

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1947 - 1948

THE ALGIERS OPERATION
8-11 NOVEMBER 1942

Type of operation described: AMPHIBIOUS OPERATION

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers that portion of the invasion of French North Africa (Operation Torch) pertaining to the assault on Algiers, Algeria, by the Allies during the period 8 November to 11 November 1942.

The operation described herein was an amphibious enterprise that, in many respects, was one of the most unique of the entire war. It was unique in that:

1. It was directed against a neutral excombatant nation. (1)
2. The status of the enemy was uncertain; it was not known if there would be an enemy at all, or if there was, what the character of that resistance would be. (2)
3. Politics and diplomatic negotiations, rather than military considerations, were the deciding factor in mounting the operation and colored every major decision concerning the entire North African campaign. (3)
4. It was "In point of numbers the largest military movement over the largest number of miles to landings under fire." (4)

In addition to these characteristics is the opinion of Lieutenant General (now General of the Army) Dwight E. Eisenhower, overall commander of Operation Torch. He stated during the planning period of the enterprise, "We are undertaking an operation of a quite desperate nature which depends only in a minor degree upon professional preparation or on the wisdom of military decisions." (5)

Since it is realized that any amphibious assault on a hostile foreign shore is "quite desperate" in nature, a question logically arises. Why, in view of these odd circumstances surrounding Operation Torch, was it ever mounted and carried through to its completion? In order to answer this

(1) A-3, p. 717; (2) A-4, p. 21; (3) A-4, p. 19; (4) Roosevelt's Message to Congress, 17 Sept., 1943; (5) A-5, p. 84.

question and at the same time chronologically orient the reader of previous events affecting the decision to occupy French North Africa, it is necessary to go back to August, 1940, just after the collapse of France.

POLITICS AND STRATEGY

No clear picture of the military occupation of French North Africa can be obtained without some understanding of the political events that preceded, accompanied and at times even overshadowed the military aspects of the campaign. (6)

It was in August of 1940, more than a year before the United States entered the European war, that our government initiated its policy of reviving the fighting spirit of France and of preventing Germany from gaining control of the French African empire and the French fleet. (See Map A) Germany, by the acquisition of these two items, would secure every transatlantic port from North Cape, Norway, to the Gulf of Guinea, except those of England, Spain and Portugal. In addition, by acquiring the French fleet, Hitler would have the wherewithal to defend these territorial gains.

It was imperative to the security of the United States that the encirclement of the Atlantic ocean by the Axis be halted in place. (7)

The British, in cooperation with the French Committee of General Charles De Gaulle, broke off relations with the government which was established in France by General Petain. They attempted to get control of strategic French positions and of portions of the French fleet by force of arms. (See Map A) They tried unsuccessfully to seize the West African port of Dakar and made direct attacks upon the French fleet at Oran. Later the British seized French controlled Syria and Madagascar while General De Gaulle established his authority in French Equatorial Africa.

The United States government, on the other hand, using diplomacy as
(6) A-7, p. 4; (7) A-9, p. 7.

its weapon, maintained relations with the French government in Vichy, and, by agreement with that government, aided French commanders in North and West Africa to maintain their independence of the Germans so they could prevent Germany from seizing these portions of the French Empire. The French officials and statesmen with whom we dealt undertook to prevent the French fleet and French possessions in Africa from falling into the hands of the Germans and further to make no permanent peace with Germany. This was accomplished.

The diplomatic victory was engineered by Mr. Robert Murphy, President Roosevelt's personal representative to North Africa. (8) Under an economic clause termed the Murphy-Weygand agreement of February, 1941, the United States was to supply North Africa with certain products vitally needed for the well being of the populace. This agreement contained a stipulation that a certain number of American control officers would supervise the distribution of these products to insure that they were not diverted to use by Germany. (9) This group, headed by Mr. Murphy, moved at will throughout North Africa and quietly sought out Frenchmen who could be relied upon for passive resistance then and for active resistance later. (10) These officers provided the Allies with their only source of positive intelligence in French North Africa and materially contributed to the military occupation in November, 1942.

Until April, 1942, Murphy's principal collaborator was General Maxime Weygand, the Supreme Commander in French North and West Africa. Together, with his subordinates, General Weygand succeeded in preventing the Germans from getting any military footholds in these vitally strategic regions. (11) He succeeded so well that the Germans forced his removal from command and subsequent return to France.

