

HEADQUARTERS 2D INFANTRY DIVISION
APO #2, U.S. ARMY

AG 201.22

15 November 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation for Company "B", 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

THRU: Commanding Officer,
612th Tank Destroyer Battalion,
APO #230, U.S. Army.

TO: Commanding Officer,
Company "B"
612th Tank Destroyer Battalion,
APO #230, U.S. Army.

I desire to commend Company "B", 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion for outstanding performance of duty in combat operations against a highly trained and tenacious enemy during the Battle of Brest from 19 August 1944 to 18 September 1944. The detailed resume, presented by the Commanding Officer, 23rd Infantry follows:

"Company "B", 612th Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to the 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division on 19 August 1944. At the termination of the siege of Brest, 18 September 1944, B Company's guns had definitely destroyed fourteen pill boxes, two dugouts, seventeen machine guns, one ammunition dump, three anti-aircraft guns, four large caliber artillery pieces and eleven houses, including a large hotel. In destroying these enemy installations and material, the Company inflicted casualties upon the enemy estimated at more than four hundred. The Tank Destroyer guns also blasted numerous enemy observation posts, the old city wall of Brest and numerous other installations which either housed enemy troops or were obstacles in the path of infantry troops.

Moving into Guipavas, France, 24 August 1944, the first platoon of the company prepared to support an attack by the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry on Hill 105. The third platoon of the Tank Destroyer unit also moved into Guipavas 25 August 1944 with the same mission. Both of these platoons remained in positions entirely exposed to enemy observation for the next seven days in order to place direct fire on known enemy strongpoints. Although they were subjected to heavy mortar and artillery fire, some of which was timed over the target they maintained exposed positions and as a result on 28 August 1944 knocked out a pill box, one mortar and five machine guns which had impeded the progress of assault companies in the 2nd Battalion for several days. The enemy also sustained what was thought to be about twenty seven (27) casualties as the result of fire from these guns during the day.

The Commanding General of the 2nd Infantry Division observed fire of these two platoons 28 August and personally commended both for their accuracy and tenacity in maintaining positions which enabled them to place direct fire on the enemy.

The next day, 29 August 1944, B Company guns destroyed two more machine guns and two mortars, besides inflicting approximately forty casualties upon the enemy. On 30 August, the company received severe counter battery fire but knocked out a machine gun and killed or wounded what was estimated to be about thirty-five of the enemy.

Two platoons moved to the top of Hill 105 on 4 September and placed direct fire on enemy strongpoints and gun positions on Hill 90. On 6 September the first and third platoons knocked out a strongly defended hotel in St. Marc and several gun positions which had held up the advance of the 1st Battalion. During the next two days, after moving to Hill 90, both platoons were subjected to exceptionally heavy 88mm fire but nevertheless moved to positions fully visible to the enemy where they would place direct fire on German installations.

Two platoons entered the city of Brest 11 September, following closely on the heels of advancing infantry. Receiving intense sniper fire as a result of moving directly behind foot troops, gun crews of both platoons abandoned all cautionary measures as they knocked out a pill box and several enemy observation posts during the day. The second platoon enjoyed a field day 12 September while its guns destroyed three pill boxes, two dugouts, one ammunition dump, two machine guns and a sixteen inch naval gun which had been firing on rear installations since the outset of the attack on Brest. The platoon is believed to have accounted for more than one hundred enemy casualties during the day.

Despite heavy counter battery and sniper fire on all gun positions during the final five days of the siege, the second platoon of B Company fired approximately 200 rounds per day and eliminated seven more pill boxes besides blasting paths through the center of the city blocks in Brest which allowed units of the 23rd Infantry to move forward steadily.

Gun crews of Company B displayed a complete disregard for their own safety and unusual initiative and resourcefulness in rendering infantry troops the closest possible supporting fire throughout the siege. Without this fire, it is doubtful if the surrender of the enemy garrison would have come as soon as it did. Tank Destroyer guns operating amid front line rifle platoons had a demoralizing as well as casualty effect upon the enemy. Many prisoners were taken, a large percentage of whom were undoubtedly driven from their positions as a result of the devastating fire from these weapons.

W.M. ROBERTSON,
Major General U.S. Army
Commanding

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