

NATURE OF THE EUROPEAN FEBA
HERO
Colonel Bell

May 25, 1978
TAPE No. 4

My name is John Sloan. I am going to just briefly state the parameters of our study and then Ray will go through the actual presentation.

We call this study we are doing "target position assessment" and the purpose of it is to describe and represent the nature of the combat zones in the immediate vicinity of the so-called forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) in modern warfare. Our purpose is to try to provide tactical Air Force commanders and planners and the pilots an improved understanding of what the nature of this area is and the operational circumstances they will face in trying to approach targets. Probably because when people study battles on maps they see all these lines drawn, there has been a tendency to think of the battlefield in terms of two sides. Each side occupies a clearly defined space and these spaces are separated by some kind of neat line. The line might be straight or it might have curves in it, but our study is an attempt to find out if that is in fact so or to show how it differs from a simple conception such as that. To do it we selected nine campaigns, seven from World War II and the other two from the Arab-Israeli wars. We selected the campaigns to show examples of situations. Particularly, we picked ones that were dynamically moving, not just static campaigns where two armies did sit and cross river valleys for weeks or something similar.

We have tried to find the most illustrative examples that will serve our purpose. We have picked ones that could show different levels, the different scales. This is another thing you have to think about when you are talking about this depiction of the forward edge of the battle position, so called, at the battalion level and what it looks like and at the division level, corps, or the theater level. It will be depicted and it will look different. The first one in chronological order we took was the German invasion of France in 1940 which we have described at the army level, but we have actually shown the movements in the German divisions. That is the lowest level which we showed of the front-- what it looks like at division bases. Then we took the German invasion of Russia in 1941. We took that down to the division level also, just showing the invasion

in the Ukraine with one Panzer group. Then we got the Battle of Kursk. I wish we had known exactly what we were going to be doing here today and I would have brought that along too because it shows at the battalion level the 48th Panzer Corp's attack on the south flank at the battle of Kursk. It shows how these fingers of infiltration that were described so aptly actually worked. Perhaps we can talk about that later in the discussion when we have the Soviet defensive in Belorussia where the Third Mechanized Corps actually broke through and the whole Corps was ranging tens of kilometers behind the so-called German front line. Actually, on a German battle map after the third day of that battle, their front line was depicted kind of like this, and this is the big hole. They do not even depict the front line on their battle map. That is even at the theater level now. And so there was a whole corps ranging around. Then we have the Allied breakout at Normandy and Operation Cobra where two U. S. corps broke through. Again we have depicted this at the combat command level and you will see that many U. S. combat commands were quite a way behind. In fact, they were going behind whole German army headquarters. That is how far behind the German lines they were. And then we have the U. S. offensive in the Saarland in 1944--two U. S. divisions and the Ardennes campaign finally where the Germans invaded the Ardennes. Then, finally, we have the Six-Day war in 1967 and the Ramadan war of 1973 along the Suez front, depicted at the battalion/brigade level, and showing this same phenomenon.

This line is only a representation. The reality is much different from it and today we will have an example where I hope you can see what has happened. It turns out, coincidentally, that in this particular campaign this was one of the problems the French faced. As Colonel Boyd pointed out, they were thinking in linear terms and they were conceiving that somehow the point of German advance represented some kind of line and there were frequent occasions where whole French units that found themselves behind this so-called line of further German advance thereupon decided that it was appropriate to surrender. They could have fought their way out if they had been thinking in different terms. Without any further ado, Colonel Bell is an armored officer who has served in Vietnam, but not in this kind of combat in armor, what he will depict here is the German invasion of France.

Colonel Bell:

Thank you John. This is going to be kind of a tie-in between what Colonel Boyd had to say and our host. What I am going to describe to you in a little detail are the first eight days of the campaign of the Germans versus the French in 1940. You see on the slide here of battle area that on the 10th of May and on the 20th of May the Germans were on the Coast about 180 miles and the dotted line that you see there is the extent of the position that I am going to discuss today. So I will come back to it.

Briefly, about the terrain--the Meuse River, which is towards the center,--represents for the purpose of discussion today a boundary, to your right or to the east is the Ardennes area. It is fairly rolling terrain. I think it is probably best described as that kind of terrain which, if you wanted to defend it, could be relatively easily defended. It had a relatively good road network; before 1940 most of the important roads were macadamized because of the tourist trade. The Meuse River is a major obstacle. It is a trench. Those of you who have been there to cross have seen that the slopes are very steep along most of the river. To the west of the Meuse River is pretty much a flat plain to the coast. You must also understand that the weather in May was very good--just a little background.

This presentation involves the 7th Panzer Division of the German army. They were grouped into three corps. They were the spearhead, as Colonel Boyd brought out. They operated in teams, reconnaissance conducted by motor cyclists, used armored cars and motorized infantry, and they had tanks. They had different organizations because of the different types of divisions based upon how they were organized after the Polish campaign. The terrain, particularly near Ardennes, is similar to what we might find in the Fulda Gap--my recollection of having cycled through the Ardennes and having spent three years in Germany on the Fulda Gap--it is relatively easy to move through. You have the same type of villages, you have the same type of tree cover, and this type of thing.

It has been brought out that the French were thinking linear tactics and the Germans were thinking exploitation of their mechanization capability. For that reason the road network is particularly important. This is the first time, Poland excepted, that we see the fluid, mobile attack of the Germans beating a linear defense. I am only going to consider the armored divisions. There are different divisions following. The infantry divisions in at least one case pass one of the German armored divisions, but essentially I am zeroing in on the German

armored formations. Again, I cannot emphasize enough that this is a very fluid situation.

The battle positions that are shown on the maps on the charts are very much exaggerated because it is extremely difficult to show on a large-scale map the front line trace or a general positioning of units that are moving very fast, so you have to consider that the width of the lines means nothing. The scale of the map--north is on the top--is 1:500,000. The units depicted here are generally the type of symbols that we use. There is one exception that I think you should be aware of, and that is what we use for a train symbol, i.e., logistical elements, I have used as a motorized infantry organization. You will see some French and you will see some Germans. The solid lines indicate a relatively high density of German troops and it may indicate high-intensity combat--it may. Again, the situation changes from man to man. The dashed lines, although we call them connectors, indicate a very low density of German troops, no troops at all, control action with little contact, artillery. A very nebulous type of situation. Now you will also note that our maps here are relatively busy and that is because we prepared the maps for a study which we did not originally think that we were going to have to depict visually. So you will see groups of little names and that is because in our manuscript they are referred to point blank, point blank.

At 5:30 a.m. German time, the 10th of May, the Germans attack. I am going to highlight the situation that you see depicted here, the 7th Panzer Division led by Rommel initially ran into a considerable number of obstacles which were undefended. In three hours he went six kilometers and then he started to pick up momentum and moved over the very good road network in Belgium to a position which is about 20 miles inside the border. Now this line is where he was at 2400 hours on the 10th of May. Following this division, was the 5th Panzer Division which was always behind the 7th and at one time, a couple of days later, the elite 35th Panzer Regiment was attached to Rommel's division and they helped spearhead the advance in that particular area. It is difficult to say whether this is a Schwerpunkt; it may be a Nebenpunkt. But obviously Rommel, whom I am sure you are all familiar with, was with the troops, bored with the troops, kicking ass, and was not satisfied with people languishing along the way. His motorcyclists were the ones that led the way at this particular time and he followed

up as quickly as he could. The Germans had a great amount of difficulty moving through the Ardennes because there just were not enough roads to accommodate all of the armored vehicles that were trying to move. He had a problem here because if the French ever had gotten their air force together they would have had a field day. The Germans were always looking to the sky to see what was going to happen, and the French never came. Well, they seldom came but when they did they were not able to do too much damage. The 1st Panzer Division moved through Luxembourg, 40 miles in the first day, then met its first resistance crossing the Belgian border. Again, undefended obstacles. They went around them. They got around them and once they got around them the engineers went up and blew them and they moved on relatively quickly. The 10th Panzer Division ran into the French initially down here and then advanced in this direction so that they were approximately here at 2400 hours.

You see a line there. Part of it is dashes and part of it is solid. The width of the line has absolutely no significance. It is very difficult to trace the forward elements, but remember that the Germans were trying to move as fast as they possibly could, therefore they used the roads. If you were looking for German armored columns, then you looked pretty much to the roads. They were opposed by French cavalry divisions which were part mechanized and part horse-- quite ineffective. I would like to call this the day when they are building their momentum, and on the 11th of May they are picking up their momentum. You see down here at the bottom of that corner a very busy chart. That is because this is where the battle of Sedan took place, which turns out to be the *schwerpunkt*. However, on the second day, advancing as they are, again we see the 7th Panzer Division moving forward. They had their armored cars forward now. The French cavalry was up. There were examples of isolated combat, but still nothing really worth speaking of. The 1st Panzer Division here, incidentally, was the forward element down here, and had run into the French 5th Cavalry Division--part mechanized and part horse, as I said before. The Germans gained such momentum, however, that they literally started to overrun the combat and support elements of the French divisions. It means to me, and I am sure to you, that the artillery units were now starting to get into it.

The French were being lackadaisical as they moved forward. They were not sure whether this was really a war. They were convinced, of course, that they had the best army in the world and they were soon to see that they were

mistaken. What little French resistance there was, however, did delay the German timetable by about a day. So this is the third day of the operation. It is the day when the German formation is close on the Meuse River. Again on the north we have Rommel's division, now in the vicinity of Dinant. They closed up there and as soon as they got to the river they started looking for ways of getting across. Combat engineers forward, motorcyclists force, tanks forward, the tanks to provide covering fire for engineer attempts to get across the river. No smoke was available, so Rommel burned houses. He made his own smoke screen. He also had part of the 5th Panzer Division with his 31st Panzer Regiment. They got across the Meuse at night using rubber dinghies and a small dam as part of the way of getting across, or a means of getting across. But the 6th Panzer Division--which we have not seen before because it was having a lot of problems up through the Ardennes, as was the 8th Panzer Division, arrived at the Meuse River at the town of Monthermé. It did not make a serious attempt to cross at night. Now, Rommel, a very aggressive leader, was the one that decided to fire the houses. The commander down here was, as you will see on the next slide, opposed by the 42nd Brigade of the 174th French Division which was composed of Vietnamese, and they fought like hell for two days. Actually it took about three days to get across the river. The 1st Panzer Division and the 10th Panzer Division were there on the 12th, the third day.

Now I have talked about the Germans getting across the river. They did not get the tanks across the river in the 7th Panzer Division area until this day, and they were able to get just a very few across. The problem they had there was that although the French collapsed very rapidly, there were several examples of very stiff resistance and the limited artillery they had and the pillboxes situated down the river raised havoc on the river boats which kept sinking and they could not force the bridgehead far enough forward on the 13th of May to get the tanks across. The 6th Panzer Division was in the process now of trying to get across. It did have a problem, though, because it was bombed by Stukas of their Luftwaffe. The 1st Panzer was also "Stuka'd". I only bring this point up to show that it is not very easy to identify a vehicle from the air, which I am sure is nothing new to anybody else, but it also demonstrates the fluidity of the situation. The advance was so rapid that it was very difficult to tell exactly where the friendly troops were. Down in the south now we have three Panzer division the 1st, 2nd, and the 10th. They started to make motions by heading across the river and the motorized rifle division, the rifle

regiment, was actually the first to get a toehold on the west bank. The 1st Rifle Regiment of the 1st Panzer Division also got a toehold, but again it was a combination of infantry, assault engineers preceded by the Stuka attack, artillery, and then followed up by armored formation moving across the river, with armored formations also providing direct fire support. The French initially put up a very stiff resistance and then the French second line the 55th Division literally collapsed. Now we start to see the disintegration of the French army because they were just not used to handling this kind of assault situation.

Okay, whereas on this day the German's had gotten a toehold, on the 14th they got a foothold. You notice what was happening up here in the north. Rommel did give up and he crossed the river at Dinant, and started to push. I want to point out one French organization which is about ready to appear upon the field of battle and that is the French 1st Armored Division. It was an armored division that had about 160 tanks, four battalions, two battalions of B-1's and two battalions of H-35's, which are supposed to be B-1's, which was very fine French tank and very heavily armored and had a good gun on it, but was relatively slow. The 1st Armored Division was to move forward to reduce the bridgehead. Rommel was engaged with the 4th North African Division, the 18th Infantry Division, and the 5th Motorized Division. He was engaged with parts of it because the French were not a coherent grouping here. They are in fact, very much discombobulated. As a result Rommel was able to consolidate his bridgehead relatively easily. The Vietnamese down here at Monthermé were fighting very well. Notice that no progress had been made by the 6th Panzer Division. They were still down there on the Meuse River, with just a toe hold. The Vietnamese of course were beginning to run out of ammunition. The 1st Panzer Division south with the 10th Panzer Division had now widened the bridgehead south here at Sedan. Your guess is as good as mine. Where was the schwerpunkt going to be? I do not think that the Germans at this particular time were saying "It's going to be here" or "It's going to be there", but they had a pretty good indication as to where it could possibly be. I think you will agree that this is where the schwerpunkt developed.

The 2nd and 6th Panzer--the Vietnamese collapsed, not because they did not fight hard but because of the fact that this thing that Colonel Boyd was talking about has finally taken place. Again, what you are seeing here is not a fixed line. Notice there are a lot of dashed lines. This is the way the situation developed on the 16th, seven days after the initial movement. Here is the Meuse

River. Here is where the forward French formations were. The 1st Armored Division was wiped out. The 3rd Armored Division, the French Armored Division, was down in Sedan with infantry. They are fighting as much among themselves as much as against the Germans. And here we are on the 17th. Again a day where they were closing up on what could be an obstacle but which turned out to be just a brief halt. Hitler halted his Panzer Divisions at this particular time because he thought that the tanks were outstripping the infantry units and he was afraid, lo and behold, that the French were going to get behind them and cut off his tanks. Okay, in summary, this dotted line here, this dashed line shows us where they were on the 17th. Again a very fluid map, and in eight days the Germans had gone 110 miles, in three days more they were at the coast. Thank you very much.

MODERATOR: I would like Colonel John Boyd and Colonel Bell, if you would, to stay up here at this table. If Colonel John Boyd and Mr. Sprey will come forward and answer questions until 5:00, which is our schedule, then we will go ahead and let those that people who have other commitments attend to them and the rest of us will be able to converse on a one-to-one basis up in the reception room. Can I have somebody else open with the questions?

Questions: There was a reference made to the tanks traveling by road. I wonder if you could give us your views how important the roads are or what are the hazards of traveling off the roads? I think you each have something to say.

Answer: One, you have got to understand that they came out of the Ardennes, and I am talking about the French thing in 1940. They pretty well had to go by the roads because there were only limited roads to go through there. In fact, when Manstein laid out his plan he called Guderian in to be sure that the armor would have sufficient roads so that they could push forward with the force that he felt was necessary in order to get the decision in France. Now, in that context, they were pretty much committed to the road. That does not mean they did not have reconnaissance patrols out to the flank and that kind of stuff, but their main units they were pretty much committed to the roads in the Ardennes because of the nature of the terrain. That is why the French did not think that the main attack would come out of the Ardennes. They thought it was impassable. The point that I want to make is that from the Ardennes to the Meuse there was what the Germans regarded as the approach march and not a big combat phase. It was essentially

an approach march through the Ardennes, and the action for the most part did not really start to take on a more serious nature until they hit Sedan and some of the points along the Meuse there.

One of the other things is that it is very difficult, as the speaker pointed out there in one of his thoughts on the dotted and the dashed lines, the major schwerpunkt was out of the Ardennes there. That was the major schwerpunkt. They had this so-called minor schwerpunkt and points of other effort coming out of the north there to suck the allies up into a sort of a sheepling plan. But you have to understand that you have schwerpunkts at every level. Whether you are talking about platoon, company, battalion and regiment and so in a sense when you look at a chart like this--I should have brought out where I have this thing zigging and zagging through--you can think of the cells going through. There is not just a continuous assault of people going down those zig zags. They are like cells just marching their way through, and you have to look at it from an organic viewpoint. Now after that, of course, the major schwerpunkt was intended to come out of the Sedan and it did come out of there. It turned out though that Rommel made much better progress in the 7th Panzer Division than I think they anticipated, but after Guderian got going he was stopped. I do not know if you people realize it, but in France there, I think it was on the 17th, when he was given the order to stop he raised all kinds of hell because he was sort of an insubordinate sort of a general and suggested that they should go on. He got a 24-hour reprieve. What he did not know at the time was that Hitler had put the stop order on. Well, after he got the 24-hour reprieve he wanted to go on and Kleist would not let him and he just finally said I resign. Here in the middle of the drive going across France and he resigned. He called a reconnaissance in force on the 17th.

Well, now what happened was when Von List came in and he was stopped and he had submitted his resignation by radio, Von Brunstedt was very disturbed at his outstanding Panzer commander's resigning in the middle of the drive so he sent List down there to rectify the situation and List apparently was a very good political general. He wanted to get this animosity between Kleist and Guderian rectified so he told Guderian he could proceed with the reconnaissance in force and he said the order still stands and he could proceed with reconnaissance in force and then neglected to find with reconnaissance in force what to convey

to him that it was to do. Guderian then picked up all those three divisions and moved out again. But instead of calling back for a radio, he strung wire so that when he was with his support elements calls were going back to his previous headquarters but since he was not allowed to move the headquarters they thought he was still in a certain position when he was actually moving on. Those sort of things happen. What I am trying to say is it was not all that well-disciplined. The main effort, or the main schwerkpunkt, was to come out of that southern sector and evidently it did because Guderian started hustling along his three divisions. The 19th Panzer Corps it was called.

Question: Mr. Connolly, how about on the road, off the road. What were your views?

Answer: Just basically that you make good time on the roads. You had a hell of a problem when you got off them. Tanks do not function well in cross-country terrain. You bog down. You hit obstacles that are difficult to cross. It breaks you up as far as your pattern is concerned. You move much, much faster and more directly if you can stay on the roads.

Question: Mr. Connolly, during your experiences during World War II, did you ever find yourself . . . (question directed to Mr. Connolly unintelligible) what was the depth and breadth of your formation?

Answer: In a word, as Colonel Boyd expressed it much earlier, confusion describes it most perfectly. Very frequently we encountered the enemy both ahead and behind. The tank configuration was, as Colonel Boyd has expressed it, very, very fluid. It was very difficult to tell where the enemy was and where you were and there was a great deal of mixing.

Question: Would you be willing to theorize, you and Colonel Boyd, on what would the results be if the enemy had an attack aircraft similar to the A-10 with an equivalent caliber gun operating against you?

Answer: Let me give you an oblique answer to that or indirect answer. Let us talk about the Normandy beachhead. I will try to come back to you in a little different way. One of the things that we had as an advantage at Normandy was the fact that we had a lot of fighter bombers in the air and when you read the German accounts it really bothered the hell out of them. They felt that if they could have gotten their act together or got their Panzer divisions to move very well they might have had the opportunity to either throw us out of there or pinch us off, whatever the case may be. But if you will recall we had them out-

numbered about 30 to 1 or more. We had these fighter bombers just working over their units all the time. And they did not have what we call a good anti-tank gun. They might have had 50 caliber machine guns or 20-millimeter cannons, or fire rockets that go every which way, and drop bombs. But even so it caused them so much disarray because even though they did not get the tanks per se, do not forget they were getting a lot of those follow-up vehicles for fuel and that kind of stuff that the tanks had to depend upon. That was cutting down their mobility. The idea was to try to stop the movement and so the point that you see coming out of German accounts very often, is the fact that while they could pretty well in some sense contain a lot of these offenses, if they did not have that tactical error there or if the other guy's tactical error is banging away on them, it was very difficult to launch a Panzer thrust. That does not mean they could not do it. It could have been the cause of all kind of difficulty because they even proved in Russia later on, even though the Russians had some superiority, that they were able to do it because even though they had limited air power in some cases they knew how to concentrate it more at the Schwerpunkt or the point of main effort, to use it more appropriately. They did it right up to the end of the war in some circumstances, not so much against us on the Western front because we had so much of an advantage, but in many cases on the Eastern front they were able to do that.

Question: If, as you said in your talk, Colonel Boyd, we only understand attrition warfare, what has to happen to change that? What makes you think we could turn around an enormous bureaucracy with 30 years of self-education in warfare. Where do you start?

Answer: The question is whether we do it, because we seem to have a mind set against it. I think you have to start right down in the military bringing the officers up, all the way up in the military. You are going to have to do it through your national war colleges, your service schools, and everything. You have to develop the insight. You are going to have to run exercises where you can actually show this is an advantage. You do not want to drop safes on somebody, shoot safes at somebody, or do both which is an attrition warfare.

Question: Relatively speaking, where do the Russians stand? Do you think they fall into the same sort of trap that we have, that they are still fighting World War II?

