

NARRATIVE HISTORY
of the
399TH INFANTRY REGT.
in Combat

CANCELLED
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE *me*

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HEADQUARTERS 399TH INFANTRY
A.P.O. #447, U.S. ARMY

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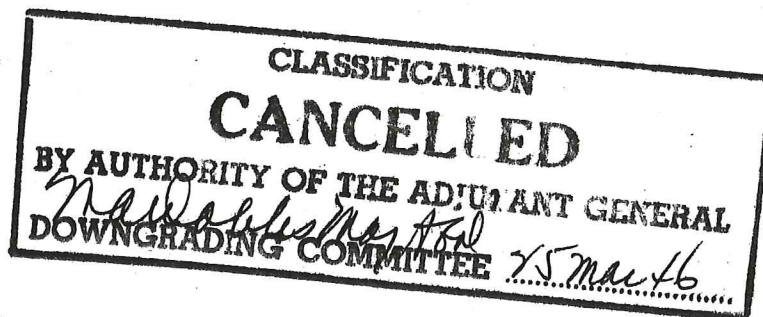
TO : TAG, War Dep't., Washington, D.C.
(Through Channels).

Transmitted herewith Regimental History of 399th Infantry Regiment
for month of December 1944.

Elery M. Zehner
ELERY M. ZEHNER,
Lt. Col., 399th Infantry,
Commanding.

7 Incls:

- 1 - Regt'l History (in quin.)
- 2 - Cpy S-1 Strength Reports.
- 3 - Cpy S-2 Periodic Reports and Overlays.
- 4 - Cpy S-2 Journal.
- 5 - Cpy S-3 Periodic Reports, overlays and operations instructions.
- 6 - Cpy S-3 Journal.
- 7 - Cpy S-4 Periodic Reports.



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On the morning of December 5th, the 3rd Bn., according to plan, jumped off from its LD, the Wingen-Rosteig RR, at 0730, and attacked N-NE along the Wingen-Sarreinsberg highway with I Co on the right and L Co on the left. Two road blocks at Q722364 and Q725365 grid coordinates were removed by our engineers and a blown bridge at grid coordinate Q724364, directly on our line of departure, was repaired.

"I" Co. reached its objective on Phase Line "C", a road fork at Q737389, by 1530 hours. "L" Co., to the NW, reached its objective, a road junction in the town of Colonne (Q725398), one hour later. Reported strong enemy defenses at this point were abandoned in the face of our advance.

Civilians informed us that the enemy was withdrawing northward toward Lemberg and had deserted Soucht and Meisenthal to the W, leaving much equipment behind in their dash to avoid entrapment. No physical contact was established with the enemy throughout the day and only three prisoners were captured by the time our 3rd Bn. called a halt to the day's operations on Phase Line "C".

Our 1st Bn., following in regimental reserve, advanced behind the 3rd Bn. by bounds. Pushing rapidly forward, they were at grid coordinate Q685360 by 0800 hours, and by 1715 had closed in the vicinity of Heideneck.

Our 2nd Bn., meanwhile, was engaged in patrol action as a Division reserve, reconnoitering to the N and W to contact the 114th Infantry. The 2nd closed into its assembly area, vicinity Q700345 grid at 0900 hours and was returned to regimental control at 1605 hours.

The 925th FA Bn. also returned to the support of CT-399, having completed its mission with the 398th Infantry regiment.

Continuing its advance NE and N on the morning of December 4th, our combat team pushed along the main axis highways and into the heart of the Forêt de la Petite Pierre Nord to forward assembly areas in a triangle bounded by Frohmul, Puberg and Moderfeld. Our 1st Bn., moving into the area S of Hinsbourg, dispatched combat patrols into Hinsbourg and Frohmul to the NW as well as reconnoitering Hill 362 situated to the N of Hinsbourg and overlooking the Frohmul-Wingen highway. Finding no evidence of the enemy, the battalion regrouped and at 1730 assembled in Frohmul.

Our 2nd Bn. took up positions to the SE, Vic. RJ Q700320, while our 3rd Bn. settled down for the night in the apex of the triangle at Q700345. Combat patrols sent to RJ Q694354, directly to the N, returned without having established contact.

The regimental CP was opened at Moderfeld (Q691330) at 1500A.

Late in the afternoon, the expected orders which were to start the drive on Bitche rolling, were received. Our 3rd Bn., chosen to spearhead the attack with the support of one pltn. from AT Co., Cannon Co., a pltn. from the 325th Engineers and one-half of our Mine pltn., prepared to move forward to the LD along a general line between Rosteig and Wingen with the 1st and 2nd Bn. (in Division reserve) following in a column of battalions.

On Regimental order, our 1st Bn. moved from its assembly area by bounds to support the attacking 3rd while making preparations for a possible offensive action on the left after reaching phase line 4.

The 2nd Bn. took over the 3rd Bn's. assembly area and immediately initiated patrols to N and W with particular emphasis along the axis of advance and the Rosteig-Volksberg road. The 2nd Bn. was further ordered to establish contact with the 114th Infantry on our left flank.

While our troops engaged in specialized training for storming fixed fortifications, our patrols continued reconnaissance of road nets leading from our CP area at Niederviller. Future action was to prove how important were these hours of toil on this first day of December.

