



Tank Killers: A History of America's World War II Tank Destroyer Force

Harry Yeide

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The Tank Killers is the story of the American Tank Destroyer Force in North Africa, Italy, and the European Theater during World War II. The tank destroyer (TD) was a bold-if some would say flawed-answer to the challenge posed by the seemingly unstoppable German blitzkrieg. The TD was conceived to be light and fast enough to outmaneuver panzer forces and go where tanks could not. At the same time, the The Tank Killers is the story of the American Tank Destroyer Force in North Africa, Italy, and the European Theater during World War II. The tank destroyer (TD) was a bold-if some would say flawed-answer to the challenge posed by the seemingly unstoppable German blitzkrieg. The TD was conceived to be light and fast enough to outmaneuver panzer forces and go where tanks could not. At the same time, the TD would wield the firepower needed to kill any German tank on the battlefield. Indeed, American doctrine stipulated that TDs would fight tanks, while American tanks would concentrate on achieving and exploiting breakthroughs of enemy lines.

The Tank Killers follows the men who fought in the TDs from the formation of the force in 1941 through the victory over the Third Reich in 1945. It is a story of American flexibility and pragmatism in military affairs. Tankdestroyers were among the very first units to land in North Africa in 1942. Their first vehicles were ad hoc affairs: Halftracks and weapons carriers with guns no better than those on tanks and thin armor affording the crews considerably less protection. Almost immediately, the crews realized that their doctrine was incomplete. They began adapting to circumstances, along with their partners in the infantry and armored divisions. By the time that North Africa was in Allied hands, the TD had become a valued tank fighter, assault gun, and artillery piece. The reconnaissance teams in TD battalions, meanwhile, had established a record for daring operations that they would continue for the rest of the war.

The story continues with the invasion of Italy and finally that of Fortress Europe on 6 June 1944. By now, the brass had decreed that half the force would convert to towed guns, a decision that dogged the affected crews through the end of the war. The TD men encountered increasingly lethal enemies, ever more dangerous panzers that were often vulnerable only to their guns while American tank crews watched in frustration as their rounds bounced harmlessly off the thick German armor. They fought under incredibly diverse conditions that demanded constant modification of tactics. Their equipment became ever more deadly. By VE day, the tank destroyer battalions had achieved impressive records, generally with kill/loss rates heavily in their favor. Yet the Army after the war concluded that the concept of a separate TD arm was so fundamentally flawed that not a single battalion existed after November 1946.

The Tank Killers draws heavily on the records of the tank destroyer battalions and the units with which they fought. Veterans of the force add their personal stories.

Tank Killers: A History of America's World War II Tank Destroyer Force Details

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From Reader Review Tank Killers: A History of America's World War II Tank Destroyer Force for online ebook

Gregory Mayflower says

A well researched history

Although it is a bit of a heavy read , meticulously listing every unit by number, it is a very thorough account of the U.S. tank destroyer forces in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany during WWII. A must for those interested in WWII.

Treg Owings says

I am reading this for my interest in WW 2 and because my dad drove a tank destroyer during WW 2. From that respective it is very interesting.

Guillermo Carballo says

Excelente libro.

Excelente libro, una parte de la historia muy bien contada. Los mapas podrían ser un poco más detallados para explicar más a fondo el contexto y las situaciones, pero en general excelente.

LARRY FLICK says

What are TD's

Great story of her tank destroyer units of WW11. Not a GREAT flowing read, but for ones that want to know, what it is like on a day to day in a war. Lots of details, life story of these men.

Jeff says

Very good history of forgotten and unsung heroes from their conception and changing doctrine thru WWII.

Daniel Little says

Tank Killers - The Unsung Heroes

Tank Killers: A History of America's World War II Tank Destroyer Force, by Harry Yeide, actually deserves six stars in my mind for the sheer volume of research within its pages. Since I am currently addicted to the online game, World of Tanks (I know there are people reading this saying, 'I feel for you buddy!'), I thought there might be a chance to pick up a few hints in the operation of Tank Destroyers from Yeide's book. I was not prepared however for the incredible depth of history and knowledge I'd find. You will find more than just a few details about the towed guns, destroyers, and crews themselves; prepare to be taken right through the United States Army's experience with this underreported and definitely underappreciated segment of its fighting force during the Second World War in Africa and Europe.

