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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 899TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
(ATTACHED TO THE 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION)  
FOR THE PERIOD OF 2 - 18 JUNE 1944  
ON THE NORMANDY PENINSULA  
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experiences of a Battalion Operations Officer)

Type of operation described:  
TANK DESTROYER BATTALION IN CLOSE SUPPORT OF INFANTRY

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion from 2 June to 18 June 1944 while participating in the invasion of Normandy over Utah Beach.

To familiarize those who are not acquainted with the organization of the tank destroyer battalion the following statements are offered in explanation.

During the development of these units there were several types of battalions. The first ones used in Africa had the 75 mm. gun mounted on the M3 half track destroyer as a basic weapon. They distinguished themselves during the Tunisian Campaign but had been replaced at the time of this writing by the new type self-propelled and towed battalions. (1)

The 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion was self-propelled and had as its basic armament the M10 tank destroyer, which consisted of a 3 inch converted naval gun incorporated in an open top, counter-balanced turret, mounted on the M4 tank chassis. (2)

Tables of organization, at the time covered by this report, provided for a battalion consisting of 37 Officers and 636 Enlisted Men. It had a Headquarters Company, in which service elements were incorporated; a Reconnaissance Company, similar in organization to a division reconnaissance troop; and three lettered gun companies, having twelve M10s, each. (3)

The 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion had been activated at Fort Lewis, Washington, received final phase training at Camp Hood, Texas and arrived in Casablanca, French Morocco, 25 January 1943. It

(1, 2, 3) Personal knowledge.

first saw combat in the battle of El Guettar, Tunisia. After the close of the Tunisian Campaign it had undergone strenuous training in the Fifth Army Tank Destroyer Training Center near Sebdou, Algeria. (4)

They were not called to participate in the Sicilian Campaign but remained in Africa, ready for combat in Italy, before arriving there late in October, 1943. At the port of Naples, the Battalion Commander was notified that his unit had been selected to go to England and subsequently participate in the invasion of Europe. (5) As a result, most of the time spent in Italy was devoted to turning in equipment and preparing for the sea voyage.

The unit entered the British Isles through the Firth of Clyde, entrained at Glasgow, Scotland for shipment south to the Salisbury Plain, and was stationed at Danebury, near Stockbridge, England.

The battalion was assigned to First U. S. Army, attached to VII Corps and further attached to Division Artillery, 9th Infantry Division. (6)

As stated by First Army Report of Operations, the object of all training of units of the Army was the thorough preparation of individuals and units for the specific task of the invasion of the Continent. (7)

In addition to exercises involving our primary mission, emphasis was placed on training and equipping the unit for use as reinforcing artillery and as direct support for assault infantry units. Personnel were thoroughly trained in the technique of waterproofing vehicles for amphibious assault landings and exercises were conducted using a beach as a starting point.

During the latter stages of the preparation for the invasion of Normandy the 899th had worked out a plan for joining and supporting the 82nd Airborne Division. (8)

(4) A-6, p. 9-23; (5) Personal knowledge; statement of Colonel Stevens, CO, 1st T. D. Group, 10 November 1943; (6) Personal knowledge; (7) A-2, p. 18; (8) Personal knowledge.

Exhaustive terrain studies and analyses of the invasion area were made as a part of the staff planning to insure that the unit would be ready for any eventuality.

Training was complete. Men and equipment were ready. The invasion was the next step.

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The intention for operation OVERLORD, as stated by Field Marshal Montgomery in his "Normandy to the Baltic", "was to assault, simultaneously, beaches on the Normandy Coast immediately north of the Carentan estuary and between the Carentan estuary and the River Orne, with the object of securing as a base for further operations a lodgement area which was to include airfield sites, the port of Cherbourg and the ports of Brittany." (9)

The morning of 6 June 1944 saw the materialization of operation OVERLORD transforming from the planning stage to execution. Plans for this event had been considered by high level staffs prior to the invasion of Africa in November 1942. This action had, in fact, delayed the forceful entry into the 'Fortress Europa' during the remainder of 1942 and the entire year of 1943. (10)