Answer: Let me answer it this way. They learned a lot from the Germans during World War II, and when you read their documents, you know, they have a lot of this maneuver, this kind of an idea. However, I am being very cautious because how much will they really show of what they are going to do? The other point is that when you read their documents and compare them to German documents you see a very strong similarity except you know of course they have many more tank forces and much more motorization than German did during World War II. I am talking about these so-called thrust points or trying to work intervals and gaps. They use the same words--main effort or axis of main advance. You see this same kind of cognizance of what they want to do. But the problem that seems to come in is how much authority or how much freedom of action are they really willing to turn over to their lower echelon, and there seems to be some suspicion about their willingness to do this. In other words, I am trying to tell you that you want to look at theirs as a blitz because they are on a local axis of advance. The only reason they have more mechanization is they can afford to do that. It probably would be a rigid kind of a blitz compared to the Germans and that kind of thing, but they are talking about fast rates of advance. They might not be able to leak around. They just might try to ram through, then pile on with a second echelon. But it seems that they are going through these very rapid rates of advance so how does that compare against us?

Question: A question for Colonel Boyd. This relates to the last question in terms of how our forces would in fact be employed. Consider the forces
or could

Answer: Let me answer it a couple of ways. Item one, let us talk about the thinking aspect, and many of us have heard of it here. You know now we like to talk about whether you want to go attack the first or the second echelon, and of course you talk about first and second echelon when you are talking about the Soviet forces. You know they had a first and second echelon at all levels, so I am interpreting maybe the corps level and the people are talking about the first and second echelon or on up. In any case, many of the ideas that we see today, because of agreement or because of certain ideas between the Army and the Air Force, is the Army is going to be able to hold out any penetration and the Air Force is going to go in and attack the second echelon. Now, if the Army is able to keep the breakthrough from happening, that is not so bad if

you accept that assumption, but let us take it the other way. Let us assume that they do make a breakthrough. They come through some of these narrow corridors if our people are spread and they are able to ram it through. Are we going to let them run around in our backyard and keep attacking the second echelon? Yet, many of the theories that we see today are that we are going to go for the second echelon. What you are saying is that there will be no breakthrough, and some people say the Army is going to hold them out, there will not be any breakthrough. In view of the historical evidence, I think that is a very dangerous thing to say. I think if they do break through you have got to be prepared to hit those leading elements, be prepared to hit some of that first echelon to kind of slow down their efforts.

Question: Can you relate that to the kinds of aircraft that we have in our inventory? What kinds do we need in the inventory and how should we use them?

Answer: Kinds of aircraft? Item one, I think you would have to have a large number of them, a couple of airplanes wandering around the air knocking hell out of them. The point being if you need numbers and you are budget limited, you are going to have to start buying on some different principles. And you need simplicity. The reason you want simplicity is because you want to generate high sortie rates to deal with their mass, so you will have massive numbers of airplanes, play that kind of game. If you do not have large numbers, they are just going to swat you aside just like a fly. And there are some other kinds of airplanes, too, the point being that those airplanes do have to be able not only to take damage, they also must be inconspicuous in terms of IR signature and size. They also should be equipped with a weapon to deal with that kind of a threat. I think the big thing is that you are going to need numbers of airplanes and if you buy F-15's and try to use that, you are not going to have the numbers. Plus the fact if you have an F-15 or some of these other expensive airplanes (I have nothing against the F-15) and started dealing with air to ground, you might find yourself trying to run the other guy out of torpedoes by driving your destroyers in front of him. In other words, the cost benefit may go the other way.

Question: Concerning the line of thought of Mr. Connolly, I know that we had a substantial air superiority when we were on the Western front in Europe, but were you ever on the receiving end of the German air? Did you have any experiences in that regard?

Answer: We had relatively little experience with air attack from either side during the latter part of the war when we were spearheading the drive to the Rhine. Our aircraft were attacking over us, strafing retreating German troops ahead of us, but at that point the supplies with the German army were so sharply and drastically reduced that there was virtually no gasoline, you were seeing horse-drawn vehicles retreating from us. Almost all of the tanks had been abandoned and so that really was not a clear indication. Our experience was that high explosives did not bother tanks a great deal. Certainly they might stop them. They might knock off tracks, but you were not going to kill crews to a large extent with high explosives. The tanks would sustain relatively little damage and at that point, as far as I could tell, there were relatively few planes that could do a great deal of damage to tanks.