

File
230

22 Oct 44

SUBJECT: Notes on Tank Destroyer Training and Operations.

TO : Tank Destroyer Officer, First United States Army, APO 230,
U.S. Army.

1. During three and one-half (3½) months of actual combat, the following points have been brought out, of interest to Tank Destroyer Personnel. Certain falscies of basic training, as listed below:

a. The Tank Destroyer doctrine of being held back, that is, Infantry going forward, then Tanks, then Tank Destroyers, is very prone to breed and foster timidity and lack of aggressive action. I believe that platoon leaders and MIO Commanders must be instilled in positive aggressive action, going forward with the Infantry Platoon, then by hand signals, bring their vehicle to firing position. Emphasis should not be placed on TD's remaining back.

b. The basic thought that Tank Destroyers will fight on the reverse slope of a hill, letting the tanks come into them, will not hold good in all cases. Take for example, the terrific fighting the 18th Inf Regt of the 1st US Infantry Division did in the area north of the towns, Haaren and Verlautenheide. In this situation, the Infantry Battalion Commanders were given the mission to sieze and hold the high ground. This, they did, then promptly organized the FORWARD SLOPE. Many strong counter-attacks were launched in this area, being complete with artillery preparation and terrific mortar fire, followed by combined Infantry-Tank assaults. Let anyone ask themself the question, "What can I drive them off with?". The answer is quite obvious, Tanks or Tank Destroyers. No Infantry Commander is going to allow tanks to run over his men in foxholes if he has any way of driving them off, therefore, the Infantry Commander to whom these weapons are attached, is going to order them out on the FORWARD SLOPE to take the on-coming tanks under direct fire. This must be done even in the face of what seems certain destruction for men and vehicles. The Tank Destroyers cannot expect to remain in comparative safety on the rear slope. This ties in with the thoughts expressed in sub-paragraph (a). Tank Destroyers must be aggressive and cannot expect to be allowed to remain back behind the Infantry in all cases.

c. Though our Senior Infantry Officers invariably understand correct use of Tank Destroyers, it is very often found that Junior Officers, particularly Infantry Platoon Leaders, do not understand their capabilities and shortcomings, for instance; when necessary to split a Tank Destroyer Platoon, attaching a section to an Infantry

Company. That puts the Tank Destroyer Staff Sergeant under direct command of an Infantry Officer. That, due to his lack of knowledge, will order the Tank Destroyers to move into an impossible piece of terrain. A spot that the S/Sgt knows his vehicle cannot negotiate. If he refuses, he has refused to obey a direct order under fire. If he obeys, the vehicle is hopelessly bogged down. During the 13 trying days in the Haaren - Verlautenheide area, when all nerves were on edge, and men nearly exhausted, tempers frayed, this occurred too often.

2. The Junior Infantry leader must be taught proper use of Tank Destroyers; where they can go and where they cannot go, what they can do and what they cannot do.

3. This, I believe, can best be achieved by the so-called "Marrying of the Services" back in the training areas instead of on the battlefield. It is my opinion, that the Tank Destroyer Battalion should be an organic part of the Infantry Division, under direct command of the Commanding General, and to be used tactically, to support the Infantry with assault fire, to stop enemy tanks, and secondly, in an indirect fire mission.

4. Miscellaneous notes on the M-10:

a. An extra Cal. .50 MG mounted on the right front of the turret has proved invaluable in hedge-row country, and in street fighting in Aschen.

b. Dust deflectors made of armor plate, save radiators from ricochet and mortar bursts.

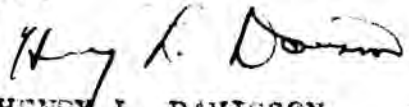
c. The Achilles heel of the M-10 seems to be the radiators; baffle plates (removable) should be installed to prevent their being punctured, by shell fragments, either air or ground burst.

d. A cover for the turret should be devised to prevent casualties from air-bursts. Some platoon leaders claim that the enemy, on hearing the sound of the M-10 motor, immediately, fire air-bursts, whereas against tanks, they use PDF.

e. The radio mast should be erected in a less exposed spot.

f. TD crews become very attached to their vehicles. They request repair and return of their vehicles after the M-10's have been disabled in combat two or three times.

5. All of the above submitted with the sole purpose of improving Tank Destroyer Tactics and Technique.


HENRY L. DAVISSON,
Lt. Colonel, F.A.,
Commanding

cc: CG, 1st US Inf Div

S E C R E T

HEADQUA.
APO 23C

634TH TANK DESTROYER B. ICM
U.S. ARMY

29 Oct 44

SUBJECT: Answers to questionnaire.

TO : Commanding General, VII U.S. Corps, APO 307, Attn: Artillery Officer.