This latter setback in our diplomatic war was somewhat offset by Hitler's interest in Russia; however, there was every indication that

(8) A-5, p. 106; (9) A-9, p. 6; (10) A-8, p. 86; (11) A-9, p. 6.

Germany was still demanding from Petain the use of the port of Bizerte and the right to base submarines, warships and planes at Dakar.

At about this time, April, 1942, the famous French General, Henri Giraud, escaped from prison in southwestern Germany where he had been held as prisoner of war for two years. When this news got to North Africa, Murphy's collaborators held that here was the man to unite the French people and lead an army back to the homeland. He had not been associated with the Vichy government which was so repugnant to most French people. Neither had he become entangled with the De Gaullist movement which was equally unpopular in both metropolitan France and Africa. He was eminently popular in his own right. If any man could align the French Colonial Forces on our side in case of an Allied invasion, it was General Henri-Honore Giraud. How wrong this assumption was, to the Allies' embarrassment, will be discussed in a later paragraph. (12)

In addition to these diplomatic negotiations which were attempting to insure quick cessation of French resistance, the neutral status of Spain and Spanish Morocco had to be determined or at least their course of action predicted. Information obtained by Allied intelligence agencies indicated that they would remain neutral.

Also, the contingency of Germany's over-running Spain to occupy Gibraltar and sever our line of communication through the Straits had to be considered. (See Map B) From there they could further disrupt our supply lines by aerial bombardment of the single rail line from Casablanca through Fez to Oran. (13)

Every effort was made to guard against any action which could be construed as provocative by the Spanish government. Due to the vulnerability of Gibraltar, it was imperative that the status quo be maintained. Through here would be funnelled all the fighter planes to captured fields at Oran and Algiers. However, any hostile action would not render this

(12) A-4, p. 21; (13) A-7, p. 5.

plan feasible as the airfield at Gibraltar is on the land side and could be made untenable by Spanish machine gun fire. (14)

Politically, as well as militarily, the unfavorable potentialities of Operation Torch were vast. These included not only the chance of a bloody repulse, but also of inciting France and Spain, which were classed as neutrals, into the ranks of our active enemies. If the Allies could take into North Africa such a strong land, sea and air force that resistance could be rapidly crushed, Torch would unquestionably be a good operation. However, such a strong force could not be mustered at this time. Instead it was to be an expedition in which the diplomats would be in the front ranks preceding the soldier.

The success of the venture lay in (a) maintaining the neutrality of Spain and Spanish Morocco, (b) submission of the French army and navy in North Africa, and (c) settlement of nationalistic interests of the French leaders. Against this background of diplomatic negotiations, the strategic concept of Operation Torch was conceived and developed. (15)

Allied strategy in the Middle East now shaped up with Torch as the western jaw of a vast pincers operation in which General Montgomery's Eighth Army in Egypt was the eastern jaw. (16)

Assuming that Libya would be cleared of Axis forces, it appeared that the following advantages would accrue from the occupation of French North Africa:

1. Allied convoys would be able to move through the Mediterranean under the protection of land based aircraft. They could reach Egypt and the Suez Canal by 10,000 miles less than around the Cape of Good Hope. The distance from England to the Far East would also be greatly reduced. (17)
2. Another possible route for the invasion of continental Europe would be secured.

(14) A-5, p. 71; (15) A-5, p. 70; (16) A-6, p. 19; (17) A-7, p. 1.

3. German activities in western Morocco and Dakar would no longer be a threat to the Western Hemisphere. (18)
4. If the occupation could be carried out without turning the French people against the Allies, it would provide a base from which the French army could be reconstituted and supplied for combat against the Axis. (19)
5. It would open a second front in Europe and divert Axis ground and air forces from the Russian front. (20)

The plans finally adopted provided for a huge concentric amphibious attack, starting from both the United States and the British Isles, and culminating in simultaneous landings at Algiers, Oran and Casablanca. These cities were the principal ports; Algiers and Oran on the Mediterranean, and Casablanca on the Atlantic. They were the centers of political control of French possessions in Africa and were the key points in the system of rail, highway and air communications.

