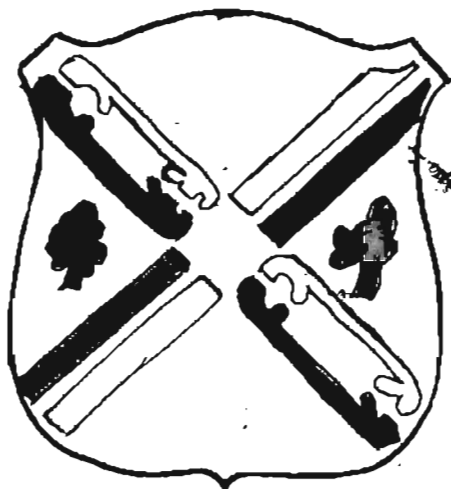


C O N F I D E N T I A L

*after* ACTION REPORT

MONTH OF  
OCTOBER 1944

RALLY 'ROUND THE FLAG



115<sup>TH</sup>

INFANTRY REGIMENT

I. Summary of Operations.

B. Phase #11 - Facing the West Wall.

1. Developing the situation.

The units of the 115th Infantry Regiment on 1 October 1944 were in positions South and West of GELLENKIRCHEN with the 1st and 3rd Battalions occupying the Regimental sector, the 3rd Battalion on the right between GILLRATH and GANGLT, the 1st Battalion on the left between TEVEREN and GILLRATH and the 2nd Battalion in Regimental reserve. The tactical plan in operation was for the 115th Infantry to develop the situation and exert pressure on the German positions covering the Siegfried Line. During the day active patrolling, both reconnaissance and combat, were carried out by the 1st and 3rd Battalions with the initial objective of seizing the high ground along the line LANGHROICH-WALDENRATH-HATTERATH-GELLENKIRCHEN and to prepare on order after relief of patrols, to continue the line HEINSBERG-TRIPS-RATH-GELLENKIRCHEN. Strong combat patrols, operating to the North and Northeast contacted the enemy and encountered mortar, artillery and small-arms fire throughout the day from the vicinity woods North of GILLRATH-KREUZERATH-BIRGDEM. The 2nd Battalion remained in Regimental reserve in positions South of STANE.

At 0100 hours 2 October the 1st and 3rd Battalions attacked to seize their respective objectives. The mission assigned to Lt. Col. Johns, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, was to capture HATTERATH and the surrounding wooded area and upon completion of that task to push forward and secure TRIPS-RATH. During the night moderate enemy resistance was encountered while the Battalion pushed on and by 0700 hours seized and secured the town of HATTERATH. One platoon of medium tanks from the 747th Tank Battalion supported the drive. The 3rd Battalion, with one platoon of light tanks and one platoon of medium tanks in support, moved forward to clear the enemy from buildings at KREUZERATH, and at the same time by close coordination with the medium tanks, succeeded in closing in on the Southern portion of BIRGDEM. Both Battalions encountered moderate resistance in the form of artillery and heavy automatic small-arms fire but by early morning they had taken their objectives. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion, in Regimental reserve, reorganized preparatory to being committed at 1400 hours. The immediate goal was the woods in the vicinity of HANIBUSCH. The Battalion moved off on schedule with Companies "H" and "G" in column, attacking through positions of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. Again resistance was encountered but by evening the objective was attained. The Regiment consolidated its defenses along a line HATTERATH-BIRGDEM-KREUZERATH and maintained contact with the enemy by constant patrolling throughout the remainder of the day and night.

On 3 October all Battalions were in the line in the Regimental sector, from right to left the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions. At 0830 hours the 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry Regiment was attached to the 115th Infantry and by 1355 hours elements of the 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, were relieved by that unit. The 1st Battalion, 175th Infantry, immediately dispatched strong combat patrols toward GELLENKIRCHEN, maintaining pressure upon the enemy situated there. Having regrouped, the 1st Battalion, 115th Infantry, at 1730 hours launched an attack from HATTERATH toward the Southern edge of woods Northwest of NIEDERHEIDE. This attack was stopped by a heavy concentration of enemy small-arms and mortar fire emanating from woods to North and East of HATTERATH. With the enemy obviously basing his defenses