Another consideration, which was believed to be important to the breaching of fortifications on the continent, was operation ANVIL, or the invasion of Europe through South France. This would require the commitment of considerable enemy forces in that area and lessen available strength to be pitted against Allied forces in the north. This was also delayed by the necessity of diverting Mediterranean shipping to OVERLORD. (11)

Original COSSAC plans had contemplated the initial phase of OVERLORD on a scale of only a single corps, consisting of three divisions with a build up by D plus 5 of nine divisions ashore, exclusive of Airborne troops. (12)

(9) A-1, p. 19-20; (10) A-1, p. 2; (11) A-1, p. 12; (12) A-1, p.9

D Day saw the invasion actually made by 21 Army Group, consisting of the First United States Army and the Second British Army, which included Canadian 3rd Division, attacking over a total front of some seventy-five kilometers. (13)

One of the prerequisites to the onslaught of OVERLORD was overwhelming air superiority. For three months prior to the invasion a planned program of strategic bombing had been directed against rail targets, bridges, airfields, coastal batteries, radar stations and other naval and military targets, until our supremacy of the air was well assured. (14)

We controlled the sea, the naval participation in the invasion being of almost unbelievable proportions.

Weather had been considered from meteorological predictions of time and tide. (15)

No stone had been left unturned in considering our own or enemy capabilities in this most colossal military operation in history.

The 'Atlantic Wall' opposing our forces, consisted of the combined defenses of the Coast of France, product of the German ingenuity and years of effort. (16)

With the assumption that one of the ports would be the Allies chief objective a concentrated effort had been made to fortify all port areas. (17)

Second priority was given to the Pas de Calais, as it lay nearest to the British Coast and Allied operations had been such as to confirm this belief.

During the course of their more than four years of war the German resources had been greatly drained and they no longer had the necessary transportation nor facilities to complete all desired defenses. However, after Rommel had made an inspection tour, increased

(13) A-4, p. 20; (14) A-4, p. 10; (15) A-4, p. 19; (16, 17, 18) A-1, p. 2  
(19) A-2, p. 34; (20) A-4, p. 23 & 24; (21) A-3, p. 33

activity was evident to our reconnaissance. (20)

It was known that concrete pillboxes and gun emplacements lined the coast, that underwater obstacles had been placed to impale all landing craft and the beaches heavily mined. Further inland, all suitable aircraft landing areas had been staked and great use had been made of wire entanglements. (21)

In the words of the 21st Army Group Commander, "The First United States Army was to assault astride the Carentan estuary with one regimental combat team near Varreville (Utah Beach) and two regimental combat teams between Vierville and Colleville (Omaha Beach). The initial tasks were to capture Cherbourg as quickly as possible and develop operations southward toward St. Lo in conformity with the advance of the Second British Army." (22)

On Omaha Beach, difficulty was encountered by V Corps owing to several factors. Authoritative sources state that poor visibility rendered aerial bombardment largely ineffective; that underwater obstacles and heavy seas had capsized the bulk of the amphibious tanks and caused damage to many landing craft; that the nature of the terrain was such that observation for the delivery of naval gunfire was extremely difficult; and that a German Division, in the area on maneuvers, was actually manning positions which the assault forces opposed. The permanency of Omaha Beach appeared questionable for a period of hours but by nightfall a beachhead, of about a mile in depth, on the line Vierville-Colleville, had been secured. (23)

The VII Corps, with the 4th Infantry Division making the assault by sea, and the 82nd Airborne Division and the 101st Airborne Division landing in the rear of the German Coastal defenses, established a beachhead in the neighborhood of Varreville, on the east coast of the Cotentin Peninsula. (24)

(21) A-3, p. 33; (22) A-1, p. 29; (23) A-1, p. 56; (24) Personal knowledge supplemented by A-2, p. 43 -44.

