

HEADQUARTERS THIRD BATTALION  
506th Parachute Infantry

L 444

A.P.O. 472  
27-May-44

SUBJECT: REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

TO: COMMANDING OFFICER.

I. The Third Battalion, 506 Parachute Infantry, left Ramsbury Wilts 0800 by bus and arrived at the railroad station Hungerford Wilts 0830. Train was boarded and left at 1010 arriving at Exeter Devon 1330. The Battalion went by bus to Camp Exeter. Briefing of company commanders began 0001 29 May and continued, to include all men up to 0900 3 June when the briefing room was dismantled.

The Battalion was ready to enplane 4 June but operation was postponed because of rough water in channel.

Enplaning took place 5 June at 2230. First planes took off at 2310 and took off 2320. Formation consisted of 45 planes known as Serial 10. They flew in 5 sections of 9 planes each in line, each section flew as an inverted V composed of 3 smaller Vs of 3 planes each.

At the time of enplaning the Battalion combat group comprised 630 men and 50 officers. Strength of Companies and detachments were Headquarters I61 (EM) and I5 (O). G Co. I31 (EM) and 8 (O). H Co. I32 (EM) and 8 (O). I Co. I25 (EM) and 8 (O) plus 7 and, with pathfinder group to rejoin I Co. in assembly area. Demolition section 24 (EM) and 2 (O). Naval fire party 2 (EM) and I (O). Artillery observer 2 (EM) and I (O). Medical group to remain on jump field 5 (EM) and I (O). C.I.C. detail 3 (EM) and I (O). Engineer detachment

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:  
**CANCELLED**  
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
S. O. McCarty  
DOWNGRADING COMPILED 27 May 44

3101-1NF(506)-0.9

(Cont)  
REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION OPERATION.

33 (M) and 5 (O).

2. The flight from England was uneventful. We passed between Alderney and the Contentin Peninsula without opposition, turned and crossed the French coast in the vicinity of Cartaret. Scattered anti aircraft fire was now visible to the north but had no effect on our planes, the formation remaining intact. As we passed over the flooded area near St. Come du Mont an intense barrage of light anti aircraft fire hit the flight and the planes scattered widely spreading the formation. As the first jumpers left the planes, this was augmented by mortar, rifle and machine pistol fire.

The first men landed in St. Come du Mont, but the actual DZ comprised the area bounded by this town, Carentan, the Douve River to bridge No. 36 and a line from there to St. Come du Mont. The Battalion immediately became engaged in a large number of small sharp fights.

Those landing on the planned DZ found it unoccupied but under fairly heavy fire. No assembly sounds or lights were ever able to be used. Capt. Shettle, and I ran, met Lt. Bolte with 6 men, and Lt. Rowe with 6 men near the assembly area. These officers reported the assembly area strongly held by the enemy. The decision was made to move on azimuth to the objective: Bridges No. 36 and 37. Along the route 16 more men were picked up with Lt. Broyhill and an engineer officer. As this group passed the power line that runs to Carentan, the engineer officer was directed to destroy the line and rejoin the group.



(Cont)

REPORT THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

3. The battalion, consisting of three officers and thirty men, reached the first objective (the Bridges over the Canal de Carentan) at 0430. Immediate resistance was met from the west bank of the river--but the Battalion managed to secure and hold the east bank and control the bridges. At this time Lt. Meason and Lt. Dougaty arrived at the site with three officers and fifteen additional men. Capt. Shettle, decided to cross the river at Bridge No. 37 to determine the enemy's strength and to establish a bridgehead, which was included in the Battalion mission. Two volunteers crossed the Bridge, although they were subjected to heavy machine gun fire. Zann and Montiolio (H Co.) after their crossing, Lt's Christianson and Bolte each took five man patrols to the far bank, crossing under the bridge. Lt. Meason then crossed with his command group. These units succeeded in knocking out three gun emplacements and killed approximately thirteen Germans. They found, however, that as soon as they knocked out one gun and started for the next, the Germans would replace the original gun crews from their reserves. After fighting for about two hours, they were forced to withdraw due to lack of ammunition and re-enforcements.

