

HEADQUARTERS THIRD BATTALION, 414TH INFANTRY  
A.P.O. 104, U. S. Army

15 May 1945

Battalion History

The Third Battalion, 414th Infantry, as part of the 104th Infantry Division was activated at Camp Adair, Oregon 20 September 1942. The Battalion underwent a period of intensive and extremely fine training until on 2 August 1943 it went on the Eastern Oregon desert country for a period of field maneuvers. This period lasted until the 10th of November 1943, when the Division went to Camp Hyder Arizona. Then followed another period of desert maneuvers which ended when the Division was moved to Camp Carson, Colorado, arriving at this new station 20 to 22 March 1944.

On 18 August 1944, The Division was ordered overseas and passed thru Camp Kilmer, New Jersey for processing. On 7 September 1944, the 3d Battalion, 414th Infantry, part of the first American unit to be taken directly from the United States to the French coast, was landed at the port of Cherbourg. Training and preparations for battle were made near Barneville, France within sight of the Jersey and Guernsey Islands, just off the French Coast. During this period the Battalion furnished about 70 drivers for the famous Red Ball freight run which operated from the landing bases on the French Coast to the advance bases in the Combat Zone in Eastern France.

On the 19th of October 1944 the 104th Division moved to the vicinity of Brussels, Belgium, into an assembly area near Malines, Belgium. At this time the Battalion, as part of the 104th Division, was attached to the 1st Canadian Army. On the 24th of October 1944, the Battalion moved to a defensive position near Instovezel, Belgium. From this position the Battalion was later to move into its initial experience in battle. "I" Company supported the 2d Battalion, 414th Infantry in its attack made on 26 October 1944. During the period of 24 October 1944 to 26 October 1944, "I" Company sent out contact patrols to establish contact between our Regiment and the one on our left flank. All Companies patrolled in search of snipers, a number of which were reported.

On 28 October 1944 at 1100, the 3d Battalion as advance guard for the Regiment moved along the Breda Highway and into Holland. At 1800 near Rijsbergen, Holland the Battalion with "I" Company leading, contacted the enemy and due to darkness, the advance was halted and the enemy's position was developed and found to be only an outpost, which withdrew after 4 prisoners had been taken.

The following morning "I" Company took the lead and advanced beyond the North edge of Rijsbergen, where the enemy was contacted in force along a wide canal. A fight ensued during which Capt. Dar Nelson, the C.O. of "I" Company did a superb job of directing artillery fires. The enemy retaliated with artillery and mortars and self-propelled gun fire which damaged a few vehicles and inflicted some casualties in the rear areas as well as forward. A field of land mines was encountered around a road block. In the darkness this field took a toll of four casualties because of ignorance of its existence. "I" Company lost its first effective shot on the enemy and upon advance later, many dead Germans were seen in the former enemy positions. "I" Company lost part of a reconnaissance patrol which was caught in a machine gun cross fire. During the night the engineers constructed a bridge across



the canal and the Battalion went across in force. This attack was the first coordinated attack that was executed by the Battalion. Plans were carefully laid and artillery fires were prepared. Each Rifle Company sent out patrols to its front which patrols successfully located enemy gun emplacements. These emplacements were destroyed by "M" Company's mortars and the artillery preparation which preceded the attack. The plan generally was for "L" Company to hold the river line while "I" Company attacked around the right and "K" Company around the left. The artillery preparation which consisted of artillery fires from the supporting artillery Battalion and additional fires by Division and Corps Artillery units, preceded the attack for over 30 minutes and when the attack jumped off it was so successful that a minimum of casualties was sustained by the Battalion, but a great number of losses were suffered by the enemy in dead, wounded and captured. After this attack the Battalion was reverted to Regimental Reserve and followed the other Battalions as they continued the advance.

The Regiment was regrouped in Leur, Holland in preparation for new attacks, and after much planning to cross the Mark River at Leur, it was decided less expensive to cross at Standarguiten. The 3d Battalion crossed and went through the 415th Infantry, advancing continually until the morning of 5 November after a day and night push for 3 days. "I" Company was hit by an enemy ambush, which resulted in some killed and wounded. Mine fields were encountered in numerous places and were removed by the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon. This operation ended the campaign in Holland and the attachment of the Division to the 1st Canadian Army.

