

Phall
13 Dec.

5

Staff Department
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1949-1950

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3RD BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY (1ST INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ASSAULT LANDING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEACHHEAD ON OMAHA BEACH NEAR COLLEVILLE, FRANCE, 6 - 10 JUNE 1944.
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Battalion Operations Officer)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION
ASSAULTING A HOSTILE BEACH AND ESTABLISHING A
BEACHHEAD

Major Edwin W. Elder, Jr., Infantry
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
INDEX	1
BIBLIOGRAPHY	2
ORIENTATION	3
Introduction	3
The General Situation	4
Dispositions and Plans of the 16th Regimental Com- bat Team	8
The Battalion Situation	10
The Battalion Mission	11
The Battalion Plan of Attack	12
NARRATION	13
H-Hour, D-Day	13
D-Day Plus 1	20
D-Day Plus 2	22
D-Day Plus 3	24
D-Day Plus 4	25
ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM	27
LESSONS	30
MAP A - Assault Plan, V Corps	
MAP B - Omaha Beach, 1st Division Plan	
MAP C - 3rd Battalion Beachhead, D-Day	
MAP D - 3rd Battalion Action, 7-10 June	
ILLUSTRATION 1 - Enemy Beach Obstacles	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 Omaha Beachhead
Historical Division, US War Department, 20 September 45
Personal possession of the author
- A-2 World War II, A Concise History
By Roger W. Shugg and Lt. Col. H. A. DeWeerd
Infantry Journal Press, January 1947
(TIS Library)
- A-3 The War in Western Europe, Part 1 (June to December 44)
Department of Military Art and Engineering
U. S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., 1949
(TIS Library)
- A-4 Danger Forward, United States Army, World War II
By H. R. Knickerbocker, Jack Thompson, Jack Belden, Don
Whitehead, A. J. Liebling, Mark Watson, Cy Peterman,
Iris Carpenter, Col. R. E. Dupuy, Drew Middleton and
Former Officers of the Division
Society of the First Division, Washington, D. C. 1947
Personal possession of Major Emil V. B. Edmonds
- A-5 The 16th Infantry 1798-1946
By Lt. John W. Baumgartner, 1st Sgt. Al de Pota, Sgt.
William Fraccio, Cpl. Sammy Fuller (This History was
printed in Germany)
Personal possession of Major Emil V. B. Edmonds
- A-6 Selected Intelligence Reports, Volume I, June 1944-
November 1944
By office of the A C of S, G-2 First U. S. Infantry Divi-
sion, Germany, 6 December 1944
Personal possession of Major Emil V. B. Edmonds
- A-7 The War, Fifth Year
By Edgar McInnis
Oxford, University Press, 1945
(TIS Library)
- A-8 Observer's Report on the Invasion of Normandy
By Alan L. Campbell
Secret Document C152
(TIS Library)
- A-9 Intelligence Activities, 1 June - 30 September 1944
US 1st Division AC of S, G-2
Film (item 921)
(TIS Library)
- A-10 G-3 Reports of Operations 31 May - 30 June 1944
(Neptune) US Army 1st Division, AC of S, G-3
Film (item 924)
(TIS Library)

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3RD BATTALION, 16TH INFANTRY (1ST INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ASSAULT LANDING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BEACHHEAD ON OMAHA BEACH NEAR COLLEVILLE, FRANCE, 6 - 10 JUNE 1944.
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of a Battalion Operations Officer)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Of all the combined amphibious operations executed during World War II, there were undoubtedly none which compared in magnitude with the assault landing in NORMANDY on June 6, 1944.

This monograph is a study of the efforts of the 3rd Battalion, 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, which participated in this landing.

Soon after the entry of the United States into the War in December of 1941, the Allied Powers arrived at the decision to first crush the Axis Military Machine, and then turn their efforts toward the defeat of the Japanese. Soon after this decision was reached, early in 1942, plans were formulated for the liberation of NORTH AFRICA, SICILY and ITALY. (1)

Even as these plans were in the process of being carried out, it became apparent to the Allied leaders that "the defeat of the German armies in Western Europe could still occur only on the ancient battlefields of FRANCE and the Low Countries. Although some strategists continued to press for an Allied main effort through ITALY or the BALKANS, the general determination to undertake a cross-channel invasion prevailed."

(2)

(1) A-2, p. 106

(2) A-3, p. 11

The first plans for the Normandy Invasion were formulated at the Cassablanca Conference in January 1943, and from then until June of '44, when the troops actually landed, every phase of the operation had been thoughtfully studied by the combined American and British Staffs.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

Large build-ups of troops, equipment and supplies were poured into ENGLAND for the Invasion. The troops entered into very strenuous training, some of which was highly specialized.

A stretch of coast at SLAPTON SANDS, SOUTH DEVONSHIRE was provided by the British Government as an assault training area for the American forces. (3) This portion of coastline resembled as closely as possible the conditions of beach, tide, and terrain of the Normandy coast.

