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HEADQUARTERS  
703RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
APO 230

DWS/jgd

24 October 1944.

SUBJECT: After-Combat Discussion.

TO : Artillery Officer, 12th Army Group, US Army.  
Artillery Officer, First United States Army.  
Artillery Officer, VII Corps Artillery.  
Commanding General, Third Armored Division,  
(For: G-3)  
Commanding Officer, Third Armored Division Artillery.

1. Submitted herewith are results of an after-combat discussion conducted by this organization on 9 Oct 44.

2. Since this battalion is self-propelled, and has always worked with the 3rd Armored Division, some of the views expressed are necessarily peculiar only to similar battalions working with Armored Divisions.

3. It is hoped that this material may be of value to other Tank Destroyer units if published in "BATTLE EXPERIENCES", "ARTILLERY INFORMATION SERVICE", or "TANK DESTROYER BULLETIN."

For the Commanding Officer:

*Donald W. Seibert*  
DONALD W. SEIBERT,  
Capt., 703rd TD Bn,  
S-3

## AFTER-COMBAT DISCUSSION

On 9 October 1944 we had an opportunity to assemble the majority of our Gun Commanders and Officers of the battalion. The purpose of the assembly was to discuss battle experiences and to determine what could be learned from a training viewpoint.

The group was requested to answer the following questions in the discussion:

"What have you learned in combat?"

"What, of those points learned, would you pass on to a new man joining your crew?"

"If you could go through another intensive training program, what subjects would you stress?"

"What of these lessons should be Standard Operating Procedure?"

All destroyer commanders and platoon leaders were given an opportunity to speak. These were the men who to that date had done a grand job, totalling a destruction of 34 German tanks and 12 S.P. guns not to mention trucks, pillboxes, O.P.s, prisoners etc--all done with a surprisingly few casualties of personnel and only three M-10's lost beyond repair.

The time selected was also notable, for we were then turning in our M-10's and drawing the new M-36 with its 90mm gun.

It is interesting to note that the points indicated re-emphasize training doctrines actually taught and emphasized in the U.S. and England. However, their coming from officers and men who have been in combat may be more conclusive to new battalion, replacements, etc.

The following quotations are reproduced as a result of this discussion:

"When your target is enemy infantry, use HE, fuze delay, and aim slightly short. Very often the effect will be low air burst over the enemy position. I have had good effect with this method."

"Let your prey get in close. Your first shot must be a kill. German gunners are good. Their first shot is "in there". We must do the same. The first shot counts."

"Every man must be alert up front. No one can be permitted to let someone else do his work. Every man must do his share. Slackers are a liability. Men must be prepared for any emergency and all personnel must be ready to act immediately. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty--especially when the men are tired."

"The M-10 is the best place to be in, during artillery and mortar fire. If time permits before arty falls the track and front of the M-10 should be sandbagged. A long slit trench under the hull makes excellent protection for the whole crew."

"Constant foot reconn is mandatory. Positions, routes of movement thereto and alternate positions must be selected. Fields of fire can be improved as result of reconn. After a position is occupied, reconn is necessary to effect improvements on the position."

"Even though the pressure is on, with arty, mortar and small arms flying around, men must rest. Car comdrs must provide relief for individuals in his crew. He must see that they eat properly and relieve themselves regularly."

"New men, fresh from the replacement pools, are naturally scared when they first join a front line crew. They should be thoroughly oriented and put at ease. They must immediately be made part of the crew and should be impressed with the importance of their being there."

"We need a twenty-power scope in each platoon. Many times we could not fire because there was no positive identification of vehicles."

"Don't block a road from the road. Get off to the flanks and get flanking fire on the road. Good point too, to have a 360 degree field of fire. Enemy vehicles may try to get out of the area as well as crash into it."

"Security outposts, for road blocks, should have wire communication to guns. Security personnel must make positive identification for the gun crew. Must have a method of illuminating the area in case of necessity."

"When MG's are dismounted for security work, dig them in. When time permits, they should be sandbagged too. Many people put a MG on top of the ground and then forget all about improving their position."