It was also desired to make landings to the east of Algiers at Bone, Phillipville, Bizerte and Tunis; but it was felt that due to the lack of shipping, particularly troop carriers and aircraft carriers, as well as trained troops, this phase would have to be eliminated. (21) Possession of all Tunisia was the crux of the entire enterprise as it would disrupt Rommel's supply lines and make his situation difficult if not untenable. It was estimated that it would take the Germans twenty-eight days to move troops, probably from France, to combat the invasion. During this time a secondary landing would be made at Bone after Algiers was secure. From there an overland attack could be launched into Tunisia by the Allies and secure all of that country within three weeks after the initial assault in North Africa. This afforded the invading army a margin of seven days. The timetable fell short by the very narrowest of margins and Tunisia was lost to the Germans for the time being. (22)

(18) A-4, p. 18; (19) A-4, p. 18; (20) A-6, p. 19; (21) A-4, p. 19;
(22) A-5, p. 72.

THE PLAN FOR THE INVASION

The decision to mount Operation Torch was actually made by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the 25th of July, 1942, at London, England. A directive to this effect was transmitted to General Eisenhower outlining the mission of the enterprise as follows:

1. "Establishment of firm and mutual supported lodgements,
 - (a) between Oran and Tunisia on the Mediterranean and
 - (b) in French Morocco on the Atlantic, in order to secure bases for the continuous and intensified air, ground and sea operations. (23)
2. "Vigorous and rapid exploitation of these lodgements in order to acquire complete control of French Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and extend offensive operations against the rear of Axis forces toward the eastward. (24)
3. "Complete annihilation of Axis forces now opposing the British Forces in the Western Desert and intensification of air and sea operations against the European Continent." (25)

Overall planning began immediately at Norfolk House, London, England, although General Eisenhower was not appointed Commander in Chief of the Allied Force until 14 August. (26) The plans took shape very slowly. The American Navy did not like the operation, nor for that matter did the United States Army. General Marshall reported that important Army officers in Washington believed it had only a fifty-fifty chance of success. (27)

A veritable "transatlantic essay contest" ensued between the British War Office and Allied Force Headquarters in England and the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the War Department in the United States during the period 1 August to 9 September on the specific choice of objectives. (28) Should the weight of the expeditionary force be thrown eastward inside the Mediterranean or westward beginning at Casablanca? There were not enough troops for all. The U. S. Joint Chiefs finally developed a compromise (23, 24, 25) A-10, p. 3; (26) A-5, p. 53; (27) A-5, p. 54; (28) A-5, p. 85.

that was agreeable to the Americans and the British. The new directive contained initial, intermediate and ultimate objectives as follows: (See Map B) (a) landings in the Casablanca, Oran and Algiers area simultaneously, (b) beachheads to be rapidly expanded to acquire complete control of French Morocco and western Algeria, and (c) acquire bases and airfields for extensive air and ground operations to the eastward. (29)

D-day was set for 8 November as this was the very latest day in 1942 that a landing on the Atlantic coast of Morocco could be risked because of winter weather conditions. (30)

By the middle of September detailed plans for the operation began to jell. Three Task Forces were to be formed. One would sail from the United States on 24 October, and carry out landings along the west coast of Africa with the mission of capturing the important port and naval base of Casablanca. This was the Western Task Force under command of Major General (later General, now deceased) George S. Patton, Jr. (31)

The Central Task Force, under Major General (now Lieutenant General, ret.) L. R. Fredendall, was to embark from England on 26 October, with the mission to capture Oran and establish contact with the Western Task Force in the vicinity of Fez and, further, to effect a juncture with the Eastern Task Force. (32)

The Eastern Task Force was composed of both American and British troops under the command of Lieutenant General K. A. Anderson, British Army. However, the assault force was to be under the command of Major General Charles W. Ryder with control reverting to General Anderson as soon as the objective was taken. This force also embarked from England on 26 October, and had the mission of capturing the harbor city of Algiers, the most important objective of the initial assault. It was important politically as well as militarily because its occupation by the Allies would inevitably affect the feeling in Europe, and its position on the

(29) A-5, p. 85; (30) A-11, p. 79; (31) A-4, p. 20; (32) A-4, p. 20.

Mediterranean was of great strategic value.

The two assaults in the Mediterranean were to take place simultaneously with the Atlantic effort but to proceed regardless of what happened on the outer coast. The landings at Oran and Algiers were so linked that if, for any reason, one should be prevented, the other would have to be postponed.

American participation in all landings was to be stressed because the incidents at Dakar, Syria, Oran and Madagascar had inflamed French opinion against the British. With the exception of the Commandos landed at Cape Matifou and the Battalion landing team at Castiglione, all assault troops were American. (33) The British 78th Infantry Division was used as a floating reserve.

The assault units of the Eastern Task Force, under the operational control of Major General Ryder, were as follows:

168th Regimental Combat Team, 34th Division (US Army)

39th Regimental Combat Team, 9th Division (US Army)

3rd Battalion, 135th Infantry, 34th Division (US Army)

11th Brigade Group, 78th Infantry Division (British Army)

36th Brigade Group, 78th Infantry Division (British Army)

1st and 6th Commando Battalions (Mixed British and American)

This gave a total of about 23,000 British and 10,000 Americans in the assault force which was so organized as to make it appear to the French people that it was an American force. (34)

The plan for the assault on Algiers followed the same general pattern as the plan for the Western and Central Task Forces. (See Map C) One force, the 39th RCT, was to land to the east of Algiers at Ain Taya, capture the airfield at Maison Blanche and effect a juncture with the troops landing to the west of the city. The other RCT, the 168th, was to land in the vicinity of Fort Sidi Ferruch, west of Algiers, and attack the harbor

(33) A-9, p. 190; (34) A-9, p. 190.

city from the rear or west side. A British force was to land at Castiglione, twenty-two miles west of Algiers, push inland and capture the airfield at Blida, then sever communications leading into Algiers from the west and south. The Commandos were to effect "scramble" landings in the vicinity of shore batteries in order to silence them prior to the time that the transports moved in close to shore to unload equipment. The 3rd Battalion, 135th Infantry, was to make a frontal attack on the port in two British destroyers with the objective of capturing the harbor and preventing sabotage and destruction to the port facilities.

The plan of assault can therefore be envisioned as a double envelopment: a frontal force seizing and holding the objective, and the enveloping forces converging thereon.

OPERATION TORCH MOVES TO GIBRALTAR

On 5 November, two weeks after the convoys had sailed from the United States and England, headquarters for the operation was opened on the Rock of Gibraltar. This move was made in six B-17's from London, England. As Gibraltar was only 200 miles from the area of action on the Mediterranean, it made an ideal location for a headquarters. Further, it was the only place which had adequate communication facilities to support an operation of this size.

Militarily, there was little left to be done. The planning stage was passed and the Task Forces were nearing their destinations. The adequacy of our planning and the effectiveness of our cover schemes would now be tested.

In order to achieve the complete strategic and tactical surprise which was so necessary to the success of the operation, much effort was expended. The very move to Gibraltar itself was converted into a cover scheme by unofficially announcing that General Eisenhower had returned to Washington for consultation; thus explaining his absence from London and also creating the impression that no large scale operation was impending

while the Commanding General was out of the Theater. (35) This was only one of the many ruses used. Others included: (a) misleading our own troops to believe that the objective was Dakar, (b) fostering the rumor in England that Norway was to be the objective and that Arctic clothing would be needed in the near future, (36) (c) having the Western Force appear to be headed for Dakar and turning north toward Casablanca at the last moment, and (d) having the Eastern and Central Task Forces follow the route used by Malta bound convoys and then doubling back toward their destinations under cover of darkness. Any tactical surprise achieved depended entirely on creating this impression because each boat passing through the Straits of Gibraltar could be logged by Axis agents in Tangiers, eight miles across the Straits from the "Rock".

The political tempo increased to a feverish pitch at Advanced Headquarters. Success of the invasion still depended on a minimum of French resistance being encountered. Major General (now General) Mark Clark, Deputy Commander of the Allied Force, had returned from a clandestine meeting in Algeria with Mr. Murphy and his French collaborators. The military information he secured as to deployment of troops, their equipment, heavy armament and supplies was accurate and timely; but the most important consideration, the loyalties and state of mind of the French army, navy and patriotic groups, was still undetermined and problematical. (37) French collaborationists at this meeting reaffirmed the belief that French aversion to foreign troops acting on their soil could be overcome if General Giraud were the Supreme Commander after the landings.

Acting on this belief, the Allies spirited General Giraud from Southern France by submarine and amphibious plane to Advanced Headquarters at Gibraltar on D minus 1. His arrival created an eleventh-hour crisis for General Eisenhower that had to be solved immediately. When (35) A-5, p. 159; (36) A-5, p. 46; (37) A-5, p. 155.

informed by General Eisenhower that H-hour was only nine hours away, and also that he was not to be the Supreme Commander in North Africa, Giraud refused to cooperate by accepting a subordinate position under General Eisenhower. An impasse resulted which was not broken until the next day after the landing at Algiers had been secured. At this time, General Giraud reconsidered and accepted the position as military and civil chief of all French forces and affairs in North Africa. This agreement still did not solve the problem for it was now found that the majority of French Army and Naval officers were loyal to the Petain government and ignored General Giraud's proclamation. We had made a horse trade only to find that the other party had traded a dead horse.

