

HEADQUARTERS
656TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 403, U. S. ARMY

19 May 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.
(Attention: Historical Section)
(Thru Channels)

1. In compliance with AR 345-105, 18 November 1929, as changed by Change 4, dated 10 August 1944, the After Action Report of the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion for the period 1 - 8 May 1945 is forwarded herewith.

For the Commanding Officer:

Victor A. Stefanowicz
VICTOR A. STEFANOWICZ
Captain, S-2
Historian

- 2 Incls.
1. After Action Report 656 TD Bn
2. Maps



R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
656TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 403

5 June 1945

SUBJECT: After Action Report

TO : Commanding General, Tank Destroyer Center, Camp Hood, Texas

1. Enclosed are copies of the After Action Report for the period 1-8 May 1945 inclusive and the Unit Journal for the same period.

2. This is the final report covering the actions of the Battalion up to the cessation of organized hostilities in Europe. With this report, the Center should have a complete file of the action of one self-propelled battalion from the date it was committed to combat to the cessation of hostilities.

3. Although the enclosed report closes out the combat phase in Europe, it by no means concludes the interesting and important duties and assignments of a tank destroyer battalion. It is anticipated that additional reports will be submitted on duties, assignments and redeployment movements of a tank destroyer battalion in post-war Europe.

John C. Meador
JOHN C. MEADOR
Lt. Col., Inf (TD)
Commanding

- 2 Encls:
Encl #1 - After Action Report, 1-8 May 1945
Encl #2 - Unit Journal, 1-8 May 1945



R E S T R I C T E D

TD
1665

HEADQUARTERS
656TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION
APO 403, U. S. ARMY

19 May 1945

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Section I

1. Campaign: (Current Campaign in Western Europe)
2. Map References:- CGCS 4416, Sheets R6, S6, T6, T7, U6 and U7.
3. Unit Commanders of Troops:-

Bn CO - Lt Col John C. Meador
 Hq Co CO - Capt Charles D. Driscoll
 Ren Co CO - 1st Lt Lawrence R. Beard
 A Co CO - Capt Clarence M. Thieme
 B Co CO - Capt Archie S. Benegar
 C Co CO - Capt Richard H. Tuggle

Section II

Statistical Data



a. Personnel Losses:

Date	KIA		DOI		WIA		MIA		CAPT		NSC	
	O	EM	O	EM	O	EM	O	EM	O	EM	O	EM
1 May 45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

b. Personnel Replacements:-

Date	O	EM	Date	O	EM
1 May 45	0	0	5 May 45	0	4
2	0	1	6	0	9
3	0	0	7	0	2
4	0	0	8	0	0

- c. PWs Taken - 853. 187 more were taken after 8 May 1945.

- d. Vehicular Losses: None.
- e. Vehicular Replacements: None.
- f. Ammunition Expended:

<u>90mm HE</u>	<u>90mm APC</u>
0	4



Section III

The 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion attached to the 9th Armored Division was disposed in the following manner, 1 May 1945; Bn CP, Headquarters Company, Reconnaissance Company, 2nd Platoon A Company, and 1st Platoon B Company, at APOLDA (J645766). The above mentioned elements, under Division control, had the mission of outposting APOIDA. In order to supplement the outposting, three platoons of light tanks, 1st Platoon, Company D, 2nd Tank Bn; 1st Platoon, Company D, 14th Tank Bn and 3rd Platoon, Company D, 19th Tank Bn, were attached to Reconnaissance Company. A Company (- 2nd Plat) attached to CCB was in position at WELINGEN (J628667). B Company (- 1st Plat) attached to CCA was in position at KRIMPERDORF (J629209). C Company attached to CCR was in position at UMPERSTEDT (J581705). Each company outposted its respective town. In addition, C Company had a guard posted over two garages of captured enemy equipment.

Information was received at the Bn CP that the 9th Armored Division with its attached commands was to move South into assembly areas in preparation for operations against the enemy in Czechoslovakia. Based on this information, plans were made to send a reconnaissance detail to reconnoiter the route.