To achieve the teamwork and timing necessary for such a large operation, three practice exercises were held. First, Exercise "Duck" was held in January on division level; second, Exercise "Fox" was staged in March on Corps level; and third, the dress rehearsal called "Fabius I" was held during the early part of May. (4)

Necessarily, many valuable lessons were learned from these practice maneuvers, and a number of revisions in plans had to be made.

Final plans called for the 21st Army Group, commanded by General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, to attack with the British Second Army on the left, and the First United States Army, commanded by Lt. General Omar Bradley on the right. The First United States Army, consisting of two Corps, was to land with

(3) A-1, p. 6
(4) A-1, p. 2

the 7th Corps on Utah Beach and the 5th Corps on Omaha Beach.
(See Map A)

The 5th Corps was to arrive at the beachhead in four stages. The initial assault force was Force "O"; the follow-up force was Force "B"; the preloaded build-up contingent was to arrive next, and finally, residual groups were to land.

Force "O" consisted of the 1st Infantry Division, reinforced, minus the 26th Regimental Combat Team. Its chief components were its own 16th and 18th Regimental Combat Teams, with the 116th and 115th Regimental Combat Teams of the 29th Infantry Division attached. In addition, there was a provisional Ranger force of two battalions. (5)

In accordance with the 5th Corps plan to secure a beachhead in the area between PORT-EN-BESSIN and the VIRE RIVER, Force "O" and Force "B" were designed so as to develop (after landing) an assault by one reinforced division into an attack of two divisions abreast. (See Map A)

The plan of the 1st Division was to establish the beachhead on the northern coast of CALVADOS near ST-LAURENT-SUR-MER. (6) The plan of assault on OMAHA BEACH was to land two regimental combat teams on a broad front. The 116th Regimental Combat Team of the 29th Infantry Division was to land on the right and capture VIERVILLE-SUR-MER and push through the defenses. The 16th Regimental Combat Team was to land on the left and push east along the defenses. (See Map B) Succeeding elements of the 1st Infantry Division were to drive inland and establish an initial beachhead. Ranger units were to perform special missions.

(5) A-1, p. 8
(6) A-4, p. 171

As the assault waves approached the shore, probably the greatest planned fires in history were to be concentrated on the beach to assist the troops in carrying out their mission. The Navy was to fire on and to the rear of the beaches, direct fire on strong points and beach defenses, and as the landing craft touched down, the fire was to be lifted to the flanks and the rear area. To fire this mission the supporting naval craft were the American battleships Arkansas, Texas, and Nevada, plus three cruisers, the Bellona, Black Prince and Glasgow, ten destroyers, and nine rocket-launching craft which were converted LCS (Landing Craft Ships). Also assisting was the French cruiser, F. S. Montcalm. (7)

During the planning stage (shortly after the 1st Division returned to ENGLAND), a Photo-Interpretation Team and an Order of Battle Team ^{WERE} was attached to the division. (8) These attached personnel, working with the Division G-2, issued weekly estimates of the enemy situation. These estimates were later found to be generally accurate.

Enemy units known to be in or adjacent to the battle zone included the 726th Infantry Regiment, the 914th Infantry Regiment, the 916th Infantry Regiment, and the 915th Infantry Regiment. (9) (See Map B)

Known enemy defenses were reinforced infantry positions which guarded all the exits from the beaches. Strong points consisted of reinforced concrete pillboxes and personnel shelters and were reported to contain (in addition to their heavy weapons) AT and AA guns and light field guns. Anti-tank ditches had been constructed across the major beach exits

(7) Personal knowledge

(8) A-6, p. 8

(9) A-1, Map No. 10

and nearly all the strong points were wired and mined. It was estimated that enemy airpower would be comparatively weak. (10)

The morale of the 1st Infantry Division was exceptionally high at this time. Even though the division was participating in strenuous training for the "big show", there were also recreational periods provided. All units took part in the usual American sports of basketball, football and boxing, with inter-regimental and inter-divisional tournaments being staged. Also, troops were allowed to visit with regularity the smaller towns in their areas and were given passes to visit London and Scotland.

To keep the importance of their mission always uppermost in the minds of the officers and men, many of the higher ranking leaders visited the area and talked with the men. Among these were General SIR BERNARD MONTGOMERY, General DWIGHT EISENHOWER and General OMAR BRADLEY. (11)

The period 5-7 June, was calculated to be the time when moon and tide conditions would be the most favorable for landing operations, and the tentative date set for the invasion was June 5. However, the forecast of sea and wind conditions was so unfavorable on the 4th of June, that General EISENHOWER postponed the invasion for 24 hours. Weather conditions improved very little, but many of the troops were already on the boats and at sea and any further postponement would have meant waiting another 4 or 5 weeks before proper moon and tide conditions would appear again. So, at 0400, hours, June 5th, General EISENHOWER gave the order for the invasion to proceed

