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Authority NO 0735017By K NARA Date 9/26/09

HEADQUARTERS  
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
APO 45, U.S. ARMY

30 October 1944

Statement of Battalion Supply Officer, 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, on Operations in Southern France during Period 15 August to 15 October 1944.

SUPPLY DEFICIENCIES

1. Supply points and Dumps many times were established at too great a distance causing many unnecessary miles of travel and long hazardous hours of driving.

2. Organizations of this type have difficulty getting parts and replacements of major items due to the constant changing from one supporting unit to the other, resulting in great delays and much unnecessary paper work in securing spare parts and supplies. This is particularly true with Ordnance.

3. It appears that the most popular and standard sizes of clothing are not sufficient to supply the demands, resulting in men either going without for some time or having to take odd and improper sizes which may mean much discomfort and even injury to the man. Shoes and socks are mainly found to come under this category.

4. Much trouble has been experienced with Dumps and Supply Points in procurement of gasoline and oil due to the fact they have tried to force fifty gallon drums on us. This is not practical for several reasons: first, because of the limited transportation we have; secondly, we have no way or facilities to get the liquids from the drums; thirdly, it is impossible to supply TDs on the line in this manner.

5. It is the opinion that units such as this, which are attached or assigned to Divisions, should be permitted to draw more of the different classes of supplies from that or through that supported unit. This would enable us to get the badly needed supplies when they are desired and not some weeks later.

6. Great difficulty is experienced in securing sufficient radio batteries for the proper functioning of radios, particularly in the tanks, which results in loss of control and proper assignment to targets of opportunity in time to get the desired results. This deficiency could be corrected by setting aside and earmarking sufficient supply of these batteries for TD use only by the Supply Depots.

7. Our type of work requires that we work right up in close support of infantry units without the proper individual clothing and some types of equipment due to low priorities. This results in much unnecessary hardship to the men and priorities for units such as this should be placed along side of or on an equal basis to the Infantry and not with the Artillery whose individuals have greater latitude of movement.

/s/ WILLIAM M. WESTFALL  
/t/ WILLIAM M. WESTFALL  
Captain, Infantry  
Bn. S-4

HEADQUARTERS  
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
APO 45, U.S. ARMY

30 October 1944

Statement of Communications Officer, 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, on Lessons Learned in Operations in Southern France during Period 15 August to 15 October 1944.

## A. WIRE COMMUNICATIONS

1. It is necessary for the firing companies to use wire communication more than the authors of the Battalion T/O and T/E anticipated. Our companies have laid wire to great advantage to Infantry Regiments and Battalion CP's they are supporting. This increases close command liaison and closer coordination of activities and plans is effected. In as much as these wire routes are generally short runs alternate wire routes have not been found necessary for us.

2. It has been found extremely useful to lay combat wire W-130 or telephone wire W-110 to platoon CP's and even combat wire to individual gun positions and observation posts. There is a great saving of BA 40 Radio Batteries for SCR 609's and, aside from being able to give and receive more and clearer information, there is a large security factor gained.

3. The Company Executive Officer becomes the Communications Officer in combat and it is necessary for him to see that his signal sergeant keeps a small reserve of wire and other signal supplies on hand at all times. Supply of signal equipment from Higher Units is generally slow and it is necessary to anticipate needs.

## B. RADIO

1. We have found it necessary firmly to establish in Company and Battalion SOP the practice of selecting high ground for net control stations, in so far as the tactical situation permits. This habit obviates the necessity of establishing relay stations it may not always be possible to establish.

2. A need definitely exists for radio code words indicating various branches of the service and types of materiel; to be used with clear text messages. The encoding and decoding of a whole message takes too long in a rapidly moving situation. This code should be changed frequently.

3. As an alternate means of communication from infantry to tank destroyers, SCR 300 radios could have been used to advantage several times. Infantry Regiments and Battalions should be allowed a sufficient number of these to lend to the TD's when the situation recommends their use.

4. After receiving the Division SOI we reproduce our own assigned link Call Signs and the Artillery Battalions' and the Infantry Regiments'. This allows definite radio reference to friendly units with adequate security.

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Statement of Communications Officer (Cont'd).

C. MISCELLANEOUS

1. The new map coordinate code has been found too clumsy for general use. If any security is sacrificed by using the Thrust Line system of encoding coordinates (changing the point of origin every 24 hours) the deficiency is more than made up by the speed of transmission and the general knowledge by everyone in the use of the Thrust Line.

2. Company's CP personnel when at Battalion Headquarters should always stop at message center before leaving to pick up any distribution for their units. This not only saves much time but also saves messenger trips over already crowded roads.

