

113th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron

A brief history of the 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, 113th Cavalry Group Mechanized, XIX Corp, 1st Army.

Intro

Why play the 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance? It's surely not because it's an easy force to play, and it's definitely not it's overwhelming firepower. My reason for modeling, and playing the 113th is simply because it was the unit in which Cpl James Hall, my grandfather, served. He was a member of Troop E, the assault gun troop. He joined the Troop on the 28th of September 1944; crossed the Roer, Rhine, Weser, and Elbe with them; fought on the northern shoulder of the 'bulge' with them; received a purple heart for being wounded in action in Stirzilburg Germany; and was with the first group to meet up with the Soviets before entering Berlin.

Origins

The 113th Cavalry Regiment originated as an Iowa National Guard unit with history tracing back to the 19th century Indian Wars. It's distinctive coat of arms featuring a Red Horse rampant, a prickly pear cactus (for it's service along the Mexican border), and a fleur de lis (for it's service during the first world war), has given the unit the nickname of 'the Red Horse Cavalry'.

Reorganization

With its mechanization in 1944 the 113th Cavalry was reorganized into three groups, 113th Cavalry Headquarters, 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, and the 125th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Collectively known as the 113th Cavalry Group Mechanized, they were commanded by Col. William S. Biddle of Portland Oregon, and a West Point graduate, class of 1923. The 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was commanded by Lt. Col. Allen D. Hulse, and the 125th by Lt. Col. Anthony F. Kleitz.

Organization

The mechanized cavalry squadrons were organized with three Cavalry Troops, lettered A to C, each equipped with 13 M8 Greyhound armored cars and jeeps, an Assault Gun Troop, E, with six M8 Scott HMC; a Light Tank Company, F, with 17 M5 Stuarts, later replaced with M24 Chaffee tanks; a Service Company; and an H&H Company.

Role

Cavalry Squadrons were primarily intended for reconnaissance missions. However, during the war they were usually employed in defensive, security, or screening missions. Armored field artillery, engineer, and tank destroyer units reinforced the cavalry for most missions.

The cavalry groups were almost never called to perform their primary duty, and later analysis showed that pure reconnaissance missions accounted for only 3 percent of their activities. The lion's share of missions included: defensive operations; special operations (such as security, road blocks, rear screening); security missions (such as flank protections, and filling gaps), and purely offensive

operations.

Highlights of service during the war

The 113th saw its first engagement with the Germans in Normandy. The Cavalry put aside its reconnaissance tactics and took on the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division head on, when the Group crossed the Vire et Taute Canal on July 7th and took the towns of Goucherie and Le Mesnil-Veneron. It fought amongst hedgerows against what turned out to be a German counterattack aimed at Carentan and Isigny for four days.

With the fall of Gathemo, the 113th got a chance to stretch its legs and really move across the countryside. On August 13th, the group marched 32 miles to Mortain, paused and then set up a moving screen in front of the 30th ID to Dornfront. Here the 125th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron worked with the 82nd Armored Reconnaissance Btn in the capture of the heavily defended 17th century fortress, while the 113th covered a sizeable gap between two advancing infantry regiments, an action which earned them a commendation from Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Leland S. Hobbs.

On September 5th, the Group under the XIX Corp, and with Company B of the 82nd Engineer Combat Battalion and Company C of the 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion attached, moved on what is believed to have been one of the most spectacular mechanized cavalry reconnaissance missions in military history, when it made its brilliant dash across Belgium 3 days in advance of the Corps. Light, and even moderate resistance was fought, or brushed aside, and heavy resistance, of which there was considerable, was reported and by-passed. All types of enemy from Panther tanks to infantry were encountered. Messenger service was maintained by plane and communications by long-distance radio.

During the 'Bulge', the group was primarily responsible for flank protection in the Maastricht- Aachen-Ligen area. The group remained on its defensive mission in the Geilenkichen area until shortly after Christmas, when they moved to the area of Gey, on the northern edge of the Hurtgen forest. While defending this particular sector, the group patrolled aggressively, and during the night of January 19-20, Troop 'C', 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron conducted a raid across the Roer, returning with 6 prisoners, the first prisoners taken on the Corps front in three weeks.

The 113th were the first units across the Roer, the Elbe, the Rhine, the Ruhr, and the Weser. Always at the front of the advance, the 113th were always given priority to fuel, sometimes to the detriment of the advance of the 2nd Armored.

On April 9th, the group accepted the surrender of the city of Einbeck which had been captured by Troop 'B' of the 113th Cavalry Reconnaissance.

During the 312 days of combat and over a distance of some 800 miles from the Normandy Bridgehead to east of the Elbe, the group captured approximately 600 enemy tanks, armored cars, half-tracks and vehicles, and captured 21,599 prisoners.