### THE BATTALION SITUATION

On the night of 1-2 June 1944 the Commanding Officer of the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion received orders attaching his unit to 4th Infantry Division Artillery. It was further specified that only essential combat elements would accompany assault forces. (25)

A small advance command post detachment, including control sets of the communication system, Company "A" and Company "C", stripped down to destroyers and essential administrative vehicles, were designated as the assault lift. Additional liason was made possible by previous plans with the 82nd Airborne Division. One liason officer was sent with the glider lift and the Company Commander of Reconnaissance Company with the seaborne lift of this Division. (26)

Battalion Headquarters, less the advanced command post group, Headquarters Company, "B" Company and Reconnaissance Company were to follow as 'residue'. (27)

On 2 June the assault lift moved into the marshalling yards at Dartmouth, England and prepared both men and vehicles for embarkation in accordance with 4th Infantry Division plans. (28)

Earlier intensive training greatly accelerated final waterproofing of vehicles which was completed in good time. The final check of personnel, weapons and equipment was rapidly made and the men briefed for their part in the general plan.

The assault lift loaded on British LCTs the afternoon of 4 June. There was no mishap other than the breaking of one shroud on one ~~truck~~ destroyer, which was repaired during the night and the vehicle loaded the following day. The assignment to craft had been made so as to maintain unit integrity in so far as possible. On 5 June we moved into the English Channel. Throughout the afternoon we remained well intact but during the hours of darkness the craft

(25, 26, 27, 28) personal knowledge.

carrying the first platoon of Company "A" dropped out and was not seen again.

#### THE ASSAULT

At daybreak, from off Utah Beach, we watched the 4th Infantry Division lead the assault of VII United States Corps. It was made in a column of regimental combat teams led by the 8th Infantry Regiment. The progress of the assault was greatly assisted by thirty amphibious tanks, launched 5000 yards offshore, which arrived on the beach with the loss of only one. (29)

After the cessation of aerial bombardment, naval guns furnished the only support until artillery in the assault lift got ashore.

In the early afternoon our unit formed in wave twenty-six, the craft carrying the Commanding Officer slightly in the lead. As we neared the beaches, roughly abreast, the pilots of the LCTs picked their ways cautiously, avoiding what debris was floating about and pushed in toward shore. Depth of water was verified by personnel of our unit as ramps were lowered and we prepared to debark. Lighter vehicles consisting of jeeps, 3/4 tons and M20s had been attached to the destroyers by means of the organic towing cables. This prevented needless loss in holes or other underwater obstructions that remained in our short trip through the water to the beach. The head of the column formed from the first vehicle, others following as they touched down.

We were ashore, the first tank destroyer battalion to land in France. (30)

Our maps showed us to be some 1500 yards south of originally planned sites. It seemed to me it would have been to our advantage had I been sent in several waves earlier. Suitable disposition of our unit on the beach was lacking and previously formulated plans no longer practicable.

(29) personal knowledge verified by A-2, p. 46; (30) personal knowledge, A-2, p. 33

\* These BN plans should have been explained in detail early in the manuscript - e.g. plan for employment upon arriving, missions, etc.

The beach where the actual landing was made was a wide expanse of white sand, which sloped into an inundated area. Engineers had been working there since early morning and underwater obstacles were largely cleared or ineffective by the time we came in.

Sporadic enemy artillery fire still fell on the beach. Although it was largely ineffective, we were most vulnerable, as well as being a lucrative target, while in our necessarily massed formation.

Upon contacting the beach master it was learned that most units were proceeding across the inundated area prior to dewaterproofing. G-4, 4th Infantry Division, located just off the beach, instructed us to proceed about two miles along the road, La Madeleine-Marie du Mont, pull into a field and dewaterproof.

As the march began a glance back down the column showed waterproof ammunition covering and other items of waterproofing being discarded from either side of the vehicles, tubes swinging forward and all hands readying themselves for combat.

