

SECRET

At : CG 5th Arm Div

Date: 24 Oct 44

Initials: _____

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HEADQUARTERS
85TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON MECHANIZED
APO 255

X-226

24 October 1944

REPORT AFTER ACTION AGAINST THE ENEMY
(Reference: Par 10, AR 305-105 C3)

AUGUST 1944

During the month of August 1944, the 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized performed reconnaissance for the 5th Armored Division in three actions which may be designated as follows:

- I. The drive on Le Mans 2 August 1944 to 8 August 1944 inclusive.
- II. The drive north to close the Falaise gap 9 August to 14 August inclusive.
- III. The drive to close the gap at Vernon on the Seine 15 August to 26 August inclusive.

I. The drive on Le Mans

1. General remarks.

a. The mission of this squadron was to reconnoiter routes, bridges and obstacles along a route generally Perriers, Fougeres, Laval to Le Mans and to determine the strength, composition and disposition of the enemy in this sector.

b. The terrain was generally rolling, interdicted by some small streams which were generally easily forded and interspersed with small woods which could afford the enemy some cover.

c. The weather during the entire campaign was dry and warm and all classes of roads and trails as well as fields were suitable for armored movement.

d. At the start of the campaign little was known about the enemy disposition or strength and no definite organized defensive lines were known.

e. The Squadron Commander disposed his four troops in a line abreast with the assault gun troop in close support of the reconnaissance troops and the tank company well forward readily available to support any troops that might require it.

f. The French civilians were most cooperative and with the use of a three (3) man LPS team as interpreters plus civilians who were picked up as the move progressed much valuable and timely enemy information was specifically obtained.

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2. Chronological Account.

2 August 1944 - The squadron moved into position vicinity of Laval. During the movement our elements received their first fire and learned two deceptions the enemy practiced. Dismounted men concealed themselves in the hedges, allowed our armored vehicles to pass and then fired on the unprotected tanks. This problem was quickly solved by flushing suspected areas with machine gun fire and canister shell from the 37mm gun. The secret trick of the enemy was to lie in ditches as through dead and then fire at our rear. The solution to this was for scouts to fire on all Germans whether they appeared dead or not. The first round usually brought the live ones to their feet and they were quickly disposed of.

3 August 1944 - During the day our elements moved to the vicinity of Fougeres but were unable to obtain contact with the enemy. Civilian reports of small numbers of enemy to our front persisted but it became evident by the end of the day that the enemy would not defend in strength at least until we reached Laval where it was learned the enemy was gathering his forces. A total of 13 prisoners of war captured that day were stragglers and offered no information of an organized defensive line but did indicate positions of AT guns which were to be used in a delaying action.

4 August 1944 - The squadron continued its reconnaissance to the south and east of Fougeres pushing on toward Vitre. Again no contact was gained with enemy in strength but civilian reports and interrogation of prisoners of war indicated the enemy withdrawal to Laval was approaching a rout.

5 August 1944 - Leading elements pushed on through Vitre and Erse now in close pursuit of the enemy who had taken to the roads on foot and vehicles of all kinds. Small groups of the enemy attempted to delay our movement with small arms fire, some anti-tank fire and hastily constructed road blocks but he was quickly disposed of by our fire. The enemy attempted and quite successfully jammed our radio communication during this period and difficulty was experienced in getting information back to higher headquarters.

6 August 1944 - On our advance this date, the enemy delayed us for some time in the vicinity of Coese Le Vivion by small arms fire and a definite AT defense of the town. By early evening after several fire fights, the enemy had withdrawn from Coese Le Vivion and advance elements were on the outskirts of Laval.

7 August 1944 - On this date the squadron made a rapid move on about a 25 mile front to the Sarthe River line where practically all bridges were either blown or prepared for demolitions. Our units crossed the river by fords and existing bridges and advance elements reached the outskirts of Le Mans. As our elements reached the town enroute the German garrisons moved out to the east offering little resistance to our movement and by the end of the day the road not from Laval to Le Mans was completely clear of enemy forces.