/s/ PAUL W. STEPHANI  
/t/ PAUL W. STEPHANI  
1st Lt., F. A.,  
Commo. Officer

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HEADQUARTERS  
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
APO 45, U.S. Army

L-1024

30 October 1944

Statement of CO "A" Company 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion on Lessons Learned during Operations in Southern France. From 15 August 1944 to 15 October 1944.

1. Since landing at ST TROPEZ, FRANCE this company has been used for the most part as tank destroyers attached to regimental combat teams of an Infantry Division. While progress was extensive it was normal for four TDs to accompany the march Bn. immediately in rear of the support of the advance guard. When rear guard action by the enemy was encountered TDs were immediately brought forward for the purpose of firing direct in the vicinity of the obstacle. This type of fire was extremely effective when AT defenses were first reduced. However, the use of a Tank Destroyer pltn in this manner exposed them to ambush fire from either Tanks or SF guns, frequently found on the flanks of such obstacles. It should be pointed out that in a march formation it was often the practice for a platoon of medium Tanks to accompany the point of the advance guard. When medium Tanks were used they normally carried out assault missions, with the TDs deploying to the flanks to either assist in assault missions or to provide observation and AT protection for the Mediums. However, in the absence of mediums Tank attachment, TDs did carry out assault missions disregarding AT positions.

2. It is the writers opinion that when a Tank Destroyer Company is attached that at least two platoons should accompany a lead Battalion. When in an approach march formation so that assault fire units could be afforded antitank protection.

3. Attachments for this unit has resulted in Infantry Commanders taking complete control of not only platoons as such but directing movements of individual M-10s. On one occasion this resulted in one Destroyer operating for a period of four hours behind enemy lines where it was subjected to S/A fire, AT, and artillery fire. This Destroyer reached friendly units only after shooting it's way through enemy infantry attempting to rush it three different times. On another occasion a battalion Commander had ordered two M-10s to take up a position to fire at snipers which had been hampering his advance. While the platoon Sgt. was reconnoitering for a position dismounted, two enemy Tanks opened fire on the infantry; one from a concealed position and one quite some distance behind it's own infantry. Immediately the Battalion CO ordered the TDs to "GO GET THOSE TANKS." Terrain was such that shooting direct fire at the tanks was impossible and resulted only in the platoon Sgt. being killed by snipers while reconnoitering in front of infantry positions.

4. Infantry Commanders of this unit are prone to overlook the limitations of Tank Destroyers in terrain which offers no fields of fire and in which mobility is greatly reduced. The remark in various forms has been made repeatedly by Infantry field grade officers that "WHETHER YOU CAN SHOOT OR NOT YOUR PRESENCE HAS MORE IMPORTANCE IN IT'S MORALE EFFECT ON FRIENDLY INFANTRY". This is definitely considered an imprudent use of Armor, particularly when occasions arise when TD commanders must use their weapons to combat enemy tanks. During an enemy counter-attack in which at least 30 enemy tanks and armored vehicles were used to overrun an Infantry Battalion, all three platoons of the company were disposed by respective Infantry Commanders in road block positions. When the situation became critical the TD Commander took control of his Destroyers and disposed them in such a manner as to turn the attack and to knock out nine enemy tanks. No objections were raised by Commanders to whom the TDs were attached. Yet, if the TDs had remained in their respective road block positions the result could have been complete annihilation.

Statement of CO "A" Company 645th TD Bn, On Lessons Learned in Southern France (Contd)

5. Invariably, when TDs are detached to **never** road blocks, no heed is taken of the platoon commander's recommendations as to the location of the TDs. Usually the result is that the guns are not able to support mutually and the positions selected are such that after one round is fired from it, it is revealed to enemy tank and Artillery Observers. This for us has resulted in the cost of one Tank Destroyer for one enemy tank knocked out.

#### OPERATIONS OF TD COMPANY IN ASSAULT FIRE MISSIONS

1. When assault fire is requested by infantry commanders on enemy strongpoints such as TOWNS, WOODS, ROADBLOCKS, ETC, better results are obtained when at least two platoons fire simultaneously. Assault fire need not be carried out at point blank ranges. When one or two destroyers are used for such purposes the result is a "BLANKET" of Artillery and mortar fire in return. The reverse of this has been found effective in extremely heavily wooded areas. Two TDs are sufficient to cover any particular road or stretch of woods. The practice has been to employ an entire platoon in a stabilized position.

#### LIMITATIONS

1. M-10 crews cannot operate effectively while subjected to enemy small arms and mortar fire while occupying positions at the MLR. Observation for the vehicle commander can be obtained only by peering over the top of the open turret. Assault positions are useless if TDs are not afforded alternate positions to occupy after firing. There is a great need for either a coaxial or a lap machine gun of 30 caliber. On several occasions the three inch gun has been used when a machine gun would have obtained desired results.

