America's Alertmen (Antiaircraft Artillery Command, East)
December 14, 1942: p. 5

Tank Destroyers Are Yanks

Answer To Nazi's Panzers

Seek, strike, destroy--that's the creed of the newly-formed Tank Destroyer crews whose task it is to knock the enemy's "hell buggies" into hell-and-gone. Their technique is simple but devastating: "The idea is," an officer explained, "if Joe Louis is sitting in the corner with his back turned, you hit him behind the ear with brass knuckles. Then you get the hell out before all Harlem breaks loose."

Deep in the heart of Texas, in the limestone hills of Camp Hood, tank destroyer troops are undergoing a Commando-tough training program that not only welds them into five-man fighting teams, but also makes them lone-wolf tank-killers. Part of their training has to do with raider tactics--borrowed from the British but adapted to American use--and during this time, they learn the tricks of primary infiltration and unarmed combat, including jujitsu.

MAKE "HOT-FOOT" FOR TANKS

They learn how to make a self-igniting grenade out of a couple of empty bottles, some potassium chlorate, battery acid, and gasoline. This concoction doesn't explode; instead, it mixes and burns with a fierce flame. It is an agonizingly effective hot-foot. Another little trick they master is the construction of a "sticky grenade": A white sock filled with TNT, soaked in heavy axle grease to triple its detonating power. This sticks like glue, and if it explodes near the tank's ventilators--that's all, brother.

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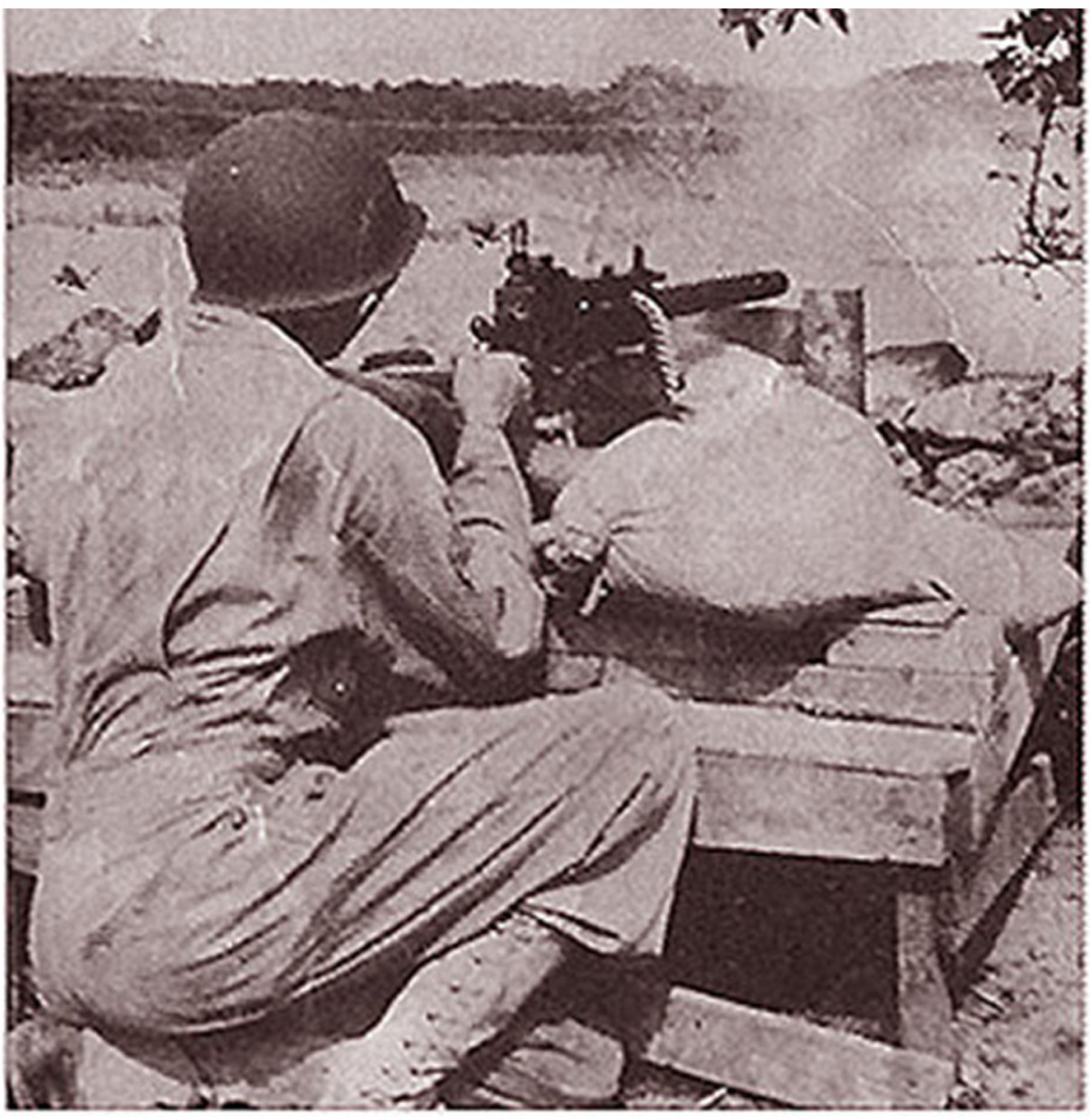
GEN. DRUM HAD FIRST TD'S