On 7 November 1944, the Battalion moved by motor which was a difficult motor march, to an assembly area near Aachen, Germany. Elements of the Division at this time relieved the 1st Division. The period of this bivouac in the woods was made notable by miserable weather, rain and snow, and by plans for an attack which were again and again put off due to the fact that air support could not be used because of the weather. On the 16th of November, the Battalion moved into an assembly area at Busbach, Germany. On moving in, "K" Company suffered casualties from enemy artillery fire from enemy occupied Stolberg. A forward Battalion C.P. was set up in the edge of Stolberg and during the period of waiting for the attack, was continually harassed by enemy artillery fires. The Battalion Communications Platoon maintained this C.P. before it was put into full operation and many night the wire lines laid in the town were cut and needed repair. It was assumed that in some cases civilians cut the lines.

On the 16th the attack was launched on Hill 267 with "K" and "L" Companies on the line, "I" Company in reserve, and "M" Company supporting the attack with machine guns and mortars. The attack was preceded by air and artillery bombardment, but still the enemy resisted stubbornly and inflicted quite heavy casualties on the Battalion. This was the Battalion's first real experience in house to house fighting, in which kind of warfare they later became highly proficient. The pressure was maintained, and using smoke and artillery, "I" Company was able to surround a pill box which proved to be the key to the entire defense of that sector. "K" and "L" Companies passed the pill box, continuing to pursue and annihilate the enemy. On the morning of the 19th, the position was taken and Hill 267 was held by the Third Battalion.



On the 20th of November "L" Company was sent to help "F" Company who had run into a strong pocket of resistance. "F" Company moved on and "L" Company mopped up. Then on the 21st the Battalion moved toward the industrial city of Eschweiler. The Battalion was in reserve on the move until 1430 on the 22d, when the Battalion was given the objective of a small settlement on the outskirts of Weisweiler which included a huge factory. The Companies crossed the Inde River here under heavy artillery fire and had hardly more than crossed on the 24th than all "hell" broke loose. Artillery and mortars fell like hail on the Company positions and enemy machine guns, riflemen and all, took a heavy toll on the Battalion strength. During this attack the Communications platoon worked day and night in a vain effort to maintain wire communications. They laid 9 separate lines across this fire swept ground. The radio operators were shot at repeatedly and chased out of their roof top positions by artillery fires. Here at Nothberg the hand set extension for the 300 radio was devised.

One platoon of "K" Company, led by Lt. Barry, advanced across a broad open field, got behind the enemy and remained there for 36 hours, sniping and demoralizing the enemy. They killed in the neighborhood of 50 to 60 of the enemy and contributed greatly to the success of following attacks by the Battalion.

At 0730 on the 25th the Battalion resumed the attack and though the attack was successful the strength of the Battalion had been so depleted that they weren't sure that a strong counter-attack wouldn't push them back. The C.O. of a Company could see great numbers of the enemy moving back and fire was kept on them. But even so, the defense was inadequate in numbers. Headquarters Company was therefore ordered on the line and the Battalion objective was secured in the face of heavy fires from mortars and artillery. The action was culminated for the 3d Battalion when parts of both the First and Second Battalions passed thru the Third Battalion. The operation was successful and great numbers of prisoners were taken, but the Battalion suffered heavily, and was in need of a rest.

The week that followed the attack on Weisweiler was spent in servicing of equipment and vehicles. Men were sent to shower baths, showers, hot meals, sleep and church services were provided. The Medical still working hard, administered typhus shots and treated numerous ailments. 117 reinforcements were received and some replacement officers joined the Battalion.

On December 2, the Battalion moved to the small town of Lohn, as an assembly area. From here, after due reconnaissance, crossing was made of the Inde River at Inden. A forward Bn C.P. was established in Inden under very ticklish conditions and in spite of the fact that the town was being shelled steadily. In the crossing of the Inde, "K" Company led the way after the C.O. had found enough of a bridge on which to cross. "L" Company and then "I" Company followed. "K" Company's load across the river without great incident. The fight that followed was a nasty affair! The Companies moved into the first few houses about 100 yards from the River and slowly pushed the enemy back by a continuous battle from house to house. Many counter-attacks were launched by the Germans, but were successfully repelled. Many hand to hand battles were fought in houses, in cellars and on the street. Hand grenades, rockets and rifle grenades as well as mortars, machine guns, pistols and rifles were fired in great volume. Finally the enemy was pushed back to about 500 yards from the River and the pressure was stopped for the night to reorganize. The next day, the 3d of December, was spent in improving the Battalion's position and preparing to continue the assault. At this time the Engineers built a Bailey Bridge across the River, continually subjected to artillery and mortar fires. When the Bridge had been completed, tanks were moved across the bridge along with some 57 anti-tank guns.



