

BASIC FILE

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HEADQUARTERS FIFTH ARMY
A. P. O. #424, U. S. Army

25 May 1944

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 57)

DISTRIBUTION MADE
DATE <i>25 May 44</i>
BY <i>Shindler</i>

COMMENDATION OF UNITS

Under the provisions of Section IV, Circular Number 333, War Department, 1943, the following units are commended:

THE 4TH RANGER INFANTRY BATTALION is commended for meritorious performance of duty in action, during the period 11 November 1943 to 14 November 1943, near Ceppagna, Italy. This battalion captured and held high ground overlooking the Ceppagna-S. Pietro Infine Road, to fill a gap between two infantry divisions. By aggressively moving into the attack, the 4th Ranger Infantry Battalion overran and secured strong and well dug-in enemy positions commanding the sector. Road blocks were established, and the area around Ceppagna was outposted. Immediately thereafter, the enemy prepared to counterattack. After a night of steady harassing fire, the enemy blanketed the entire area with an intense and sustained 170mm artillery barrage, and as soon as the concentration lifted, attacked in waves of skirmishers, supported closely by mortar and automatic weapons fire. The thin line of defense imminently threatened by this overwhelming assault, all the battalion's reserves were rushed into action in an effort to stem the tide of battle. Although the flanks were driven back under continual enemy assault, the center held firm. Each officer and man faced the enemy with determination. Drivers became runners and ammunition bearers. The battalion's cooks worked heroically under heavy fire to remove the dead and wounded from the fire-swept slopes. Supporting mortar fires fell within 100 yards of the intrepid force's positions to stall the waves upon waves of Germans as they stormed the slopes. Although the entire rear area was being constantly shelled, disrupting communications, and although the front line elements were under heavy and continuous fire, with supporting fires falling dangerously close, the battalion provided an impenetrable barrier to the enemy at all times; and the deadly accuracy of Ranger fire stopped the advance of each wave. After five hours of sustained and ferocious assault, the enemy retired badly battered, suffering heavy casualties, unable to reorganize and renew the attack. The courage, combat skill and soldierly determination displayed by officers and men of the 4th Ranger Infantry Battalion reflect the finest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

THE 2ND BATTALION, 141ST INFANTRY REGIMENT, is commended for meritorious performance of duty in action on 15 and 16 December 1943. The battalion initiated an attack on San Pietro, Italy, in the face of withering artillery, machine gun and mortar fire from well organized and strongly defended German positions. On four different occasions within a period of eighteen hours the battalion renewed its attack, each time with decidedly reduced strength because of heavy casualties. During the night artillery and heavy weapons support was lost when

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communications were destroyed, yet officers and men of the 2nd Battalion drove forward in the attack, resorting solely to the use of the grenade and bayonet. When elements became separated during the heat of intense battle, individual groups continued the attack with determined courage and initiative, fighting their way onward until they succeeded in joining their units. Despite relentless pressure exerted against them by the enemy and heavy losses which greatly reduced the fire-power which could be brought to bear upon the Germans, the 2nd Battalion at all times evidenced a fighting determination to advance forward; and the severe losses inflicted by this unit upon the enemy were a contributing factor to the subsequent attainment of the objective. The officers and enlisted men of the battalion exhibited courage and resourcefulness under increasing enemy fire. Often in the face of certain death, duties were performed unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for personal safety. The courageous performance of the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment reflects the finest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

THE 636TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION is commended for outstanding performance of duty in action, on 13 and 14 September 1943, during the invasion of Italy. The 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion was assigned a 1500 yard sector in the vicinity of La Cosa Creek and the Caloro River when an armored attack by the enemy was anticipated. Following two hostile air attacks, the expected armored assault was launched directly at the positions occupied by this battalion. Some of the enemy tanks succeeded in crossing the La Cosa Creek, overrunning the positions held by the battalion's reconnaissance company. This emergency outpost line held, with members of the unit firing machine guns and rifles point blank into the approaching tanks and engaging the enemy vehicles with hand grenades. The enemy supported its attack with a heavy artillery concentration, but throughout the engagement the officers and men of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion courageously held their positions and delivered withering fire from their three-inch tank destroyer guns into the enemy armor. During the battle 14 Mark IV enemy tanks and one ammunition vehicle were destroyed and the enemy attack so overwhelmingly crushed that no further attempt was made in this sector. The courageous performance of each man in the battalion contributed materially to the prevention of a breakthrough which would have threatened the solidarity of the entire beachhead. The 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion's performance is worthy of emulation and reflects the highest traditions of the Army of the United States.

THE 1ST BATTALION, 142ND INFANTRY REGIMENT, is commended for meritorious performance of duty in action, on 12 February 1944, near ***, Italy. The 1st Battalion occupied a defensive position on the upper levels of *** ***. During the early morning the Germans launched a strong attack, preceded by heavy artillery and mortar fire. As the attack developed, it became apparent that the enemy's main efforts were directed at the Battalion's center and right. The center was lightly defended by one rifle platoon, but the remaining platoons of this company rushed to the threatened sector and struck the Germans with full impact to repulse the attack. In conjunction with this effort, the battalion's heavy machine guns in an adjacent sector delivered

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Summary

inflicted fire on the enemy with devastating results. In the midst of unceasing fire, officers and men of the 1st Battalion performed their duties unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for personal safety. The determination, skill, and coordination of effort displayed by members of this Battalion in destroying a major German attack on a vital sector reflect the high traditions of the military service.

By command of Lieutenant General CLARK:

A. M. GRUENTHER,
Major General, G. S. C.,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

M. F. Grant

M. F. GRANT,
Colonel, A. G. D.,
Adjutant General.

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