

A Look at EOD At War During 1945

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War puts extreme demands on soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Those demands are even greater for those serving in EOD. Throughout the years, many military units including EOD kept records of their actions, accomplishments, and challenges. A UXOInfo.com reader doing research at the National Archives came across a mini-series of EOD unit records from WWII. Reading these unit histories reminds one of the dangerous and at times unpleasant conditions that EOD units face during war. The unit history records also highlight the extraordinary level of commitment and bravery these soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines showed.

The 88th Ordnance Bomb Disposal Squad is one of the many EOD units that served during WWII. A look at the 88th's unit record dated 23 March 1945, which can be downloaded from the link below, highlights the perseverance of EOD to overcome the dangerous and harsh conditions of war.

The 88th was activated at the Bomb Disposal Center, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland in 1943 where they were trained in both the scholastic and practical aspects of bomb disposal. On May 13, 1944, the unit was deployed to England to get re-supplied and to support the British EOD program. Two days after Independence Day 1944, the unit arrived at Utah Beach to join the 24th Ordnance Battalion. Their first war time duty included clearing burned out German ammunition from a German horse drawn ammunition train that was strafed by Allied aircraft 2 weeks earlier killing some 56 horses in the process. According to the unit record, the god-awful stench "was a good start in breaking us in for what was yet to come".

Experiencing heavy shelling and bombing, the 88th quickly became masters at the art of camouflage. Upon orders from General Woods, the 88th was tasked with defuzing German time bombs on an aircraft runway. Their first attempt at the defuzing operation was hampered by enemy fire. Following an armored column the following day, the unit was able to continue its work clearing the airfield.

The unit then moved on through France clearing "countless bombs, grenades, and munitions in the path of infantry, all while being subjected to small arms and machine gun fire". An urgent request then came in through the 41st Ordnance Battalion to dispose of burned and dangerous ammunition strewn over railroad tracks from a train explosion in the city of St. Mihiel. After clearing the train tracks, the EOD Squad eventually made their way to Belgium clearing UXO all along the way. As a result of their brave and heroic actions, the 7-man EOD Squad collectively received five Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, and the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque.

The 1945 unit record of the 88th Ordnance Bomb Disposal Squad (EOD) can be downloaded using the link below. Other unit records will be posted on UXOInfo.com for readers to enjoy. One should always remember the sacrifices that the EOD community has made and continues to make in support of our great Nation. Thank You EOD.

So, the next time you think you had a bad day, bad month, or a bad year; imagine what the 88th went through to defend our great country and you will quickly realize that your situation pales in comparison.

The archives document was donated to UXOInfo.com by Rick Stauber (Army EOD Retired).