

ARMY GROUND FORCES BOARD
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OPERATIONS OF
91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON, MECHANIZED
IN THE PO VALLEY OFFENSIVE

(Reported by Colonel T. Q. Donaldson, Jr., Cavalry)

Observer's note: 1. The attached Report of Operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, in the Po Valley, was submitted by the squadron commander, Lt. Colonel H. Bruss, Cavalry.

2. This squadron, the only one of its kind in the theater, operated under the IV Corps of the Fifth Army.

The value of such a mobile, and yet hard hitting unit, in this operation was fully appreciated by Major General W. D. Crittenger, the IV Corps Commander, by whose skillful employment, such far reaching results were obtained.

The importance of the part played by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in the spring offensive from 14 April 1945, to 2 May 1945, may be clearly seen in the commendation from the Corps Commander, attached as Appendix #2.

3. During the offensive mentioned above, this observer was in close touch with and actively followed the operations of the squadron. On 20-21 April 1945, when the 10th Mountain Division, to which it had been attached for such an opportune moment, actually broke through into the Po Valley, had the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron been immediately hurled through this gap, even far greater results would have been obtained. Not being so used, the Corps Commander then, on 22 April 1945, reverted the squadron to corps control where it was employed so effectively until the completion of the campaign.

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HEADQUARTERS
91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON
APO 464 - U. S. ARMY

In the Field, Italy
20 May 1945.

REPORT ON OPERATIONS IN PO VALLEY OFFENSIVE

On 12 April 1945 the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron moved from Prato, Italy, (Q-675801) and closed in the vicinity of Silla (L-584143) at 0730-B. At this time the squadron was attached to IV Corps for future operations and placed in corps reserve. For a period several days prior to this move the squadron had reorganized and refitted its vehicles. The time in the new area was occupied with training, range firing of the 37mm guns and small arms, and officer reconnaissance of the forward areas for future operations.

While awaiting commitment, a mission in support of the 371st Infantry Regiment in the event of enemy counterattack in their sector was assigned to the squadron. A plan for road blocks and defensive positions in this sector was set up after a reconnaissance had been made, but it did not become necessary to put this plan in operation.

On 17 April orders were received to move to Cereglio (655284) via Gaggio Montano (550168). The squadron was to move on Tole (655309) but not to proceed beyond Cereglio without previous reconnaissance. The movement to Cereglio was completed at 1820-B. At this time orders were also received to send an officer and radio crew with an SCR 193 to the 85th Division to work with Rover Pete (air - ground liaison) for them. This was complied with.

During this early period of the offensive the situation was obscure and enemy resistance intense. Several missions were tentatively assigned to the squadron and then cancelled, and the squadron remained in corps reserve through 18 April. At 1700-B, 19 April, the squadron, by order of IV Corps, was attached to the 10th Mountain Division and moved to assembly areas as follows: Troop "A", 712392; Troop "B", 705345; Troop "C", 668320; Troops "E" and "F", 665315. By this time the enemy had begun to give ground in some places and in the course of the advance the lines of communication had become extremely overloaded. The MSR in this sector ran over secondary roads in the mountains west of Highway 65 many of which were too narrow for two-way traffic. These roads were jammed with ammunition and ration convoys, units moving forward and others to the rear, and also returning truck convoys.

At 0200-B on 20 April the troop commanders were briefed on their mission of screening the left flank of the 10th Mountain Division and reporting all available information of both the friendly and enemy situation. Troop "A" moved out at 0330-B and Troop "B" at 0400-B. It was necessary to move Troop "B" through the 1st Armored Division sector in order to reach its portion of the squadron sector and a clearance for this movement was secured. The roads, however, were filled with other units whose officers did not know of the priority and would not allow our column to pass. Troop "B" finally managed to infiltrate its vehicles into the other convoys and by 1030-B had reached 696431 and 698429. At this time Troop "A" on the right was at 699402.

The problems of road movement in a large scale advance such as this, were particularly noticeable to a mechanized unit. It was apparent that much closer control and coordination of movements in the forward area by commands higher than division is necessary. Without such control movement reduces itself to an "every man for himself" situation, in which priority convoys which must be at a certain place at a definite time are crowded out by others less critical.

The method of operation used at this time was similar to that previously used by the squadron in mobile situations and proved generally satisfactory. Where possible two reconnaissance troops were committed and one held in reserve although in the Po Valley Operation it was often necessary to use all three troops to cover the large sectors assigned. Each reconnaissance troop had a platoon of Company "F" light tanks and a platoon of Troop "E" assault guns attached. In addition to this support, the 10th Mountain Division attached a platoon of engineers consisting of three (3) squads of twelve (12) men each with a dump truck, Pioneer and Demolition equipment, and a mine detector for each squad. One of these squads was attached to each troop. A bulldozer was later furnished and held in reserve to be used when and where needed.

On the evening of the 20 April the 10th Mountain Division gave the squadron the mission of policing the Sammagia River Valley and securing the road to 722510 to Crespellano. For this mission it was necessary to commit Troop "C" as enemy resistance was still strong. Troop "C" soon reached its objective, the bridge at 770543, securing it intact while its first platoon was still engaged in a fire fight. At the same time, Troop "A" was also meeting resistance at 733513, and using its 81mm mortar with a forward observer against enemy positions. By last light the squadron held positions at 737563, 750557, 769548, 770547. The third platoon of Troop "C" was engaged in a series of skirmishes on the right and could only secure its own positions, but our other elements maintained aggressive patrolling in their sectors through the night. Ponte Samaggio had been secured and was now outposted with the aid of TD elements and infantry.

On 21 April our troops moved out at first light to the north and northwest with the mission of effecting aggressive reconnaissance in its sector and to secure and hold the bridge at Bomporto (659753) and a bridge in the vicinity of 616764; then to make a reconnaissance of Comatta (F-557130) and Borgo Forte (F-445115) along the Po River. At 1615-B the squadron was notified of a change in its sector boundaries. They were on the west from 670610 north to 639629 northwest to 635693 to 624745 to 612750 to 591802, and on the east from 573571 to 690705 to 653800. At this time Troop "A" had already reached 720660 and was engaged in a fire fight using its light tanks to reduce the opposition. Troop "A" reached the first objective at 1650-B. The bridge had been prepared for demolition but was seized before it could be blown. The road was mined in this area and enemy infantry and an antitank gun were on the road northwest of Bomporto at 658753. In the course of its advance to this objective Troop "A" had taken 153 PW'S and wounded or killed an unknown number. This troop continued to advance during the night against persisting enemy opposition. At 2315-B vehicles burning in the road were holding up the advance and there were two (2) truckloads of enemy infantry and an antitank gun confronting them. At 220015-B Troop "A" engaged the enemy at 628778 and routed them.

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During this time Troop "C" had been moving on the second objective, the bridge across the Secchio River at 615775. At 1823-B on 22 April they had reached the bridge, finding it intact, but receiving heavy rocket fire from west of the river. At 1000-B vehicles were put across the bridge and it was secure at 1005-B. Troop "B" engaged the enemy in a fire fight at 636788 and reported another enemy column at 581788. Troop "C", continuing beyond the bridge, destroyed an ammunition dump at 600780, and reached 559845 where it was moved off the road by the CG of the 10th Mountain Division to allow his columns to pass. The troop finally got clear at 1600-B and by 1618-B had moved on to 545930. By this time the operations of the squadron were so extended and the situation so open that we were ordered to furnish patrols on the roads behind us as security for messengers and other movement on these roads.

The squadron was relieved from the 10th Mountain Division by corps order at 221500-B to assume the mission of screening the IV Corps right flank and continue reconnaissance in the corps sector exclusive of the 1st Armored Division sector. It was impossible to relieve Troops "B" and "C" at once due to the difficulty in getting other troops up to relieve them. Our advance continued swiftly and there was usually enemy to the rear and on the flanks of our elements as well as to the front. It must be admitted that while this swift exploitation of the breakthrough confused the enemy and often resulted in the capture of his artillery and the seizure of his ration trains moving to supply forces already behind us, all the confusion was not on his side and we were not without our problems.

A few examples of the situation at this time will give a picture of the general situation as it existed throughout our operations in the valley. At 221800-B, Troop "B" engaged in a fire fight at 600908 in which 21 PW's, 6 trucks and 4 carts were captured while Troop "C" was already at 565930. Our leading elements had advanced over 6 kilometers by 2010-B and elements were at 593999 while others were engaging the enemy at 594978. At 2400-B our leading elements had moved on another 7 kilometers to F-569064 and at 230200-B an infantry battalion ran into an ambush at 587935, more than 14 kilometers behind. Leading infantry elements on the right were along the 84 Northing and the 1st Armored Division had been reported at 475820.

By this time the supply situation was becoming critical, and the difficulties increased as the advance continued. It was not only that the trucks of our service echelon often had to by-pass enemy positions on the way up to the troops but also on the way back to the dumps, and at the same time these dumps were getting left further behind until it was a full day's trip for a truck to go from our supply installation to the gas dump and return. From here it was necessary to get the gas and other supplies on up to our forward positions and there are not sufficient trucks in the T/E to handle a less difficult supply situation adequately. The problem was temporarily solved by capturing and repairing enemy vehicles.

On 23 April at approximately 1100-B our elements reached the Po River and sent our patrols to the east and west. In the course of the day the squadron reconnoitered the Po River from the 445 Easting to the 615 Easting. At 1200-B a good place for bridging the river was found at 615130 and reported. All of the road net within this area was reconnoitered with road and bridge classes and conditions reported to IV Corps. Troop "A" to the southeast securing the right flank was engaged with the enemy as far south as 723907 and

later entered an engagement in conjunction with elements of our infantry in which 200 P.W.'s including a Lt. Col. and two Majors were taken. This was in the vicinity of 722960.

By 231900-B there were no bridges up but two possible points for making a patrol crossing were found in the vicinity of 615130 and 500105 and the squadron notified IV Corps that it would attempt crossings at those points that night. These attempts did not succeed as the current was too swift for our small rubber boats and a patrol from Troop "C" encountered strong enemy resistance on this side of the river in the vicinity of 521121 and flak batteries of the squadron coming up on the right found a bridge at 745113 with two center spans blown but still possible for infantry elements to cross. The infantry did cross this bridge and took Revere (738115). In the meantime Troop "B" in the west had found a civilian ferry at 478099 and had one platoon across at 1455-B. The remaining platoons and the vehicles of the third platoon followed and the troop moved to secure the left flank of the infantry bridgehead with positions at 602149 and 603123 and maintaining patrols in this vicinity.

At 0355-B the remainder of Troop "B" and Troops "A" and "C" were ordered to assemble all combat $\frac{1}{4}$ ton vehicles with personnel near Camatta (579128) to start crossing river at 1545-B but there was no bridge completed to carry vehicles until 1030-B. The delay in establishing bridges was caused by a lack of available bridge materiel which it seems could have been kept immediately behind the forward elements - especially as it had been generally anticipated for sometime that it would be necessary to bridge the river. By this time Troop "B" had reached 557226 and was ordered to proceed to Mantova (470235). This objective was reached at 1715-B after reconnoitering the area and the road net.

Troops "A" and "C", having crossed the river moved in column and reached 495330 at 0120-B on 26 April. Troop "B" had assembled for a new mission and moved out at 0235-B to cut Highway 10 in the vicinity of Cas Telleucchio (3623). The squadron mission was now the screening of the 10th Mountain Division left flank. The mission of the 10th Mountain Division was to cut Highways 10, 62, and 11 and advance on Verona, seizing Villafranca Airport with all possible speed. The Troop "A" and "C" column had reached 645522 at 0610-B where a blown bridge held them up for several hours. At 0940-B they had a by-pass and were ordered to reach Highway 11 and use it as an axis to move on Brescia (0567). By 1440-B they had reached Highway 11 at Verona, reconnoitered and reported all bridges blown and swung west on Highway 11 toward their objective. During this time orders from the Commanding General, IV Corps had been received to move on Chedi (0152) airfield with all possible speed, by-passing all opposition and capture the airport. Troop "B" reached the objective at 1345-B, totally surprising the enemy and engaging them in a two hour fire fight in which 52 P.W.'s were taken and the enemy was prevented from setting off prepared demolitions. A chart of these demolitions and the field was sent to IV Corps.

Troops "A" and "C" advanced west on Highway 11 and at 2300-B, the night of 26 April, held bridges across the Fiume Mincio at 419554 and 432524. The by-passed areas behind them were active with enemy movement and they reported enemy armor in the area west of the river. A request was made to Corps for the support of a platoon of medium tanks or tank destroyers at 2400-B but apparently none were available.

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At first light on 27 April the second and third platoons of both Troop "A" and Troop "C" moved out while the first platoons of both troops remained to secure the bridges. At 0830-B the advancing elements had reached 350584 where it was reported by civilians and partisans that the enemy armor had moved out to the northwest during the previous night. At 1445-B contact was made with Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division at Brescia and Troop "A" was ordered to reconnoiter the route from Brescia to Crema and Troop "C" to secure all bridges west of Brescia and reconnoiter from Brescia to Treriglio on Highway 11.