All elements of the battalion remained in place performing their assigned missions, 2 May 1945. The Bn S-3 left the CP at 0800B in performance of the planned reconnaissance. Upon returning a full report was rendered of his findings. Other usual staff activities were carried on at the Bn CP.

Upon receipt of the Division orders for movement into an assembly area in vicinity of WEIDEN (P190290) 3 May 1945, Bn FO No 3 was prepared and distributed. Companies remained in place performing in addition to the outposting mission, maintenance and training. A Company (- 1 Plat) departed from KRIMPERDORF (J679709) moving with CCB to an assembly area in the vicinity of MARKTIEUTHEN. After traveling 101 miles B Company arrived at MARKTREDWITZ (P110650) at 032000B May 1945. The march was unevent-

ful and after outposting the town, billets were secured and troops billeted. C Company departed UMPERSTEDT 03-0715B with CCA. After traveling 85 miles C Company bivouacked for the night at STAMMBACH arriving there at 1600B.

The 1st Platoon, Company D, 14th Tank Bn, and the 3rd Platoon, Company D, 19th Tank Bn, reverted to their respective battalion's control 040800B. The Bn CP closed at APOLDA 040830B, joined the Division CP group and marched to MUNCHBERG (D890845) where it opened at 1700B. At 042113B May the Bn CP was informed that CCA with B Company had been attached to the 1st Infantry Division.

Reconnaissance Company performed the usual road security mission during the road march. Upon arriving at MUNCHBERG Reconnaissance Company outposted the town.

A Company displaced with CCB. A Company departed from MELLINGEN 040630B May 1945 and after marching approximately 100 miles closed at HIMMELKRON (765688) at 1515B.

B Company remained in place 4 May 1945.

The march was resumed 4 May by CCA. C Company departed from STAMMBACH 040645B. After traveling approximately 85 miles C Company pulled into a field 700 yards SW of WOPPENRIETH at 1600B for the night bivouac. The road march was uneventful. One Platoon (2nd Plat) was attached to Division Trains effective 0800B.

The Bn Hq continued the road march to its destination. The Bn CP closed at MUNCHBERG (D840084) 050830B joined the Division CP Group and proceeded to its destination. The Bn CP opened at KELTNITZMUHLE (P175139). The 9th Armored Division established its CP at WERNBERG but since space was limited, the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion CP had to be established at KELTNETZMUHLE. In order to maintain close contact between the Division and Bn CP, the Bn CO established a Fwd CP close to the Division CP at WERNBERG. Information was received that the Division CP was to move to WEIDEN (P190290) the following day. A billeting party was requested to report to Division CP at 050800B May 1945. The CO of Headquarters Company was designated as billeting officer and instructed to report at the designated place the following morning.

Reconnaissance Company performed the usual road security mission 5 May 1945 during the road march. Upon ar-



iving at the destination, outposts were set-up around WERNBERG. The Company CP was located at NEUNIGEN (P153-116).

A Company accompanying CCB resumed the march 5 May 1945 departing from HIMMELKRON (75668) at 0630B. After traveling 60 miles the company arrived at VOKENSTRAUS (P325240) 1330. Road blocks were established on roads leading into town. The march was uneventful.

B Company remained in place 5 May 1945. Maintenance was performed.

C Company remained at WOPPENRIETH (P288171) 5 May 1945.

The 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion was attached to V Corps and became THIRD ARMY troops 6 May 1945. At 0935B the battalion was alerted for movement to WEIDEN (P191290). The Bn CP closed at KELTNITZMUHLE at 1315 and opened at WEIDEN 1435B.

Reconnaissance Company performed the usual security mission 6 May 1945.

A and C Companies remained in place 6 May 1945. There was no activity in either of the company areas.

B Company attached to CCA which in turn was attached to 1st Infantry Division resumed the advance to the East and Czechoslovakia. B Company departed from MARKTREWITZ (P610650) 050800B and arrived at GOLDDORF (P450780) Czechoslovakia 2300B. The Company CP was established in that town. The two platoons moved into perimeter defense positions. There however was no enemy action.

Normal staff functions were performed 7 May 1945. Companies Ren, A and C remained in position performing security mission.

