M-48 & Scissors Bridge


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In ground warfare, the need to quickly replace destroyed bridges is often acute. New bridges have to be erected in a matter of hours, sometimes under enemy fire.

The Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army, has developed a portable bridge to help solve the problem. This bridge, resembling a pair of scissors, in operation, is composed of lightweight sections that can be made up into 40 or 60 foot spans. Mounted on an M48 Tank Chassis, the bridge “drives” to ravine to be crossed, opens up to span the gap and is then detached from the vehicle. After the crossing has been completed, the bridge is picked up and moved to another site.

The M48 tank chassis is 24 feet 5 inches long and is powered by a V-12 air-cooled engine, developing 810 horsepower. It has a top speed of 28 miles per hour, and can cross barriers up to 4 feet in depth. When used as a vehicle to transport the scissors bridge, it is armed with .50 caliber machine guns. It has radio communication equipment, as well as an intercom system for internal use. The folding bridge mechanism is activated by large hydraulic cylinders, and road wheels are mounted by means of torsion bars.