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Patrick

Measler

Staff Department
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
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OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST DIVISION IN THE LANDING AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEACHHEAD ON OMAHA BEACH,
6 - 10 JUNE 1944
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: A REINFORCED INFANTRY DIVISION
LANDING, ESTABLISHING, AND SECURING A BEACHHEAD.

Captain James R. Darden, Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

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OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST DIVISION IN THE LANDING AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEACHHEAD ON OMAHA BEACH,
6 - 10 JUNE 1944
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the 1st U. S. Infantry Division, reinforced, in the landing, establishment, and securing of the beachhead on OMAHA BEACH, 6-10 June 1944, during the Normandy Campaign.

In order to orient the reader, it will be necessary to refer to certain Allied conferences in 1941, and to discuss the major events that led up to this operation.

At the Washington Conference in 1941, it was decided that Germany must be the first of the Axis Powers to be defeated. (1) This decision was reaffirmed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in LONDON in 1942, but would be subject to establishing the necessary holding actions against Japan. (2)

It was felt that Germany could only be thoroughly defeated on the historic battlefields of FRANCE and the Low Countries. For this and other reasons the combined Chiefs of Staff discussed plans for a Cross Channel Assault (Operation Roundup) to take place in the summer of 1943. When it became obvious that sufficient forces and material could not be concentrated in ENGLAND in time for this 1943 assault, the combined Chiefs of Staff decided to undertake Operation Torch -- the invasion of NORTH AFRICA in the fall of 1942. (3)

(1) A-1, p. 8
(2) A-1, p. 9
(3) A-1, p. 10

NORTH AFRICA was invaded by American and British forces in November 1942. By 13 May 1943, the German Army in AFRICA had been defeated and the Allies were massing forces for invading SICILY.

The invasion of SICILY took place on 10 July 1943, by the U.S. Seventh and the British Eighth Armies. From SICILY, ITALY was invaded on 3 September 1943 by the British Eighth Army and on 9 September by the U.S. Fifth Army. (5)

The advance up the ITALIAN PENINSULA was slow and costly. By 4 June 1944, ROME was in Allied hands. (6)

During these MEDITERRANEAN campaigns, the planning and logistical build up for a Cross Channel assault on fortress EUROPE had been taking place in ENGLAND. By the time of the fall of ROME, the stage was set for the invasion of EUROPE through the NORMANDY BEACHES of FRANCE.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The planning for the invasion at Army and Corps level was called "Neptune". (7) As the planning progressed, it became apparent that there was a need for some practical exercise, involving as nearly as possible, the conditions that would exist in the actual assault landing. (8)

In December 1943, the British Government provided a coastal area at SLAPTON SANDS, where these practice amphibious landings could be made under conditions that were similar to those of the NORMANDY COAST where the landing was going to take place. Here also, this assault training

(4) A-2, p. 10, 48
(5) A-3, p. 10
(6) A-3, p. 81
(7) A-4, p. 6
(8) A-4, p. 6

could be carried out with the use of live ammunition and naval gunfire. The first such exercise showed that more than one infantry division could be mounted in the existing port facilities. (9)

The original plan, called "Cossac" provided for a three division assault on the beaches, assisted by the drop of one airborne division. General Eisenhower changed the plan to include five divisions in the assault to be aided by the dropping of three airborne divisions. (10)

The overall approved plan (See Map A) called for landing the U.S. First Army on the right and the British Second Army on the left. (Gold, Juno and Sword Beaches) In the First Army zone, the VII Corps, on the right, was to land on UTAH BEACH; and the V Corps, on the left, was to land on OMAHA BEACH with the mission of securing a beachhead between the VIRE RIVER and PORT-EN-BESSIN, from which the Corps would be prepared to advance to the south. D-Day was to be 5 June 1944. (11) (12)

The object of the assault forces was to occupy the general line CAEN-BAYEUX-GRANDCHAMP. (13)

Opposing the landing forces in the NORMANDY area was the German LXXXIV Corps, part of the German Seventh Army. In the immediate vicinity of UTAH and OMAHA BEACHES, were six divisions, of which five were infantry and one was a Panzer division. Although the German divisions were close to their authorized strength, the quality of the troops was not the best. Many of the soldiers were in the older age

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- (9) A-4, p. 6
(10) A-1, p. 52
(11) A-4, p. 8
(12) A-5, p. 39
(13) A-6, p. 2

classes and many others were Polish and Russians of dubious military value. (14)

Morale in these units along the coast was thought to be low. In the Western Zone of FRANCE, the units there were not too well equipped. The artillery, for example, was of various makes -- German, French, Polish and Russian. It was difficult to maintain ammunition for so many different weapons. German supplies were not reaching the front due to the Allied bombing. (15)

On the other hand, American soldiers were young, well equipped and well trained. Their morale was very high and their combat efficiency excellent.

map 12
The terrain, inland from OMAHA BEACH greatly favored the defense because it forms cross compartments to the general line of advance. Running generally east and west and parallel to the landing beach are three areas of high ground, separated from one and the other by the AURE RIVER and one of the tributaries. (16) The height of the ground varies from 100 feet along the bluffs of the beach to 400 feet in the CERISY FOREST area about 12 miles inland. The country inland is generally rural, with hedgerows and small orchards dotting the countryside. There are few roads in the area. One east-west highway parallels the beach and one north-south highway runs from ST. LAURENT through TREVIERES to the CERISY FOREST. (17) (18)

It was expected that the assault area would be heavily fortified with strong points, scattered pillboxes and beach

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- (14) A-1, p. 68
(15) A-1, p. 69
(16) A-7, p. 49
(17) A-4, p. 10-20
(18) A-7, p. 49

obstacles. Taken into consideration also, was the fact that the Germans had two years in which to prepare these defenses as a part of their vaunted "Atlantic Wall". In addition, the terrain added to the defensive strength.