"There is plenty of time to move into positions slowly. Fast moving objects attract attention. Vehicles moving slowly don't make very much noise--the vehicle can be controlled better and the crew can be better prepared to fire if they ease into position and study the terrain as they advance."

"Some Task Force Commanders gave orders to destroyers on road blocks to fire at anything that came up the road. If these orders had been followed, we would have destroyed many friendly vehicles. Such orders are ridiculous. The security has had enough training to be capable of determining which vehicles should be fired upon."

"There were times when dust was one of our biggest problems. Supply vehicles moving into our positions raised dense clouds that caused enemy artillery to start coming in. This was remedied by having guards enforce the speed limit of 5 mph in the area."

"Orders issued to troops must be complete, precise, and must be given with an air of confidence by the officer. Too often orders lack necessary information for the proper execution of a simple operation--while on the other hand large operations very often meant added trivial details that are relatively unimportant, or have long since been included in S.O.P."

"If there is no infantry support close by, when the outfit pulls in for the night, try to pick a position with open fields to the front. Place your outpost out far enough to alert the guns in case of enemy infantry attack. Get the artillery also, to prepare a fire plan to cover your front. Site the guns to cover the open spaces. The Jerries will have a hard time cracking a spot like this."

"Keep those vehicular machine guns clean. The head space is easily knocked out of adjustment on the .50 cal.--should be adjusted frequently throughout the day. Keep these guns covered with a piece of canvas, German shelter half or other protective material that can be easily removed."

"Avoid unnecessary movement in position. Your camouflage will be more effective and hence less artillery and mortar on your position."

"After firing the 3" Gun, move to an alternate position. Jerry will pour arty in your former position, and if he tries to come through the area again he will very often afford you a shot or two from the new position."

"Use the .50 cal MG on tain-skinned vehicles at ranges up to 300 yards, and 3" HE at greater ranges."

"Camouflage constantly, even at short halts. Take a tip from Jerry, and keep him guessing with good camouflage."

"We should have five (5) TDs in a platoon. Since one TD is useless without supporting fire from another, and since we do have vehicular casualties, the platoon loses a whole section when one vehicle is out. If there were five destroyers, one casualty would still leave two sections operative. The fifth destroyer would, in addition, be the platoon leader's vehicle. Too often the platoon leader takes unnecessary risks by making dismounted trips, rather than take an M-10 from a position."

"Don't leave a German vehicle until you are positive that the armament and vehicle are destroyed or unusable."

"Keep your equipment mounted on the vehicle--makes it easier to move in a hurry. Keep the area clean around your position so it won't attract attention."

"We must be even more conscious of booby traps and mines, now that Jerry has had time to fix up a lot of their gadgets. The best way to run into these traps is to go "souvenir hunting". Let's forget the souvenirs and spend more time fighting."

"Those range cards are still necessary. Use the map to get exact ranges during daylight hours. If situation permits zero in on critical points and record the data. This saves time, ammo and equipment in the long run."

"If we were to get more training, I would stress night fighting during all types of weather and as well as, all types of targets. Also, be sure that every member of the crew can do everyone's job. Everyone must be able to drive or to gun. In training, although all crew members actually fired the 3" gun, the preponderance of the ammunition went to the gunner and Car Comdr, some of whom are now casualties."

"Be thoroughly prepared for enemy action between 0400 and 0600."

"Field glasses can be used most effectively in moonlight."

"One way we used to ease the strain on men's nerves was to pass around among the entire platoon all radio messages, regardless of what they were. It kept them busy and gave them something to think about."

"Good preventative maintenance is a must. We owe a lot to our drivers on this point, as well as for their night driving. During preparation for combat, both maintenance and gunnery were continually stressed which paid off, for we lost not one M-10 due to poor maintenance."

"A well disciplined unit, from a crew on up, will go further with fewer losses. In garrison, rest areas, and even during combat, the disciplined outfit will be apparent from their morale, pride in their outfit, saluting, appearance, and proper wearing of the uniform."