At this time the Battalion was still without communications, short on ammunition, and had one ration for only about two-thirds of the men. The Battalion had approximately thirty rounds of ammunition per man, one light machine gun with 175 rounds, one bazooka with six rounds, one bundle

( Cont )

REPORT THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

with 350 pounds of explosives, and one Hawkins mine per individual. Lt. Broyaill was dispatched with two men to try and get thru the lines to our own troops, with word of the situation, and to bring back supplies of ammunition and rations.

For the remainder of the day the position was held on the river bank. Early in the afternoon word was received that Col. Johnson and a group from the 501st Parachute Infantry were fighting at the locks at La Barquette with two other men. Capt. Shettle made his way to the locks but found this unit in much the same situation as the 3rd Battalion. Col. Johnson did have contact with the U.S.S. Nevada and Capt. Shettle prepared and sent a message for the C.G. 101st A/B Division to be forwarded.

That night the Battalion was re-enforced by forty additional men, who had been dropped in the vicinity of Carentan. Two bundles were also retrieved, one with small arms ammunition, and one with K-Rations. As night fell, the seven engineers and two demolition men worked their way down stream to the bridges and prepared them for demolition, completing their work in twenty-seven minutes. At approximately 0200 hour, the enemy attempted a crossing at Bridge No. 37; but withdrew in face of the Battalion defensive fire leaving several dead and wounded.



(Cent)

REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

The next day, D plus I the Battalion continued to hold the east bank, and the enemy's efforts were confined to shelling and observed mortar fire. Sometime around noon a flight of P-51s appeared overhead, and with the aid of a out-up signal panel, bombing was requested on the enemy's position. The planes returned at 1430 and dropped eight to twelve bombs--three of which landed on our own position, killing one and wounding one. The remainder breached both bridges. Further casualties were prevented by the quick action of Chaplin Mc Gee and S/Sgt. Shames, who waved an identification flag in front of an on-coming planes, which were strafing our position.

Somewhere around 1600 hour a force of approximately three hundred German Parachutists were observed approaching our rear. A defensive line of twenty men was built up facing our rear, and several patrols were sent out to determine the actions of the enemy. These patrols encountered the enemy as they were taking positions in a woods about 300 yards to our rear, and were successful in making the enemy believe they had a large force. After a short, but bitter fire fight, the enemy started to surrender in groups of thirty and forty. By the end of the day 255 prisoners had been taken and an estimated 40 Germans killed.

(Cont)

REPORT OF THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

The night passed quietly except for a brief period when an enemy force attempted to complete destruction of the bridges. They were driven off by our small arms fire.

A few additional D-rations and some small arms ammunition were found during the hour of darkness. The best find however was a 60 MM mortar tube and 80 rounds of ammunition.

The next morning, D plus 2 the Battalion was still without communication and Capt. Smetala sent two patrols to contact the beach forces. Lt's Barling and Santarseiro took off at 0800 with two riflemen each. They encountered quite a few enemy who were withdrawing from the beach and had several skirmishes in which they killed six Germans and took three prisoners.

At 1100 Lt. King, Battalion S-4 arrived with plenty of water, rations and ammunition having crossed through the enemy's lines in a captured vehicle.

At 1400, Lt's Barling and Santarseiro returned with word that they had gotten thru and that the Battalion was to be relieved at 1900 by the 327th Glider Infantry.

Through out the day the Battalion had been subjected to especially heavy artillery and mortar fire. Most of this was stopped when the enemy's observation post, a barn, was set on fire by tracer bullets.

At 2000 units of the 327th Glider Infantry effected a relief and the Battalion moved to bivouac at Heiseville. Contact with the Regiment was established at 2200.

(Cont)

REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

The strength of the Battalion during the three days totaled 19 officers and 117 enlisted. We suffered twenty-eight (28) casualties of which seven were killed and twenty-one were wounded. Known casualties inflicted upon the enemy were from sixty to seventy dead and a total of 253 prisoners were turned over to the 1st Battalion, 506 Parachute Infantry.

