

The following is from the National Archives WO 170/864

Army Form 2118

WAR DIARY
 or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required)

Unit 50 R. Tks

Commanding Officer Lt. Col. J. R. D. Carlton, VC

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Vol. I and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

Month and Year December, 1914

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
			The War Diary of this Regiment for December, 1914, is contained within a Narrative of Operations, copy of which is att to this AFO. 2118.	

5953/FPMAL/6-43
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25
 26
 27
 28
 29
 30
 31
 32
 33
 34
 35
 36
 37
 38
 39
 40
 41
 42
 43
 44
 45
 46
 47
 48
 49
 50
 51
 52
 53
 54
 55
 56
 57
 58
 59
 60
 61
 62
 63
 64
 65
 66
 67
 68
 69
 70
 71
 72
 73
 74
 75
 76
 77
 78
 79
 80
 81
 82
 83
 84
 85
 86
 87
 88
 89
 90
 91
 92
 93
 94
 95
 96
 97
 98
 99
 100

NARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS IN THE GREEK REBELLION, DEC. 14-JAN. 15

On 2nd Dec 1944, KKE, or Greek Communist Party, considered themselves ready for the coup for which they had been working, and an excuse was found by them to start active resistance to the Government.

This excuse was bound up in the decision to disband the Andartes. All parties had previously agreed on this, and total disbandment was to be carried out by 10th. Dec. When this decision was put to the members of the Greek Cabinet for signature, however, the KKE members refused to sign, insisting that if ELAS, their army, was to cease to exist, then they would insist upon the disbandment of the Greek Mountain Brigade, which had been formed in the Middle East and had fought for the Allies in Italy. To disband this, the only real formation in the Greek Army, was out of the question, and a split in the Government resulted. The KKE members resigned, political feeling ran high, and the British troops in the capital were warned to be ready for any eventuality. It was considered likely that British troops would be required either to take active participation in the troubles which would probably result or, if KKE merely carried out a policy of passive resistance, be called upon to arrest certain key political figures, and occupy ELAS arms and ammunition dumps.

The action KKE were to take was not long in making itself apparent. ELAS started by clearing the newly-formed National Guard in the outlying districts, and called their followers to a large demonstration for the 3rd. Dec. This demonstration the Government forbade, and it was obvious that an issue would be forced on the following day.

Early in the am of 3rd. Dec, the regt was ordered to stand to, and all ranks were confined to their billets. At about 10.45-day, both "B" and "C" Sgns, who were quartered in the centre of the city, reported firing from the vicinity of Constitution Square, the main square of Athens. On investigation, this was found to have been caused by the city police firing on a large Communist demonstration which had defied the Government's ban. Casualties resulted on both sides, and it was not until tanks appeared on the scene that any semblance of order was restored. British troops did not, however, open fire. The demonstration was not broken up, but it was decided to keep it on the move until it dispersed at nightfall, and to block the entrances to the city to prevent any further infiltration of KKE sympathisers. "A" Sgn accordingly threw a cordon across the two main roads running from ATHENS to the PIRAEUS. At one of these barriers, a procession of several hundred people attempted to force a passage, and "A" Sgn had to fire a few shots in the air to stop it from being overrun by the demonstrators. The procession thereupon broke up with bad grace.

In the afternoon of this day, the first fighting broke out, but this did not at that moment involve British troops. The noise of battle came from the direction of the Acropolis, and it was said that ELAS were engaging the Nationalists in the area of the Temple of Theseus. A warning had previously been given that this area would see the outbreak of trouble, as both parties had strongholds in it.

A general strike was proclaimed this day, and all city services came to a standstill.

The next day heralded the ELAS attacks on the city police stations, one of the first to be attacked being that in Ippocratus Street. Here a patrol of "C" Sgn found the whole place surrounded, the police being held within by ELAS. The British troops available were far too few to take any offensive action, which also, at that time, had not been authorised. They did, however, stay on the spot until daylight. On the same day, "A" Sgn observed a large body of ELAS in positions surrounding the Royal Ordnance Depot, and they were ordered to turn out at maximum strength to deal with them, the intention being to disarm them. When the strength of the ELAS was observed, however, it was obvious that the force available to "A" Sgn could not deal with the situation. The Commanding Officer then arrived and ordered the ELAS to disperse, which they did, shuffling away in a rather sheepish manner.

Two other incidents occurred during the day which affected this regt. One was the shepherding of a large body of Communists that had, by some means, got hold of the bodies of those killed during the firing in Constitution Square. After a service at the Cathedral, the bodies were taken to the cemetery in the south of

When the following the burial the crowd dispersed. The second incident was a small attack on the police station in Neofitou Metaxa, near our own barracks. A small group of about twenty ELAS were seen to be creeping up on this building with the obvious intention of attacking it, whereupon the Commanding Officer turned out a troop from HQ Sqn to deal with them. The intention was to disarm the ELAS and send them to their homes. This was unsuccessfully accomplished mainly by the Commanding Officer and the REM attaching them from the rear, armed with nothing more than clubs. They were then disarmed and told to disperse, which they refused to do until a little persuasion was employed. They said that if they returned without their arms they would possibly be killed. Later, a deputation from their own ranks arrived on the scene to request that these arms be given back to them, but this was refused.

