

HISTORY OF THE 634 TDBN

One of the first Tank Destroyer Battalions to be organized in the United States Army, the 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion, less the Pioneer Company, was activated at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana on 16 December 1941 from the Anti-tank Batteries and Anti-tank Platoons of the 59th Field Artillery Brigade of the 34th Infantry Division. All the personnel were members of the National Guard Regiments; from Iowa, the 185th Field Artillery, and from Minnesota, the 151st Field Artillery and the 125th Field Artillery. The unit was formed as the 34th Provisional Anti-tank Battalion in August 1941 and participated as such in the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers. In January 1942, the Headquarters Battalion 151st Field Artillery Regiment at Camp Dix, New Jersey, was redesignated the Pioneer Company, 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion and in May 1942 joined the Battalion at Camp Claiborne.

When first organized, the Battalion was equipped with towed 37 mm guns, but at Camp Hood, Texas, where the unit was sent for training early in June 1942, it was reequipped with 75 mm guns mounted on half-truck vehicles, and 37 mm guns mounted on 3/4 ton carriers. At this time, the Pioneer Company was redesignated the Reconnaissance Company. The Battalion returned to Camp Claiborne in November 1942 after participating in the Fall Maneuvers in Louisiana. During 1943, the Battalion was reequipped with the new well known M-10 Tank Destroyer.

Leaving the United States late in the month of December 1943, the Battalion arrived and was garrisoned in Southern England on 10 January 1944. While in England, extensive training was carried on for the Invasion of the Continent which was to come.

The Battalion landed on Utah Beach, in the vicinity of Adouville la Hubert, France on 30 June 1944. Company A, supporting the 83rd Infantry Division was the first to make contact with the enemy. This action took place south of Carentan on 10 July.

With Companies A and B supporting the First Infantry Division, and Company C, supporting the Fourth Infantry Division, the 634th T.D. Battalion took part in the initial phase of the Allied breakthrough west of St. Lo, which was the start of the drive that led to the breaching of the Siegfried line in the Aachen area. Companies A and B supported the drive south through Marigny, west to Coutances, and then south, while Company C supported the drive south to protect the left flank of the First Division. In the vicinity of Notre Dame de Conilly, the First Platoon, Company C was in great part responsible for the failure of a strong enemy counter-attack, which if successful, would have severed the American supply and communication lines. The TD crews stood their ground, firing 3 inch guns and machine guns into the numerically superior forces, inflicting heavy casualties upon the enemy. South of Coutances, Companies A and B cut east again supporting the drive which took the high ground east of Mortain. This operation resulted in the famous "Falaise Pocket". From there the attack continued and Mayenne fell on 6 August 1944. Company A took road block positions in the vicinity of Mayenne and the 3rd Platoon, with a platoon of Infantry was given credit for repulsing a German counter-attack on a road block at a vital position on the line. Company B took up positions in the vicinity of Ambrieres le Grande. Meanwhile, Company C had moved to the vicinity of St. Pois and Mortain.

On 13 August 1944, Company C was detached from the 4th Infantry Division and joined the rest of the Battalion in the support of the 1st Infantry Division in their drive northeast toward La Ferte Mace. From there the movement was eastward. On 24 August, all units moved 110 miles to the vicinity of Chartres, and in the next six days advanced to the Seine. The historic crossing of this river was made on the 27th at Corbiel and Molun. Two days later the Marne was crossed at Menux, and on 31 August, Soissons fell.

Average daily moves were 20 miles. During the last week of August alone, the Battalion traveled 300 miles across Northern France. Only scattered resistance was met, proof of the destruction and defeat suffered by the great German Army of the West. Mute evidence was seen along the route in columns of smashed enemy vehicles and equipment.

The push continued to the northeast, through Laon and then North to Mons, Belgium. The 634th was one of the first Tank Destroyer Battalions to enter Belgium. At Bavai, one TD of the 2nd Platoon, Company B, pulled into the rear of an enemy column and destroyed by direct fire, seven general purpose vehicles, one anti-tank gun, and one self-propelled gun. Five prisoners were taken and heavy casualties were inflicted upon the enemy by the devastating fire of the M-10.