The tank destroyer itself is not much more than a yearling. The first outfit of this kind made its appearance during the Carolina maneuvers as part of Lieut. Gen. Hugh A. Drum's First Army which was deployed along the Pee Dee River in South Carolina.

The TD's used 37 mm. guns bolted on jeeps and they accounted for three-quarters of all the tanks sent against them. However, as a result of the success of some 50 tank destroyers--old 75's bolted on half-tracks--which surprised the Japs on Bataan, the gun was changed but the TD idea was clinched.

Today's TD is a 75 mm. antitank gun mounted on a half-track. Compared to a tank, it can cover territory much faster, it is more maneuverable, packs as much of a punch, is easier to build. It capitalizes on the tank's two weaknesses: blind spots, slow speed. In turn, it has a weakness: lack of armor.



Tank destroyer crews learn to keep their heads down when live ammunition is fired from this gun over their heads.

FIGHTS LIKE A RAIDER

A tank destroyer, out-racing the foe, can take a vicious crack at close range, or--with the aid of small, low-flying planes to direct its fire--it can lob shells from 5 miles away. Essentially its fighting scheme is that of a raider, harrying, bewildering. Another possible use, considered by football-minded experts, would be for the TD's to run interference by "taking out" enemy tanks and leaving home-team tanks to get at enemy infantry, fortifications, communications.

