Morale maintenance in World War II US Army ground combat units: European theater of operations, 1944-45

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Abstract
This paper examines how both the Army as an organization and its small unit leaders attempted to maintain the soldiers' morale in the European Theater of Operations during World War II. Morale was critical to the Allied victory in the war, yet the morale of frontline GIs was often neglected. This occurred with such frequency that many combat soldiers suffered from a new category of wound known as "combat exhaustion." Through an examination of what influenced combat soldiers' morale, a clearer understanding of what the Army did well and how it failed to support combat GIs emerges, as does an explanation for why combat exhaustion caused so many casualties during the European campaign. This link between morale maintenance and combat exhaustion was critical to the efficiency of combat units during the war and ultimately helped determine the shape and outcome of every battle.

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