#### PERIMETER DEFENSE OF AN INSTALLATION

Our first mission was received from Commanding General, 4th Division Artillery, i. e., antitank protection for the 4th Infantry Division Command Post to be located that night in the vicinity of Audoville la Hubert. (31)

The reconnaissance for this mission was made by S-3 and Company Commanders of Companies "A" and "C". Positions for perimeter defense were selected with "A" Company, minus its lost platoon, on the right, Company "C" to the left and left rear.

Upon our return to the battalion it was learned the first hostilities had occurred on a minor scale. Apparently, one of the numerous small fortifications in the area had been by-passed and remained unnoticed until members of our local security chanced to be curious about what was on the other side of the hedgerow. The action

(31) Verbal order received by Bn. Co. in presence of the author.

had been brief, without losses to us, and the twenty some odd PWs turned over to some infantrymen returning to the beach.

The battalion moved into position, checked its fields of fire and tied in for mutual support and all around security for the night. The gap caused by lack of destroyers to cover all necessary positions in the perimeter was compensated for by selection of alternate positions which could be occupied in darkness and security posted to prevent surprise from an unexpected direction.

#### ANTI-TANK DEFENSE OF A DIVISION

During the early evening, the Commanding Officer, S-2, S-3 and the Communications Officer visited the 4th Division Artillery Command Post to check the latest developments and complete the anti-tank plans for the following day. This time we were assigned the mission of protecting the Division left flank against possible enemy armor.

Units of primary interest to us were the 8th and 12th Infantry Regiments who held the center and left flank of the 4th Division sector.(3

A reconnaissance was made as it was necessary that they be aware of our plans and that we have knowledge of their likely dispositions the following day. The remainder of the reconnaissance was extremely difficult, in that it was conducted in almost total darkness. It was very fortunate that we had made extensive map studies of this area while we were in England as this familiarized us with the terrain over which we were now working. Accessible positions covering the most likely avenues of enemy armored approach were selected and the movement to position began.

We led out with Company "A" first, leaving Company "C" in its left flank positions. They joined the column after Company "A" had cleared. It was necessary to lead the companies slowly because of the extreme darkness and the fact that we dared not use even blackout lights. Company "A" occupied the right of the sector chosen, Company "C"

was deployed to the left, covering all routes of approach from the direction of Montebourg. Time permitted only a map selection of positions against attack in other sectors of the division front. We relied to quite an extent on the inundated area to the south and the location of the 82nd Airborne Division as partial barriers in that direction.

Minor activity occurred in these positions with the approach of dawn, as it was found that in addition to crashed gliders strewn throughout our area, we were also intermingled with small, scattered groups of Georgian soldiers. The amount of small arms fire exchanged had no serious consequences. Shortly after it began we found that there were also a few soldiers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions in the vicinity. They were most helpful in orienting our men on the local situation and taking our prisoners off our hands.

Little occurred during the early part of the day. The advance of the Infantry rendered our positions of little immediate value. There appeared to be no armored threat, so we sat in position while the Commanding Officer went to the Division Artillery Command Post for further instructions.

#### ATTACK OF A FORTIFIED POSITION

Upon the Commanding Officer's return, we learned that our direct support of Infantry had begun.

Company "C" was to move east to assist the 1st Battalion of the 22nd Infantry in an attack on the strongpoint of Crisbecq. Ordinarily the support of an infantry battalion would not call for the use of so many guns. However, in this instance, the infantry battalion had attacked Crisbecq early on the morning of the 7th and had been counter-attacked and driven back in the afternoon. (33)

It was about this time that Company "C" arrived and went into position along the general line held by the infantry.

The enemy attacked again during the early hours of the morning and our destroyers participated in repulsing the attack. (34) Difficulties were experienced by most gunners in this engagement as the wooded area came too close to their positions to afford a long, open field of fire. They could not see well without the aid of night lighting devices. Pinpoint precision was lost in this type of fighting and it was a slow process to use bore sighting on targets at this close range. (35)

With one company thus employed, the Headquarters and two platoons of Company "A", even though in well forward positions, constituted the main mobile anti-tank reserve for the entire 4th Division sector. (36)

#### CLOSE SUPPORT OF INFANTRY IN THE ASSAULT

To further the Corps advance on Cherbourg it was necessary that the high ground in the vicinity of Quineville be captured and enemy coastal positions, which were still delivering all too accurate fire on the beach, <sup>be</sup> neutralized. Between the attackers and the Quineville Ridge were the strongpoints of Crisbecq, Azeville, Fontenay Sur Mer, Chau de Fontenay and Ozeville, ranging from fortified positions to enemy occupied towns.