(10) A-5, p. 79-80

(11) Personal knowledge

the following day, and H hour for Omaha Beach was set as 0630 hours. (12)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 16TH REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

During the second week of May (1945) all units of the 16th Regimental Combat Team were moved to a marshalling area in the vicinity of LONG BRADY, DORSET. Here the division commander, Major General CLARENCE HUEBNER, addressed the troops, and the information of the coming operation was given to the men in the ranks. (13) Due to the confined space within the marshalling area, most of the time was spent on maintenance of equipment and arms, and the study of maps, sand tables, terrain models of the beach, aerial photographs and other specially made devices. (14) Because of this study, one man more than a year after the invasion, said that "he had become so familiar with the beach around COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER in its miniature form that when he landed on D-Day it was like going back to a countryside with which he had been acquainted since boyhood." (15)

At low tide Omaha Beach consisted of a tidal flat about 300 yards wide, at the end of which the ground rose abruptly to a height of about 50 feet. The eastern sector of the beach was very rocky and only about 150 yards wide. At the end of this rocky flat was a rock cliff which was practically vertical and about 30 feet high. (See Map B) This cliff continued eastward into the British sector, and really formed an obstacle between the American and British sector. At the top of and beyond the bluff the ground was rolling and divided into fields

(12) A-3, p. 87-88
(13) Personal knowledge
(14) Personal knowledge
(15) A-5, p. 69

of various sizes by hedgerows which were about 4 feet high and 3 feet thick.

During the extensive study of the terrain prior to the landings even the texture of the sand (which had been picked up by submarine) was examined. A great deal of attention was also placed on the study of the times of the rise and fall of the tides and how strong the tides were. This study was to aid in deciding how many and what types of obstacles could be placed in the water by the Germans and be maintained there against the strength of the tides. Also extensively studied was the depth of the sea bottom, so that it could be determined how near to land the assault boats would "touch down", throughout the landing area.

The mission of the 16th was to reduce the beach defenses in its zone of action and proceed with all possible speed to the D-Day Phase Line. It was then to cover the landing of the remainder of the 5th Corps. (16)

On 1 June 1944, the 16th Regimental Combat Team began embarking at WEYMOUTH. The 1st Battalion went aboard the U.S.S. Samuel Chase; the 2nd Battalion boarded the U.S.S. Henrico; and the 3rd Battalion embarked on H.M.S. Empire Anvil. (17)

The general plan of the 16th Regimental Combat Team reinforced was to land on Omaha Beach in areas designated as "Fox Green" and "Easy Red" at H-hour, D-Day with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions abreast, the 3rd Battalion on the left, and the 1st Battalion in reserve. (See Map B) Each battalion was to seize the objectives in its assigned zone.

(16) A-5, p. 73

(17) Personal knowledge

THE BATTALION SITUATION

After the 3rd Battalion embarked on 1 June, the troops immediately began to get acquainted with the British sailors and especially the British coxswains on their assault boats. Once they were acquainted and settled, more study and briefings took place. In conjunction with this study, practice loading of the assault boats and "abandon ship" drills were carried on.

During the practice loadings aboard ship, the final polish was put upon the placing of the "teams" in the assault boats. For this landing the units were not to fight by platoons, but rather were broken down into sections according to the weapon with which they were armed. Each section was arranged so that there would be 35 men and their equipment in each boat. There were flame-thrower teams, BAR teams, bangalore torpedo teams, demolition teams, riflemen, and additional personnel such as field artillery observers and photographers.

On another ship in the follow-up force were replacements for the 3rd Battalion. These replacements had been carried in each company of the 3rd Battalion as overstrength during the training period in England. Each group was approximately the size of a platoon with an officer in command. The men had all been briefed in the same manner as the initial assault troops. This system provided immediate well-trained, well-briefed replacements for each organization after the assault landing.

(18)

Special invasion money was issued to the troops along with special assault gas masks, and their "Mae Wests": Assault

(18) Personal knowledge

jackets containing special features such as water-proofed pockets were issued to the troops who were to be in the lead waves.

The invasion convoy set sail late in the afternoon of 5 June. The trip across the channel was very uneventful. The weather was wet, the wind strong, and the sea was very rough. All British seamen were alerted and at their guns. On the H.M. S. Empire Anvil the 3rd Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. CHARLES HORNER issued the final battalion order as a last briefing.

THE BATTALION MISSION

The 3rd Battalion was to land in the area of "Fox Green" at H-hour, reduce beach defenses in its zone, and protect the left flank of the 1st Division. It was to capture the towns of LE GRANDE HAMEAU, STE-HONORINE-DES-PERTES, HUPPAIN, and the high ground at MT. CAUVIN. (See Map D)

There it was to make contact with the British on the left of the American sector and be prepared on orders to assist the British 47th Commando Battalion in the capture of PORT-EN-BESSIN. (19)

Landing with the assault troops were to be 32 DD tanks, which were special tanks devised to swim ashore. Sixteen were to land on the 3rd Battalion beach ("Fox Green"). These tanks came from B and C Companies of the 741st Tank Battalion.

