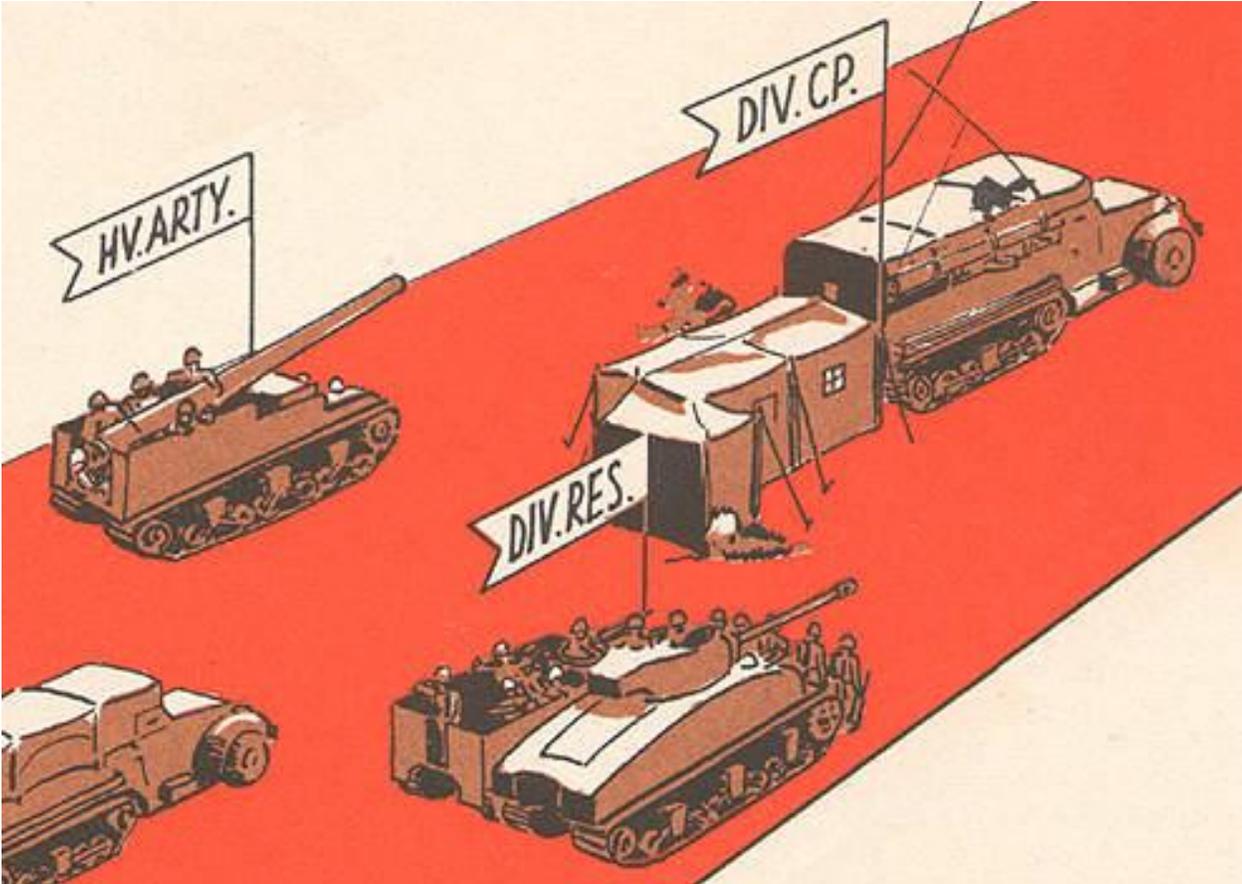
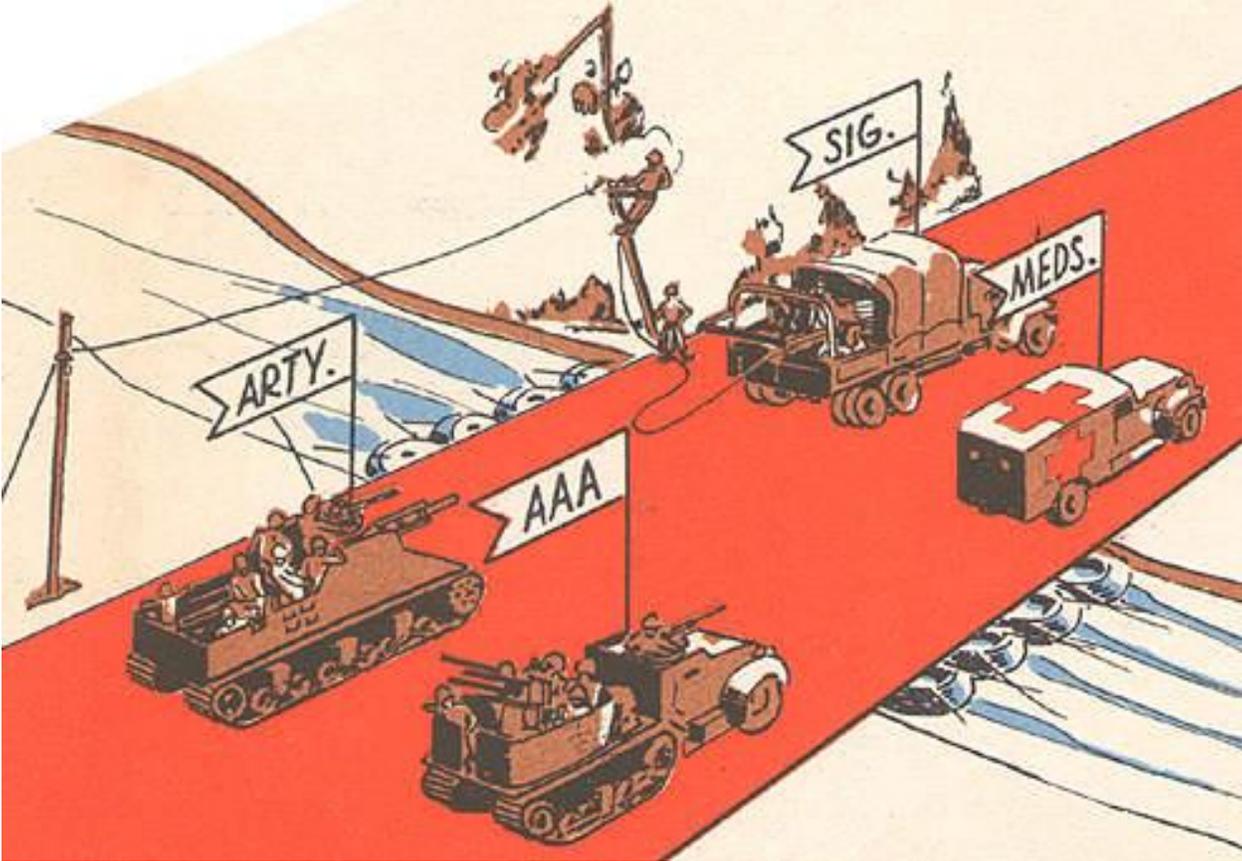