Both troops continued to advance with good progress well into the evening. In the vicinity of Soncina at 2255-B Troop "A" ran into an enemy column which it engaged and captured 30 PW's. After the engagement the troop withdrew across the Oglio River to secure for the night. Troop "C" also ran into the enemy at about the same time. Its column cut an enemy convoy approximately in half at a road junction in the vicinity of Caravaggio and knocked out 15 enemy vehicles and took 6 PW's. An unknown number of enemy perished and burned in the destroyed vehicles.

Continuing the advance on 28 April, Troop "C" reached Treviglio at 0955-B and was joined there shortly by Troop "A". At 1400-B Troop "C" was ordered to move to and seize Lodi and Crema, establish a roadblock, and seize the bridges in this vicinity. Troop "A" moved to Ghedi to relieve Troop "B" which had been required to remain at the airfield for security and also to guard the large number of prisoners it had amassed. Upon relief, Troop "B" moved to the vicinity of 879255 and assembled, closing at 2300-B.

The accumulation of prisoners and the lack of facilities for disposing of them had begun to become a problem as soon as our elements broke out into the valley. POW cages were well behind and no provision was made for picking up prisoners and transporting them to these points. It was necessary for a unit to furnish its own transport for this purpose or keep the prisoners. As has previously been stated, the vehicles of the squadron were inadequate for its own supply without transporting food for prisoners and carrying them long distances to the nearest cages. At one time when the forward elements were in the vicinity of Brescia it was necessary to transport prisoners in a captured vehicle back to cages south of the Po River. The only thing that prevented our troops from bogging down under their accumulations of prisoners was the fact that it was possible to find organized partisan groups who would accept them and hold them. At no time in the operation was any effort made by an appropriate service to alleviate the prisoner problem of forward units.

This situation became particularly critical on 29 April. Troop "C" was holding approximately 700 prisoners at one point and 300 in another; and Troop "A" reported that the prisoners still held at the Ghedi airport were without food for the second day and there was no way of moving them. At this time Troop "B" was ordered to seize and hold the bridge at 085394 and Troop "C" the bridge at 195327 and reconnoiter west and southwest to the Ticino River. At 1630-B the third platoon of Troop "B" engaged approximately 500 enemy in a fire fight near Castlebuttano (845390) and forced their surrender. Troop "C" had 1000 enemy held between the 42 and 45 Northings and 43 and 44 Eastings negotiating their surrender. Troop "B" reached its objective near Volongo and held there for the night.

On 30 April our elements reached Busalla and Pavia and the day was spent rounding up our prisoners and attempting to dispose of them. Troop "B" was ordered to send a patrol to Milano to observe and report on the situation there on the following morning.

Troop "B" patrol left at 0545-B and returned at 1230-B reporting elements of the 34th Infantry Division, 1st Armored Division and some British Anti-aircraft were in town and all approaches to the town secured with medium tanks. Contact was made with the 442nd Infantry Regiment at Casale. By this time the situation had become quiet and operations consisted mainly of controlling groups of enemy as they surrendered. However the squadron was ordered to push west and contact the enemy and the squadron command post moved to Torino while the troops pushed on and contacted the French forces at Rivoli at 1030-B on May 2nd. At the time the surrender in Italy became effective on 3 May, Troop "A" was in contact with the French 27th Division, Troop "B" had moved north from Torino without contact and Troop "C" was securing the Torino airport.

SUMMARY

In general the operation in the Po Valley may be said to be an example of what can be accomplished by swift exploitation of the situation and the development of a breakthrough into the enemy's lines of communication. However, so far as the operations of this squadron are concerned, it was also a terrific bluff in the sense that all of our elements could have been cut off and destroyed at any time before any support could have been brought up. In this report it might be said that the situation was over-exploited and fortunately successful. The operation can scarcely be cited as an example of criterion for future operations of a similar nature.

Coordination between units was negligible. For example, the squadron performed its Corps missions regardless of the positions of other units as it very seldom had current position reports from them. Even when screening the flank of a division we did not know where their elements were as our reports were many hours old. This lack of coordination was largely due to the breakdown of communications which began as soon as the swift advance in the valley was launched. For telephone communication it was a signalman's nightmare and it was a common occurrence to encounter signal officers who had no lines to their subordinate units and could not find them. This situation particularly affected the infantry which is largely dependent on telephone for its communications. The squadron, using radio, was not affected as soon but, as our positions became more extended, even radio communication suffered and we were often out of communication with our liaison sets at other headquarters and sometimes with our troops. The use of relay stations improved the situation but this practice results in delay and inaccuracy in the reception of reports.

The squadron was employed to the maximum in the course of this offensive. All available use was made of its characteristic mobility and fire power. Its role as reconnaissance was sometimes minimized in that it by-passed opposition and forego the reconnaissance of areas to seize and hold special objectives. In these cases its employment more resembled the characteristic employment of a cavalry force in the enemy's rear.

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While it has been stated that the operation could scarcely be cited as a model, it served to bring to light some problems which arise in a swift moving situation of this type and eventualities which must be anticipated. It also revealed some inadequacies within the squadron and demonstrated others which had been realized and previously reported. All of these are contained in the following critique.

CRITIQUE

Movement:

It was apparent in the first days of the offensive that traffic control in the forward areas must be closely supervised to prevent the clogging of critical roads with the result that necessary troops and supplies cannot be moved forward when needed. The situation is not adequately handled by the MP's of individual units as they are subject to the orders of their immediate officers and priorities of other units are thus often ignored or over-ridden.

Engineers operating with the most forward elements can perform invaluable service in repairing demolitions before the main burden of traffic arrives and avoid the delay and congestion. In this report, where it is known that obstacles requiring bridging materiel lie ahead it would seem wise to keep this materiel well forward and available on short notice. More than a 48 hour delay in vehicular crossing of the Po River resulted from a lack of available materiel although huge supplies of this type had been amassed and lay far behind.

Liaison:

As signal communications decrease in efficiency in an extended situation the importance of liaison between units increases. Most of the time a liaison crew with radio will prove effective and if the radio fails messenger service will still provide some contact.

Air - ground liaison in the sectors in which the squadron operated was not found effective. Rover Pete with whom the squadron was previously scheduled to operate was shifted to the 85th Division and we received no benefit from the arrangement. Although panels were displayed on the vehicles our columns were strafed three times by friendly aircraft. On two occasions smoke pots were put out without result. On another occasion 1st Armored Division elements in our vicinity were also strafed by friendly planes. An officer of our unit working on the Rover Pete plan at the 85th Division reported that the system was highly unsatisfactory and ineffective.

Signal Communications:

The general difficulty of maintaining communications in this operation have been previously stated. It scarcely seems possible that wire can be maintained in a situation so swiftly moving. Thus all combat troops must be prepared to operate solely on radio when it becomes necessary. The use of radio also presents problems and some of them encountered within the squadron follow.

Where the squadron positions are greatly extended and a great distance

exists between the squadron and higher CP's, the prime consideration in the selection of CP locations must be the maintenance of good radio reception. This becomes a problem since in staying close to the troops the CP increases the distance to higher headquarters. Even staying close to all the troops becomes difficult when they are widespread. It is thought that the presence of a large set, possibly an SCR 299, in the squadron CP for use to higher headquarters over long distances would correct the situation by reducing the problem to maintaining a suitable position in relation to the troops.

Along this same line it has been found that the immediate location of the set itself within a CP or with the troops has a great effect on the reception obtained. The presence of buildings, high tension wires, or even tall or thick growths of trees will reduce reception seriously. A set should not be placed in a low spot in relation to the surrounding terrain.

Shortly before this operation, the squadron lost most of its SCR 193 radios and was equipped with the SCR 506. The general impression among the communications personnel of the squadron is that we could have worked farther with the SCR 193. Part of this may have been due with comparative unfamiliarity with the new set but is mainly attributed to the fact that it has preset channels and it is therefore impossible to add extra wire antennae and thus secure greater range. An advantage of the SCR 506 is the fact that it has five channels which may be changed simply with a switch while the SCR 193 has only one and can only be changed by tuning. Another advantage is that it is all in one piece and in an excellent mount. There is some difference of opinion on which has the better receiver. The SCR 506 is stronger and can pick up a weaker signal but the 193 has greater selectivity and can weed out interfering signals better. It has been suggested that instead of 5 preset channels the 506 be equipped with 4 preset channels, retaining the advantage of easy change, and 1 tuneable channel to allow for adding a long antenna for great distances.

Supply and Maintenance:

The transport allowed the squadron by T/O and E is inadequate for a unit of this size and nature that must maintain its own supply. If it had not been for the capture of enemy vehicles the efficiency of the unit would have suffered through lack of necessary supplies. A squadron transportation section large enough to attach two trucks to each reconnaissance troop for carrying supplies from the squadron dump and yet leave enough trucks to operate from squadron to rear dumps and CM installations is needed. This means that six (6) additional trucks are needed as those on hand at present are needed for the rear supply.

The maintenance half-track in each troop should be replaced with a 2 1/2 ton 6x6 truck as the half-track is inadequate when the troops are working separately or at some distance from the squadron.

POW Collection:

Arrangements must be maintained to pick up prisoners from combat troops soon after they are captured. Their presence with the unit, especially a mechanized unit, bogs down the advance and also necessitates bringing up food

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to feed them when it is difficult enough to get food for our own troops. POW cages were much too far behind and no arrangements to collect prisoners were in effect.

It is also suggested that a prisoner interrogator be attached to the squadron in swiftly moving reconnaissance operations.

ENEMY PRISONERS KILLED AND WOUNDED

These include only those positively confirmed in our reports and are a minimum estimate.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PW's</u>	<u>KIA's</u>	<u>WIA</u>
20 April 45	85		1
21 April 45	198		
22 April 45	45	4	2
23 April 45	568	44	4
24 April 45	20		
25 April 45	None		
26 April 45	364	3	2
27 April 45	193		
28 April 45	1080		
29 & 30 April 45	<u>7459</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	10012	52	12

MATERIAL CAPTURED OR DESTROYED

ARTILLERY

7 - 88mm guns
7 - 105mm guns
2 - 155 Howitzers
1 - 170mm gun
1 210mm gun
12 - 20mm guns

VEHICLES

37 Vehicles captured
17 Vehicles destroyed
11 Motorcycles
110 Horses and gear
64 Carts
60 Bicycles
1 Artillery Carrier

MISCELLANEOUS

1 - ME 109 Airplane
1 - Ammo dump destroyed

For the Squadron Commander:

/s/ Jerome H. Baker
/t/ JEROME H. BAKER
1st Lt., Cavalry,
Squadron Historian

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HEADQUARTERS IV CORPS
THE COMMANDING GENERAL

10 May 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO : Commanding Officer, 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron,
APO 464, U. S. Army

The important contribution made by the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron to the IV Corps effort in the Spring offensive from 14 April to 2 May inclusive was most gratifying to this headquarters, and I desire hereby officially to commend you and the officers and men of your command for a uniformly superior performance of many varied and difficult missions.

During the first six days of the offensive, the uncertainty of the situation required that you be held in Corps reserve where your strength could be thrown in quickly where most needed. During that period, your thorough reconnaissance and preparations to meet any possible call were ample evidence of a high state of training and a due sense of your responsibilities. A rapid movement to a more advanced assembly area occurred during this time, and was carried out with minimum delay despite aggravating traffic conditions.

Later, on 20 April, you were attached to the 10th Mountain Division, and your elements were soon moving forward on its left, furnishing it the necessary flank protection until, on the next day, you occupied Crespellano, well out into the valley of the Po. The following day, the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron captured a bridge over the Secchia River intact and moved rapidly northwest.

On 22 April you were detached from the 10th Mountain Division to operate directly under Corps again, and on 23 April, after advancing on Highways 63 and 12, you reached the south bank of the Po. You crossed the Po River as opportunity offered during the next two days and thereafter elements moved on rapidly to the vicinity of Mantova.

On 26 April you accomplished successfully the seizure of the Ghedi Airport and elements reached the southern shores of Lago di Garda. The following day, two troops moved west along Highway 11 to the vicinity of Brescia, and after that you advanced rapidly south and west to mop up the territory between the Po River and elements of the 1st Armored Division.

While conducted with a thorough appreciation of the role of reconnaissance troops, your operations were hampered by excessive numbers of prisoners of war, and by the need for maintaining road blocks to the south pending the arrival of less mobile units. On 29 April, C Troop alone took over 4000 prisoners.

Appendix #2

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On 30 April, your squadron began aggressive reconnaissance below Milan and between Adda and Ticino Rivers, while on the next day elements reached Pavia and, moving toward Torino, entered that city just before midnight. The last day of hostilities was spent in establishing proper order in Torino and pushing elements on up the mountain roads toward the French border.

All personnel participating in these operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron under your command should feel great pride in its accomplishments. Given suitable terrain again, after long and discouraging months in the Apennines, your squadron quickly arose to the occasion and made the most of the opportunity for return to rapid movement over wide areas. The importance of your contribution to the campaign was noteworthy and at times your presence furnished security in an otherwise critical situation. I am proud that your squadron was available to fight under IV Corps in the last campaign of the war in Europe, which with its help led so quickly to the surrender of the German LXXV Corps and the cessation of hostilities in Northwestern Italy.

s/ Willis D. Crittenberger
t/ WILLIS D. CRITTENBERGER
Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding

1st Ind

Hq 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, APO 464, US Army, 17 May 1945

TO: See Distribution.