The average person would see a tank destroyer rolling by, and understandably mistakenly identify it as just another tank. In spite of some commanders trying to make them just that, reality was very different. First, you have to take away that picture of men encased in a heavily armoured box on tracks with a big gun sticking out in front of them, and instead, remove the 'heavily armoured' part, oh and while you're at it, remove the top of the turret so everything from bombs, to hand grenades, to bird droppings can fall in amongst the crew. Then, exchange the big gun for a bigger gun, and you have the average tank destroyer. They were fast and maneuverable, although the turret rotation speed left a little to be desired. But that gun – that gun was deadly.

It took a very special breed of soldier to operate the tank destroyers, with an even more special breed operating the 'towed' variety of anti-tank guns. Now you have to picture the above mentioned gun, but have it just sitting on a pair of wheels and hauled around by anything from a jeep to a half-track. I can't imagine the courage it would take to drive up to a clash line, unhook the heavy gun from the tow vehicle, manually swing it around, and then try to hit something that has probably already started shooting at you. Being assigned to a towed anti-tank gun should just include a Silver Star Medal attached to your orders because surely, you're probably going to do something to earn one. They would be great in a defensive position, but to go chasing after the retreating enemy as they did, well, that just takes a big set of what cannons used to fire.

Frankly, if you have even a passing interest in anything military, acquire this book. You'll receive a ton of knowledge you probably don't already have unless you've studied the art of tank killing, or at worse, you'll be introduced to heroes of the Second World War who define the word hero.

Reviewed by Daniel L Little – December 12, 2017 – www.daniellittle.com

Carsten Koralage says

interesting, educational and worth reading, especially if you have keen interest in WWII or tanks and guns in general.

Vernon Burt says

The best thing I can say about this book is that it's pretty factually correct. Unfortunately it's also a pretty dry compilation of facts that seems to do its best to avoid drawing conclusions, diving into details, or providing anything really Tank Destroyer specific. Instead it reads more like basic history of the war with occasional assurances that tank destroyers were involved. I feel like this is on the cusp of being a great book but never

got there.

Stephen Tatham says

Not a bad read. Enjoyef it.

Reading unit histories can sometimes be tedious, however I found the author's research on the internal political infighting over the TD's development and mission to be fascinating. The brave men that manned these thin skinned vehicles obviously made a serious contribution to our victory in Europe during WW II. The author did a great job of researching unit histories to include engagement details. Overall for the military history buff it was not a bad read. I enjoyed it!

Will says

I thought this was quite an interesting book, but I thought I'd write a little review just to note that in contrast to a lot of recent military histories, Tank Killers is more like a survey of tank destroyer operations and politics as a whole. That is, there's not much in terms of individual narratives. It's quite engaging nonetheless, however, and I'd definitely not consider it dry reading. Rather, it goes quickly, and is well-referenced for deeper dives.

Daniel Patitz says

Interesting

So much information not shared in other historical records. The truth is apparently within an documents the modernisation of ground warfare.

Rick Eggers says

Excellent history of TD's

The boo k provided an excellent history of the TD's of WWII. Provides substantial footnotes to allow the interested reader to do follow-up research.

Jimmy Sharp says

I loved every minute, the detail of the conflict from unit to unit, theatre to theatre drew me to those very places and put me on the ground with the men. I am a keen military vehicle enthusiast and the information

provided about the evolution of the equipment they had on hand from the start of the war to the end was great and it opened my eyes up to new perspectives of the actions these men took part in and how successful they were in many cases. The chapters jump from unit to unit but the flow from North africa, Italy and on to the West is there so it's not too hard to understand. Great book.

clinton Littlefield says

Very interesting. Fairly good read. Once the army understood how to use the TD's, they did very well. They did have weakness'. I would recommend.

Al Lock says

Well written and researched book on the role and employment of tank destroyer units in the ETO by the American Army in WWII. From the M3 halftrack with a 75mm and the M6 with a 57mm to the M10, M18 and M36 self-propelled TDs, this book covers all aspects of the operations and history of the various tank destroyer battalions that the US Army deployed to the ETO (including a section at the end which lists each BN and information on its stand-up, equipment, units attached to and what campaigns or battles it took part in). Very informative on the doctrine and reality of the use of tank destroyers and how successful they were in from Africa to crossing the Rhine. Highly recommended.