B Company continued the march to the East departing GOLDDORF 0630B and arriving at ST SEDLO (P554875) Czechoslovakia 1230B hours. The troops were billeted and outposts manned. There was no enemy action however. 85 prisoners were picked up in the vicinity of the company area.

All units of the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion remained in place 8 May 1945. This was the last day of



operations against the Germans by the 656th Tank Destroyer.

The 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion, attached to the 9th Armored Division, began the thirmonth of action against the Germans as FIRST ARMY reserve troops. During the first few days of May CCs of the 9th Armored Division with their attached elements moved South into assembly areas in preparation for operation against German forces in Czechoslovakia. Company B attached to CCA which in turn was attached to the 1st Infantry Division advanced into Czechoslovakia. Company A and Company C attached to CCB and CCR respectively remained in assembly areas in the vicinity of WEIDEN since the Combat Commands of the Armored Division to which Companies A and C were attached were in THIRD ARMY tactical reserve. On the 6th of May the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion was assigned to the THIRD ARMY. In the last few days of war in Europe the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion while having one element of its battalion committed, did not engage any enemy forces. In combat however 172 enemy were taken prisoners.

Section IV

The 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion moved into the lines 28 February 1945. Since then, and until 8 May 1945, except for a short period of time in March, the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion had been attached to the 9th Armored Division. The following comments are based on observations made during the period 28 February to 8 May 1945.

ASSIGNMENT OF TD BATTALIONS TO DIVISIONS:

It is believed that TD Battalions should be made organic parts of Divisions. Such organization would enable TD Battalions to train as integral parts of Divisions and consequently insure smoother operations in combat. It would also mean that a certain amount of reorganization would have to be done. In that the 656th Tank Destroyer Battalion has never operated in a direct attachment to an Infantry Division it is not known whether the present organization of a SP TD Battalion is satisfactory for assignment to units of that type. It is felt that a TD Battalion assigned to an Armored Division should have certain modifications namely:

1. Replacement of the SCR 600 series radios with SCR 500 series.
2. Replacement of the SCR 608 with the SCR 506 for command communication, in a TD Battalion.
3. Possible elimination of Reconnaissance Company.



4. Cutting down of Headquarters Company personnel.

The difference in the radio series sets necessitates the addition of an extra radio in order that radio communication may be maintained between the armored division elements and the TD elements. If the 600 series sets were T/O & E equipment, this addition would not be necessary.

The rapidity of movement and distances involved between the elements of an Armored Division with their attached TD elements, makes the SCR 608 unsatisfactory as a command radio. It is suggested that each company be provided with an SCR 506 and operators to operate it.

During the entire period of combat, the reconnaissance company of this organization never functioned in the role for which it was organized and trained. The presence of a Rcn Squadron precluded the use of a TD Reconnaissance Company as a Division Rcn element.

Since all supply needs are furnished by the Combat Commands, it is felt that certain personnel can be eliminated in Headquarters Company.

WIRE COMMUNICATION:

Wire communication proved the most satisfactory means of communication. Generally, Combat Command laid wire to company CPs providing that time and the tactical situation permitted. Contact to companies from the Bn CP was established through the Division and Combat Command switchboards. This procedure could not be followed during a rapidly moving situation or when great distances were involved.

During the period 14 March to 22 March 1945, the 656th TD Battalion operated as Corps Troops under III Corps in a two Division sector. Since the companies operated under battalion control with no direct attachments to any other organization, wire communication proved quite a problem. Equipment and personnel were not provided for in the T/O & E for extensive wire laying projects. The problem was solved by having the companies tie into the nearest Infantry switchboard. This method will work provided: that the Infantry is willing to handle TD traffic, a terminal post is available at the Infantry switchboard and the battalion switchboard has contact with the superior Infantry unit.

Generally, wire communication is put into use as soon as the situation permits. It is felt that since such great reliance is put on wire communication, a wire section per company and a battalion wire section should be provided for in the T/O & E.