(19) (20)

Of primary importance in such an operation was the weather. Conditions had to be determined for months and days in advance. The weather in the Channel area during May and June is very unstable and unpredictable.

The overall logistical support for the plan was excellent. Initially, on the beach, this support was to be provided by the Provisional Engineer Special Brigade Group. A ten day level of Class I supply was carried by the Task Force and was to be maintained at that level. Units carried five day level of combat rations and all vehicles landing were to land with full tanks of gasoline. A hospital ship was to be off shore to handle and evacuate the wounded. There were no major shortages of supplies and equipment, as the stock pile for the invasion, above basic loads, was 2,500,000 tons of supplies. (21) (22) (23) (24)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF V CORPS (See Map B)

The V Corps plan of assault called for the landing of one division, reinforced to include four Regimental Combat Teams plus additional artillery and armored support. The plan was such that the assault by one reinforced division

(19) A-2, p. 20-23

(20) A-7, p. 56

(21) A-9, Annex #2 (cont'd) p. 41-56

(22) A-4, p. 32

(23) A-1, p. 83

(24) A-4, p. 2

could be easily expanded to an attack of two divisions abreast. For this reason, the 116th Combat Team from the 29th Division was attached to the 1st Division for the landing. The plan called for two regimental combat teams landing abreast. The mission of the 1st Division was to make the landing, reduce the beach defenses, seize the beachhead maintenance line, and secure the D-Day phase line by two hours before darkness. It was to cover the landing of the remainder of V Corps and be prepared to continue the extension of the beachhead towards the south and south-east. (25) (26) (27)

The Corps plan also called for the landing of an Engineer Special Brigade to clear lanes in the beach obstacles by H hour plus 30 minutes. (28)

In addition, the 2d and 5th Ranger Battalion were to land in the assault wave with the specific mission of knocking out the coastal batteries located at POINTE DU HOE and POINTE DE LA PERCEE. (29)

THE SITUATION OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

The effective strength of the 116th and 16th Combat Teams had been increased 25 percent to take care of the initial contemplated casualties. The 1st Division was a battle-seasoned outfit and contained a Corps of veterans from AFRICA and SICILY. The 116th Combat Team of the 29th Division was attached to the 1st Division to permit it to benefit from the experience of a unit that had made two pre-

(25) A-4, p. 8-11, 30-32

(26) A-1E, p. 1

(27) A-7, p. 22-24

(28) A-4, p. 32

(29) A-4, p. 30

vious assault landings.

The terrain, facing the 1st Division, (See Map B-1) was characterized by reefs, tidal flats, high bluffs and a series of limestone cliffs beginning at the beach and steadily rising to form an inland plain. The tidal range of 18 feet between the low and high water mark left about 300 yards of exposed, sandy, tidal flats at low water mark. This expanse was covered by three rows of underwater obstacles which were covered by the high tide. At the high water mark the flat ended in a shingle embankment about 8 feet high and 15 feet wide. This was composed of rocks and stones of an average size of three inches in diameter. Still beyond this shingle, lay about 200 yards of beach flat before the bluffs could be reached. The bluffs averaged 100 to 170 feet in elevation. The beach itself was concave in shape, thereby adding immense strength to the German defenses.

The only exits from the beach were five draws, leading up the bluffs and the inland plains. The draws, (See Map C) reading from right to left D-1, D-3, E-1, E-3, and F-1 were critical terrain features and as such, were the key points in the German beach defenses. Strongpoints and pillboxes were the focal points of the defense of these exits on draws. Inland from the beach bluffs, were numerous hedgerows which limited the attacker's observation to sometimes less than 50 yards. (31) (32) (33)

The enemy forces opposing the 1st Division were esti-

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- (30) A-4, p. 8-10, 35-36
 - (31) A-7, p. 49
 - (32) A-4, p. 10-20
 - (33) A-1, p. 95-96

mated to be one battalion (800 to 1000 men) of the 726th German Infantry Regiment. Reinforcing the beach defenses were 352d Infantry Division, located some 20 miles away at ST. LO and the 30th Mobile Brigade located some 40 miles from the beaches at COUTANCES. The G-2 estimated that no armor would be used against the assault on D Day.