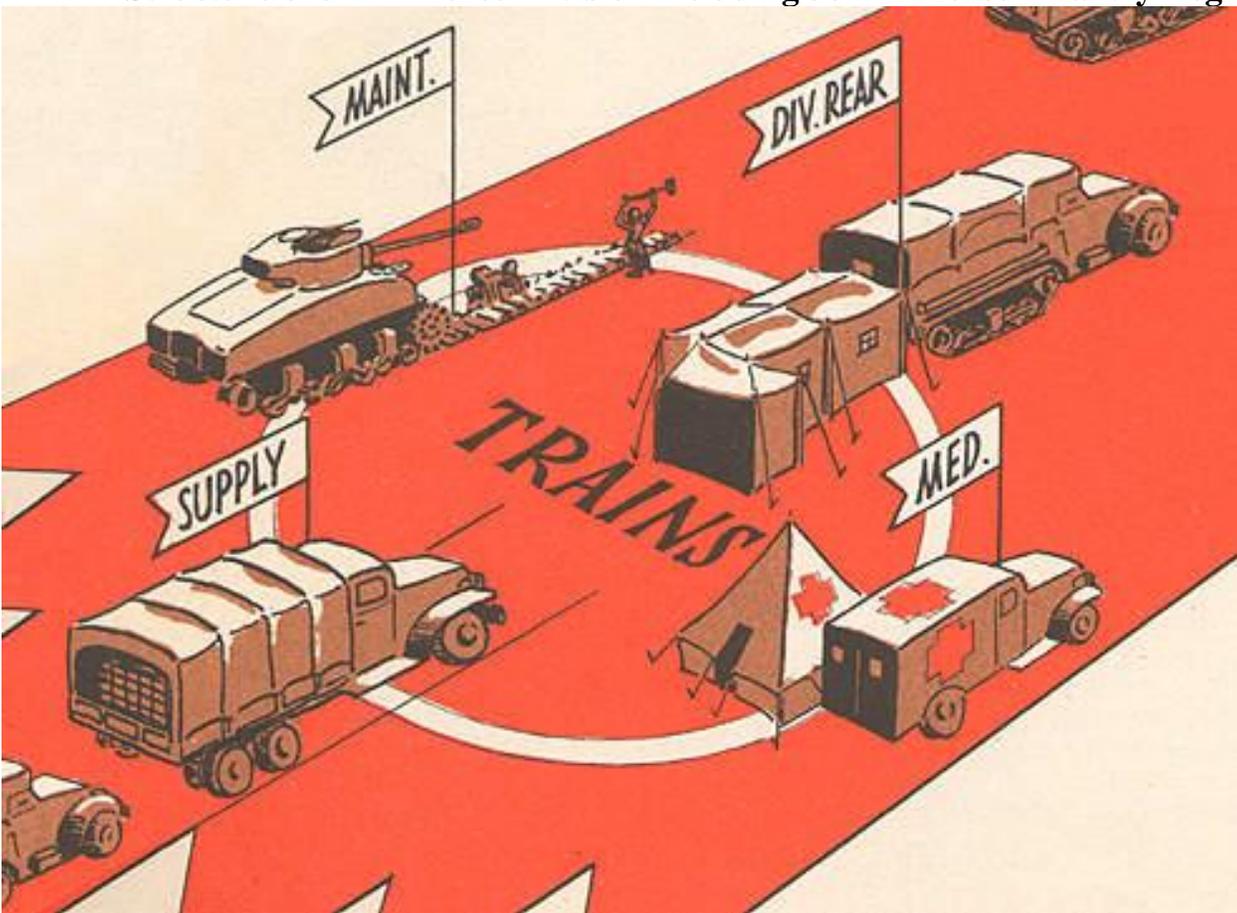


