

Historical Report, 24th Cav Ron Sq Mecz 1-31 July (19703)

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E. S. JOHNSTON Colonel, Infantry GUSTODIAN

P.O. Rag. # 1483044

HISTORY OF

24TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON MECHANIZED

FROM

5 JUNE 1944 THROUGH 28 JUNE 1944 Lt. Col. F. H. GASTON, Jr., Commanding.

- 1. HISTORY OF THE 20TH C VALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON MECHANIZED IN THE CHERBOURG CAMPAIGN.
- a. Name Campaign against the German forces occupying the CHERBOURG PENINSULA.
- b. Duration The 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized as a complete unit participated in this campaign from 17 June 44 to 28 June 44.
- c. Purpose To compel the surrender of the German forces in the CHERBOURG PENINSULA.
 - d. Authority Ordering Commanding General, ETOUSA.
- e. Narrative of the 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized participating in the CHERBOURG Campaign.
- (1) A detachment of Troop "B", consisting of 3 officers and 64 enlisted men, Captain WALES VAUGHAN, commanding, departed from England, 5 June 44, with the mission of seizing and holding the ILE du LARGE, northernmost of the ILES of St. MARCAUF, 6000 yards off the east coast of the COTENTIN PENINSULA, covering the approach to UTAH BEACH. The detachment assaulted the island at H-2 hours, on D-day, 6 June 44, and found it heavily mined but unoccupied. They held the island for two days suffering 9 casualties from exploding mines and hostile artillery fire and were relieved on the 8th of June at which time they moved ashore and provided local security for VII Corps Headquarters. They continued on this mission until the 16th of June, at which time they reverted to squadron control.
- England via SOUTHAMPTON, the 14th of June 44, and landed in FRANCE in the vicinity of St. MARIE du MONT, the 15th of June 44. The squadron was attached to the 4th Infantry Division the 16th of June 44, with the mission of relieving the 22nd Infantry Regiment and establishing a counter-reconnaissance screen along the high ground extending from QUINEVILLE, 4000 yards to the west. The 4th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop Mechanized, was attached, and the relief of the infantry was accomplished by midnight of the same day. The screen was established by the 4th Reconnaissance Troop, Troop "B", 1 platoon of Troop "A" and Troop "C", extending in that order from east to west, supported by the fires of Troop "E" with Troop "F" and Troop "A", less one platoon, in reserve. On the 17th and 18th of June, during the hours of darkness, small enemy patrols attempted to penetrate the screen unsuccessfully. During the same period the entire squadron zone received constant interdiction and harassing fires from enemy artillery and heavy mortars. On the morning of the 19th of June, Troop "C" was ordered to



secure a bridgehead on the north side of the SINOPE River in the vicinity of BOURG de LESTRE. This mission was accomplished with one platoon at 1027 hours; shortly thereafter the livings counter-attacked with an estimated reinforced infantry company, forth ratter layout the interest of the river after suffering 15 casualties. Took "I", Casual J. F. CHRITTENSEN, commanding, covered by a smoke screen, and preceded by a transfer preparation by Troop "E", recaptured the town at 1400 destroying an estimated 75 Germans and several anti-aircraft and machine guns, and forcing the enemy to withdraw to the north.