1. Yes. Thirty-six (36) 3" guns are a wealth of available fire power. Because of ability to relieve Light Battalions of Division of interdictory missions, long range, harassing etc.
2. Type of fire most frequently delivered: Harassing and interdiction. These are the most desirable and appropriate missions of TD's.
3. Normally, sufficient time has been available to lay by Base Angles. Compass has also been used. Good accurate results have been attained using either method.
4. Bulk of firing done by this Battalion, has been by Platoon and Section. The Company has only once, been employed as a unit in a secondary mission.
5. Massing of fire within the Company has been accomplished through FDC. Ordinarily, each Platoon registers on a common Base Point. If this is not practicable, a computed shift is made. Massed fire in combat of the Company has been unobserved, results are unknown. Massing fire of the Battalion has only been done in training. Good results were attained using TOT methods.
6. The artillery battalion which unit is supporting, brings the survey to Gun positions. Actual position area survey is accomplished by personnel of the Platoons.
7. The artillery is very co-operative, they conduct the registration, assign missions, observe where practical, etc.
8. No. The artillery work of this Battalion has been very limited. Our work has been close support of the Infantry. Seldom do we have more than a single platoon employed in secondary mission. The close co-operation with the Division Artillery when working secondary mission obviates the need for trained specialists in Survey etc. However, an ACP would always be welcome. In the open country characterized in the passage through France etc, a cub would have been invaluable.

Bulk of fire

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS 634TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
AFC 230 U.S. ARMY

13 Nov 1944

1st Lt Brown *AMB*
Maj Cook *PFC*
Capt Ward *PFC*

File

SUBJECT: Battle Experiences of TD's in Aachen.

TO: Commanding General, First United States Army, AFC 230, Attn: Anti-Tank Officer.

1. When troops of the 26th Inf Regt moved into the city of Aachen, Company A of this Battalion moved in with the Infantry to provide close support.

2. Normal combat attachments were not in effect. When the 3rd Bn of the 26th Inf Regt moved to the north, one (1) Gun of the 1st Platoon was attached to 3rd Platoon, making a 5-gun platoon operating on the north of the city. The 2nd Platoon with 2 guns, worked with the 2nd Bn of the 26th Inf Regt, and moved in from the south-east, and eventually passed through the center of town. The 1st Platoon with three (3) guns, entered town on the south-east, and moved across the southern edge of town.

3 a. As stated in the beginning, our mission was to provide close support to the infantry. In order to do this, the Destroyers moved immediately in rear of the leading Infantry, firing at targets of opportunity, and those strong-points designated by the Infantry. The enemy used houses, piles of rubble, cellars, theaters, churches, and any natural obstacle he could make into a strong point. He employed in addition to normal Infantry weapons, Tanks, SF AT Guns, and 75mm AT Guns.

b. In attacking cellar positions, which usually had iron grilling across the window, a round of AP or APD 30 was fired into the grill, and immediately followed by HE. This ordinarily cleared the cellar.

c. When firing against personnel on the street, F.D. was used, skipping the shells along the paving, ahead of our Infantry. This results in an air-burst just over the enemy Infantry.

4. Reconnaissance for firing positions was tedious and thorough. It being almost impossible to move with any freedom, side streets, alleys, and passages created by destroyed buildings were most often used. It is necessary for each gun commander to know at all times, the exact location of the friendly Infantry, other guns in the platoon, and probable firing positions. Reconnaissance on foot must be made of the entire route. Crossing long straight streets should be avoided. One (1) Destroyer was knocked out while crossing a street, previously crossed many times and considered safe. The enemy had moved a 75mm SF Gun into a building at the far end of the street, hitting the destroyer with a flanking shot from 750 yards.

5. a. Upper stories must be watched carefully; early in the fight, a hand grenade lobbed from a 3rd floor window, landed in the turret, igniting the ammunition, and seriously damaging the vehicle.

b. On another occasion, a German soldier lurking behind a fence, escaped notice of the infantry, and fired a bazooka at close range. Fortunately, the round glanced off the top of the turret, causing only minor damage.

The closest cooperation with the Infantry imperative. In one AT Gun could not be attacked by TD's by reason of its position. The crew provided cover for an Infantryman creeping forward, by throwing 3 HE FG against the wall above the gun. This drove the enemy gun crew cover, permitting the Infantryman to push a Thermite Grenade down the side, effectively silencing the gun.

7. Conclusions:

a. Ammunition should be brought close in, and an individual dump for each platoon established. Expenditure of HE was high, and constant resupply was necessary. Note: One (1) Gun fired 132 rds in a very short time, while supporting advance of Infantry through one (1) block of buildings.

- (1) AP and APC at times, had little effect against walls of modern buildings, often glancing off and causing no damage, when fired at 3rd and 4th story concrete walls, (ricochet).
- (2) W.P. would have been valuable for starting fires to burn strong-points out, or to screen street crossings.

b. Reconnaissance: On foot and thorough. Platoon Leaders, and Staff Sergeants dismounted and forward with the Infantry.

c. Security:

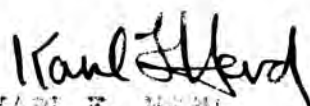
- (1) Additional Infantry was assigned each destroyer for close-in protection. These riflemen should not cluster around the destroyer, but be deployed slightly forward and to the rear on both sides of the street, and if possible, in upper stories of close buildings.
- (2) It was necessary for two (2) TD men to remain in each Tank Destroyer all night since all TD's remained in MLR. This caused perpetual fatigue in the gun crews. Plenty of powdered coffee is a big help in combating this.

d. Protection:

- (1) The safest place for the crew is within the M-10. Mortar hits on M-10's and alongside caused no casualties.
- (2) A wire framework over turrets helped keep debris from fouling turrets, and prevented grenades from being lobbed into the turret.
- (3) Shrapnel deflectors improvised by Bn Maintenance, saved countless radiators from beingiddled by close mortar bursts.

e. Although some sort of covered cover to protect against air-bursts and direct hits would be of value, the ease of escape from an open turret Destroyer, as well as the increased visibility, warrants the continued use of the open turret.

