

ANTI-TANK DEFENSE OF ANZIO BEACHHEAD

1. Planning Phase.

a. Operation Shingle.

- (1) VI Corps was withdrawn from the vicinity of VENAFRO in the early part of January 1944 and began planning for Operation "Shingle". High lights of coordination of AT defense included:
 - (a) Coordination with G-3 as original beachhead objective was not suitable for AT defense. As a result, the projected line was extended to the MOLETTA River which gave a more suitable road net and at the same time afforded a better natural obstacle on the left flank.
 - (b) Coordination with the Engineers as to priority of demolitions, mine laying and roadblocks.
 - (c) Coordination between British and American units to insure adequate protection of boundaries.
 - (d) Directives to units to insure that they embarked adequately equipped with AT means; to assist units having insufficient equipment.
 - (e) Assurance that the loading plans were such that AT weapons would be unloaded early in the landing.
 - (f) Check on ammunition supply and recommendation as to the ratio HE to AP. It was decided that 80% HE and 20% armor piercing (with base detonating fuze) would be a proper percentage. This allotment of types has proved satisfactory throughout the operation.
 - (g) Plans for AT defense from units to determine that all avenues of tank approach were adequately covered.
 - (h) Close liaison with all units to insure dissemination of all pertinent information.
- (2) As a result of this phase of Operation Shingle the necessity for the following appears:
 - (a) The Anti-tank section of either division or corps should be included in any planning group from beginning to completion of plans.
 - (b) Constant association of the AT Officer with G-3, G-2, and G-4 are imperative in order to advise the General Staff of capabilities and limitations of TD's, of other AT means, and to assist them in their planning estimates.
 - (c) The anti-tank units involved must be informed promptly of changes and modifications in plans, since the smallest change in plans will affect AT dispositions.
 - (d) All units involved in an operation must be informed of the AT plans of the other units so that complete, detailed coordination can be attained.
 - (e) The Anti-tank defense portion of the Corps Order must include specific instructions as to locations of demolitions, mines and other passive means of defense.

2. Operations Phase.

a. Landing Phase.

- (1) Only one TD Bn, the 601st TD Bn attached to the 3rd Division, landed in the assault wave just after dawn. The first 24 hours were spent in unloading and assembling the battalion in the area designated. Due to the soft, marshy ground, considerable work was required before all guns reached the area. Dewaterproofing was accomplished and by the morning of D-1-1 the Bn was ready for operations. During this period the British 81st AT Regiment was in floating reserve and quickly available in case of need.
- (2) During this phase organization of the beachhead was the primary concern. Reconnaissance of the area by all units was made, positions located, and occupied, and AT positions along boundaries closely coordinated. As new units landed constant readjustment of gun positions and boundaries was necessary.
- (3) The landing of the 894th TD Bn on 26 January coincided with the enemy counterattack on the 1st Inf Div (Bn) in the CARROCETO area with approximately 20 tanks. Two companies of the 894th (under Corps control) were placed in support of the 1st Div and Ranger force who were operating in the CARROCETO area. Two days later the third company was placed on the left flank under corps control.

b. Offensive Phase.

- (1) On the 28th of January the 1st Inf Div (Br) started its drive toward the north with C Co, 894th attached. M-10's were employed as assault guns as well as anti-tank guns and worked with the infantry battalions. During this period fighting was heavy with numerous counterattacks; the lines fluctuated; units were cut off and then contact rejoined.
- (2) On the 30th of January the 3rd Division began its attack on OGISTERNA. The 601st TD Bn supported the attack as assault guns as well as anti-tank.
- (3) In both instances targets of Tank Destroyers included personnel, houses, strong points, machine guns, vehicles, guns, tanks and SP guns. 50 cal. machine guns were used by M-10's constantly and the M-10's were employed in the front lines of the infantry continuously.
- (4) Beginning 4 February 1944, offensive operations, other than counterattacks, ceased and the VI Corps assumed the defensive.

c. Defensive Phase.