Fortunately, as well as unexpectedly, after viewing the strength of the invader, there was one person in Algiers who was legally armed and inclined to cooperate. This personage was Admiral Jean Louis Francois Darlan, Petain's designated successor and commander in chief of French forces. The part to be played by Admiral Darlan in this operation will be fully discussed in a subsequent paragraph. Suffice it to say at this point that he issued the orders which brought about speedy cessation of hostilities. (38)

THE ASSAULT

The assault force for Algiers and Oran embarked from England in two large convoys, a slow one which sailed on 22 October, and a fast one which sailed on 26 October. The fast convoy, carrying the assault troops, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar on the night of 5-6 November. It followed the route of eastern Malta bound convoys in the hope that enemy observers would be deceived. Not until the last minute, about 1200, 7 November, did the convoy turn south and steam at full speed toward its objective.

The first enemy action occurred at 0537, 7 November, off Cape

(38) A-4, p. 21.

Palos, Spain, about 160 miles from Algiers, when the Thomas Stone, a USS transport, was struck by a torpedo disabling her to the extent that it was necessary for her to drop out of the convoy. (39) This was a serious blow to the Task Force because this transport carried a Battalion landing team and was the only transport which had participated in actual landing practices prior to this time. In compliance with operation orders, the Thomas Stone was left behind with the H.M.S. Spey, a British corvette, detached to screen her while the rest of the convoy continued on course. This sudden turn of affairs was not to the liking of the troops aboard the transport and after dark of that night, eight hundred men were loaded into twenty-four of the Stone's landing craft and set out for Algiers about 155 miles distance. This courageous but futile attempt to participate in the landings as planned was doomed to failure. Rising seas and mechanical breakdown of the landing boats made it necessary for the troops to be taken on board the Spey which landed them on the main passenger quay in Algiers on 9 November, after scuttling the landing craft enroute.

The rest of the convoy, approaching the shore of Africa in the vicinity of Algiers, broke up into sections at about 1800 and steamed to their designated area off the landing beaches. (See Map C)

The 39th RCT was to land across "C Beach" in the area of Ain Taya, some twelve miles east of Algiers. Aerial photographs of this beach had shown it to be satisfactory for landing operations, but, actually, it was found to be a narrow strip of sandstone, dotted with large rocks, and rising sharply up from the sea. (40) In spite of this unforeseen situation, the regiment commenced to land shortly after H-hour. A delay of about forty-five minutes was occasioned by shore batteries at Cape Matifou and Fort d'Estrees firing on the naval covering force. This resistance was quickly silenced by the heavy guns of the British

(39) A-9, p. 196; (40) Personal knowledge.

warships, and the landings continued. Up to this time everything had functioned smoothly and according to plan, but it was in the ship to shore movement that the lack of training in both army and navy personnel became shockingly apparent. Lack of proper training caused delay in loading the landing boats, coxswains were green and inexperienced, individual officers and soldiers were so burdened with equipment, ammunition and weapons, that they were virtually immobilized. Some soldiers were drowned in the landings simply because they were unable to regain their feet after being rolled over by a wave. Landing waves had trouble locating their beaches, and even though only a light sea was running, many of the landing craft came into shore out of control and beached broadsides. Unit integrity was completely disrupted and this necessitated precious time being lost in reorganizing and consolidating the beachhead. (41)

Not only was the landing of troops behind schedule and ineptly handled, but in the unloading of vehicles and equipment, the mission of the regiment was even more seriously imperiled. This unloading was scheduled for a separate beach about two miles to the east of the one on which the troops had landed. This beach was no more suited for heavy equipment than the other was for troops. Artillery pieces could not be moved off the beach due to lack of heavy prime movers; some boats grounded well off shore due to overloading; and others crashed into rocks or onto the beach with a resultant loss of equipment.

The landing of equipment and artillery was so unsatisfactory that the regiment finally departed from the beachhead for its objective minus anti-tank guns and other heavy equipment. (42) Anti-aircraft guns and communication equipment were still aboard ship at 1400 hours on D-day.