#### MATERIEL

1. Much can be said for the M-10 MOTOR CARRIAGE in it's ability to stand prolonged use without maintenance. The diesel motors have proved highly satisfactory in all operations involving all types of terrain. Weather up until the present time has had no effect on operations except that when the M-10 has been allowed to sit for a period of several days the primer must be used. It is believed that as the weather becomes increasingly colder much more difficulty will be found in starting.

2. It is recommended that all M-10s be equipped with CHEVRON-TYPE tracks since their all around use gives better performance than BLOCK-TYPE. It should be pointed out, however, that in the first 1100 miles traveled since D-Day the BLOCK-TYPE rubber tracks showed less wear than did CHEVRON-TYPE tracks. Most of this mileage was accumulated on black top roads. Steel tracks have no advantages over either of the other types.

3. New type turret locks are desired for all guns. Some replacement M-10s have been received with light counterbalances. Except on level ground the turret is very hard to traverse. This caused loss of confidence of the crew in their weapons. Salvaged counter-weights should be of use in exchanging for heavier balances.

4. Recoil springs and cylinders are now beginning to show failures after much firing. This is in part due to lack of periodic ordnance inspections. Solenoid jacks are shorting out if allowed to become wet. Solenoid failure is impredicable and often occurs in the middle of a fire mission. Solenoid wiring system should be changed to someplace other than the deck of the floor.

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## Statement of CO "A" Company 645th TD (On Lessons Learned in Combat ) (Contd)

## SUPPLY

1. Ammunition supply has been ample on all types of ammunition. Methods of ammunition supply within the company, that of providing each platoon with an M-3 half-track, is more than sufficient. Two M-3 half-tracks can adequately supply the platoons. In this connection, a system of pooling the 9 ammunition half-tracks loaded at the dump and the other six farmed out to the companies, would release 2½ ton trucks for other supply purposes.

2. The new WP smoke shell for the 3" guns is very effective in adjusting fire under all types of terrain and weather conditions. There has been no occasion thus far to use smoke shells for screening effect.

3. Fuel has been supplied satisfactorily by hauling all types in a 1½ ton detailed for this exclusive purpose.

## PERSONNEL

1. Tank Destroyer trained replacements have been rare. However, armored force trained personnel have proved readily adaptable to operations of an M-10. It is found that Casualties have occurred among the higher ranking non-coms and in the case of this company, five new platoon sergeants have been made since the landing. Some M-10s have had as many as 2 and 3 new commanders while only four still have their original commanders who landed in France. Every private who landed with the company in France is now at least a T/5. Replacements should be sprinkled liberally with non-coms but not technicians.

## MAINTENANCE

1. Maintenance by Company maintenance section on M-10s has until recently been almost impossible because of the constant employment of all M-10s in running condition. Preventive maintenance for M-10s has been little used because of the constant use of the pieces on the line. Ordnance checks are necessary to determine condition of the M-10s. Company or Battalion maintenance is not equipped to do the job.

2. Replacement for M-10s is slow. Battle loss certificates submitted on the 28th of Sept. have received no action. Two weeks has lapsed since turning in a ¼ ton for replacement. No replacement received to date.

## COMMUNICATIONS

1. BA-39 and BA-40 batteries for SCR 610 are not satisfactory in maintaining constant communication with SCR 608 command sets. Battery chargers for M-10s are very desirable. When working as a Tank, TD, Infantry team a common communication means is highly desirable. An SCR 300 per pltn and one for Coy CO should be included in T/E.

/s/ JERRY B. MORGAN  
/t/ JERRY B. MORGAN  
Captain, F. A.,  
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS  
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Statement of CO "C" Company, 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, on Lessons Learned during Operations in Southern France. From 15 August 1944 to 15 October 1944.

1. When TDs are supporting infantry in the attack there must be close liaison between the Company Commander of the leading infantry elements and the TD platoon commander, in order that the fire of the TDs can be coordinated completely. This also holds true for work with tanks.

2. TDs should always be in support of infantry and tanks and not attached. The majority (90%) of the infantry company commanders don't know the capabilities and limitations of TDs and consequently will employ them incorrectly. The TD platoon cmdr is the only man who should move his guns and if the infantry wants guns in a certain position that platoon leader should be consulted.

3. When TDs are placed on road blocks to protect the infantry flank, etc, infantry personnel should be placed well out in front of them and to the flanks. The infantry should set up around the TDs position and not the TDs around the infantry or where the infantry itself desires. Many times the infantry wanted TDs to go out and set up a block where the infantry was and that position would be out in the open with no cover or concealment, but the infantry could dig in and obtain cover and concealment there. Put the guns in position and then put out the infantry protection.