- (1) During this period most of the hostile tank action occurred in the ANZIO-ALBANO axis from the 2nd to the 19th of February the enemy employed elements of six divisions on a 3000 yard front, and gained approximately 10,000 yards. An estimate of the enemy armor employed is 125-150 tanks, including both Mark IV and Mark VI types.
- (2) From the 2nd to 16th the 894th TD Bn had two companies employed in the ANZIO-ALBANO sector. Guns were placed well forward to cover vital roads and avenues of approach. Hostile artillery and mortar fire was intense. By the 5th of February, C Co, which had been in heavy action since the 29th of January was depleted to approximately 50% in strength in both M-10's and personnel. The balance of the Company was near exhaustion. B Co took over some of the positions of C Co so that some relief could be effected. A lull in fighting took place for a few days and from the 11th to the 16th the 645th completed relief of the 894th in this sector.
- (3) From the 16th through the 19th the Germans made an all out effort. During this period all 36 M-10's of the 645th battalion were employed with seventeen of them lost. As a result of these losses one platoon of A Co, 894th, which was still committed on the left flank was attached to the 645th. Also A Co of the 701st (A & C Company arrived on 9th Feb, balance of Bn on 23rd) was placed in direct fire positions in vicinity of the overpass to reinforce the 645th. In addition, the balance of A Co, 894th was alerted and B Co 894th was attached to the 56th Div (Br) which was on the left flank of the 45th Division. The 645th TD Bn destroyed 25 tanks in these 3 days and the 701st destroyed six. In addition, all TD's fired at enemy personnel with 50 cal. MGs and 3" guns. Other targets were houses, machine guns and mortars.
- (4) On the 19th the 1st Armored Division counterattacked with C Company of the 701st attached to overwatch the tanks. The action was successful and C Co destroyed two tanks.
- (5) After the counterattack the enemy fighting was reduced to local attacks and patrol skirmishes until the 28th when the enemy had regrouped and struck the 3rd Division along its whole front. The usual enemy tactics of tanks supporting infantry was employed. The attack lasted for five days during which approximately 75-100 tanks were employed by the enemy. The 601st destroyed 25 during this period with the loss of no M-10's although some were damaged.
- (6) Due to the wide front of the 3rd division and the amount of armor available to the enemy, C Co of the 701st TD Bn was attached to the 601st to provide depth to the defense as all guns (36) of the 601st were committed in direct fire positions. On 4 March one platoon of B Co was sent to 3rd Div area to protect the canal crossing NE of CONCA. Thus, a total of 48 M-10's were available in the sector of the division. (C Co, 791st had only 8 guns). In addition, C Co of the 894th was alerted for possible employment, and the balance of the 701st TD Bn was in reserve.
- (7) From 5th of March until 25th March only local actions have taken place. As of 25 March TD units in VI Corps are with units as follows: B Co of the 894th is attached to the 5 Inf Div (Br) on the left flank, A Co of the 894th is attached to the 1 Inf Div (Br) on the right flank of 5 Div (Br) and C Co is in Corps Reserve prepared to back up either forward Company. The 645th is with the 45th Div.

The 601st with C Company of the 805th TD Bn (which arrived on the beachhead March 11th) is attached to the 3rd Div. The 805th TD Bn (-C Co) is attached to the 1st SS Force on the extreme right flank. The 701st TD Bn is attached to the 1st Armored Division, in Corps Reserve with the Division. This arrangement of units covers all avenues of approach and provides an adequate TD reserve.

d. Conclusions.