On December 2nd, orders finally arrived for CT-399 to move from our reserve positions via motor shuttling to a forward bivouac area in preparation for an advance NE toward the Maginot hinge of Bitché. In addition to our own vehicles, trucks for the movement were supplied by the 925th FA Bn. and the Division QM.

Movement began exactly at 0700 with five minute intervals between serials, vehicles at 75 yard intervals, AA guns mounted and manned and air sentries posted. The general terrain we traversed was open and rolling with little hint of the rough country which lay ahead.

Proceeding without incident, all elements had closed in to their respective assembly areas by 1420. Our 1st Bn. moved into Shalbach (Q585248), our 2nd Bn. into Veckersviller (Q594270), our 3rd Bn. into Sieviller (Q608275).

The regimental CP opened in Shalbach. Our 925th FA Bn. was attached to the 398th Infantry regiment, while the 898th AAA Bn. was added to our combat team.

At 1015 hours of December 3rd, the regiment again moved forward in a NE direction to the town of Petersbach (Q656300) taking up assembly areas in and near the town. Our 3rd Bn. assembled in the thick woods directly E of Petersbach, our 2nd Bn. assembled to the SE of Petersbach and just E of La Petite Pierre (Q681296), while our 1st Bn. closed into positions within Petersbach where the regimental CP was established.

Rifle and AT security was provided on our left flank by our 3rd Bn. at RJ Q 700319 and Q700322 grid coordinates.

Seeking to exploit our previous day's success, CT-399 was ordered to continue the attack at 0730 hours on December 6th. Utilizing the same general tactical pattern, the 3rd Bn. lunged ahead in an attempt to seize Lemberg, the first regimental objective, continue to the second regimental objective and then push on to Bitche, the Division objective.

By 0930 hours, only two hours after jumping off from phase line "C", both Sarriensburg and Goetzenbruck had been secured and the high ground of plateau 409, NE of Goetzenbruck, was in our hands. At this point, however, enemy resistance began to stiffen. Reconnaissance to the north by the I & R pltn., along the Sariensburg-Lemberg highway, found a bridge blown at grid Q742440 and enemy entrenchments on open ground to the left of the road at grid Q739442 extending N to the Lemberg-Eichenberg road. When fired upon the enemy answered with mortar fire.

Road blocks had been set up at three points along the St.Louis-Lemberg highway. An artillery Battalion of 105mm guns was discovered on a plateau S of the Lemberg-Eichenberg road. Seventy-five and 88mm guns were emplaced N of Lemberg. Hill 423, commanding high ground E of Lemberg was strongly fortified as was Hill 345, N of the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road, Hill 345 was defended by the 7th Co., 953rd VG Regiment, estimated by our S-2 at 30 men, with two additional companies of enemy troops in Lemberg reported by an FFI source.

With Goetzenbruck in our hands and evidence developing that the Krauts were going to make a stand, "I" and "L" Cos. prepared to reorganize and "K" Co. was committed in preparation for enemy contact. At 1130 hours our attack was resumed with "K" and "I" Cos. battling through the woods on the left of the highway and "L" Co. crawling through the woods on the right. Heavy artillery and mortar fire from Hill 423 slowed our troops considerably and by 1535 hours all

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Cos. were unable to advance further. "L" Co. was stymied by a clearing at grid Q735442, "K" Co. was forced to dig in because of mortar and artillery fire from Hill 423, and "I" Co was pounded mercilessly by artillery and mortars from Hill 345.

Faced by these strong German positions, our units were consolidated and preparations made to soften our objectives with artillery fire before attempting to resume the advance. Consolidation was completed at 1800 hours with I, K and L Cos. digging in at grids Q752438, 745441 and 738442 respectively.

Our 1st Bn., following closely behind the 3rd Bn., established assembly areas at Goetzenbruck and dispatched patrols to the town of St.Louis to contact the 398th Infantry on our left flank and along the Sarriensberg-Mouterhouse road.

Our 2nd Bn., still in regimental reserve, advanced to successive assembly areas, closing to Heideneck at 0930 hours and to the vicinity of grid Q735415 by 1600.

Our regimental CP closed into Heideneck at 0815 hours and moved forward to Sarriensberg at 1415.

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Skies were grey and full of the usual threat of rain when at 0930 hours of December 7th---the 3rd anniversary of Pearl Harbor--- we resumed our attack on Lemberg and high ground to the N and E. A terrific ten minute Corps artillery preparation and a rolling barrage lifting one hundred yards every four minutes, preceded the attack.

Facing our regiment was a determined enemy, dug in on every high piece of ground and supported by machine-gun and mortar emplacements on Hills 345, 405 and 423, and along the Enchenberg-Lemberg and Mouterhouse-Lemberg roads. Concrete pillboxes in the vicinity of grid coordinates Q736444, 741446, 759439, and AT guns guarded the approaches to Lemberg from the S. Self-propelled 20mm

AA guns, converted into AT guns, were mounted on dug in half-tracks S of Hill 345. Roads were heavily mined and road blocks were placed at advantageous locations. Known elements facing us were the 7th Co., 953rd VGrenadier regiment dug in on Hill 345, elements of the 361st Field Replacement Bn., S of Hill 423, and the 3rd Co., 816th AA Bn., on a line along the Enchenberg-Lemberg road in the vicinity of grid Q735446. Other enemy forces could not be identified but were in considerable strength with at least two full Cos. reported in Lemberg.

