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SUPPLY OPERATIONS IN THE BRISTOL CHANNEL AREA
DURING "OPERATION OVERLORD"
15 April - 6 June 1944
(Personal Experience of an Operational Supply Officer)

Type of operation described: SUPPLY OF TROOPS IN
MARSHALLING AREAS AND EMBARKATION POINTS
FOR A CROSS-CHANNEL INVASION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index	1
Bibliography	2
Introduction	4
The Formation of XXIX District OPERATIONAL Headquarters	6
Security	7
The Mission	8
The Plan	9
Supply Problems	12
Embarkation Supply	19
Embarkation Feeding	22
The "Reverse" Plan	23
Analysis and Criticism	24
Lessons	26
Map I - Strategy of Overlord	
Map II - Concentration Areas U. S. Forces	
Map III - Mounting Installations	
Chart A - OPERATIONAL Organization	
Chart B - Mounting Plan Phases	

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the European Theater of Operations Supply Section of the Service of Supply OPERATIONAL Headquarters, XXIX District, at NEWPORT, Monmouthshire, England, from 15 April 1944 until 6 June 1944.

The word "OPERATIONAL" was used to designate the headquarters and various other installations to include troops and personnel responsible for the XXIX District's participation in OPERATION OVERLORD, also to distinguish them from other Service of Supply installations and troops in the area, and from the troops being staged. It appeared to be under the joint command of the Commanding Officer XXIX District and the Commanding Officer 17th Major Port. Command directives were received through the Commanding Officer Western Base Section at CHESTER from Service of Supply Headquarters at CHELTENHAM in most instances. Technical directives were received direct to the OPERATIONAL Services from the Special Staff Sections at Western Base Section in some instances; in others, the Service of Supply Staff Sections contacted the OPERATIONAL sections direct by telephone. (1)

OVERLORD, as is now generally known, was the code name for an operation to be based in the United Kingdom to invade Northern France and to strike at the heart of Germany in 1944. (See Map I)

(1) Personal Knowledge.

OVERLORD followed ROUNDUP, plans for invasion of Northern France in 1943, which was to have followed TORCH, the invasion of North Africa in 1942. ROUNDUP had not materialized in 1943 because of a lack of landing-craft in the European Theater of Operations, and because the limited number available were being used in the Sicilian and Italian campaigns. (2) Premier Stalin had insisted on a Second Front with a date 1 April 1944 at the Teheran Conference, and had been promised an invasion of Northern France by 1 May 1944. Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt had agreed on PLAN OVERLORD and a date of execution of 1 May 1944 at Cairo, when the appointment of General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander was agreed upon. (3) OVERLORD plans were formulated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Supreme Allied Command at London under the direction of Lieutenant General Frederick E. Morgan. (4) These plans were later altered by General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery to increase the assault landing area from GRANDCAMP to CAEN, to from VARREVILLE to the ORNE RIVER and to increase the assault forces from three to five divisions, the airborne assault from two-thirds of one division to three divisions, and to change the assault time from May to June. (5)

On 29 October 1943, the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, had delegated to the Commanding General Service of Supply, European Theater of Operations, the responsibility for mounting that part of the operations to be performed by United States forces. (6) (See Chart A) The Service of Supply Mounting Plan, however, was not published until 20 March 1944. (7) Western Base Section was more

(2) A-7, p. 2; (3) A-6, p. 53; (4) A-6, p. 9; (5) A-2, p. 4; (6) A-8, p. 1; (7) A-8, p. 2.

MISSION
SECRET

prompt with its plans, however, for by early April the OPERATIONAL troops were already in XXIX district or under orders. (8)

THE FORMATION OF XXIX DISTRICT OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

The personnel designated by Western Base Section to form the OPERATIONAL Headquarters began assembling in NEWPORT the second week of April 1944. Some were members of the 17th Major Port stationed in NEWPORT and were already there; others reported to the Commanding Officer XXIX District from outside the area. It appeared at once that there was little space available and no provision had been made for housing the headquarters. Some sections managed to get some place to operate temporarily by moving into corners of their corresponding section of the 17th Major Port. It was a matter of weeks though, before the Engineers were able to erect three portable buildings on a nearby vacant lot to supply the necessary office space. (9)

It was about the 15th of April when the entire staff assembled for its first meeting. These general staff meetings occurred regularly at least twice weekly, thereafter, and were conducted by the Commanding Officer of the XXIX District or the Commanding Officer of the 17th Port. At these conferences directives for further operations were issued, and various staff sections reported on their individual progress and coordinated with other staff sections.