In addition, in direct support of the 3rd Battalion was the 62nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion, SP. Prior to the landing, this armored field artillery battalion was to take positions in the boat lanes about 3000 yards in rear of the as-

(19) Personal knowledge

sault waves and fire on the beach beginning at H-30 and lift fire at H-5. (20)

Also landing behind the first wave was a special Engineer Task Force, whose mission was to neutralize the beach obstacles.

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK

The 3rd Battalion's plan of attack was to assault beach "Fox Green" at H-Hour, D-Day with Company I and Company L in the first wave, landing immediately behind the DD tanks. Company I was to be on the right. (See Map B)

Following closely behind the first wave were to be elements of the Special Engineer Task Force. Their mission was to destroy beach obstacles and make roads across the beach for vehicles.

The second wave was to consist of Company K's assault sections, followed in the 3rd wave by Company M and one section of Battalion Headquarters commanded by the Battalion Executive officer. The Battalion Command boat was to land on the Battalion Commander's order. It was felt that he could best observe the action from a floating position just off shore. Also, the naval observer in this Command Boat could see better from this position and would be better able to adjust the fire of the naval ships. (See Map B)

Companies I, K and L were to be loaded in LCA'S (British Landing Craft Assault boats). These craft were well armored on all sides and part of the top. They were easily maneuvered due to the fact that each propellor was operated by an individual engine. The rest of the Battalion was to be loaded in

(20) A-5, p. 74

American LCVP's (Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel). Both craft had the same capacity, but the British LCA sat very low in the water so as to have underwater exhausts for quietness in night landings. This sometimes proved to be quite a disadvantage as they were easily "swamped" in the water.

The mission for the companies was to push across the beaches using Exit F-1, destroy the enemy in their zone, and then proceed with all possible speed to the high ground west of PORT-EN-BESSIN.

There was no line of departure designated by battalion, as the Navy handled all movement and times from ship to shore.(21)

NARRATION

H-HOUR, D-DAY

All troops of the 3rd Battalion were loaded into the assault craft on time in the early morning of 6 June 1944. This in itself was quite a task in view of the fact that the HMS Anvil carried only enough assault craft on board for three companies. The assault boats for Company M and Battalion Headquarters came from other ships in the transport area. At the time of loading there was a lot of loud yelling from coxswains to the ship to determine whether or not they had come to the right place. The noise and confusion did not in any way tip off our arrival to the enemy, as the transport area was 25,000 yards from shore. As the troops loaded there were calls of "good luck" from their new-found British buddies.

The assault craft circled in a rendezvous area until all boats were present in their wave and then headed inland. This

(21) Personal knowledge

was the start of the long-awaited moment - "the assault on the West Wall".

The DD tanks started (from 6000 yards out) toward the beach at H minus 1 hour as they were to be on the beach at H-1 minute. This proved to be a mistake. Due to the rough sea 26 out of the 32 tanks sank as they touched the water. The few that did reach shore were almost immediately "knocked out by enemy anti-tank fire". (22) This disaster had a bad effect on the morale of the incoming waves of troops. As they approached this area they could see a great number of men struggling in the water, and the assault craft could not stop to rescue them. However, there were some British RAF rescue craft darting in and out among the assault boats, and they were able to pull some men aboard and take them back to ships in the transport area. Naturally, the fire power which had been expected from these tanks was gone.

As the first wave approached the beach, Captain Kimball Richmond, Company Commander of I Company, radioed that his company had been taken to the wrong beach and was somewhere in the vicinity of PORT-EN-BESSIN. This meant that they could not land at their designated position at H hour, so the boats carrying them were turned around and started back for "Fox Green". The Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. CHARLES HORNER, ordered Captain ANTHONY PRUCUAL, Company Commander of Company K to take over I Company's mission. This resulted in Company L's (commanded by Captain JOHN ARMELINO) landing alone, as Company K was 10 minutes behind the first wave. (23) Company L landed on "Fox Red" beach at 0700 hours, 30 minutes late because of

(22) A-5, p. 82

(23) Personal knowledge

high seas and poor visibility. (24) (See Map C)

Only four assault sections and the Company Headquarters from Company L landed, as the boat carrying its 4th assault section capsized shortly after leaving the transport area. There was no supporting fire at this time, as the Naval gunfire had already lifted and the DD tanks were either sunk or "knocked out". As yet, no other tanks had arrived.

The LCVP's carrying L Company stopped short of beach obstacles about 25 yards from dry land. These obstacles consisted of "Belgian Elements C obstacles, height 7'7" and width 8'5"; German Steel Hegdehogs, height 5' with Teller mines attached; German Steel Tetrahedra, height 5'; poles sunk in the ground, and barbed wire. (See Illustration 1) Most of the under-water obstacles were mine-capped. Some of the obstacles did prove an advantage to us in one sense, as they provided cover for the men who were wading ashore under heavy direct fire.