- (3) On the 20th of June orders were received from the 4th Infantry Division detaching the 4th Reconnaissance Troop and extending our zone westward to the vicinity of VAUDREVILLE and requesting reconnaissance north and east of the SINOPE River. Troop "A", with one platoon of Troop "E" attached, was moved to the left flank and given the mission of reconnoitering north along the St. MARTIN d' AUDOUVILLE Le VAST road to its junction with the VALOGNES QUETTEHOU road and of securing the bridge at HAU AUVRAY. This they accomplished at 2200 hours, capturing one German and de-arming the bridge which was prepared for demolition. They were then given the mission of reconnoitering east to QUETTEHOU which they reached and entered at 2300 hours. Troop "C", with one platoon of Troop "E" attached, was moved to the east flank and giv en the mission of reconnoitering north along the coast road to QUETTEHOU. This road was mined and full of craters and they only reached the vicinity of Le JARDIN at dark. Troop "B" continued to protect the division's right flank from QUINEVILLE to VAUDREVILLE. The squadron CP and Troops "E", less detachments, and "F" moved to the vicinity of VAUDREVILLE.
- (4) On the 21st of June, Troop "A" reconnoitered northwest to the vicinity of Le VAST, which was cleared of the enemy, and continued north to St. PIERRE EGLISE, and there began a reconnaissance west in the zine between those two towns; bounded on the south by De SAIRE River and on the north by the St. PIERRE EGLISE CHERBOURG road. By 1945 they were in contact with strong enemy forces along the line GONNEVILLE THEVILLE. Troop "C" reached QUETTEHOU at 1100 hours and continued north to BARFLEUR encountering no enemy resistance. Seven isolated Germans surrendered at various points along the route of advance of this troop. The squadron CP and Troops "E", less detachments, and "F" moved to the vicinity of HAU DOUCET. Troop "B" remained along the line QUINEVILLE VAUDREVILLE protecting the division's right flank and rear. Company "B" of the 801st TD Battalion was attached at 2200 and was given the mission of supporting the squadron, by fire, in its zone from a position in the vicinity of the QUINEVILLE ridge.
- (5) On the 22nd of June Troop "C" was given the mission of reconnoitering west in the zone north boundary ENGLISH CHANNEL, east boundary BARFLEUR, south boundary BARFLEUR CHERBOURG road. By dark they were in contact with the enemy main line of resistance, which was a series of fortified areas extending north from THEVILLE through COSQUEVILLE to the channel. The 4th Reconnaissance Troop was again attached to the squadron and initiated reconnaissance of the enemy positions at GONNEVILLE, relieving Troop "A" which was given the mission of protecting the right flank of the 22nd Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of PIN.BEL against strong enemy patrols which were infiltrating from the vicinity of GONNEVILLE. Troop "B" was moved north to the vicinity of the squadron CP in reserve. The squadron captured a total of ten prisoners this date.



- (6) Orders were received on the 23rd of June attaching the squadron to the 22nd Infantry with the mission of protecting the supply road from Le THEIL to PINABEL. The zone was divided into three sectors, with Troop "A" on the north, Troop "B" in the center and the 4th Reconnaissance Troop on the south. Troop "C" established a counter-reconnaissance screen from St. PIERRE EGLISE north to the channel and maintained contact with the enemy lines in that vicinity by means of small patrols. From this date through the 25th of June the squadron's mission remained unchanged while the 22nd Infantry attached and reduced the enemy's strong points in the vicinity of CONNEVILLE. During this period Troop "A" repulsed an enemy counter-attack at 1945 on the 23rd of June in the vicinity of PINABEL, killing 50 Germans, and forcing the remainder to withdraw. Troop "F" successfully attacked the village of PINABEL in support of the 22nd Infantry at 1000 on 23rd of June, killing 30 Germans, and assisting in the capture of many more. Two tanks were lost in this action by enemy anti-tank fire but both tank crews escaped by foot and later rejoined their troop. This troop came to the assistance of Troop "A" in its action at 1945 the same day and pursued the withdrawing Germans toward GONNEVILLE, killing an additional 50 Germans. Troop "F" in conjunction with the light tank company of the 70th Tank Battalion attacked GONNEVILLE in the vicinity of the BOIS de BLANQUEVILLE upon two seperate occasions on the 24th of June, as a diversion to cover infantry attacks in another sector. Both of the attacks and another, made singly on the 25th of June, failed to penetrate the enemy's defenses due to road blocks and tank obstacles. From the 23rd of June through the 25th of June inclusive the squadron captured 47 prisoners.
- (7) On the 26th of June the 22nd Infantry attacked north to the MAUPERTUS air-field with Troop "A" protecting their west flank and Troop "C" protecting their east flank. Troop "B" protected their supply road from Le THEIL to PINABEL. The 4th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered into squadron réserve in the vicinity of Le THEIL. Company "B" of the 80lst TD Battalion passed to the control of the 22nd Infantry. The squadron CP moved to the vicinity of HAU AUX PIQUOTS with Troop "E", less detachments, and Troop "F" in squadron reserve in the vicinity of the squadron CP. A total of 106 prisoners were taken by the squadron on this date.
- (8) The squadron mission remained unchanged on the 27th of June while the 22nd Infantry continued mopping up operations among the enemy strong points north of MAPERTUS. The total number of prisoners taken by the squadron on this date was 172.
- (9) On the 28th of June the squadron was relieved from attachment to the 22nd Infantry and passed to control of the 4th Infantry Division and was assigned the mission of reconnoitering all coastal installations from CHERBOURG to QUINEVILLE. Troop "B" was assigned the zone from CHERBOURG to BARFLEUR and Troop "C" the zone BARFLEUR to QUINEVILLE. The 4th Reconnaissance Troop was detached on this date. The remainder of the squadron moved to Le VAST and began routine maintenance and reorganization. No further enemy resistance was encountered in the squadron zone on the COTENTIN PENINSULA.