(8) Personal Knowledge; (9) Personal Knowledge.

At this first meeting it was found there were the following special staff sections: (10)

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Adjutant General | 6. Quartermaster | 11. Security |
| 2. Judge Advocate | 7. Surgeon | 12. British Liaison |
| 3. Transportation | 8. Signal | 13. Finance |
| 4. Engineer | 9. Chemical | 14. Chaplain |
| 5. Ordnance | 10. Post Exchange | |

Each of the Supply Services Chiefs and the Security Chief were to command the troops of their respective branches which participated in the OPERATION. It will be noted that there was no coordinating staff at the inception. Several conferences later, when a need for supply coordination became apparent, the Quartermaster Section Chief was given the responsibility for all supply. (11)

SECURITY

It is believed that much of the early fog in which most of the staff moved from time to time was due to security measures. It is now known that the policy of higher headquarters was to inform subordinates only enough of the plan to accomplish their part of the mission, and then only in time for them to accomplish it. As a result, orders and information came to the Operational Staff from conferences, the Commanding Officer in person, or by direct contact with a higher technical representative. Though the whole staff used "Top Secret" for their necessary memoranda, there was almost a complete absence of written orders or directives from higher level. It may be added that only a very limited number of the staff became BIGOTED (informed as to the time and place

(10) Personal Knowledge; (11) Personal Knowledge.

of the INVASION). These were personnel charged with map supply and assisting in briefing the troops in the Marshalling Areas after they were sealed. The Security Officer was continually on the job checking and enforcing security measures and with counter-intelligence work. CIC personnel, generally in civilian clothes, but not too difficult to spot with a little experience, were always on hand where operations were in progress. (12) That the security measures were successful was proved by the fact that the INVASION achieved surprise. (13)

THE MISSION

The mission, as was pieced together after numerous conferences, was to combat load two Infantry Divisions and several thousand additional troops for the INVASION. This force, it was learned after the operation, was the "PreLoad Build-Up, Bristol Channel" and was to consist of two infantry divisions, the "tails" of two airborne divisions, the overstrength and residues of the assault and follow-up divisions, and re-inforcements for the two Engineer Special Brigades, a total of 43,472 troops and 6063 vehicles, slightly less than a third of the total of the troops, and slightly more than a third of the vehicles of the United States Forces to land on the Continent through D plus 2 days. (14) (See Map II) The OPERATION in the Bristol Channel Area, though not then known by the OPERATIONAL staff, was to be a completed single operation and not a continuing process as

(12) Personal Knowledge; (13) A-4, p. 60; (14) A-1, p. 151.

in the Southern Ports from which the shuttle build-up was also mounted. The staff was never informed in advance as to the date of completion of the operation. Each section completed its assignment as given. A "Y-Day" was mentioned from time to time in the conferences, but always as some day in the not too distant future. It is certain that "Y-Day" 1 June 1944 (15) arrived without certain members of the staff being aware of it. (16)

THE PLAN

The Overlord Mounting Plan as described in an early staff conference, called for three separate phasings of the forces being staged: (17) (See Chart B)

1. The Assembly or Concentration Area Phasing where the units completed their T/O&E equipment, received personnel replacements and completed readiness;

2. The Marshalling Area Phasing where the troops were given craft loading assignments, waterproofed their vehicles, received invasion currency, were sealed (that is restricted to the area for security), and briefed as to their part in the operation;

3. The Embarkation Area Phasing where the troops embarked.

The troops did not come under ^{XXIX DIST. OF HQ.} (OPERATIONAL) control until they entered the Marshalling Areas where they were to be provided with "Hotel" accommodations and the OPERATIONAL troops would function. The Marshalling Areas were to contain a

(15) A-8, p. 11; (16) Personal Knowledge; (17) A-8, p. 5.