- (1) One of the important points brought out in this operation has been the necessity for rotation of TD personnel. Formerly the conception of the role of Tank Destroyers has been that of a mobile reserve to deepen the static anti-tank guns and to move to the area where the greatest threat developed. In the perimeter defense of the ANZIO Beachhead it has been necessary to place M-10's in the front lines often under intermittent rifle, MG, mortar and artillery fire. The continuous presence of enemy tanks in the area necessitated that TD crews be alert constantly. Losses in crews and M-10's were heavy. As a result considerable reserve had to be maintained not only to reinforce, but to replace individual guns or units.
- (2) The use of TD's as anti-tank guns sited behind a house or in a hull defilade position waiting for tanks to appear has been the chief method utilized. Terrain of the beachhead is frequently bare of cover and ground is often marshy. This condition has restricted TD movement chiefly to roads and prevented movement to meet the tanks has been impracticable. Against the mass of artillery, mortar, SP and tank fire that the enemy employed during his attacks the only sure way to cover a route of enemy tank approach was to actually have the AT gun dispersed in mutually supporting positions to cover approaches.
- (3) It is pertinent here to point out a weakness in our present anti-tank means. We assume that an infantry anti-tank gun once placed in position will be there when the enemy tanks approach. However, no provision is made to maintain communication (other than visual) with these guns. Thus, if a 57mm crew or gun is knocked out or overrun there is no way of knowing about it and an approach that seems to be well covered may actually have no protection. Wire is not satisfactory as it cannot be maintained. Accordingly, it appears advisable that each infantry or towed anti-tank gun crew be equipped with a radio to enable communication with the platoon and company commander. In the case of the Tank Destroyers a radio in each M-10 provides this necessary communication.
- (4) Another problem of anti-tank defense is the necessity of giving close support to advancing or withdrawing troops. It has proven impractical to move towed anti-tank guns in forward areas in daylight due to thin skinned prime movers and inadequate protection for crews while going into positions. During the hours of darkness only can the towed anti-tank guns be placed in forward positions.
- (5) Another problem is the limited traverse of the towed anti-tank gun. In several instances attempts have been made to move the trails to fire in another direction with the result that the gun crew was destroyed or neutralized by hostile fire. With emphasis on concealment and minimum of movement it must be appreciated that the towed gun generally can only fire in the direction in which it is sited at time of attack. It follows therefore that the M-10 is the most economical AT weapon due to its ability to fire promptly in any direction.
- (7) The tactics of the enemy in employing infantry and tanks together necessitate our placing a large number of anti-tank guns and TD's on or near the front line in order to be in range of the tanks following the infantry. In many cases the Boche tanks follow at a distance of approximately 1000 yards and as many were Mk VI's only the 3" gun could fire on them with effect. During the major German attack, enemy infantry overran the anti-tank positions before they could fire a round at enemy tanks. Also, several attacks were made at night with no tanks involved and AT gun crews were overrun. As a result, two suggestions are made which might alleviate this difficulty.

- (a) Every anti-tank gun should be able to fire on enemy personnel with HE. Approximately 10% of the fighting personnel of a regiment are anti-tank crews. The added fire power in support of the infantry might save a critical situation and keep the gun in operation.
- (b) Anti-tank guns must be able to fire at night. To permit observed fires, some type of flare should be devised in order to see what the enemy is doing at night and allow AT gunfire as in the daytime. It is pertinent that the enemy has a yellow flare which lights up an area for about five minutes.
- (7) One of the most interesting developments in tactics is the artillery-tank destroyer team. Throughout this campaign tank destroyer OP's frequently observed for division and corps artillery on all types of targets. In one instance a TD Company Commander, while his TD's were firing on tanks at closer ranges, adjusted corps artillery on tanks out of range of his own TD's and in 3 days destroyed 15 tanks and damaged several others. In another instance the artillery and TD's were tied in so well that the artillery fired a concentration on enemy tanks and infantry to cover the TD's who moved into firing position and destroyed 3 tanks and dispersed the rest. Wherever the enemy uses tanks and infantry together such TD-Artillery teamwork is essential to break up a determined attack. This is also a reason for the reserve company of a TD Bn to be in indirect fire positions so that it can cover the forward companies who are in direct fire positions.
- (8) As teamwork is the essence of success, the attaching of a TD Bn to each division on a continuous basis is essential. Only by constant working together can the tricks of combat be refined and confidence in one another be established. For example, a TD Company had destroyed several tanks but the enemy was retrieving them during the night. By getting together with the infantry a trap was laid, on the next night, when the Germans attempted recovery the infantry mortars put up some flares while the TD's shot up the enemy recovery crews. Another example is the employment of this same Company's guns on roving gun missions during the night. Prisoners of War state it is very effective.
- (9) This operation provides innumerable examples of the TD's being used in other than anti-tank roles. It has been a frequent occurrence for an infantry company commander to ask the TD's to shoot-up a house containing enemy personnel. This is accomplished by indirect fire when possible, otherwise from direct fire positions. Utilizing HE-delay fuze, armor piercing with a base detonating fuze and HE-fuze-quick, excellent results are obtained. Such missions should be encouraged so that full advantage of the weapon can be taken.
- (10) A variety of communications are essential to obtain maximum coordination and efficiency. Every TD Bn can be reached by telephone through two different channels. The Corps Anti-tank Warning Net is maintained 24 hours a day with all battalions in the net. Each Bn is on the division net with the divisions to which attached. Liaison officers with radios are at these headquarters also. In addition, roving liaison officers contact all other TD units daily. An average of 3 OP's per battalion are also maintained. All of these channels of communication are desirable to keep Tank Destroyers abreast of the situation.
- (11) Passive means of anti-tank defense have been used extensively here. In the constant shifting and regrouping of units required in any similar operation, indiscriminate mine laying, demolitions and road crating must be closely controlled. Careful planning and wide distribution of information is necessary to ensure against casualties of our own personnel and equipment. Responsibility for executing demolitions must be clearly defined and all persons operating in the area informed of the plan.