On the 9th of June a task force, including the 22nd Infantry and the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was formed under the command of Brigadier General Henry A Barber. (37)

The decision was made to contain the enemy at Crisbecq with Company "C" of the 22nd Infantry and Company "C" of the 899th Tank Destroyer Battalion. (38)

The remainder of the regiment with the two platoons of Company "A", 899th, attached for the purpose of anti-tank protection and direct support in the assault, was to attack in a column of battalions.

(34) Personal knowledge, statement of Captain Clarence A Heckethorn, CO, Co "C", 899th TD Bn, to author 7 June; (35) from conversation between the gunners of Co "C" and the author; (36) personal knowledge; (37) A-7, p. 1; (38) A-7, p. 1

The third was to seize the town of Azeville and the strongpoint to the northeast, then attack Ozeville; to be followed by the 2nd which would contain the enemy at Chau de Fontenay; and the 1st which would attack the town of Fontenay Sur Mer to relieve the pressure on the 3rd Battalion which was receiving flanking fire on that point. (39)

Operations proceeded according to plan on the 11th. The following day found the platoons of Company "A" used almost entirely in the assault role as the 3rd battalion reduced the Ozeville strongpoint. (40) By nightfall mopping up operations were almost completed. (41) In the absence of a tank threat, the destroyers had assisted by delivering direct fire on fortifications and emplacements, contributing where they could to the reduction of the enemy's strength. Still the disadvantage of never having worked together before and having no common communication system was felt.

The 12th of June saw "B" Company, Headquarters Company and Reconnaissance Company rejoining the battalion, much to the relief of the Battalion Sergeant Major who had been resupplying our advance force with the Message Center three quarter ton truck. They had been taken to Omaha beach, landed there with the loss of several vehicles, and moved to Utah beach by various improvised means during the period since we had seen them last. No one in that group seemed to have a coherent idea of how or why this mishap had occurred. (42)

They were brought into an assembly area southwest of Emonde. Company "B's" platoons were immediately placed in support of infantry in the Ozeville sector with the main effort toward the Quinzeville Ridge.

Reconnaissance Company located observation posts and manned them. Those having adequate fields of observation were most difficult to secure. Most reconnaissance was accomplished by patrols working back and forth over the Division front with primary missions of obtaining

(39) A-7, p. 1, supplemented by personal knowledge of the author;  
(40) personal knowledge; (41) A-7, p. 2; (42) conversation between the Bn. CO, Bn. Exec. and the author.

all available information concerning enemy armor.

Finally, Crisbecq fell and Company "C" was released to Battalion control.

This company, less one platoon, was now switched to the 8th Infantry sector on the left. The detached platoon was left in support of one of the battalions of the 39th Infantry. This Regiment had been detached from the 9th Infantry Division and assigned the mission of clearing coastal defenses along the shore north to Quineville. (43)

The only roads usable in this vast, inundated area were causeways, many of which had been mined. One destroyer, which had been sent down to give close support to the attacking infantry, was stopped, when it hit a mine, and became bogged down in the mud. This necessitated several hours delay in getting it out, during which time no fire of any kind was being delivered.

The platoon leader organized positions for his four destroyers in the ruins of the now fallen Crisbecq. Infantry, in line of skirmishers, was advancing northward toward Quineville, over the inundated area between Crisbecq and the beach. Main resistance was coming from enemy located in fortified positions primarily designed for beach defense. The range to most targets was in the neighborhood of 1500 to 2500 yards.