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(10) The squadron wring the period of 16 June to 28 June 44:

Captured 342 German

Suffered the following losses:

Killed in action - 11

Wounded in action - 45

Missing in action - 3.

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DISSEMINATION DIVISION G-2 Section

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E. S. JOHNSTON

27 OCT 1944

Colonel, Infantry

HISTORY OF 24TH CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON, MECHANIZED FROM 1 - 31 JULY 1944, INCLUSIVE

LT COL F. H. GASTON, COMMANDING

On laur 94, the equadron was attached to the 101st Air Borne Infantry Two OF was moved from Virandeville 14.9 miles north to Beaumont Hague.

On 2 July 1944, the squadron was given the mission of reconnoitering the peninsula north of the highway joining Cherbourg and Les Pieux with the following duties:

1. Capture or destroy all German stragglers.

2. Report the location of enemy coastal guns, fortifications, installations, and supply dumps.

3. Cooperate with civilian officials in the preservation of law and

order.

4. Report the location of the dead to the graves registration.

On 3 July 1944, the squadron was attached to the 4th Cavalry Group and from this date to July 9, it performed substantially the same mission, although the area of reconnaissance was reduced to half the area of the peninsula.

The squadron was detached from the 4th Cavalry Group and attached to the 9th Infantry Division at 1730, 10 July 1944. Orders were received verbally thru group headquarters to proceed to the vicinity of Graignes (420777). The squadron moved as a unit and arrived at the new bivouac area at 1345, 11 July 1944. At 1535 the squadron was ordered to relieve Company K, 2d Battalion, 60th Infantry, along the road bordering the Lozon River bottom area from the vicinity of Haut Vernay south to Le Mesnil Angot, established a road block on the road running west to Tribehou Island, and protect the west flank of the division. Troop B was given the mission and effected the relief at 1725, 11 July 1944. Meanwhile Troop E went into firing position near the squadron CP and registered on Tribehou village prepared to support any action of our troops against the enemy on the island. Troops A, C, and F remained in squadron reserve near the squadron CP. The enemy detected movement while relief was in progress and delivered some small arms fire on our position from the island. Approximately 150 artillery shells landed along our line during the late afternoon and evening. No casualties resulted from the enemy fire and actual contact was not established with the enemy this date. Due to the character of the enemy fire it was felt that he might attempt to counter-attack along Troop B's line, so Troop A was sent to reinforce the line that Troop B was protecting. At 2100 Troop A took over the line south of the island road from road junction 408755 to Le Mesnil Angot. Troop B shifted its platoons to the north of road junction 408755 and both troops established additional road blocks. Two wounded PH were captured in a building in Graignes.