The German front lines extended generally N of the Enchenberg-Lemberg road along grid Q725445 to 734448 to 738444 to 742448 to 749451 with a strong point and pillbox N of Hill 345 and along an MLR S of the hill.

Our 3rd Bn., seeking to reduce Hills 345, 405 and 423, launched their attack on the right of the Sarriensberg-Lemberg road with "I" Co. on the right and "L" Co. on the left. No sooner had the attack been initiated, however, when our troops were stopped by a hail of small arms, artillery and mortar fire. "I" Co. was pinned down immediately by heavy fire from Hill 345 and machine gun fire from houses at RJ 251, a few hundred yards to the SE. These enemy positions were hammered repeatedly by our artillery, but no lessening of enemy fire resulted.

"K" Co. managed to advance 400 yards beyond the Mouterhouse-Lemberg road after two hours of furious effort, fighting through crossfire of machine guns, artillery and mortars every step of the way, but was also finally brought to a halt by the murderous Kraut defense, most of it from Hill 423 to the NE. Our artillery was concentrated on this strong point also, and this time we had better results, the advance being enabled to creep forward although at heavy cost. By 1400 hours, one pltn. of "K" Co. was on the forward slopes of Hill 380 and the remainder of the Co. had reached the rear slope of the hill. At this point, fire from Hill 423 and entrenched enemy holding a ravine at grid Q748450, however, again stopped our advance.

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At 1200 hours, "L" Co, on "I" Co's. left, ordered to close the gap resulting from "K" Co's. advance, once again attempted to push ahead. They had reached the slopes of hill 405 when the batallion was again withdrawn to prepared positions to permit further artillery softening of the German positions.

Meanwhile, our 1st Bn., striking from W of the Sarriensberg-Lemberg highway, battled through intense small arms, mortar, 20mm shrapnel and machine gun fire with "B" Co. crawling across open ground to reach the Lemberg-Eichenberg road. Heavy losses were suffered by our hard-hitting Baker Co. during this short advance, and when continuation proved impractical, units which could withdraw were pulled back to their original positions. Two pltns. of "B" Co., however, were forced to remain in open ground until darkness covered their withdrawal.

"C" Co., on "B" Co's. right, also ran into exceptionally heavy 20mm fire as well as resistance from a pillbox at RJ vic grid QY37444. Three 20mm guns were captured during Charlie Co's. stubborn advance.

"A" Co., holding positions on Ridge 397.4 (Q7144), retained its ground doggedly under continuous enemy pressure as a buffer against possible enemy counter attacks. Shelling of the 1st Bn. positions did not cease with the fall of darkness. There was precious little rest for the 1st batallionites that night.

The 2nd Bn. assembly area was moved to Goetzenbruck in preparation for commital the following day.

After holding our positions throughout the night of December 7th and early morning of the 8th under constant enemy artillery fire along our entire regimental front, CT-399 resumed the attack with the town of Lemberg and highground to the N, E and SE ~~the~~ still the objective.

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Plans of attack were now revised in view of the determined enemy resistance. The 2nd Bn. was ordered to move from its reserve assembly area in Gutzenbruck and envelope enemy positions along the Mouterhouse-Lemberg road and strong points on Hills 345 and 405 by an end run around the German's left flank. The 2nd was then to continue Northwestward to cut the Lemberg-Bitche RR and the Lemberg-Bitche road.

At 0730 hours, the 2nd Bn. pushed off from its LD just S of the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road with G Co. on the right and F Co. on the left. Immediately after crossing the LD, "F" Co. ran into concentrated small arms fire from Hill 345 to the NW, pinning the Fox Co. men in a stream bed at grid Q762434. At 1020 hours, "F" Co. was still unable to resume its advance, but "G" Co. had begun to make some progress.

Slashing across the Lemberg-Mouterhouse road, "G" Co. fought Northward to seize hill 327.5, several hundred yards to the NW of hill 345. Training their fire on hill 345, George Co. made it evident to the Krauts that their positions were in danger of being completely outflanked and the Jerries began to withdraw to the NE, removing 80 men from what seemed to be impregnable positions on hill 345.

With fire pressure relaxed somewhat, "F" Co. began to surge ahead. Continuing its squeeze play against the 7th Co., 953rd Volksgrenadier Regt., one pltn. of "F" Co. reached Hill 345 by 1040 hours and by 1115 had seized the hill. The advance now began to gain momentum. High ground at grid Q758446 was secured by "F" Co. at 1205 hours, at the same time as "G" Co. was subduing the enemy on hill 329 (Q769452). With the scent of victory, both Cos. continued the advance, pushing the enemy relentlessly. "F" Co. had control of hill 405 by 1255 hours. The enemy continued to retreat and both "F" and "G" Cos. combined their attacks, one pltn. of "F" Co. cutting the Bitche-Lemberg RR at grid Q756455 by 1615 hours, and "G" Co., slowed by heavy machine gun fire from a ridge bordering the railroad, advancing

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On our left flank, "A" Co. of our 1st Bn. relinquished its hard won positions astride ridge 397.4 (Q7144) to elements of the 398th Infantry Regiment. At 1130 hours, two pltns. of "A" Co. were sent back to St. Louis as a mobile reserve, the remaining pltn. moving to positions E of the St. Louis-Lemberg road at grid Q734438.

