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Prepared by:

Henry S. Hastings
(Name)

Major
(Rank)

Early in World War II when armored divisions were first incorporated into The United States Army their fighting force consisted of three tank regiments, one armored infantry regiment, two field artillery battalions, a reconnaissance battalion and an engineer battalion. It was customary to attach an antiaircraft battalion and a tank destroyer battalion. The armored division was organized as a well rounded, self-contained, mobile unit which could operate separately for a considerable length of time. The principle doctrine of the division was to attack with tanks in mass with all other arms assisting in pushing the tanks forward. In early maneuvers it was found the division was too large to move around easily and the tanks were out of proportion to the infantry. As a result one of the tank regiments was dropped from the division. About the same time another artillery battalion was added giving a total of three battalions. In the organizing of later armored divisions tank and infantry units were organized as separate battalions with a total of three tank battalions and three infantry battalions. This gave a much better balanced unit of tanks and infantry. As tanks and infantry were seldom employed as regiments the separate battalion organization had many other advantages.

Armored infantry regiments were originally copied

after regular straight infantry regiments. They were smaller with less men in the rifle companies and had no antitank or cannon company. The number of actual fighting men was further reduced by drivers and vehicular maintenance personnel. The first vehicles used by the armored infantry were the four wheel scout cars which gave some armor protection but had little cross country ability. These were soon replaced by the M-2 and M-3 half-tracks. The fire power of the armored infantry was greater due mainly to the vehicular machine guns which each vehicle carried. Training was basically dismounted infantry tactics with special emphasis on offensive combat with tanks. Training was given in mounted marches, formations and fighting the vehicle. The latter was very seldom used as most of the time armored infantry fought dismounted.

Communication in armored infantry units was by means of SCR 508, 528 and 510 radios when mounted. When the infantry dismounted the 510 was dismounted and carried to form the SCR 509. This radio was too heavy and unhandy to carry as a dismounted set. It was possible to net it with the tank radios by installing the correct crystals. This was not done in lower units and it was not used for tank and infantry communication. Armored infantry units later received the SCR 300 and SCR 536 for dismounted

use. These worked well for infantry communication but still gave no communication with the tanks. Telephones were installed on the backs of tanks for communication with the infantry. They were not very successful due to inability to alert the tank commander, inability to get to the back of the tank or damaged wires and phones. The only sure method of communicating with tanks was to climb on the back of the tank and talk directly with the tank commander. Visual signals were used to some extent, however messages are very limited by this means. With the SCR 300 and the AN/VRC-3 radio in the tanks communication may be improved between tanks and infantry. However, only one SCR 300 radio is authorized in each armored infantry company and tank-infantry communication is desirable in units below the company level.

In early training the armored infantry was used principally to follow an attack and secure ground taken by the tanks. There was no close coordination between the tanks and infantry, both operated more or less separately. The importance of a closely knit combined team had not at this time been realized. Of necessity the practice was started of joining tanks and infantry up to form a combined force, one overcoming the weak points of the other. This eventually developed into the tank-infantry team

with units of various size from battalions to platoons being joined together according to the mission, enemy and type of terrain. It became customary in all types of operations to join infantry and tanks together with one or the other leading according to the type of obstacles met. In the heavy armored division there was always a shortage of infantry. Often battalions from infantry divisions were motorized and attached to the division to overcome this shortage. The principal disadvantages to this was that attached battalions did not have the training or experience of fighting with tanks and personnel of tank-infantry teams were not familiar with each other. The latter was found to be an important factor in gauging overall efficiency of a combined team. Whenever possible it was found best to join up the same tank and infantry units together in training and in combat. Not only would staff sections function better but lower unit commanders and individual tank crews and infantry squads become acquainted and gained confidence in each other. Units gained objectives as a team and not as individual arms. To round out this team artillery forward observers were attached down to include tank and infantry companies from the field artillery battalion in direct support of the unit. This gave a well rounded team of tanks, infantry and artillery. The artillery

forward observer operated dismounted with the infantry and the observer with the tanks rode in a tank. Wherever possible the same artillery battalions were kept in support of the same units.

Prior to an attack on designated objectives the tanks and infantry were joined together in a rear assembly area. Infantry vehicles were sometimes left in this area and the infantry rode on the tanks up to the attack position where they dismounted and attack with the tanks. At other times the infantry rode mounted in their own vehicles to the attack position and dismounted there. In attacking a position the enemy often placed all his artillery on the attacking tanks forcing the infantry to fall behind some two or three hundred yards. It is important that the infantry not be entirely separated from the tanks as one of the enemy's objectives is to separate the tanks and infantry so they may deal with each in turn. After tanks overrun the objective the infantry mopped up and organized the position, or the team reorganized and continued on to the next objective. Usually a team was assigned several objectives with other teams attacking on either side. Where enemy mines, obstacles or antitank guns were encountered the infantry took the lead and was supported by the tanks.

When these obstacles had been reduced the tanks passed

through the infantry and continued the attack. In some instances after committing the tanks it was found the objective displayed more antitank defenses than was first thought. In such cases it was necessary to have the infantry pass through the tanks and seize the objectives before the tanks could move forward. At times the infantry would be holding in a defensive position and the tanks passed through and made an attack with the infantry following. It was found much better for the tanks and infantry to join in a rear area.

In the attack of a fortified town a coordinated envelopment and frontal attack was generally used. Medium tanks encircled the town sealing it off so reinforcements could not get in and the enemy in town could not escape. To have tanks in their rear created confusion among the enemy. The frontal attack was made by tanks and infantry. The tanks led to the outskirts of town where the infantry passed through and clearing the town. In this phase small teams of tanks and infantry worked together. Usually a tank to a squad of infantry. The tank covered the infantry squad's movement forward and supported by knocking out automatic weapons and other strong points. These small teams must be organized before the attack and given specific sectors or streets. Coordination and control is most

difficult in this type fighting and prior planning must reach down to the lowest units. Due to their speed and maneuverability the light tanks were found good for supporting infantry in a town. Teams continued through town and set up a defense on the far side with the medium tanks. The support which consisted of infantry and tanks followed the attacking teams, took over prisoners, and assisted in overcoming particular tough islands of resistance.