At this stage no definite policy had been laid down for British troops. The only action they were ordered to take was the disarming of anyone not on duty carrying arms within the city boundaries. A rider to this order stated that this action was not to be taken unless it was assured of success. However, on the night of 4th. Dec a proclamation was issued by the British GOO to the effect that all ELAS troops were to be out of the city limits by midnight on 5th. Dec. They were to march out in forced bodies after advising British commanders of their routes, etc. At the same time as this order was published martial law was proclaimed.

During the 5th. Dec small incidents, all building up to the general clash which now appeared inevitable, were dealt with by this regt, the major of these being the disarming of IWS elements who had provoked trouble from their HQs in Stadium Street. Here shots and grenades were exchanged between the rival factions, and it was thought that ELAS were responsible for the incident. Troops of "I" Sqn under the command of Capt. G. D. Moss, MD, forced an entry into the building and occupied the ELAS HQs. This action was loudly applauded by ELAS sympathisers. Great difficulty was experienced by the British troops in keeping the ELAS crowd from getting at the disarmed IWS personnel, and tanks had to be brought to the entrance of the building to restore order. Some of the women in the front of the crowd, who were by this time angry, because they interpreted our action as that of protection of the IWS, were fanatical, screaming and calling on the troops to shoot them when they were warned that this would be the result of any attempt to break the cordon around the building. However, at 1700 hours, the time of the curfew, the crowd melted away and later in the evening trucks from the regt were able to remove the Nationalists from the building to safer areas.

The Commanding Officer attended a conference this pm and later gave orders to the Sqn Ldrs. He said that with effect from this date a state of war existed between the British troops and ELAS. ELAS had been given every opportunity to settle the present dispute without force of arms, but they had taken no action to achieve this, and had provoked trouble on every occasion by firing on British personnel and by continually disobeying the C-in-C's orders.

As a result of these orders the regt re-rouped during the night. "A" Sqn withdrew from the Neuf area and occupied Omorionas Square with three troops. One troop remained in occupation of the Telegraph Office just south of this Square. "B" Sqn concentrated in the Zappion Building, less one troop which remained at Gondhi Barracks, guarding Security Detachment personnel. "C" Sqn, less one troop on Solonisi Island, which was to remain, and one troop with a troop of "D" Sqn at the VT Station at Nea Liosia, concentrated in Korai Street, to which location HQ moved during the night. "E" Sqn were left in Marina Barracks. "D" Sqn was very much split. One troop was at Marathon Dam, one at Pallini VT Station, one with a troop of "C" Sqn at the VT Station at Nea Liosia and the fourth troop in reserve at Marina Barracks. Also under command of "D" Sqn was a large portion of the rear party of HQ R. The, which was formed into a fifth troop, and was established as a guard on the Criminal Records Office in the centre of the city. This re-rouping was completed without incident, and all established themselves for what they knew would be the opening of hostilities on the morning of the 6th. Dec.

The first task assigned to the regt was that of rendering ineffective the ELAS HQs, opposite HQ in Korai Street. This building was defended, and the only entry was through a strong steel grill, which it was appreciated would require to be broken by a tank. At 1000 hrs the attack was launched, using "C" Sqn HQ, plus a troop of that sqn and a troop of "D" Sqn drawn from Zappion Building.

The "D" Sqn troop had run into an ambush earlier in the day whilst attempting to get to the attack was launched, by transport. They later made the journey uneventfully by going across the Old Palace gardens. Two tanks were employed to support the attack, one of which broke down the steel grill. The plan was successful, and thirty PsW were taken. One of this regt's ORs was killed, as was one ELAS.

Early in the am, a Coy of the 2 Para Bde joined "A" Sqn in the defence of Omoforias Square. This locality was a key point, and to deny the rebels the centre of the city it was imperative to hold it. During the weeks which followed this proved to be a very trying task, but one which was successfully accomplished.

It was also during this day that the first example was seen of ELAS omitting to recognise the Red Cross. This regt's 15-cwt RMO veh, which was very clearly marked, had two grenades thrown at it. There were no casualties.

It had been decided to leave the garrison troops on Salamis Island. This garrison was small, consisting only of a troop with two carriers, the whole being commanded by Capt. H.D.O'Sullivan, MC. Capt. O'Sullivan soon appreciated the situation, however, and was not slow in causing the arrest of the head of both EAM and ELAS on the island. The people were predominately loyal, and very soon twenty of the disarmed National Guard had been re-armed and were acting under the orders of Capt. O'Sullivan. During the period that followed, a strong force was built up from various sources on the island and, with the help of the Royal Navy in the Piraeus, was soon able to report between two hundred and two hundred and fifty under arms. Capt. O'Sullivan also instituted boat patrols around the northern approaches. These preventive measures most certainly stopped any ELAS attempt to attack the island, a task which would not have been difficult, because only a few hundred yards separated the island from the mainland in the Megara area, which was very thickly populated with ELAS. During the whole of the time that hostilities were in progress in the Attica area the force on Salamis had to call for RAF aid only on one occasion, this when a force of approximately 200 ELAS were seen concentrated near the narrows. This concentration was dispersed.