At 1650 hours, following destruction of an enemy road block at grid Q730444 by Co. "C", 325th Engineers with a dynamite charge, "B" and "C" Cos., supported by the 1st pltn., Co. "A", 781st Tank Bn., prepared to launch a night attack against Lemberg and the Lemberg-Enchenberg road from the edge of the woods. Five minutes before H hour, our artillery cut loose, plastering the highway and enemy OPs west of the town with HE 81mm and mortar fire added for 15 minutes and reducing a pillbox at grid Q737444. Then, under cover of a WP smoke screen, "B" Co., and "C" Co., which had moved up from St. Louis, advanced into the clearing that had defied their efforts for three days.

Two of the four supporting tanks were almost immediately disabled by AT mines which tore off their treads, but the remaining two tanks, followed by "A" Co. on the right and "C" Co. on the left, battered their way into Lemberg from the S, directly up the highway. Even then the Krauts did not withdraw but had to be driven from building to building in savage combat with the tanks firing into deep cellars at point blank range and our infantry hurling grenades through the windows of houses within the town.

Our 3rd Bn., spearing up the Mouterhouse-Lemberg road, and under observed 20mm, machine gun and small arms fire, advanced toward Lemberg from the SE with "K" and "L" Cos in the lead. Mines and road blocks added to the battalions hazards, but with the enemy outflanked on his left by the advance of our 2nd Bn., and only small pockets of Krauts left behind to fight a furious rear-guard ac-

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tion, our 3rd Bn. fought forward to reach positions previously attained in two other attacks at the head of a valley (Q746452). This time there was no driving us backward. Advancing slowly, due to fierce enemy fire from W of Hill 405 to their rear, and N and W of the railroad, "L" Co. managed to reach the railroad underpass at grid Q745453 where they were finally stopped by blistering 20mm fire from buildings to front and machine gun emplacements on the railroad above.

No further advance was possible that night but the enemy lines had been pierced and with the positions now held by the 2nd Bn. on their right, and the hard won advance walked up by the 1st Bn. on the left in its night attack, the promise of our capture of Lemberg on the following day now seemed assured.

Not much rest was afforded the 1st Bn. during the night of December 8th and early morning of the 9th. Seeking to exploit its toehold in Lemberg and keep the enemy on the run, the 1st began to engage the Krauts in the toughest kind of fighting which can fall to the lot of the infantryman..... house to house combat. Following the lead of the two remaining tanks, our "A" and "C" Cos. battled up the main street of Lemberg routing the Jerries with hand-grenades, small arms and supporting fire of the tanks.

By 0315 hours, RJ 399.4, directly in the center of town had been reached and the entire southern half of Lemberg was under our control. With daylight, "B" Co. joined the battle. The advance of "A" and "C" Cos. had cleared only the main streets of Lemberg and Baker Co. now began the nasty job of cleaning up the side streets.

Enemy resistance was determined and the advance continued at a snail's pace under constant German artillery fire. By 1710 hours, "C" Co. had progressed

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Infantrymen. Another "Flak-wagon", scouting from the NW, also withdrew after two bazooka rockets, both misses, were fired at it by the 2nd Pltn. at 300 yards.

At 0730 hours the following morning, however, the Krauts attacked in force. One "flak-wagon" followed by 50-60 enemy infantrymen armed with automatic weapons, rumbled down each of the two trails leading toward the 1st Pltn. Coming at our men from two roads at once, and with the benefit of terrain and firepower which caused our men to duck into their fox holes, the enemy soon overran our positions.

The 2nd Pltn., with its right flank exposed, also was forced to withdraw, making a wide circle of the open field to its rear and meeting the remainder of the Co., pinned by flak fire, S of the railroad, where the Co. was reorganized having lost 55 men killed, wounded and missing. The combined fire of our "F" and "G" Cos. finally stopped the attack and drove the enemy to our flanks.

This stumbling block having been removed, "E" and "G" Cos. attacked at 1600 hours to gain high ground in the vicinity of Hochfirst (Q7545) with "F" Co. remaining in its previous position to protect their right flank. "E" Co. came over a draw and crossed the railroad without meeting enemy resistance. They were climbing the next ledge to higher ground when a merciless fire with 20mm and automatic weapons from concealed enemy positions and from four "flak-wagons" on the road to their front, pinned Easy Co. down. One "flak-wagon" was finally hit and crippled with an AT grenade and a near miss on another chased the remaining three "Flak-buggies" away. One half track, which had been dug in, and three machine guns continued firing. Darkness had now fallen and "E" Co. withdrew, digging in on the reverse slope of the

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several hundred yards further into town with the assistance of an additional platoon of tanks committed at 1630 hours. Nine hundred yards of Lemberg still remained in enemy hands at the close of the period but our grip on the important communications center had been considerably strengthened and despite harassing enemy artillery fire, we retained the ground we had won.