1. This commendation from General Crittenberger is most gratifying to me, and it is with my heartfelt thanks that I pass it on to you.

2. It is indeed an honor to be so highly praised, but it has only been through your courage, willingness, determination, and devotion to duty that such praise could be received. You have richly earned this honor, and I want to thank each and every one of you for your individual contributions which played such a great part in the success of this operation - our last in the war against the enemy in Europe.

3. The Squadron played a role of major importance in the Po Valley Campaign, and it was through your efforts and speed in maneuverability that troops of the German LXXV Corps were so quickly routed and captured. Your daring and resourcefulness confused the enemy into a deplorable state; and although behind the enemy lines throughout most of the campaign, you performed your arduous tasks with utter disregard to personal safety and without once faltering from the steady drive to victory.

4. In winning our last campaign of the European war, some of our comrades who have been through so much with us have fallen, but their memory will always be with us, and their heroic deeds will remain as an inspiration to all of us in the future years of peace.

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5. Every member of the Squadron should feel proud of his deeds in the final defeat of the Nazi regime, and for those deeds I again wish to express my deepest thanks to all of you for your splendid and superior performance of duty.

/s/ H. Bruss
/t/ H. BRUSS
Lt. Col, Cavalry
Commanding

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HEADQUARTERS
91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON
APO 464 - U. S. ARMY

In the Field, Italy
3 June 1945.

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned in Combat.

TO : Commanding General, Fifth Army, APO 464, U. S. Army. (Attention: AFV Section).

I. In compliance with Letter, Headquarters Fifth Army, AG 370 TK, dated 26 April 1945, subject as above the following report, covering operations of this unit for the period 1 April 1945 to the cessation of hostilities in Italy, is submitted:

1. Night Reconnaissance:

Movement at night by mounted reconnaissance troops is not worthwhile. The difficulties encountered are:

a. Ambushes: Ambushes of bazooka teams, antitank guns, small arms and grenades can wreak havoc with a motorized reconnaissance platoon in a short time. Regardless of the amount of care taken to make a quiet approach, the enemy at an ambush will always be warned and ready. Dismounted patrols must precede the column constantly, thus limiting the movement to no more than dismounted patrol speed.

b. Mines: The danger of mines requires that a dismounted element precede a mounted column. Poor visibility at night, even in the best moonlight, makes it impossible to check a road for mines visibly as is the common speedy practice during the hours of daylight.

c. Radio Interference: At night radio communications become extremely difficult because of the great number of stations that come in due to increased receptivity. In long range operations, very little actual information can be expected.

d. Visibility: The primary reconnaissance mission of determining the strength and disposition of the enemy cannot be accomplished with any degree of accuracy because fire from a few scattered weapons at night invariably give the impression of a much larger force.

e. Fatigue: If a reconnaissance troop is driven night and day, which happens when speed becomes desirable, fatigue soon causes serious decreases in efficiency. A reconnaissance troop seldom has been able to keep a reserve platoon so that, during an operation, the only actual rest that can be obtained is that which comes after refueling, rearming and eating after dark and between tours of platoon guard. Given some rest at night the troop can continue aggressively and give accurate information for weeks at a time. A troop can accomplish more by operating from first light to last light than one which operates night and day.

2. Air-Ground Liaison:

There should be much closer liaison between forward elements, particularly the reconnaissance elements, and the air arm. The communications time lag between corps or divisions and the forward elements is so much greater than the time required for a reconnaissance plane to sight a column and get dive bombers or strafers to it that many of our own columns have been struck. "Rover Pete" was intended to do the job but our liaison with "Rover Pete" was assigned to a regiment that was usually 60 to 120 miles from our forward elements and completely out of radio contact thereby benefiting us none whatsoever.

3. Speed in a Breakthrough:

The last operation has shown that once a breakthrough has been made, speed is the most important factor to complete exploitation. To continue as rapidly as would have been possible improvements must be made, i.e:

a. Communications: For the resultant extremely long range operations better radio communications must be established between the troop headquarters and squadron headquarters. The troop should not be forced to drop off relay stations because it will cut their fighting strength critically. Also, in a situation like the Fo Valley operation, where many strongpoints were by-passed, there is a danger that a one-car relay station will be captured by a raiding party or a wandering group of enemy trying to find their way back to their own lines. It is suggested that an SCR 299 at squadron headquarters would help a great deal in lengthening communication possibilities, allowing the troops to be farther out from squadron headquarters and allowing squadron headquarters to be farther out from Corps or Division headquarters and still maintain contact. This is suggested rather than a series of relay stations because of their vulnerability and because of the additional time required and the liability for error in using relay stations.

Another serious handicap resulting from slow communications is the poor dissemination of enemy and friendly information to forward elements. This difficulty is particularly true in the case of infantry companies. Seldom have our forward elements contacted infantry on our flanks who knew any more than that they were going in a certain direction and some enemy were supposed to be in front of them. Seldom, during relatively fast moving combat, is information concerning friendly troops on our flanks available until it is 24 to 48 hours old. This lack of information retards movement and often changes the method of attack on certain objectives.

The using troops were actually very inexperienced with the use of the SCR 506 radio because they had only one day of instruction before entering this last phase of combat. The general opinion is that the SCR 506 radio is not as satisfactory for our work as the SCR 193 radio. The criticisms are that the SCR 506 cannot be tuned as finely as the SCR 193 to eliminate interfering stations, it cannot be tuned up on a long wire antennae as readily as an SCR 193, that it has too many gadgets and that certain tubes burn out too readily. Experience and instruction will probably eliminate some of these difficulties but certain of the mechanical refinements should be made in order to have a dependable means of communications.

b. PW Evacuation: A better system must be devised for handling prisoners of war. It was only because of the unusual circumstances of the presence of partisan groups that our reconnaissance troops were able to drop large groups of prisoners and were able to continue on their missions. Army controlled PW cages should be established much farther forward because a unit of this size and type does not have the men to guard prisoners nor the transportation to **move** them to a PW cage or to bring food to the prisoners.

c. River Crossings: When a breakthrough has been accomplished and a large river crossing is eminent, bridging material must be moved up close behind the forward elements. The time lost in waiting for bridging material to come from rear areas only makes the final crossing much more costly in manpower and equipment losses because the enemy is given an opportunity to dig in. Thus the rapid exploitation of a breakthrough is lost or seriously slowed down.

d. Supply: The supply section and transportation platoon of the reconnaissance squadron must be enlarged to be able to support the reconnaissance troops in a breakthrough, which is one of the primary missions of this type unit. Our forward elements have actually had to slow down for supplies to reach them. Any such delay allows the enemy time to either escape or set up temporary defenses that will cause casualties, loss of equipment and delays. In addition, for situations where there are long distances between squadron and army service installations and where strong points have been by-passed, supply trains should be provided with an armored escort when moving forward to contact the troop supply elements.

4. Fire Power:

The best protection that a unit of this type and size can have is to move into a breakthrough as rapidly and as aggressively as possible, being sure that all personnel understand that, when enemy armored or lightly armored columns or units are encountered, every weapon and arm is used to the fullest extent. This extremely heavy type fire, whether exactly accurate or not, so disorganizes a surprised enemy element that there will be very little returned fire.

5. Reconnaissance by Trained Personnel:

Reconnaissance missions should be assigned to experienced reconnaissance officers and men. When these men have been assigned the mission they should be allowed to proceed as they know best. Much confusion and delay had resulted from high ranking officers, particularly those from non-reconnaissance platoons and "taking charge" and, in certain instances, changing the mission as assigned by a higher commander. If the chain of command of a reconnaissance platoon is maintained through troop and squadron, more progress will be made at less expense in men and equipment.

6. Never use captured vehicles in more than a few numbers because you invite bombing and strafing by our own Air Corps.

7. The use of a platoon of assault guns and a platoon of tanks with a reconnaissance troop as a small task force is ideal. However, the communications with these two attached platoons needs to be improved. Many times

it has been necessary to send a messenger after the tanks when it should have been possible to call on the radio to have them move up to position.

8. Germans used bazookas excessively from prepared positions along all principal routes. Previously prepared positions were dug at about 150 yard intervals along all principal routes, which would hold two to three men per position - evidently used by Germans for personnel to take cover in when columns were being strafed, and also used by units delaying along these routes.

9. German strongpoints encountered in the daytime were generally by-passed at night by using side roads and trails.

10. Even when disorganized small German units continued to destroy bridges by demolitions, ammo dumps and equipment likely to fall into our hands were burned or blown up.

11. Germans used 20mm flakwagons as artillery, employed them very effectively with direct fire.

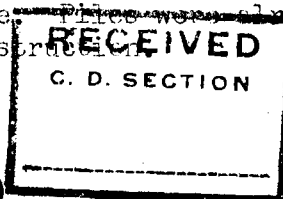
12. Civilian cars were used by the enemy with light MG's mounted (welded) on top of them. Always used them as deceptively as possible, and near the heads of columns. Gave impression to our troops of being a partisan vehicle initially.

13. Partisan groups proved effective and of assistance after our forces had exploited a situation, or were reliably sure of success in exploiting a situation, especially in our operations in and around the many small towns and villages encountered. Partisans furnished information of value on the terrain, roads, bridges, and enemy positions. Partisan communications were used in securing information of tactical conditions in areas along assigned routes, especially logical delaying positions and strongpoints. This saved much time and many lives.

14. Light tanks proved to be of value from a psychological viewpoint in controlling PW's, especially when a unit the size of a platoon has captured PW's up to 10-15 times its size.

15. German OF's located at vantage points would usually direct the fire of all weapons in that particular spot by firing tracer at the target and then shifting if another target appeared on the flank, thus effectively controlling the fire of all available weapons. Mortar fire was also placed on targets using this method. Some artillery fire was directed in this manner by using 20mm tracer.

16. Cement slabs were laid under water in the vicinity of practically all principal stream crossing sites, and near bridges where stream depth permitted, thus forming another bridge available for traffic in the event that the bridges in the vicinity were bombed. Approaches were prepared in the vicinity of all road bridges which could be utilized quickly in the event of demolition of the bridge. ~~Piles were already driven - making an inconspicuous framework ready for construction.~~



/s/ H. BRUSS
Lt. Col., Cav.,
Commanding.

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ARMY GROUND FORCES BOARD
MTOUSA

No. 318

28 February 1945

OPERATIONS OF
91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON, MECZD
IN ITALY, 1 NOVEMBER 43 TO 20 FEBRUARY 45.

(Reported by Colonel T. Q. Donaldson, Jr., Cavalry).

(Observer's Note: In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 2, AGF letter 350.05/111 (R) (15 Dec 1944) GNGBI, Subject: Reports of Cavalry Operations, attached hereto, as Inclosure No. 1, is report of Operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, in Italy from 1 November 1943 to 20 February 1945.

This squadron was commanded during the above operations, and until recently by Lt. Col. Charles A. Ellis, Cavalry. The present commander is Major Lloyd C. Helm, Cavalry, whose executive officer, Major Elgin E. Sanders, Cavalry, prepared the data for the attached report, requested when the undersigned visited that unit on 9-10 February 1945.

This report brings out clearly the typical use and missions assigned to a mechanized cavalry unit in the Italian theater. It illustrates well that mechanized cavalry can and frequently is required to perform practically every type of mission.)

1st Ind.

HEADQUARTERS MTOUSA, APO 512, 12 March 1945.

TO: Commanding General, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, Washington 25, D. C. (ATTENTION: Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2).

This headquarters has no objection to the reduction in classification of this report to RESTRICTED, provided names of individuals, unit designations, geographical locations, and information on casualties are deleted.

FOR THE THEATER COMMANDER:

JACK CARTER,
Captain, AGD,
Asst Adjutant General.

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HEADQUARTERS
91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON
APO NO. 464, U.S. ARMY

In the Field, Italy:
20 February 1945.

REPORT OF OPERATIONS IN ITALY

THE CASSINO SECTOR.

The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, then at Trapani, Sicily was relieved from assignment to the Seventh Army on 10 October 1943 and assigned to the Fifth Army. On 13 October 1943 the squadron moved to a staging area in the vicinity of Termini - Immerse preparatory to moving to join the Fifth Army in Italy. Troop "E", the light tank troop, left Sicily on 18 October via LST and landed in Naples, Italy on 20 October. However, delayed by necessary re-equipment and other organizational details, the remainder of the squadron did not leave its staging area until 28 October. The move overland by convoy across the Straits of Messina was made in five days to Maddaloni, Italy (vicinity of Caserta) where Troop "E" rejoined the squadron. On 7 November 1943 the squadron, attached to II Corps, moved into an assembly area in the vicinity of Villa Volturno in corps reserve.

At this time, II Corps was heavily engaged with the enemy in the mountainous terrain commanding the Mignano Pass and neither the situation nor the terrain warranted the employment of mechanized reconnaissance. However, with the clearing of the Mignano Pass in early December and the drive for the heights of Monte Sammucre, San Pietro, Monte Lungo and Monte Maggiore in progress, the possibility of using mechanized reconnaissance and armor to spear head a strong attack through the Rapido and Liri River Valleys was anticipated. The mission of the squadron in the event of such an attack was divided into three phases:

- I. To reconnoiter and to effect a counter - reconnaissance screen in the Cassino - San Elia Branch of the Rapido River Valley.
- II. To assemble and cross Rapido River (Bridghead to be effected by infantry) in preparation for Third Phase.
- III. To continue aggressive reconnaissance west of Rapido River to the Melfa River.

The development of the now famous stalemate before Cassino prevented the accomplishment of this plan and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was destined not to operate in its primary mounted role at any time in the campaign before Cassino. However, the plan is thought to be of interest to show how II Corps anticipated using the squadron in the development of the attack.

During the month of December the squadron, remaining in corps reserve, reconnoitered the forward area for necessary bivouac areas for corps supporting troops; established and constructed OP's overlooking the Liri Valley, and for 8 days, carried rations and supplies up the slopes of Monte Sammucre to the SSF which was in combat on these heights and could be supplied by no other means.

Inclosure 1.

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The squadron's first commitment to action in Italy was a dismounted mission. Troop "C" was attached to Task Force "A", commanded by Brig. General Allen (CG, CC "B", 1st Armored Division), which had the immediate mission of taking Monte Porchia. On the night of 2 January 1944 Troop "C" moved dismounted from a de-trucking point in the vicinity of Monte Lungo to a sector on the left flank of Task Force "A" with the British 46th Division on the left. The troop mission was to protect the left flank of Task Force "A" and to maintain contact with them and with the British on the left. The enemy positions on Porchia and on Monte Cedro, to the west in the British sector, were strongly and stubbornly held and on the morning of 6 January Troop "A" moved into position on the right of Troop "C". This same morning both troops advanced under enemy observation and artillery fire to occupy Hill 65 between M. Porchia on the right and M. Cedro on the left. On the night of 6 January Troop "B" was assigned the right flank security of Task Force "A" and, with the 1st Battalion, 6th Armored Infantry repulsed a strong enemy counter attack, suffering 20 casualties in this engagement.

The squadron continued the mission of protecting the flanks of Task Force "A" until relieved on 11 January. At this time, Troop "C" was attached to the 1st Tank Group and remained in the vicinity of Mignano until 16 January. During the period Troop "C" did dismounted reconnaissance for suitable tank routes in the road-net northeast of Pastinelle and M. Trocchio. However, the situation was obviously developing into an infantry operation and little armor was used in the operations following.

The 34th U. S. Infantry Division was pushing forward into the valley and high ground on the right around M. Sammucro, Chiaia, S. Pietro, S. Vittore and Cervaro. On their right the CEF (French) was moving on S. Elia from Acquafondala. Task Force "A" was relieved and the 36th U.S. Infantry Division, passing through the 6th Armored Infantry, soon occupied M. Trocchio on the left of the 34th Division. The enemy, by 16 January, had withdrawn the bulk of his forces to defenses behind the Rapido River along a general line S. Angelo, Cassino, Cairo.

II Corps still hoped to develop the situation so that a breakthrough on the Rapido could be effected. For this eventuality the squadron was alerted to perform a mission which was generally a variation of Phases II and III of the original plan. The 36th Infantry Division was to establish a bridgehead across the Rapido in the vicinity of S. Angelo. The squadron would pass through the bridgehead to screen the left flank of corps and effect reconnaissance to the Aquino River with particular attention to enemy defenses in the vicinity of S. Giorgio, possible crossings of the Aquino and location of enemy "switch" positions running southwest from Cassino toward the Aquino River. On 20 January the squadron moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Ceppagna near Venafro.

This mission did not materialize but along with similar tentative missions had the effect of making it necessary for the squadron, even when committed in a dismounted situation, to hold itself alerted to revert on short notice to its original roll as mechanized reconnaissance.

On the night of 24 January Troop "A" occupied outpost positions in the 143rd Infantry Regiment sector along the Rapido with the mission of patrolling to the river at night and crossing if contact was lost. Prior to first light on 3 February the squadron relieved the remainder of the 36th Division outpost and patrol sectors, screening the Rapido from the vicinity of Cassino to the left corps boundary with Troops "A" and "C". (During this period Troop "B" was

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attached to the 1st Tank Group for an impending operation). Behind this screen the 36th Division was withdrawn and replaced on 6 February by the New Zealand Corps.

On 9 February Troop "C" went into positions on the left flank of the 34th Division protecting this flank and maintaining contact with the New Zealand Corps on the left. This mission lasted for 12 days and on 21 February Troop "C" was relieved by the 27th MG Battalion.

The squadron (-Troop B) remained in the vicinity of Ceppagna in reserve until 11 March when it moved to Bivouac in the vicinity of San Agata. Troop "B", still attached to the 1st Tank Group, was not withdrawn until 25 March. The squadron remained engaged in reorganization under a new T/O & E and in intensive training until 2 May. In this training schedule special emphasis was placed on dismounted action in mountainous terrain and night operations.

THE ROME OFFENSIVE:

During this period II Corps had been planning for the spring offensive which was destined to break the Gustav and Hitler Lines and carry on through Rome and to the Arno River. The II Corps effort would be made in the coastal sector where the 82nd and 88th Divisions held a defensive sector with a bridgehead across the Garigliano River in the vicinity of Minturno. Their line ran in an arc from the coast just south of Scauri through Minturno, Tufo, and carried southward along the hill features to the vicinity of Damiano. The French CEF was on their right in the vicinity of Lorenzo.

The initial mission of the squadron was again a dismounted one. At H hour, which was set at 112300B May, the 350th Infantry Regiment, the right flank unit of the 88th Division would attack generally northeast and then north taking Monte Cianelli, Hill 316, and M. Rotundo. The French, having to take Damiano and Castelforte would be delayed and leave the American right flank exposed. It was necessary that the squadron occupy and hold these key features against counter attack leaving the infantry free to continue the attack.

The squadron moved under cover of darkness from its assembly area at S. Agata to a detrucking point at the base of M. Salvatitio on the night of May 11th. Troop "B" had previously placed its assault guns in position south of Castelforte and the squadron CP moved in its organic vehicles but the remainder of the troops were moved by truck leaving their vehicles in the assembly area. Troops "B" and "C" occupied Cianelli the evening of 12 May. That night Troop "A" occupied Hill 316 and before dawn moved on to occupy M. Rotundo while Troops "B" and "C" extended to cover both M. Cianelli and the approaches to Hill 316.

At 1545B on 14 May the squadron, less Troop "C" remaining on M. Cianelli, was relieved and reverted to II Corps control. The squadron was immediately attached to the 85th Division and was to pass through the 339th Infantry Regiment before dawn, 15 May. In this short span of time it was necessary to reassemble, move the reconnaissance troops by truck back to the assembly area (approximately 20 miles) to secure their vehicles and move from there via Highway #7 to the vicinity of the Minturno - Scauri road junction.

Heavy demolitions north of Scauri and determined enemy resistance delayed the advance in this sector approximately 24 hours before our elements could advance along Highway #7. Tanks of Company "F" reached a point midway between Scauri and Formia against enemy defense points along Highway #7. One tank was destroyed by anti-tank fire and the crew captured. On 17 May the squadron was relieved from its mission with the 85th Division while the infantry and medium tanks attacked Formia. The squadron assumed the security patrol of the coast from the mouth of the Acqua - Traversa River to the Garigliano River. Troop "C" was relieved from the garrisoning of M. Cianelli and was assigned the mission on 19 May of reconnaissance west from Formia into the Gaeta Peninsula. Troop "B" continued on coast patrol and Troop "A" moved in support of Troop "C". Both Troop "A" and Troop "C" had a platoon of the light tank troop and assault gun platoon attached.

Troop "C" made slow progress over extensive enemy demolitions to reach Gaeta at 1840B on 19 May. Enemy resistance was light and consisted of Italian Marines and elements of the German 15th Division. Reconnaissance to the northwest toward Sperlonga was blocked by heavy demolitions. During this period Troop "A" had been called upon by the 339th Infantry Regiment to perform road reconnaissance on Highway #7 toward Itri and had made good progress against strong enemy resistance destroying numerous road blocks to reach Itri. On the northwest outskirts of Itri Troop "A" engaged the enemy rear guard, destroying a MK IV tank, an anti-tank gun and MG positions, and continued along Highway #7 toward Fondi. Troop "C" retracing its steps entered Itri behind Troop "A" and turned left to move out swiftly toward Sperlonga. Troop "B" relieved from coast patrol joined Troop "C" in its advance.

As the advance continued, the use of engineers attached to the leading reconnaissance platoons vindicated the squadron's request for such an arrangement and surprising progress was made in spite of extensive enemy demolitions wherever they could hinder road movement and flooding of large areas to further impede our advance. The practice upon encountering a demolition was to leave a security detachment with the vehicles and continue the reconnaissance on foot while the engineers went to work on the obstruction. The vehicles would overtake the dismounted element as soon as the by-pass had been completed.

Troop "A" reached Fondi at 1940B on 20 May and dismounted to hold the high ground northwest of the city until relieved by the infantry. At 1800B the leading elements of Troop "C" reached Sperlonga. From these points our elements converged on the key point of Terracina guarding the gateway to the Pontine Marshes. Troop "C" dismounted patrols entered the city and found it strongly held by the enemy. Troops "A" & "C" were joined by elements of the 337th Infantry Regiment supported by tanks and attacked. On the morning of 24 May elements of the squadron moved over quickly constructed Bailey bridges through Terracina and raced to join the beachhead forces. This contact was first made by Troop "A" and its attached engineers in the vicinity of Borgo Grappa on 250905B. At 1020B the same day Troop "B" contacted other forces of the beachhead south of Littoria. On 26 May the squadron was detached from II Corps and placed under direct operational control of Fifth Army whose forward headquarters was located at Nettuno on the beachhead.

On 26 & 27 May the squadron, moving into the hill mass northeast of Littoria, took the towns of Sermonetta, Bassiano, Norma and Sezze. North of

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these towns terrain and lack of roads made vehicular movement impossible and Troops "B" & "C" proceeded in dismounted action and occupied the towns of Roccagorga, Carpineto, and Montelanico on 28 May. Troop "A" was assigned coastal patrol. On 29 May the squadron was again attached to II Corps then at Cori preparing for the final drive for Rome in conjunction with the forces of the beachhead.

The squadron's elements moved North to Guilianello and east to Roccamassima where it was necessary to dismount and move on into the mountains Northeast and southeast on foot. On these heights OP's were established and with these positions as bases patrols operated to Colle Ferro and Segni and to the Southeast screening the right flank of II Corps while the French moved north from Montelanico toward Segni and Highway #6.

On 1 June the final phase of the drive for Rome was under way. Artema fell to the SSF, the 3rd Division was attacking Valmontone, and the 36th Division meeting stiff resistance at Velletri. With the cutting of Highway #6 east of Valmontone and the fall of Velletri, the enemy was forced to withdraw his forces in the Valmontone area which were in danger of being cut off. The French forces joining the SSF on Highway #6 continued to attack north across the highway to Palestra while the American forces swung their attack northwest toward Rome. This, once again left the II Corps right flank exposed North of Highway #6 and the squadron was assigned the mission of securing a line along the Aniene River and was attached to the SSF for this operation. The squadron maintained this screen until 6 May when French forces, having taken Tivoli, ~~contacted~~ our elements and assumed responsibility for the sector.

During this period the squadron also formed a special task force upon VCG II Corps with the mission of passing through the 88th Division and proceeding by road into Rome. Progress was to be reported to the CG, II Corps by a series of phase lines. Upon arrival in Rome this force was to establish official II Corps signs on the main arteries into the city. The force was under command of the squadron commander, Lt. Col. Ellis, with an operational staff of squadron officers and was designated Task Force Ellis. It consisted of two reconnaissance platoons, two platoons of medium tanks, one company of infantry, two platoons of 105mm SP guns, one company of engineers, and a medical detachment of 3 ambulances, two medical officers, and eight aid men.

The force was divided into two columns, designated Subforce #1 and Subforce #2, and moved out early the morning of 4 May on the Frascati - Rome and Grotta Ferrata - Rome roads passing through the forward elements of the 88th Division in the vicinity Monte Compatri. Both columns encountered determined resistance from enemy rear guard detachments which had established road blocks of anti-tank guns, MG's, and infantry. These were over come with a loss of two medium tanks. At one point enemy infantry withdrew north from Subforce #1 toward Subforce #2. Notified of the situation Subforce #2 struck swiftly and killed a large part of this enemy detachment. No prisoners were taken in the course of this mission. Task Force "Ellis" entered Rome proper at 041312B. Although scouts of other units had entered the outskirts of the city earlier, it is believed this force was the first unit of combat strength to enter Rome.

ROME TO THE ARNO

Following the taking of Rome, the enemy's hasty withdrawal north of the Tiber proceeded with such speed that the 88th Division was meeting only slight resistance and complete loss of contact seemed imminent. The squadron was attached to the 88th Division and a second "Ellis" Task Force was formed with the mission of pursuing the enemy to the north between Highway #2 on the west and Highway #3 on the east and prevent him from establishing organized resistance in this zone.

This task force, although larger, was similar in composition to the first. It consisted of this squadron, one battalion of infantry, one company of engineers, one battalion of tank destroyers and one battalion of medium tanks. This force was also organized in two columns each consisting of one reconnaissance troop, one medium tank company, one tank destroyer company with infantrymen mounted on the tank destroyers. One battalion of the 913th Field Artillery was in support of the task force and sent forward observers with the two reconnaissance troops. This made for a highly mobile combat team as the reconnaissance troops supported by the tanks could overrun light delaying groups and it was only necessary to commit the infantry where stiff resistance was encountered. By this time the reconnaissance would have developed the enemy positions and the infantry could be thrown directly into the engagement to the best advantage. Close liaison at all times with supporting artillery is highly advantageous both for the supporting fire afforded our elements and because the reconnaissance often finds itself in points of vantage where artillery can be directed on enemy transport movements and concentrations of personnel and material.

Both columns moved out at 061130 June and the Troop "A" column made first contact in the vicinity of Formello. This resistance was overcome with the support of the tanks and the column passed on to engage a small enemy force in the vicinity of M. Dolforso and continue north of Campagnano where a fire fight developed during the night in which the infantry with the column destroyed an estimated enemy company. The Troop "B" column passed through Sacro Fano, reporting it had been evacuated approximately two hours before, and continued through Magliano to Mazzano, Calcata and Faleria all of which were reported clear. At Civita-Castellana contact was made with elements of the 6th South African Armored Division and a joint engagement was fought against enemy anti-tank positions northeast of the town. On the night of 7 June the task force zone was shifted to the northwest as the 6th South African Armored Division coming up from the east was taking over the original sector. The force's mission was reconnaissance of all roads toward Orvieto and Bagnoregio. Reaching Vallerano the Troop "B" column found it occupied by the enemy and a fire fight developed which lasted through the afternoon of 8 June resulting in the enemy evacuation of the town under cover of darkness.

During these operations the South African forces had continued west through our sector and on the morning of 9 June contacted the 1st U. S. Armored Division at Viterbo. The squadron task force advanced north and secured a line Soriano - RJ5830 - Orte until the 6th South African Armored Division reorganized and assumed control of the entire sector. On 10 June II Corps was relieved by IV Corps to operate in the sector on the corps right flank from which the 1st Armored Division was being withdrawn. On the night of 11 June the squadron assembled in the vicinity of Canino.

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Under IV Corps, a third Task Force "Ellis" was formed with a battalion of the 141st Infantry and elements of the 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion attached to the squadron. Troops "A" & "C" headed the two columns comprising the task force. On 13 June "A" column passed thru Ischia-di-Castoro which was clear and the "C" column reached Pitigliano and established a road block. At this point the task force was increased in size with the addition of the remainder of the 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, a medium tank unit and engineers, and Brig. General Ramey, with the Headquarters of the 1st Tank Group as his staff, took command of the force.

In this sector, the 36th Division was on our left attacking along Highway #1 and the French CEF once again was on our right and a little behind. It was necessary for Task Force Ramey to extend itself to protect the flank of the 36th Division and fill the gap to the left elements of the CEF. Contact with the French was established by Troop "C" at Sorano on the 14th and contact with the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (attached 36th Division) was established at Scansano on the same day. Troop "B" relieved Troop "A" and pushed on to Campagnatico where the TFR held positions until the French, attacking Arcidosso could come up on the right. Troop "C" securing our right made contact with the French at Triana. Patrols of Troop "B" pushed to within 300 yards of Paganico and reported a company of enemy infantry dug in along the railroad. Troop "C" supported by tanks came up and engaged the enemy and then remained on the right garrisoning Hill 259 and maintaining patrol contact with the CEF. At this point elements of the 1st Armored Division passed through our positions at Paganico and the squadron was relieved for 48 hours to assemble in the vic. of Campagnatico for maintenance. Unfortunately it took 24 hours of this period to assemble the scattered troops.

The operation with TFR had taken a great deal out of the squadron. Enemy resistance had been scattered and generally slight but the terrain had become increasingly mountainous, the roads more and more inadequate, and enemy demolitions and mines were every where.

On 25 June the squadron was attached to the 1st Armored Division to operate with CC "B". Troop "C" moved to the vicinity of Massa Maritina ahead of the squadron and began reconnaissance toward Monte Rotondo immediately. The squadron followed on 26 June and at dawn Troop "A" passed through Troop "C". Troop "A" on the right and Troop "B" on the left continued the advance north in the squadron sector as the left force of three CC "B" columns.

The terrain through which the squadron operated while with CC "B" was the worst it had encountered in a mounted mission. It was mountainous and rocky, contained no first - class roads and many of the existing trails were only for mules. The withdrawing enemy had mined trails and stream beds extensively and had employed demolitions even on secondary roads and trails. No engineers were available for attachment to the squadron and this lack further retarded the rate of advance. By the time the squadron reached Canneto and Serrazzano it could no longer be supplied over its axis of advance and the squadron rear had to swing to the right through Pomerance to Serra and supply the flank. Enemy resistance in the sector was scattered, consisting of strategically placed rear guard detachments and delaying forces up to company strength. These our troops destroyed or forced to withdraw as they were encountered.

On 1 July Troop "B" contacted Troop "A" and reached Highway #68 while Troop "C" coming in from the right moved west on the highway under heavy enemy artillery fire to establish a road block south of Buriano. Troop "B", unable to contact Troop "C" at this position due to demolitions and mines, moved north-east toward Montecatini and Troop "C" moved generally north to converge on this objective which was located on a strategic height commanding the south and east where Volterra was strongly held by the enemy. At this time a platoon of tank destroyers was attached to Troop "C".

First contact was made by Troop "C" south of Montecatini and a brief fire fight developed with a detachment of 20 to 30 enemy in which the enemy lost two killed, several wounded, and five prisoners. A strong combat patrol entered the town under cover of darkness, forced the enemy to withdraw, captured their OP and worked on through the town to take 10 PW's. At 022400-B Troop "B" made contact with Troop "C". The enemy evacuation of the town was followed by an enemy barrage of approximately 200 rounds forcing these troops to withdraw to the south edge of town to consolidate positions. This advance to Montecatini had carried the squadron well ahead of the right columns of CC "B" and we were ordered to hold in these positions until further order.

For the next two days our positions were subjected to constant, intense artillery and mortar fire and enemy counterattacks which, with the aid of our supporting artillery, were broken up. On 4 July the squadron was reinforced with two platoons of medium tanks and two platoons of infantry. The enemy in and about Montecatini and controlling the high ground was approximately one regiment.

CC "B" ordered an attack for 0530-B on 5 July and Troop "B" attacked from positions in the south edge of town against a company of approximately 90 enemy. In a four hour fight Montecatini was cleared and the troops advanced 100 yards north of town where the bridge was blown and all approaches covered with intense enemy fire. As Troop "B" cleared Montecatini, Troop "C" attacked Hill 619 West of town defended by two enemy companies and a battery of 18 mortars on the reverse slope. Supported by tanks and tank destroyers our forces took the hill against strong opposition inflicting heavy casualties and wiping out the enemy mortar positions.

Col. Carr's (CC "B") Force took up the attack on 6 July and the squadron resumed a reconnaissance roll to the west and northwest. On 7 July CC "B" was relieved and the squadron continued attached to the 88th Division to the vicinity of Orciatice screening the division left flank. At this point the squadron was passed through by the 91st Division. From 13 to 20 July the squadron in assembly south of Highway #68 was occupied with maintenance, repair, and replacement of vehicles, radios and weapons which had been submitted to hard usage and were generally in bad shape. During this period Troop "B" with a platoon of Troop "E" and a platoon of Company "F" (Assault guns and light tanks) were attached to Task Force "Ramey" in the vicinity of Camporbiano.

On 21 July the squadron assembled in the vicinity of Fauglia and began a period of defensive operations along the south bank of the Arno River first under the 34th Division and later under the 45th AAA Brigade which was functioning as infantry. Troop "A" was attached to Task Force "Williamson" along the coast from 22 to 25 July performing reconnaissance north on Highway #1 to Pisa and securing information of enemy defenses in this sector. The squadron

SECRET

continued to maintain outposts and patrols, supported by mortars and our assault guns, through 22 August. The operation was a dismounted one although $\frac{1}{2}$ ton, 4 x 4 vehicles could be used for some night patrolling.

THE GOTHIC LINE OFFENSIVE.

During August 1944, II Corps was completing plans for its offensive to break the Gothic Line and assembling its forces south of Florence. The enemy falling back across the Arno had established himself in prepared positions in the rugged heights of the Appenines with a screen of outposts and delaying forces as far south as the river. The British had managed to take most of Florence but the enemy held the outskirts of the city.

On 23 August the squadron moved east to Castelfiorentino and from there to an assembly area near Cerbaia where it spent the remainder of the month preparing for its mission in the coming offensive. The 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion, 757th Tank Battalion and Company "E" 39th Engineers were attached to the squadron. The mission was a combined reconnaissance and combat mission in that the squadron was to reconnoiter the road nets in its sector and enemy positions and also to force the enemy to withdraw as far as possible before the commitment of the 34th Division in the mountains east of the Prato - Bologna Road. The initial squadron sector extended from the Bisenzio River on the left to the 75 Easting on the right.

Our troops moved across the Arno on the night of September and Troop "A" on the left and Troop "B" on the right moved out at first light on 3 September. From the 3rd to the 6th of September the squadron remained engaged in clearing the valley south of Prato and Calenzano in the face of observed enemy artillery fire and numerous enemy delaying forces. Troop "C" was committed on the right to maintain contact and protect the squadron flank. On 6 September Troop "A" cleared Prato of the enemy and continued north on the right of the Prato - Bologna Road.

The squadron was relieved of responsibility for the sector east of the road northeast out of Calenzano and Troop "B" pushed up this road splitting its platoons to occupy M. Maggiore, Fisciano and a point well north of Le Croci on 9 September. Troop "C" working over the mountains between Troop "A" and Troop "B" cleared these heights to join Troop "B" at M. Maggiore. These positions were held until the 34th Division passed through them. At this point the squadron's mission became the opening of the Prato - Bologna Road and the screening of the of the II Corps right flank. The medium tanks and tank destroyers were relieved from attachment to the squadron but the engineers continued to clear demolitions for our advance.

In the mission along the Prato Road the squadron encountered a variety of difficulties. The road ran in a deep river gorge with the enemy holding strong points on the high ground commanding the road. This, and the fact that the enemy had used demolitions at every feasible place in the road, resulted in most of the advance being made in dismounted action. The 6th South African Armored Division on the left was generally 3 to 5 km. behind and this necessitated dismounted security in the hills to the left and rear. Two platoons of the light-tank troop (Company "F") were dismounted to provide additional patrols. The situation was further aggravated by the absence of Troop "C" and one platoon of Troop "B" on a special mission with II Corps.

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Stiffened enemy resistance from enemy strong points approximately 300 yards north of Castagneta was encountered on 14 September and the squadron continued engaged in dismounted action against prepared positions of two enemy battalions astride the road until 22 September. Troop "A" and "B" mopped up small delaying groups and found the positions recently abandoned by the main force and Troop "B" continuing to Vernio reported the town evacuated. The enemy intensified his mortar and artillery fire in the wake of his withdrawal and the engineers were unable to continue work on demolitions. The forward elements reached S. Quirico on the 23rd as infantry elements advancing from the east cut the road at Montepiano.

On 26 September the squadron assembled at Montepiano and Troops "A" and "B" moved to secure the road junction in the vicinity of Castiglione. This was the beginning of the rainy season and almost continued rain and heavy fog lowered visibility often to fifty feet. As the 6th South African Armored Division elements approached Castiglione, Troop "A" gave up its road block in this vicinity and pushed on to reach Sparvo on the 28th. At this point the squadron was relieved by the 6th South African Armored Division and moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of Futa Pass.

Troop "C" and the platoon of Troop "B" rejoined the squadron here having completed their special mission with II Corps. This mission had been designated the "Dutchess Plan" and had provided a reconnaissance detachment with each of the leading elements of the divisions assaulting the prepared defenses of the Gothic Line and the Futa Pass. These detachments equipped with radio reported progress of the leading elements by means of prearranged check points direct to II Corps. This eliminated the normal time lapse in securing this information and facilitated corps control of the advance.

On 3 October, the squadron assembled at Montefredente to resume reconnaissance and screening on the corps right flank. The squadron was to pass thru and relieve the 168th Infantry Regiment north of S. Andrea. Moving out on 4 October our elements found the infantry was still engaged against stiffened enemy resistance and had not yet taken their objective, Hill 747. The squadron was attached to the 168th Infantry Regiment and joined the attack. At this time the squadron was supported by a company of medium tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers. The nature of the terrain would not permit vehicles or tanks to leave the roads to get into firing positions and the enemy using grenades and bazookas from the high banks against our mounted elements had a distinct advantage. Once again it was necessary for our elements to dismount and fight on foot.