South of Mons, a section of the 3rd Platoon, Company A fired on an enemy column on the road, destroying eight general purpose vehicles and a number of horse-drawn vehicles, killing many of the enemy and the deadly fire resulted in the surrender of 150 Germans.

The Battalion was instrumental in the capture of over 900 prisoners in the Mons area. Some of these were captured in the vicinity of the Battalion Command Post by Headquarters Company and Reconnaissance Company personnel.

An enemy column, with orders to withdraw to and occupy the Siegfried Line before the Allies arrived, collided unexpectedly with an American Armored Column southeast of Mons. As they attempted to punch their way through, their southern flank was hit by the 1st US Infantry Division supported by the 634th T. D. Bn. For days, there were no front lines. Enemy units continued their attempts to force their way out of the Division sector. The battalion was instrumental in preventing the retreat by helping to literally destroy four German infantry divisions and to reduce two others to skeletons.

After the Battle of Mons, only moderate resistance was encountered in a rapid advance through Charlevoi, Namur, and Liege, where the Meuse River was crossed. From there the Battalion pushed on toward Aachen and the Siegfried line.

During this drive across France and Belgium, the Platoons of Reconnaissance Company were often used to spearhead the advance of the Infantry columns, being the first Allied troops to enter many towns.

The 634th played an important roll in the breaching of the Siegfried Line in the Aachen sector, with Company C supporting the leading troops. The second and last closely knit line of fortifications was forced on 15 September.

Company B was in close support of the infantry combat team, whose mission it was to drive to the vicinity of Verlautenheide and Haaren, northeast of Aachen, to make contact with the 30th Infantry Division, who were on the north. The purpose

of this operation was to cut all roads leading into Aachen; thereby cutting off all supplies and reinforcements to the troops garrisoned in that city. On 16 October a patrol from the 2nd Platoon of the Battalion's Reconnaissance Company made first contact with elements of the 119th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division and by midnight, 17 October, the ring around Aachen was closed.

The TDs moving with the forward elements of the infantry, hammered at the enemy occupied buildings and pillboxes with their 3 inch guns and 50 caliber machine guns, softening them up so that the doughboys could move in and capture these strong points with a minimum number of casualties.

On 10 October, an ultimatum was delivered to the German Garrison Commander of Aachen allowing him 24 hours to surrender the city and his troops. No answer was forthcoming and artillery and air bombardment of Aachen was begun at 12:00 hours on 11 October. The infantry began the attack on the city the following day with Company A of the TDs in close support. The M-10s moved with the forward elements blasting at houses and buildings that the enemy had organized as strong points in their futile attempt to prevent the advance of our troops. The three inch and 50 caliber fire from the Tank Destroyers contributed a great deal to hasten the decision of the Commandant of the German forces in Aachen. On 21 October, all resistance ceased and the troops and military installations within the town were surrendered to the American forces.

Meanwhile the enemy was launching numerous strong attacks against our lines to the east and northeast, attempting to break through to relieve the encircled Germans in Aachen. All attacks were beaten off with the aid of the TDs of Companies B & C who were stretched on a line running generally northwest from Stolberg to Haaren.

The platoons of Reconnaissance Company were employed in infantry roles during much of this period and did their part in strengthening the ring around Aachen.

From the Battle of Aachen, the Battalion moved into the Hurtgen Forest and participated in the historic battle that took place there. Tree bursts from constant enemy artillery and mortar fire made the Forest a hell on earth. The enemy put up the stiffest defense the Battalion had experienced to that time. In spite of this determined resistance, the enemy was steadily pushed out of the Forest to the Cologne Plains. Company C opened the way for the Division's advance from Schevenhutte. In Hamich, C Company TDs slugged it out with German tanks and held the town against great odds until the infantry could consolidate their positions. Company A followed Company C through Schevenhutte and broke through the Forest in the vicinity of Merode. Company B attacked to the north assisting in the capture of Heistern, and in a difficult fight, drove as far north as Langerwehe. Reconnaissance Company was again employed as infantry and fought heavy engagements with the enemy in this sector.

The Battalion along with the 1st Infantry Division was relieved during the early part of December and moved back into Belgium for a much needed rest. This rest was interrupted when the Germans made their breakthrough in the Ardennes on 16 December. The 634th along with the 1st Division was rushed to the threatened area to hold the northern shoulder of the bulge. The 2nd Platoon of Company A in the vicinity of Dom Bvtgenbach, Belgium, during the period 20 to 23 December, destroyed nine German tanks when the enemy launched attacks to gain the important road-net in that sector. All attacks were stopped cold, largely due to the action of the TDs.