The 12th of July was spent in reconnaissance of approaches to the island. Early in the morning patrols were sent out to reconnoiter the area between our line and Tribehou Island. The patrols returned and reported that the bridge on the causeway to the island had been destroyed by the enemy; old new AT gam as in resittion year the west end of the causeway at 40151. Yenemy fore sten at 40.750 and small arms fire was received from an elemy subject in the vicinity of the blown bridge. No casualties were sustained by these patrols although their mission was dangerous and difficult. Taking them to within a few yards of enemy positions. Enemy artillery shells continued to fall along our line on 12 July but no casualties resulted. Troop E was ordered to place fire in the vicinity of the blown bridge and also in the village of Tribehou where it was believed that the enemy had an OP in a church tower overlooking our lines. Troop E, firing as a battery, laid repeated concentrations of great intensity on the island. This observed fire was extremely effective causing the enemy many casualties and greatly reducing the effectiveness of his artillery. Further reconnaissance of the blown bridge now became necessary as it was contemplated that the squadron would assault and take the island dismounted early on the 13th of July. A three man patrol from Troop B moved at 1500, on 12 July along the road west toward the island. When they were approximately 75 yards from the bridge a German patrol fired at them with a machine pistol. The men leaped into a swamp and returned unhurt, reporting the location of the patrol and the fact that the bridge was completely demolished. Troop E placed an accurate artillery concentration in the vicinity of the bridge and at 20 another patrol moved to the bridge and finding it unoccupied crossed to the western tip of the island. The Commanding General 9th Division, directed that the island be secured during the night of 12-13 July. One platoon of Troop B, Lt Rubin commanding, proceeded at 2300 west along the road, moved across the bridge, contacted our friendly patrol, and established a bridgehead on the island 400 yards in depth and extending 100 yards to either flank.

Tribehou Island was secured on 13 July and the squadron extended to the south. A second platoon from Troop B, Lt Haverstick commanding, moved at 130200 July across the bridge, through Lt Rubin's bridgehead, and secured the town of Tribehou at 0445 with no opposition. This information was reported to division and we requested that the bridge be repaired by engineers. The bridge was completed by 1200, 13 July, and Troop C moved mounted over the bridge to the island relieving Troop B at approximately 1700. Troop C had the additional mission of establishing a counter-reconnaissance screen on the mainland west of the island, with a series of road blocks, to protect the left flank of the 9th Division which was moving south. At 2200 the squadron, less Troop C, moved to a new bivouac area south of Tribehou. Upon arrival at the new area, Troop A occupied a line south of the island to 397410. Troops B, F, and E were in squadron reserve in the vicinity of the squadron CP. Two PW's were taken this date.

The squadron mission remained unchanged the 14th of July and the day proved uneventful except for sporadic artillery fire which, up to now, had caused us very few casualties. At 1615 the squadron was attached to the 330th Infantry Regiment of the 83d Infantry Division, which had moved into the area west of the southern end of our counter-reconnaissance line. Troop E maintained harrassing fire on enemy positions along the west side of the Lozon River from 379728 to 381708. Troops B and F remained in squadron reserve with troop E in firing position. Three PWs were taken during the day.

During the night of the 14-15 July the CO 330th Infantry directed the squadron to protect the left flank from our present position, during the regiments attack on the village of Remilly Sur-Lozon which was scheduled to be launched at 1000, 15 July 1944. Troops A and C were left in their present position where Troop A was in contact with the right flank of the infantry. Troop B was taken from reserve and moved to the rear of the leading battalion of the 330th Infantry prepared to fill a gap which would come into existance between the 330th and 60th Infantry when the 330th pushed west and the 60th continued south. The attack on the morning of the 15 July was postponed until 1130. Troop B moved into position between the 330th and 60th Infantry Regiments which placed them about 200 yards south of the east west highway at 410710. Troop B's advance to the south was made in face of fairly heavy machine gun and small arms fire although they sustained no casualties. At approximately 2100, the infantry line ceased their movement and Troop B maintained contact between the two regimental flanks for the remainder of the night. At 2130 the 9th Reconnaissance Troop, less one platoon, was attached to the squadron, although it did not move into our area until the next morning. 13 PWs were taken this date.

On the 16th of July the squadron was engaged in filling the gap between the lines of the 60th and 330th Infantry Regiments. Troop A moved to the vicinity of the cross road south of Remilly-Sur-Lozon which placed them in the rear of the 330th Infantry. From this vicinity they moved south and east to gain contact with the right flank of Troop B, as the gap between the two infantry regiments became too wide for Troop B to cover effectively. Troop C extended its line of road blocks to the south occupying positions previously held by Troop A. Troop E continued to fire in direct support of Troops A and B. The 9th Reconnaissance Troop took over the protection of Tribehou Island and in addition moved south to gain contact with Troop C's right flank at 390723, thereby covering the area vacated by Troop A. 7 PWs were taken this date.