While this action was in progress mounted patrols reconnoitered trails to find passable routes to the north to bypass the enemy strongpoint and continue the advance. By the night of 8 October Troop "A", "B" and "C" had established positions in line in the vicinity of Rioveggio and Polverera and the 168th Infantry Regiment was relieved on the morning of 9 October.

Enemy resistance all along the front had stiffened and enemy medium and heavy artillery had apparently gone into permanent position to cover the forward areas with increasingly intense fire. The advance on the left and right of II Corps had been stalled even sooner and the corps sector was a bulge with its most advanced points along Highway #65 just north of Livergano.

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On 15 October, the squadron, now attached to the 1st Armored Division, was relieved in position by the 81st Reconnaissance Battalion and assembled near L. Luccian in the Futa Pass for maintenance and rehabilitation. On 24 October the squadron moved to an assembly area in the vic. of Castel Del Alpi, where its vehicles were left with small troop detachments, and moved by truck to take over dismounted defensive positions in the sector north of Monzuno. The mission, as have been all of the squadron missions since, was purely in an infantry capacity - maintaining outposts, machine gun and mortar positions, and patrol and counter-patrol activity usually at night.

From 5 to 22 December the squadron was in rest camp near Sesto and returned to resume the defense of the same sector. On 29 December the defense of the sector was assumed by the 363rd Infantry Regiment and the squadron was attached in tactical reserve manning secondary defenses through the month of January. On 1 February the squadron was attached to the 6th South African Armored Division and relieved their CC "C" in position on 2 February. The squadron still remains in defense of this sector facing the Reno River from Collino on the left through M. Stanco to Grizzana on the right with its assault guns at Piana di Setta. The squadron's vehicles remain at Castel Del Alpi as the squadron has no use for them at present and there is no place else to put them. In this sector there is only one very poor trail for $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton, 4 x 4 vehicles and the troop positions are supplied by mule under cover of darkness. Both in the Monzuno sector and in this present sector Company "F" (light-tank) has been dismounted and used in the line.

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DISSEMINATION DIVISION

G-2 Section

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HEADQUARTERS ARMY GROUND FORCES

Army War College

Washington 25, D. C.

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151

SUBJECT: Report, Army Ground Forces Board

MTO

Number A-299 Inclosure

1. The attached report, reproduced as received in this headquarters, is furnished for your information and file. It does not represent necessarily the views of the theater commander, this headquarters or the War Department.

2. Distribution has been made as indicated below:

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31 MAR 1945

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AG 319.1/004 C-0
HEADQUARTERS MFOUSA, APO 512, 2 March 1945

TO: Commanding General, Army Ground Forces, Army War College, Washington 25,
D. C.
ATTENTION: AC of S, G-2

1. Recommendations contained in the attached report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Theater Commander. Recommended changes in T/O & E will be submitted through command channels when combat experience indicates the necessity thereof.

2. This headquarters has no objection to the reduction in classification of this report to RESTRICTED, provided names of individuals and unit designations are deleted.

FOR THE THEATER COMMANDER:

/s/Albert W. Karr
ALBERT W. KARR
Captain, AGD
Asst Adjutant General

ARMY GROUND FORCES BOARD
MFOUSA

No. 299

16 February 1945

(Reported by Colonel T. Q. Donaldson, Cavalry)

REPORT ON 91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON, MECHANIZED

I GENERAL:

1. The 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, now commanded by Major Lloyd C. Helm, has participated in the Tunisian, Sicilian, and Italian Campaigns in the role of a "separate" squadron. As such, it has learned that it must be self-sustaining and its long battle experience has rendered it well qualified to make the recommended changes to T/O & E which were forwarded to Commanding General, Army Ground Forces as Report No. 278 under date of 23 January 1945.

2. Upon visiting this squadron on 10 February 1945, certain of these changes to the T/O & E were again emphasized and are of especial interest. They include:

- a. The addition of a horse troop.
- b. Addition of rifle squad to each reconnaissance platoon.
- c. Addition of liaison planes.
- d. Substitution of the 81mm mortar for the 60mm.
- e. Substitution of the half-track as a command vehicle.

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f. The need of a better wheel reconnaissance vehicle than the M-8 - (the T-28, though not in use in this theater, appears to have the necessary specifications desired).

g. Reduction in the number of carbines and corresponding increase in M-1's, submachine guns, and pistols in the reconnaissance troop. Also the addition of BAR's.

h. The SCR 536 radio was recommended and also additional telephones.

3. At the present time, the squadron is operating under the control of the II Corps of the Fifth Army. With the 6th South African Armored Division on its right and the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, on its left, it covers a front line sector of approximately three thousand meters on the left flank of the II Corps. The squadron is performing and operating at the present time primarily in an infantry role, although its use of OP's, listening posts, and dismounted patrols affords it excellent training.

II AGF TOPIC LIST:

1. With reference to questions contained in G-3 Topic List, 6 January 1945, Inclosure to AGF letter 461/2019(GNGBI), subject:- Topic List, dated 12 January 1945, Sections I, II, and III are covered in detail in recommended changes to T/O & E, 27 November 1944, forwarded to Headquarters AGF under date of 23 January 1945. Sections IV and V are covered below, the information having been furnished by Major Elgin E. Sanders, Executive Officer of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized, 10 February 1945

"TACTICAL EMPLOYMENT:

1. MISSIONS

a. Reconnaissance: At the present time this squadron is being employed in a dismounted defensive situation which requires numerous security, reconnaissance and combat patrols that are principally for the purpose of determining enemy dispositions, identity and suitable routes for future advances. Due to the perfect visibility and the necessity for occupying the forward slopes of high mountain ranges, it is impossible to perform other than night patrols.

The front now covered is approximately three thousand meters. The peculiar condition of the terrain requires patrol work to extend as far as four thousand meters over rough ground while under constant observation and mortar range of the enemy. This situation requires that a patrol many times must spend two days to accomplish its mission.

The composition of patrols, as found most suitable by this squadron is relatively small. Security and reconnaissance patrols are usually composed of three or four men and one NCO. More hazardous reconnaissance patrols are composed of approximately eight men, one NCO and one officer. Combat patrols are composed of approximately sixteen men two NCO's and one officer.

b. Combat, other than reconnaissance: Though plans were recently formulated for use of this squadron in dismounted attack, it was not so used. During the last 3½ months this unit has been employed in defensive combat with

extensive use of security and reconnaissance patrols and combat patrols sent out to capture prisoners for identification purposes.

2. MOUNTED AND DISMOUNTED EMPLOYMENT

The tactical employment of this unit has been approximately half mounted and half dismounted. The method of employment of course, depends entirely on the terrain, amount of demolitions, strength of the enemy defenses and other variables which may demand any combination from completely mounted to completely dismounted action.

The reconnaissance squadron must be rapidly and easily converted, to any degree of combination from mounted to dismounted action. Occasions of particularly rapid developments have required that complete conversion be made within a space of a very few hours. The ease with which this conversion can be accomplished depends entirely upon the precombat training and the combat employment of the squadron in that combination role in the attack and defense.

A greater percentage of the precombat training of this unit was in the mounted work. Consequently, when first actually in combat there was a reluctance among the troops to dismount and continue forward dismounted. Constant necessity and practice in combat has proven the worth and any reluctance has been removed allowing the unit to be more fluid than any other unit of equal size.

To improve the flexibility of the squadron a change in the small arms within the unit has been recommended. (See recommended changes dated 27 Nov 44.) This change was recommended principally to bring a better balance in arms for the varied work of mounted, reconnaissance and dismounted work both at night and during the day. The differences as brought out is that longer range and accuracy of fire is needed during the day while speed and compactness are needed at night.

3. REMOVAL OF OBSTACLES, INCLUDING MINES.

At present there is no T/O & E allowance for more than light demolition chest for use by reconnaissance troops. Since there is no engineer squad or platoon, the reconnaissance platoon must do all its own road clearing and mine lifting unless the corps or division has sufficient engineer troops to assist you in that role. They usually have about 50% enough engineers in a fast moving situation so you still do your own engineer work, fighting hours of delay, even though you continue dismounted and let the vehicles wait until engineers can get far enough forward to clear the roads of craters and blocks.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND CONTROL.

Communications and control are very good. Recommendations as made in letter dated 27 November 1944 are for a slight revamping to conform to the best methods of netting and speed of communications developed after a period of 24 months training in the United States and 26 months of operations overseas. Several additional of the larger sets are needed because of the great distances

the squadron is often forced to cover. The complete elimination of the SCR 538 is requested because men and equipment have been lost due to the inability of members of tank platoons to warn each other of impending attack from a fluid flank.

The present communication equipment in the squadron is apparently designed for fast moving situations alone. In this theater, however, there is less than 50% of combat time spent in moving rapidly. Therefore, it is imperative that adequate telephone equipment be provided in the T/O & E to take care of defensive and slow moving attack situations. Unless so authorized, it is often difficult to obtain this equipment when badly needed.

5. LESSONS LEARNED AND TRENDS.

a. The cavalry reconnaissance squadron must be able to do anything. It must be self-sufficient to the point of asking help from no one except long range artillery. By this statement I do not mean that the squadron should be able to do the job of a division. The equipment issued should be such that it is efficient to operate alone mounted or dismounted and the state of training should be high enough to enable performance of cavalry, infantry, engineers, artillery, attack or defensive missions equivalent to any unit equal in size.

b. The reconnaissance squadron is a little task force. It lacks a pioneer and demolitions platoon and a dismounted element either built into the reconnaissance platoons or as a separate troop. The need for a horse troop has been felt seriously during the Tunisian, Sicilian and thus far in the Italian campaigns.

c. Strictest of discipline in soldiering, maintenance, supply, training and teamwork are essential. Any degree short of near perfection is a waste of manpower and material.

d. 'Sneak and peak' reconnaissance is very good if it is possible. It is seldom possible. Experience has shown that boldness, tempered with caution and common sense used to fight for information gets results. Temerity or hesitancy in the face of ordinary delaying action will result in no information and no advance.

e. A squadron CP cannot be operated efficiently and to the best interests of corps and army headquarters with the present authorized tentage and equipment. There must be sufficient room for two large maps to cover the corps front on 1:25,000 scale. There must be an operations tent where only the S-3, S-2, squadron commander, executive officer and enlisted men's section can work. There must be tables, chairs and a truck. A reliable electric generator set is indispensable because good map work is impossible under poor lights. Sufficient tentage should be provided for the other sections of a squadron headquarters because bad weather retards work and efficiency to a serious extent.

Include in the CP set-up only the operations command, and communications and guard or detail set-ups. The inclusion of any more, that is the S-1 and personnel, is cumbersome and unnecessary. The later sections operate more efficiently by remaining at a rear echelon with the squadron maintenance and supply sections.

The basic reason for a well equipped operations section is the necessity for the wide coverage of friendly and enemy information demanded of a unit of this type of corps and division headquarters. This information extends over more than a corps front because of the sudden moves from one flank of the corps to the other that are often required of this unit.

f. A thorough knowledge and study of maps and aerial photographs are essential for accurate reconnaissance. The responsibility for an error in location affects not only the platoon or troop involved, but the corps plans, because corps depends on the reconnaissance squadron for absolutely accurate information.

6. CHANGES IN DOCTRINE:

a. The former tendency for a reconnaissance squadron to depend mostly on mounted reconnaissance has been found to be incorrect in this theater. Good reconnaissance will be accomplished when a coordinated mounted, dismounted, and air team is designed and trained as a unit. It should be created, used and trained as a team because such a trained team only is capable of overcoming the confusion caused by the strain of fierce combat.

b. The use of the tank company as a unit is practically non-existent. Habitually the tanks, if used, are attached, by platoon, to the reconnaissance troops.

The assault guns are used either in battery or attached, by platoon to the reconnaissance troops. Usually, where the situation is mobile and the reconnaissance troops are widely separated, the assault guns are attached for support, and are fired by forward reconnaissance platoons on targets of opportunity using radio for communications and reconnaissance platoon leaders to sense the fire. Whenever the squadron is employed in a defensive section, the assault guns are set up in battery, wired for telephone, fired in on defensive concentrations and are fired by the assault gun platoon leaders from OP's through the troop 'Fire Direction Center'.

c. The prompt recording, action and file of every telephone and written message received day or night within this squadron, has been found to pay valuable dividends. In this way messages are properly coordinated with the bulk of information received and therefore can be properly evaluated.

TRAINING:

1. Because this unit is the only one of its kind in this theater, replacements for the combat elements must be trained for the work by this unit. Since there is little or no training time other than combat, replacements must be infiltrated among experienced men in the midst of combat with the hope that they learn fast enough to get through the training stage without becoming a casualty.

Replacements received by this unit are not trained in mechanized cavalry. September 1942 was the last time that a shipment of cavalry replacements were received. Most replacements have been with infantry training, quite a few from armored force, and very few from cavalry.

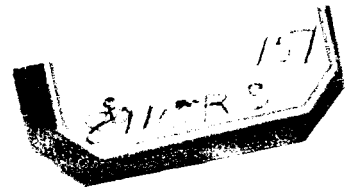
It is particularly desired that replacements for this unit come with cavalry training."