As the men came onto the beach the greatest disappointment to them was discovery that it had not been touched by the air bombardment. They had hopes to use the bomb craters as fox-holes. Finding no craters, those men who lived to reach the beach started desperately to dig holes in the sand, but the high waves filled them with water. The only cover they could find from the fierce fire was the wreckage scattered on the beach and the dead bodies which had floated ashore. Enemy machine gun fire was particularly deadly during their first minutes on the beach.

It was later discovered (from remarks made by the first

Germans captured) that one of the reasons for the unusually heavy fire on the beach was the unexpected presence of the 352nd German Infantry Division in the vicinity of COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER. This division had been moved into position for maneuvers there on D-Day minus 1, and had all of its guns set up and trained on OMAHA BEACH. This additional fire-power more than doubled that which was anticipated in pre-invasion planning.

In the draw at Exit F-1 the enemy could be seen and the naval forward observer in the Battalion Command boat called for fire from the French cruiser the "F.S. Montcalm". This fire scattered the enemy, after which the naval observer "walked" the fire up and down the draw. This was the most accurate fire the author has ever witnessed.

The sections of L Company were reorganized under a verticle cliff at the edge of the water, where they discovered the loss of their 4th Section in addition to the losses inflicted by the enemy to the other sections. Their company strength was now reduced from 187 to 123 men.

Upon completion of the reorganization the company under command of Captain ARMELLINO began to assault the strong points on the beach.

While directing this assault Captain ARMELLINO was seriously wounded and Lieutenant CUTLER took over his command. The company continued its action against the enemy's dug-in emplacements, with sections working as teams and supporting each other. In the fierce fighting that ensued Company L suffered heavy casualties, but fortunately in the confusion of battle

elements of the 116th Infantry Regiment and Company F of our 2nd Battalion were landed by mistake on our beach (Fox Green). They were immediately put into action as reinforcements for L Company. (See Map C)

About this time K Company "touched down". Accurate enemy machine gun and sniper fire inflicted heavy casualties and pinned this company down momentarily. While moving the men into firing positions Captain PRUCNAL, the company commander, and Lieutenant BRANDT, his executive officer, were mortally wounded. Lieutenant ROBINSON, who took over to direct the company across the beaches, was killed by a sniper. Lieutenant STUMBAUGH reorganized the troops and pushed forward to the top of the hill where they joined L Company. (See Map C)

These two companies, fighting in sections which had been previously formed, continued to hold the high ground in spite of the fact that they were fighting separately because they were on the extreme left flank of the American forces. These sections made a fine fighting team, but replacing key men in them was difficult. This difficulty was due to the fact that members of the sections were specially trained in the use of weapons not normally used by the infantry, such as flame-throwers, bangalore torpedoes, pack charges and pole charges. However, this difficulty did not hinder the advance of the two companies, and a patrol reached the road between LE GRANDE HAMEAU and COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER, but was forced by enemy fire to withdraw. Another patrol reached the town of CABURG, but was surrounded by 52 enemy troops. (See Map C) However, unusual as it may seem, one member of the 3 man patrol was a good talker and convinced the Germans to surrender. (25)

(25) A-5, p. 97

During this action I Company was returned to its correct landing point and met with the same difficulties which the previous companies had encountered on landing. Very few men were landed, however, as most of the LCAs had swamped on the way from PORT-EN-BESSIN. This company, now numbering only 17 men, pushed forward and joined L and K Companies.

M Company "touched down" shortly afterward and although receiving heavy fire, managed to get ashore with the loss of only two boats sunk. This company joined the other units of the battalion as soon as possible. (See Map C)

Captain EDMONDS, company commander of M Company, and Captain RICHMOND started to reorganize the battalion. At this time (which was about 1300 hours) the enemy, supported by mortar and machine gun fire, counterattacked.

This effort was repulsed, and Lieutenant MONTEITH, who exposed himself so as to direct the defense more effectively, was killed. For this heroic deed he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. (26)

The 3rd Battalion Commander ordered his command boat ashore at 0830 hours. Because of the confusion of battle and the wreckage littered on the shore, the boat "touched down" on the 2nd Battalion beach, (See Map C) and its occupants were pinned down by enemy fire for several hours. This Headquarters group, consisting of the battalion commander, his S-2, S-3, Artillery liaison officer, naval forward observer, radio operators and linemen, finally managed to cross the beach and gain shelter in the high ground beyond. Upon reaching this shelter, the headquarters group discovered that of the original

(26) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain KIMBALL RICHMOND, Company Commander of I Company

35 who had landed from their boat only 15 could be found. This small group then started off to join the battalion, but was unsuccessful for a time because of the enemy pockets of resistance which separated them, and the lack of any fighting personnel. (27)

Fighting across open beaches was not a new experience for the 3rd Battalion, as they had previously taken part in the assault landings in AFRICA and SICILY. However, both of these landings had been made at night, and neither of these beaches was half so heavily defended as was OMAHA BEACH. Also, the Normandy beach differed somewhat from the others in that the beach itself was about 300 yards across and then the ground rose abruptly to about 80 feet. On the eastern edge of "Fox Green" was a rock cliff about 30 feet high. This feature of the terrain offered some cover for the troops once the 300 yards of open beach was crossed.