Upon our arrival in the bivouac area at Heiseville, we were joined by approximately four officers and 100 enlisted men. These men had been widely scattered during the jump, and had fought with other units during the operations.

On the morning of D plus 3 the Battalion was put in regimental reserve and Capt. Shettle set up his C.P. in a house between Beaumont and St. Come du Mont. As men continued to rejoin the Battalion, the strength reached 24 officers and 278 men. That afternoon Capt. Warwick rejoined the Battalion and took command.

The Battalion, in regimental reserve remained here until D plus 5 when it received orders to relieve 3rd Battalion 501st in outposting the inundated area from Carentan-Valognes road to Lesville. The Battalion C.P. was set up at Houesville.

The afternoon of D plus 6 the Battalion was ordered to relieve the 1st Battalion 506 who were in contact with the enemy on the Carentan-Baupte road about 1200 yds. west of Carentan. At 2300 the Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Battalion 502 and marched south on the Carentan road to St. Come du Mont where it was picked up by truck and taken to Carentan.



(Cont)  
REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION NEPTUNE.

Upon reporting to regimental Headquarters in Carentan, orders were received to attack along the Baupre road at 0500, D plus 7, following artillery barrage commencing at 0430. As the location of the 1st Battalion was undefinate and guides not available, plans were made to attack with G-H-I-Co's eckeloned to left rear with G Co. guiding on the Baupre road. The 2nd Battalion 506 was to attack on our right and the 501 on our left. Following a spotty barrage, the attack opened at 0500 as ordered. At this time there was no contact with any of the flank units or unit to be relieved. There was no communication within the Battalion.

Contact was made with the 1st Battalion 506 short of Douville; relief made, and the attack pushed. Enemy contact was immediately made and they withdrew slightly past Douville. As the attack progressed the Battalion found itself ahead of the 2nd Battalion and receiving fire in its rear from them. I Co. reported contact with the 501st on our left and found we were ahead of them also. The fire from front and flanks became very heavy and the attack halted. Help was asked for and a platoon of light tanks arrived. The tanks misjudged the front line and fired on our own men, killing at least two and wounding five. This plus the failure of either the 501st or 2nd Battalion 506 to advance forced our Battalion to withdraw to our original line of departure where the line was straightened and defence set up.

In the afternoon our Battalion was relieved by the 401st Glider Battalion plus a Battalion of the 3rd Armored Division with infantry attachments. The Battalion moved to a bivouac area in Carentan at the Basin a Flot.



(Cont)

REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

On D plus 8, the Battalion moved back to the Haute road to dig a defensive position protecting Carentan. At 1730, D plus 8 while returning from this position the Battalion received orders attaching it to the 501 Parachute Infantry then in position astride the Carentan--Periers road in the vicinity of Auverville. I Co. remained at the Basin a Flot as division security. H Co. was attached to the 2nd Battalion 501 and G plus Headquarters Co. to the 1st Battalion 501. This condition persisted until D plus 12 at 1200 when the Battalion was reconstituted with the exception of I Co. and took over the outpost line: St. Quentin to the Periers road. This was held until D plus 14 when we were relieved by a Battalion of the 501 and the Battalion returned to control of the 506 at the Basin a Flot. While here, Major Horton was assigned to the Battalion and took command. On D plus 16 the 506 relieved the 501 and the 3rd Battalion took over the left sector of the main line of resistance, just north of St. Quentin.

On D plus 20 the 101st Division was relieved by the 83 Division and the 3rd Battalion moved by foot and truck to a bivouac area two miles west of St. Sauver Le Vicomte. The following day the Battalion moved by truck to an area south of Cherbourg, near Hardinvast. This condition maintained until D plus 34 when a move was made to Utah Beach.

The Battalion embarked D plus 35, debarking in Southampton D plus 37 and that same day returning to camp at Ramsbury, Wilts.

The number of men completing the operation and return-

(Cont)

REPORT ON THIRD BATTALION OPERATION NEPTUNE.

ing to England was 22 officers and 252 men which now included 6 men who arrived seaborne joining us D plus 12.

Total casualties for the Battalion in operation was 17 officers and 300 men killed, wounded and missing.

COPY

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES