

Weapons of Tank Battalions Illustrations

Chapter I: History



SC-114641: Brig. Gen. Adna Chaffee (left), commanding the 7th Cavalry Brigade (Mechanized), watches maneuvers in January 1940 with Brig. Gen. Frank Andrews, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, War Department. Chaffee became the first chief of the Armored Force. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-114197: One view of tanks emphasized their infantry-support role dating back to World War I. Here, M2A3 light tanks from the 66th Infantry Regiment (Tanks) and foot troops attack through a smoke screen during maneuvers in August 1939. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-114265: Armor-minded cavalry officers thought vehicles could replace horses in slashing maneuver. Here, an M1 combat car from the 1st Cavalry advances during maneuvers in August 1939. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-117776: First ceremonial formation of the 2d Armored Division on 14 February 1941 at Fort Benning. Reconnaissance troops equipped with White scout cars are in the center beyond the command/radio cars in the foreground. The silhouettes of a few light tanks are visible on the far side of the formation to the left. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-137628: The first GHQ tank battalion, the 70th, was to have received medium tanks but did not because the armored divisions had first priority. The 70th reorganized as a light tank battalion. These M3 light tanks belong to Company C, which was sent to Iceland in March 1942 and later returned to the battalion as Company D. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-118008: Part of the 1st Armored Division's tank brigade in formation at Fort Knox in March 1941. The tanks are a hodgepodge of prewar models. M2 and M2A1 medium tanks, the latter with larger turrets, form the front line. They carry a 37mm main gun and bristle with machine guns. The rest are light tanks and combat cars, the most modern being the M2 light tank with a 37mm gun. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-114356: A light tank advances in front of a wave of medium tanks. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-123426: 1st Armored Division M2 and M2A1 medium tanks pass an antitank gun on maneuvers. Tankers were at first taught to fire on and then overrun antitank guns to crush the weapons beneath their tracks. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-136432: An M3 medium tank crew dismounts with Tommy guns and pistols during training. Before the Armored Force fully realized the importance of combined-arms operations, tank crews were expected to attack roadblocks from the flanks while the lead tank engaged the enemy. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-144246: According to U.S. Army doctrine, the tank destroyer—here the stopgap M3 mounting a 75mm gun—was supposed to battle enemy tanks while friendly tanks dealt with other targets. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-203636: Tanks, TDs, and infantry from CCA, 5th Armored Division, work together to clear Tangermünde, Germany, on 12 April 1945. The tank destroyer is an M36, which carried a 90mm gun. The 740th Tank Battalion used several M36s in action after it had to equip itself with whatever was available from a repair depot during the Battle of the Bulge. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-163584: The look of a medium tank battalion under way in December 1942, with more than a company of vehicles visible in this shot. This unidentified separate tank battalion is part of the 1st Tank Group. These are late production M3s, on which the side access doors were eliminated because they weakened the armor protection. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-131348P: The 26th Cavalry, Philippine Scouts, passes an M3 Stuart belonging to the 192d Tank Battalion in December 1942. The mostly National Guardsmen of the 192d and 194th who survived the fall of Bataan joined the infamous death march, and many perished. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



111-M-1012_1: A waterproofed M5, almost certainly from the 70th Tank Battalion, crashes through the surf during landings at Safi, Morocco, on 8 November 1942. (NARA, Signal Corps film)



SC-172606: A 70th Tank Battalion M5 crewmember mans the anti-aircraft .30-caliber at Casablanca Airport in November 1942. The new M5 had sloped armor that offered better ballistic protection and twin Cadillac engines, but it retained the M3 Stuart's 37mm main gun. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-149998: A 1st Armored Division M3 Lee tank crew (2/13th Armored Regiment) poses after the capture of Oran in November 1942. Both men and tank look like they are now veterans. The 75mm gun is in a limited traverse side sponson; this one is a short-barreled M2 version weighted to work with a retrofitted gyro stabilizer. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



111-M-1001_6: An M3 Stuart from Company B, 1/13th Armored Regiment, nears Tebourba, Tunisia in early December 1942 shortly before the Armored Force's first clash with the Germans. Note the disposable fuel tank on the hull. (NARA, Signal Corps film) [color photo]