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ARMY GROUND FORCES BOARD
HTOUSA



Report No. 505

UNCLASSIFIED

22 June 1945.

REPORT OF OPERATIONS OF 91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE TROOP, MECHANIZED,
DURING BOLOGNA - PO VALLEY OFFENSIVE

(Reported by Colonel T. Q. Donaldson, Jr., Cavalry)

Observer's note: 1. The attached report of operations of the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized, during the Bologna - Po Valley offensive, was obtained from Captain Clifford E. Lippincott, Cavalry, the troop Commander.

2. This troop operated with its parent unit, the 91st Infantry Division, commanded by Major General W. G. Livesay, under the control of II Corps of the Fifth Army.

3. It will be noted that this troop was not employed in general as a unit. The division commander, particularly during the latter part of the campaign, assigned the various platoons to work with regiments and a separate task force. As brought out by the troop commander, there were times when conflicting orders might result from such a situation, and which could readily cause him embarrassment. However, such was not the case, and the results obtained by this troop were most gratifying.

1 Inclosure
Appendix 1

Classification cancelled or changed to
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JOAN I. GRANT
Captain, Armor
Ch. Secy & Doc Branch

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91ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE TROOP
(Mechanized)
APO 91, U. S. Army

25 May 1945

SUBJECT: Report of 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, Mechanized.

TO : Colonel T. Q. Donaldson, AGF Board, F.A.A. C, APO 777, U. S. Army.

1. In compliance with letter Army Ground Forces Board, MTOUSA, A. P. O. 777, U. S. Army, dated 4 May 45, the following report is submitted:

a. In preparation for the initial push off, the mission of the troop was to initially assist the infantry attack by fire from 37mm guns of the light armored cars, to be prepared in case of a breakthrough to push rapidly forward in the division zone and maintain contact with the enemy, to establish and man division OP's as directed. For disposition of the troop see Overlay "A". In addition to supporting the attack by 37mm fire, two mortar crews, with 81mm mortars were attached to "H" Company, of the 362d Infantry Regiment. Prior to the jump-off, the guns of the armored cars were registered on pre-arranged targets as requested by the infantry regiment. With the data obtained and using "luminous buttons" the troop fired one thousand and seventy-six (1,076) rounds during the general preparatory fire. On the 17th of April the 361st Infantry Regiment requested fire on Mt. Adone and vicinity. In reply to this request the eight (8) guns of the 1st and 3d platoons fired 2,546 rounds of 37mm HE.

Initially, two division OP's were established--No. 1 by the 1st platoon and No. 2 by the 2d platoon. On the 18th of April OP No. 3 was established on Mt. Adone by the 2d platoon. On the 19th of April, OP No. 2 abandoned as useless and OP No. 1 was moved to the vicinity of M. Pesigliano.

b. On the 21st of April, the troop's mission was changed to precede the infantry assault elements in the division zone and maintain contact with the 6th South African Armored Division and assault regiments. To accomplish this, one platoon was assigned the mission of maintaining the contact--one armored car and 1/4 ton truck (peep) was with each assault battalion CP and the remainder of the platoon was with the 6th South Africans and there were no friendly troops known on the right flank of the division. It was mutually agreed that instead of the forward reconnaissance, a flank screen was more necessary. Thus a platoon was given the mission of gaining contact with friendly troops on the right and screening the flank until close contact could be obtained. The other platoon was held in reserve.

On the 22d of April, the troop CP, 2d platoon and the trains were together just north of Highway 12. The 1st platoon continued to screen the right flank of the division. The 3d platoon reported positions of advance elements, when possible, and made liaison with the elements of 361st and 362d Infantry Regiments and 6th South Africans. The front was moving so fast that when night fell, the trains had moved within a few hundred yards of a pocket of resistance. The entire night was punctuated with strafing German planes, enemy mortars and machine gun fire; yet by noon the next day the division CP,

Quartermaster and Ordnance were well ahead of them.

The 23d and 24th of April found the troop still moving north at every opportunity. The 2d platoon had relieved 3d platoon in screening the left flank of the division and reporting advance elements when possible. Third platoon was in reserve resting and 1st platoon was attached to 362d Infantry Regiment screening the right flank of the division. During the 24 hours, 31 prisoners were taken.

From the Po River to the end of the activities in Italy, the troop performed its missions with exceptional success. In particular its services as a component part of the "task forces" were particularly fine and deserving of detailed accounts. These assignments had a pure reconnaissance flavor and were performed with highly gratifying results.

First platoon characterized their period of operation from 25 April to 1 May with these words, "Travelin, Shootin', No Eatin', No Sleepin'".

On the 25th of April in compliance to Field Order 47, in which the 91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was to reconnoiter well forward in the division zone in the direction of Legnago, Cerea, and Belvone, the 1st platoon was to work in conjunction with 363d Infantry Regiment and 3d platoon in conjunction with 361st Infantry Regiment.

The platoons were held up most of the morning of the 26th by the difficulties encountered in getting their heavy vehicles across the Po River. In the meantime the infantrymen had crossed the river and gone on ahead. First platoon, when they had finally crossed the Po, caught up with the doughboys near Legnago where their preparations for crossing the Adige River were being hampered by enemy machine gun fire from the right rear flank. Italian Partisans reported approximately 100 Germans by the river. With two tanks attached, the 1st platoon took off with several partisans as guides to find the Jerries. They located several pockets and took 23 prisoners, who had given up when they found themselves covered. There were signs that other enemy forces had withdrawn so the 1st platoon returned to the regiment. Once in the town of Legnago the commanding officer declared the mission accomplished and the platoon was relieved.

On the 27th the platoon was ordered to report to General Livesay, who assigned them to "Task Force George", which was composed of 3d battalion of 362d Infantry Regiment, 12 tanks, 6 tank destroyers and attached medics. The task force's mission was to leave Colonga, hit Highway 1091 and work its way to the city of Vincenza. In the morning of the 27th, while this force was grouping, 1st platoon was given the task of finding the best way to the highway and to gather any enemy information of value. Working cautiously out from the town of Colonga in the afternoon, the first obstacle they encountered was a huge German field piece that was in the process of being knocked out by an American plane. As soon as the piece had been wrecked the platoon continued on. Suddenly out from a road that angled into the one they were on came a Jerry peep containing a German major and captain, who were immediately captured. Continuing in their surprise advance, the platoon next ran into four Jerries on bicycles, who were also taken prisoners. Slowly the armored cars and peep approached the outskirts of the town of Colcredo. In

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the reconnaissance of this town the platoon leader, 1st Lieutenant Edwin P. Riede, was killed by small arms and anti-tank fire. Running into strong enemy opposition here the platoon withdrew. Pulling back the platoon came across a German convoy. They poured 37mm and machine gun fire into the column, although darkness somewhat obscured the targets and the effect of the fire on them. After this brief skirmish, one armored car returned to the "Task Force" which had assembled by this time. Joining up with the main body, the formation was briefly as follows: 2 armored cars, next the tanks, then the tank destroyers followed by the infantry mounted in trucks, the medics, and the remainder of the reconnaissance platoon acting as rear guards.

In the small hours of the morning of the 28th of April the task force passed through Colorado, this time meeting no opposition. Just before reaching the highway the leading vehicles engaged in a short fire fight in which one German vehicle was knocked out. Hitting the highway the force started north toward Vincenza. There was sporadic small arms fire from both sides of the road but it was so ineffective that it was by-passed without harm. Around a bend in the road and at full speed straight into the column came a German motorcyclist. Machine gun fire cut him down. Moving along slowly but steadily a fire fight developed on the left and a tank was knocked out. Still farther north on the highway what appeared to be four vehicles and a group of men in the early daylight later proved to seven vehicles. After a fierce fire fight the enemy was destroyed. In this short engagement several prisoners were taken and a small ammunition dump hit. Just as daylight began to peck through the hills and trees another short engagement resulted in 100 prisoners. Resistance was stubborn all along the way. Each time the column stopped to clean up a pocket, the rear of the column would be fired upon. Actually there were times when there were two separate fights going on within the column. Sergeant Clark in the lead vehicle spotted a road block and called up a tank which began machinegunning enemy personnel around the block. This drew small anti-tank fire and although the tank was hit ten times it was not knocked out, testimony to the ruggedness of Allied equipment. Fortunately none of the platoons armored cars were hit in this engagement. The road block cleared, movement was detected in a field to the right of the highway. Fire from the tanks set a haystack in the field into a blaze and disclosed an enemy SP gun nearby. While the tanks rendered this useless the platoon armored cars sprayed the field. With the approaching of a group of houses, tanks pulled up and fired into the buildings. The enemy returned with small arms fire so the infantry dismounted and methodically mopped up the resistance. In spite of the stubbornness of the enemy, prisoners were taken. Continuing up the highway harassing fire was met every 200 or 300 yards but again it proved ineffective. In the late afternoon and at about 6 kilometers from Vincenza all resistance ceased and it was here that a little comical relief appeared. Sergeant Rogach in one of the leading armored cars spotted a man walking up the road toward them. Watching him all the way, at 100 yards he was identified as English. As he drew abreast of the car he turned and with a typical cockney accent said, "Where the 'ell 'ave you been? I've been watin' two bloody years for you blokes. "

On the outskirts of Vincenza the task force contacted a similar force from the 361st Infantry Regiment, which had been spearheaded along a parallel route to the city by 3d platoon. The objective had been reached and the force rested and waited while Sergeant Stock in an armored car drove an

infantry lieutenant back to Cologne for orders. On the way back, over the route they had just fought their way over, the two came across an abandoned 88mm alongside the road. Its appearance was somewhat mystifying as it had not been there when they had come up the highway.

Orders came back for the task force to proceed along Highway 53, cross the Brenta River and move beyond it for 2 or 3 kilometers where the 361st task force would take over their task from there.

At 0230 on 29 April, with the 4 armored cars in the lead, 1st platoon led the force out of Vincenza on Highway 53 half way to the Brenta River; small arms fire from the flank stopped the column. As this resistance was cleared up, a peep from the 38th Infantry Division came up with the startling news that their task force was surrounded at the river. This news had hardly been given when General Livesay came up and the column moved on to where the 88th force was pinned down. Evidently the presence of the 362d Infantry Regiment force relieved the situation. Although very little firing ensued. One armored car crossed the river with the infantry, no others followed as the river bed was sown with butterfly mines. This car returned shortly with the news that the objective had been reached. At 1200 on the 29th the 1st platoon was relieved and reverted to troop reserve.

The 30th saw the platoon catching up on some badly needed sleep, servicing their vehicles and securing their equipment.

The action of the 2d platoon during this same period, 25 April to 1 May, is as follows:

On the 25th, 2d platoon laid claim to the fact that it was one of the first units in the division to have heavy vehicles cross the Po River. Although the platoon was officially in troop reserve, Staff Sergeant Robert Eshleman was ferried across the river by the engineers at approximately 1000. Once across the river the two vehicles began the reconnaissance of several bridges across canals and for awhile acted as liaison with forward elements.

On the morning of the 27th on verbal orders from division G-2, the 2d platoon moved southeast from Legnago along the Adige River checking towns and contacting friendly forces. Early in the afternoon the platoon met elements of the 6th South African Armored Division. A little later without engaging in any kind of a fight the platoon captured five Russians who said they had been forced into the German Army. Getting low on gas, the platoon returned to the troop CP, where the trains had joined them. After filling their vehicles the platoon went east again on Highway 10, crossed the river at Legnago and reached the city of Colonga at 1700. Inasmuch as Colonga was newly cleared and there were still by-passed pockets of resistance in its vicinity, the 2d platoon was ordered to establish outposts around the town for the night.

Relieved from this duty on the morning of the 28th a new mission was given them. The town of Sossano hadn't been cleared and the platoon was to go up and clear it. Picking up two partisans as guides, who said they knew where the Germans were hiding, the men and vehicles set out over a back road. About one mile from the town they saw a column of Germans in the distance walking down a railroad track. With all eyes on these men, the platoon

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almost failed to notice that the ditches along the road they were on, were full of Germans. The leading three armored cars almost passed them completely before they were sighted. Suddenly someone spotted them and the fight was on. Once fire on, the Jerries, approximately a company of them, opened up with small arms. As the platoon's fire power began to tell, some of the Germans took refuge in a ditch alongside a building. However, 37mm fire from the armored cars bursting against the building just over their heads drove the Jerries out. Such fire was actually improvised aerial bursts. The front and the rear of the platoon column were each fighting a separate battle. For approximately 10 minutes it lasted and then the Germans gave up. Several of them were killed, more wounded, including their commanding officer, and 67 were taken as prisoners. The platoon had not suffered a single casualty. While the prisoners and the wounded were being escorted to the rear the rest of the platoon went on to Sessano. Reaching the village they found it cleared of enemy but they reconnoitered a small bridge over a canal beyond the town before they pulled back for gas and ammunition. That evening they received a new mission. They were to travel that night so as to relieve the 1st platoon northeast of Vincenza on Highway 53.

At 1200 on the 29th of April, the 2d platoon relieved the 1st platoon on Highway 53 just before the Brenta River. Supposed to contact the 363d Infantry Regiment, the platoon crossed the river and failing to find any elements of the infantry there began to work the roads parallel to the river to gain any enemy information.