Northwesterly winds caused waves of 3 to 4 feet in the Channel and 6 foot waves on the beaches. This wind condition persisted into D plus 1 and caused many hardships to the landing forces. (35)

Enemy strongpoints, many with artillery pieces laid for direct fire on the beaches, had excellent coverage of the landing area by grazing and plunging fire, both frontal and enfilade. (36)

PLAN OF THE 1ST DIVISION (See Maps B, C and D)

Having been given the mission of securing and establishing the beachhead, the 1st Division was to land with two Regimental Combat Teams abreast -- the 116th CT (attached from the 29th Division) on the right and the 16th CT on the left. Each Combat Team was to land with two Battalion Landing Teams abreast.

The 116th CT, with two Ranger Battalions attached, had the mission of:

1. Reducing beach defenses in zone and open exits from beaches.
2. Securing the beach maintenance line and capturing the towns of VIERVILLE and ST. LAURENT.

(34) A-4, p. 26-27

(35) A-4, p. 38

(36) A-7, p. 56

3. Capturing portion of D Day phase line in their zone of action.
4. Gaining and maintaining contact with 16th CT on the left.
5. Protecting right flank of division.

The 2d Ranger Battalion had mission of:

Sending three companies to scale and capture the enemy gun position at POINTE DU HOE; and of sending an additional company to capture POINTE DE LA PERCEE.

The 5th Ranger Battalion was to land with 116th CT and receive instructions from the Combat Team Commander.

The 16th CT on the left had the mission of:

1. Clearing beach defenses in their zone of action and opening the beach exit leading to COLLEVILLE.
2. Capturing town of COLLEVILLE and the high ground to the southeast of the town.
3. Securing the division left flank by sending one battalion (3d Battalion) to STE-HONORINE-DES-PERTES and attempting to gain contact with British 50th Division on the division left boundary.
4. Covering the landing of the 18th and 26th CT of the 1st Division and the 115th CT of the 29th Division.

The 18th CT had the mission of landing behind the 16th CT and moving with the greatest possible speed to capture its objectives and preparing the high ground east of TREVIERES for all around defense.

The 26th CT, landing late on the evening of D Day, had

the mission of passing through 16th CT and capturing the high ground in the vicinity of TOUR-EN-BESSIN.

The 115th CT (29th Division) initially under the 1st Division was to assemble in the vicinity of LONGUEVILLE as Force Reserve and be prepared to assist in the capture of ISIGNY.

The 741st Tank Battalion was to support the 16th CT; the 743d Tank Battalion was to support the 116th CT; and the 745th Tank Battalion was initially in division reserve.

The supporting fires for assault was to be initially furnished by the Navy vessels off shore. Some supporting artillery fire could be expected from weapons firing from the decks of landing craft. (37) (38)

FINAL PREPARATIONS

All troops to be landed on D Day arrived at the ports during the last days of May. They were issued three K type and three D type rations. Riflemen were issued 96 rounds each and BAR teams 900 rounds; 60 mm crews 20 rounds of mortar ammunition. Every man carried five grenades and in addition each rifleman carried four smoke grenades. Every man wore special assault jackets with large pockets and built-in packs in the back. (39)

All troops were loaded in ships on 3 June. General Eisenhower postponed D Day for 24 hours due to the storms and heavy seas. Some units had already sailed and had to return to port. D Day was set as 6 June and H Hour was to be 0630 hours ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour later than previous day due to the

(37) A-12, p. 2-6
(38) A-4, p. 30-33
(39) A-4, p. 43

tides). The assault convoy sailed from southern ENGLAND on 5 June and arrived off OMAHA BEACH at 0300 hours 6 June 1944. (40) (41)

At approximately 0330 hours, assault troops began debarking from transports into LCVP's and LCA's and immediately began moving to rendezvous areas. Landing craft remained in rendezvous until approximately 0530 hours and then under the thundering and comforting fire of naval guns, the assault wave moved towards the line of departure. The line of departure was crossed in a skirmish line of landing craft carrying the first assault wave, composed of troops from one Ranger Battalion, two Tank Battalions, and from four battalions of the 16th and 116th CT's. (42) (43)

About 1000 yards from the beach, the leading wave came under fire from enemy machine guns, mortars and artillery. Many of the landing craft were damaged and sunk from this fire. Thus, the casualties began to mount even before the landing craft could touchdown on the beach.

NARRATION

THE ASSAULT AND ACTION ON D DAY (See Maps C and D)

The first wave of landing craft began to deposit troops on OMAHA BEACH at 0630 hours on 6 June 1944. (44)

Many of the landing craft were unable to make dry landings due to damage from enemy fires. As a result, troops in many instances had to wade through waist-to-neck high water for 100 yards or so before reaching the sand of the tidal

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- (40) A-4, p. 37-38
 - (41) A-1, p. 89
 - (42) A-13
 - (43) A-4, p. 40-43
 - (44) A-4, p. 42

flat. As the landing was made at low tide, the troops were forced to move across 300 yards of tidal flat which offered them no cover, whatsoever. Exhausted and seasick, cold and cramped, these troops had little incentive to move across this tidal flat with any speed. As a result, they suffered their heaviest casualties from enemy small arms and machine guns, that were sighted for grazing and converging fire over this stretch of beach. (45) (46)

After crossing the flat, men reached a rock shingle, that afforded the only cover along the entire beach area. Once under the safety of this shingle or wall, it was difficult to have the men move forward to the bluffs. Here, many more casualties were received due to high angle enemy fires. Squads, platoons and even companies were found without leaders. For the first half hour or so after touchdown, leaderless men made little or no effort to move off the beach. Action was confined to rescuing the wounded, some of whom were being washed ashore by the incoming tide. Morale was a definite problem under these trying conditions on the beach.

Many men had reached the shingle without weapons or arms. Much of the arms and equipment was lost due to the enemy fire; much more was lost or damaged in the water. The rough sea had caused men to drop or loose their weapons before reaching the tidal flat. In some cases, equipment had been tied to life preservers, and if lost, was beached by the tide. Much equipment was gathered from this source and was later used on the beach. The loss in heavy weapons (machine guns and 81 mm mortars) was particularly felt on the beaches. Machine guns

(45) A-4, p. 44

(46) A-4, p. 44

and mortars without ammunition were not uncommon during these early hours on the beach. The valuable effect of these weapons to further the beach advance was lost. (47)

Radios were also lost or damaged in wading to the beach. This loss was greatly felt throughout the remainder of D Day. Without radios, about the only means of communication on the beach, it was difficult for commanders to get their units together and it was still more difficult to let the CP's still afloat know what the situation was. Radio was also the only way of calling for and controlling the supporting fires of the Navy. As a result, supporting fires were very limited during the morning of D Day. The Commanding Officer of the 116th CT estimated that three fourths of the regimental radios were lost or rendered useless. (48)

Many of the tanks of the 741st and 743d Tank Battalions in the assault wave were lost, due to the rough and choppy seas. These tanks, especially fitted with struts and canvas to make them amphibious, and called D D tanks, were no match for the beating waves. Struts were broken, canvas was ripped, and engines were flooded by water. In the case of the 741st Tank Battalion only five of its thirty two D D tanks made shore. Many other tanks that reached shore were immediately disabled by enemy fire. Thus, the use of tanks, in knocking out strongpoints was of little value, especially in the zone of the 16th CT. (49) (50)

The Special Engineer Task Force in the assault wave met the same fate as the infantry and tanks. The engineer group

(47) A-4, p. 56
(48) A-4, p. 56
(49) A-4, p. 42-43
(50) A-13

had the most dangerous and difficult mission of the D Day landing forces. Their mission was to clear gaps in the obstacles along the tidal flats in order to facilitate the later landings at high tide. The gaps were to be cleared by H plus thirty minutes, but this time schedule became impossible when many of the engineer landing boats were sunk by enemy shells or were swamped by heavy seas. Much of their demolitions were lost in these sinkings. (51)

However, notwithstanding the difficulties encountered, the engineers began the work of clearing gaps as soon as they reached the beach and with whatever material they had available. By the time many of the engineers began work, the rapidly advancing tide had begun to cover the lower obstacles on the tidal flat. The engineer's job was further hampered by infantrymen walking over the flat towards the beach. The result of the engineer work was two gaps cleared in the zone of the 116th CT and four in front of the 16th CT. (See Map C) (52)

To add further to the confusion of the first waves of troops was the intermingling of units with similar designations. Somewhere in the planning that fact was overlooked in this regard. The 2d Battalion of the 116th CT was abreast of the 2d Battalion of the 16th CT. Many boat sections of Company E, 116th landed far to the east of their assigned beaches and became intermingled with boat sections of Company E, 16th CT. (53) (54)

The support companies of the initial assault battalions

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- (51) A-4, p. 42-43
 - (52) A-4, p. 42-43
 - (53) A-4, p. 48,66
 - (54) A-14

and the reserve battalions of the two regiments began landing in the second assault group around 0700 hours. They landed under entirely different conditions than had been planned. The tide had been rising steadily since 0630 hours and within an hour had risen some eight feet. The beach was an area of wreckage and confusion. Damaged tanks and landing craft cluttered the beach. Wounded and dead were scattered over the area. In addition to all of this, the second wave came under the same fires that were keeping the first wave pinned down on the beach. (55)

By 0800 hours, elements of service troops and some artillery began to land while the first and second waves of infantry were still pinned to the beaches by enemy fire. Vehicles that were landed at this time merely added to the disorder ^{ON} the beach. In short, this added to the already growing chaos and further snarling of the assault plans. (56)

However, even with the loss of equipment, morale, and numerous casualties, the assault troops did not stay pinned down to the beaches for very long. Small groups under the direction of anyone who would lead them began to cross the beach flat beyond the shingle and began to move up the bluffs. This type of assumed leadership was exemplary because many units had lost most of their officers and non-commissioned officers. These new leaders formed groups and then showed them the way up the bluffs in the face of heavy enemy resistance. Many of these early advances took place between the exit draws and thus, the heights were reached without too many more casualties. Brigadier General Cota, assistant

(55) A-4, p. 49

(56) A-5, p. 54

Division Commander of the 29th Division, who had landed in the 116th CT zone about 0730 hours, displayed his great leadership by walking up and down the beach under enemy fire and organizing groups of men from the 116th to move up the bluffs towards VIERVILLE. (57)