The RAF went into action on this day, 6th Dec, for the first time, in indirect support of "D" Sqn. A large number of the enemy were observed on the hill named Arditos, immediately south-west of the Stadium. The planes strafed it with cannon and machine gun fire to good effect.

At the end of this first day the regt claimed as killed ten of the enemy with approximately double that number wounded. These figures are a fair average for the whole of the period between 6 Dec and 6 Jan.

During the 7th Dec the major task of this regt was the clearance of the area bounded by the three following streets: Ermou - Athinas - Stadium. Until this task was completed the centre of the city was dominated by the enemy. Two troops each of "A" and "B" Sqn were employed, and they were to form a strong point at the key junction of Ermou and Athinas Sts. This strongpoint was made by 1000 hrs, and from that time onward until ELAS pressure here had relaxed, and the regt relieved of the commitment by 11 KTRC, the troops in the position had a very hard time. They were frequently dynamited, ELAS making excellent use of the cover afforded by the very narrow streets approaching this area from IROON, which was very strongly held by them, and suffered numerous casualties, which were partly compensated by far heavier losses suffered by the enemy.

ELAS had not so far made attacks on the regt's outlying localities - those at Pallini, Marathon Dam and Nea Liosia. On the 8th Dec Marathon troops took ELAS PsW, but, to avoid opening hostilities in an area which had to date been quiet, these were released after being disarmed. ELAS threatened reprisals, but they were not forthcoming, and this locality was not attacked throughout the time it remained occupied by the regt. Nea Liosia troops were particularly useful during these first days, as they were able to report the movement of troops towards the Athens area. Their position appeared to be on the enemy's main supply route into the city.

Although fighting had not taken place at Mamma Barracks, the HQ of this regt prior to the outbreak of the trouble, there had not been lack of incidents. An ELAS staff officer was captured, who attempted to destroy his papers on being apprehended. This action was frustrated, however, and the papers were subsequently found to contain an operation order which routed an ELAS division from the north to the Athens area. A second item of interest which took place in this area was the release on the 8th Dec of British PsW within a hundred yards of the barracks. No reasons were given to the prisoners as to why they were released, and they could only state that they had

been very well treated. This was later found to be the exception to the rule, as the general treatment of PsW during the fighting was very bad, except in isolated incidents.

On 9th. Dec an extra troop was despatched to Marathon Dam. This was the troop made up of 40 R. Tks personnel, and they went under escort without incident.

On the night of 9th. Dec troops were removed from Manna Barracks, as they were getting very isolated, and this move was also accomplished without incident. A voluntary force was left there to form an OP, as it had been found that an admirable view of a great portion of ELAS territory could be obtained from one of the neighbouring buildings. HQ Sqn established itself in the University Buildings in the city.

Orders were received during that evening that troops would be withdrawn from the WT Station at Nea Liosia after the station had been rendered useless. Extra transport was sent out for them under the command of Capt. T.H.C. Kepple. No incidents occurred on the way out, but on the return journey the column was ambushed near the munition depot in the north of the city. The front of the column did not halt, but drove on through the ambush. Unfortunately, two ORs were wounded and evacuated. The rear of the column did not get through, and it was feared that it had been captured. Two tanks were sent out to the area and on arrival at the WT Station found the missing troops. They had observed the trouble at the head of the column, had halted and turned round. They were escorted back to Athens by the tanks, who generally shot up the whole of the ambush area on their way through. ELAS casualties were claimed.

During this same evening two troops of "B" Sqn were used to escort the remaining German and Italian PsW held at Goudhi to Kalamaki Airfield, for onward routing out of the country. This was completed without incident - a most surprising event, as the column passed through large areas dominated by the enemy.

10 Dec. During this an "D" Sqn HQ, plus one troop, were sent to reinforce the troop already at Pallini, the Marconi WT Station, from which all broadcasting to England and the outside world took place. They arrived without trouble. This left a troop of "D" Sqn in Athens which was placed under command of "A" Sqn, who, during this pm, established positions to the immediate south-west of the hill, Likavittos, using a troop each from "D" and "C" Sqn to do so. This was the first build up of the positions which were to be the regt's responsibility during the greater period of the operations in Athens. A sector which was later described by a senior commander as "the thin red line of black hats".

This line eventually linked the base of Likavittos with the key position at Omoneias Square, which was at this date held by the 6 Para Bn. To establish it, the regt had under command troops from the SBS, who remained so for the whole time and proved themselves invaluable, the 3 Corps Car Coy, RASC and a Fd Survey Coy, the two last-named units doing all in their power to carry out a task which was as different from that of their normal role as the tasks of this regt were from those to which it had hitherto been accustomed. When, at a later date, the regt was relieved of its commitment on another section of the perimeter front, these two units passed from command.