On 18 December, Task Force "Davisson" was formed under the command of Lt. Colonel Henry L. Davisson, the Battalion Commander of the 634th. The task force was composed of the Reconnaissance Company, 634th TD Bn., First Reconnaissance Troop, and elements

of the 745th Tank Battalion. The first mission assigned to the Task Force was to seize, occupy, and hold the town of Weismes, Belgium. This small force accomplished their mission in spite of determined enemy attacks. An American Jeep in which two Germans were riding was captured in the town by members of the 3rd Platoon of the Battalion's Reconnaissance Company. Among the important documents captured with the vehicle were films showing scenes of the German breakthrough. Prints of these films were later shown in leading magazines and newspapers.

During the middle of January 1945, the attack to destroy the enemy troops within the bulge was begun. Reconnaissance Company, as part of the Task Force, was called upon to hold a portion of the line in the vicinity of Veywertz, to release the infantry for the attack. The weather was cold and the snow was deep. High winds and snow flurries slowed down the determined advances of our troops, but the infantry supported by the TDs moved steadily ahead. Our troops not only retook the ground captured by the Germans in their breakthrough, but forged ahead to capture territory that the American forces had not formerly held. Among the towns that fell during the drive were Faymonville, Schonnen, Monteneau, Heppenbach, Bullingen, Murringen, Ramscheid, and Hollerath. The 634th T. D. Bn. had breached the Siegfried Line for the second time in the European campaign.

Early in February, the Battalion moved back to the Hurtgen Forest area to prepare for the crossing of the Roer River. Reconnaissance Company relieved elements of the infantry along the River in the vicinity of Obermaubach, Germany, and held these defensive positions for two weeks.

The first elements of the Battalion crossed the Roer River on 25 February. Company B supported the attack on Kreyzan, by blasting at enemy strong-points with their 3 inch guns from the west side of the River. From there, the attack continued toward the Rhine River with Companies A, B, and C contributing their share to the success of the drive by supporting the infantry with the deadly fire of the M-10 Tank Destroyers.

The first full-scale defense of a town by the enemy was staged at Ero on 1 March, where the 2nd Platoon of Company A ran into a heavy concentration of 88s, self-propelled guns, and automatic weapons and only after a hard fight, the town fell the following morning. The enemy was beyond mustering anything but temporary stops and blocks to the drive towards the Rhine River through Lechenic, Gymnich, Metternich, and Bornheim. The advance into Bonn met increasing resistance as it penetrated into the heart of the city, but on 9 March, this Rhine city also fell.

Reconnaissance Company, reinforced by a platoon of light tanks, cleared the town of Buschdorf, and also Grau-Rheindorf where 85 prisoners were captured. Task Force "Davisson" was dissolved on 11 March and the component parts reverted to the control of their parent units.

While Bonn was being cleaned up, the U.S. 9th Armored Division had siezed the railway bridge across the Rhine River at Remagen. On 15 March, the first elements of the 634th T.D. Bn. crossed the Rhine, and moved into the bridgehead that had been already established. Two days later, the attack to expand the bridgehead in the First Division sector began. Determined resistance was met as the Battalion drove generally north to the Sieg River. The enemy committed large numbers of self-propelled guns and tanks, but were steadily driven back and they retreated to the north bank of the River. The attack then turned to the East. On 27 March, the enemy resistance collapsed and only scattered resistance was met as the southern bank of the Sieg River was cleared. Reconnaissance Company furnished zone reconnaissance as the Division

advanced north to the area south of Paderborn where a portion of the ring around the Ruhr Pocket in the vicinity of Ruthen and Geseke was held for several days. This pocket yielded some 317,000 prisoners to the American Forces.

In a period of two weeks, the Battalion had traveled over 150 miles making daily average of approximately 12 miles a day.