8 August 1944 - During the day the division passed through our unit and we assembled our unit in the vicinity of Change in preparation for a new mission.

II. The drive north to close the Falaise gap.

1. General remarks:

a. The mission of the squadron was to reconnoiter routes, bridges, obstacles and demolitions along a route generally La Hays, Paray, Bannettable, Marners, Moulins, Coutomer to Saas and determine strength, composition and disposition of the enemy in that sector.

b. Again the terrain and weather favored armored action but the area is well populated by towns so situated that they could be well defended by the enemy.

c. Little information about enemy strength and disposition was known but it was felt that pressure from the south would cause him to either attempt to escape the closing of the gap or bitterly fight to hold the gap open for escape of all his elements.

d. French civilians continued their assistance but it had been learned that civilian reports had to be studied, weighed and collated very carefully as there was a tendency to exaggerate.

e. The squadron commander disposed his troops on a comparatively narrow front to meet the difficulty which it was felt would be encountered if the enemy had disposed his troops so as to make strong points of the various cities and villages enroute.

2. Chronological account.

9 August 1944 - The movement of the squadron was delayed by small but determined resistance by small arms and AT fire vicinity Courdival, Beauffay and Paray but by the next morning the combined efforts of our troops and the main elements of the division which were close behind these strong points had been reduced.

10 August 1944 - Civilian reports indicated that Bessay, Ardenay, Savigne, Bannettable and Ballon were still occupied by enemy forces in strength but these strong points were bypassed and the squadron moved to the vicinity of Marolles with leading elements moving toward Marners and La Ferté Bernard.

11 August 1944 - The division passed through our elements and attacked to the north of our position. Our elements continued to reconnoiter Ballons, Marners and the Forêt de Ferzeigne but enemy defenses prevented our elements from probing the enemy positions.

12 August 1944 - The division attack having accomplished its mission the squadron moved north with the mission of outposting the towns of Moulins and Coutomer and by active patrolling to determine enemy strength in those towns and also Gace, Saas and Laigle with particular emphasis on enemy movement on that road net. Our out posts and patrols periodically reported the enemy activity in this sector.

13, 14 and 15 August 1944 - Continued mission and from these reports G - 2 estimated approximately one division reinforced was holding the sector Coutomer - Moulins. This later proved to be approximately correct.

III. The drive to close the gap at Vernon on the Seine.

1. General remarks:

a. A portion of the enemy having escaped the Falaise - Caen gap, this squadron was given the mission of performing reconnaissance for the division along a route generally east to Dreux and then northeast to Morten Cassicourt so that the division could be employed in another trap.

b. Weather and terrain continued to favor our operations.

c. The route of advance was believed to be held lightly at best by the enemy with some question of enemy strength in Dreux.

2. Chronological account.

15 August 1944 - Squadron reorganized and prepared for new mission and moved out in the afternoon.

16 August 1944 - Squadron moved from Grucy to Crecey no enemy contact.

17 August 1944 - Squadron moved from Crecey to Champagne meeting enemy in Houdan and Boutigny. Bridges across the river vicinity of Charpent had been blown. Enemy interdicted cross roads enroute with artillery and heavy mortars.

18 August 1944 - On this date the squadron was given the mission of protecting the rear and right flank of the division while the division moved north toward Vernon and Neubouville and Caillon. The squadron commander proposed to accomplish this mission by out posting the Eure River on the west side from Ivry la Battaille north and the day was spent reconnoitering and establishing suitable observation along the river.

19 August 1944 - Observation of the east side of the river was good and the enemy remained on the defensive. The day was marked with exaggerated reports of enemy activity by civilians who were apparently fearful that we were not doing our job since we ourselves remained concealed.

20 August 1944 - Enemy movement from Ivry to Garennes was noted during the day but he made no attempt to cross the river.

