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HEADQUARTERS FIELD US ARMY GROUP
Artillery Section



13 May 1944

SUBJECT: NOTES ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TANK DESTROYER UNITS IN THE ANZIO BRIDGEHEAD.

The answers to the questions that follow were dictated by Colonel L. B. Jacoby on 12 May. They are the result of a visit of about one week to the Anzio bridgehead during latter April and early May 1944.

1. Q. What equipment above T/O & B is issued to TD Companies for fire direction work when used as artillery? For communications?

A. All battalions have one 12-drop switchboard for the use of the battalion headquarters, and each Tank Destroyer Company has one 6-drop switchboard. Some battalions are utilizing a 6-drop switchboard in their reconnaissance on the beachhead. The above signal communication equipment in excess of T/O is in effect for the 894, the 601, the 701, the 805, and the 636. I did not see the 804. The 601, the 805, and the 636, each is equipped with a total of 4 BC telescopes on a special issue. These were the last 3 battalions I visited, and it could be that the other 3 battalions have this equipment, as I did not question them directly as to their possession. For wire, it appears that each battalion headquarters company and each tank destroyer company is using about 10 to 12 miles of wire, or have that amount on hand for use. The situation on both fronts is that wire is being used very extensively with radio communication held to the absolute minimum for purposes of security and ease in transmitting information and instructions. To sum up, it appears that the following additional equipment is needed in a battalion of TDs:

a. One TD 72, 12-drop for battalion headquarters and for supplemental use of the reconnaissance company.

b. One TD 71, 6-drop for each TD Company. (2 battalions in their rear train area are utilizing a switchboard for the commanders of the rear echelon to contact various elements represented in the train area. This is very useful, but does not apply to TDs used as artillery.)

c. 4 BC telescopes per battalion with the good wire increased from 3 miles to a total of 10 miles.

2. Q. How are TDs generally employed in an artillery role, and what type fire is used (harassing, neutralization, counter-battery, etc.)?

A. Tank destroyers generally are employed on harassing fires or observed fires on targets of opportunity. Tanks are fired on in any sector, but the observed fire targets of opportunity are generally at a fairly good range. As to type fire used, the battalions report as follows:

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a. 701, 894, 645, 805, 636, all types but chiefly by observed fires. The 636 reports that of 72,000 rounds fired 95% were observed fires.

b. 776th reports type as mostly harassing with about one-half observed.

c. 601st was the only Battalion which reported that their fires were mostly unobserved from map data. This Battalion however had been used more than any other Battalion on its primary mission, and hence I believe this is the reason that their fires are reported to be mostly harassing fires which are unobserved and are placed from map data.

3. 2. Get a confirmation of existence of Antitank subsection in artillery staffs of Army, Corps and Divisions.

A. a. Antitank subsections are reported not to exist as such in any artillery staff of any American division in Italy. In the 34th, 45th, and 3d Divisions, the TD Battalion Commander, when he becomes attached to the Division, becomes the Antitank Officer of the Division. In the 85th Division, the Division Artillery Executive coordinates all antitank measures, but has no subsection to aid him. Was unable to contact the 1st Armored Division, but their TD Battalion Commander reports no Antitank subsection in the Division.

b. The VI Corps actually has an Antitank Subsection, which consists of General Lamey, his aide, and a good TD major with one expert typist. As the War Department turned down the Antitank Subsections in Divisions, Corps and Army, this section is functioning on a sub-rosa basis. For the static situation which has developed in the beachhead since about February 22d, this section has proven invaluable, but when the situation becomes more mobile, it is doubtful that there is enough personnel to do the pick and shovel work required to coordinate the Corps antitank plans. Actually each Division on the beachhead has a good TD Battalion and also at present has the time for the TD Battalion Commanders to make good recommendations for Antitank defense. The General was needed in order to force proper antitank measures by elements of the Division other than TDs, and also to insure employment of TDs within Division sectors to maximum antitank defense when viewed from the Corps Commander's view point.

4. 2. What are the relative merits of Self-propelled and Towed Tank Destroyers? What are the proper proportions for a field army?

A. Towed Tank Destroyers are in my opinion perfectly worthless to perform an active and reliable type of TD missions.

a. Even when dug-in they have only the 800 mml field of fire. Hence it takes 4 guns to cover 360 degrees of territory, whereas a single self-propelled TD would cover the same 360 degrees of fire.

b. There is no protection to the gun crew which the armor of the M10 affords. Consequently, when tanks show up and artillery fire is laid on the towed gun, the crew can not man the gun; whereas in an M10 the crew can and does man the gun.

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c. The towed gun can't fire and move, as the prime movers are very vulnerable when attempting to get out the towed gun. For example, a British towed regiment and the 894 self-propelled battalion were in 2 adjoining division sectors where a heavy German attack was made. Both Divisions were forced to make withdrawals. The British regiment, in the course of 2 or 3 days, lost over 60 towed guns, most of which never had an opportunity to fire a shot before they were over-run. On the other hand, the 894th lost only a few of their self-propelled units. On another occasion, the 645th had the misfortune of having their infantry pull out without warning, and had they not been self-propelled they would have probably been completely liquidated. However due to the self-propelled 10 they lost only 10 to 12 lbs.

d. The 805th is a towed Battalion and its Battalion Commander likes the towed gun. However I find that there are some special reasons for his liking the towed weapon.

