



Battle Yet Unsung: The Fighting Men of the 14th Armored Division in World War II

Timothy O'Keeffe

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While headline writers in the ETO were naturally focused on events in Normandy and the Bulge in the north, equally ferocious combats were taking place in southern France and Germany during 1944–45, which are now finally getting their due. The US 14th Armored Division—a late arrival to the theater—was thrust into intense combat almost the minute it arrived in Europe, as the Germans remained determined to defend their southern flank.

Like other US formations, the 14th AD, after advancing through France against intermittent opposition, was hammered to a standstill at the Westwall in the fall of 1944. Nevertheless, it had gained experience, and when the Germans sought to turn the tide, with Operation Northwind, they found a hardened formation against them. This book explores in detail what happened in the month of January 1945 in the snow-covered Vosges Mountains, when the Wehrmacht's attempt to destroy the Sixth Army Group failed. Northwind began in the mountains but was extended onto the plains of Alsace very near the Rhine River. A strategic withdrawal after a hellish ten days of fiery combat allowed the Allies to hold the line until a spring offensive. The dreadful cold and the conflagration of battle took a toll on both sides, but by now the 14th and the other American divisions felt the heat of battle in their hearts and knew what had to be done to defeat a wily enemy.

But the Siegfried Line still loomed in front to American forces, and in the sector of the 14th, the divisions literally exploded their way through it in March at Steinfeld, and began to propel the Wehrmacht into a retreat from which it could never recover. Armored columns kept punching their way through roadblock after roadblock in town after town with powerful artillery and air concentrations that never gave the German soldiers a chance to respond. As a result of the rapid advance of Seventh Army and the 14th, German POW camps like the ones at Hammelburg and Moosburg were liberated of over 100,000 prisoners, an achievement which gave the division the *nom de guerre* "The Liberators."

Timothy O'Keeffe, a Professor Emeritus from Southern Connecticut State College, had a brother-in-law who lost a leg while serving with the "Liberators," and thus has devoted years of effort to unveiling the crucial, yet heretofore unwritten, role that they played in the ultimate Allied victory.

REVIEWS

"...an incredible job in shedding light about an often neglected but important role this unit played in the defeat of Nazi Germany."

WWII History, May 2011

"Written particularly to honor the efforts of the US 14th Armoured Division...does just what it intended, giving the appropriate recognition of the work of the men of the 14th Armoured Division, and covers their operations in Europe on operations which have for so long been overshadowed..."

Military Modeling.com, 02/2011

“...a frontline soldier’s view of how green troops became battle wise and battle weary veterans...a useful record of a proud combat record.”

Journal of America’s Military Past

“The U.S. 14th Armoured Division fought its way from southern France via Alsace, into Germany and the end of WWII. This account is very much a tribute to the men....”

Miniature Wargames

"This is our book of our combat experiences in World War II, authored by Timothy J. O'Keeffe. I consider this book a labor of love; it is dedicated to the men of the 14th Armored Division who fought in France and Germany during World War II; especially to those men who gave their lives or were seriously wounded in the fighting. . . .our future generations may come to know our contribution in world War II by reading this book. Thank you, Tim O'Keeffe."

14th Armored Association - The Liberator

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