maximum of four times the number of troops the Embarkation Points could load in a twelve-hour period. (18)

The Bristol Channel Area was the Concentration Area for the two Infantry Divisions, the Second Infantry Division, the Ninetieth Infantry Division, and the Engineer Special ^{no significant map} Brigade units of the preload build-up. (See Map III) As a consequence, the problem of creating Marshalling Areas resolved itself into the making of 200-troop single camps, or 400--troop double camps, out of the existing Concentration Area facilities, and adding the required number of single or double camps necessary for the additional personnel. A "Marshalling Camp" was comparable to a company unit with a complete cadre of OPERATIONAL personnel consisting of: (19)

1 Company Officer,	1 Supply Sergeant,
1 First Sergeant,	1 Mess Sergeant,
1 Clerk,	4 Cooks.

The above personnel were to furnish the "Hotel" accommodations in a single camp. A double camp had twice the operating personnel and accommodated twice the number of troops. The two hundred twenty-odd camps which became marshalling areas on 15 May 1944 were a responsibility of the OPERATIONAL Engineer and were divided between the 360th and the 373rd Engineer General Service Regiments. (20)

The Chief Quartermaster, Service of Supply, had directed the Quartermaster, Western Base Section, to establish rail-heads (See Map III) to be completely stocked with Class I and a small amount of each normal item of Class II supplies for Class I and II Supply of the Marshalling Areas. This was done in spite of the fact that there were two General Depots

(18) A-9, p. 2; (19) Personal Knowledge; (20) Personal Knowledge.

in the area which were in some instances, nearer the Marshalling Areas than the four railheads later established. Class III was to be supplied in the same manner from Class III distributing points (See Map III) to be established convenient to the Marshalling Areas. The instructions from Western Base Section were for supply point distribution, that the Marshalling Camp Commanders would send their own transportation to the railheads and distributing points daily for sufficient quantities of Class I, II and III supplies for the next day's consumption. PX rations, consisting of one package of cigarettes, one piece of candy, and a package of gum, were to be issued to the troops in the Marshalling Areas daily from the railheads with Class I supplies. Laundry was to be handled on a limited piece-bundle per man weekly basis by three mobile laundry companies (See Map III), which would give twenty-four hour service to Marshalling Areas by contact between the laundries and the camp commanders. (21)

Ordnance Supply and Service was calculated to consist of supply of waterproofing material, and minor vehicle repair. For this purpose an Ordnance Battalion was assigned to the Ordnance Officer. Signal supply was to be effected similarly by the Signal Officer with a Signal Supply and Maintenance Company. (22)

Engineer, medical, and chemical supplies were not considered in the planning, as it was assumed the units would have completely equipped themselves in their Concentration Areas. The Medical Plan, however, did provide for evacuation by ambulance from the Marshalling Areas and Embarkation

(21) Personal Knowledge; (22) Personal Knowledge.

Points to an existing U. S. hospital unit at ABERGAVENNY.

(23) (See Map III)

Two Truck Battalions and a number of civilian haulers were placed on call of the Transportation Section for hauling of supplies and personnel. These were all to be used as the operation progressed. (24)

SUPPLY PROBLEMS

Supply problems presented themselves immediately at the first meeting of the OPERATIONAL staff and did not wait for the units being staged to reach the Marshalling Areas 15 May. Those of the staff who had been fortunate enough to locate office space requested phones, office furniture, and typewriters at once.

The office furniture was procured quickly and easily by the OPERATIONAL Quartermaster Supply through the 17th Major Port Quartermaster, who had established good connections with the British and could always be depended for items of that nature. He was even successful in obtaining a satisfactory safe for the Security Officer.

Telephones were promptly installed by the Signal Officer. This amazed many who had been unable to get phones before this assignment. This same Signal Officer was able to have phones installed throughout the Marshalling Areas, another remarkable accomplishment.

note: Typewriters were another matter which illustrates the difficulties often encountered in attempts to obtain necessary

(23) Personal Knowledge; (24) Personal Knowledge.

items through the prescribed channel of the Quartermaster Supply Office, Western Base Section. Typewriters were "controlled" items, which meant that they would be released by the Depots only on specific order of the Quartermaster Supply Officer, of the Base Section. A careful survey showed a need for thirty-two. A phoned request to the Western Base Section Quartermaster Supply Officer was denied on the grounds that the headquarters was operational and did not need typewriters.