Structure of 3rd Armored Division including 36th Armored Infantry Regiment



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ABOVE ILLUSTRATION by 3AD combat-artist John Garner in 1945 is a simplified depiction of the basic elements that made up the 3rd Armored Division in WWII. A full depiction would have included over 4,000 vehicles and 15,000 men. Garner's work was not intended to show a Combat Command, which, as a front-line strike force, was less complex in its composition of basic elements.

Structure of 3rd Armored Division including 36th Armored Infantry Regiment

In his Foreword to the Gen. Maurice Rose biography released in 2003, noted military historian Martin Blumenson described how the 3rd Armored was one of two Army armored divisions in Europe in World War II that was structured under an earlier scheme of organization.

Unlike the later formed 4th, 5th, 6th, and so on, divisions, the 2nd and 3rd had twin Combat Commands, A & B. These were essentially separate twin strike forces operating independently but mutually linked to Division Headquarters. The 2nd and 3rd "were also heavier," Blumenson wrote, "that is, had more troops and tanks -- about 15,000 men and 254 Shermans in each division as compared to the 10,000 and 154 tanks in the subsequent armored divisions." Blumenson adds that the 3rd Armored was reorganized prior to D-Day to include a Combat Command R (for Reserve, and sometimes referred to as Combat Command C) to facilitate more rapid mobility.