3. Summary.

a. Regardless of the echelon involved, it is essential that the following be recognized:

- (1) The AT Officer must be informed promptly of enemy information, of contemplated operations and plans, and must be included in all planning. Conversely, the recommendations of the AT Officer should be required in all matters pertaining to anti-tank defense. Otherwise his

usefulness as a staff officer is nil; confusion and inefficient protection will result. The foregoing necessitates frequent consultation of the AT Officer by the commander and action on the part of the various staff sections to insure that the AT Officer is continuously in the picture. This cannot be accomplished by the energy and initiative of the AT Officer alone.

- (2) In order to be efficient the defense against hostile armor must be a planned disposition which incorporates all available means after weighing enemy capabilities. Maximum protection will only result: from careful utilization of terrain for siting of weapons and as obstacles to enemy tanks; from careful integration of all anti-tank weapons in accordance with their capabilities; from maximum use of demolitions and mine fields carefully coordinated with weapon locations and natural obstacles; from the closest cooperation on the part of local infantry groups; and from intimate integration not only into the artillery plan but, equally important, the fire plan of all infantry weapons.
- (3) In order to accomplish the foregoing it should be exceptional for Tank Destroyer units attached to a division to be further attached to regiments or lower units. The anti-tank defense of the division must be a divisional disposition in which all division weapons are disposed according to their capabilities to include the bazookas, the 37mm and 57mm guns and the cannon companies.

- b. Missions should be given to tank destroyer unit commanders in terms of areas, routes or localities, and the disposition of the guns left to the TD Commander. Otherwise improper use of the TD guns will result. Local infantry commanders are prone to dispose TD guns in localities which limit fields of fire, or in exposed positions which do not permit the advantage of hull defilade.
- c. AT defense between adjacent units and localities must be carefully coordinated to include definite fixing of responsibility, mutual assistance by fire, constant liaison, communication and interchange of information.
- d. Where operations are likely to be continuous and prolonged, a portion of each TD Battalion should be retained in reserve to permit rotation either of single M-10's or platoons for purpose of rest of crews and maintenance of equipment.
- e. It is imperative that TD units participate in combined training with infantry and artillery to the maximum extent possible prior to active operations. Wherever practicable the same TD battalion should habitually operate with the same division in order that the most intimate acquaintance and understanding may be developed and maintained.
- f. This operation has brought out the following regarding training of TD personnel:
 - (1) All crews should be proficient in indirect fire.
 - (2) Trained wire men should be provided in each company.
 - (3) Replacements for every job must be trained.
 - (4) Definite steps must be taken to insure that the pioneer platoon is trained in maintenance and construction of roads to gun positions and construction of positions.
 - (5) The maximum number of cannonners should be trained and all TD personnel trained to read maps and operate FM radio.
 - (6) Insure that TD personnel know enemy tricks.
- g. Equipment changes or additions as follows have been indicated by this operation.
 - (1) Some added armor protection should be added on bottom of M-8 and M-20.
 - (2) Ball-mounted .30 or .50 caliber MG is needed on M-10, for fire against ground targets.
 - (3) Armor protection for radiator of M-10 is needed.
 - (4) Chevron type tread on M-10 will improve the capability of the vehicle.
 - (5) An independent battery charger for each M-10 is seriously needed.
 - (6) Armor plate battery box in M-10.
 - (7) Provide uprights in ammunition racks of M-10's