As a matter of fact, the Transportation Section alone later used over half of the original estimated number in preparing Marshalling Area assignments, march tables, embarkation schedules, and loading plans. The Quartermaster, Western Base Section was next phoned and convinced of the need. It was agreed that a truck should be dispatched immediately to the depot to pick them up and the Base Section Supply Officer would be directed to have them released by the time it arrived. The truck left immediately and returned from the forty-some mile round trip without the typewriters.

The next day the incident was reported in a staff conference. The matter then was taken up through command channels, and three days later twice the requested number arrived by the same special truck from the depot. The Quartermaster Supply Officer, Western Base Section, proved a bottleneck between the OPERATIONAL supply and the depots in nearly every instance because of an apparent inability to appreciate the requirements, and supply did not function as efficiently as it should have until his office was by-passed later on.

A change in Class I supply early in the operation improved its efficiency. When the first troops arrived in the Marshalling Areas it was discovered the camp commanders had to neglect other work in order to send trucks for rations. It was agreed by the Engineer Officer in charge of the camps, the Quartermaster, and the Motor Movements Officer of the Transportation Section, that the camp commanders should phone their estimated ration strength to the railhead by 0900 for each succeeding day's ration issue. The railhead officer would then consolidate the orders, load and dispatch them on TC vehicles back to the camps. The railheads were to make their estimated transportation requirements known to the Motor Transport Officer a day in advance. This change from Supply Point distribution to Unit distribution on Class I and III Supplies reflected a considerable saving of transportation as a single loaded vehicle was able to service several camps in one trip, eliminating the necessity for each individual camp operating partially loaded vehicles. Class III Supply was soon handled in much the same manner by having the Gasoline Supply Company make "can exchanges" at various points within the Marshalling Areas as requested by a supply representative of the Engineer Battalion operating a group of camps.

It became apparent as the first troops arrived, that many had not received complete T/O & E equipment in their Concentration Areas. Camp Commanders were directed to assist the troops in any shakedown inspections necessary and furnish shortage lists, giving only the camp number, and shortages,

to OPERATIONAL Headquarters through Engineer OPERATIONAL channels.

It also appeared at once that demands for Class II Supply could not be met by the limited stockage at the railhead. To do so the railheads would require model stocks of Class II supplies which require more space than used for Class I. It was necessary therefore, to begin drawing Class II Supplies direct from the depots.

When it was discovered that the shortages were not only for clothing as had been anticipated, but for all supply items, the OPERATIONAL Quartermaster was given the responsibility for filling shortages for items of all services. This proved to be a task of considerably larger proportions than any foreseen in the planning stage. How this was accomplished will be covered later.

When the two Infantry Divisions made their shift to the Marshalling Areas around 15 May it was found that they were equipped about as well as could be expected. The Second Division complied with the letter of the plan and relied on the camp commanders to fill what shortages then existed. The 90th Division G-4 and Quartermaster worked with OPERATIONAL Headquarters with their unit transportation until their camps were sealed. Other units were not so well off. The most unfortunate was a Port Battalion Commander who came to the OPERATIONAL Supply Office on Y minus 3, having just received orders to report his unit to Marshalling Areas. The unit had been on Port duty for a considerable period of time, never expecting to get so close to combat and had to be

virtually re-equipped throughout. By this time, however, the Supply Section was able to meet such situations, and the Port Battalion was equipped even to its ammunition which was passed across the dock by hand after the gang-plank had been raised.

