

70TH INFANTRY DIVISION HISTORY

APRIL

During the opening days of April the elements of the 70th Infantry Division were moving into a new area assigned to division responsibility by the Third Army. The division was attached to the Third Army for operations, but was still attached to the Seventh Army for administration. The 70th Infantry Division continued in SHAEF Reserve.

The first units to be relieved, in the general area LANDSTUHL-KAISERLAUTERN-OTTENBERG-REICHENBACH, in accordance with OI # 30, issued 30 March, consisted of Division Artillery, the 70th Recon Troop, the 270th Engineer (C) Battalion, the 370th Medical Battalion and Clearing Station, and the 433rd AAA AW Battalion. Division Artillery and the 70th Recon Troop closed into their respective areas on the last day of March.

The Division CP closed in Otterberg and opened at Bad Kreuznach at 021100B April. On this day the 70th Infantry Division assumed responsibility for Third Army lines of communication and rear areas, generally, RHINE RIVER-BOPPARD-BRAUNSHOHM-STROMBERG-OBERNDORF-OPPENHEIM.

OI # 31, published and issued on 020800 April, instructed the infantry regiments and Division Artillery to relieve elements of the 270th FA Battalion and to assume responsibility for the tactical guarding of bridges at Oppenheim, Nierstein, Mainz, Gau Bickelheim, Hochstatten, Boppard, St. Goar, and Bad Kreuznach.

In the same instructions, the 570th Signal Company was directed to furnish personnel and equipment for installation at Director Headquarters in Oppenheim.

By nightfall of 2 April the component units of the division had closed into the new area. The 274th Infantry CP was located in Gonsenheim; the 1st Battalion in Gonsenheim; the 2nd Battalion in Obr-Olm; 3rd Battalion in Oppenheim. The 275th Infantry CP was located in Gau Algesheim; the 1st Battalion in Ober Helbersheim; the 2nd Battalion in Spremlingen; the 3rd Battalion in Worsheim. The 276th Infantry was located in Rheinbollen; the 1st Battalion in St. Goar; the 2nd Battalion in Werlau; and the 3rd Battalion in Weiler.

The Division Artillery CP was located in Windesheim; the 725th FA Battalion in Hargesheim; the 882nd FA Battalion in Munster; the 883rd FA Battalion in Heddeshheim; and the 884th FA Battalion in Schweppenhausen.

The 270th Engineer (C) Battalion was located in Budesheim; the 370th Medical Battalion and Clearing Station in Bad Kreuznach; the 70th Recon Troop in Bad Munster; and the 433rd AAA AW Battalion in Oppenheim.

The varied duties of the division consisted of mopping up; continuous patrolling and traffic control on the MHR, secondary roads, and along the Rhine River; guarding bridges, underpasses, public utilities, military installations, and factories; the administration of civil and military government and Displaced Persons Camps; and garrison duty.

In the course of patrolling the woods near Waldalgesheim on 2 April, Company K, 276th Infantry was fired upon by three SS troopers, armed with machine pistols. Two men were promptly killed and the third was captured. Investigation by the division CIC Detachment uncovered the fact that these men were members of the Waldalgesheim SS sabotage cell. The secret hiding place of the cell, containing food, ammunition and explosives, was located in the Elisenhehe mine near Bingen. A guard was maintained at the mine to trap other possible suspects in the sabotage organization.

The similarity between the Waldalgesheim cell and the Saarbrucken cell, uncovered on 25 March by the detachment, revealed the existence of an extensive sabotage organization. The hiding place of the Saarbrucken cell, in a well camouflaged underground location in a small park of that city, contained the largest secret cache of enemy demolitions, ammunition and food-stuffs seized in the Seventh Army. The 70th CIC Detachment carried on the investigation of leads discovered on 4 April. Automatic arrests were secretly made of numerous suspects in Bad Kreuznach.

On 3 April curfew hours in the division area of 1900 to 0700 was established. Civilian vehicles and handcarts were forbidden on Main Supply Routes.