In the 2nd Bn. sector, "F" Co., which had cut the important Lemberg-Bitche RR was having tough sledding. Unable to advance further because of darkness, "F" Co's. 1st pltn. had pushed across a dirt road running parallel to the RR tracks and taken up a defense area north of the tracks and to the right of a bridge across which a tree-block had been constructed by the enemy. The 2nd Pltn. also had crossed the tracks and had dug in on the forward slope of a hill and to the left of the 1st Pltn. with one squad deployed in a saddle between the two platoons at a point where ^{three} ~~two~~ trails, one from the NW and the other two winding from the NE met the road running parallel to the railroad. For additional protection, a machine gun section was set up at this road intersection. One squad of the 3rd Pltn. remained south of this road, while two squads of the 3rd Pltn., the Weapons Pltn., and Co. Hq. dug in S of the railroad on high ground between two deep ravines.

Directly to the front of the 1st and 2nd Pltns. was a tremendous ravine. Thick woods to front, flanks and rear limited vision to about 300 yds. The railroad itself, ran through a gorge about 30 feet deep and 20 feet wide. The only open ground was a field to the rear of the 2nd Pltn., and even this terminated at the railroad gorge and the deep ravine to the south.

The Krauts made no serious attempt to drive "F" Co. from their positions that night although a "flak-wagon" (a 20mm gun mounted on a half-track and firing HE) approached the 1st Pltn. from the NE, retiring upon sighting the

Hill.

"G" Co., on the left, continued to push ahead against lesser enemy resistance to capture the Hochfirst hill.

Our 3rd Bn., which had started for Hill 423, the key to Lemberg, under cover of darkness the preceding day after the initial advance of our 1st Bn., was once again pushing forward. Progress was slow due to observed enemy 20mm flak fire. It was 1200 hours before "K" and "L" Cos. had secured the hill and clearance of the houses on the forward slope was still in progress at the end of day. "I" Co., moving into Lemberg at 1400 hours, through positions previously cleared by "K" and "L" Cos., made contact with the 1st Bn. and threw its strength into the drive to sweep the enemy from the town.

By December 10th, definite enemy front lines had ceased to exist with the Krauts withdrawing to high ground in the vicinity of Lambach and Reyessvillers to the NW. Known enemy units facing us now were the 3rd and 4th Cos., 815th AA; the 3rd Co., 816th AA; the 13th Co., 953rd AA; the 1st Co., 361st Engineer Bn., the 1st Co., 361st AT Bn., the 3rd Co., 119th PGR; Hq. Co., PGR; and the 14th Co., 35th PGR.

Vigorous combat patrols were initiated by all three of our battalions but no contact was made save for one enemy squad which was caught up with by our 1st Bn at a road junction, grid Q727453. In the ensuing fire fight, two enemy were killed and one captured. Lemberg had now been completely occupied, and our 1st Bn, having completed its mission at 2330 hours of December 9th, moved to an assembly area in St. Louis, closing at 1800 hours of December 10th.

Our 2nd Bn. moved to secure high ground at Hochfirst which had been captured by "G" Co. during the previous period, consolidating its positions by 1050 hours without making enemy contact although patrols were dispatched to grid lines Q754463, 760463 and 766465.

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Our 3rd Bn. reorganized in the NE section of Lemberg under light enemy artillery fire which fell in the sector throughout the day. Schlossberg, to the N was outposted and occupied by one pltn. of "I" Co. This pltn. was relieved at 1300 hours by a pltn. from Co. "K". Patrols were sent to RJ363.4 (Q749460) and Hill 426.8 (Q747477) without establishing contact.

Forty-four prisoners were taken to bring our regimental total to 591 for 39 days of combat.

CT-399, having secured its initial objectives, now went into Division reserve, December 11th marking seven days of furious, consistent fighting. Our 3rd Bn. was ordered to maintain outposts on high ground NE of Lemberg and dispatched one pltn. from "K" Co. to occupy Hochfirst and one pltn. from "I" Co. to occupy Schlossberg. Active patrolling to the NW, N and E was engaged in and Hills 397.7 (Q735464) and 400 (Q760465) were probed with no enemy contact resulting.

Our 2nd Bn. assembled in Goetzenbruck, while our 3rd Bn. remained in its previous positions.

The Regiment continued in Division reserve through December 12th with the mission of protecting the Division's ^{right} ~~left~~ flank and rear. All units engaged in special training in anticipation of imminent orders to launch an attack on the fortified citadel of Bitche, some five kilometers to the N of our positions.

Training continued for the second day with practice in storming fortified positions the main business of the day as the Regiment continued in Division reserve with the mission of protecting the Division right flank and rear.

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Our 1st and 2nd Bns. remained in their previous positions. Our 3rd Bn., however, moved to a blocking position on the right flank of the 398th Infantry and astride Hill 365.1 (Q772484), deploying between the Lemberg-Bitche road and the Lemberg-Bitche RR.

Orders to move up arrived on the morning of December 14th. At 0700 hours, CT-399 took up positions on high ground in the vicinity of Schoenberg (Q7648) and astride the Lemberg-Bitche road. Only about three kilometers separated us from this Maginot hinge. But between our positions and Bitche lay mazes of entrenchments, pillboxes, forts, mines and road blocks. Machine guns were emplaced where they could command every trail and highway. Enemy artillery covered the open ground from behind the citadel.