The Supply Section was able to accomplish its mission after working out a system and getting additional personnel. The Quartermaster OPERATIONAL Section was originally assigned Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment 164th Quartermaster Battalion (M) consisting of three officers, two warrant officers and ten enlisted men to command the Railhead, Laundry, Gasoline Supply, and Bakery Companies assigned to the operation, and to furnish the OPERATIONAL Headquarters personnel. The Quartermaster Battalion contained a supply section of one warrant officer, one sergeant and one clerk. The original plan was for the warrant supply officer to fill the shortage lists after checking them against First Army tables of equipment. The wisdom of this check was early apparent when a camp known not to contain Airborne units listed jump boots as shortages, and another camp listed several motorcycles short which were unauthorized. ^{IP} The warrant officer immediately hit a snag when the First Army directed that impregnated clothing would be worn over wool clothing and 15,000 pairs of larger size impregnated leggings were needed. The OPERATIONAL Supply Office called the Quartermaster Supply Officer, Western Base Section, who, in turn, called Service of Supply Quartermaster Supply Office at CHELLENHAM, which was the stock control office. The SOS Quartermaster Supply Office directed the Western Base Section Quartermaster Supply Officer

to direct the XXIX OPERATIONAL Supply Officer to have the leggins picked up at a designated depot. The trucks were dispatched and returned empty. It seemed that the SOS Control Office was behind on its postings. The Quartermaster Battalion Commander then phoned CHELTENHAM direct and was directed to another depot. Before dispatching the trucks, however, he called that depot and found it was also out of impregnated leggins. The Commanding Officer 164th Quartermaster Battalion then called CHELTENHAM direct again and asked for a list of depots which might have the leggins in stock. After calling a number of depots he was able to locate the necessary amount of the required sizes by taking all the stock in two depots and part of the stock of a third depot. Then the trucks were dispatched for them. From the leggin experience a system of calling the Service of Supply Quartermaster Office at CHELTENHAM direct for a list of depots believed to have the item, then of calling these depots in inverse order of distance until the item could be located, was evolved.

The 164th Quartermaster Battalion Supply Section was soon swamped with shortage lists and the Commanding Officers of the 64th, 272nd and 567th Quartermaster Battalions loaned their supply sections to the OPERATIONAL Supply Officer to assist in the OPERATION. By keeping the Commanding Officer of the 164th Quartermaster Battalion on the phone locating critical items for the four supply sections, it was possible to fill all the shortages in the Marshalling Areas and equip the units receiving their orders just prior to "Y" day, if

the items were at all available in the United Kingdom. In numerous instances, the items arrived after the troops had loaded, but they got what items were available.

The supply of items other than Quartermaster, which also was handled by the four Quartermaster Battalion Supply teams, as shortages of all supply items were reported on a single list from each camp, presented its problems also. It was found early that numerous Signal and Ordnance items were "frozen" on order of the Commanding General, Southern Base Section. Having had previous contact with the First Army Quartermaster on a few minor matters which he immediately adjusted, it was decided to call him for advice, and possibly contact First Army G-4. The object was to contact someone who had authority to have supplies released without delay. The First Army Quartermaster replied that a field officer from the G-4 Section would arrive at OPERATIONAL Headquarters in the morning, with First Army's authority behind him. The next morning a major from First Army arrived and was acquainted with the situation. After a phone call by the major back to First Army, he informed the OPERATIONAL Supply Officer that the units in the Marshalling Areas would receive their shortages. Thereafter, all depots honored all requisitions for all items. It was always possible to get action dealing with Ground Forces Staff Officers of First Army or VII Corps. Questions were answered readily, and decisions were reached promptly.

The laundry organization worked admirably. One of the lieutenants of the CAERPHILLY Laundry Company was placed in

charge of the laundry service. His duty was to contact the Marshalling Camp Area Supply Officers and arrange the schedules for the three mobile Laundry Companies. He reported that the Laundry Companies could do more than the limited bundle per man per week which consisted almost entirely of socks and underwear, and that they were willing to take field jackets and denims, if permitted, and to work their equipment around the clock if necessary.

The Laundry Officer was directed to go ahead with the unlimited bundles. For several days before Y-Day, the laundries did work continuously to maintain their twenty-four hour service. The morale of some service units was exceptionally high. This action of giving more than required, typified by the laundry companies, was also shown by the railhead companies in sending out rations on their own initiative in the middle of the night when some unit arrived unexpectedly with no breakfast in sight; while the gasoline Supply Company and the Bakery Companies met similar emergencies with the same esprit.