During the early part of April, the Battalion moved east, crossing the Weser River at Beverungen and continued across the open terrain leading to the Harz Mountains, crossing the Beine River against feeble resistance and seizing the towns of Dassel, Northeim, and Binbeck. The Harz Mountains were defended by four German Corps who put up tough opposition to the advance of our troops. The number of trees felled across the roads at critical points was only limited by the amount of explosives the enemy had on hand and the number of men available to handle saws. Tanks and self-propelled guns opposed the advance and through some towns were captured with little or no resistance, others like Osterode, Benneckenstein, and Thale were taken only after hard fighting.

The pay off of the entire operation came on 20 April when more than 10,000 prisoners were captured and the Harz Mountains reduced for all practical purposes. The Harz Pocket yielded over 73,000 troops to the American Forces. Over 30,000 were taken by the First Infantry Division and attached troops, of which the 634th, accounted for over 1,700. Reconnaissance Company alone took a total of over 1,300 PWs in the operation. German Generals were not an uncommon sight as 18 of them showed up in PW cages.

After the Battle of the Harz Mountains, the Battalion traveled a distance of more than 200 miles and by 23 April, all units employed either in the northwestern part of Czechoslovakia or immediately outside the border in Germany.

Not all the fight was out of the German Army during the last days of the war, and although in some places the enemy gave up with little resistance, there were instances when they fought fanatically. On 4 May, the 3rd Platoon of Company B, east of Cheb, Czechoslovakia contacted one of these fanatical groups and at ranges of from 30 to 100 yards, fired all the 3 inch high explosive shells in their M-10s at the enemy who were determined not to give ground. They also physically overran four machine guns with the TDs, throwing hand grenades out of their vehicles into fox holes occupied by the Germans. The score of the Platoon for the day was 12 enemy machine guns, 50 enemy killed, and many wounded.

The Battalion continued the push into Czechoslovakia, and on VE Day, 8 May, 1945, occupied positions well into the country with the line running through Falkenov from Braslice on the North to Mnichov on the South. Three hundred six days of combat, continuous except for a three day period in August and a four day period in December.

Thus ends the combat history of the 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion in Europe. The Battalion has more than proved itself worthy to be fighting mates of the famed First U.S. Infantry Division. Much credit for the efficiency of the Battalion goes to the Headquarters Company, who furnished supply and maintenance, and to the Medical Detachment for medical care.

In eleven months of combat on the continent, the Battalion destroyed 55 enemy tanks, 12 self-propelled guns, 18 armored cars, 76 general-purpose vehicles, and 25 anti-tank guns. Forty-nine pillboxes, 80 machine gun nests and 189 strong points were neutralized. Over 3,000 prisoners were taken and 45 enemy vehicles and 5 anti-aircraft guns were captured intact. The known enemy killed runs well over 600. The Battalion fired during combat 17,855 rounds of three inch ammunition.

Fifty-four Silver Stars, four with clusters, and 157 Bronze Stars, 9 with clusters have been awarded to members of this Battalion. Many others are pending. Croix de Guerres have been awarded to two members of the Unit. Seven enlisted men received Battle-field Appointments to the rank of second lieutenant.

Route of the 634th I.D. Bn.



