

ACC

10000/120/3655

E I

Eng. Tr

May 6-14, 194

10000/120/3655

E I

Eng. Training

May 6-14, 1945

105
108

Subject :- Report on Eng Trk and Equipment of 104 Eng Bn,
Italian Combat Group MAROVA as at 1800 hrs 12 May 45.

56 BLU
1 R

124 May 45

To :- GE Main 8 Army.

From :- Major P.D. Hammond. RE 56 BLU.

105

1. TRAINING.

(a) Training has again been interrupted during the past week by two days holiday. Both 4 Pz Coy and 79 Pz Coy have done a Bailey Bridge scheme, and a bridge demolition scheme, and a practice minefield has been laid and afterwards removed by 79 Pz Coy.

(b) 79 Pz Coy built an 80' D/S Bailey on an easy site in 7 hrs, using one platoon. The off loading of the stores had been done the previous day. This is a slow time due to dumping of stores in building area, slowness in setting out building rollers and general slowness in the building itself. The task was, however, done entirely without Sapper supervision.

4 Pz Coy built a 70' D/S Bailey on a restricted site in 6 1/2 hrs, using 1 Platoon. The stores had been off loaded the previous day, once again within the building area. This, together with the same slowness in setting out the building rollers and the same slowness in building, resulted in the same slow time. Here again, though, the task was done completely without Sapper supervision.

The minefield laid by 79 Pz Coy was laid as designed by Capt Gentle SO RE III, and the mines were well concealed, and a correct land mark, datum point and datum line were used. The minefield record was poor, mainly because the minefield record pro-forma was not used. However, the record produced was good enough to enable another Platoon of the same Coy to successfully lift the minefield the following day. The times for both tasks were fair, and both tasks were done without supervision.

The bridge demolition schemes were not done at all well. Dummy explosives and accessories were used and the Coys were given ample warning to get these "laid on". The results were very poor, and very little attempt was made to make the dummy charges as realistic as possible. Each Coy had two bridges to recon and prepare, for Hasty Demolition i.e. cutting the span only. The recon reports and sketches were very poor, although it was obvious, the officers knew where and how to cut the girders. The actual fixing of the dummy charges and the layout of the firing circuits was also very poor, with the exception of one task where necklaces of dummy 808 in hessian were used to cut the main members of a wooden girder bridge. A reasonable attempt had been made in this case to do the job well. The amounts of explosive required were calculated by using Italian formulas and difficulty is experienced in converting these into the equivalent quantities of British explosive. The best and most practical method to overcome this would be by trial and error. There was little enthusiasm for these demolition tasks, due to the badly made dummy explosives and the natural feeling that they would now never have to perform such tasks. This is, perhaps, excusable in the circumstances.

1. TRAINING.

(a) Training has again been interrupted during the past week by two days holiday. Both 4 Pz Coy and 79 Pz Coy have done a Bailey Bridge scheme, and a bridge demolition scheme, and a practice minefield has been laid and afterwards removed by 79 Pz Coy.

(b) 79 Pz Coy built an 80' D/S Bailey on an easy site in 7 hrs, using one platoon. The off loading of the stores had been done the previous day. This is a slow time due to dumping of stores in building area, slowness in setting out building rollers and general slowness in the building itself. The task was, however, done entirely without Sapper supervision. 4 Pz Coy built a 70' D/S Bailey on a restricted site in 6 1/2 hrs, using 1 Platoon. The stores had been off loaded the previous day, once again within the building area. This, together with the same slowness in setting out the building rollers and the same slowness in building, resulted in the same slow time. Here again, though, the task was done completely without Sapper supervision.

The minefield laid by 79 Pz Coy was laid as designed by Capt Gentle SO ME III, and the mines were well concealed, and a correct land mark, datum point and detun line were used. The minefield record was poor, mainly because the minefield record pro-forma was not used. However, the record produced was good enough to enable another Platoon of the same Coy to successfully lift the minefield the following day. The times for both tasks were fair, and both tasks were done without supervision.