(1) Due to the vulnerability of the towed guns being over-run, his battalion is not being used very much in the exposed positions that a primary mission requires. Hence he is relieved of the most dangerous missions, which are given to the self-propelled.

(2) He doesn't have to carry as much special equipment as the self-propelled battalions do, since he never is used in an assault artillery mission or an accompanying mission.

(3) He has no problem of training drivers for special equipment. He does not have to train nearly as many radio operators as an air outfit does. He has much more man-power, which enables him to rotate two complete crews for each gun after it has been placed in position.

(4) He has a lot more of trucks, whereas the AF units are desperately short on trucks.

(5) He is used practically exclusively as reinforcing artillery, and as such is only expected to fire the simplest types of artillery fire.

(6) He participates in practically no night attacks involving a movement of his guns. That is, he supports night attacks by fire power only, whereas self-propelled AF support night attacks by fire and mobility.

(7) Compared with the self-propelled battalions, his officers and enlisted men have far less work and training to accomplish.-
CONTROVERSIAL - 3 August 1944.

5. a. Are any battalions equipped with the T70? if so, how is it liked?

A. No battalions are equipped with T70s, but the 805th will be equipped as soon as sufficient T70s arrive in the theater. The T70 is thoroughly disliked for the following reasons:

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a. Its armor is entirely too thin and it is not the superb seventy-thousand-dollar fox hole which the T10 is.

b. It uses a gas engine, which is a tremendous fire hazard when hit. This does not exist to such a degree with the Diesel powered T10.

c. It looks very much like the German Mark V.

6. Q. How do the 76mm and 3-inch Guns compare?

A. No appreciable difference between the 76mm and 3-inch gun.

7. Q. What ammunition is available for these weapons and for what targets is it used? Targets of opportunity, ever?

A. Normal targets are fired upon, using:

a. HE with fuze delay and fuze quick. (Known use of this type of ammunition both for antitank and for anti-personnel purposes.)

b. HE with M54 time fuze. This is used chiefly for the adjustment of sheafs and registration.

c. APC - HEF. This is the prime favorite for direct fire on tanks. Except for the 601st, the Battalion Commanders all felt that the AP could be completely replaced by APC - HEF.

d. AP. The 601st feel that for Mark VI and Ferdinand the AP will make better penetration, as they have two instances of APC and HEF bouncing off the front armor of Mark VI's and Ferdinands at approximately 500 to 600 yard ranges and they felt that AP in the same condition could not have bounced.

e. Home-made smoke, which the battalions like very much in making their adjustments as they must adjust on base points and check at distant ranges and the bursts are quite difficult for an observer to pick up. Some smoke for this purpose, however, is a must.

f. Star shell (illuminating shell). 125 rounds of naval star-shell for the 3-inch gun were obtained and refitted with 3-inch cartridge cases to enable firing in the 3-inch gun. Each battalion was issued about 20 of these shell, and all are ultra enthusiastic about their use at night to light up and area where possible targets are lurking. The Army antitank Officer states that 10,000 rounds of 3-inch shell is being sent to his Army with one of it even scheduled to be flown in. This information is given to show the importance attached to star-shell by the Fifth Army.

8. Q. How much survey does a Tank Destroyer unit do

A. Survey, which the TD Battalions do.

a. 894th -- none; artillery does all.

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b. 701st -- does all its own survey. (This battalion has fired more indirect fires and is more expert in its control than any battalion in the Fifth Army.) The survey work which they have performed to date has been extremely simple.

c. 645th -- in general the artillery does all survey, but personnel can carry the survey from a place mark.

d. 601st -- artillery does all, battalion none. (One survey party in the reconnaissance company has had training, but never yet has been used.)

e. 776th -- always done by artillery.

f. 636th -- when the Division Artillery knows our proposed locations they locate the base place of each platoon as a place mark with the direction.

g. 805th -- does all survey in a slow manner from a place mark furnished by the artillery. (My observation was that the 805th generally has always fired for at least three weeks from any artillery position as artillery, and they have not had to survey in many positions. -
CONTROVERSIAL - 3 August 1944.

9. Q. How much time is allowed Tank Destroyer units for preparation of data?

A. Usually, for harassing scheduled fires, the TD units have from 3 to 12 hours notice to prepare their data. However the situation is much stabilized, and at the present time preparation of data to fire is almost exclusively the application of a K. As the situation is stabilized, RIF RIF messages are taken every two hours and in the best battalions applied every two hours. This may differ from the IC 2, but it is a standard practice in the good TD Battalions, to apply meteorological corrections.

10. Q. Have they adequate organic transportation for ammunition?

A. All Battalions except the 636th report no trouble with getting ammunition, but every Battalion has a lot of extra transportation so you cannot tell whether the T/O organic transportation is actually adequate.