During night 10-11 Dec the troops at the junction of Athinas and Ermour Sts were subjected to increased enemy activity, and as dawn broke it was seen that the enemy had infiltrated much closer to the regt's positions. The force commander, Capt. R. U.E. Bond, MC, was wounded during the night by a rifle grenade exploding in the room he was occupying. At 1000 hrs it was feared that the whole force in this area would have to withdraw, one of the section positions being set on fire and becoming untenable. The position was finally restored, however, and the only place evacuated was the section position on the south-west corner of the road intersection. This gave the enemy possession of the buildings to the west of the junction, leaving a no-man's-land at this point not more than thirty feet wide. For days to follow the situation was critical, but all enemy attempts to dislodge our troops failed, and the position continued to be held, thus denying the enemy any chance of infiltrating in strength to the centre of the city, which was only a few hundred yards away. Later in the day two platoons of 11 KIDC came under command of this regt and moved to the road junction area. Major E.T.W. Jenkin, MC, took command of the force.

During the morning of 11th Dec an ELAS officer, under a white flag, approached the regt's forward locality on the north side of the perimeter line, stating that he had orders to attack and would, if necessary, engage any British troops standing in his way. He was told that our troops felt very much in the same mood, as he would

find if he attempted to carry out his orders. Following this visit, the fighting on this front commenced in earnest.

14th Dec proved to be the most critical day as far as this regt was concerned. By this time a perimeter had been formed around the centre of the city with the troops available to the commander in Athens. This perimeter, with its centre approximately at Constitution Square, covered a radius of about 700 yards, and was very thinly held. The manner in which it was held can be seen from the fact that this regt held sections of the perimeter at the following points of the compass - one sqn at 360°, one at 270° and a third at 160°. This state of affairs was unfortunate but at the present stage unavoidable, as prior to the commencement of the insurrection troops were not disposed about the city tactically. To give additional point to this unfortunate situation, over and above the places held by sqns on the perimeter, further sectors were held at widely divided locations. One troop of "A" Sqn were in occupation of the Telegraph Office, which was in the forward area between the road junction previously mentioned and Omonias Square. During 14th Dec this building was subjected to heavy fire from the rebels, and in the evening a platoon of 6 Para Bn was sent to reinforce.

During the afternoon of this day Lieut. R.L. Willson, of "O" Sqn, was shot through the back whilst on the steps of a hospital. He was killed instantly. He was investigating a report that ELAS were in occupation of this building despite the fact that it prominently displayed the red cross. Following this incident, ELAS occupation was definitely proved, as his body was dragged inside, his battle dress removed and his revolver taken. The hospital was then evacuated, but later it was re-occupied and was subsequently attacked by our troops towards the end of the battle within the city.

To this day the small OP party left at Manna Barracks when HQ Sqn evacuated them had proved itself most useful. They had sent many reports of troop movement and had passed targets of all natures to the guns and aircraft. However, it was decided that the time had come for them to be withdrawn, as they were now in an isolated position about 1,000 yards outside the perimeter. They were warned to be ready to evacuate this night, and a troop of armoured cars was sent to get them. This troop, commanded by Lieut. A.D.L. Gardiner, completed the task without incident, although much difficulty was experienced in getting past the numerous road blocks which had been erected by both sides.

By 12th Dec the perimeter was established, and the centre of the city, held by British troops, was virtually cut off, except for armoured vehicles, who could still get along the main road to the sea at Faliron, which was never out of our hands. The perimeter lacked troops and many gaps were left. During the day many reports came from the regt's forward troops to the effect that ELAS were infiltrating towards the centre of the city. Undoubtedly infiltration was taking place, and everything was done with the troops available to counter the threat. As every day passed our position got firmer, and the chance of an ELAS attack succeeding grew correspondingly dimmer. If they had attacked during the first half of Dec they could have carried the city, but no co-ordinated action developed.

Although by this time fighting was progressing most fiercely in the city, our positions at Pallini and Marathon had not been molested, except for two or three very minor incidents.

It was known at this date that substantial reinforcements were on their way to Greece, and everyone began to talk of tank reinforcements, which would mean the re-equipment of the entire brigade. On 12th Dec, the regt learned that this was to take effect, and everyone was pleased, for although much experience had been gained in the infantry role, all had tanks and tank work at the back of their minds the whole time and felt a little jealous of the sister regt that had already been partly re-equipped.

On 14th Dec, the first move was made to concentrate the regt on one section of the perimeter. 11 KRG, who had arrived from the north some days previously, were to take over that part now held by "D" Sqn, based on the Zappion Broadcasting Station and facing the Stadium, which was most strongly held and which consisted rumours and reports said was a concentration area for ELAS. "D" Sqn, who had not had very much actual fighting to do, had nevertheless had a most unpleasant time in a war of nerves caused by civilian reports which could not be ignored.