21 August 1944 - Our scouts began to probe vicinity of Aigleville and Facy sur Eure and found both towns occupied and the bridges around Facy blown. Enemy did not seem disposed to fight and there were indications that he was moving out of town to the woods to the north. Enemy fired small amount of mortar at our OP denying us the use of one OP during the day.

22 August 1944 - Our scouts found Facy and Aigleville clear of enemy. Enemy returned to town and terrorized civilians this night.

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24 and 25 August 1944 - Squadron moved north east across the Eure river and north to replace division in the salient in the Seine River vicinity Vernon, Harbecoville and Gaillon with mission of covering withdrawal of the division and outposting that area. The three mentioned towns were outposted and the enemy remained inactive during the period of our occupancy. Squadron was relieved on 26 August 1944.

26 to 29 August 1944 - Squadron vicinity Guerville for rest and refits. On 29 August Squadron moved to St Cloud, outskirts of Paris and prepared for new mission.

30 - 31 August 1944 - Squadron started to move NE from Paris and reached vicinity of Bully by 31st. During this period all elements were opposed by strong delaying detachments of small arms and anti-tank fire which impeded our progress and slowed down the movement of the division. Three of our reconnaissance troops were detached from squadron control and one reconnaissance troop with attachments of the assault gun troop and light tank was attached to each combat command and the balance of the squadron moved back to Baron to guard division trains.

Incls.

Incl 1 - Annex "A"

Incl 2 - Annex "B"

Incl 3 - Unit Journal

Incl 4 - Message File for Aug 44

George C. Benjamin
GEORGE C. BENJAMIN
Major, Cavalry,
Commanding.

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Annex "A"

SUMMARY OF STRENGTH AND CASUALTIES

AUGUST 1944

	Asgd Strength 1 Aug 44			Asgd Strength 31 Aug 44		
	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>EM</u>
Headquarters	9	1	46	8	1	46
Hq. & Sv. Troop	3	2	76	4	2	78
Troop A	5	0	133	5	0	138
Troop B	5	0	134	5	0	131
Troop C	5	0	134	5	0	133
Troop D	5	0	134	5	0	135
Troop E	5	0	102	5	0	101
Company F	5	0	89	5	0	91
Medical Detachment	2	0	12	2	0	12
TOTAL	<u>44</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>860</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>865</u>

CASUALTIES (85th -)	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>EM</u>
Killed	5	0	8
Wounded	3	0	48
Missing	0	0	5
Known Captured	0	0	0
TOTAL	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>61</u>

ENEMY PRISONERS OF WAR CAPTURED BY OUR FORCES: 34.



Incl No. 1

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Annex "B"

COMMANDING OFFICERS

AUGUST 1944

SQUADRON COMMANDER:

1 August 1944 to 1500, 30 August 1944 - Lt. Col. KENT FAY, 0286301, Cavalry. Killed in action in France 30 August 1944.

1500, 30 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Major JOHN P. GERALD, 023009, Cavalry.

TROOPS OF THE SQUADRON:

HEADQUARTERS AND SERVICE TROOP:

1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - 1st Lt. PAUL O. PETERSON, 01010111, Cavalry.

TROOP A:

1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. CHARLES W. BENNINGTON, 0452900, Cavalry.

TROOP B:

1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. KENNETH M. HAYES, 01010128, Cavalry.

TROOP C:

1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. JOHN R. VANE, 01010690, Cavalry.

TROOP D:

1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. LEONARD S. CARLSON, 01011717, Cavalry.

TROOP E:

1 August 1944 to 2400, 28 August 1944 - 1st Lt. EUGENE F. COLBERT, 01011108, Cavalry. Reassigned to Headquarters and Service Troop 29 August 1944.

0001, 29 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. PATRICK J. BURNS, JR., 01010461, Cavalry.

COMPANY F:

1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. JOHN T. SCHWARZ, 01010396, Cavalry.

MEDICAL DETACHMENT:

Incl No. 2 1 August 1944 to 31 August 1944 - Capt. MEYER FRIEDENTHAL, 0425804, Medical Corps. SECRET