The actions on the bluffs up to 0900 hours dealt mainly with small groups attacking enemy resistance and strongpoints. The partial opening of E-1 draw by elements of the 16th CT was probably one of the more important actions in the morning of D Day. This draw was to be later used as the main exit from the beach for the support regiments. (58)

Artillery was entirely absent from the beach until the afternoon. All attempts to land artillery had failed and many guns were lost in the high seas. Many of these artillery pieces were lost when the DUKWS (2½ ton amphibious trucks), on which the guns were being transported, were sunk by enemy fire or swamped by the waves. Artillery support during the morning was practically nil and later on fire support was furnished by naval units when ship-to-shore communications had improved. (59)

The 18th RCT began landing on the beach at 1000 hours just to the east of E-1 draw. The 2d Battalion met some resistance from that part of E-1, not yet cleared. When supporting tank fires were unable to reduce a strongpoint, the NSFCP (Naval Shore Fire Control Party) called for fire from a distroyer. This fire caused the strongpoint to surrender. Around 1130 hours, E-1 draw was completely cleared

(57) A-4, p. 60
(58) A-4, p. 84
(59) A-4, p. 79-82

of enemy resistance. Immediately, engineers began the job of preparing the road for vehicle traffic. Some vehicles did leave the beach through E-1 but were forced to stop at the head of the draw due to enemy action still on the bluffs.

(60) (61)

The battalions of the 18th CT had barely reached the beach when elements of the 115th CT (29th Division) began landing on top of them, due to last minute changes in Corps plans. The landing of the 115th CT added to the congestion and confusion on the beach and in getting off the beach. Reorganization of both the 18th and 115th CT's was further delayed and greatly confused. (62)

By 1155 hours on D Day, the 1st Division had determined from captured prisoners that elements of the German 352d Infantry Division were committed in the beachhead area. This information was sent to V Corps. (63)

Three miles to the west of the main landing, troops of the 2d Ranger Battalion had reached the heights of POINTE DU HOE by scaling the cliffs with rope ladders. When the top was reached, the gun position was found to be deserted and the guns withdrawn. Patrols soon located the 155 mm guns about 1500 yards from the beach and destroyed them with incendiary grenades. After repelling a German counterattack, the Ranger forces in the area, were more or less under seige by enemy snipers and mortar fire for the rest of the day. (64)

Before 1200 hours on D Day many elements of the 116th CT and 5th Ranger Battalion, had reached the bluff's and were

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- (60) A-4, p. 82-83
(61) A-1, p. 99
(62) A-4, p. 84-85
(63) A-4, p. 87
(64) A-4, p. 87-91

advancing west along the coastal highway and south from ST. LAURENT. Units of the 1st Battalion and the 5th Ranger Battalion passed through VIERVILLE and advanced some 500 yards beyond the town before they encountered some heavy enemy fire that was to pin them down for the remainder of the day. Other elements of the 1st Battalion reached a point about 600 yards south of the village and they too, were held up for the remainder of the day by strong opposition. (65)

The 2d and 3d Battalions had reached a point northwest of ST. LAURENT, and their advance was halted by sniper fire from the town. The battalions also were under heavy machine gun fire from the high ground at the head of D-3 draw. (66)

ST. LAURENT, also proved to be a formidable foe for the 115th CT, which had begun to land near E-1 draw at 1030 hours. The 1st Battalion passed southwest of the town, attempting to reach the ST. LAURENT-FORMIGNY HIGHWAY. The 2d Battalion spent all afternoon trying to wipe out a small enemy group on the eastern edge of town. That night the 1st and 2d Battalions bivouaced to the southwest of the town. The 3d Battalion had only reached the top of E-1 draw by darkness and so set up a defensive position to the north of ST. LAURENT-COLLEVILLE HIGHWAY.

In the zone of action of the 16th CT, things were very similar to what had been going on in the zone of the 116th CT. Early gains on the bluffs had been made by small groups of men. Elements of the 2d Battalion had cleared part of E-1 draw and were approaching a German bivouac, located about

(65) A-4, p. 97-98

(66) A-4, p. 97-98

one mile west of COLLEVILLE. These 2d Battalion elements met stiff resistance from the town and for the remainder of the day were unable to gain any ground.

The 1st Battalion, 16th CT, had moved up the bluffs between E-1 and E-3 draws and were attempting to cross the coastal highway in order to capture FORMIGNY and SURRAIN, to the southwest of COLLEVILLE.

The 3d Battalion, 16th CT was about a mile to the east of the town along the coastal highway. They had run into enemy resistance in CABOURG and had by-passed it to the east. Late in the afternoon the battalion was in the village of LE GD-HAMEAU. (67)

The 2d Battalion of the 18th CT was sent to the aid in the capture of COLLEVILLE, but actually occupied the high ground to the south and southeast of the town.

The 3d Battalion was sent to relieve the 1st Battalion, 16th CT and to take over the mission of capturing FORMIGNY. Due to the heavy enemy resistance, the mission could not be accomplished; so, the 3d Battalion was to fill the gap between the 16th and 116th CT's.

