

Notes on:

Against the Panzers: United States Infantry versus German Tanks, 1944-1945

by Allyn R. Vannoy and Jay Karamales
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1. *Against the Panzers* is a collection of small-unit combat vignettes: U.S. Army versus German tanks.
2. Each vignette is constructed from multiple sources: unit diaries, official histories, German sources, and interviews by the authors. The authors use separate accounts of the same action to attempt to establish ground truth. Better diagrams would have helped. Elevation, defilade, and dead space – so critical in small-unit direct-fire combat – are difficult for the reader to visualize without graphics.
3. The authors include very little analysis. Many issues are discussed historically, but none are examined. The scenarios raise many points on:
 - U.S. Army WWII doctrine, especially the employment, training, and combined arms integration of **infantry with AT guns, tank destroyers, engineers, and tanks** when fighting enemy armor.
 - **Artillery** for AT fights.
 - **Infantry AT capabilities and practices:** bazookas, demolitions, tactical employment.
4. One theme runs throughout the book. **Most of the actions show how a lack of integrated training, unclear chain of command, and missing sense of teamwork between infantry units and their supporting units led to misunderstandings, misemployments, disagreements, and outright failures.**
 - The 38th Infantry anti-tank officer, defending the town of Rocherath in December 1944 could not coordinate units supporting his regiment:
 - Two M-36 SP TDs declined to move to engage German tanks, “Not our sector!”
 - A Sherman tank, ordered to a new position, “misunderstood” and drove out of town.
 - Another M-36 opted not to move and engage a German tank, “It’s too dark to use our sights!”
 - Two half-tracks were unwilling to integrate their positions with the AT defense plan.
 - An infantry company commander, supported by two towed 57mm AT guns, found the guns abandoned and disabled just as German tanks arrived in his sector.
 - The commander of a 57mm AT gun could not convince his assigned infantry squad to move to protect his flank. The squad leader could not convince the AT gun to move when it attracted enemy fire. When the AT gun engaged an enemy tank and then moved to a supplementary position, the infantry squad withdrew. The AT gun was then overrun by German infantry.
 - **The 376th Infantry, in January, 1945, conducted their first attack of the war with unfamiliar units, and no time for integration. “They had heard many lectures on armor-infantry coordination, and had been told that such attacks would be carefully rehearsed...”**
5. This theme has relevance today. Marine Corps standing units can be task organized in many combinations. This flexibility is gained at the expense of specific-purpose optimization. The Marine Corps today has many of the same challenges coordinating separate ‘type’ units as the Army had in 1944. Infantry integration with the new USMC EFV – which requires common training, doctrine, employment, and organization – will face many of the challenges described in this book.