

HEADQUARTERS, 3rd TANK DESTROYER GROUP
APO 230, U.S. ARMY

7 August 1944



HISTORY OF THE 3rd TANK DESTROYER GROUP
(25 May - 1 July)

1. The combat operations of the 3rd TD Gp may be considered to begin at Norton Manor Camp, Somerset, England. Except for brief training exercises, the Group was stationed at Norton Manor from its arrival in England until its departure for the marshalling area on 25 May 1944. At this time the 3rd TD Gp was commanded by Lt. Col. Church M. Matthews, Maysville Ky, and had attached battalions as follows:

612 TD Bn (T)	Commanded by	Lt. Col. Joseph M. Dealey
635 TD Bn (T)	" "	Lt. Col. Wint Smith
629 TD Bn (SP)	" "	Lt. Col. Glenn Cole
803 TD Bn (SP)	" "	Lt. Col. Charles Goodwin
893 TD Bn (SP)	" "	Lt. Col. Samuel E. Mays

2. For the purpose of the cross channel movement the Group was divided into a "Forward echelon" and the remainder of the Group was the "2nd echelon". The forward echelon included Lt. Col. Matthews, C.O., Major George C. Warner, Ex O, Major Elbert M. Roberts, S-2, Capt Earl H. Fuller, S-3, and 12 EM. The forward echelon left Norton Manor Camp on the morning of 25 May 1944 destined for Camp St. Mary's Hill, Glamorgan, Wales, and arrived in the evening of the same day. Final instructions and preparations for the invasion operation were completed in the five days at the camp. While the forward echelon was at Camp St. Mary's Hill, Col. Matthews attended an address by General Bernard L. Montgomery, on the subject of the coming invasion.

3. The forward echelon was loaded on MT 214, the SS Oliver Wollcott, at Cardiff Docks, Wales on 1 June 1944. The ship moved out of port at 1330 on 2 June 1944, formed up in convoy in the Bristol Channel, and sailed for the invasion coast. The ship arrived off shore from Port En Bessin, Normandy, France, at 0730 on 7 June 1944, DT 1, and anchored about 3 miles out. From this anchorage the beach and cliffs could be seen and activity well identified with the aid of binoculars.

4. The advanced echelon was scheduled to land on D plus 2. When it became apparent that unloading would not begin on schedule, Col Matthews went ashore in a small landing craft with the mission of expediting the unloading of the ship. Col. Matthews returned several hours later with directions for initiating contact with the naval units which were to unload the ship.

5. Early 9 June, D plus 3, Col Matthews secured a landing craft and went to the command ship and advised the naval authorities of the troops aboard and the necessity for unloading without delay. Unloading began approximately 1100 hours. Col. Matthews and Capt. Fuller then went ashore and reported to V Corps Arty GP. Col. Matthews remained ashore to find and dispatch the first Tank Destroyers ashore to their proper areas. Capt. Fuller returned to guide the forward echelon of the 3rd TD Gp to its assembly area on the beach head. The two light armored cars were unloaded onto LCT 199 and with Major Roberts, Capt. Fuller, and 7 EM, arrived on OMAHA Fox Red beach at 0145 hours 10 June 1944. Major Warner stayed aboard until

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1700, D plus 4 to coordinate the unloading of the nine different units aboard. The third vehicle with Major Warner and crew were brought ashore in a rhino ferry, beached at 1855 and closed in a bivouac area near V Corps Arty at 1935 June 10, D plus 4.

6. At 110730 the fwd echelon was alerted for movement and moved to a new area (T665758) near V Corps Arty C.P. in the vicinity of La Mine. During the 11th and 12th June, V Corps Artillery, the 1st and 2nd Infantry Division Headquarters were contacted and liaison was established to indoctrinate all the incoming TD units. The 635th TD Bn was attached to the 1st Infantry Division as soon as it arrived, on 8 June 1944, and remained with the 1st Division in an active primary role throughout the advance of the Division. The Group contacted the TD Bns arriving on the beach and assisted in guiding and directing them to Transit Areas where de-waterproofing was done. After de-waterproofing, any elements in the Transit Areas were guided to previously selected assembly areas, from which areas they were attached to divisions. The 803rd TD Bn began arriving on June 13th and was attached to the 2nd Infantry Division for 1 day, after which they were attached to the 29th Infantry Division. Major Warner practically lived at the beach during the next few days in order to meet other TD units arriving. The 612th TD Bn began arriving on the beach on the 14th of June, and continued to arrive in small units through the 17th of June. As they landed they were guided to their assembly areas by Major Warner and Capt. Blackwell, assistant S-3. Upon arrival in their assembly area they became attached to the 2nd Infantry Division.

7. The 2nd echelon of the 3rd TD Gp consisting of nine officers and forty-seven and 14 vehicles departed from Norton Manor Camp on Monday night, 5 June 1944. The convoy arrived at the Marshalling Area, 6 miles north of Southampton at 0945 June 6. Final preparations started immediately and were completed in two days. The 2nd echelon left the Marshalling Area in the afternoon of 7 June 1944 and moved to the pier at Southampton. All vehicles were loaded aboard the Liberty Ship, WILLIAM S LORING. The convoy of ships sailed from a dispersal area near Southampton at 1800, 8 June 1944 and arrived off the coast of France, north of UTAH BEACH the next day, 9 June 1944. The ship lay at anchor off UTAH BEACH until 12 June, when it moved to OMAHA BEACH to await debarkation orders.

MEN RJB

8. On 13 June 1944, Captain George R. Westlake, communications officer, and 6 Enlisted Men and Captain Raymond J. Blackwell and six Enlisted Men in two Half-tracks, debarked on an LCT, beached and proceeded to Transit Area #5. The remainder of the rear echelon consisting of 7 Officers and 35 Enlisted Men, and 12 vehicles debarked on a rhino ferry later in the day. The next morning, 14 June, Major Frank L. Dougherty, S-4, and Captain John W. Walsh, Hq Commandant, left the Transit Area to locate the forward echelon. They made contact with Major Warner in Trevias and received the location of the forward DP. They then returned to guide the rear echelon to the forward CP in the vicinity of La Mine. They joined the forward echelon at 1200, 14 June 1944.

9. On the 19th and 20th of June 1944, Colonel Matthews reconnoitered in the zone of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions for Possible Assembly Areas for the

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TD Battalions which were yet to arrive. On the afternoon of 20th June, the Group Headquarters received its first taste of enemy action. Three German planes made runs over the area strafing and dropping bombs. Thirty minutes after this incident, Father Joe Earrich, emerged from beneath a "Jeep" with a rather sheepish expression.

10. The Group Headquarters moved to a new bivouac area in the Forêt de Cerisy T652689, three miles west of Balleroy on th 27th of June 1944. The new location was a dense forest and camouflage and concealment afforded no problem. Plenty of logs and wood was available from which foxholes and shelters were made for protection against artillery fire. The 2nd Infantry Division established a Shower Point in a stream running through the area and the shower proved to be a very popular place. During the rest of the month, continuous reconnaissance was made by Captain Fuller for Assembly Areas for the 629th and 893rd TD Battalions.

For the Group Commander:

RAYMOND J. BLACKWELL
Captain, TD (AUS)
Assistant S - 3