

HEADQUARTERS  
643rd TANK DESTROYER BATTALION

EXTRACT

From FM 21-45

PROTECTION AGAINST CARELESSNESS

1. GENERAL:

a. Careless or thoughtless acts lead to frequent casualties in the combat zone. Such casualties have just as serious an effect on our fighting strength as battle casualties. Troops must always be as alert against accidents as against enemy action.

2. BOOBY TRAPS:

a. This is the name given to devices used by an enemy to wound or kill careless or thoughtless opponents. As the name indicates, only a "booby" will be injured by such a trap. Men must always be watchful for them in areas which have been in the possession of the enemy. They may be connected to doors, windows, furniture, and souvenirs, such as helmets or parts of uniforms or rifles, and they may be attached to weapons or vehicles which have had to be abandoned.

b. DESCRIPTION:- The elementary booby trap usually consists of a small charge of explosive, either in slabs or in a cartridge, with an igniter worked by either push or pull methods or both. A wire or cord may be attached to the igniter and to another object or the trap may be placed beneath a loose board.

c. LOCATION:- The following are examples of places in which booby traps may be used:

(1) DOORS:- Traps are placed inside houses, over doors, in door frames, or against the wall behind the door when wide open. Doors in such cases are rarely locked and are sometimes left ajar.

(2) WINDOWS:- Traps are placed on inside sills of ground floor windows or connected to closed or half-open shutters with a wire in tension.

(3) BARN DOORS:- Traps, usually of heavier charge than referred to in (1) and (2) above, may be placed on the ground or between battens at the height of a man. They may be placed under a loose board in the floor.

(4) VEHICLES:- Traps may be placed inside the cab of a vehicle, attached to the door or a brake handle, or under the seat. They may be found under the closed or half-open hood of the vehicle.

(5) SOUVENIRS:- A helmet, pair of boots, blouse, rifle, or pistol, or other piece of equipment, particularly when left in a building or other confined space, may be connected with a booby trap. This is a particularly useful type against an opponent with the habit of collecting souvenirs.

(6) MISCELLANEOUS:- Traps may be used in cellar entrances, inside doors, cupboards, chests of drawers, and farmyard vehicles.

3. ANTIPERSONNEL MINES:

a. Such mines work with shrapnel effect, that is, using a casing containing hundreds of bullets or other missiles which are blown through the air by the explosion of the mine. Like booby traps they may work on

3. ANTIPERSONNEL MINES (Cont.)

the push or pull method. They are particularly useful in woods where they are more easily camouflaged. Mines with pull igniters are usually worked by a simple trip wire but may be fixed to loose branches and other minor hindrances to advance which an unsuspecting person is liable to move. A mine with a push igniter is generally used in combination with an obstacle, being placed in the middle of the obstacle itself or in the approaches to it. Antipersonnel mines may be frequently employed to protect barbed wire, antitank mine fields, and other obstacles from clearing operations.

4. ANTITANK MINES:

a. Antitank mines may be found in small fields blocking roads or approaches to important weapons or positions or in larger fields used as a part of a continuous obstacle against tank movement. Many antitank mines operate only under pressure of 300 pounds or more, but others may operate under the weight of a man or may be fitted with special means of detonation when tampered with. These mines should be neutralized and disarmed by specially trained individuals. If one encounters an area where one suspects the presence of mines, one should avoid it and report it to his commander.

5. PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES:

a. When a soldier suspects the presence of booby traps or mines he must take great care before moving. Outdoor areas should be examined for trip and tension wires or disturbed surfaces of the ground. In buildings nothing should be moved until it has been thoroughly examined. If a soldier must enter a building, he should try to get a view through a window of the inside of the door before he enters. If he can't do that open the door with a long pole from a sheltered position. Even if a mine is detonated be careful that there isn't a second one which will explode when the door is closed. Sometimes a double booby trap has been used to take advantage of such carelessness.

b. When any wire or cord is found it should be followed up, without being touched, to make certain that it is not connected to a trap. Any igniters which are found must be neutralized before any wires are cut or any unnecessary movement is made. If a cord or wire is cut, it should be done with scissors or wire cutters, not a knife, so that no pull will be produced while cutting. If the wire or cord is stretched tight, it must not be cut as that will detonate the mine. If a man cannot easily neutralize a mine or trap, he must mark it to protect others until it can be dealt with by specially trained men.

6. NEUTRALIZING A TRAP:

a. The first and most delicate operation is to find out where the trap is and how it is fired. Having discovered the charge, all igniters must be neutralized. Push and pull igniters have a safety device consisting of a metal key which passes through a hole in the stem. The last step in placing the mine is the removal of this key. When one has found the igniters, he must neutralize them by pushing a split pin or nail in this hole. Until this has been done the soldier should exercise great care to avoid compressing the igniter in any way or pulling any wires or cords in the vicinity. Once split pins are in position you should unscrew the igniter from the charge. Do this with care as a detonator may be in the igniter tube and, if so, it is liable to fall out. If one cannot unscrew the igniter by hand, leave it for a trained man. Do not attempt to disarm a mine unless his mission demands it.



7. DUDS:

a. The soldier will frequently find unexploded shells and bombs in the area in which he is working. He should never examine them or pick them up unless he has been specially trained to do so and his particular mission is to destroy them. If he discovers such shells or bombs he should warn others of their presence and notify his commander of their location.

8. MOTOR VEHICLES:

a. Carelessness in the vicinity of motor vehicles is a cause of many avoidable accidents. Casualties produced in this way are just as helpful to the enemy as if he had inflicted them himself. Do not expect a vehicle driver to be able to avoid an accident. He has a big job to do that demands all of his attention and the soldier's cooperation. Never walk on a road if it can be avoided. When it is necessary, walk on the left, facing traffic. When one falls out to rest by the road, move off the shoulder beyond the ditch. If soldiers are lying in the grass at the edge of the road it is their fault, not the driver's, if he hits one when suddenly forced to pull off the road. A soldier should never go to sleep under a motor vehicle, even if he is the driver of that vehicle. It may move out unexpectedly and if it does he probably will never move again.