EMBARKATION SUPPLY

The initial impression gained at conferences was that the Navy would take over control and responsibility of the OPERATION once the troops were aboard and until they were landed. Army OPERATIONAL Supply would concern itself only with furnishing a few blankets, possibly, and such items of rations as required by the Navy to completely supply

with the Chief Quartermaster's Office at CHELTENHAM and an extra two days' rations, which was still considered a slim margin, was released. An inspection of these vessels after the first troops were loaded showed they had no housekeeping supplies. Fortunately, these could be procured from the railheads and were placed aboard at once.

An incident occurred while aboard the vessels which demonstrated how little the ship Masters had been informed concerning the OPERATION. One hundred five-gallon drums of gasoline had been ordered placed on the decks of the Liberty Ships when they were being loaded. This was a last minute order from Headquarters, Service of Supply. The instructions were that it was planned to re-fuel the far shore landing craft from this supply when they came to the ships for unloading. None of the Ship Masters had been informed of its intended use, and they were quite uneasy about having inflammables on deck in case the ship came under shell fire.

The blankets mentioned were difficult to procure. The "Hotel" accommodations in the Marshalling Areas had required four per man which were to remain there when the troops left. That had amounted to over 170,000 blankets. This project called for another 100,000. The depots had been stripped. However, the Commanding Officer of the 164th Quartermaster Battalion, who had by this time considerable experience in locating supplies was able to locate sufficient blankets in the "sorting sheds", establishments where supplies were taken from ship-side and classified before being routed to the various depots.

Some of the troops were not entirely satisfied with the free PX rations. It seemed that the fighting men of the Ninetieth Division wanted more than cigarettes, candy and gum. Along with his usual shortage lists one morning, one of the Engineer Battalion Supply Officers brought in a request to purchase 200 cans of Copenhagen Snuff, 500 plugs of chewing tobacco and 1,000 cigars. The OPERATIONAL PX Officer was not easily convinced, being one of those individuals who would not deviate from original instructions if it inconvenienced himself. However, one of the best supply NCO's was put on the job and one Infantry Battalion of the Ninetieth Division got the desired "Combat Supplies" delivered to its battalion in the Marshalling Areas.

EMBARKATION FEEDING

It was hoped to improve troop morale by feeding them white bread while in the Marshalling Areas instead of the bread baked from the darker British National wheat flour. And further to give them the best send-off possible, it was planned to provide coffee and white bread steak sandwiches at the Embarkation Points. The white bread rations appeared to be sufficient in the Marshalling Areas, but when it came to making sandwiches, the Commanding Officer, 360th Engineers reported that there wasn't any way he could slice the ration allowance of bread thin enough to make the required number of sandwiches. This fact was reported to SOS Food Service at CHELSEA and at the same time, ten pounds extra

per hundred men was ordered by the OPERATIONAL Supply Officer for sandwiches. As was explained, embarkation began three days ahead of schedule in order for all vessels to clear port at the required time. The last day of embarkation, when two-thirds of the troops were aboard and all the sandwiches were made, a ration expert arrived from Service of Supply Headquarters to advise on sandwich making. It seemed as though the use of an extra 4,400 loaves of bread had upset their calculations.

THE "REVERSE" PLAN

When the loading was completed and the ships sailed 4 June 1944, a number of the OPERATIONAL Personnel watched them pass down the Bristol Channel. The OPERATIONAL Staff did not have time to catch their breaths, let alone a little of their lost sleep when a conference was held. Bad weather was mentioned along with the possibility that the INVASION might not come off at all. The Engineer Section was instructed to keep the camps in readiness, the Transportation Section to work out routes back to the Marshalling Camps, and the Supply Section was ordered to keep the railheads stocked with non-perishables. It was known at OPERATIONAL Headquarters that the troops to load early would be out of rations by the time they could get back even with their assault and emergency rations.