h. The following points regarding employment of TD units should be emphasized;

- (1) Infantry must insure local security of M-10.
- (2) Wherever possible, reconnoiter and prepare positions for M-10s prior to occupation; reconnaissance by CO of unit to occupy.
- (3) Insure that AT guns are mutually supporting.

/s/
/t/ RUFUS S. RAMEY
Brigadier General, U. S. Army,
Anti-Tank Officer.

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SECRET
Equals British SECRET

C O N F I D E N T I A L

APPENDIX 4

HEADQUARTERS 701ST TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
A.F.O. 251, U.S. Army

14 March 1944

Summary of operations of your Battalion and Companies by appropriate periods (10 Feb - 8 Mar 1944):

Afternoon of the 7th of February at approximately 1500 hours, orders were received from the Commanding General, II Corps, attaching two companies of the 701 TD Bn to VI Corps. "A" and "C" Companies were chosen for this attachment and shipment to the Anzio Beachhead. The following morning at 0600 hours, 8 February, "A" and "C" Companies left the Cassino sector for Misida to embark on LST's bound for the Anzio beachhead. Due to limited amount of shipping space available at time of shipment the companies were encouraged to take with them a minimum number of vehicles. Each company embarked with 12 M-10's, 1 T-2, 2 Half-tracks (M-2), 4 2-1/2 Ton 6x6 Trucks (1 Maint. Truck and 3 ammunition trucks), and 5 1/2 ton Trucks. "A" Company shipped with 4 officers and 93 enlisted men; "C" Company with 6 officers and 109 enlisted men.

The Convoy left Misida at 1900 hours, 8 February, bound for Anzio; however, due to rough sea the convoy was forced to return to vicinity of Naples harbor where the following day was spent in anchor. The following day at 2045 hours, the convoy of LST's once again headed for Anzio where it docked at 0800 hours, 10 February. The unloading began at 0900 hours without undue difficulty and without incident. The companies closed in the First Armored Division assembly area in vicinity of 861 at 1100 hours. The afternoon of the 10th Feb., enemy aircraft dive-bombed and strafed the assembly area without inflicting any casualties on either "A" or "C" companies.

The morning of the 11 February, "A" and "C" Companies were attached to First Armored Division Artillery to support the fires of the 27th and 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalions; "A" Company reconnoitered and occupied indirect fire positions in vicinity of 8495-2480; "C" Company reconnoitered and occupied indirect fire positions in vicinity of 853-249. The remainder of the day was spent by the companies preparing for the artillery role. The AFA Battalions surveyed and registered in the guns of "A" and "C" Companies; the 91st AFA Bn with "A" Company; the 27th AFA Bn with "C" Company. "A" and "C" Companies set up own Fire Direction Centers.

The afternoon of 11 February, Col. Daniels, Division Artillery, 1st Armored Division; Lt. Wright, A Company; and Capt. Childs, C Company reconnoitered for alternate direct fire positions in the vicinity of the "Flyover". "A" Company chose positions to the left and "C" Company to the right of the "Flyover".

