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Book Review: Tank Sergeant

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Armor in Vietnam

reviewed by Dr. Robert J. Bunker

TANK SERGEANT. By
Ralph Zumbro. Pocket
Books, New York, 1988, 253
pp., \$5.99. (Member \$5.40)

Tank Sergeant is a well written and easy to read memoir regarding a year tour spent by the author with Company A, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor from July 1967 to June 1968. The exploits of this U.S. Army armor force made it the most highly decorated unit in Vietnam. The adventures of Zumbro and his cohorts aboard the "Assassin," "Ape," "Apostle," and "A-Go-Go" make for an exciting account of the use of armor in Vietnam, specifically that of the M48A3, and provide a glimpse of

this conflict from a rarely seen perspective.

The wealth of tactical knowledge regarding "Jungle Busting," or the use of armor in dense vegetation against guerrilla and light-infantry forces, is the most important aspect of the book. Hard learned tricks of the trade such as tanks "backscratching" each other, explained as the "removing of hostiles who have boarded another tank, by firing light-caliber weapons at its buttoned-up turret" (Glossary p. 244), and the use of claymores attached to the working blade of a dozer tank to augment firepower provide valuable information. As does the use of the turret motor as a "VC detector" and the ability of a tank to destroy, or bust, an enemy bunker by spinning on it like a can opener.

This book not only makes for pleasurable reading, but is also informative regarding the role of the tank in an unconventional warfare setting and shows that, if properly utilized, the tank may have the potential to become a powerful anti-insurgency asset. Given the preponderance of unconventional conflicts in the world today and the recent and less-than-satisfying U.S. experience in Somalia, this book is even more relevant now than when first published. Marines, with a tradition of keeping tanks closely integrated with infantry and often using them in something other than a sweeping mechanized warfare role should find this book of particular interest. *Tank Sergeant*, therefore, should be considered required reading for all Marines.

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Guderian's Apologist

by Stanton, and Bryan Fugate—have echoed this same view in the past two