

HEADQUARTERS 117TH INFANTRY
A. P. O. 30, U. S. ARMY

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CLASSIFICATION
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NOVEMBER 1944
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
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SUBJECT: Resume of Operations for the Month of October 1944
TO : The Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, D.C.

October 1, 1944, found the 117th Infantry Regiment well within the German homeland, its troops entrenched along a line facing the Siegfried Line. The enemy was known to be feverishly bolstering its defense. Additional tank ditches, foxholes and other obstacles were being erected. With great tenacity the foe was resisting all attempts to probe its strength. A Fifth Corps penetration of the Line was thrown back; Seventh Corps progress, to the East, was repeatedly counter-attack. Prisoners of War stated that the German High Command intended to hold the Line for the winter in order to protect the important industrial cities of the Rhine and Ruhr Valley.

On 2 October 1944, the 117th Infantry jumped off to smash its way through these formidable barriers. The plan of attack called for an assault in column of battalions with the First Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Frankland, leading the assault. For several days prior thereto, the First Battalion had engaged in an intensive period of training in the tactics that would be involved. Riddled by casualties in the Normandy campaign there was but one enlisted man left with any flame throwing experience.

The First Battalion of the 117th Infantry inaugurated the attack at 1100, 2 October 1944, after an ineffective air bombardment. "B" and "C" Companies provided the leading elements for the push which had to be made over open and flat terrain that was easily observable to the enemy. The Wurm River was the first major obstacle. Its descending slopes were shelled continuously by the enemy. Our own mortar and artillery fire had little effect upon the concrete and steel structures. However, by the use of direct fire weapons the embrasures were widened and the foe was prevented from manning its guns therein by concentrated

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fire from rifles and machine guns. Using improvised "duckboards" our troops crossed the Wurm River despite the heavy mortar, artillery and small arms fire leveled against them. All of the strong points in the enemy defense system were destroyed in short order. By nightfall of the first day the battalion objective was secure. A strong defensive position was established as the First Battalion then dug in to prepare for an anticipated counterattack.

The Second Battalion of the 117th Infantry followed the First Battalion in the initial attack by 1000 yards. "E" Company went forward in an area to the left of the leading battalion and captured the bridge site on the main road between Marienberg and Palenberg. The other two rifle companies of the Second Battalion passed through the First Battalion and seized some ground North of the two slag dumps in the City of Palenberg. "E" Company took the town of Marienberg in a hand to hand encounter. The First Platoon secured the bridge site while the Second and Third Platoons swung across the river and destroyed two large pillboxes and several machine gun positions on the East Side of the River near the railroad tracks. The 105th Engineers completed the bridge for heavy traffic within four hours.

In the meantime "G" and "F" Companies of the 117th Infantry were advancing in the zone of the First Battalion. They attacked through it and helped clean out the town of Marienberg and the huge pillboxes that were blocking "E" Company. "F" Company made its way North of Palenberg and assumed a defensive position at the bottom of a high ridge that was occupied by the enemy. "G" Company removed the remaining hostile forces from the City of Palenberg and continued to the factory district East of the town. During the night a strong counterattack was repelled. The enemy made determined attempts to wipe out the bridgehead across the Wurm River, in the Northern Sector, with mortar, artillery, "nebelwerfer" fire and a single airplane assault. Our troops held the ground that they had gained and successfully warded off every thrust by the foe to dislodge them.

The following day the two battalions consolidated their positions.

"F" Company renewed the attack but was unable to make much headway because of its unfavorable position. "G" Company went on to clean out the factory district. A great deal of small arms fire was being received from the Rimburg Castle Area, which was holding up the advance in the Central Sector. The town of Ubach was captured by the Third Battalion. Rimburg Castle was not taken until we reached Ubach. On 4 October 1944, the enemy launched a strong counter-attack against "F" Company, which was repulsed in close fighting, with heavy casualties to the hostile forces.

The Third Battalion of the 117th Infantry supported the other battalions in the initial attack, with mortar fire, and was held in readiness against the threat of counterattack. On 2 October 1944, "I" Company crossed the bridge spanning the Wurm River to secure the Right flank of the First Battalion. On 3 October 1944, it completed the clearance of Palenberg. The Third Battalion also sustained an aggressive counter thrust the night of October 3rd, and threw back two enemy blows reinforced with tanks, infantry and artillery. The Third Battalion moved thru the First Battalion and captured Uoach and together with the First Battalion, led the assault on Alsdorf.