In order to avoid jamming the air with excessive communications and avoid the possibility of drawing enemy fire, EES telephones and remote control devices in the destroyers were connected by wire, so that the platoon leader could give the most minute instructions and target designations to the commander of each vehicle without leaving his observation post, which was located in a ruined Crisbecq tower.

He supplemented his own vision by radio contact with members of his own platoon who were following the infantry. From them he received target designations and reports concerning the effect of his fire. As fire missions were relayed to him, he designated the target

by means of reference points and specified which destroyer was to fire. Thus, excellent control and pinpoint precision were made possible. (44)

It proved much faster to have the destroyers located on high ground with good observation. The fire had been nearly continuous and a small shift in a turret had moved deadly accurate high explosive and armor piercing rounds to targets designated.

About the time a good show was progressing at this position, the enemy opened fire on the crowd of observers, that had gathered on the high ground above the destroyers, causing four or five casualties among the group. At this point, Colonel 'Paddy' Flint, Commanding Officer, 39th Infantry, ordered the balcony cleared.

On the morning of the 13th the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry, moved toward the high ground west of Quineville. The 2nd Battalion moved through the 12th Infantry area to attack west along the ridge toward Quineville. The 1st Battalion moved from its positions near Fontenay sur Mer to a position on the left of the 3rd Battalion and prepared for a coordinated attack to seize the Quineville Ridge. (45) This was accomplished the morning of the 14th and our Companies "A" and "B" returned to battalion control. (46)

Company "C" returned from support of the 8th and 39th Infantry Regiments and the 899th was released from 4th Infantry Division. We reverted to VII Corps control and moved, as a unit, to the vicinity of Eturnville, southeast of Chef du Pont. With this move battalion interest shifted south and west of the beachhead.

The first platoon of Company "A", missing since the initial landing, was found fighting with the 101st Airborne Division in the vicinity of Carentan. The Company Commander naturally felt he should have his platoon returned for continued operations. The spirit of the request, however, was not shared by the 101st Airborne. Conference with the platoon leader revealed: (1) that he was most satisfied

(44) personal observation: (45) A-7, p. 2; (46) A-7, p.2

with his self appointed attachment to the 101st; (2) that he was very proud of being with the savagely fighting paratroopers; and (3) that he would gladly spend the rest of the war with them if he were able to conceive a way in which tank destroyers could become airborne.

On the forenoon of 16 June, Company "A", less one platoon was attached to the 9th Infantry Division, then in the vicinity of St. Jacques de Nehou, pushing westward toward Barneville sur Mer. Later in the day they were rejoined by their 'prodigal' platoon and the entire company attached to the 60th Infantry Regiment.

Action was the same as that previously encountered except on a more rapid scale. Gains were quickly made, enemy resistance was crumbling and the work consisted of alternately carrying and fighting with infantry troops against opposition which was generally vehicles and personnel.

Company "C" had a similar mission with the 82nd Airborne Division, then cleaning out enemy resistance along the north bank of the Douve River.

On the afternoon 16 June a platoon of Company "C" supported the attack of the 82nd Airborne on the town of St. Sauveur le Vicomte. Guns were emplaced on the east bank of the Douve River behind the last available cover. Support in the initial phases was relatively simple in that all flashes of gun fire and indications of grouped personnel or crew served weapons ~~was~~<sup>were</sup> bound to be enemy and could be fired upon. One destroyer was lost during this action in an exchange of fire with an anti-tank gun, wherein the latter got there 'fustest with the mostest'.

As the attack progressed it was difficult to tell friend from foe, at which time one gun remained in an overwatching position while the other section followed the paratroopers into the town and assumed a tank role in street fighting while the mopping up operations were

being carried out. The first section was soon followed by the other remaining gun. All continued the action, crowding toward the ever growing perimeter, firing on targets of opportunity at close range, until the town was secured.

Company "A" continued to push westward with the 60th Infantry.

Company "B" was in direct support of Infantry with the 357th Regimental Combat Team, then fighting in a northwesterly direction on the right rear flank of the 9th Infantry Division.