The bridge demolition schemes were not done at all well. Dummy explosives and accessories were used and the Coys were given ample warning to get these "laid on". The results were very poor, and very little attempt was made to make the dummy charges as realistic as possible. Each Coy had two bridges to recon and prepare, for Hasty Demolition i.e. cutting the span only. The recon reports and sketches were very poor, although it was obvious, the officers knew where and how to cut the girders. The actual firing of the dummy charges and the layout of the firing circuits was also very poor, with the exception of one task where necklaces of dummy 808 in heaviest were used to cut the main members of a wooden girder bridge. A reasonable attempt had been made in this case to do the job well. The amounts of explosive required were calculated by using Italian formulae and difficulties is experienced in converting these into the equivalent quantities of British explosive. The best and most practical method to overcome this would be by trial and error. There was little enthusiasm for these demolition tasks, due to the badly made dummy explosives and the natural feeling that they would now never have to perform such tasks. This is, perhaps, excusable in the circumstances.

(c) As a result of these training schemes the following conclusions are drawn :-

- (1) Both coys can build simple, single span Bailey Bridges without supervision, but the time is nearly double that of a British Pz Coy. For larger and more complicated Baileys, it is considered Sapper supervision and guidance is necessary.

-2-

(ii) The Bn can lay and remove minefields but Sapper guidance is still necessary in preparation of records.

(iii) The Bn is not capable of producing a realistic training scheme in demolitions when dummy charges have to be used, showing lack of enterprise and initiative on the part of the Coy Comds and their officers. It is considered that if real explosives were used for a definite demolition task, Sapper supervision is still essential.

(a) No further directive has yet been received as for what purpose the Group will be used in the future but the Eng Bn are continuing with their training during the coming week. Two No. 4 Pumping Sets have been obtained together with 3 tanks and training will be given in their use. Each platoon will also do two two-day convoy runs, practising movement and harbouring, and also have one day for internal economy on stores, vehicles, kits and billets. A two-day Group exercise without troops is also being held during the week, and the HQ's of the Eng Bn will participate in this.

2. PERSONNEL.

(a) Major Fenoglio has now returned to duty as CRE, which should help the Eng Bn HQ organization.

(b) Leave for Italian personnel is now in operation at the rate of 5% of the unit strength away at the same time, thus reducing the numbers available for training.

3. EQUIPMENT.

(a) All personal weapons of the Bn have been inspected during the past week by a British armorer and were found to be generally satisfactory.

(b) G 1098 explosives and accessories have not yet been drawn, and it is not intended to do so until more definite orders regarding the future employment of the Group are received.

107

4. GENERAL.

The following observations are made as a result of the past two weeks study of this Eng Bn :-

(a) If the MANTOVA Group was used in its proposed operational "holding role", the Eng Bn is capable of carrying out the tasks it would be called upon to do, but still with British Eng advice and guidance.

(b) If the Group is required for mobile offensive operations approaching our own Divisional standards, the Eng Bn would require at least a further 3 months military and sapper training, with proper courses for officers and NCO's at an ESN. The number of vehicles in each coy would have to be brought up to British Rd Coy WS to enable the coys to be fully mobile. Even after this extra training and with the extra vehicles, a British Eng Liaison unit would still be necessary to give advice to the Eng Bn for a period during operations, the length of this period depending entirely upon the capabilities of the Eng Bn at that time.

training during the coming week. Two No. 4 Pumping Sets have been obtained together with 8 tanks and training will be given in their use. Each platoon will also do two two-day convoy runs, practising movement and harbouring, and also have one day for internal economy on stores, vehicles, kits and billets. A two-day Group exercise without troops is also being held during the week, and the HQ's of the Eng Bn will participate in this.

2. PERSONNEL.

(a) Major Fenoglio has now returned to duty as CRE, which should help the Eng Bn HQ organization.

(b) Leave for Italian personnel is now in operation at the rate of 5% of the unit strength away at the same time, thus reducing the numbers available for training.

3. EQUIPMENT.

(a) All personal weapons of the Bn have been inspected during the past week by a British armorer and were found to be generally satisfactory.

(b) G 1098 explosives and accessories have not yet been drawn, and it is not intended to do so until more definite orders regarding the future employment of the Group are received.

4. GENERAL.

The following observations are made as a result of the past two weeks study of this Eng Bn :-

(a) If the MANTOVA Group was used in its proposed operational "Holding role", the Eng Bn is capable of carrying out the tasks it would be called upon to do, but still with British Eng advice and guidance.