In attacking a woods the infantry led and the tanks were used in a support roll. The main enemy defenses were found in the edge of the woods where there were good fields of fire. During the infantry attack the tanks supported from vantage points by direct fire into the edge of the woods using both machine guns and cannon. Infantry vehicular machine guns were sometimes used to supplement the tank fire. After the infantry entered the woods tanks followed closely along and continued in support. When woods were very thick and no trails existed it was necessary for tanks to skirt the woods and join the infantry on the far side. Tanks had to stay close to infantry in the woods for protection from rockets and other individual antitank weapons. In an attack through large wooded areas where the terrain was extremely hilly it was sometimes necessary for the infantry to attack alone and

the tanks join them later after engineers had cleared avenues of approach.

Small tank and infantry teams were very successful in attacking pillboxes and bunkers in the Siegfried Line. A medium tank company and an infantry company were joined together. These were further broken down to form assault teams consisting of a section of tanks, two squads of infantry and an engineer flame thrower team. This gave two assault teams to each tank and infantry platoon and six teams to the tank-infantry company. Two or more assault teams would attack pillboxes simultaneously and other teams passed through to attack positions further on when the first positions were overcome, using a leap-frog method. Prior to teams attacking an artillery observer put artillery fire on the position forcing the enemy defending outside to seek cover inside the pillbox. The section of tanks took the position under fire with machine guns and cannon forcing the enemy to close the gun ports. The two infantry squads then approached the position from a blind side prepared to make an assault. The tanks continued to fire and attempted to shoot the gun ports in. The tank fire lifted as the infantry reached the position. The infantry placed charges in

the ports to blow them in if the tanks had not already accomplished this. The flame throwers were directed through the ports and the infantry entered and cleared the box out. In most cases the enemy came out when the flame thrower was used. Smoke and fragmentation grenades thrown in were found very effective in bringing the enemy out.

On an exploitation combat commands marched in from one to sometimes three columns. Each column was organized into a tank-infantry team usually not less than battalion strength. Many of the actions in an exploitation were advance guard actions. The point was generally made up of a section of medium tanks. The advance party was composed of a medium tank platoon with a platoon of infantry mounted on the backs of the tanks. The remainder of the infantry with the advance guard rode in their vehicles in the support. On long marches the infantry riding the tanks was rotated to rest them. Their half-tracks followed at the rear of the main body. This shortened the column and made the infantry immediately available should they be needed. The infantry in the main body usually moved mounted in their vehicles. When passing through woods where enemy was suspected the infantry in the advance guard dismounted and took a parallel route through the woods on either side of the road. The infantry was used to take out road blocks,

antitank guns and mines when encountered to allow the tanks to move ahead. Tanks in the advance guard acted as a base of fire while the infantry maneuvered and took out the resistance. Infantry in the main body was often used reinforced with tanks to put out flank security. The general practice was to put two squads of infantry and a section of tanks to cover a main avenue of approach. As there is danger of an attack on any part of a column during an exploitation tanks and infantry were distributed through out the column. This was particularly necessary in a long column where a combat command was marching in a single column. Often the command attack from a march column when on an exploitation and it was necessary for the infantry to be joined up with the tanks on the march. When the advance guard hit something the column would coil just off the road and get set for action.

When halting for the night or any length of time security was placed well out. Strong outposts and road blocks covered roads and other avenues of approach. It was found a good hasty road block could be established by stringing a couple of concertinas of wire and mine necklaces across the road covered by a section of tanks and squads of infantry. The infantry should have a dismounted post in front of the block to alert the main force on an enemy approach. An artillery observer was posted with the main blocks and

artillery fire plan prepared to support the blocks. The infantry was used to assist the tanks in setting up local security around the bivouac area.

On an exploitation where movement continued at night more infantry was put in the advance guard and it was necessary for them to dismount more often to protect the tanks and make dismounted reconnaissance of dangerous areas. Progress was much slower at night. In terrain where we averaged fifty to sixty miles a day only fifteen to twenty miles was made at night. When artificial moonlight was used it helped very much.

In organizing a defensive position armored infantry battalions were used practically the same as regular infantry units. The main difference was we had more tanks and used more of them in the line. Generally all three infantry battalions were put in one combat command and two battalions were put on the line and one in reserve. Each battalion had attached a medium tank company which was assigned a platoon to each rifle company and dug in on the front lines covering tank approaches. A platoon of tanks along with the reserve rifle company acted as the battalion reserve. The reserve infantry battalion with a battalion of tanks constituted the combat command reserve. Where the front was such

that all three infantry battalions were required on the front lines the division reconnaissance battalion was used to relieve battalions.

In an amphibious operation the division was usually formed into combat commands and landed after regimental combat teams had established a beach head. If possible ports were secured and the combat team was landed there. Other times the landings were made on beaches from landing craft. Missions of the command were to help expand the beach head, act as a reserve or seize important installations or terrain features. The armored infantry and tanks were loaded as teams on the landing craft. The first mission of the armored infantry was to serve and outpost assembly areas for the teams. After assembling the team fought in the manner already covered. If difficulty occurred in landing vehicles the infantry was sometimes transferred to smaller craft and landed dismounted to assist the regimental combat teams until the tanks and vehicles were landed. In landing operations plans had to be kept flexible as so many different things could happen. Armored units generally had several plans and executed the one which best suited the situation.

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