

31st

INFANTRY

DIVISION

World War II



H I S T O R Y

O F T H E

31ST INFANTRY DIVISION



I N T R A I N I N G A N D C O M B A T

1 9 4 0 — 1 9 4 5

B A T T L E H O N O R S

Medical Detachment 124th Infantry
106th Engineer Combat Battalion
3rd Battalion 124th Infantry
2nd Battalion 124th Infantry

MERITORIOUS SERVICE UNIT PLAQUE



31st Signal Company
31st Quartermaster Company
106th Medical Battalion
731st Ordnance Company
31st Infantry Division Band
Medical Detachment 124th Infantry
Service Company 124th Infantry
Service Company 155th Infantry
Service Company 167th Infantry
Medical Detachment 167th Infantry
M. P. Platoon 31st Infantry Division
Headquarters & Headquarters and Service Company
106th Engineer Combat Battalion
Medical Detachment 155th Infantry

COMMENDATIONS

Restricted

HEADQUARTERS 31st INFANTRY DIVISION

Office of the Division Commander

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 146

APO 31
12 September 1945

BATTLE HONORS.—Pursuant to authority contained in Section IV, Circular Number 333, War Department, 1943, the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, desires to give recognition to the following unit for deserved honor and distinction:

SECOND BATTALION, 124TH INFANTRY. The 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy, on Mindanao, Philippine Islands, during the period 22 April 1945 to 27 June 1945. The battalion landed at Cotabato, Philippine Islands on 22 April 1945 and secured the area. Contact was established and forces committed in direction of Sarangani Bay and Nuro. The next day the battalion was withdrawn from this action and directed to spearhead an infantry division advancing into the interior. This operation was aimed at securing the Sayre Highway thereby cutting the main supply route and line of communications between the two enemy strongholds at Davao in the south and Cagayan in the north. The battalion embarked from Cotabato on the evening of 26 April 1945 in LCM's for Fort Pikit. The shortage of craft prevented the movement of organic vehicles and all weapons had to be hand carried. The battalion made a forced march of 16 miles immediately upon landing, the advance elements crossing the Pulangi River at its junction with the Sayre Highway during the night. A bridgehead was established and contact with the enemy was made at once. The entire battalion closed into the bridgehead at 1500 the same day, moving under adverse weather conditions and over difficult terrain. After only three hours rest, reports were received of an enemy force advancing south to the critical junction of the Sayre Highway and Highway Number 1 near Kabacan endangering the entire operation. At 1800 the battalion moved north to contact and destroy the enemy. At 2300, after advancing 10 miles, the battalion met strong and determined opposition in a night fire fight. The engagement lasted through the night, the entire battalion being committed to halt the advance of a strong, fanatical force determined to destroy the critical bridgehead across the Pulangi River. The enemy was stopped and driven to the north by 0530, completely disorganized. The battalion had been without sleep for three nights, and had made forced marches by land and overwater movement by boat over a distance of 71 miles. Nevertheless, they reorganized, and at 0800 initiated a relentless pursuit of the enemy for an additional five miles. A captured field order identified the opposing force as a reinforced battalion supported by 75 mm guns. The enemy was completely disorganized from the fight and the aggressive pursuit of the battalion, and were destroyed in detail. The battalion was relieved on 29 April 1945 after seven days of continuous fighting and marching without rest and moved in support of the lead battalion. Three days later they were committed to the east on the Kibawe-Talomo Trail, the route of the enemy withdrawal, and for 3 days fought a suicidal force endeavoring to get across the Pulangi River. The advance of the rest of the combat team was held up by a strong force in well organized positions on ideal defensive terrain in the Pinalay Lake area. The battalion was then committed to this engagement, and for the next 4 days attacked the position from the flanks and the rear. On the fourth day, supported for the first time by artillery fire, the battalion overran the position and was credited with 106 of the 187 enemy found killed. The next night the enemy launched a counterattack against the battalion perimeter which lasted throughout the night. The attack was repulsed and 73 of the enemy were killed in the engagement. On 15 May 1945 they were committed to the capture of Silae, an enemy stronghold protecting a crossing of the Pulangi River. They broke the enemy line and pushed forward to secure the town on the same day. The deep, swift-flowing river was crossed at two points, by use of field expedients, and the remainder of the enemy force was either destroyed or driven into the mountains east of the river. The battalion was relieved and assembled in Malaybalay on 27 June 1945. The aggressive action of the battalion, continually driving the enemy before them, never allowing him to reorganize or consolidate, played a major role in the liberation of Mindanao in advance of the highest expectations. During the period, a total of 67 days, the battalion was in direct contact with the enemy 50 days. Of the remaining time, only 4 days were available for rest and recuperation. The battalion accounted for 430 enemy killed, 117 found dead and 5 prisoners of war. The conspicuous gallantry and outstanding performance of duty from 22 April 1945 to 27 June 1945 by all members of the 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry, reflected great credit upon themselves and the battalion and upheld the highest traditions of the Service.