111-M-1001_8: M3 Lees from 2/13th Armored Regiment at Tebourba shortly before the unit's suicidal charge into the fire of German 88s on 1 December 1942. (NARA, Signal Corps film) [color photo]



SC-171115: Results of an 88mm gun hit on an M3 Lee. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-167617: A mechanized column, almost certainly 2/1st Armored Regiment, retreats on 14 February 1943 near Sidi bou Zid. An M4A1 Sherman is the third vehicle from the rear of the column. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-167575: A 13th Armored Regiment M3 Lee on 20 February 1943 rolls toward the enemy near Kasserine Pass. This photo illustrates the M3's potentially dangerous high silhouette. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-171641: 1st Armored Division tanks, including several out on the valley floor, kick up dust as they drive toward Mateur on 3 May 1943. This is an M4A1 Sherman. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-175585: M3 medium tanks and infantry hunt down German snipers in Bizerte, Tunisia, on 8 May 1943. These Lees may belong to A/751st Tank Battalion (Medium). (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-175690: An early production M4A1—almost certainly from the 753d Tank Battalion—plows its way up a Sicilian beach on D-day, 10 July 1943, just after leaving an LCT. The tank has a riveted three-piece final drive housing, the narrow main gun mantlet and simple slit for the coaxial machine gun, and M3 Lee-pattern bogies with the return rollers directly over the center of the assemblies. The driver and bog, however, have fixed periscopes in front of their hatches rather than the very early vision blocks. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-180520: A CCB/2d Armored Division M4A1 drives through Gela, Sicily, on 11 July 1943. This vehicle has the early pattern bogies and is equipped with direct vision blocks. It is nonetheless outfitted with the second-generation cast final drive housing. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-177897: A 2d Armored Division Sherman burns outside Canicatti, Sicily, on 14 July 1943 after being hit by artillery fire. Note the less visible counter-painted star on the turret side. Tankers were learning that bright white stars and circles gave German gunners excellent aiming points. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-179709: Second Armored Division tanks on 22 July 1943 enter Palermo, Sicily, as residents waive white flags. The lead M4A1 has an add-on armor piece that was often affixed around the coaxial machine gun to prevent shrapnel or bullets from entering the turret. The lead tank has sand shields on the sides. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-188762: An M4 near Mistretta, Sicily, in August 1944 provides a view of the hatch arrangements and the armored cover added to protect the slit through which the coaxial machine gun protrudes. Terrain such as this constricted tank operations. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-181222: M4A1 tanks debark from an LST at Salerno on 9 September 1943. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-182608: The 1st Armored Division's "look" in November 1943. This M4A1 near Capua, Italy, still has sand shields, and the crew has added track sections to increase the frontal armor protection. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



111-CR-2_1: A 753d Tank Battalion M4A1 Sherman fires on Germans at San Pietro in December 1944. (NARA, Signal Corps film)



SC-195563: Mountainous terrain often relegated tanks to indirect-fire missions. Here, M4s from the 755th Tank Battalion fire as artillery near Pietramala, Italy, on 1 October 1944. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-190082: 755th Tank Battalion medium and light tanks in Coreno, Italy, just after its capture on 14 May 1944. The M4 exhibits first-generation characteristics in nearly every respect, although it has appliqué armor over the gunner's position. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



26-G-2343: A tank dozer clears obstacles on Omaha Beach on D-Day. Three separate tank battalions—the 70th, 741st, and 743d—participated in the assault wave on the two American beaches. (Coast Guard photo, National Archives)



111-ADC-1477_1: A knocked-out DD tank, probably on Omaha Beach. Spotty photographic evidence, including Robert Capa's famous pictures from Omaha, indicates that crews under fire fully collapsed only the front of their screens so that they could shoot. (NARA, Signal Corps film)