The situation remained unchanged until 0920. 17 July, at which time Troop C was ordered to leave it's positions and move to the vicinity Les Champs De Losque to cover the gap between the first and 2d Battalions of the 330th Infantry as they continued their advance to the west. The 9th Reconnaissance Troop covered the area vacated by Troop C with mounted patrols. The 1st and 2d Platoons of Troop F were attached to the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 330th Infantry to provide support for the infantry during their advance. The 3d Platoon of Troop F was moved to the vicinity Les Champs De Losque in readiness to assist either battalion. Troop E remained in position firing on targets of opportunity on all troop fronts. At approximately 1530 the 1st Platoon of Troop F participated in a coordinated attack with the 1st Battalion of the 330th Infantry. Hostile anti-tank fire destroyed two of our tanks, however, the crews were only slightly injured. Meanwhile the 2d Battalion of the 330th Infantry encountered such stiff resistance in its CP at 394700 with 2 platoons on line and 1 platoon in reserve. At 1600, Troop A was relieved from the mission of maintaining contact between the right flank of Troop B and the left flank of the 330th Infantry, and was ordered to make a reconnaissance of the area west of the river and between the two highways to their junction at 363687. This reconnaissance for the remainder of the day consisted of dismounted patrols. At



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0900 on the 17th of July Captain Norman, who was commanding Troop A, was wounded in a small patril action. Captain Norman returned to his troop CP and familiarized his tea with the enemy situation before he was evacuated. 1st Lt Barret C. Dill was simed command of Troop A at 1200, 17 July. At 1700 Troops A and B, syptorted by in attempty accurate concentration by Troop E attacked a small twin at 39 66 which had been holding up the advance of the line all day. This actail caused the enemy to withdraw and seven P is were taken. From the town Troops A and B proceeded one half mile to the South where contact between the 60th Infantry on the left and Troop C on the right was again established. Three men from Troop A were seriously wounded during this action when their \(\frac{1}{4} \) ton truck was destroyed by a German teller mine.

On the 18th of July at dawn a small enemy force estimated to be 40 men and 2 officers attempted to counter-attack on the sector held by Troops A and B. The attack was successfully repulsed with eleven known enemy killed, four wounded, and six captured including one officer. Troop B lost two killed and six wounded in this action, and Troop A suffered no losses. The enemy again counter-attacked at 1430 in the vicinity of the Troop A sector and the attack was repulsed with no losses to our side and only one known enemy killed. At 1630 the squadron CP received a heavy enemy artillery concentration during which one man was killed and three wounded. The 9th Reconnaissance Troop captured four prisoners in the vicinity of 371738.

On July the 19th the squadron was relieved from assignment to the 83d Infantry Division and was attached to the 2d Armored Division. The 106th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron took over our sector and relief was accomplished by noon. At 1620 the squadron moved to the vicinity of Bordigny, a distance of 12.6 miles. Troop B was attached to the VII Corps Headquarters at this time. From the 19th of July through the 26th of July, the squadron remained in bivouac in the vicinity of Bordigny, and performed maintenance of vehicles, arms, and equipment. Hedge-cutting devices were installed on the tanks and assault guns during this period.

Pursuant to instructions contained in Field Order: 12. 2d Armored Division the Squadron reconncitered to the south at 270600 July through the area previously bombed by the air corps and established a CP at 0930 in the vicinity of St. Martin De Bon Fosse after traveling 13.5 miles. Elements of the 2d Armored Division were engaged in eliminating enemy armored and anti-tank resistance in the vicinity of Le Meshil Herman, and the town was cleared at approximately 1300. At 1500 a task force consisting of the 3d Battalion 66th Regiment, Troop A and the 3d Platoon of Troop F, 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and attached engineers. Lt Col Parker commanding, was ordered to proceed southeast and reconnoiter in force to Tessy Sur Vire. A second task force consisting of the 2d Battelion, 66th Armored Regiment, the 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (less Troop A), and one company of the 22d Infantry, was ordered to proceed south and reconnoiter in force to the vicinity of Ville Baudon. The enemy exerted vigorous delaying action along both routes. The first task force pushed the enemy to the south and at 2130 elements of the task force were withdrawn to the north saving Troop A and the 3d platoon of Troops to block the enemy for the night in the vicinity of Le Mesnil Opac, with orders to continue their

reconnaissance to the objective at dawn. The second task force pushed the enemy south past La Denisiere and established a CP for the night approximately one mile south of the town. Thirty PWs were taken on the 27th July. Both of our forces pulled into a perimeter defense on the night of 27-28 July with dismounted patrols maintaining contact with the enemy. Intermittent enemy shelling continued on both fronts during the night.

