

Appendix C

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

Unit citation awarded to battalion per Sec I, GO #29 Hq.,
First U.S. Army, 17 February 1945

The 51st Engineer Combat Battalion, United States Army, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy from 17 to 22 December 1944, in Belgium. When German forces had penetrated deep into friendly lines on 17 December 1944, and were rolling westward rapidly, the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion was ordered into strongpoint defensive positions in the vicinity of Trois-Ponts, Hotton and Marche, Belgium with the mission of impeding and containing the enemy advance at strategic points. Faced by numerically superior forces in armor, firepower and manpower, the battalion quickly constructed and stubbornly defended roadblocks, prepared vital bridges for demolition and served as infantrymen. By their determination and devotion to duty, regardless of the odds, the battalion denied the enemy important avenues of advance, thus permitting strong friendly forces to move into counterattack positions. By skillful use of the weapons at hand, excellent terrain appreciation and the use of ingenious ruses, the enemy was led to believe that strong formations confronted them and that they were being rapidly reinforced. When German tanks attacked repeatedly, fierce fire from rocket launchers destroyed them; infantry attacks, supported by intense artillery barrages, were met by a hail of small arms fire with heavy losses on enemy ranks; when bridges could no longer be

held, they were demolished at the last possible moment, denying their use to the hostile advancing forces. Throughout the five-day period, the enemy was never able to penetrate the defenses manned by the officers and men of the 51st Engineer Combat Battalion. Their courageous actions and fortitude contributed materially to the ultimate defeat of German offensive plans in this area and are worthy of high praise.