In crossing the Wurm River, small arms, mortar and artillery fire was encountered by the troops. The enemy's defense in this area was made both from within pillboxes and from field fortifications protecting them. Houses were used as strong points. Enemy fire was voluminous throughout the period and mine fields effectively laid.

On 4 October 1944, the 117th Infantry continued the attack to Southeast. It seized its objective and protected the Left flank of the Division Line. Enemy resistance was still stiff. A number of counterattacks were launched in an attempt to restore its former positions and to knock out our bridges spanning the River. Smoke was used and the heaviest artillery concentrations that the troops had ever received. Bitter house to house fighting was encountered in all towns.

On 5 October 1944, the enemy threw an even heavier volume of artillery against the troops. A mine development of brick houses and buildings proved to be a difficult strong point. Nevertheless, the Regiment continued its advance, reduced additional pillboxes and continued into the enemy stronghold.

With all objectives attained, the Regiment consolidated and strengthened its positions. Counterattacks were being constantly fought off. On 7 October 1944, the First and Third Battalions attacked South. They advanced approximately 5000 yards to gain their objective by Noon. The Second Battalion of the 117th Infantry was being held in reserve and on the afternoon of October 7th, it moved to the Right to establish contact with the 119th Infantry which was lagging behind. In the day's fighting 471 Prisoners of War were taken; most of them by the Third Battalion of the 117th Infantry.

On 8 October 1944, the foe made its most determined effort to break through our forces. Two battalions of infantry, with twenty assault guns and seven tanks endeavored to retake Alsdorf. The hostile force came in on the Left flank of the Regiment and reached the town of Alsdorf. Reserves were called for but by the time they had arrived the First and Third Battalions had driven the enemy back. The next day, the Second Battalion pushed on to Schaufenberg. The town was captured after a mild house to house encounter and the position held. The troops now fortified themselves for an active defense of the Alsdorf-Schaufenberg Sector.

On 16 October 1944, "E" Company of the 117th Infantry, with one platoon of "A" Company and supported by "K" Company of the 120th Infantry, on the Right, was detailed to seize the Railroad in Mariadorf, as a diversionary point. The attack was accompanied by the use of smoke, mortar and artillery fire. It drew a violent enemy reaction in the form of unprecedented mortar and artillery fire. Fires came from battery and battalion concentrations in calibres from 75mm to 210mm or larger. This considerable amount of artillery fire was diverted from the main attack of the 119th Infantry to the South. With the enemy frantically

concentrating its forces against this thrust by our men, the elements of the 119th Infantry succeeded in closing the gap that provided its only avenue of escape or of reinforcing the garrison occupying the besieged city of Aachen. Major General Corlett, Commanding Officer of the XIX Corps, personally commended Colonel Walter M. Johnson for this highly meritorious achievement.

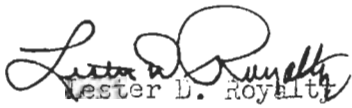
The XIX Corps was transferred to the Ninth Army on 22 October 1944, as the enemy kept harassing its positions with artillery and patrol activity. Several Buzz Bombs were also seen soaring over the Regimental Area.

On 27 October 1944, leading units of the 406th Infantry Regiment began relieving elements of the 117th Infantry for battle experience. The Third Battalion of the 406th Infantry was attached to the Regiment on 28 October 1944. It relieved the First Battalion of the 117th Infantry which reverted to a Rest Camp. On 2 November 1944, the Second Battalion of the 406th Infantry took over the lines of the Second Battalion. By 020500 November 1944, it is to assume the responsibility for the defense of the sector for several days.

In addition to protecting the breach made in the Siegfried Line the 117th Infantry Regiment constituted an important segment of the American forces encircling the town of Aachen. Its Second Battalion having ~~reached~~ Reached the town of Schaufenberg, Germany, had made the deepest penetration of the German homeland up to that time.

During the operations in the Month of October the 117th Infantry captured over 1200 Prisoners and large quantities of enemy weapons, ammunition and other equipment.

For the Commanding Officer:


Lester D. Royalty
Captain, 117th Inf.
Adjutant