The Battalion Headquarters anti-tank and Regimental anti-tank platoons both sized tank fighter teams and armed with "bazookas" and automatic weapons. These teams were emplaced in strategic spots though no tanks were employed by the enemy, these teams did serve to fend off close in attacks by S.P.'s and aided in knocking down buildings occupied by enemy soldiers.

A coordinated attack on the 5th of December was planned for 1500. This plan included artillery preparations of the supporting Battalion and heavy concentrations of 8 inch guns as well as long range machine gun fire and mortar fires by "M" Company. Tanks were used to knock down some concrete walls over which "I" Company was able to pass. The plan was for "K" and "L" Companies to maintain pressure frontally while "I" Company moved around and struck from the right flank. This operation and the preceding artillery fires was so successful that the enemy was completely surprised with the result that by nightfall 176 prisoners were taken from the enemy's force. It was during this action that Capt. Whitney single handedly captured 15 prisoners with a map board as his only weapon.

On the 7th an unusually fierce counter-attack by the enemy was launched against the Battalion, but was broken up with the aid of the artillery and co-ordination of all weapons, and again the attack was resumed with the fighting continuing fiercely and bitterly for each part of ground. On the 8th, another counter-attack was sustained and repelled by the Battalion. On the morning of the 9th, an "I" Company patrol contacted an enemy patrol and a brief fight ensued in which a see-saw action occurred wherein first our soldiers were captured and then recaptured along with their machine gun. Finally 13 battalions of artillery were brought to bear, in counter-batter, on the enemy positions which broke resistance in the town of Inden.

On the 10th at 0800 the Battalion resumed the attack on the north to take the town of Schophoven. The attack went rapidly, but due to another Battalion's requirement of taking the town of Pier, the attack by the 3d Battalion was held up about 800 yards outside of Schophoven, waiting for Pier to be taken. Remaining on the slight rise was a harrowing experience, for, though few casualties were sustained, the men were forced to live in fox holes which resulted in several cases of trench-foot and 2 cold miserable nights. During this period the enemy kept pounding the Battalion's position with mortars and artillery and swept the area with small arms fire.

By 1600 on the 13th the town was taken, but the position was still precarious, because of a stubborn enemy strong point in a castle nearby. This was finally reduced after some difficulty by another unit and on December 15th the 3d Battalion was pulled out for a long awaited and much needed rest.

From the 17th of December until the 23rd the Battalion remained in Eschweiler, Germany, resting, refilling key positions and replacing and revamping its equipment. On the 23d the Battalion relieved elements of the 83d Division in the town of Lendersdorf, Germany, along the Roer River. The Battalion remained here until February 7th. This period of defense was occupied in patrolling across the Roer river into enemy lines in attempts to capture prisoners. The town of Lendersdorf was periodically shelled by enemy mortars and artillery which caused some casualties. Our artillery retaliated in kind and mortars as well as machine guns contributed to continual harassment of the enemies positions across the river. In this town some of the Communications and A & P men discovered a water driven electric generator which, through the efforts of these people and the Battalion Executive Officer was put into operation and maintained. As a result, everyone had electric lights, but due to the cold weather causing ice, etc, the water power often failed and at times the lights were out.



On February 8th the Battalion moved back to Eschweiler where preparations were made to cross the Roer and press on to Cologne. These next few days were marked by a hustle and ado by everyone! Equipment and troops were moved night and day; reconnaissance was continuous and an air of suspense and excitement dominated the whole area. "I" Company was given the task of keeping the Roer river "smoked" to hide the activity along it's banks.

At 1800 on the 24th of February, the Battalion moved to Mariaweller, Germany, beginning a series of rapid moves and fast furious action which culminated with the Battalion being the first Infantry unit into Cologne.

On the 25th, into Duren across the Roer, at 0930 on the 26th into Merzenich, at 1630 into Buir, from then until the 1st of March the Battalion was more or less split up with each Company having separate assignments of securing lines of departure, widely separated objectives, etc. On the 1st of March at 0130 the Battalion moved to Sindorf, Germany, again in reserve. Plans were made by the rest of the Regiment for a continued attack! It was during the laying of these plans that the Battalion Commander was injured at the 2d Battalion Headquarters as the result of long range enemy heavy shelling. The town of Sindorf from the 1st to the 3d was subjected to bombing, strafing and shelling. Not many casualties resulted, but much material damage was done.