On the top of this cliff the men encountered a new kind of obstacle in the form of hedgerows. These hedgerows were about 4 feet high and 3 feet thick, and did offer some protection. It was later found in trying to advance against the Germans that they were masters in hedgerow fighting. One of their favorite tricks was to dig a slot through the base of the hedgerows at each corner and place a machine gun in each slot so as to get grazing crossfire about 6 inches from the ground.

Being experienced fighting troops, the Companies soon mastered hedgerow fighting to a degree and pushed forward into the town of LE GRANDE HAMEAU at 1600 hours. (See Map C) Upon

(27) Personal knowledge

entering the town, the battalion reorganized and set up an all-round defense in a large farm house surrounded by brick walls. This reorganization showed that the battalion strength now numbered only 154 men. (28) During the night this small unit beat back several attempts by the Germans to infiltrate its position.

Meanwhile, the battalion headquarters group had made its way to beach "Fox Green" and the battalion commander had set up the command post for the night. As it was impossible to tell whether troops in the area were friendly ones or German patrols infiltrating the area, the command post was set up in a draw near the beach. Fortunately (due to prior planning) the radios had been water-proofed and equipped with life jackets before the landing, and communication was possible between the battalion commander and the remnants of his battalion.

Thus ended the 3rd Battalion's first day of action in Normandy.

D-DAY PLUS 1

At dawn, Lieutenant Colonel HORNER (the Battalion Commander) ordered the operations officer to find the battalion, organize a forward command post, and then send a messenger to guide the Battalion Headquarters Group and M Company to that location. Meanwhile, the Battalion Commander was attempting to contact regiment for further orders, and also organizing any men of the 3rd Battalion whom he could find on the beach. Captain EDMONDS of M Company sent out men from his company to pick up any mortar and machine gun ammunition which they could

(28) Personal knowledge; statement of Captain Kimball Richmond, Company Commander of I Company

find strewn along the beach. This was the first instance of re-supply, and was a very difficult one as the beach was still under very heavy artillery and mortar fire. Most of the ammunition which was salvaged had been swept onto the beach by the surf.

Upon locating the remnants of the Battalion at LE GRANDE HAMEAU, the S-3 immediately dispatched a messenger to the rear battalion command post on the beach. In addition, patrols were sent out to destroy enemy snipers who were very active and making effective use of the cover afforded by the hedgerows near our position in the farm house.

About 1000 hours the Battalion Commander arrived at the battalion forward command post. He was accompanied by B Company of the 745th Tank Battalion. The tanks were immediately assigned the mission of spraying with machine gun fire the hedgerows in the vicinity of our position. This action was very successful in quieting the enemy snipers and served to boost the morale of our troops considerably.

A liaison officer from the 745th Tank Battalion arrived at 1100 hours to report that Company B of the 745th Tank Battalion was relieved of attachment to the 3rd Battalion and was attached effective immediately to the 18th Regimental Combat Team. The 18th and 26th Regimental Combat Teams had landed during the night and were pushing inland. The information that these two combat teams were ashore and fighting was very heartening to the troops of the 3rd Battalion.

By early afternoon, the remaining members of the Headquarters Group and M Company had made their way to the forward

battalion position. Not far behind this group replacements arrived and the battalion again reorganized. At 1900 hours, the Battalion Commander issued an attack order for the movement eastward toward STE-HONORINE-DES-PERTES. The battalion was to move in a column of companies, with L Company leading off and followed in order by Battalion Headquarters, K, I and M Companies. Darkness fell as the lead company had covered about 700 yards toward their objective, and Lieutenant Colonel HORNER ordered the battalion to go into an all-round defense for the night. The slowness of the battalion advance was caused by the fierce resistance of small pockets of determined enemy troops. It was necessary to destroy each pocket of resistance so that lines of communication to the beach could be kept open. This was essential for the safe evacuation of the wounded and the resupply of the battalion.

D-DAY PLUS 2

Their third day ashore found the 3rd Battalion still moving eastward toward its D-Day objectives. Although small groups of enemy continued to offer stubborn resistance from well dug-in emplacements, the troops pushed doggedly forward. Late in the afternoon STE-HONORINE-DES-PERTES fell to the Battalion. (See Map D) By this time the 62nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion SP had seven guns ashore and furnished supporting fires for the battalion. With the coming of this additional fire support and the clearing of the weather, the spirits of the men rose considerably. The battalion continued its forward movement and the town of HUPPAIN was also captured. (See Map D)

With the capture of HUPPAIN the battalion had now extended its communication lines a distance of approximately 3 miles. Normally, this distance would not be considered excessive, but it was a difficult one for the battalion because of the lack of transportation and the sniper fire which harassed any vehicles returning to the beach for supplies.