VEHICLE STOWAGE:

It is felt that the problem of stowage of equipment aboard tank destroyers should receive a considerable amount of study with the objective of adding one cargo truck to the T/O & E of the gun and reconnaissance company. During the period of action against the enemy, all T/O & E equipment as well as personal clothing clothing and equipment was carried on the vehicles in which the crews rode. Since space was limited in the fighting compartment all personal equipment had to be carried on the outside of vehicles. As a result of this, some of the equipment was lost by falling off while other was destroyed by shrapnel and small arms fire. The strapping of inflammable materials, bed rolls, duffle bags, field bags, etc, presented an additional fire hazard. In several instances, shell fragments and incendiary ammunition set fire to the attached impedimenta. During the heat of battle there was but one choice; jettisoning of the burning equipment.

A solution to the problem of carrying personal and other equipment was approached in the following manner: special racks were constructed to carry such impedimenta and, all personnel turned in all clothing with the exception of one OD uniform, one field jacket, overcoat and a few pairs of socks. It was anticipated that dirty uniforms could be exchanged for clean ones at shower points. However, during the approximate 70 days of action, the opportunity never presented itself to do this.

In order to perform its secondary mission, that of indirect fire and as additional aids in performing its primary mission, certain items of equipment were added to the T/O & E, namely, range finders and aiming circles, since no considerations were made for the carrying of these items of equipment. These items received some un-called for hard wear.

This battalion did not perform any indirect fire missions. Neither was the range finder used in delivering direct fire. Nevertheless, due to the lack of other transportation both of these instruments had to be carried wherever the combat vehicles went.

Based on the above it is felt that an additional cargo truck organic to the companies would be justified. This truck would be used for the carrying of specialized equipment which is required only when special missions are performed. In addition, all excess personal equipment which is not immediately required could be stowed and transported in this vehicle.



ELIMINATION OF THE TANK DESTROYER SECONDARY MISSION; INDIRECT FIRING.

While this organization has not performed any indirect firing missions, the following comments are based on observations made of other TD units. It is felt that TD arms should have but one mission, that of destruction of enemy armor by direct fire. The following reasons are made in support of the assertion:

1. In the past it has been noted that Tank Destroyer Battalions remained at the front while the Infantry units which they supported were pulled back for a rest. In a case of this nature, the TD units were assigned supporting fire missions. This assignment generally precluded the performance of thorough maintenance and the resting of personnel after a lengthy period at the front.
2. There is a sufficient number of artillery units to perform all artillery missions.
3. The attachment of a TD Battalion to a Field Artillery Battalion or Group, throws an additional burden on the artillery.

CO-AXIAL, 50 CAL MG:

Based on the experiences of the last two months it is felt that Tank Destroyers should have a co-axial mounted .50 cal MG. The MG can be used in the following way:

1. Ranging in on enemy armor and other appropriate targets.
2. Engaging targets not warranting the employment of the primary weapon without exposing any member of the crew.
3. In a fast moving situation when in the presence of enemy, to pin down enemy troops while maneuvering into position to engage a primary target.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In conclusion it is felt that the following changes be considered in the organization of TD Battalions:

1. Assignment of TD Battalions to Divisions as organic parts of Divisions.
2. Possible elimination of the Reconnaissance Company.
3. Addition of a wire section; one per company.
4. Substituting 500 radio series for 600 series radios in a TD Battalion assigned to an Armored Division.
5. Substituting SCR 608 with the SCR 506 as a command radio.
6. Addition of a cargo truck for each company.
7. Elimination of the secondary mission of Tank Destroyers; namely, Indirect Fire.
8. Addition of a 50 cal co-axial MG in tank destroyers.
9. Addition of an administrative clerk in the S-1 section.