During the day elements of the 275th Infantry and the 276th Infantry began movement to adjust to boundary changes. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 276th Infantry moved to Boppard and Weiler respectively. Bingen, east of the Nahe River, was now placed under control of the 275th Infantry; Bingen, west of the Nahe River, came under command of the 276th Infantry.

Warning orders were issued to the 2nd Battalion, 275th Infantry for movement to Weisbaden.

The following day, 4 April, word was received at Division Headquarters that enemy snipers were harassing railroad

personnel. Protection was requested after an American officer was wounded. Although the action was outside of the 70th Division zone, the Division Commander immediately ordered the 276th Infantry to furnish personnel to guard and ride the trains coming into the division area from Bad Kreuznach to Neunkirchen.

During the day elements of the 2nd Battalion, 275th Infantry closed in Weisbaden.

OI # 32, issued 4 April, confirmed the verbal orders adjusting the boundaries between the 275th Infantry and 276th Infantry, and instructed the 70th Ren Troop to move to Bad Kreuznach immediately. The Ren Troop was ordered to establish road blocks, to patrol the city, and to relieve elements of the 70th Division Artillery guarding bridges 274 and 259.

OI # 33, of the same day, provided a schedule of availability of the 70th Infantry Division Band for the units of the division.

Following the receipt of verbal orders from Third Army, the Commanding General ordered the 275th Infantry to garrison Coblenz with one battalion and the 274th Infantry to furnish guards for a Displaced Persons Camp at Gonsenheim.

The 3rd Battalion, 275th Infantry (- Companies K and M) began movement to Coblenz to relieve the 13th Armored Division. Company K, 275th Infantry began the relief of Company B, 275th Infantry in Saarbrücken. Simultaneously the 1st and 3rd Battalions,

274th Infantry effected relief of elements of the 785th MP Battalion, and assumed responsibility for security of the Gonsenheim Camp.

OI # 34 of 5 April confirmed the verbal orders issued the day before and elaborated upon the duties of the 275th Infantry in Weisbaden. In the same Instructions, the 70th Ren Troop was attached to 70th Division Special Troops for operations only.

The Director Headquarters at Oppenheim was discontinued on 8 April by direction of OI # 35.

On 10 April, in compliance with OI # 36, elements of the division continued the move across the Rhine River. OI # 36 instructed the 275th Infantry to relieve the 11th Infantry in Frankfurt. Division Artillery was to relieve the 275th Infantry in the area west of the Rhine River. The 276th Infantry was to relieve Division Artillery on the Nahe River bridges and installations.

By nightfall of 10 April, elements of the 882nd FA Battalion relieved the AT and Cannon Companies, 275th Infantry. Concurrently the 1st Battalion, 276th Infantry relieved units of Division Artillery on bridges 289 and 290. Company L, 276th Infantry had relieved guards of the 275th Infantry on bridge 295 at Bingen.

On 11 April the 275th Infantry (-) closed into Frankfurt. Company L, relieved in Coblenz where Company I continued garrison

duty, assumed guard responsibility of German hospitals, north of Frankfurt. The 2nd Battalion remained in Weisbaden. Company K was still in Saarbrücken.

The 276th Infantry opened a new CP in Stromberg. The 1st Battalion, relieving Division Artillery, closed into Heddesheim as the 2nd Battalion moved into St. Gear.

Division Artillery Headquarters moved into Spremlingen. During the day the component units of Division Artillery opened new CP locations: The 882nd FA Battalion in Ober Ingelheim; the 883rd FA Battalion in Aspelsheim; the 884th FA Battalion in Hackenheim; and the 725th FA Battalion in Florsheim. Division Artillery Air strip was located northeast of Bodenheim.

On 11 April the 70th Infantry Division was relieved of attachment to the Seventh Army for administration and was attached to the Third Army for administration and operations.