Throughout the time that fighting took place civilian reports continually came to this regt. Some were undoubtedly most accurate, and some most alarming, but it was impossible to give every one of them the attention which was warranted had they all been true. At this time one building which the regt occupied in the north of the perimeter was reported as due for blowing up by the enemy every night. This, however, never materialised.

By early evening 14th Dec the relief of "B" Sqn at the Zeppion Building was completed and they had moved and taken over the left flank of the regt's positions, between Ononios Square and Likavittos. This relieved certain attached troops, previously referred to, who were now able to return to their normal occupations.

The LMD were this day ordered to Rouf Ordnance Depot to service certain vehicles at that place. The depot was located outside the perimeter and was held as a separate position. The LMD were given an armoured car escort to get them to it, but this, apparently thinking that a heavy recovery vehicle could do thirty miles per hour, made off far too quickly and did not maintain contact with the column behind. This column was accordingly sniped very heavily from all sides as soon as the armoured car went on ahead. Had the control by the regt's EME, Captain Rothwell, been anything other than excellent there would have been most heavy casualties. However, with no panic, the column of thin-skinned vehicles made their way through EME-infested neighbourhoods and eventually arrived at the depot with small casualties. In the weeks that followed the LMD performed its task admirably, and although 400 shells fell in their area completed its work. These facts are borne out in letters of appreciation from the commander of the depot.

By 15th Dec EME pressure at the junction of Ermou and Athinas Streets had grown less, due to actions on either flank of the EME District by two bns of the 2 Para Bde. It was deemed possible for the two troops of "A" Sqn there to be relieved by two platoons of the Greek National Guard, many platoons of which the regt had under command. Further, it was decided to hand over this section to 11 KRRC, in whose area it was. Thus, except for small posts, that part of the regt in Athens would be concentrated on one section of the front, a highly desirable state. Command passed to 11 KRRC at midday, and "A" Sqn came into reserve behind "C" Sqn. This was primarily to give them a rest, but had the secondary effect of giving depth to the line. The troop of "A" Sqn in occupation of the Telegraph Office was also relieved by a platoon of the National Guard, under command of, and supported by, a section of HQ Sqn.

During the evening of this day the regt heard that the first sqn of tanks would be arriving very shortly, and at a sqn ldrs' conference the next day, "D" Sqn, by winning a ballot to which the question was put, received the allocation. It was decided to withdraw them from the line and replace with "A" Sqn. It was necessary to relieve the troop of "B" Sqn at Goudhi, and this was done by sending the troop of "D" Sqn still left in Athens. This troop had until the present time served under command of "C" Sqn.

The regt patrolled most actively at night during this period. Although untrained for this type of work, much aggressiveness was put into it, which bore fruit, as the results attained were highly satisfactory. This patrol work was very necessary, as it was impossible at this stage to put in an attack of any size, and had we not continually probed the enemy's line, giving him no rest, he might have realised our weakness and acted accordingly. As it was, the enemy was constantly kept on his guard, never knowing where these fighting patrols would strike next.

During 16th Dec "C" Sqn's right flank was relieved by a coy of 2 HLI, and they in turn relieved the detachment of 40 R. Tks which had been serving under their command. This detachment thereupon returned to its own regt, which had arrived from the Peloponnese.

The regt sector now extended from Asklepiou Street on the right to Patission Street on the left, a front of about seven hundred yards through very narrow streets, with EME, in some cases, only the width of a street away.

On the morning of 17th Dec the first part of the relief of "D" Sqn by "A" Sqn took place. A troop of "A" Sqn passed through the main positions with a tank in support and established themselves in a building at 37454546. This relief was completed without incident, although "D" Sqn lost one CR killed in the area during the day.

It was on 17th Dec that OC Barrymore reported the latest position on Salamis Is-
land. There total British force there was about 35, but through the good will which
these soldiers had built up, particularly the commander, who was most popular on the
island by virtue of having secured for the people all the relief they required, a force
of 250 armed men now existed, all having placed themselves under command. They were
in a position to report that they were confident of being able to deal with any emergency
which might arise and that they considered the island secure. A most notable feat,
accomplished by the personal initiative of the commander.

After last light 17th Dec "B" Sqn were completely relieved by "A" Sqn and went into
reserve, awaiting the arrival of their tanks. When these tanks arrived, the sqn was
to come under command of a British Division, who were all now ashore, and whose task it
was to clear the road from the coast. The Commanding Officer decided to give "A" and
"B" Sqns one tank each to use in close support of infantry and to have two tanks as a
regt reserve in RHQ.

During 18th Dec the regt intensified its patrolling, and both "A" and "C" Sqns
achieved notable success. Lieut. A.M. Willis was wounded on one of the patrols, which,
although unfortunate, was a small price to pay for the results attained.

On the 19th Dec an unfortunate accident took place in "D" Sqn which resulted in
the wounding of 11 soldiers. During an arms check a 36 Mills grenade exploded in a
room where a troop was assembled. Due to the presence of mind of their Troop Leader,
Lieut. R.B. Hollowes, who was himself wounded, none was killed. During the few seconds
which elapsed from the time it detonated all got on the floor. The grenade exploded
on a table and set off a smoke grenade, which wounded some by burning.