(b) If the Group is required for mobile offensive operations approaching our own Divisional standards, the Eng Bn would require at least a further 3 months military and sapper training, with proper courses for officers and NCO's at an SAE. The number of vehicles in each coy would have to be brought up to British Fd Coy WE to enable the coys to be fully mobile. Even after this extra training and with the extra vehicles, a British Eng Liaison unit would still be necessary to give advice to the Eng Bn for a period during operations, the length of this period depending entirely upon the capabilities of the Eng Bn at that time.

(c) If the Group is required for Garrison Duties, the Eng Bn is capable of performing normal eng tasks i.e. road maintenance and improvement, dismantling Bailey Bridges, minefield clearance, re-building civilian bridges and improvements to billets, without close British Eng supervision.

-3-

British Eng Liaison would, however, still be necessary between the Italian Eng Bn and the Command under which the MANTOVA Group was serving.

In the field.
PMH/ec

[Signature]
Major RE.
56 HLU.

Distribution :-

CE Main 8 Army.
CSO I, 56 HLU.
SO RE, 56 HLU.
File.

106

Subject :- Report on the progress of 104th Regt
 Italy
 2 May 1945

56 REGT
 12

6 May 45

To: US. Main G Army.

From: Major P.D. Hammond, 25, 56 REGT.

1. TRAINING.

- (1) Very little training has been done during the past week, due to :-
- Both P.D. Coy's providing 3 mine clearing parties to search for mines in areas which the Group wishes to use for an exercise.
 - Hot weather for first 3 days of week.
 - 2 days holiday given by Group Commander to celebrate German surrender in Italy.

From (a) it is apparent that both coys can use their American pattern detectors and know how to sweep and search for mines. (About 2 dozen Volkswagens were recovered)

- (11) During the coming week, the Coys will do a Bailey Bridge exercise, lay a defensive minefield, and also receive instruction in the use of the No. 4 Pumping Set in the operation of a water point. (Sufficient stores have been released through local Dig channels)

2. EQUIPMENT.

- (1) Stores Platons have proper stores with staves. Receipt and issue vouchers are maintained. List of stores is maintained and stores are checked by Platoon officer fortnightly.

Stores could be kept cleaner and laid out better.

- (11) Vehicles. A recent maintenance inspection confirms that vehicle maintenance in the Regt is good. Standard of driving is not good but compares favourably with the rest of the Group.

There is now an LAD 4/5 104 Regt Bn but as yet it has insufficient spares. It is equipped with recovery vehicle and has a oxy-acetylene welding set.

3. GENERAL.

- (1) Although it is not yet known for what purpose this Group will be used in the future, it is intended to maintain with standard

1. TRAINING.

- (1) Very little training has been done during the past week, due to:-
- (a) Both 1st Coy's providing 3 mine clearing parties to search for mines in areas which the Group wishes to use for an exercise.
- (b) Wet weather for first 3 days of week.
- (c) 2 days holiday given by Group Commander to celebrate German surrender in Italy.

Even (a) it is apparent that both coys can use their American pattern detectors and know how to sweep and search for mines. (About a dozen Yellowbills were removed)

- (11) During the coming week, the Coys will do a Bailey Bridge scheme, lay a defensive minefield, and also receive instruction in the use of the No. 4 Pumping Set in the operation of a water point. (Sufficient stores have been released through local big channels)

2. EQUIPMENT.

105

- (1) Stores. Platoons have proper stores with stores. Receipt and issue vouchers are maintained. List of stores is maintained and stores are checked by Platoon officer fortnightly.
- Stores could be kept cleaner and laid out better.

- (11) Vehicles. A recent maintenance inspection confirms that vehicle maintenance in the Reg is good.
- Standard of driving is not good but improves favourably with the rest of the Group.
- There is now an LAD 2/5 104 Reg in but as yet it has insufficient spares. It is equipped with recovery vehicle and has a oxy-acetylene welding set.

3. GENERAL.

- (1) Although it is not yet known for what purpose this Group will be used in the future, it is proposed to continue with training during the coming week and endeavour to form an opinion as to the capabilities of the Reg Bn.
- (11) No reply has been received to the question in my last report regarding training in wet bridging, advanced Bailey bridging and use of M. It is therefore assumed training in these subjects is not considered necessary now.

Field.
FHE/co

Major RM
Att. 56 RM.

1815