11. Q. What restrictions are placed on their use due to limited life of the tubes?

A. No restrictions because of limited life of tubes have been placed on indirect fire. However, not only must tubes be replaced, but the trunion bearings in some instances have been replaced. Tests were being made as to the reduction in muzzle velocity and effect, as they had one gun which had fired up to 3300 rounds and for indirect fire did not lose too much accuracy. On the other hand, one gun with 2600 rounds was getting far too much probable error in its fire.

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12. Q. When Tank Destroyer Artillery is used in a Field Artillery role, what is the organization for combat? Are Tank Destroyer battalions placed in support of an infantry unit, or do they reinforce the fires of a Field Artillery battalion? Are Tank Destroyer units smaller than a battalion ever used in a Field Artillery role?

A. For TD roles in the primary mission, the TD, in general, functions through G-3 of the Division to which it is attached. For the field artillery role, they function in one of two ways under the Division Artillery.

When the Battalion is green and there is no confidence on the part of the Division Artillery in its ability to accurately deliver fire, each Tank Destroyer Company is paired up with an FA Battalion. The TD Company maintains a fire-direction center near its platoon positions and has wire communication to the FA Battalion to receive missions and to enable the Field Artillery to make use of any TD observer who might be connected by either radio or wire to the company. As the Division Artillery Commanders secure more confidence in the TD Battalions, the Division Artillery deals direct with S-3 of the TD Battalion Headquarters, who in turn deals direct with the fire-direction centers of the TD Companies. Actually in each TD battalion two companies in general are on the primary mission and one TD Company is in the indirect fire role. Hence, instead of having to coordinate 36 guns, the problem is practically always reduced to the coordination of one Company of 12 guns. The Division Artillery deals direct with the TD Battalion, which in turn deals with its TD Companies of 3 platoons. Also in this manner observers from the TD Battalion fire their own guns on many targets. Also the use of any TD observer to bring fire by artillery units is simpler and surer.

The material that follows is extracted from notes of a conversation with Colonel Jacoby regarding his observations in the Anzio bridgehead.

1. Among the types of fire employed by the Field Artillery in this stabilized situation are the following:

a. BINGO -- This is the equivalent of the BOMBARD used in LTD with the exception that each unit fires 6 volleys.

b. HITLER -- This fire is employed in silencing German artillery whenever their harassing fires become particularly objectionable. Each battery firing the HITLER fires 24 rounds on each of its 5 favorite targets.

c. LHA, TOKIO, BAHAM -- These are the names for certain important targets which are fired upon call.

2. The Antiaircraft is very efficient and has shot down numerous German planes. Crews manning 50 caliber machine guns want their ammunition to be 100% tracer. Ground units are very reluctant to display any air recognition signal. For safety from our own bombardment planes, troops depend almost entirely upon the bomb line.

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3. Most units appear to be above their T/O strength. They also have more than the T/E allowance of equipment. Artillery ammunition is plentiful. The artillery wire net is very elaborate. Radio is used little if at all by the artillery.

4. Tank Destroyer battalions have authority to call for Air O's. planes. These planes are not assigned to TD units, but are regularly available to them. Batteries in the MIOs need frequent charging; the vehicles move very little and forward units use their radios for some transmission and quite a bit of listening. Consequently, all units are demanding numerous charging sets of the type known as "Tiny Tin". In TD units the greatest number of casualties appears to be among the drivers of the MIOs. All units make modification in their equipment; as a result there is tremendous demand for welding rods.

5. All units claim that gasoline vehicles burn much more easily than do the Diesel powered vehicles. Many units are placing tops over their MIOs. Apparently crews feel much safer if they have something over their heads. The German Mark V is a very effective antitank weapon.

/s/ T.S.H.,
/t/ T H HENDEYIN,
Colonel, FA
Executive.

Memo, Headquarters, Army Ground Forces
GWH, T-6/67102

(1) Hqts-6 to G-3 13 Jun 44

1. The attached inclosure was received infor ally.
2. Your remarks and recommendations are requested, particularly with reference to paragraph 1.

/s/ A.W.W.
/t/ A.W.W.

(2) G-3- to Hqts 17 Jun 44

23

Stabilized situations wherein elaborate artillery type installations are feasible are considered the exception rather than the rule. A TD battalion can be supplied with this equipment in such cases. Accomplishment of the battalion's primary mission will be impeded by having to transport and maintain a large amount of artillery fire direction center and fire control equipment.

s/FAINE
t/FAINE FOR DEUVAN

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3. Most units appear to be above their I/O strength. They also have more than the I/E allowance of equipment. Artillery ammunition is plentiful. The artillery wire net is very elaborate. Radio is used little if at all by the artillery.

4. Tank destroyer battalions have authority to call for Air O. P. planes. These planes are not assigned to TD units, but are regularly available to them. Batteries in the MIOs need frequent charging; the vehicles move very little and forward units use their radios for some transmission and quite a bit of listening. Consequently, all units are demanding numerous charging sets of the type known as "Tiny Tim". In TD units the greatest number of casualties appears to be among the drivers of the MIOs. All units make modification of their equipment; as a result there is a tremendous demand for welding rods.

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/s/ T. E. H.,
/t/ T. E. HEDEKING
Colonel, FA
Executive.

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- 7 -
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