In addition to other details in the Rose biography about the Division's composition, "Spearhead in the West" (circa 1945) provides excellent elaboration of its own (see sample excerpts below).

From "Spearhead in the West" page 14:

"The composition of Combat Command 'A' in Europe normally consisted of the 32nd Armored Regiment, less one battalion; the 67th Armored Field Artillery Battalion; one battalion of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment; one battery of the 486th Armored Anti-Aircraft Battalion; one company of the 23rd Armored Engineer Battalion; one company of the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion; one company of the 45th Armored Medical Battalion, and one company of the 3rd Armored Division Maintenance Battalion.

"Those division units which were not attached to combat commands 'A' or 'B' were part of Combat Command 'Reserve', led in action by the commanding officer of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment. The reserve force had, as its backbone, the infantry regimental headquarters, plus one battalion of blitz doughs [doughboys]. Naturally, all of these combat commands maintained a fluid composition. Thus, when the situation demanded, extra infantry, artillery, or other branches were added to bolster fire power and drive."

[Web-editor's note: The composition of Combat Command "B" was normally identical to "A", with the exception of the 33rd Armored Regiment, less one battalion, taking the place of the 32nd, and with the 391st Armored Field Artillery Battalion taking the place of the 67th.]

Structure of 3rd Armored Division including 36th Armored Infantry Regiment From "Spearhead in the West" pages 10-11:

"The 'Spearhead' was fact as well as nickname. Its mission was twofold: first, to pierce enemy frontline defenses, and second, to race amok, cutting the German supply and communications channels, the organization of reserve forces, and the very will to fight. How well the big steel striking force accomplished this task is stated in the day by day history of the western front. In action, the 3rd Armored Division usually hit the enemy with multiple spearhead columns.

"Two combat commands, 'A' and 'B', organized into task forces were committed on line, with a reserve group, actually, a third combat command, held in abeyance slightly to the rear. Division Headquarters Forward Echelon travelled immediately behind the two primary battering rams, and elements of Trains, which included Supply, Maintenance, Medical, and Division Rear Echelon, moved in that order.

"Actually, because of the nature of armored warfare, every man in the division saw something of action during the long drives. Supply trains were ambushed during their important trips back and forth over the roads of conquest; command post soldiers found themselves battling bypassed Nazi troops, and rear echelon maintenance men helped to round up prisoners of war.

"Theoretically each of the spearheads were of the same basic composition. Due to a changing situation in action, this was not always the case, but deviation was the exception and not the rule.

"Reconnaissance elements in light tanks and armored cars invariably rode the point of the attack until opposition was encountered. Tanks and infantry, always well supported by artillery, tank-destroyers, anti-aircraft units, and engineers, supplied the Sunday punch. Communications were maintained by signal men well to the front, and medical corps detachments also travelled with the probing spearheads in order to hasten evacuation of the wounded.

"Driving immediately behind these forward elements was the command post, often within small arms range of the enemy; the heavy artillery, represented by attached 155mm self-propelled units, and the division reserve ready to go into action on call.

"Division Trains were at the haft of the spearhead. Here were the administrators, the supply, maintenance and medical headquarters which catered to frontline elements.

"In action, this entire phalanx of power was highly mobile and fluid of composition. Thus, reserve forces could be, and were, rushed into the line when it appeared that one of the primary combat commands was weakening, or needed a rest. Similarly, attached units of artillery, infantry, or air support might be incorporated on short notice. The 'Spearhead' at war

Structure of 3rd Armored Division including 36th Armored Infantry Regiment
was self-supporting, extremely fast, and packed an incredible wallop in fire
power."

[END of excerpts]

Source: <http://www.3ad.com/history/wwll/feature.pages/composition.1.htm>