For the Commanding Officer:


 KARL F. MEARD,
 Major, F.I.I.,
 Executive Officer

HEADQUARTERS
634th TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 230, U. S. ARMY

10 March 1945

SUBJECT: Battle Experiences and Recommendations.

TO : Tank Destroyer Officer, First US Army, APO 230, US Army.
(1 copy to VII Corps ATO)

1. Battle Experiences:

a. Enemy Recognition. During the Butgenbach fight, one Tank Destroyer crew that accounted for seven (7) enemy tanks, recognized them and fired on them simply by their enormous size. As the car commander put it - "Hell, no! We don't build them that big. Fire!"

b. During particularly heavy engagements, the battalion Medical Detachment materially aided the various regimental aid stations.

c. Socks can be picked up daily, boiled out daily in a kitchen water heating unit, and returned dry to the men daily. All that is necessary is to have four (4) pairs of socks per man to start the rotation.

d. Star shell fuse cut to 800 yards has been used as an illuminating agent. Star shell is also effective in burning down haystacks.

e. A town was taken rapidly and successfully by riding infantry on Tank Destroyers. Groups of four (4) men had been previously assigned houses. The Tank Destroyers went in shooting. The infantry jumped off as they passed their assigned houses and rapidly cleared the town.

2. Recommendations:

a. The SCR 300 should be issued on the basis of two (2) per platoon for Tank Destroyer companies and Reconnaissance Company. This unit has used both the SCR 536 and SCR 300 and find the SCR 300 far superior in performance. This radio permits the platoon leader to keep in touch with the Infantry Company Commander and the vehicles of his platoon while making necessary dismounted reconnaissance.

b. Infantry training and Infantry arms should be stressed for Reconnaissance Company. It is found that a great deal of reconnaissance work is done dismounted. Even to the extent of taking over or relieving Infantry units. Therefore the weapons and training should include Infantry tactics. This, so the enemy will not recognize a different unit by the use of different weapons. Reconnaissance Company of this organization has accumulated and uses five (5) BARs and M-1 rifles. It is recommended that the 60mm mortars be issued one (1) per Reconnaissance platoon.

c. The perfect Tank Destroyer: At the moment it would appear that the medium tank, T26, A3, is the ideal Tank Destroyer. This is based on the following reasoning:

(1). The Infantry do not trust their present anti-tank weapon; that is, the 57mm gun.

attle Experiences and Recommendations, (Cont'd)

(2). In the assault it is found that Tank Destroyers are often in front of the tanks due to various reasons.

(3). On numerous occasions, Tank Destroyers are used in assault gun roles. This will continue when the occasion demands.

(4). Therefore, as long as Tank Destroyers will be used in an anti-tank, tank, assault gun, and Tank Destroyer role, it is my opinion that the best and most recent tank should be used.

(5). It is my opinion that Tank Destroyer battalions should be an organic part of the Infantry divisions.

d. A task force has been formed and tried consisting of First US Infantry Reconnaissance Troops, Reconnaissance Company of 654th TD Battalion, Assault Gun Platoon of 745th Tank Battalion, Mortar Platoon of 745th Tank Battalion, and a Light Tank Company of the 745th Tank Battalion (Company "D"). This was a light, mobile, versatile force with plenty of fire power. In missions lasting two (2) to four (4) days, it was highly satisfactory. On missions of longer duration, one (1) to two (2) weeks, it was found that supply and administrative difficulties developed, caused mainly by lack of T/O and T/E and was felt in Communications, Supply, and Officer and enlisted personnel to properly man the CP.

e. Motor Maintenance: Inclosed copy of daily motor maintenance report. Note that Division Ordnance Officer receives a copy and is occasionally asked to help on a particular problem.

(1). The M-20 has been generally highly unsatisfactory due to (1) lack of cross-country ability, (2) the ease with which it slides off the shoulders of the roads, (3) the ungoverned engine, causing numerous clutch and motor failures on steep grades.

f. A luminous radium night-lighting devise issued by the Engineers, two (2) per armored vehicles, held in a gloved hand, have been found very effective to guide M-10s at night by use of hand signals.

g. A showdown inspection putting men on proper T/Es gets rid of numerous stoves, skis, comforters, extra blankets, individual comfort boxes, and promptly eases the transportation problem.



HENRY L. DAVISSON
Lt. Col., FA,
Comdg 654th TD Bn.