As the 3rd Battalion moved out of HUPPAIN toward the high ground west of PORT-EN-BESSIN, the Germans launched a counter-attack. After about thirty minutes of fierce fighting, they were driven back and the battalion continued on toward its objective and occupied the high ground west of PORT-EN-BESSIN.

(See Map D)

Here contact was made with the British 47th Commando Battalion which was reorganizing after an unsuccessful attempt to capture the port. The Battalion Commander of the 47th requested us to evacuate his wounded before he and his men attempted another "go". (29) Arrangements were made to evacuate the wounded back through American channels immediately. In addition, a forward observer from the 62nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion SP was made available to accompany the Commandos and direct any supporting artillery fire needed for their attack. This attack "jumped off" and after fierce fighting the Port fell to the British.

The 3rd Battalion then sent a strong combat patrol to MT. CAUVIN, approximately 1½ miles south of PORT-EN-BESSIN. Meeting no resistance, this patrol occupied the high ground there, and made contact with the 1st Battalion of the 26th Regimental Combat Team, which was in position about 1000 yards from MT.

(29) Personal knowledge; statement of the Commanding Officer of the British 47th Commando Battalion

CAUVIN. (See Map D)

On the 8th of June, the battalion reported to regiment that its D-Day objectives had been captured. When one considers the fierce enemy resistance, the great number of casualties suffered, and the difficulties of supply and evacuation, it is not remarkable the 3rd Battalion arrived at its objectives three days late--it is amazing that they were successful in arriving there at all. (30)

During the remainder of their 3rd day in Normandy, the battalion was occupied with mopping up scattered enemy resistance in the area.

D-DAY PLUS 3

All elements of the 1st Division were making progress and continuing their attacks on the morning of 9 June. The Regimental Commander gave the 3rd Battalion new orders which contained the mission of clearing enemy resistance up to the Army boundary from PORT-EN-BESSIN to VAUCELLES, maintaining contact with the British on the left flank, and organizing defensive positions in the TOUR-EN-BESSIN area. (See Map D) The 7th Field Artillery Battalion was to be in direct support of the 3rd Battalion for this action.

The battalion met only slight resistance and managed to capture a large number of prisoners. These enemy troops, having been caught in a pocket formed by the sea behind them, the British on their left and the Americans on their right, willingly surrendered.

During the late afternoon, the battalion reached TOUR-

(30) Personal knowledge

EN-BESSIN and occupied defensive positions in the vicinity of that town. (See Map D) Companies I and L, each with a machine gun platoon attached, were placed on line: Company K was in reserve; and, Company M's mortar platoon in support.

With the remainder of the 16th Regimental Combat Team, the 3rd Battalion was now placed in division reserve. As night fell, both officers and men for the first time had the conviction that the invasion had been a successful one. This was quite a contrast to the gloomy outlook which most of them had held after the landings on D-Day.

D-DAY PLUS 4

During the night and the next day (June 10th) only local security for the battalion was employed. The men not occupied in these security measures were given the chance to shave, bathe, and clean their weapons and uniforms. One of the enterprising doughboys found a source of potatoes (possibly in the cellar of a French farm house) and everyone enjoyed a good breakfast of fried potatoes.

After breakfast, the battalion began to reorganize again. During this reorganization, the men turned in all the special equipment issued for the landings, such as the flame throwers, bangalore torpedoes, and pole and satchel charges. The special sections which had been formed for the landing operation were dissolved and the battalion began to operate on its normal T/O and E.

Late in the afternoon, the battalion was alerted for movement and sent to a position nearer the 18th and 26th Regimental

Combat Teams, which had by this time advanced inland about 7 miles.

To sum up the results of this action, anyone reviewing the events of the first five days following the landings on OMAHA BEACH could have nothing but praise for the actions of the men of the 3rd Battalion, 16th Regimental Combat Team. Against almost insurmountable odds, they, as part of the Team, played a major part in securing the beachhead and opening the main personnel exit for the other units of the 5th Corps. "Individually and collectively the members of the 16th Infantry Regiment turned threatened catastrophe into a glorious victory for the American army". (31)

The regiment received the Distinguished Unit Citation for its gallant efforts on D-Day, and on July 2nd, approximately a month after the invasion, General EISENHOWER himself, accompanied by Lt. General OMAR BRADLEY and Major General LEONARD GEROW went to the 1st Division Command Post in Normandy, to personally decorate a number of the men who had helped lead the American assault on France.