On the 3d of March the Battalion, under command of Major Ryan moved to Herren and from here moved on the town of Buschbell. This move took the Battalion through a dense woods and through a chateau where at least 100 prisoners were taken and evacuated by the Battalion M.P. Squad led by Cpl. Louis Meins. In Buschbell, the Battalion ran into its' first serious civilian problem. Hundreds of civilians were huddled in a church yard and finally after much fuss and fanfare they were permitted to go to their cellars. On the 5th the troops of "I" Company leading the Battalion were the first Infantry troops to enter the city of Cologne. On the 6th of March, the Battalion ran into quite still resistance and by employing T.D.s and 4.2 mortars, this resistance was reduced and over 100 more prisoners were taken! On the 7th, the Battalion pressed on through Cologne, meeting very light resistance and at 0745, K Company reached the Rhine and at 0803, I Company also moved onto the banks of the Rhine River.

From the 8th to the 21st of March, the Battalion remained in a reserve position, resting, reorganizing and preparing for future moves. Elements of the 415th Infantry were relieved by the Battalion in a mass shifting of the lines. Shows, passes, showers and general reshaping was carried out along with a training schedule which included training in use of river crossing assault boats.

On the 22d of March the Battalion moved by motor across the Rhine River over the VII Corps pontoon bridge just South of Bonn into an assembly area at Hovel, Germany. Here the Battalion was attached to the 33d Armored Regiment of the 3d Armored Division. The Companies were joined with the Armored Companies and training in tank riding and tactics was conducted. The entire unit was known as Task Force Hogan and was commanded by Lt. Col. Hogan of the 33d Armored Regiment.

On the 25th the Task Force moved from Hovel to Buchholz. The Task Force was in reserve initially, but on the 26 of March at 1900 it moved to Altenkirchen and the same night was committed, leaving Altenkirchen as a landing column. The column had hardly cleared the town of Altenkirchen before it had a brief but brisk fight. The night was filled with tracers and brilliant explosions. Barnes and houses burning brightly, lit up the countryside. Before a flight on the 27th the column was stopped because of a destroyed bridge on the Riste river. A detour was made and the river forded. Then began a rapid advance through town after town, day and night through rain and fog.



The way was littered by German trucks and tanks that burned merrily. Ammunition trucks exploded from time to time, scattering fire and singing metal in all directions. On the 28th, the town of Elkenrath was passed through, but outside of Derschen a 20 mm flak gun was encountered and knocked out after a brief fight. On the morning of the 28th, Task Force Hogan moved into Dillenburg. Here the outfit got a rest and resupplying as well as amaintainance check. Kitchens were brought up and hot meals prepared. In this town many recaptured P.W.s were fed from the left-overs in the kitchens. These people seemed half starved and would eat most anything.

From Dillenburg, the task force continued its dash across Germany on the 29th of March at 0700. The advance was slower because of stiffening resistance. Casualties were suffered daily and through the excellent work by the Medics, rapidly cared for and evacuated.

On the 30th the Task Force broke out onto an open plain and advanced on the town of Wewer. Here a classic fight took place between our soldiers and the fanatical SS German troops. The enemy employed Panzerfausts, Grenades, rifles, machine guns and pistols against the Battalion. But no artillery or heavy weapons. The fight raged on for 36 hours during which time many German soldiers were killed or captured. The Battalion suffered nominal casualties as a Battalion whole, but "K" Company took the greatest loss. On the 1st of April the Task Force was split up with a headquarters in each of Wewer and Salzkotten. Military rule was established and minor affairs of government kept both staffs busy while tanks, heavy weapons and riflemen manned road blocks. Former French P.W.'s were used as auxiliary police who helped patrol the town. Many ex-German soldiers were picked up and hospitals which housed German wounded were checked. The entire period from the 1st of April to the 5th was devoted to administration.

On the 5th, at about 1800, Hogan's Task Force proceeded to Schmechten, a distance of 25 or 30 miles. This trip over mountains and through woods was made under the worst possible conditions. The roads were muddy, the weather damp and cold and particularly through the wood the darkness was like a black cloak over all. Numerous accidents occurred and many vehicles left the road and mired down. The entire night was spent locating missing vehicles and finally at daylight, all vehicles were closed in the area and accounted for.

After 2 days in Schmechten, the task force crossed the Weser River and moved up to take the town of Northeim. Another brisk fight took place and the Air Corps was called in on a long column of enemy vehicles which were all knocked out. The town of Northeim was entered by "K" Company while "I" and "L" Companies flanked the town. Fights with enemy S.P. guns and Infantry ended with another Battalion victory. The tanks couldn't get into town at once because of a destroyed bridge, so the doughboys led the attack.