Enemy tanks seemed conspicuous by their absence and targets for all three companies were ordinarily crew served weapons, groups of enemy personnel, and motor or horse-drawn vehicles.

On the morning of 18 June, the Battalion Commander, 3rd Battalion, 60th Infantry, pooled ideas with the platoon leader, 1st platoon, Company "A". A resultant task force, consisting of three half-tracks and the first platoon of Company "A", loaded all the infantry they could get on this combination of vehicles and departed for Barneville sur Mer.

As this small, but highly mobile force intersected the Les Pieux-La Haye du Puits road, they met the head of motorized and horse-drawn remnants of the German 77th Infantry Division, moving south. An exchange of fire with the head of the column resulted in some of the leading enemy vehicles being knocked out and the remainder blockaded.

Word of what had happened was immediately flashed back to 9th Division by radio. This was a Division Artillery S-3's dream. 'Zombie' after 'Zombie'\* was poured on the halted Germans and the percentage of annihilation ranged somewhere between high and complete.?

During the initial action one of the destroyers was knocked out. The radio operator, though wounded, remained in the vehicle and served as the sole communication link between the commander of this force and the Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division.

\*massed fires of 9th Infantry Division Artillery

The task force rolled on into Barneville, which was surprised and taken. *by surprise*

Units of the 899th were released by Corps order from all other commitments and were reattached as a unit to 9th Infantry Division.

Troops of the 9th swung rapidly to the north. The peninsula was cut. Cherbourg was the next objective.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A study of this brief cross section of typical tank destroyer action shows that they were not used in their primary role, during the operations in Normandy, north of the Douve River inundated area. This was brought about by the absence of enemy armor and the need for high velocity, hard hitting assistance against enemy fortifications encountered by the infantry. Although a powerful mass of fire power was sometimes left idle, the tank destroyers had the weight, ability, experience and training to cope with enemy tanks if they appeared. Had enemy armor moved in our direction, a relatively large force could have been stopped by our unit between the western end of the inundated area south of St. Sauveur le Vicompte and the western shore.

Lack of aggressiveness was apparent at Crisbecq. This was probably not the fault of either commander concerned but rather attributable to a lack by each of a knowledge of the other's capabilities and methods of operation. Although the destroyer company possessed overwhelming fire superiority over the defending garrison it was of little value if not intelligently requested and used.

Initiative of a platoon leader led to very effective and close support in the case of the Second Platoon, Company "C", supporting a Battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment. These people had worked together in England, understood each other's methods to a degree and were not strangers.

Support of infantry was aggressive in the capture of St. Sauveur le Vicomte. The spirit was definitely present with troops of the 82nd Airborne Division and was shared by the tank destroyer platoon

in support. The same feeling showed itself in the separated platoon of Company "A" while working with the 101st Airborne Division and again in <sup>the</sup> cutting of the peninsula.

It is apparent now that the good and bad points of tank destroyer battalions were being recognized. The disadvantage of inadequate armor is being overcome by recent developments in the heavy tank. The desirability of the high velocity, hard hitting gun has been included. Their availability for use with infantry troops has been insured by the creation of the new Infantry Regimental Tank Company and the Infantry Division Tank Battalion.

Although outmoded by more recent weapons that perform the same and additional duties, Tank Destroyers were there when needed and performed a duty which the situation required.

#### LESSONS

Included in lessons learned during this period are:

1. Tank destroyers can be used to advantage when employed in their secondary role.
2. Maximum battle efficiency can not be attained without previous combined training of the units concerned with each other or similar units.
3. Agressiveness follows command channels and a resourceful platoon leader can accomplish his mission with the maximum of efficiency and the minimum of effort.
4. Lack of liason between forward and rear units in an operation of this kind results in needless loss of time and waste of materiel.
5. Night vision devices are needed for night fighting.
6. Decentralization is the most practical method of operation for armor in close support of infantry.
7. Infantry can be efficiently transported on armor and insures the arrival of the two at the scene of battle at the same time. THIS METHOD
8. Armored units communication systems can be of use to the infantry unit commander as a supplement or substitute.