Our 1st Bn. moved to the Schoenberg area and dispatched combat patrols to the NE. Numerous enemy were observed digging in, preparing positions E of the railroad and generally S of Bitche. Co. "A" made contact and engaged in a lively fire fight just west of Bitche College, capturing two prisoners. "B" Co. also engaged the enemy in the vicinity of the college where they seemed to have strong positions, buttressed by six machine guns. Two Krauts were killed and four captured at a cost to us of one man.

Our 2nd Bn., in Division reserve, moved its CP to Lemberg.

Our 3rd Bn. also dispatched combat patrols to the E and NE as far as Pond d'Hasselfort in the 7848 grid square, and to the vicinity of Hill 315.1 (Q778492) where the enemy was observed laying a mine field. Plans were laid for continuing our patrols during the night as far as Bitche and the Maginot defenses to the NE of the town.

The Regiment marked time for the third successive day, December 15th, while the ring of protecting forts and pillboxes surrounding Bitche were softened by artillery and aircraft. Patrols continued probing enemy strength day and night.

One patrol from "B" Co. captured a ~~house~~ house 300 yards from the entrance to a pillbox after a brisk engagement in which three enemy were killed. We suffered one casualty.

Our 3rd Bn. ran into machine gun and small arms fire in their patrol action, but returned without loss and with one prisoner captured at a dam on the N shore of the pond.

As the picture was unfolded, it became evident, however, that the enemy was not only ready but determined to defend the stronghold of Bitché with every means at hand.

Vigorous patrolling continued through December 16th with tanks from Co. "A", 781st Tank Bn., assisting the 3rd Bn. in a short advance. At 0900 hours, the 3rd Bn. established advance positions at the edge of a wood E of the Lemberg-Bitché road in the vicinity of the 49 grid. Enemy resistance was spotty when the 3rd Bn. tested their positions, putting up a fight only after a sortie by Co. "K" supported by tanks to the N shore of Pond d'Hasselfort, spied the Krauts in a hotel facing on the pond. Both the tanks and the patrol opened fire and routed the enemy from this position, capturing five prisoners. Prisoners captured identified two units in our sector, the 2nd and 3rd Cos. of the 119th Panzer Grenadier Regiment.

In our 1st Bn. sector, a strong combat patrol from "C" Co., assigned the mission of investigating Bitché College and the vicinity to the NW and return by 0530 hours, failed to report. No word had been heard from them by the close of the period and another patrol was readied to go to their assistance.

A new type of mine-booby-trap consisting of two shiny cylinders placed one atop the other was discovered by our I & R pltn. while on a road patrol. Engineers exploded the mine which burst with the force of a 105mm shell.

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Action was limited to patrols throughout the night of the 16th and afternoon of the 17th. One sharp engagement developed when a platoon from "C" Co. reinforced the patrol from that same Company, which had been holding positions in the College de Bitche since the previous day, and drove the enemy from the college. Three PWs were captured and three machine guns knocked out before the remainder of the enemy force retired.

As our patrols probed deeper into enemy positions, the Krauts showed less tendency to fall back. The Maginot fortress was one of the two strongest points in the entire line. Loss of Bitche would probably force the enemy to withdraw to their Siegfried Line some five miles further north and would almost assure our crossing into German territory.

Sparring for position was carried forward through December 16th. The enemy made ready for what he must certainly have known to be an impending attack, by withdrawing his outposts and taking up positions within the perimeter of steel and concrete defenses surrounding Bitche and the Citadel overlooking the city. During darkness of December 17th and 18th and again in daylight, our 3rd Bn. investigated enemy positions in houses at grid Q779499, but found them unoccupied.

Our 1st Bn. found the enemy strongly entrenched in foxholes at grid Q770503. We continued to hold our positions in the College de Bitche, but movement to and from these positions were hindered by enemy sniper fire from houses across the road.

Enemy artillery and mortar fire was much heavier than on the previous day, particularly in our "I" Co. and "K" Co. sectors. Between 1030 and 1630 hours, 30 rounds of 105mm, 14 rounds of 81mm and 4 rounds of 88mm fell on our positions.

Continuing preparations against our coming attack, the enemy laid extensive mine fields, mostly of the "S" variety. Six tanks were observed NW of Bitche.

The enemy plan seemed to be only to slow us down with sniper and machine gun fire and delay us as much as possible.

With the enemy making every effort to conceal his strongpoints from the persistent searching of our patrols, action was again limited to skirmishes between our scouts and enemy MLR outposts. Our artillery continued hammering at known enemy positions with excellent visibility on this 19th Day of December aiding our gunners. Enemy artillery also was unusually active, 5 rounds of 150mm, 103 rounds of 105mm, 104 rounds of 88mm, and 15 rounds of 81mm falling in our sector between 0200 and 1530 hours.

One of our combat patrols discovered a well camouflaged enemy pillbox with enemy troops entrenched on the slope of a hill 200 yards NE of RJ296.1 (Q789499). The patrol engaged the enemy on a trail 100 yards from the road junction, but only two of our men were able to return. A second patrol, dispatched to the area, set up a listening post. It was discovered that the pillbox was manned in shifts, relief being accomplished by use of a half-track. Artillery was concentrated on this position during daylight and latter patrols found the surrounding woods abandoned by the enemy.