4. Although the TDs are supporting infantry in an attack, they must be on the alert for any tank attacks or threats, and must be ready to move to counter the enemy armor. The infantry must realize this as the supporting fire might have to be switched to the flank somewhere. He (Infantry CO) must make his plans accordingly.

5. The .50 Cal. MG on the M-10 is useless for anything. It is designed for AA protection, but it is so placed that the gunner can't manipulate it except to the rear. He would have to get out of the turret in order to fire in any other direction.

6. The smooth rubber block tracks are no good except on a hard surface road. In woods, cross country, mud, and up grades, they just spin like an auto wheel. The chevron type rubber track is the most efficient.

7. The SCR 610 radio is a good radio, but because it runs on batteries, and the batteries are hard to get plus the fact that the batteries con't last long, makes the radio useless the majority of the time.

8. The diesel motor in the M-10s has the gas motors beaten in many ways - power, quietness, operation, etc.

9. The traversing worm gear on the turret has broken quite a few times on me. Even though the gun is locked any jar or lurch by the M-10 seems to break the mechanism.

10. Old type counter-balance is no good except on a very level piece of terrain. If the M-10 is anyway but level, it takes a lot of effort on the gunners part to traverse.

/s/ EDWARD T. NAUGHTEN  
/t/ EDWARD T. NAUGHTEN  
Captain, Infantry,  
Commanding.

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HEADQUARTERS  
645TH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION  
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30 October 1944

Statement of CO Reconnaissance Company 645th TD Battalion, on Lessons Learned during Operation in Southern France. Period 15 August 1944 to 15 October 1944.

1. In the advance north an Infantry Battalion had attached to it one platoon M4 tanks, one platoon TDs and two platoon of Rcn From a TD Battalion.
2. The order of march was: Rcn pltns - m4 tanks carrying infantry and TDs carrying infantry.
3. During the morning Rcn encountered light enemy road block - called up the tks and it was destroyed.
4. Approaching a town where it was known that there were enemy, Rcn fired down the road into the town with .30 Cal. MG and 37mm. The infantry deployed and quickly occupied the town.
5. Friendly elements in the town gave Rcn and infantry information that there was a strong enemy position on the road about 1500 yards out of town with AT guns. This positions were well dug in.
6. The infantry commander gave a direct order to the Rcn commander to proceed down the road in the M-8s and M-20s despite the fact that it was known that the enemy was well dug in just ahead.
7. The road was absolutely straight - paved and bordered by deep ditches and large trees with open fields extending about 500 yards on either side.
8. The Rcn elements moved foreword. The rest of the armor did not follow as they had previously agreed to do. The enemy hold his fire until the Rcn was either 200-300 yards. The enemy apened fire with 2 AT guns well to each flank and small arms dug in on a line approximately 500-600 yards across the front.
9. The Rcn elements were quickly knocked out. The enemy fired on the rear vehicles first and then the forward ones. Knocking out 2 M-8s, M-20 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  Ton.
10. The infantry then deployed and flanked the enemy positions and captured them.

CONCLUSIONS:

When Rcn locates enemy positions they cannot be expected to drive up to them to draw fire. The M-8 and M20 has very light armor which will turn only .30 Cal. These vehicles are not able to spearhead an advance into enemy AT positions.

In this case Rcn could have fired some searching rounds of 37mm to try get the enemy to disclose his positions or the tanks which are more able to negotiate rough terrain could have fired. In any case the infantry should have immediately started a flanking movement leaving the tanks to fire frontally. This solution was finally employed and succeeded.

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## Statement of Commanding Officer Rcn Company on Lessons Learned (Contd)

The following is one instance of what has happened:

1. The mayor of a French town came to the Infantry Commander and reported that the enemy had evacuated the town.

2. Reconnaissance Company moved out towards the town with 1 half-track in the lead, followed by a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton and another half-track.

3. On approaching the town the enemy opened up with heavy fire from MG and 20mm. The 20mms were placed in the upper stories of the building and were able to fire down into the half-tracks inflicting severe casualties.

4. When the town was finally occupied it was found that the enemy was very strongly dug in. Obviously the informant was a German sympathizer.

5. This is proof that information must be varified from source known to be friendly.

6. When there is any doubt foot reconnaissance must be made and searching fire directed on the positions. This is expecially true when operating in territory where the sympathies of the local population are divided.

/s/ RICHARD B. WILDER  
/t/ RICHARD B. WILDER  
Captain, F. A.,  
Commanding, Rcn Co.  
645th T. D. Bn.