The regiment moved from the beachhead in two columns, one going across country to the airfield at Maison Blanche and the other column

(41,42) Personal knowledge, from Col. A. H. Rosenfeld, Bn. Comdr. 39th RCT.

moving on the road from Ain Taya to Algiers. Neither column encountered anything other than light and sporadic resistance. The first column reached the airfield shortly after 0800 and had completed negotiations for its surrender at 0830, just eight hours after landing across the beaches at Ain Taya, twelve miles away. (43)

The second column moved into Algiers and relieved the French youth organization, Les Chanteurs de la Jeunesse, which had seized and held the communication centers, important bridges and other public utilities since the early hours of D-day.

This youth organization, Vichy's prototype of Hitler's Youth Movement, was a most effective fifth column for the Allies. They were well organized and strongly inclined toward aiding the Allies in every manner possible. Two thousand weapons had been smuggled in to them prior to D-day for use in preventing interference to the landings. The late arrival of the 39th RCT into the city rendered the youth organization's position extremely precarious. When the Americans finally came to the rescue, brisk fire fights were in progress throughout the city between troops of the Algiers garrison and the youths. (44)

At Ain Taya unloading of equipment and supplies continued until 1800 hours when it was necessary to discontinue the operation because of high seas and lack of landing craft. Out of the seventy landing boats, all types, with which the Naval Transport Division started the assault, only seven remained at this time. (45)

In the meanwhile, the 168th RCT was landing fifteen miles west of Algiers at Sidi Ferruch over "B Beach". Here again only light resistance was met, but the confusion in landing was even greater than at "C Beach". Some companies arrived on shore eight hours after leaving their transports; others landed as far as eight to twelve miles from their appointed destination. Only the lack of determined resistance on the part

(43) Personal knowledge, from Col. A. H. Rosenfeld, Bn. Comdr. 39th RCT;

(44) A-5, p. 107; (45) A-9, p. 202.

of the French saved this force from disaster. (46)

Mr. Murphy's efforts were strikingly apparent on "B beach". The invading force was met by General Mast, Chief of Staff to the Algiers Command, who had been informed four days previously when the landings were to take place. He had made what deployment of troops he could in the limited time and arranged for the immediate capitulation of Fort Sidi Ferruch. It was felt by Mr. Murphy that this was the only French official who could be trusted with information concerning the landing.

Once the unit was ashore and assembled, one battalion set out toward Blida to assist the English in the capture of the airfield there. The remainder of the regiment made a forced march on Algiers. By midday the advanced guard reached El Biar, a suburb, on high ground immediately overlooking the city. Sharp street fighting occurred in this vicinity for the remainder of the afternoon until 1700 hours when an oral armistice was concluded between General Ryder and Admiral Darlan. (47)

Concurrent with the two assaults being made by the American forces around Algiers, a third was taking place at Castiglione, twenty-two miles west. This column, consisting entirely of British troops, experienced the same difficulty in debarking as the Americans. Once ashore, however, the force swung south and east cutting the coastal road connecting Algiers and Oran and continuing on to occupy the airfield at Blida.

By 1630, XII Air Force Spitfires and Hurricanes were operating from both the Maison Blanche and Blida airfields providing the much needed air cover for the Naval Task Force, now in the Algiers roadstead. (48)

While these three pincer-like movements were developing across the beaches to the east and west of Algiers, still a fourth force was about to enter the battle. The 3rd Battalion, 135th Infantry, 34th Division, equally divided on two Royal Navy destroyers, the H.M.S. Malcolm and Broke, was entering the Bay of Algiers preparatory to a frontal attack

(46) A-9, p. 205; (47) A-5, p. 179; (48) A-5, p. 177.

on the port proper. H-hour had been delayed until word was received that the enveloping forces had landed successfully. At 0220 word was received and the approach began. The Malcolm, leading the way, was hit by shore batteries before reaching the boom, causing her to lose way, and she had to turn back to sea. The Broke fared a little better. She crashed through the boom, steamed boldly into point-blank fire, and berthed at the Quai de Falaise to disembark her troops at 0520. (49) Due to the fact that the Colonial troops of the Algiers garrison had been alerted four hours before, this detachment was quickly overwhelmed and were led away for a brief internment.

All organized resistance from hostile land and naval forces in and around Algiers ceased at 1700 hours, 8 November. The transition of the North Africa French to an ally status had begun.

THE ARMISTICE

Probably no other action of the war received more acrimonious discussion than did the armistice concluded with Admiral Darlan during the period 8 to 11 November, 1942. This temporary military expedient, so distasteful to both the British and American people, was dictated by military necessity too weighty to yield to the niceties of political motives and diplomatic proctol.