SC-192000: Neither the tankers nor infantry were prepared for the demands of vicious hedgerow fighting, which started just beyond the beaches. Here, heavily camouflaged Shermans from the 70th Tank Battalion support the 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, northwest of St. Lô on 23 July 1944. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-192066: Tank battalions adopted new techniques in the hedgerows. A 709th Tank Battalion M5A1 in July 1944 has sandbags for extra armor protection and the Culin hedgerow-busting device that allowed tanks to plow through the obstructions. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-193567-S: Tanks blast German infantry near Gelim, Belgium, on 3 September 1944 as Allied forces drive toward the western border of the Reich and its Siegfried Line. The tank to the right is an M4A1 (76mm), which provided the commander with a vision cupola and single-piece hatch. The tanks' rubber chevron tracks show the heavy wear inflicted by the long race from Normandy. An M4 with its split commander's hatch and with rubber block tracks is to the left. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



242-MID-3425_2: A Panther rolls toward Luneville during the counterattack against Patton's Third Army in Lorraine. The Mark V outclassed even late-production Shermans in fire power and armor, but it was mechanically less reliable, weighed half again as much, and consumed more fuel. (National Archives, German newsreel)



SC-279926: Shermans and M36s with the 7th Armored Division during fighting near St. Vith in January 1945. (National Archives, Signal Corps photo)



SC-202358: One of the first American tanks to cross the Rhine River exits the Remagen Bridge on 11 March 1945. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



111-ADC-3960_1: A 707th Tank Battalion M4A3 (76mm) fires at a building outside Bamberg in support of the 89th Infantry Division's advance on the city in April 1945. The steel frame visible on the hull was added by Service Company to hold sandbags but is now empty. (NARA, Signal Corps film)



SC-205298: An M4A3 (76mm) from the 22d Tank Battalion, 11th Armored Division, has just fired a white phosphorous round into a house while clearing Wernberg, Germany, on 22 April 1945. Riflemen from the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion race past the tank. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-183529: M3 Lees just after the collapse of Japanese resistance on Makin Atoll, Central Pacific, on 24 November 1943. This was the last combat appearance of the Lee in American service. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-190036: A Sherman, probably belonging to the 754th Tank Battalion, leads attacking 37th Infantry Division riflemen with fixed bayonets on Bougainville on 16 March 1944. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-187435: View from a Water Buffalo during the 7th Infantry Division assault landing on Enubuj Island, Kwajalein, on 2 February 1944. The infantry transported on board the LVT helped man the machine guns during the run into the beach. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



80-G-310951: This is how waves of LVTs heading toward the beach looked from the air, in this case Marine Corps assault troops landing on Iwo Jima. (U.S. Navy photo)



111-ADC-2460_3: A 776th Amphibian Tank Battalion LVT(A)(4) supporting the 81st Infantry Division's landings on 17 September 1944 at Angaur, Pelau Islands, fires its 75mm main gun at Japanese troops from the waterline. Only one battalion man was killed that day. (U.S. Navy film)



SC-206879: An LVT(A)(4) from the 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion supports Tenth Army troops taking cover from heavy fire before advancing into Zamami Shima in the Ryukyu Islands on 26 March 1945. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-206493: A 708th Amphibian Tank Battalion LVT(A)(1), which was the first type of amtank produced, works inland with the 77th Infantry Division on Keise Shima on 31 March 1945. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-183538: An LVT(2) crew watches the brush off Red Beach on Butaritari Island, Makin Atoll, in November 1943; the .50-caliber has just been fired at something as it is smoking. The amtrac wielded a tremendous amount of automatic weapons fire power that could help out the infantry. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-187437: Water-proofed 767th Tank Battalion M4A1s with wading gear land with the 7th Infantry Division on Kwajalein on 2 February 1944. The forward stack was for the air intake, and the rear one handled exhaust. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-188815: Action was usually at close range in the Pacific Theater. Here, an M3 on Bougainville sits almost atop a Japanese bunker that has just been worked over by a flamethrower. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)



SC-204239: Tanks and riflemen from the 40th Infantry Division assault Japanese positions on Panay, Philippine Islands, on 18 March 1945. Note the fixed bayonet, a sure sign of close-quarters action. (NARA, Signal Corps photo)