BOGNOR REGIS, ENGLAND	10 Jan 44 to 26 Mar 44	77 days
PARKETONE, ENGLAND	27 Mar 44 to 25 Jun 44	91 days
CAMP KINGSTONE RUSSELL	26 Jun 44 to 27 Jun 44	2 days
AT SEA	28 Jun 44 to 29 Jun 44	2 days
UTAH BEACH, FRANCE	30 Jun 44 to 30 Jun 44	1 day
EMONDEVILLE, FRANCE	1 Jul 44 to 4 Jul 44	4 days
VIERVILLE, FRANCE	4 Jul 44 to 11 Jul 44	7 days
MEAUTIS, FRANCE	12 Jul 44 to 25 Jul 44	13 days
LE MESHIL ANCOT, FRANCE	26 Jul 44 to 27 Jul 44	2 days
LA CHAPELLE, FRANCE	28 Jul 44 to 30 Jul 44	3 days
ST. DENIS LE GAST, FRANCE	31 Jul 44 to 31 Jul 44	1 day
LES RUES, FRANCE	1 Aug 44 to 2 Aug 44	2 days
LE PLESSIS, FRANCE	3 Aug 44 to 6 Aug 44	4 days
OISSEAU, FRANCE	7 Aug 44 to 12 Aug 44	6 days
LA MOCKERIE, FRANCE	13 Aug 44 to 13 Aug 44	1 day
LIGHOU, FRANCE	14 Aug 44 to 14 Aug 44	1 day
LA BIGOTIERE, FRANCE	15 Aug 44 to 24 Aug 44	10 days
JANVILLE, FRANCE	25 Aug 44 to 27 Aug 44	3 days
VOISINS, FRANCE	28 Aug 44 to 28 Aug 44	1 day
CROUY SUE QURCOQ, FRANCE	29 Aug 44 to 29 Aug 44	1 day
SOISSONS, FRANCE	30 Aug 44 to 30 Aug 44	1 day
CHEVEREGNY, FRANCE	31 Aug 44 to 31 Aug 44	1 day
SAMOussy, FRANCE	1 Sep 44 to 1 Sep 44	1 day
LA CAPELLE, FRANCE	2 Sep 44 to 2 Sep 44	1 day
MAIBEUGE, FRANCE	3 Sep 44 to 3 Sep 44	1 day
NOUVELLES, BELGIUM	4 Sep 44 to 5 Sep 44	2 days
MONCEAU, BELGIUM	6 Sep 44 to 6 Sep 44	1 day
ST. MARC, BELGIUM	7 Sep 44 to 7 Sep 44	1 day
ST. GEORGES, BELGIUM	8 Sep 44 to 10 Sep 44	3 days
HERVE, BELGIUM	11 Sep 44 to 11 Sep 44	1 day
AUBEL, BELGIUM	12 Sep 44 to 12 Sep 44	1 day
HIRTZ, BELGIUM	13 Sep 44 to 14 Sep 44	2 days
HAUSET, BELGIUM	15 Sep 44 to 23 Nov 44	70 days
VICHT, GERMANY	24 Sep 44 to 30 Nov 44	7 days
BERGRATH, GERMANY	1 Dec 44 to 5 Dec 44	5 days
MONTZEN, BELGIUM	6 Dec 44 to 13 Dec 44	8 days
HENRI CHAPELLE, BELGIUM	14 Dec 44 to 19 Dec 44	6 days
SOURBRODT, BELGIUM	20 Dec 44 to 28 Jan 45	41 days
OBERMEURUERTZ, BELGIUM	29 Jan 45 to 5 Feb 45	8 days
REMOUCHAMPS, BELGIUM	6 Feb 45 to 9 Feb 45	4 days
SHEVERHUTTE, GERMANY	10 Feb 45 to 26 Feb 45	17 days
KREUZAU, GERMANY	27 Feb 45 to 28 Feb 45	2 days
BUBENHIEN, GERMANY	1 Mar 45 to 5 Mar 45	5 days
HERRIG, GERMANY	6 Mar 45 to 7 Mar 45	2 days
BRENIG, GERMANY	8 Mar 45 to 15 Mar 45	8 days
OVERICH, GERMANY	16 Mar 45 to 18 Mar 45	3 days
HONNEF, GERMANY	19 Mar 45 to 24 Mar 45	6 days
THELENUITZE, GERMANY	25 Mar 45 to 27 Mar 45	3 days
IZERT, GERMANY	28 Mar 45 to 29 Mar 45	2 days
ALLENDDORF, GERMANY	30 Mar 45 to 30 Mar 45	1 day
BIEDENKKOPF, GERMANY	31 Mar 45 to 31 Mar 45	1 day
FUNSTENBERG, GERMANY	1 Apr 45 to 7 Apr 45	7 days
NATINGEN, GERMANY	8 Apr 45 to 9 Apr 45	2 days
ALLERSHAUSEN, GERMANY	10 Apr 45 to 10 Apr 45	1 day
NORTHEIM, GERMANY	11 Apr 45 to 11 Apr 45	1 day
OSTERODE, GERMANY	12 Apr 45 to 16 Apr 45	5 days
ST. ANDREASBERG, GERMANY	17 Apr 45 to 18 Apr 45	2 days
BENNECKENSTEIN, GERMANY	19 Apr 45 to 23 Apr 45	5 days
KLOSTERRODE, GERMANY	24 Apr 45 to 29 Apr 45	5 days

MARKTELEATHEN, GERMANY

ASCH, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

UNTERREICHENAU, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1 May 45 to