Admiral Darlan, a slightly odious person from the Allies' point of view, especially in respect to his dealings with the Germans, was in Algiers visiting his son who was seriously ill with infantile paralysis at the time of the invasion. He was immediately placed in protective custody, and when it was found that General Giraud's proclamation had fallen on deaf ears, particularly at Oran and in French Morocco, a series of conferences were held with Darlan. (50)

A message was sent by Darlan to Marshal Petain in France requesting that the Marshal order an end to all French resistance. At noon the same

(49) Personal knowledge, from Maj. L. W. Bailey, Plat. Ldr., 3rd Bn., 135th Inf.; (50) A-5, p. 179.

day, 8 November, Petain's reply was received, rejecting the request, relieving Darlan of all command and ordering full resistance to continue. Darlan disregarded this order, at this time being fully cognizant of the strength in which the Allies had landed, and contacted General Ryder, Commanding Officer Ashore, to conclude an oral armistice pertaining only to Algiers. Organized resistance at Algiers ended at 1700 hours.

On 9 November, General Clark and General Giraud arrived in Algiers from Gibraltar. At a conference on the 10th with General Clark, Admiral Darlan assumed authority of all land, sea and air forces in North Africa in the name of Marshal Petain and issued orders for the cessation of hostilities. This order reached Casablanca on the morning of 11 November, a few minutes before an attack was to be launched on that city. The pseudo air of legalism adopted by Darlan was acceptable to the people of North Africa, and he established a provisional government with himself at its head and General Giraud as Commander in Chief of French ground and air forces.

The Darlan deal, negotiated during the height of battle, required quick decisions to be made; and right or wrong, from a political viewpoint, it halted fighting in all French North Africa. Resultant achievements in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations further vindicate the American military leaders concerned.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A close analysis of the Algiers operation brings out one salient feature with stark reality. Without previous experience the Allies mounted the largest amphibious enterprise ever attempted, and in the face of all types of shortages, successfully carried it to conclusion in an incredibly short time. From July to November the multitude of problems inherent to an amphibious operation were met and overcome. The planning, based on

theoretical principles, was basically sound and well executed. The popular concept of the military commander's being concerned primarily with military strategy and tactics and holding a mission to meet and destroy the enemy on the field of battle is strikingly absent in this operation. General Eisenhower had to assume the role of a diplomat and engage in political negotiations to the near complete exclusion of military tasks. This was necessary in order to assure his military occupation at least a bare element of success. That the French General with whom we chose to deal proved recalcitrant and ineffective was an honest error in judgment. The decision to foster General Giraud as the head of the army, navy and government of French North Africa was arrived at only after eliminating all other possible candidates and accepting the considered opinion of individuals on the ground (General Clark, General Mast and Mr. Murphy). The failure to anticipate the French refusal to accept General Giraud was occasioned by the failure to comprehend the mental makeup of the French professional army and navy officer. Regardless of the circumstances, the motivating reason for their course of action can be summed up in one word, "l'honneur". The shift by the Allies to Admiral Darlan, a representative of legal authority (Petain), satisfied this code of honor and successfully culminated hostilities with a minimum of casualties to both sides.

The planning staff of Allied Force Headquarters appeared to lack the boldness required to implement the directive received from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This directive ordered that lodgements be secured on the Atlantic coast of French Morocco and also at suitable places between Oran and Tunisia on the Mediterranean. The emphasis of the operation was to be placed on getting control of Algeria and Tunisia and annihilating the Axis forces operating on the Western Desert. In order to land farther east than Algiers, the landing at Casablanca would have had to

have been abandoned; thus temporarily exposing both flank and rear of the invading force. Spain and/or Germany might then be tempted to move across the Straits of Gibraltar and through Spanish Morocco to cut Allied land and sea supply lines. This characteristic of the plan was so repugnant to the planning staff at Allied Force Headquarters and the War Department that the directive was reworded to include only landings at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers with the emphasis then placed on securing bases to the west of Algiers from which future operations to the east could be launched.

The planners accurately estimated the time it would take the Germans to effectively combat the invasion, but they over-estimated our ability to move eastward from Algiers; and, consequently, the first battle for Tunisia went to the Germans. The loss of Tunisia was due in part to two circumstances not having been considered; one was the unseasonal weather encountered in the mountains of Northern Tunisia, and the other was the fact that since our troops had to be ready to fight on the beaches of Algeria, the boats were combat loaded. Units and equipment were not disposed favorably for the rapid and distant advance that was desired.