After pinning on the medals, General EISENHOWER made a short speech to the men in which he said (in part) "You are one of the finest regiments in our army. I know your record from the day you landed in NORTH AFRICA and through SICILY. I know that you want to go home, but I demanded if I came up here that you would have to come with me. You've got what it takes to finish the job". (32)

(31) A-5, p. 112

(32) A-5, p. 114

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

The important part of any major operation is the logistical support. This is particularly true of an amphibious operation because of the extended lines of communication and the methods of transportation which must be utilized. Supplies must be loaded on ships, ports should be available for unloading at the area and trucks should be available to deliver the equipment to supply points.

Allowances must be made for the loss of large amounts of equipment by the assaulting waves. To alleviate this loss, life preservers must be made available to be placed on the hand-carried equipment. This will result in smaller losses, as any equipment (such as mortars, machine guns and ammunition for these weapons) that is dropped by the men into the water will not sink to the bottom but can be towed by them to dry land.

The only means of initial evacuation of wounded men is the use of assault boats which are bringing in succeeding waves of troops. This is undependable and difficult, as the boats may be destroyed when they touch down and also the wounded men must be exposed to the firing as they are taken back across the open beach to be placed into these boats.

2. NUMBER, TYPES AND USE OF LANDING CRAFT

To avoid confusion in the transport area, each ship carrying troops for the landing should be equipped with enough landing craft to accommodate all of the troops on that particular ship. This would eliminate the confusion caused by bringing other landing craft to the ship for loading.

The good characteristics of the British LCA and the American LCVP should be combined so as to perfect a more suitable type of landing craft. Those features of the LCA which should be adopted are: (a) its all-around armor, (b) its underwater exhausts which makes for quietness in landing, (c) its low silhouette, and (d) its ability to be lowered into the water fully loaded with troops. The best features of the LCVP are: (a) its speed, (b) seaworthiness, and (c) its maneuverability.

I believe that the American navy should eliminate the use of a rendezvous area (going around in a continuous circle until all boats in the wave have arrived) in assembling their assault waves, as it only makes the troops more seasick than under ordinary conditions. The British lower all landing craft from davits into the water simultaneously from both sides of the transport. The landing craft then move forward to the bow of the transport, join up and head inland.

3. SUPPORTING ARTILLERY

Self-propelled armored artillery is more effective for use in the initial landings than standard artillery. Self-propelled artillery pieces are able to carry a basic load of ammunition, their full tracks enable them to cross the sandy beaches with relative ease, and they are able to go into firing position immediately. Standard artillery must be transported in amphibious trucks, and in order to carry a basic load of ammunition the trucks must be overloaded and consequently often sink in a rough sea. Also, upon reaching the beach, the artill-

lery must be lifted from the trucks by cranes and this is very time-consuming.

4. DD TANKS

Either the DD tanks must be improved or they must be used in a different fashion. It was learned through sad experience on D-Day that these tanks cannot swim 6000 yards to shore in a rough sea. They should be taken closer to shore before being floated or should be improved so that they can maneuver more successfully through rough water.

5. REPLACEMENTS

It is of vital importance that units being trained for an assault landing are kept over-strength while training. Thus, after the landing, these additional troops can be used as replacements in positions for which they have already been especially trained. Also, these men should be thoroughly oriented as to the mission of their units at the same time as the regular troops are.

6. TRAINING OF MEN IN SPECIAL SECTIONS

Each man who is trained to fight in special assault sections with special weapons should be familiarized with the use of all other weapons in his section. Thus, every man in a particular section is able to take over and capably handle the job of any other member of the section. This is important so that such weapons as the flame-thrower will not be out of action should the man who is armed with it become a casualty. This system was followed to a small extent during the training

for the assault landings in Normandy.

7. THE DEFENSE OF THE ENEMY

The enemy violated the principals of defense in that he had no defense in depth and no reserves set aside to counter-attack. He maintained large concentrations of troops on his main line of defense and this factor made the initial landing and the breakthrough more difficult. However, once his position was breached, our troops met only weak and scattered enemy resistance in proceeding inland.

I believe that this was one of the leading factors in the success of establishing the beachhead at OMAHA.

LESSONS

1. An important procedure to remember in successfully supplying an amphibious operation is the water-proofing of as much equipment as possible and attaching life preservers to the hand-carried equipment.

2. We would have a more suitable type of landing craft if we would combine the best characteristics of the British LCA and those of our LCVP. Also, we should adopt the British method of loading and assembling assault boats.

3. Self-propelled armored artillery is much more effective for use in the initial landings than standard artillery.

4. DD tanks must be improved or must be used in a different manner if they are to give effective support to troops in an assault landing.

5. Whenever possible, replacements for units participating in assault landings should receive identical specialized

training at the same time as the regular troops in these units.

6. Each man who is trained to fight in a special assault section should be familiarized with all the weapons used so that he can take over and capably handle the job of any other member of that section.

7. To successfully defend any area you must have defense in depth and reserve forces must be set aside to counterattack.