The 23th of Julyavet spent in driving south against stiff enemy resistance, the restrict essisted objective? At 280230 July our IPW team discovered from 10 mas the termin-2d Armored Reconnaissance Battalion was bivouaced 800 yards to the south of the 2d Task Force position. At dawn, both forces were attacked by the enemy and both attacks were repulsed with no ground lost. Troop A attacked at 1000 and secured the high ground south of Le Mesnil Opac. The second task force drove south at 0700 and captured Ville Baudon at noon. At approximately 1600 Troop A with the d Platoon of Troop F attached was again counter-attacked by a superior enemy force which had been gaining strength by reinforcements all day; they succeeded in holding their position however. At 1700 the 1st and 2d Platoons of Troop F were attached to the 1st and 2d Battalions, 66th Armored Regiment respectively. The 3d Battalion 66th Armored Regiment relieved Troop A and the 3d Platoon Troop F reverted to battalion control. Troop A remained in the same general vicinity that night and returned to the squadron bivouac area the morning of 29 July. 23 PWs were taken by the squadron on 28 July.

At 290915 July, the squadron CP was shelled and Lt Seery and four enlisted men were wounded and evacuated. The CP was immediately moved 800 yards to the west. During the remainder of the day Troops A and C worked lateral reconnaissance to the east. Troop E was held in squadron reserve. 13 PWs were taken by the squadron on July 29.

On the 30 July the squadron performed security for assigned whits of CCA. We had no contact with the enemy. On the night of 30-31 July the squadron and the rear echelon which was located north of Les Mesnil Herman both were subjected to enemy air-raids. The rear echelon suffered three casualties which were evacuated during the night. Three PWs were taken by the squadron on July 30.

On the morning of the 31st of July, the squadron stood by alerted for immediate movement. At approximately 1300, CCA received the mission of moving east through the area bounded by the roads joining Deniserre, Tessy Sur Vire, and Ville Baudon and destroying all enemy in the area with Tessy Sur Vire as an objective. At 1530 the squadron received the mission of moving east through a sector approximately one kilometer wide which was situated just north of and parallel to the highway running east from Ville Baudon to Tessy Sur Vire, to destroy enemy snipers in the area, pass through the infantry line, and contact and protect the north flank of the 66th Armored Regiment. Troop F reverted to squadron control at 1530. The squadron less Troop F moved dismounted to an assembly area approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ kilometer northwest of Ville Baudon. Troop C crossed the highway, which was designated as the LD, at 1700 and moved east in line of skirmishers, followed by 200 yards by Troop A. Troop E was held dismounted in squadron reserve and Troop F assembled mounted just east of the highway on our north flank. Meanwhile the enemy 2d Panzer Division had launched a determined counter-

attack accompanied by an extremely heavy artillery barrage which caused the 66th Armored Regiment and the infantry to withdraw to the southeast. This change of direction left a gap between the right flank of Troop C and the left flank of the 66th Armored Regiment. The squadron commander immediately sent Troop E dismounted and one platon of Troop F mounted to the southeast to establish contact. When this was accomplished Troop C followed by Troop A swung south and made contact with Troop E. At 2200 the 66th armored Regiment was on the high ground south of the highway and southeast of Ville Baudon. Troop E and 1 platoon of Troop F were on the north flank of the armor with their left flank south of the highway and at the cross road due east of and approximately 3 kilometers from Ville Baudon. Troop C was disposed on the ridge which continued north from Troop E's position, and Troop A was on the forward slope of the ridge and north of Troop C. Squadron headquarters and the remainder of Troop F were at 442467. Heavy artillery concentrations were delivered by both sides throughout the night.

The squadron during the month of July 1944: destroyed approximately 350 Germans, captured 91 Germans.