John C. Meador
JOHN C. MEADOR
Lt Col, Inf (TD)
Commanding

UNIT JOURNAL

Fr : 010001 May 45

656 TD Battalion

To : 082400 May 45

Time	Ser	Time	Incidents, Messages, Orders, Etc	Action
In	Out	No.	Dated:	Taken
Tuesday, 1 May 1945				
0817B			Bn S-3 left for town gun positions.	S
0843B	1		From 9 Armd Div: G-3 Periodic Rpt No 105.	M T
	2		G-2 Intelligence Summary.	M
0919B			Bn Surgeon left for Weimar and UMPFERSTEDT.	S
0945B			Bn S-3 & Lt Beard Arr at CP.	S
1012B			Tank Platoons atchd to this unit confirmed as 1st Plat Co D, 14 Tank Bn; 3rd Plat Co D, 19 Tank Bn atchd for operations.	
1521B	3		From 3d TD Gp: TD Disposition Overlay 240.	M
Wednesday, 2 May 1945				
0751B			Bn S-3 left on recon for billets.	S
0813B	4		From 9 Armd Div: Div G-2 Intel Summary.	M T
	5		G-3 Periodic Rpt 106.	M
	6		Confirmation of verbal orders.	
	7		Troop List No 18.	
1537B	8		From 3d TD Gp: TD Dispos Overlay 240.	M
Thursday, 3 May 1945				
0823B			Bn S-3 left for Div CP.	S
0841B	9		From 9 Armd Div: FO 6	
	10		G-3 Periodic Rpt 107.	
0850B			From A Co: Deptd from KRIMPERDORF (J679709) moving to MARKTREDWITZ (P110650)	
0900B			From C Co: Left UMPERSTEDT 0715B.	
1620B	11		To Hq Co, Rcn Co and Plats of A & B Cos: FO No 3.	
	12		From 9 Armd Div: G-2 Per Summary	M T
1630B			From C Co: Arr at STAMMBACH at 1600B.	M
Friday, 4 May 1945				
0805B	13		From 9 Armd Div: G-2 Per Rpt No 108.	M T
	14		G-3 Intel Summary.	
0830B			CP closed in APOLDA	T
1620B			From C Co: Co in position 200 yds SW of Woppenreith.	M
1700B			Bn CP opened at MUNCHBERG (D890845).	
2113B			From 9 Armd Div: CCA including B Co 656 TD Bn atchd to 1st Inf Div.	
Saturday, 5 May 1945				
0750B	15		From 9 Armd Div: G-3 Per Rpt 109.	
0830B			Bn CP closed at MUNCHBERG.	
0835B			From A Co: Co moving to HIMMELKRON (750668).	
1615B			Bn CP opened KELTNITZMUHLE (P175139).	
1700B			From A Co: located at VOHENSTRAUS	M.
2100B			CO left for Combat CP. Will stay at WERNBERG.	



Time	Ser	Time	Incidents, Messages, Orders, Etc.	Action
In	Out	No.	Dated:	Taken

2230B From 9 Armd Div: Have Bn billeting party report at Div CP 060800B to go to WEIDEN to pick out billets.

2230B To Hq Co: CO designated as beilleting officer. Report to Div CP 060800B with billeting party.

Sunday, 6 May 1945

0935B Bn alerted to move to WEIDEN.

1005B 16 From 9 Armd Div: Intel Summary M T

17 G-3 Periodic Rpt 110. M

18 From 3rd TD Gp: TD Dispos Overlay 242. M

19 TD Dispos Overlay 243. M

20 TD Dispos Overlay 244 M

1200B From 12 ARMY GP: 656 TD Bn attached to V Corps, Third Army.

1315B Bn CP closed at KELTNITZMUHLE. T

1435B Bn CP opened at WEIDEN (P191290) M T

1640B From 3d TD Gp: TD Dispos No 215. M

2330B From B Co: Co arr at GOLDDORF, CZECH. M

Monday, 7 May 1945

0725B Bn S-3 left to visit companies. S

0730B From B Co: Co left GOLDDORF 0630B.

0853B 21 2400B From 9 Armd Div: G-3 Periodic Rpt 111. M

1013B 22 2400B G-2 Intel Summary. M

1630B 23 0600B From 3d TD Gp: TD Dispos No 246. M

1645B Bn S-3 returned to CP. S

1700B From B Co: Co located at ST SEDLO(P554875). M

Tuesday, 8 May 1945

0706B Bn S-3 left for A & C Companies. S

0809B 24 From 9 Armd Div: Periodic Rpt 112. M

25 Intel Summary. M T

1300B Bn CO left for A & C Companies. S

1543B Bn S-2 left for C Compan. S

1550B Bn CO returned to CP. S

1555B From B Co: No changes to report.

1705B Bn S-3 returned to CP. S

1735B Bn S-2 returned to CP. S

2400B JOURNAL CLOSED AND FORWARDED.