On the 10th of April the Task Force moved through Northeim and on to Duderstadt. More stiff resistance was met here from tanks and S.P.s, but the Battalion with its tanks knocked these out and moved on around Merbis, into Silkenrode and then into Bartoldeide, where the Task Force was broken up and the Armored Battalion went on another mission. In Brotelode, after the Armor had left, the Battalion received numerous attachments which constituted Task Force Rouge. Plans were laid for moving beyond Nordhausen to secure a road net and then an attack beyond there. On the 11th this task force moved toward Dolau with the ultimate objective of the City of Halle. Dolau was taken after only slight resistance, but the bridge into Halle had been destroyed. On the 15th Task Force Rouge moved North and crossed the Saale river on a 3d Armored bridge, then cut South and moved on the City of Halle. As the city was approached, resistance stiffened steadily. The main enemy weapons consisted of Panzer-fausts and rifles and machine guns. On the edge of Halle, the landing elements captured large food warehouses. Civilians were engaged in wholesale looting of these stores.



This was stopped and the Battalion Anti-tank and A & P Platoons were placed on guard over these warehouses. The attack on the city, meanwhile continued. In the city of Halle were located a number of military schools, as well as important German military installations. It was estimated that almost 5,000 German troops were located in this town. The bulk of these troops were Wehrmacht soldiers, but there were a number of SS troops who were in control and forced the Wehrmacht soldiers to fight which they did effectively. The town was to be spared bombing and shelling because of numerous hospitals and other non-military installations. Ultimatums were sent the German Garrison Commander, but because of the SS troops, he was unable to surrender.

The exhausting process of methodically going thru each house on each street went on and on. The number of casualties was not great compared with previous actions in which the Battalion took the leading role, but enemy snipers or riflemen took a toll of the Battalion's strength. On the 17th, over 700 prisoners were taken in a very few hours. The final total for the Battalion was well over 2,000 taken in Halle. The famous Count Felix von Luckner was found in the town and placed under guard after his required visits to the rear.

On the 19th, after many weary hours of grim and bitter fighting, the town was cleared and all mopping up was completed. Then from Halle, Task Force Rouge moved to Ammendorf. On this move the Battalion was completely motorized by virtue of many German trucks of civilian and army stock. In Ammendorf, many more prisoners were taken and evacuated. No fight occurred here and the Battalion settled down to get a well earned nights rest. At Ammendorf a Germany half-track assembly line was discovered and placed in operation by the Battalion Motor Officer, A & P Platoon and Anti-tank Platoon. The Battalion got 15 half-tracks therefrom, and finally Regiment took over and each Battalion was given the same number of these vehicles.

On the morning of the 20th, the Task Force moved on again to take the towns of Grobers, Macheitz and Frieroda. Again light resistance was met and the Battalion moved in and occupied quickly. The Battalion was supposed to remain in this position, but on the 22d of April orders came to move to Hohenpriesnitz to relieve another unit there.

The Battalion moved in and set up along the Mulde River over which no bridges had been built. The Battalion A & P Platoon constructed 2 foot bridges over the river, using make-shift materials, such as barrels, pipe, planks and cable. Later the engineers built a treadway ponton bridge, which immediately created trouble in that the civilians wanted to cross the river on this bridge, but were not permitted to. Continuous guarding was necessary. From the 22d to the 28th there was a daily surrender of from 6 to 76 enemy troops. In one instance the Battalion Commander brought in 76 Germans who were riding bicycles and were being herded along by one soldier on a German motorcycle. Patrols were sent across the river to ascertain the enemy strength and the first patrol resulted in casualties by virtue of a surprise assault by the enemy and the fanatic action of one P.M. who deliberately set off mines, killing himself and wounding 3 American soldiers. Another patrol was to cross the Mulde River and attempt to contact the Russians between the Mulde and Elbe Rivers. At the last minute orders were changed so this group consisting of one squad from each rifle Company reinforced by machine guns from "M" Company and commanded by Lt. Cangialosi of "I" Company merely secured the East banks of the Mulde.

On the 29th of April the Battalion carefully laid plans to patrol to the Elbe River to locate and eliminate any remaining groups of resistance and to report location of food or ammunition stores. The patrols reached the Elbe River but no enemy were located.

On May 1, 1945, the Battalion moved to Eilenburg and relieved another unit. Here a guard was placed on the bridge across the Mulde River and contact and visits were made at our C.P. by the Russians and at the Russian C.P. by the Battalion's various commanders. In the course of the next few days over 2000 former P.M.s of Allied nations were evacuated. Here in Eilenburg the Battalion remained, carrying out routine sentry duty and administrative functions until the declaration of cessation of hostilities on 12 May 1945 at 2400.