



2ND ARMORED IN EUROPE

2014 ETO TRIP UPDATE 1/2013

HI Group, hope this finds you well after the holidays. There is much to report since the first update and there have been some questions that I hope I can answer as well. First the update

The planning for the event is in full swing. The towns and villages that we intend to visit in France and Belgium have all been receptive and are considering us as their official Liberation commemoration. In March there will be a series of meetings between government officials and our man in Europe, Gerald. These meetings will cement the approvals we are looking for and help them understand what we need and what they can expect. Interest among re-enactors both in the US and in the ETO has been robust. There are committed groups from the UK, Belgium, France, Holland, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic and of course the US. This is really an international effort. German uniform re-enactors are lined up as well and there are many “behind the scenes” developments being finalized for the event, that are kept quiet so that they increase the surprise factor for the re-enactors. There will be an assault boat crossing of the Somme, there will be opposed fire re-enactments and ambushes all along our route, and there will be scouting and patrolling and outpostting during most of the event. The conclusion of the trip is set to include the liberation of Mons Belgium as part of the “tanks in town” event. The duration of the trip is being raised from 10 to 12 days to encompass all that we are planning. We are expecting a full Armored recon company, a Medium tank platoon, an Armored Infantry company and all the appropriate support organizations including HQ and maintenance. So far we have around 70 names from US participants on our list of potential or committed personnel. I’d like to have more at this point so please continue to recruit your buddies and other quality re-enactors. We have a Chaplain interested and also a group of war correspondents who wish to document the event and produce a newspaper during the trip for the participants. All of this adds up to an unprecedented and wholly immersive event like has never before been attempted.

Next, I’ve had questions from some of the potential recruits from the US that are probably on everyone’s mind. Having been on more than a few 2nd Armored trips myself I can help with answers.

First question on everybody's mind is Cost. This is a reasonable question, but first a little perspective. B-17 bomber ride is \$495.00 for 20 minutes. P-51 Mustang is \$2295.00 for ½ hour. Jump school with the "Airborne Demonstration Team in Oklahoma is \$1495.00 plus travel to Oklahoma. These "ultimate WWII experiences" don't have nearly what a 2nd Armored trip has. The cost of the 2nd Armored trip will be 400 British pounds, or about \$750.00 in current US money. This includes the food, the organization, and most importantly the fuel and transport for the vehicles and tanks that raise this event above the level of any other event out there. There will be a way to pay that using "Paypal" gift which will save US participants in money transfer costs. What is not included, and what is the single largest expense for US participants, is the flight to Europe. Current flight costs from the East Coast seem to be around \$1200.00. Additional expenses would include hotel expenses in Europe before and after the trip (more on that in a later chapter) and anything purchased or consumed in addition to what is provided. I expect that the average participant can expect to reasonably commit \$3000.00 to this event. The difficult thing to account for at this point is the world economy, our crappy dollar (which is currently highly inflated making goods and services purchased in foreign money more expensive) and the global price of fuel and its impact on the price of Air fare. All of these things are beyond our control so they can only be estimated.

Where are we gathering? For previous trips the Americans have always flown into London and gone across on the ferry with the UK participants. This time, since the trip itself has gone from 10 to 12 days duration, we decided to fly into Paris. This will mean that US participants will not lose what amounts to 2 nearly full days crossing the English Channel. There are other certain advantages as well. First, We'll be in Paris on the 70th anniversary of the Liberation. I don't know what is planned but there could be some interesting events that we could enjoy. Second, US participants could either fly in the day before the event and tour Paris, or fly in the morning that the trip starts and gather with all of us to take the train from the Paris North train station to Montdidier and the beginning of the event. Next, flying to Paris would better accommodate anyone who wants to include a side to Normandy either before or after the event.

Guns? This is another question most have. We haven't been able to develop a program or ability to bring our own weapons from the US. There may be a way, but I haven't found it and it seems to add a complication that really is not needed. Dummy weapons will be made available for loan to all US

participants from ETO participants. In addition, because this will be essentially a 120mile long tactical re-enactment, we are arranging for a Blank firing weapons provider to provide blank firing WWII weapons and blanks for hire during the event. Costs are speculative right now for weapons hire. The latest I've heard is 150 Euros for the entire event plus the cost of blanks. This is not included in the trip cost and is considered optional. However, I would allow this into my planning since this opportunity does not come around often and may never be a reality again.

Uniforms, are yet another common question. The uniform is that of the 2nd Armored Division in WWII. No other uniforms are permitted unless by prior approval (such as war correspondents) that includes paratroopers Rangers whatever. The essence of the event is that we are presenting, as close as possible, the appearance of a WWII armored column in combat. To that end the uniform needs to be...uniform. The standards will be issued as we get a little closer, but are really pretty easy for US re-enactors. The wool service uniform is the basic component, along with rough out boots and leggings. Beyond that of course the helmet and field gear appropriate to your impression. Once the standards are out we'll make them available so that we can all prepare.

How much gear can I bring? We are allowing only one duffle bag plus what you can wear on your back. This is do-able as I've never brought more than that. If you want also to bring additional items, you can store them at the Paris North train station where lockers are available to rent.

Normandy, I know that Normandy holds a great pull for US participants. For those who want to include a Normandy experience to the trip, we've decided to fly to Paris. We can put you in touch with any of the commercial tour operators (one that is well known is "Battlebus") who can specialize in showcasing the Normandy beachhead area for interested Americans. I would allow 2 or 3 extra days to your trip, but Normandy is far more accessible from Paris and since you are already invested in the flight the cost of the side trip to Normandy is not really all that bad. The 2nd Armored however has too much going on at the time and Montdidier (the start of the trip) is simply too far from Normandy to provide transport or support to a Normandy side trip in period vehicles.

How are we going to be assigned? We attempt to keep units together to the best of our ability. Most of the US participants will be initially slotted to be Armored Infantry soldiers and assigned to halftracks. We will also slot individuals into the recon company either in Jeeps or the available M-8

armored car crew positions. If you have a clear preference, please communicate this with me and we'll see what we can do.

Standards, I need to speak now to standards and appearances. The 2nd Armored in Europe strives for historical accuracy in vehicles and equipment but just as important is the appearance of the personnel. Without belaboring the point, No really fat guys. No Farbs. No bad haircuts. No facial hair (beards, not at all and mustaches should be period looking) and eyeglasses should be period or contacts worn. Potential participants will be required to provide a recent photo of themselves in WWII uniform along with their application. I fully understand that we're not all 18 anymore. I also fully realize that most of us are not fit like a soldier. However, if you cannot affect the appearance of a WWII soldier then we cannot permit you to attend. My suggestion is that if you are concerned that your standard of appearance is not up to scratch, please contact me privately and we'll see or offer suggestions for improvement. If you simply feel that you are a few pounds away from appropriate, then I encourage you to work on it. Also, with a year or more between now and then, it would advantage all of us to improve our fitness to better withstand the arduousness of the event. I don't wish to discriminate but that is where we are.

What can you do now? As I've said before, get your passport in order. Don't wait do it now. If you have a passport, make sure it will be in effect for the trip. Work on your fitness, work on your impression. Study the 2nd Armored division and have an idea of the pride and professionalism of the WWII 2nd Armored division. Recruit! We need as many interested American participants as possible. Talk to you units, talk to your buddies, raise awareness and raise interest. This is the event to do! Do not miss it.

Please continue to ask questions and we'll answer them the best we can. Check in with your area coordinators and we'll keep working to be sure that you can have the true experience of a lifetime.

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