During the afternoon of 19th Dec "D" Sqn were ordered to move to the coast at
Paliron to take over their tanks. They were to move down complete and after collect-
ing their tanks go into billets in the same area. Their subsequent actions up to
the end of the month are covered separately. They collected their tanks, as did the
crews from "A", "C" and RHQ, which latter returned to the regt in Athens in support.
Up to this date tank support had been given to the regt by 46 R. Tks.

For the first time dynamite throwers made their appearance on the regt's northern
front. "A" Sqn, using borrowed tanks and armoured cars, stonked a building, known
to all as the unfinished building, which was located in Kaminos Square and contained
ELAS. Armoured cars were put in Petission Street to stop any ELAS attempting to es-
cape through the back of the building, and dynamite was thrown from an upstairs window
at one of them. Dynamite was ignited in various ways, one example being as follows:
a German stick grenade with additional blocks of dynamite tied to it, making a very
effective demolition charge. A later model used against the regt took the form of a
tyre packed with dynamite, a fuse worked into the charge and the whole bound with rope.
It would then be lighted and rolled to the target, which was usually a wall. This was
used both in an effort to destroy our positions and as a terror weapon.

20th. Dec was quiet, but marred by an unfortunate accident. The Signals Sergeant
~~out with a line party~~ well within the area held was shot dead by a Greek sentry at
the Telegraph Office.

An unfortunate notion had just previously taken place at R/F HQ, which had stayed
as an isolated post to the north of the city. The result of this action was that
many R/F personnel were taken P&W. This made the higher command reconsider the
position both at Pallini and Marathon, at each of which places the regt had two troops.
At Pallini "D" Sqn HQ was also established. The regt was warned that their evacuation
was probably going to be ordered, and the best way for their return was discussed.
The sea seemed the most reasonable, and Pallini carried out a recon in carriers on 21st
Dec from their location to the sea at Loutsas 6142, via Sparta. The patrol met a road
block which was manned by two ELAS. They made the ELAS remove the road block for
them. On the return journey the patrol was fired at in Sparta, but no casualties
were sustained. The beach at Loutsas was found to be suitable for evacuation and was
free of mines.

One OR of "A" Sqn was killed during the afternoon of 21st Dec by a sniper.

On 22nd Dec a plan was evolved which required the use of two of the regt's tanks,
with a carrier containing a crew able to deal with mines. Much ELAS activity had
been reported in the area surrounding the prominent feature named Lofos Strefi, which
was in the rear of the enemy's lines facing this regt's positions. Only very little

Extensive action had been taken against ELAS in this area, except for the patrol activity, the reason being that at this stage the higher command were not prepared to push forward in the north until the south and the lines of communication were secure. It was felt that ELAS were possibly suffering under the delusion that they dominated this section of the front, and, accordingly, in order to shake them out of any complacency, the commanding officer decided to take a small armoured force under his own command north along Patission Street and then turn east along Loufros Alexandras, in the direction of the Averof Prison at 396457. Road blocks had been reported on this route, but not of a very substantial nature, although they were known to contain mines. With the Colonel commanding one tank and Major E.T.W. Jenkin, MC, commanding another, this small force set out into ELAS territory and made havoc of all they met. The crew of the carrier did very fine work. When road blocks were encountered they dismounted from the carrier and, covered by the tanks, removed mines, which were numerous. This operation was performed satisfactorily three times, but two of them were killed by a sniper at the fourth road block, which was in the vicinity of the prison. The force returned along the same route and were engaged by ELAS dynamite throwers. This sweep certainly made ELAS think hard, for they went to great ends to ensure that a repetition would not occur.

This day also saw the first of the official ELAS representatives who, from now on, were to present themselves regularly to the regt's post in Themistokleous Street. Their visits were so regular, indeed, that this became known as "negotiation barrier". Some things that passed over this barrier took the form of dirty pieces of paper addressed to the British Prime Minister. It was through this post that ELAS representatives passed on route to the conference which took place on Christmas Day.

In the early hours of 23rd Dec Lieut. M.M. Sheppard took a patrol of "A" Sqn into the enemy lines. They lay up for a long time and waited for ELAS to appear. Eventually a small congregation of the enemy was seen in a doorway slightly below ground level. The patrol crept up, threw grenades and most certainly killed four or five. Our troops suffered no loss. This was typical of the minor actions which were fought by the regt during this period. Never to give the enemy rest or a feeling of security - that was the intention.

On 25th Dec all was comparatively quiet in the Athens area, and anything which happened was rather overshadowed by the presence of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in the city. This did not mean that fighting did not take place on this day, which was certainly not the case, as can be seen from the following account of an action fought by troops of "D" Sqn based on Pallini RT Station.

Major R. Andrews, OC "D" Sqn, at Pallini, received a report from a civilian that there were some British POW being held by ELAS in the village of Paiania 4844, about four miles south of Pallini. He therefore sent out a troop fighting patrol under the command of Lieut. A. St. C. E. Butt, whose orders were to investigate this report and, if it were true, to attempt the release of the prisoners.