On villages, an attack was meanwhile launched to complete the destruction of enemy positions in the towns of KREUZATH and BIRDSH and in the woods West of HATTERATH. The 2nd Battalion, with Companies "E" and "G" on the line, launched an attack at 0800 hours. Progress was very slow and local counterattacks were encountered. By 0940 hours Company "G" was reported 300 yards short of its objective; by 1030 hours Lt. Col. Anthony J. Miller, Jr., Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 118th Infantry, reported that the Southern part of woods in the vicinity of HAMBUSCH had been cleared and that Company "G" was in process of clearing the northern portions. Other Battalion units also slowed by heavy mortar and artillery fire, nevertheless, continued to inch forward. By end of day the 2nd Battalion was still in the process of attaining its objective.

The 3rd Battalion resumed its attack at 0600 hours in conjunction (with the 2nd Battalion) with the initial objective of clearing the towns of KREUZATH and BIRDSH. Despite heavy resistance the Battalion completely cleared the enemy from strongpoints within BIRDSH and KREUZATH and at 1035 hours Company "K", under Captain Waldo S. Schmidt, launched an attack on SCHIEWALDENRATH. In spite of heavy resistance the Company reached and occupied positions within the town of SCHIEWALDENRATH itself. In doing so, heavy casualties were inflicted on the German forces. Repeated enemy counterattacks, however, by reserve elements made the positions of the Company untenable. By the following morning communications with the forward elements were cut and the Battalion was forced to hold in the positions from which the attack had been launched. Company "K", depleted by the action, was relieved by Company "H".

With the attack of the 3rd Battalion still developing and the situation obscure, another push designed to improve the positions of the Regiment was planned for 2400 hours 3-4 October. Again the 1st and 2nd Battalions made night attacks on woods North and East of HATTERATH but were unable to advance against strong enemy resistance. The attack was resumed at 1000 hours toward objectives in the vicinity of HATTERATH. The 1st Battalion advanced approximately 200 yards into the woods but was later forced to readjust in the face of heavy enemy resistance in the form of heavy artillery, mortar and small-arms fire which made the advanced positions of the Battalion untenable. The 2nd Battalion attacked at 0600 hours to capture SCHIEWALDENRATH and WALDENRATH. The Battalion was able to advance slightly against strong enemy resistance. The 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry, attached, continued to defend its sector conducting active patrolling against the enemy at GILLRATH.

## 2. Active defenses.

The period 5-6 October was characterized by constant patrolling, probing enemy defenses and reconnoitering in order to gain information for necessary future operations. At 0800 hours 5 October the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry, was relieved of attachment and reverted to parent-unit control. The regiment continued to defend its sector with 2nd and 3rd Battalions on the line; the 1st Battalion reorganized in reserve positions in the vicinity of GILLRATH.

On 7 October the 1st Battalion was committed to action in the form of a raid on the town of SCHIEWALDENRATH. The mission assigned to the Battalion was to attack under cover of darkness, destroy the town and the enemy positions within the town and with-

draw. Simultaneously, Company "I" was to attack and secure a group of buildings Northeast of BIRGDEM on the SCHIERNWALDENRATH-BIRGDEM road. The 1st Battalion, with Company "A", 121st Engineers attached, began its movement at 0400 hours. After overcoming slight enemy resistance the Battalion reached its objective and leveled the town. In the action ninety-nine (99) Germans were captured and an estimated equal number were casualized. At 0830 hours the Battalion successfully withdrew. At the same time Company "I" attacked and seized its objective to secure the right flank of the 1st Battalion during the raid. Throughout the day the 2nd Battalion, defending the right sector of the Regimental area, continued to improve its positions and maintain contact with the enemy. At 2130 hours the 3rd Battalion was relieved in positions by the 1st Battalion.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions on the line on 9 October continued to defend their sectors and improve the defenses by construction of field fortifications. The 3rd Battalion, less Company "L", reverted to Regimental reserve. Company "L" relieved Company "E" in position on the outskirts of BIRGDEM at 1150 hours and assumed responsibility of defense of the sector; Company "E", returning to Battalion control, rejoined its parent unit. At 2130 hours the 3rd Battalion, 175th Infantry, was attached to the 115th Infantry and replaced the 1st Battalion on line. The 1st Battalion assembled in the vicinity of GANGELT and was placed in Division reserve.