The lack of boldness in the conception of Operation Torch allowed the Germans to get into Tunisia and fight there for six long months. A bold daring plan had been abandoned in line with the U. S. Army staff officer's habit of conducting his war with methods of certainty.

The principle of security, secrecy and deception was used and observed to the fullest extent in this operation. It has often been remarked that the invasion of North Africa was the best kept secret of the war. Every indication pointing to a landing in North Africa was obscured by manufacturing a conflicting indication. No means were overlooked to camouflage the true destination of the vast convoys forming in both England and the United States. That the cover for the operation was

effective is amply evidenced by the fact that the landings were in most part unopposed. Only isolated enemy air and submarine opposition was encountered until after the troops were firmly ashore. German air strength had been shifted to Sicily and Italy in anticipation of raiding the Malta bound convoy, and German submarine strength had been concentrated off Dakar in anticipation of a landing there.

Had this secrecy been faulty and had determined armed resistance been met at either Ain Taya or Sidi Ferruch, it can safely be said that the Algiers Operation would have ended in disaster. The hit-or-miss methods by which the assault troops were put ashore rendered them ineffective as fighting units until reorganization had taken place.

The plan calling for a frontal attack upon the harbor of Algiers lends itself to more criticism than any other element of the entire operation. The timing for the attack was especially faulty. Two hours after H-hour gave ample time for the enemy to deploy his troops and alert the shore batteries but did not allow sufficient time for the enveloping forces to enter the city and assist the frontal force in carrying out its mission. How this plan could have succeeded, it is difficult to see, unless the French had not resisted; and, in that case, it would have been unnecessary. The choice of landing craft left much to be desired for they were British Destroyers of high silhouette and afforded inadequate debarking facilities for the assault troops, especially when under fire. This pseudo commando attack lacked two essential elements necessary for success--surprise and fire support. The order calling for this force to hit the port of Algiers and stick there was outside the realm of possibility. If it was felt that this phase of the landing was necessary, it should have been assigned to a well trained coordinated force that specialized in this type of warfare.

The need for better training of landing craft crews was startlingly apparent. The art of landing troops through surf and then retracting the

boat so that it could be used again was still a mystery to the personnel manning the boats at Algiers. The expenditure of landing boats, ninety-four percent, was so great that the Army felt that the Navy had failed in its mission. General Ryder recommended that "The line of demarkation, wherein the navy has full control of the operation until the troops reach the shore, should be changed so that the army takes control when the troops get into the landing craft." (51)

The over-burdening of men who have to go over the side of a transport into landing craft, land on a surf swept beach, and then march and fight, resulted in enormous quantities of personal equipment being discarded and materially delaying the landing and resultant overland moves.

The action of the two regiments ashore was aggressive and all objectives were secured according to plan. The airfields at Maison Blanche and Blida were immediately converted to the use of the Allies.

The entry of troops into the city of Algiers produced a somewhat delicate mission because we were not occupying the city in the usual military sense. The civil government was left intact and the administration of the port was turned over to the British. On 10 and 11 November, troops were moved into billets on the outskirts of the city and preparations immediately were begun for the push on to Tunisia.

LESSONS LEARNED

In this, the first large scale amphibious operation attempted in World War II by the United States Army and Navy, a multitude of lessons were learned and applied to later operations. From the approach taken by the author in describing the Algiers operation, it is believed that the following lessons were brought out:

1. Staff planning, in its conception, must be bold enough to insure that the true objectives of the operation are reached without expending the strength of the enterprise on the

(51) A-9, p. 202.

approaches to the objective.

2. If amphibious operations against determined resistance are to be successful, landing boat crews must be thoroughly trained in every element of their trade. In this same connection, assault troops must be familiar with every detail involved in a ship to shore movement.
3. In order to obtain the maximum effect of surprise and deception, every effort must be extended to maintain the security and secrecy of the operation.
4. Against even light resistance, a ship to port movement is hazardous, and the chance of success is limited under the most advantageous of conditions.
5. To prevent immobilizing assault troops, the over-burdening of the individual soldier with ammunition, equipment and weapons must be guarded against.
6. Heavy equipment and crew-served weapons must be made available to the assault troops immediately after establishment of the beachhead.
7. Fifth column activities should be fostered wherever possible in order to secure aid and support from elements within enemy territory.