The house in which the prisoners were held was pointed out by a civilian. Lieut. Butt left a section to cover any withdrawal whilst he took the other two sections to the house, surrounded it and called for its occupants to surrender. This they did without further ado, and as had been reported nine British soldiers were held inside, who were released. Their ELAS guards were taken into custody. The released soldiers were found to be from another regt in our own brigade, the 11 KRRC, and they had been captured during an attack by their regt on Arditos, south of the Zappion Building.

Lieut. Butt withdrew to the covering party and whilst crossing the square was fired on. This fire the troop returned as they made their way from the village.

The return journey was made across country, and all went well until the troop attempted to cross a road. They were about half way back when this attempt was made. An ambush was encountered and heavy small arms fire was directed upon them. The ELAS prisoners made away. To disengage, Lieut. Butt decided to get small parties out one at a time. This plan was successful, and by twos and threes the party returned to Pallini. Two of the released KRRC soldiers failed to get in, and it was assumed that they had been recaptured. The result of the action was that seven very grateful British soldiers were released from the enemy. They could not, however, return to their battalion in Athens, as road communication was impossible, except to a strong force. They were therefore rearmoured and remained at Pallini.

At approx 0630 hrs on 26th Dec activity broke out around building No. 106 on the Athens City Map. This building, a laboratory, was occupied by a troop of "C" Sqn. It was a key position on the sector and attacks by ELAS upon this locality were predicted daily by civilians. At the above time a dynamite attack was launched on the south-west face of the building which did little damage, but, apparently through sympathetic detonation, all the looky traps laid by this regt around the building exploded. No ELAS wounded were found, and the attack did not develop.

On 27th Dec the RMO was wounded whilst returning from a forward position. He had visited this post to attend to a wounded man. The soldier was being carried back by a party of which the RMO was one when they were fired on and the doctor badly wounded by an explosive bullet. The wounded soldier was a pin hit and killed.

On the morning of 10th Dec the half regt of "D" at Marathon commenced evacuation. It had been decided to destroy or render unserviceable all heavy equipment, which included a three-ton truck. A scout car was to attempt to reach Pallini along a road round the north of the Arm, then south down the coast through N. Makri to Pallini. The crew of this car were the driver, who could not walk due to illness, and a sergeant of "D" Sqn, who was also unwell.

One hour before first light the walking troops left, striking due south across the Pentelion Mountains to join Pallini. At 1630 hrs this force arrived at Pallini with only three ORs missing. These had fallen out owing to exhaustion, and their intention was to rest, lay up and then move on the next day. They were unfortunately captured by ELAS, however, and subsequently released during the truce which followed. Of the scout car nothing was heard until some weeks later, when the crew returned. They had also been taken prisoner whilst attempting to get round a road block. The story of the time spent by the driver in captivity is attached to this diary.

During night 27-28 it was found, through civilian information, that ELAS were attempting to mouse-hole through a row of buildings in Solonos St, with the intention of gaining a position by first light at 37764524, and so dominate a new area. They worked a little behind schedule, and when troops were brought to deal with this activity it was found that ELAS had succeeded in their plan to such an extent that only one wall still required attention. The enemy made off when attacked, leaving behind him much evidence of his work. Following this, "C" Sqn, the troops involved, made a strong point at 37764520 to counter any similar move in future. This position proved to be a good one, for by 1030 hrs five kills had been made from it.

The RAF dropped the first supplies to Pallini garrison during the pm. The troops from Marathon had had to leave the greater proportion of their kit, which had to be made up, and so certain items, plus more rations, were dropped. The dropping was carried out successfully.

Civilians reported this day that the enemy intended to make an attack on the regt sector in Athens on night 28-29. This was not a new rumour or report, however. HQ Sqn were ordered to put out positions in rear of the front line to thicken the defence, but no attack developed.

In a bout of over-enthusiasm Pallini was shot up by fighters of the RAF during night 28-29. They had apparently seen a light and had judged it to be the enemy. Luckily, apologies were sufficient, as no one was hurt.

During the following night a large fire broke out in the block of buildings at 37454540, an "A" Sqn's sector near Patission St. This fire burnt so fiercely that troops in the forward posts on the other side of the road had to withdraw, taking up new positions at 37504540. Unfortunately, prior to this withdrawal, a building was dynamited, and as a result three of our own troops (one from this regt and two National Guard) were killed. The bodies were recovered later.

In the early evening a rather dowdy individual presented himself to the barrier under a white flag. He said that he wanted to see the Archbishop. He was Swelos, a former ELAS cabinet minister. The regt handed him to higher authority.

During early on 31st Dec a report reached the regt through Cable and Wireless Company, whose installations the troops at Pallini were guarding, to the effect that an attack had been put in on that station during the night. The telephone line was out of order and the regt could not reach them on the wireless.

Later in the morning communication was re-established and Pallini reported that they had been attacked at midnight by approx 50 ELAS, supported by an armoured car. The attack had been most determined, liberally supported with automatic weapons and by an anti tank gun firing HE.