During the following day news was received of the sudden death of President Roosevelt. Units of the division were notified and services planned. Memorial services were held on Sunday 15 April, at Bad Kreuznach. Lt Col Duane M. Witt, AC of S, G-1 officiated and Lt Col Loren T. Jenks, division chaplain, delivered a eulogy on Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The band participated in the services. The Division Commander and his Staff were in attendance. A five minute period of silence at 1500 was observed by all troops in the command.

To augment existent security procedures, the Division

Commander directed that all highway and railroad bridges would be inspected daily for demolitions. Roving patrols were ordered to remain overnight in unoccupied towns to prevent enemy knowledge of towns actually occupied by American troops.

The 275th Infantry, during 13 April, relieved elements of the 551st AAA AW Battalion in guarding four Displaced Persons Camps in the vicinity of Hochst, and also furnished guards for a PW Camp in Oberursel. The 3rd Battalion (-) 275th Infantry, relieved in Coblenz by the 209th FA Battalion, moved into Frankfurt.

The 433rd AAA AW Battalion closed into Rudesheim by 1700 of the same day. Batterys A and D were relieved of providing LAA protection of the bridge in the vicinity of Oppenheim and assigned LAA protection of the bridge in the vicinity of Bingen.

Following receipt of a report that the train guards of the 276th Infantry had been fired upon in the vicinity of Bad Munster, the Commanding General directed the 70th Rcn Troop to prepare an ambush in that area. The ambush was to be prepared prior to daylight of 15 April. A thorough search of the area for snipers was unsuccessful.

On 17 April the 70th CIC Detachment apprehended an important SS trooper in Bad Kreuznach who was sought in the sabotage organization. Within the following four days sixteen

confessed saboteurs were arrested, leaders and members of sabotage cells in Trier, Weinsheim, Rhaunen, Wolf, Ehrang-Longwisch, and Bad Kreuznach. Information was secured on eleven other cell units in the Moselle region, outside of the 70th Division area, which was transmitted to higher headquarters. A detailed description of the work of the 70th CIC Detachment, described by the SNAEF countersabotage officer as the largest sabotage case uncovered in the ETO, is included in the Twelfth Army Group Intelligence Summary for the week ending 8 May 1945.

During the week of 16 April to 23 April, the 70th Infantry Division completed the movement of all units across the Rhine River. The reshuffling of units in new areas was contingent upon the relief of the elements of the division, west of the Rhine River, by the Fifteenth Army. OI # 38 of 16 April, subsequently amended in part by OI # 39 of 17 April, directed the movement.

OI # 38 ordered the 274th Infantry to relieve the 2nd Battalion, 275th Infantry in Weisbaden; the 276th Infantry to relieve Company L, 275th Infantry, and move into a new area in the vicinity of Hanau; and the Division Artillery and the 270th Engineer (C) Battalion to relieve the 276th Infantry.

During the afternoon of 16 April, Company K, 275th Infantry, relieved from duty at Saarbrucken, closed into Frankfurt.

Action on OI # 38 was postponed temporarily by Third Army order. This was rescinded several hours later, however. OI # 39 was in compliance with Third Army order to replace the 2nd Battalion, 275th Infantry at Weisbaden and to move two-thirds of the 276th Infantry as soon as possible. Only those orders in OI # 38 pertaining to the 276th Infantry and to the 70th Division Artillery were amended in OI # 39.

The 276th Infantry less one company was directed to move into the new area commencing 171200 April. The company was to rejoin the regiment upon relief by the 550th FA Battalion. At the same time, Division Artillery was to relieve the 276th Infantry on guarding bridges on the Rhine and Nahe Rivers.

The 276th Infantry closed in the vicinity of Hanau at 1700. The regimental CP was located in Hanau. The 1st Battalion opened in Roth; the 2nd Battalion in Windecken; and the 3rd Battalion in Samborn.

In the same period the 1st Battalion, 274th Infantry relieved the 2nd Battalion, 275th Infantry in Weisbaden which began movement into Frankfurt. Division Artillery units were in the process of moving into the new area.