To stave off possible enemy infiltration, one platoon of Co. "A" supported by an AT gun squad, moved to high ground in the vicinity of Schimberg, and one pltn. from Co. "K" moved into positions previously vacated by the enemy near the edge of the woods N of the pond.

On the 20th of December, evidence began to accumulate that the enemy was preparing for a counter attack. To offset this possibility, we pulled in our lines while increasing the activity of our patrols. Co. "C" of our 1st Bn., withdrew from the College de Bitche. Our 3rd Bn. relinquished its positions at the edge of the woods.

There was no action whatsoever on December 21st. The enemy remained within his fortifications throughout the period and we turned our attention toward the new sector we had been ordered to deploy in. The area we moved into ran on a line between Petit Refferching and Lambach. It was understood that prior to our movement our positions were to be filled by the 106th Cav. Recon. Grp. Movement was not completed by the end of the period.

For the first time since going into action 52 days previously, CT-399 was on the defensive. Defensive positions were adopted to aid in covering the withdrawal of several divisions from adjacent sectors and hold the line while these divisions were employed elsewhere.

In furtherance of this plan, our 1st Bn. began digging in along Reyersviller Ridge from the Lemberg-Bitche road, up to, but not including, Ft. Freudenberg. Hourly contact at Hill 412 (Q754501) between our 1st Bn. and the 1st Bn., 398th Infantry, was begun at 1400 hours.

Our 2nd Bn., released from Division reserve at 2030 hours, December 21st, moved to extend the line of our Co. "E" (which had been released from 1st Bn control and dug in on Hill 365 and Hill 373.9) along Kreutzberg Ridge and the Mouterhouse-Lemberg road, as protection for the Division's right flank.

Our 3rd Bn. now reverted to Division reserve, taking up a defensive line on high ground NE of Lambach.

A new regimental CP was opened at Enchenberg, Q707464, at 1400 hours.

No contact was made with the enemy, but two prisoners were taken to bring our regimental total since November 1st to 606.

As evidence increased that the enemy was being reinforced, our regiment, covering a greatly extended sector, continued to prepare defensive positions, lay mines along main routes and establish listening posts.

Late in the afternoon of the 23rd of December, defense plans were revised. The 1st Bn. established an outpost line along Meyersviller Ridge from the lake at grid 7848 to Fruedenberg Farm at Q750512. Our 2nd Bn. withdrew from positions along the right flank of the regiment and dug in SW of the 1st Bn's. positions with "G" Co. holding high ground at Schlossberg, "F" Co. (=) on high ground at Hochfirst keeping one pltn. of "F" Co. in mobile reserve, and "E" Co. assembled in Lemberg as a battalion reserve. Our 3rd Bn., once again under regimental control, adjusted its positions. "I" Co. entrenched on high ground at Spitzberg, a platoon of "K" Co. took over positions NE of Lambach which had been vacated by "I" Co. No contact was made with the enemy although a few enemy shells landed in Lemberg.

The problems facing CT-399 on December 24th were manifold. We had been ordered to hold defensive positions generally S of the fortress of Bitche on a front which would normally be held by a full division. In order to overcome the numerical meagerness of our personnel, we organized a defense in depth with our 1st Bn. holding an OPLR within the Regimental sector and establishing a series of listening posts with extensive patrolling to negate the threat of ~~infiltration~~ infiltration. Each Co. held one platoon in reserve to strengthen a threatened position in the event of an enemy attack. Contact between the various companies was maintained by our I & R platoon.

Our 2nd Bn. continued building defensive positions on our MLR and also within the regimental sector, prepared to coordinate with units on our flanks upon arrival in their respective defense positions.

Our 3rd Bn. took up an intermediate position, prepared to throw its weight forward if needed.

The 925th FA Bn. was held in readiness, while our Cannon Co. was moved up to our OPLR for close support and our AT Co. was ordered to coordinate throughout

our defense in depth with our Engineer Bn. so that road blocks and mines which had been placed along all principle avenues of approach, might be defended as best possible.

Our regimental CP was moved to Sarriensberg (Q740418), opening at 1020 hours.

No contact was established with the enemy with the exception of an enemy patrol which had been apprehended removing dynamite we had planted in trees along a roadway. The enemy was chased off by our Engineers.

Christmas day was spent quietly with again no contact made with the enemy. Positions were strengthened further and patrols reported an estimated 30-40 Krauts seen in Bitché.

It was now established that the enemy front lines extended generally from grid Q734545, NW of Bitché, SE through grid Q750553 and thence along a ridge one kilometer S of Schorbach. Defenses S of Bitché consisted of dug in positions with no general line. Two prisoners were taken when, intoxicated by too much holiday merrymaking, they walked into our lines.

The day was brilliantly clear and our P47s were active over Bitché. We suffered no casualties due to enemy action on this day of Good Will. Turkey and all the trimmings lent emphasis to the holiday spirit.

December 26th came and went without the enemy making any attempt to dislodge us from our positions S of Bitché. With our 1st Bn. still holding our MLR and our 3rd Bn. entrenched on our RRL in positions formerly held by our 2nd Bn., which now was in Div. reserve, every effort was made to prevent the enemy from infiltrating our positions. Defenses continually were strengthened. Listening posts, outposts and mines were readied. The fourth day of sunshine even permitted the Air Corps to land a few punches at the Kraut defenses, our P47s drawing 40 rounds of

AA fire while strafing enemy positions.