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL HUTCHISON:
OFFICIAL:

JOHN C. DUCKWORTH
Colonel, GSC
Chief of Staff

CHARLES B. PORTER
Major, AGD
Actg Adj Gen

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HEADQUARTERS 31st INFANTRY DIVISION

Office of the Division Commander

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 156

APO 31
20 September 1945

BATTLE HONORS.—Pursuant to authority contained in Section IV, Circular Number 333, War Department, 1943, the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, desires to give recognition to the following unit for deserved honor and distinction:

3RD BATTALION, 124TH INFANTRY. The 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action near Aitape, British New Guinea, during the period 12 July 1944 to 7 August 1944. On 12 July 1944, the 3rd Battalion, after a forced march of 12 miles, routed an enemy held position east of the X-Ray River to secure a line of departure, to launch a counter-attack to restore the line of the Driniumor River, which had been penetrated by a determined fanatical enemy force the previous day. The 3rd Battalion, with an exposed right flank, led the attack and by strong aggressive action reached its objective late in the afternoon of 13 July 1944. This battalion was subjected to intense automatic and small arms fire from three exposed flanks throughout the night, as other elements of the combat team had been delayed by a strong enemy force and could not close in on the objective. On 14 July 1944, the 3rd Battalion in an advance to close the left flank of the unit on their right, met sudden intensified enemy resistance from all directions. The 3rd Battalion fighting with sheer determination under the most adverse circumstances finally overpowered the enemy killing 168 enemy and severed and strongly secured the enemy's main supply route. This feat was accomplished so swiftly that an enemy supply train continued to advance down the trail directly into the strongest sector of the 3rd Battalion's perimeter, resulting in 131 enemy dead littering the trail and river bed. Shortly before daybreak on 16 July the 3rd Battalion was attacked by a well organized enemy force from the rear followed by a similar attack supported by mortar fire on the right flank by an enemy force occupying positions previously prepared by friendly troops. The opposition in that direction was quickly neutralized and one company of the battalion counterattacked to the right and drove the enemy from their position where 416 enemy were killed. Early on the morning of 21 July 1944, the enemy launched a vicious coordinated attack on the front and rear defense of the 3rd Battalion. There followed the most fanatical fighting up to this time, as the enemy attacked the well defended positions of the battalion time and time again, only to be repulsed by a superior force. On 31 July 1944, the entire regiment, reinforced by an infantry battalion, launched a counter-attack, to the east toward Niumen Creek, to relieve the pressure on the extreme southern flank and to secure a position from which the enemy could be enveloped and cut off. The 3rd Battalion on the extreme right flank of three battalions abreast with the reinforcing battalion following reached its objective early in the afternoon of 1 August 1944. Turning south the 3rd Battalion encountered well prepared positions and the advance was halted due to the bitter opposition. Following the engagement 99 enemy dead were counted. The advance to the south was continued through dense jungle, rough and swampy terrain, with the 3rd Battalion reaching the Afua Trail far in advance of the battalion on its right. On 5 August 1944, while attacking south on Niumen Creek, the 3rd Battalion contacted strong dug-in positions, but by aggressive action digging the enemy from caves and spider fox-holes in solid rock, continued to advance until 1500. Heavy mortar fire was received during the night and the enemy launched a vigorous counterattack which was quickly repulsed by the 3rd Battalion. Immediately afterwards the 3rd Battalion launched an attack fixing the enemy in position, while another battalion flanked to the enemy's left; then a vicious coordinated attack was launched, destroying and routing an estimated reinforced battalion, accounting for 425 enemy dead. As a result of the strenuous action on 5 and 6 August the whole enemy force was practically annihilated and the disorganized remnants of the force trapped. The 3rd Battalion was in constant contact with the desperate enemy force during the period of 13 July to 7 August 1944. The aggressive action of the 3rd Battalion, relentlessly driving the enemy through mud, swamps, dense jungle growth and over rough mountainous terrain during heavy prevailing rains, never allowing the enemy to consolidate and reorganize, played a major role in the liberation of Aitape and established another "stepping stone" for allied armies to advance to the other strategic islands to the north. During this period the 3rd Battalion accounted for approximately 1300 enemy dead. The conspicuous gallantry and outstanding performance of duty from 13 July to 7 August 1944 by all Personnel of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, reflects great credit upon themselves and the battalion and upholds the highest traditions of the Service.