From the time of reaching the bluffs, the 1st Battalion, 18th CT was engaged in overcoming by-passed enemy groups located at the head of E-1 draw. (68)

The 26th CT, which had begun landing at 1900 hours, sent the 3d Battalion, followed by the 2d Battalion to take up defensive positions in the vicinity of the highway from ST. LAURENT to FORMIGNY. The 1st Battalion took up defensive positions between the beach and COLLEVILLE, in order to pro-

(67) A-4, p. 101

(68) A-4, p. 100

tect the left flank and rear of the 3d Battalion, 16th Infantry. (69)

Thus, by 2400 hours on D Day, the assault of five regiments had only gained a mile or so inland due to the heavy, unexpected enemy resistance. This opposition had been mainly due to the elements of the German 352d Infantry Division, which through sheer luck, or a stroke of genius, were on maneuvers and were occupying the position of the beach defenses on the night of 5 - 6 June 1944.

The 1st Division, that night, took up its front line positions with pockets of enemy troops still in its rear areas. The division, was not only a long way from its D Day objectives, but was also in danger of being hit by a counter-attack.

CAPTURE OF D DAY OBJECTIVES 7 - 8 JUNE 1944 (See Map E)

After reorganization, the elements of the 1st Division were ready to resume the push to reach the D Day objectives. The aims for the attack were to advance far enough inland to put the beach out of range from enemy artillery and to gain maneuver room in the beach area.

In the zone of the 116th CT, action was limited to mopping up the area that had been gained on D Day. The 3d Battalion of the 115th CT captured ST. LAURENT while the remainder of the regiment moved towards its D Day objectives. The 116th CT consolidated the gains of the day before. Later in the day VIERVILLE fell. At 1700 hours on 7 June, General Gerhardt, Commanding General of the 29th Division, assumed command of

(69) A-4, p. 101

his division and the 115th and 116th CT's were returned to his control. (70)

The battalions of the 16th CT spent the day in mopping up areas of by-passed opposition. The 1st and 2d Battalions, after COLLEVILLE fell to the 2d Battalion at 1000 hours, moved to the south and southeast of the town, behind the advance of the 18th CT.

The 3d Battalion, 16th CT, moved into STE HONORINE-DES-PERTES and the 1st Battalion, 26th CT assisted the 3d Battalion by taking the high ground to the south and southeast of the town. The 3d Battalion sent patrols to PORT-EN-BESSIN in the late afternoon and by dark had moved eastward against light resistance to occupy HUPPAIN. (71) (72)

The 18th CT advanced on 7 June but was slow in getting started. The 1st Battalion advanced towards the high ground to the north of ENGRANVILLE against sporadic resistance. However, resistance in the town lasted until evening, when the enemy was forced out of the town and across the AURE RIVER.

The 3d Battalion, keeping pace with the 1st Battalion reached the town of SURRAIN at 1200 hours, and continuing to advance against light enemy action reached and crossed the AURE RIVER at 1700 hours. Moving swiftly, the battalion reached MANDEVILLE and took up defensive positions around midnight.

The 2d Battalion moved to the southeast from COLLEVILLE. Before reaching the AURE RIVER the battalion was forced to deploy by machine gun fire coming from the other side of the river. A crossing was forced and the battalion pushed the

(70) A-4, p. 127
(71) A-7, p. 72
(72) A-4, p. 116-117

enemy back to MOSLES. After a fight in which the enemy lost about 30 men killed, the battalion entered the town around 1700 hours. (73) (74)

The 1st Battalion, 26th CT was near the division left flank with the 3d Battalion, 16th CT. On 7 June, the 1st Battalion took the high ground south of STE HONORINE-DES-PERTES.

The 2d Battalion, 26th CT, was in division reserve and moved towards the east in the vicinity of ETREHAM.

The 3d Battalion, 26th CT, was attached to the 18th CT and was ordered to take FORMIGNY. The battalion commander at this time thought he was attached to the 18th CT but had not been informed of this by regiment. (75)

The 3d Battalion failed to take FORMIGNY on the 7th of June.

During 7 June, the 18th CT had almost reached its D Day objectives. The 26th CT had still not reached its D Day objectives by midnight of the 7th.

ACTION ON 8 JUNE 1944 (See Map E)

During 8 June the 1st and 2d Battalions, 16th CT were in division reserve while the 3d Battalion on the division left flank, advanced south from HUPPAIN towards MT. CAUVIN. At 0725 hours, the 3d Battalion contacted the British 47th Commandos, thus, joining the American and British beaches. (76)

In the zone of the 18th CT, the 1st and 3d Battalions made no advances on the 8th of June. The 2d Battalion moved

(73) A-7, p. 72
(74) A-4, p. 117-118
(75) A-15
(76) A-12, p. 17

about a mile south of MOSLES and was stopped by heavy enemy resistance.

The 1st Battalion, 26th CT, moving abreast of the 3d Battalion, 16th CT reached ETREHAM. The enemy resistance in front of these two battalions was steadily increasing. The enemy was fighting a stiff delaying action while trying to escape from a pocket that was forming to the south, caused by the British attacking to the west from BAYEUX.