The reorganization of the division units within the area east of the Rhine River continued for several days. In OI # 40, issued on 181200 April, the 274th Infantry was directed to

relieve Division Artillery and move remainder of regiment to new area when relieved by the XXIII Corps; the 276th Infantry was directed to move into a new area in the vicinity of Darmstadt and relieve elements of the Seventh Army in the new area; and the Division Artillery, the 270th Engineer (C) Battalion and the 70th Ren Troop were directed to move east of the Rhine River by 20 April.

All reliefs west of the Rhine River were completed by elements of the Fifteenth Army by 202030 April.

The following morning Division CP closed at Bad Kreuznach and opened in Frankfurt.

The 274th Infantry CP was now located in Schierstein while its 1st Battalion was located in Biebrich; the 2nd Battalion in Hochheim; and the 3rd Battalion in Bad Schwalbach. The 275th Infantry occupied Frankfurt. The 276th Infantry CP opened in Darmstadt with its 1st Battalion in Seligenstadt; the 2nd Battalion in Gross Gerau; and the 3rd Battalion in Urberach.

Division Artillery CP closed in Bad Nauheim. The 882nd FA Battalion was located in Weilmunster; the 883rd FA Battalion in Butzbach; the 884th FA Battalion in Kronberg; and the 725th FA Battalion in Assenheim. The 270th Engineer (C) Battalion closed into Florsheim and the 70th Ren Troop in Hanau.

Elements of the division relieved the 11th Belgian Fusileer Battalion in Frankfurt, Hanau and Assenheim. In its new area the 276th Infantry effected the relief of the 103rd Infantry

Division on numerous installations. Concurrently the 274th Infantry relieved the 558th FA Battalion guards in Limburg.

Effective midnight of 21 April, the 70th Infantry Division was released from SHAEF Reserve and constituted as Third Army Reserve. The division was no longer required to be prepared to assemble on 24 hours notice.

OI # 41 of 22 April instructed all units to submit, as an inclosure to the daily unit report, a list of all guarded installations with locality, coordinates, type of installation and organization furnishing guard incorporated in the list.

A survey of the several hundred installations under division responsibility revealed that railroad bridges and stations; supply, signal and ammunition dumps; hospitals; airports; underpasses and overpasses; military and civilian government buildings; electric plants, transformer stations, dams and public utilities; food, grain and medical warehouses; roadblocks, roads and MRs; Reichsbanks in Frankfurt and Hansu; steel mills, machine shops and factories; Prisoner of War, Allied Prisoner of War, and Displaced Persons Camps were being guarded and patrolled.

The continued success of the American forces in Germany necessitated further adjustments in the division area. Upon completion of unit movements by 29 April, in compliance with OI # 43 of 27 April, the division area, roughly a huge triangle - BAD NAUHEIM-DARMSTADT-WURZBURG- covered several thousand square miles.

Elements of the 274th Infantry occupied the area around Darmstadt. The 276th Infantry, after being relieved by the 274th Infantry, closed in the vicinity of Wurzberg. Division Artillery continued in Bad Nauheim. The Division CP and the 275th Infantry remained in Frankfurt. The 270th Engineer (C) Battalion moved to Bad Schwalbach. The locations of the 370th Medical Battalion and the 70th Rcn Troop remained unchanged.

On the last day of the month a report of werewolf activity was submitted by the Third Army. The 70th Rcn Troop was immediately dispatched to the area of Ruppertsburg to investigate. Three SS troopers were discovered and offered resistance. In the fire fight, one SS man was killed and the others captured and held for interrogation.

In the course of mopping up operations 3319 prisoners were taken by the division during the month of April. In this same period 33 persons on the SHAEF automatic list were apprehended by the CIC. All these were individuals who held prominent offices in the Nazi Party or in Nazi controlled organizations. Sixty-three other Germans, considered potential menaces to the security of American Forces, were arrested in the Bad Kreuznach-Mainz area.