Early on the morning of the 30th working back to Highway 53 the platoon finally contacted the 363d Infantry Regiment at 0700. The commanding officer gave the platoon the mission of clearing out resisting Germans (1) in the vicinity of Spinoda; (2) in Castolfrance; and (3) in surrounding areas. These orders were carried out methodically and efficiently and at the end of the day the platoon reported to the 363d Infantry Regiment assembly area.

On May 1st the 2d platoon was ordered to clean out Montebeluna and its vicinity of the Germans reported to be there. Reaching the town partisans greeted them and informed them that there were Germans there who wished to surrender Major General Zwade and his staff to the 2d platoon.

An estimated 1300 soldiers gave up also. The general surrendered his personal pistol to 1st Lieutenant Franco, the platoon leader. Lieutenant Franco requisitioned buildings in the town for PW enclosures, gathered all surrendered arms, sent the general and his staff back to division headquarters, and awaited orders. When trucks and personnel from the division arrived the platoon was relieved and rejoined the troop just outside of Treviso.

On the 25th of April at 1800, the 3d platoon was ferried across the Po River at Sermide with orders to report to 3d Battalion of the 361st Infantry Regiment, although their exact location was unknown. At the small village of Ponto the platoon ran into a small fire fight and encountered a road block which forced them to turn their vehicles around under fire and withdraw. The 362d Infantry Regiment later cleared this area. Contacting the commanding officer of the 361st Infantry Regiment the platoon started a joint mission with the infantry at about 2300. They were to reconnoiter roads in the area of Legnago. Working out in front of the doughboy force about 11 kilometers the platoon reached the outskirts of Legnago without

meeting any resistance. Stopping near the main highway leading to the town, the men heard heavy vehicular traffic ahead of them. Taking every precaution the platoon turned their vehicles around and continued to listen. A tank detached itself from the enemy column on the highway and was coming their way. The platoon withdrew and reported this information to the commanding officer of the 361st Infantry Regiment and the mission was completed at 2400.

On the 26th of April the platoon joined the 361st Infantry Regiment but remained inactive waiting for orders to move their vehicles across the Adige River.

At 1715 on the 27th the platoon crossed the river at Legnago and traveled the rest of the day to contact the 361st Infantry Regiment which had crossed the river previously. They joined the regiment just north of Colonga.

On the 28th of April the 3d platoon became a part of the task force to work its way from Colonga to Vincenza by means of secondary roads. The force was composed of 3d Battalion of 361st Infantry Regiment attached tank destroyers and the 3d platoon of the reconnaissance troop.

As the column pulled out it was formed in the following manner: The three armored cars (platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and section sergeant) in the lead, the three tank destroyers, the platoon's peeps and last the infantry mounted in trucks. One armored car and one peep was left with the regiment for communication purposes. Heading northeast, the column encountered no opposition for seven or eight miles and then it came upon a tank trap. By-passing this to the southeast the column reached Orangia, where it met another trap. Partisans came up and told the men that there were Germans on a nearby hill who could direct fire on the road. The three armored cars flanked the hill to the left and attacked the Germans. In the ensuing fire fight the doughboys were called up and with supporting fire from the armored cars the area was cleaned out and approximately 100 prisoners were taken. With the prisoners being escorted to the rear the force continued on its mission for another five miles. Encountering ten Germans with two bicycles around a bend in the road, eight of them surrendered and remaining two were killed. Partisans came up and pointed out dug-in positions ahead near the road and claimed there were Germans in them. The column shot up these positions although there were no signs of enemy about. One mile south of Vincenza the force came up a secondary highway which led into the city. Walking down the highway were six Germans. The leading vehicles began firing and the Germans scattered into the fields along the road. One, however was captured and the tank destroyers came up and proceeded to shell the field. Moving into the outskirts of town they met the 362d task force. Together they moved into town to find elements of the 88th division already there. They stayed in Vincenza all night.

The next morning, the 29th of April, the 3d platoon was still attached to the 3d Battalion of the 361st Infantry Regiment. The task force from 362d Infantry had moved ahead to secure a bridgehead across the Brenta River on Highway 53 but had met resistance 6 kilometers northeast of S. Pietro and were being held up. The four armored cars of the 3d platoon, with accompanying peeps, were sent out along to the southeast in search of

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another river crossing in the vicinity of Grantorto. Moving out they had gone about a mile when they ran into a group of partisans who reported some twenty Germans in a house on the left of the road. The armored cars moved up, covered the houses and the Germans came out and surrendered. As the Germans filed out of the house, one long German came up from the other direction waving a white flag saying there were thirty more nearby, who wished to surrender. A peep was sent up and they were marched back. Together again the platoon proceeded down the road until Partisans stopped them and reported fifteen Germans sleeping in a barn. Five men dismounted and went to the place where they captured the sleeping men. These prisoners were turned over to an infantry peep which had come up on the column's rear.

Sergeant Olson with two armored cars had moved some distance down the road and come upon some thirty-five Germans shaving, washing and preparing breakfast. Capturing them they were also turned over to the infantry men in the peep. The two armored cars waiting for Sergeant Olson in the meantime had spotted four Jerries walking down the road. When they were about fifty yards from the cars, Staff Sergeant Trahan ran out towards them and with a pistol. Seeing the Americans for the first time, three of the enemy started running. Staff Sergeant Trahan fired one shot at one who dropped his rifle in order to make better speed, while one was hit by machine gun fire and another captured by a partisan. The German who had immediately given himself up was searched and four knives were found concealed in his clothing. The wounded man was removed to the rear, and the platoon regrouped before it proceeded on its mission. A mile farther on Partisans again reported Germans in a house just off the road, who wanted to surrender. With the armored cars covering, the Partisans, they brought them out. Finally arriving in Grantorto they found the town clear and received a message to disregard the mission and return. At 1400 the platoon was on its way back when Partisans reported many Germans in a house 300 yards off the road. With two armored cars covering and two moving on the house, over seventy Germans came out and gave themselves up. Two peeps were called up to take charge of the prisoners and march them back to the rear. With the prisoners on their way under the charge of Corporal Greaney and Corporal Hibbs, the remainder of the platoon headed back to the highway. Reaching it they found it packed with traffic but finally managed to work their way in. Just as they had done so a message came from the two peeps with the prisoners for the platoon to return as there was liable to be trouble back there. The platoon turned off the crowded highway at the next road only to find it filled with knocked out vehicles. Using the leading car as a bulldozer the platoon began to push its way back to the two peeps.

In the meantime Corporal Greaney and Corporal Hibbs, who were guarding their prisoners as they marched along the road had sighted eight or ten heavily armed Germans crossing the road ahead of them. They stopped the column of prisoners and watched the Germans ahead, who had now spotted the peeps. For a few minutes both parties just stared, then a Partisan went forward and talked with the Germans. On his return he told Corporal Greaney that the men ahead wished to surrender. Expecting a trick, Greaney and Hibbs went forward cautiously. The non-commissioned officer in charge of the group said in his broken English that he wished to give up so Greaney had them throw their arms into a nearby canal. Just as they did this, Germans swarmed out of nearby houses. This was when the peeps called to the platoon for help.

Two officers came up to Greaney and Hibbs and wanted to know what was going on. Greaney explained and asked them if they wished to surrender also. One officer, a captain, said he had no intentions of doing so. Hastily Greaney and Hibbs began to tell him how hopeless his position was and the captain hesitated. Finally he agreed, only to insist that he would surrender only to an officer. Hibbs persuaded the captain, and the other officer, a major, to get in his jeep and he would take them to the platoon leader where they could surrender to him. Just as Corporal Hibbs' car pulled away the platoon came up and covered the entire group of Germans with the armored cars. All German weapons were dumped into the canal and they were lined up with the original group of prisoners. At the highway they came across Hibbs and the surrender was completed. Farther down the road they turned the entire group, 350 men, over to the MP's. They had captured a complete paratroop battalion.

In rejoining the 3d battalion, the platoon ran into traffic trouble. Finally they crossed the Brenta River and continued on Highway 53 to Cittadella, where they were supposed to meet the infantry, but when they arrived the doughboys had left. East of the town the platoon column, led by the four armored cars (platoon sergeant, platoon leader, and the armored section sergeants) followed by the jeeps, came upon an infantry major in the ditch by the side of the road, who said he had spotted some Jerries. At first investigations failed to disclose any. However, before the column moved, four Germans were seen and when the platoon opened fire, fifteen more rose up in the field waving white flags to surrender. These prisoners were turned over to the major and his driver.

After a short but fierce fire fight in the town of Vedalago the platoon drove on through the town toward the outskirts where they shot up a group of enemy vehicles, turned over the captives to a group of Special Police, who came up the highway behind the platoon. Six more prisoners walked into surrender farther down the road. Just outside the town of Ist-rana, the platoon finally contacted the rear of the 3d battalion column which had been separated from the front part of the column when it had been attacked by a number of Germans. When the 3d platoon came up the fight had just ended and the infantrymen had captured 400 Germans. Leaving two platoons and two tank destroyers to guard the captured men the rest of the doughboys prepared to move on and rejoin the front part of their column. A formation was made up and with two of 3d platoon armored cars in the lead followed by two tanks, the rest of the reconnaissance platoon and the trucks of infantrymen, the group set out. The column traveled slowly as it was dark and the surrounding areas were than likely infested with the enemy. Along the road on the left the leading elements of the column saw several parked wagons but paid them little attention thinking they had already been knocked out. Suddenly there were cries of, "Hault! Hault!", in a very foreign tongue and ahead across the middle of the road there appeared a wagon as a road block. Sergeant Trahan in the leading car had passed the wagons by this time and to give some sort of warning to the rear of the column he fired three shots at three cyclists which loomed up in the darkness. Those were the only shots fired. The point M-8 crashed through the flimsy road block in a true cavalry charge and the whole force proceeded down the road. One kilometer farther down the road there was a brief fire fight but it was too dark to see the results. Continuing another two kilometers, they met a jeep from the 3d battalion, which was returning from the advance elements of the battalion

to see what had happened to the rear units. They had just realized that they had been split into two parts. With this poop as a guide the column moved up to the outskirts of Treviso, where it joined the rest of the infantryman. Everyone remained here for the remainder of the night.

On the morning of the 30th of April at 1100 the platoon moved out on Highway 53 to secure a bridgehead across a river north of the city. However, it had already been secured that morning at 0300 by the British so they returned to Treviso. Here they were ordered by the division to patrol the highway between Castelfranco and Treviso; an engineer convoy had been ambushed east of Veduggio. The patrol composed of four armored cars began between 1200-1300 hours. At Veduggio they participated in a small fire fight. Spreading their armored cars through a convoy of MPs, anti-tank men and Headquarters Company, 91st Infantry Division, the platoon escorted them safely through to Treviso. Returning they picked up another convoy consisting of divisional headquarters and signal company; this convoy was escorted through without trouble. By 1900 hours traffic on the highway was so thick that the platoon ceased patrolling and with their mission completed they settled down for some well earned rest before rejoining the troop.

c. General Remarks:

(1) The organization of the platoon as outlined in the previous report submitted, four (4) armored cars and five (5) 1 1/4 ton vehicles per platoon has worked very satisfactory. It will be noted that many times during the action described above it was not uncommon for a column to be engaged in all-around or two separate fights at one time. By having this additional armored car, the platoon commander was able to divide his force and still maintain a force with sufficient fire power in each. The mission of maintaining liaison with assault elements was also expedited by the four armored cars per platoon as it gave the platoon leader four high-power FM sets (SCR-508). He was able to place one armored car and 1 1/4 ton with each assault battalion and one armored car and 1 1/4 ton with each regimental command group. Many times these units would be separated beyond the range of the commonly used SCR-110.

(2) The organization of the troop as outlined in the last report is still in effect with the exception of two 6 x 6 trucks in lieu of two half-trucks in the supply section and the liaison radio is now mounted in a 3/4 ton weapons carrier instead of a 3 1/4 ton G & S car. This organization still believes the redistribution of the vehicles is advisable. During the past operation--which was ideal for light armored mechanization--the troop was able to maintain its mobility, readily effect re-supply, able to maintain communications and make maximum use of its available fire power.

(3) During previous operations the trains moved quite independently of the troop CP, moving only when the time and space distances required. The troop command post likewise moved on an independent axis from the division CP. During this operation, however, the division command axis was followed and the troop's trains moved with, or followed by a few hours, the troop CP. The trains bivouac area was as near to the troop CP as possible. The reserve platoon was also kept in the immediate vicinity of the command post. As most every daily move was from 10 to 20 miles and the emphasis was on forward

traffic it was impossible for the platoons to return a messenger very far for supplies, thus the supplies had to be kept well forward.

(4) For coordination with the infantry regiments, the regimental commander, regimental S-3, the troop commander and the platoon commanders, would get together and work out the details. The troop's mission would be viewed in the light of how it could be accomplished the best and assist the infantry regiments. Many times the platoon, though working on a division mission would be taking orders from the regimental commander or the assault battalion commander. This may appear to allow for the development of conflicting orders; but on the contrary, it enhanced the dissemination of information and made for closer cooperation of all concerned.

/s/ Clifford E. Lippincott
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