During the period 9-11 October activity was confined to reconnaissance and combat patrol activity, and minor readjustments of positions and improvement. The 1st Battalion remained in Division reserve, conducting rehabilitation training with emphasis on disciplinary and battle drills, and rifle marksmanship. The 3rd Battalion, less Company "L", remained in Regimental reserve and conducted training activities until 10 October when the 3rd Battalion was committed in the left sector of the Regimental zone of action. At 1700 hours 11 October the 3rd Battalion, however, reverted to Division reserve and was again withdrawn from forward positions. Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion, 175th Infantry, continued to defend its sector of the Regimental area and maintain contact with the enemy by aggressive patrolling. The 2nd Battalion remained on the right of the Regimental sector throughout the period.

The Regiment, on 12 and 13 October, continued to defend its sector with the 3rd Battalion, 175th Infantry, on the left and the 2nd Battalion on the right. Reverting to Regimental control at 0600 hours 13 October, the 1st Battalion at 1845 hours completed relief of the 3rd Battalion, 175th Infantry. The latter unit then returned to its parent organization. The period of relatively inactivity was sharply punctuated on 13 October when a raiding party composed of elements of Company "G" and one squad of Company "A", 121st Engineers C Bn, was dispatched to destroy enemy positions in the WALDENRATH area, notably a tower used by the Germans as an Observation Post. Under cover of darkness the party succeeded in approaching the tower and in placing and detonating demolitions; the tower was completely destroyed.

During the period 14 October to 20 October the 115th Infantry continued active defense of its sector without change in the position of or relief of the forward elements. Patrol activities in the absence of offensive operations, however, were intensified. Both combat and reconnaissance patrols were utilized to the utmost in maintaining physical contact with the German forces. The 3rd Battalion remained in the Division reserve area near GANGELT and conducted training activities with particular emphasis on es-

ordinated infantry-tank assault operations. It was returned to Regimental control on 17 October to conduct a night raid against BUSCHERHEIDE. The operation was begun at dusk on that date. The mission was a limited success; extremely heavy resistance consisting of artillery fire, and high velocity and machine gun fire from well-emplaced positions prevented the Battalion from penetrating the positions in BUSCHERHEIDE. On completion of the raid the units returned to its reserve status until 1845 hours 20 October when it was released to occupy the positions of the 2nd Battalion on the right of the Regimental zone of action. The 2nd Battalion was, in turn, placed in Division reserve.

The dispositions of the Regiment remained unchanged until relief of the 1st and 3rd Battalions was completed by elements of the 407th Infantry at 1800 hours 30 October. Two significant raids were conducted, however, prior to the relief. Companies "B" and "L" during the night 28-29 October were assigned the missions of moving on WALDENRATH and on the woods Northeast of HATTEKRATH respectively, of killing or capturing all Germans within those positions, destroying all enemy materiel and obtaining information regarding the strength and dispositions of German forces. Both Companies achieved limited success in approaching their objectives. Company "B" experienced considerable difficulty, however, when two of the leading platoon leaders and a platoon sergeant became casualties by anti-personnel mine explosions. Nevertheless valuable information was acquired regarding the enemy defenses in the WALDENRATH and HATTEKRATH areas.

On relief, the Regiment, less the 2nd Battalion which remained in its reserve area, moved to an assembly area North of EIGELSHOVEN for reorganizing and rehabilitation. All units were reported to have closed into the area by 1345 hours 30 October. Action was being taken to begin training and rehabilitation activities as the month ended.

On the whole the action of the 115th Infantry during the month of October began to assume the characteristics of stabilized warfare. Offensive action during the early days of the month developed the existence of strong German covering positions in front of the West Wall. It was before these positions that the Regiment occupied defensive positions to contain and exert pressure on the enemy.