The armoured car was one which had previously been captured from the RAF at Kifissia. This veh was attacked with great determination by Rfn. Pink, one of the men recaptured from ELAS some days previously. He crept up very close to the car and scored a direct hit with a PIAT. After a few moments the car blew up. Later, it was confirmed that, apart from its normal load, it carried a considerable quantity of dynamite. The attack was finally beaten off at 0130 hrs, with casualties to British troops as follow: 1 officer and four ORs wounded, one of the latter subsequently dying. ELAS left behind them many dead.

Whether the break in the telephone line to Athens from Pallini was in any way connected with the attack or whether it was pure coincidence is not known. However, as the line had gone, the commander of the land forces decided to evacuate Pallini, since the station could no longer be used. A column was formed under the command of the officer commanding KDGs to protect this evacuation and escort "D" Sqn, and returned at 1000 hrs, its task completed without incident. The equipment at the station was rendered useless.

Although the force at Pallini guarding the station was now unnecessary, it was considered unfortunate that it had had to be evacuated at this stage in the operations, for it was apparent that ELAS were beginning to weaken in Athens, and to have had a force in that position would have enabled us to account for any ELAS withdrawing in that direction. "D" Sqn felt sorry that they had been drawn in, for they had excellent positions there and were confident that they could have withstood a powerful attack. They were also well stocked with food.

"D" Sqn, who, as has been indicated already in this narrative, were the first sqn of this regiment to be re-established in an armoured role, moved down to the coast near Faliron on the 19th Dec and completed the drawing of their tanks by 2000 hrs on that day. In addition to the sixteen tanks allocated to "D" Sqn, four crews from the other sqns of the regt were in the same area to draw a corresponding number of Shermans. These latter four were driven back to Athens and used in subsequent operations in direct support of the infantry troops of the regt.

The tanks had come straight off the ship and were from Italy. From their appearance it was judged that they were in bad condition, and as one of them burnt out a clutch in the first few hundred yards, it was thought that the regt would probably experience considerable trouble with them. However, this was a false impression, for in the weeks which followed no major mechanical fault was encountered.

The sqn was placed under direct command of 10 Corps, who had recently arrived to take over operational command of the land troops in Greece. During 20th Dec 10 Corps put "D" Sqn under command of 4th British Division, who were by then ashore and whose task it was to clear the line of communication from the coast into the city. The sqn did not fight its tanks this day, and they were serviced and filled with ammunition in preparation for the morrow, when they would commence operations with battalions and brigades of 4th. British Division.

The main task accomplished during 20th and 21st Dec was the evacuation of a large force of REE personnel that had been cut off in a factory area at Imittos 3041. This was carried out by two troops of "D" Sqn, who operated under command of KDG.

The main clearing of the Faliron-Athens road had by this time commenced. It was necessary to clear and dominate several hundred yards on either side of the road, which was wide and straight, and so gave every opportunity to snipers firing from very long ranges. 4th. British Division tackled this task by advancing along both sides of the road to a depth of about six hundred yards, with the main thrust coming from the south. Certain elements of the division, in the centre of Athens, worked down from the capital to meet the oncoming forces. The tanks of "D" Sqn supported these drives from 20th. Dec onwards, which provided them with excellent shooting, and the operations proceeded favourably against quite strong opposition. Formidable road blocks were encountered which withstood all efforts on the part of the tks at blasting them down. These road blocks were covered by enemy posts immediately behind them. To get the infantry and sappers to these blocks, in order that they might be

the tanks used HE amm with delayed fuse, bouncing the rounds about ten feet in front of the blocks, so that the explosion took place over the heads of the defenders, resembling air bursts.

The area of this advance was far more open than had previously been the case in the fighting, and consequently the tanks were able to engage the enemy with HE at long ranges. This type of shooting took the rebels by surprise, and their reactions in the main, were to panic and run, thus presenting "D" Sqn with easy kills.

On 24th Dec one troop of the sqn knocked out a 65mm gun at 369440.

Up to 26th Dec the sqn had been operating by troops on the scale of one troop per Battalion. This in normal circumstances would have been inadequate, but a greater number of tanks were not available, and although it meant no rest for the crews, support was given to the infantry on every occasion it was asked for. On 28th Dec the sqn was able to operate on a more liberal scale, large areas had been cleared and the Saliron road was open. The division then turned its attention to districts in the south of Athens which were known to be rebel-infested. It had been assessed that this area would prove difficult, but this proved to be wrong, and district after district rapidly fell to the advancing troops. By this time it was apparent that ELAS resistance in the southern part of the city had ceased, and large areas fell without trouble. At the end of the year 4th British Division had completed its task in the south and was preparing for future operations, the first being a drive from east to west across the northern front of the perimeter. "D" Sqn were scheduled to continue their support in this new attack, and the last two days of the year were spent in maintenance and rest, preparatory to fresh action.

The diary of the regt's activities in the Athens fighting does not end with the termination of the year, and the final phases of the fighting are described in the January section of this narrative of events.