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL HUTCHISON:
OFFICIAL:

JAMES L. SLOSS, JR.
1st Lt, AGD
Asst Adj Gen

MARK W. LANCE
Lt Col, Ord Dept
Actg Chief of Staff

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HEADQUARTERS 31st INFANTRY DIVISION

Office of the Division Commander

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 87

APO 31
16 July 1945

BATTLE HONORS.—Pursuant to authority contained in Section IV, Circular Number 333, War Department, 1943, the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, desires to give recognition to the following unit for deserved honor and distinction:

MEDICAL DETACHMENT, 124TH INFANTRY REGIMENT. The Medical Detachment, 124th Infantry Regiment, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action on Mindanao, Philippine Islands, during the period 6 May 1945 to 12 May 1945. On 6 May 1945, the 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, advanced north along the Sayre Highway from Kibawe with the mission of seizing the Maramag Air Strip and opening the highway to this point. Two miles south of their objective the leading elements of the Battalion entered an exceptionally dense tropical rain forest. Here they encountered heavy, accurate, controlled fire from an estimated battalion of the enemy occupying a long prepared, well camouflaged, defensive position organized in depth. The 1st Battalion launched a determined attack, assaulting the position several times but were unable to dislodge the enemy from his fortifications. Casualties were heavy. After the successive assaults, a large number of the wounded remained in advance of our lines. All personnel of the Battalion Medical Section, as well as personnel of the Regimental Medical Section voluntarily went forward to augment the strength of the company aid men. For three hours, under heavy enemy fire, the medical personnel found, treated, and evacuated fifty casualties, many of which were 20 and 30 yards in front of our lines. In the performance of this duty three medical technicians were killed, the Assistant Battalion Surgeon and one aid man severely wounded, and three aid men slightly wounded. On 7 May 1945, the 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, reinforced the 1st Battalion with the mission of taking the fortified positions and of clearing the woods of the enemy. The 2nd Battalion advanced 200 yards through the underbrush when it encountered the same fierce resistance that had faced the 1st Battalion the day before. The position was assaulted but the advance was stopped. Again numerous casualties remained where they had fallen in front of the enemy positions. In order to care for and remove all the wounded in as short a period as possible, the entire 2nd Battalion Medical Section came forward to assist the company aid men. Throughout the day men of the 2nd Battalion Medical Section made numerous trips 20 and 30 yards in front of our lines in the face of heavy enemy small arms and grenade fire to find, treat, and evacuate approximately 40 severely wounded men. In the performance of this duty the Section Leader was killed, two aid men were seriously wounded and three of the medical personnel,

though not wounded, had bullet holes in their clothing. On 7 May 1945, the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, with the mission of seizing an objective in rear of the enemy fortified position, thereby cutting his communication to the rear, advanced around the flank of the 2nd Battalion in an encircling movement. In executing this mission the 3rd Battalion crossed a flat open grassland between two areas of heavy woods. As the rear of the battalion, where the Battalion Medical Section was marching, crossed this open grassland, the enemy launched a furious banzai attack. In the fight that ensued a number of casualties were incurred by our troops. Though the terrain was open and in full view of the enemy, the personnel of the 3rd Battalion Medical Section treated the wounded in spite of heavy machine gun, rifle, and mortar fire. For several hours the Medical Section, along with several riflemen, were cut off from the Battalion. Nevertheless the medical personnel continued to search for, treat, and collect the casualties. When contact was reestablished the wounded were evacuated. The Medical Section then returned to make another reconnaissance of the open area for other wounded, though they were still endangered by enemy fire. In so doing the personnel of the Medical Section were the last to leave this scene of conflict. This act not only saved the lives of several of the fifteen severely wounded men and ten to fifteen slightly wounded but was also responsible for keeping several of the wounded from falling into the hands of a fanatical enemy. The Battalion Surgeon, although severely wounded in this action, would not permit treatment of his wounds until the other casualties had been cared for and removed to safety. Two medical non-commissioned officers were killed, one by enemy bayonet wounds while he was attempting to reach a wounded man. The resistance of the enemy in and about the woods was so well camouflaged, dug in, organized and stubborn that the fighting of all three Battalions continued for a period of six days before our troops completely annihilated the enemy. During this period of time the entire Medical Detachment continued to go forward to treat and remove casualties from areas in front of our lines or from areas commanded by enemy sniper fire. The conspicuous gallantry and outstanding performance of duty from 6 May 1945 to 12 May 1945 by all personnel of the Medical Detachment, 124th Infantry Regiment, was an inspiration to the troops advancing along the Sayre Highway, reflected great credit upon themselves and the Medical Department, and upheld the highest traditions of the Service.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL MARTIN:
OFFICIAL:

JOHN C. DUCKWORTH
Lt Colonel, GSC
Chief of Sta:

RUSS T. WHITE
Lt Colonel, AGD
Adjutant General
DISTRIBUTION: A, C, F



The Battalion landed on Mindanao Island, Philippines, April 23, 1945. This job can best be covered by the citation awarded by Headquarters 31st Division August 20, 1945.

“BATTLE HONORS.—Pursuant to authority contained in Section IV, Circular Number 333, War Department, 1943, the Commanding General, 31st Infantry Division, desires to give recognition to the following unit for deserved honor and distinction:

106TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION. The 106th Engineer Combat Battalion is cited for outstanding performance in action against the enemy on Mindanao, Philippine Islands, during the period April 22, 1945 to June 30, 1945. As the infantry division, of which it was an organic unit, and its attached units began their rapid advance north from Kabacan through Central Mindanao to Impalutao in order to quickly split the Japanese forces, the 106th Engineer Combat Battalion, although it was still on the assigned job of opening and maintaining the supply road for an entire Corps from Parang to Cotabato, was given the mission of performing the engineer work necessary for adequate support of the troops. Through mountainous jungle terrain traversed by innumerable gorges and rivers and against constant enemy action, the unit cleared the way for the advance of the division. Despite enemy artillery, mortar, machine gun and rifle fire, the 106th Engineer Combat Battalion with courageous determination and utter disregard for personal safety, sacrificing security for speed, worked right up in the front lines, often with lights at night and within small arms range of the Japanese, building bridges and by-passes. Working at times ahead of the infantry and often on the flanks with little or no security, the engineers kept up constant reconnaissance and opened routes of supply which enabled the infantry to keep the enemy so confused that only once was he able to put up stubborn resistance. Nearly every bridge abutment was mined with heavy demolition bombs which the engineers removed without accident. All of the heavy equipment was moved forward and kept in running order by the use of great initiative and at times simply through sheer determination. North of Kabacan an LCM ferry was established across the Pulangi River a 425 foot infantry support bridge was built and maintained. From this point to the Mulita River a total of 73 bridges were repaired or bypassed as the infantry moved forward, replacement and more permanent repair being accomplished by other elements of the battalion working night and day in the presence of the enemy. A Bailey bridge was placed across one deep gorge under such difficult circumstances that it had been declared impossible. A 110 foot Bailey bridge was placed across the Mulita River. From this point to Malaybalay the job was heartbreaking as the company in the lead was having to expend every effort to keep up with the infantry using emergency methods and improvisations to maintain close support while small detachments were spread over the whole stretch of road making more substantial repairs, keeping the road open for the movement of the entire division. Much harassment by the enemy was encountered and security had to be sacrificed. At the most advance point the turn-around distance for



engineers supplies stretched out to 314 miles over a road which in places disintegrated faster than it could be repaired. Truck drivers as well as road crews worked with little or no security with complete disregard for their own safety. When the junction was made with other troops advancing from the north the battalion then had to concentrate on the main supply road to the north coast while keeping open the entire Sayre Highway long enough to move the division into the Kibawe to Malaybalay sector. The extraordinary heroism of the officers and men of the 106th Engineer Combat Battalion and their foresight and technical skill under difficult and hazardous conditions were a material contribution to the successful advance of the division and exemplify the highest standards of the United States Armed Forces.”

In November the battalion sailed for the United States and was inactivated December 21, 1945. The job had been completed—the objective to do the job thoroughly and efficiently regardless of any obstacles had been attained.

VIRTUTE ET ARMIS