As the period ended, the Germans were still attempting to infiltrate our positions with groups of five and six men, but were achieving little success. Contact was established between the 398th Infantry on our left flank and the 117th Recon Squadron on our right. Counter attack plans were laid for execution in the event of an enemy breakthrough.

Today, December 27th, Col Andrew C. Tychsen, our Regimental Commander since the day the 399th Infantry was activated, on the 15th of November, 1942, was ordered to the 100th Infantry Division in the capacity of Acting Assistant Division Commander. His post in the 399th was taken over by Lt. Col. Elery M. Zehner as Acting Regimental Commander. Lt. Col. Zehner had been in command of our 1st Bn. His post was in turn filled by Maj. Bernard V. Lentz, 1st Bn. Executive Officer with Capt. Condee C. Nason, CO of Co. "D" in the executive spot.

While still on the defensive, our MBR was moved forward so that it coincided approximately with our former front line positions. Minor adjustments were made, such as the establishment of additional outposts forward and vigorous combat patrolling with the purpose of giving us control of the "No Mans Land" between our forward elements and those of the enemy.

Reconnaissance placed enemy strength generally NW and SE of Bitche with the bulk of the Kraut forces and entrenchments situated to the NW. No definite enemy front lines were reported S of Bitche but road blocks, AT mines, mortars and machine guns and barbed wire were set up along the highway leading to Bitche E of the ~~main~~ railroad. Two hundred Krauts were reported entrenched on a ridge at Le Rothianbach (Q770528) NW of Bitche with an OPL extending from grid Q 770528 to Q760530. The German 1st Bn., 477th Infantry, was identified as being located at Sehorback.

At 1900 of December 28th, under cover of darkness and on Division order, Plan Tennessee was put into effect. Our 1st Bn. remained in its assigned sector with the mission of maintaining contact with the 117th Recon Cav. Sq. on its right and further strengthening its positions, while our 2nd Bn. pulled out of Enchenberg and assumed positions abreast of our 1st Bn. and on its left flank, relieving the 398th Infantry of part of its defense sector. An outpost line was established and elements organized to defend the MLR while plans were laid to develop a counter attack if necessary with local reserves.

Our 3rd Bn. moved to our RRL, running from the vicinity of Lambach through LeSpitzberg SW to grid Q4777, S of Schwangerbach, with orders to improve and develop its new positions and prepare for counter attack. Contact was established between the 398th Infantry and the 117th Recon. Sq. Action of our Cannon Co., AT Co., and the 925 FA Bn. were coordinated with particular attention to our right flank. Our Air Corps was very active. We lost one medium bomber downed by enemy AA fire about two miles N. of Bitche.

Following through on Plan Tennessee, our 2nd Bn. divided its sector on our MLR into two sections, "B" Co. taking up positions on the left adjoining the 398th Infantry and "E" Co. moving into entrenchments on the right while "F" Co. was maintained in Bn. reserve in the vicinity of Legert Farm (Q737509). Both the 1st and 2nd Bns. continued to improve their positions, the 1st Bn. maintaining its sector of the previous period with minor adjustments to conform with the battallion boundaries.

Eighteen rounds of enemy 105mm and 24 rounds of 88mm fire fell within the Q7749 grid square, just S of the College Be Bitche, between 1000 and 1330 hours. An additional 83 rounds of 150mm, 105mm, 88mm and two rounds of smoke, landed just S of the Bitche-Rohrbach highway, particularly in the vicinity of Legeret Farm, where our 2nd Bn. had moved into position the previous night.

Enemy activity was unusually prevalent, especially N of Bitché, where troops and horse-drawn vehicles were noticed by our observers.

The Regiment continued to strengthen defensive positions with little interference from the enemy. Day and night patrols made no contact although a patrol from "E" Co. found Kraut emplacements at grid Q759518 and observed an enemy half-track at grid Q763517. A patrol from "A" Co. sent to grid Q765509 to dispose of an enemy machine gun position found the position deserted. Enemy artillery fire was much lighter than on December 29th. Identified units in contact were the German 1st and 2nd Bns, 477th Regiment.

December 31st, the last day of 1944 and our 61st day of combat, found us wrapped in the first heavy snowfall we had experienced in France. In the face of an enemy being constantly reinforced, we held our positions and continued to improve them.

In our 1st Bn. sector, a heavy concentration of enemy artillery fire fell on our positions. An enemy patrol which had pushed to grid Q768491, NE of Shoenberg, was driven off with small arms fire, losing one man killed and two wounded. One of our patrols sent to the woods engaged in a sharp fire fight with the enemy, with one killed and one wounded as a result. Investigation of houses N of the College de Bitché found them unoccupied.

Prisoners taken by CT-399 from 1 Dec. to 31 Dec. were 212. The Regimental total for 61 days of combat stands at 611.

Toward the end of the period, every one was wishing everyone else a Happy New Year. The concensus of opinion was that the Krauts couldn't last out the coming year. Moral was excellent with a touch of homesickness---naturally.