The 3d Battalion, 26th CT, was held up at FORMIGNY until noon when it was released to the 26th CT and ordered to move down the BAYEUX HIGHWAY to take its objective STE. ANNE. The battalion moved along the highway, passed through the 2d Battalion and then around midnight passed through TOUR-EN-BESSIN, encountering only light enemy resistance. The battalion reached STE. ANNE about 0015 hours on 9 June and prepared defensive positions. (77) (78)

Thus by 2400 hours on 8 June, the 1st Division had reached its D Day objectives.

DIVISION ATTACK ON 9-10 JUNE (See Map F)

At 0016 hours, the division received F.O. #2 from V Corps and were given the mission to capture VAUBADON-LA COMMUNE-AGY on the BAYEUX-ST. LO HIGHWAY. The main effort was to be on the right to assist the 2d Division in the CERISY FOREST. In addition the division was to protect the Corps left flank and maintain contact with the British. The time of attack was 1200 hours on 9 June. (79)

The 1st Division planned to attack with two regiments

(77) A-4, p. 120-121

(78) A-15

(79) A-12, p. 20

abreast the 26th CT on the left was to attack towards DODIGNY and AGY and the 18th CT on the right was to attack towards VAUBADON-LA COMMUNE. The 16th CT was to be in division reserve and was to mop up by-passed resistance to the Army boundary. (80)

The attack of the 1st Division was delayed one to two hours because the regiments could not get their battalions together on time. In the zone of the 26th CT the 3d Battalion had had a stiff fight in STE ANNE during the night with Germans fighting to avoid encirclement. In the 18th CT zone, the 1st and 3d Battalions were relieved by elements of the 2d Infantry Division. However, the 3d Battalion was in a fire fight near MANDEVILLE when relief was effected and was unable to break contact immediately.

The attack was progressively slower from left to right in the zone of attack. The 3d Battalion of the 26th CT captured its objective, AGY, at 2140 hours on 9 June and 2d Battalion captured DODIGNY around 0200 hours on 10 June. The remainder of the day was spent in consolidating positions in the 26th CT zone.

In the zone of the 18th CT, the 1st and 3d Battalions met determined enemy resistance almost after crossing the line of departure. This resistance had to be by-passed. The 1st Battalion captured LA COMMUNE at 1000 hours, and the 3d Battalion captured VAUBADON around 1600 hours on the afternoon of 10 June. (81)

At 2400 hours on 10 June the 1st Division was along the BAYEUX-ST. LO HIGHWAY, prepared to continue the attack to the south.

(80) A-4, p. 138

(81) A-4, p. 139

SUMMARY

In summary, the 1st Division assaulted the German's vaunted "Atlantic Wall" on 6 June and secured a foothold on continent EUROPE. The division aided in pushing the enemy away from the beachhead area by practically destroying or putting to flight elements of the German 726th, 914th, 915th and 916th Infantry Regiments (the last three formed the 352d Infantry Division). The 1st Division on D Day had suffered some 3000 casualties in the assault.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. BEACH MOVEMENT

That the assault troops were slow in moving across the tidal flat and beach could have been due to two causes: 1. The lack of sufficient planning, and 2. The lack of proper training. As for the planning, it is believed that troops were overloaded, especially with ammunition and grenades. As a result, troops that were forced to wade ashore when many landing crafts could not reach the beach, were unable to make any headway with this weight against rough seas. Once a man was hit by a wave or caught in an undertow, he would lose his ammunition and weapons. As far as the training was concerned, it had evidently been made under more ideal conditions than were faced in NORMANDY. Surely, the men were not accustomed to wading through rough water as they had to do in the assault. Then too, aggressiveness on the part of individuals was lacking. The majority of men who crossed the tidal flat did so by walking. In the training phases, men

should have been taught to move across the expanse of the beach as fast as was humanly possible. It is felt that had the loading plans for the individual soldier been given more consideration and had the training been more realistic, there would not have been so many casualties suffered in crossing the 300 yards of tidal flat.

2. FLOATING OF EQUIPMENT

In amphibious training for an assault on enemy shores, the instruction of troops should include means of floating individual weapons and equipment. Had this been done loss of equipment, especially heavy weapons and rifles would not have been so great. When such equipment has been made capable of floating, and even if the man becomes a casualty while wading ashore, then it would be possible to recover these items for later use. The loss of machine guns and mortars was particularly harmful to the assault units on the beach as the troops were unable to bring the necessary fire to bear on enemy positions. The loss of mortars was felt more strongly when it became apparent that tanks would not be readily available, due to the difficulty of landing. As a consequence, positions that might have been rendered ineffective, continued to harass the landings of the troops for a greater part of D Day.

3. SIMILAR UNIT DESIGNATIONS

Much of the confusion that existed on the beach in the first few hours, can be directly traced to the similarity of unit designations in the initial assault wave. The 2d Bat-

talion of the 16th CT was abreast of the 2d Battalion of the 116th CT and the resemblance in regimental numbers caused men of one regiment to join men of the other. This was especially true when the boat sections of Company E, 116th CT landed about a mile to the east and amidst the boat sections of Company E, 16th CT. To men who were under such heavy enemy fire, it mattered little whether the regiment was the 16th or the 116th CT. The mistake of placing such units adjacent to each other, goes back to the pre-assault planning. Evidently, the planning did not determine that such a similarity in unit designations would cause confusion among the troops. This could have been easily overcome by using any other combination of the six regiments available from the 1st and 29th Divisions.