## II. Forces Engaged.

The situation existing throughout the month of October was that both the Regiment and the German forces opposing the Regiment occupied active defensive positions. This permitted far closer investigation of the German defensive dispositions than has been possible under other conditions. Similarly the Germans have undoubtedly been able to discover a great deal regarding the practices and tactics of the Regiment in combat operations.

The enemy positions during a large part of the month were generally on the line SCHIEWWALDENRATH-PUTT-WALDENRATH-STRAETEN. Their defenses consisted largely of field fortifications employing to the best advantage any material which might have been available locally. By constant work in that direction the positions were constantly improved.

In line with the German policy, the units occupying the forward positions were rotated as frequently as possible. In general, however, the following units were identified most frequently:

167th Gren. Bns. Bn.  
II Bn 352nd Gren. Regt.  
II Bn 351st Gren. Regt.  
I Bn 351st Gren. Regt.  
163rd Inf. Div.

During the first stage of the current phase of operations, the development of the situation, heavy casualties were undoubtedly inflicted on the enemy forces engaged. A prisoner of war statement, for example, indicates that on 3 October Company "X" alone inflicted 20 to 30 casualties requiring medical evacuation. Enemy casualties during the later defensive operations were probably moderate. Slightly over 200 prisoners of war were taken during the month.

### III. Battle Casualties for October 1944.

#### Infantry

	KIA	DOW	DOI	SWA	SIA	LWA	MIA	LIA	TOTAL	DTY	TOTAL
Officers	1	0	0	8	1	11	9	0	30	8	38
Men	42	3	0	100	1	202	190	40	578	38	616
Totals	43	3	0	108	2	212	199	40	608	46	704

#### Medical Detachment

	KIA	DOW	DOI	SWA	SIA	LWA	MIA	LIA	TOTAL	DTY	TOTAL
Officers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Men	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	6	1	7
Totals	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	6	1	7

#### 115th Casualties - All Branches

	KIA	DOW	DOI	SWA	SIA	LWA	MIA	LIA	TOTAL	DTY	TOTAL
Officers	1	0	0	8	1	11	9	0	30	8	38
Men	42	3	0	102	1	203	193	40	584	39	623
Totals	43	3	0	110	2	214	202	40	614	47	711

#### Field Grade Officers

None.

#### IV. Awards and Decorations.

##### A. Number of awards by type during October 1944.

Silver Star Medal	-	17
Bronze Star Medal	-	131
Bronze OLC - Bronze Star Medal	-	19
Purple Heart Medal	-	34
Bronze OLC - Purple Heart Medal	-	2
Combat Infantryman Badge	-	718
Expert Infantryman Badge	-	180
Good Conduct Medal	-	358
Good Conduct Clasp	-	79



**V. Changes in Regimental Staff and Battalion C.O.'s.**

Colonel Edward H Mc Daniel 016497 assigned as Regimental Commander 5 October 1944 vice Lt. Col. Louis G. Smith 0105017, transferred.

Major William E Druning 0376650 relieved as Regimental S-3 3 October 1944 and assigned as Regimental S-2 vice Captain Lucian P Laberde 0382433, transferred.

Major Albert G Warfield 0409305 assigned as Regimental S-3 5 October 1944 vice Major William E Druning 0376650, relieved.

## VI. Battle Lessons.

1. In clearing villages it is important that the unit be restrained from the tendency of breaking into small groups, entering the houses and allowing themselves to be defeated in detail. Suspected houses should initially be attacked with grenades. If, then, it is necessary to enter the house, all around security should be provided from the outside.

Similarly, it is impossible to properly defend an area from positions within houses. Groups in buildings can too easily be surrounded, isolated and defeated individually.

2. Combat patrols regardless of size can and should be equipped with communications equipment to enable them to call for prearranged fires. Mortar fire is particularly effective in support of such groups. This practice has been used in a number of instances and has been found to be of invaluable assistance in the accomplishment of the mission of the patrol.

3. There are frequently situations in which there is a need for units smaller than a squad to be able to operate independently. In addition squad leaders are frequently unable to individually control the action of all members of the squad. Rifle squads should therefore be trained to operate as three four-man combat groups.