No one expected any news on the 4th but when the 5th rolled by without any reports, except bad weather, the

OPERATIONAL Headquarters Staff had visions of having a repeat performance. The morning of the 6th arrived and reports of a successful landing came in. The troops had landed and MISSION of the XXIX District OPERATIONAL Headquarters was completed.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Colonel James A. Crothers, Commanding Officer of the 17th Major Port stated to the OPERATIONAL Staff 5 June 1944:

".....There were a few kinks, but I suppose that was to be expected.....I had the opportunity of talking to General McKelvie and General Robertson and their staffs just before they left. They were highly pleased.General McKelvie expressed himself to me as follows: 'We are leaving here the best equipped Division in EPOUSA.'....." (25)

The 373rd Engineer Regimental historian states: "Plan OVERLORD" was successfully accomplished with commendation to the Regiment....The Regiment's part in 'Plan Overlord' was one of the most exacting night and day operations the Regiment had experienced. The responsibility was great, particularly in the messing, sanitation and policing features." (26)

It was thought at the time that efforts to supply all shortages had succeeded. However, some of the machine gun spare parts kits delivered to the troops after they had boarded the vessels contained no parts⁴²¹⁵-which should have been checked by the supply personnel before accepting them. (27)

Some of the troops embarking on 30 May consumed all

(25) Personal Papers of Author; (26) A-15, p. 60; (27) A-20.

of the five days' 10-in-1 rations and part of their reserve before debarking, as was expected. (28)

Better liaison should have been made with the Navy at higher level on the matter of troops' accommodations on the cargo craft. It appears this detail had not been coordinated in the planning. If a Section had been given this responsibility and had given the matter proper attention, troop accommodations could have been immeasurably improved.

There were too many SOS personnel who were not sufficiently acquainted with the situation who had to be convinced before necessary supplies could be obtained. They often formed unnecessary obstructions which impeded supply. This was illustrated by the typewriter, leggin, and ration for ship^s incidents.

Combat Command liaison should have been officially established with OPERATIONAL Headquarters in the planning as well as Mounting stage of the OPERATION. When First Army was contacted, all difficulties in obtaining supplies were eliminated. This liaison should have existed from the earliest possible date.

There were only two Officers on the OPERATIONAL Staff who had worked on the Planning Staff. Had the whole OPERATIONAL Staff worked on the Planning, it is believed they would have been able to have functioned more efficiently. As it was, many of the staff lost time getting acquainted with the Area and its various installations. This does not mean that Security would have been violated. The staff would need only to have been informed on its part of the Mounting in the

(28) A-20.

Planning Operation. (29)

The absence of written orders was sound. The security as maintained was effective as is attested by the fact that the INVASION achieved surprise. (30) It is certain that none of the OPERATIONAL Personnel knew the time and place before they were BIGOTED for briefing in the Marshalling Area.

Much of the OPERATIONAL Supply could have been eliminated had the Marshalled Units equipped themselves in their Concentration Areas as planned. The greatest time-consuming supply task of the OPERATIONAL Supply Section was to obtain the supplies for the troops in the Marshalling Areas which had been available to them in their Concentration Areas. Had they so equipped themselves OPERATIONAL Supply would have been devoted mainly to Class I and Class III Supplies and to securing items in short supply which were arriving from State-side during the OPERATION.

The change from supply point distribution to unit distribution of Class I and Class III supplies was sound in that it effected a considerable saving of vehicles and personnel.

A final difficulty was that some special units, like the Port Battalion mentioned, were not alerted in sufficient time for them to equip themselves. Such last minute changes in troop lists, however, may have been unavoidable.

LESSONS

Some lessons concerning Supply which were emphasized

(29) Personal Knowledge; (30) A-4, p. 60.

in or may be gained from the Bristol Channel Build-up Mounting of OVERLORD, are:

1. Top-level coordination between the Army and Navy on combined operations in all phases of supply is necessary.

2. There should be Combat Command Liaison with all levels of the Operation.

3. The Operational Staff should be the Planning Staff, if possible, which would eliminate early operational confusion and permit the planners to correct their own mistakes.

4. The principle of informing subordinates of only their portion of the PLAN as it becomes necessary in the interest of security is sound.

5. A system of Command show-down inspections should be initiated in the Concentration Areas to insure that troops equip themselves as completely as possible before entering the Marshalling Areas.

6. Troops should be alerted in sufficient time to equip themselves before being ordered to the Marshalling Areas.

7. Unit distribution is superior to supply point distribution in some types of operations.

8. The impetus of supply should always be toward the troops.

9. Plans should include a detailed method of distribution for critical items and items in short supply.

10. Supply is a command responsibility.

11. Supply plans must be flexible.

*Particularly
supported
by Navy*