4. WATERPROOFING EQUIPMENT

When there is a chance that landing craft will be unable to make a dry beach landing, and when there is a chance that assaulting troops will have to wade any distances through water, all the necessary precautions must be taken for waterproofing equipment, especially radios. This had not been done prior to the assault on OMAHA BEACH. Many radios were damaged when they were soaked by the waves. This proved to be one of the main shortcomings of the troops on the beach. Without radios, unit commanders were unable to effect the reorganization of their scattered units. Battalion commanders had no means of contacting or locating their companies. Furthermore, units on the beach were unable to call for the much needed naval supporting fires. Since no artillery was

landed on the beach until late in the morning, the supporting fires were furnished by the Navy. The only means of communications between the beach and the ships was by radio. It was not until late in the morning that adequate shore-to-ship communications were established and then only by the additional landing of troops with radios that were not watersoaked. As an example of the loss of the radio, the Commanding Officer of the 116th CT estimated that three fourths of his radios were lost or damaged on D Day.

5. LANDING SERVICE UNITS

To the confusion and disorganization that was prevalent on OMAHA BEACH in the first few hours of the assault, more turmoil was added by the landing of vehicles and service elements, while the assaulting troops were still pinned to the beaches by enemy fires. About an hour and a half after H Hour, a chemical mortar battalion and another service unit began landing on the beach. Infantrymen were further hampered in their assault tasks by the presence of these units and vehicles on the beach. It seems that the whole thing was a result of poor planning and underestimating the ability of the enemy to hold up the assaulting elements. Even so, there should have been some means to prevent this landing of the service elements. Plans should have been flexible enough to meet such unforeseeable events. In any amphibious assault, service elements should be kept off the beaches until the infantry and engineers have performed their beach tasks and have moved inland from the beach. In the case of OMAHA BEACH, service elements should not have been landed until around 1200

hours and even later because it was not until that hour that the beach exits or draws were partially cleared.

6. ASSUMING LEADERSHIP

During D Day, there were many instances where leadership was missing and still many more instances where leadership was exemplary and outstanding. During the first few hours after landing and especially since the assault wave suffered so many casualties on the tidal flat, men were prone to stay under cover of the shingle instead of trying to get across the beach. Fewer casualties certainly would have been suffered on the shingle if the men had continued to the bluffs. Only in isolated cases, did anyone take charge of a group of men and lead them over the beach to the bluffs. In many areas along the beach, once a gap in the wire was blown, there was nothing to prevent the movement up the bluffs. At 0800 hours Brigadier General Norman D. Cota, assistant Division Commander of the 29th Division, landed in the zone of the 116th CT and found the beach crowded with the 1st and 2d waves of infantry. He immediately undertook the task of organizing small groups of men and placing them under the nearest officer or non-commissioned officer for the movement up the bluffs. The General performed this task for a greater portion of the morning of D Day in spite of the heavy enemy fire that was covering the beach. Certainly, this type of leadership was inspiring to these newly appointed leaders and their men. It was primarily due to these new leaders that men or groups of men began climbing the slopes

of the bluffs and began cleaning up the pockets of enemy resistance that was holding up the entire D Day time table. However, all men must be indoctrinated with the idea of assuming leadership when the situation warrants it, especially after key leaders have ~~been~~ become casualties. Men should not ~~have~~^{have} to be told to do this on the battlefield; it should be an instantaneous action on their part.

7. LANDING SUPPORTING UNITS

The landing of the 18th CT at about 1030 hours on D Day should have been delayed until elements of the 16th CT had moved further inland. The 18th CT came under some of the same fires that were holding up the advance of the 16th CT. This tended to disorganize the advance of the 18th CT up the bluffs. The first units of the 18th CT had only been on the beach about a half hour when units of the 115th CT began landing on top of them. V Corps in a last minute change of plans decided to land the 115th CT. It seems to have been a very poor move to make at this critical time. There was not one regiment on the beach attempting to reorganize, but two. Both units became intermingled and the resulting confusion merely added to the congestion on the beach. The landing of the later units of the 18th CT was delayed almost two hours and the advance up the bluffs was delayed almost four hours. Evidently, V Corps knew nothing of the condition on the beach, especially in front of E-1 draw. If the 115th CT had to be landed at this time, it should have been landed farther to the west on OMAHA BEACH.

LESSONS

1. The necessity for rapid movement of assault elements across the beach should be instilled in troops
2. Equipment of assault troops must be prepared for floating to prevent excessive losses in landing.
3. To avoid confusion, similarly designated units should not be placed adjacent to each other.
4. Waterproofing of equipment, especially radios, must be thoroughly done before an assault landing.
5. Service troops and motorized elements must not be landed until the assault units have moved off the beach.
6. Men must be taught to assume leadership roles when key personnel become casualties.
7. Supporting combat units should not be landed on top of each other in order to avoid confusion and disorganization.