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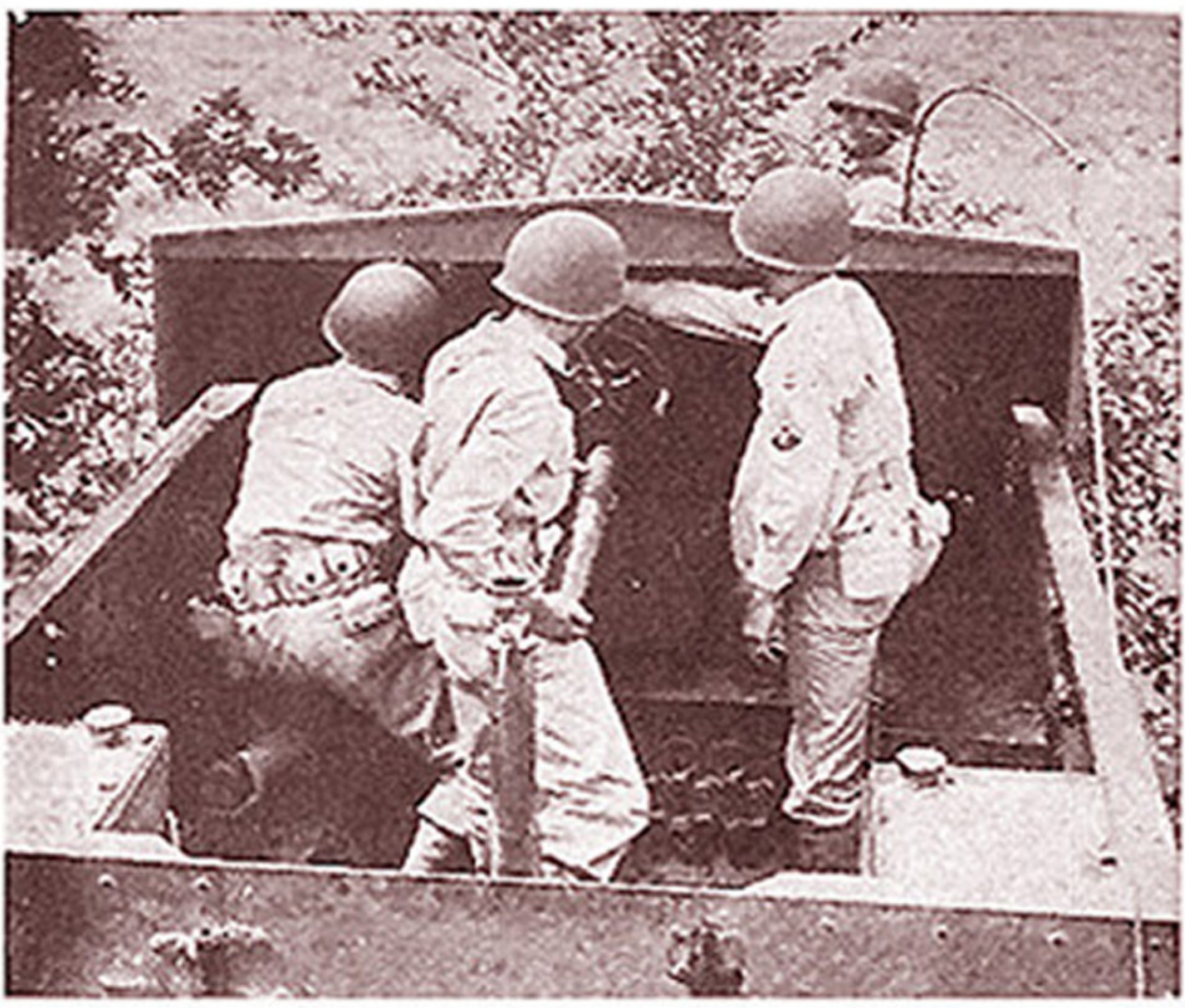
A tank destroyer unit is a three-vehicle team comprising two TD gun mounts with their own protective anti-aircraft carrier--a 40 mm. Bofors with two .50-cal. machine guns for hedge-hoppers.

The TD crew of five men works this way: Commander--points out targets, gives general order for attacking, orders fire. Gunner--spots moving target, keeps gun aimed. Loader--loads gun, keeps clear of recoil while...Assistant gunner--opens, closes breech, fires gun. Driver--observes to front, ready to move vehicle instantly on orders.



Here's what the boys behind the Tank Destroyers see as a TD goes into action.

"THUGS" FERRET OUT TANKS

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SEEK, STRIKE, DESTROY!

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ABOVE: From a slit trench, this TD soldier hurls a "sticky grenade" at an upright piece of concrete representing a tank.

One of their special jobs is to go tank-hunting. These "scout thugs," as they are called, go out at night in eight or ten-man gangs, led by a Super-Thug and an Assistant Thug. Once enemy tanks are located, the TD's are brought up quietly. The end of the night is the end of the enemy tanks.

That go-get-'em philosophy is just the thing to give Hitler's Panzers a run for their money--a long run on the way back to Berlin. And the Yanks who drive and shoot these new babies are anxious to impress upon the Nazis how quickly an American can pick up an idea and go it one better. Their frank opinion is that Hitler hasn't seen a blitz yet, and that he won't see one until he's hit by a blitz with a familiar trademark:

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