"A" and "C" Companies supported the fires of the 91st and 27th AFA Battalions respectively from the 12th to 17th February. Late in the afternoon of the 17th February, approximately 1730 hours, "A" Company was ordered by the 1st Armored Div to take up direct fire positions in the vicinity of the "Flyover". "A" Company displaced forward immediately on order in a bi-tank positions; one platoon in vicinity 856286, one in vicinity of 845290, and one platoon in vicinity of 820296. The platoons closed in the positions at 2300 hours, 17 February. "C" Company remained in indirect fire positions in support of 27th AFA Bn.

"A" Company received heavy enemy counter-battery fire the following day, despite the fact that none of the guns fired a round of ammunition. The night of 18-19 February enemy artillery fire increased in intensity on all forward positions. At 0400 hours, 19 February, a strong enemy infantry attack supported by tanks moved down the Albano-Anzio road. The enemy tanks in support of the attack were Mark IV's and Mk VI's. Enemy armor was engaged throughout the morning by all three platoons.

The second platoon, having the best field of fire from vicinity of 845290, was credited with two Mk VI's and 5 Mk IV's. The enemy armor was engaged at ranges from 1100 to 1200 yards. In the afternoon of 19 February, the first platoon fired at an infantry concentration with direct fire and, although the effect was very good the 1st platoon was forced to evacuate their positions in vicinity of 856286.

"A" Company continued to occupy direct fire positions in the vicinity of the "Flyover" through the night of 25 February when they were relieved by "A" Company of 94 TD Bn. The losses sustained by "A" Company in defense of the "Flyover" were 2 enlisted men killed; 2 officers and 8 enlisted men wounded; and 3 M-10's damaged by enemy action.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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"A" Company was relieved by "A" Company, 894 TD Bn on the night of 25-26 February and with drew to an assembly area in vicinity of 865229. The period from 26 February to 8 March was spent in rehabilitation and training of new gun crews.

"C" Company displaced forward to occupy direct fire positions on the night of 19-20 February; one platoon in vicinity of 865235, one in vicinity of 912280 one platoon straddled the Anzio-Albano road in vicinity of 866253. The following day, 20 February, the second platoon displaced forward from vicinity of 912280 on reconnaissance in force with tanks of 1st Armored Regiment. Enemy armor was engaged in vicinity of C.T. di Pediglione and one M1 IV and one M1 VI was destroyed. The engagement resulted in the loss of 2 K-10's; one slightly damaged and the other with a direct hit on the turret; salvageable. The third platoon moved forward from vicinity of 865285 with tanks from the 3rd Battalion, 1st Armored Regiment on reconnaissance in force up Railroad Bed toward Cerrocto. The platoon advanced forward to vicinity of 906290, with drawing to positions in vicinity of 912290 at dusk. The 2nd and 3rd platoon remained in the vicinities of 922290 and 912290, respectively until the night of 22-23 February the 2nd platoon moved to the vicinity of 860253, relieving one section of the 1st platoon in that area and the 3rd platoon moved to vicinity left of the "Flyeye" to relieve one platoon of "A" Company.

On 23 February, "C" Company was ordered to reconnoiter for indirect fire positions in vicinity of 8923. The night of 24-25 February, 9 guns of "C" Company moved into indirect fire positions in vicinity of 897237 in support of fires of the 91st AFA Bn. With this move to indirect fire positions "C" Company reverted back to battalion control.

The morning of 25 February the remainder of the 701 TD Bn landed at Anzio comprising Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Reconnaissance Company and B Company. The following day "B" Company moved from assembly area at 866231 to "C" Companies old indirect fire positions in vicinity of 852248 to support fires of the 27th AFA Battalion. "B" Company fired in support of the 27th AFA Bn until the 29th of February when it was ordered to move to the Conca area. In the Conca area, one platoon was attached to the 601 TD Bn and 2 platoons occupied indirect fire positions in vicinity of 967159, reinforcing the fires of 69th AFA Bn. "B" Company remained in those positions through 8 March.

On the afternoon of the 29 February, "C" Company, on order from 1st Armored Division, was attached to the 601 TD Bn to strengthen the anti-tank defenses in the 3rd Infantry Division sector. "C" Company remained in the 3rd Infantry Division sector through 8 March 1944.

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