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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 509TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY
BATTALION (SEPARATE), IN THE INVASION OF
NORTH AFRICA, 8 - 13 NOVEMBER 1942.
(NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Supply Officer)

Type of operation described: AIRBORNE INVASION

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 509TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY
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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion (Separate), in the invasion of NORTH AFRICA, 8 - ¹⁷15 November 1942. It was the first airborne operation attempted by the United States Army in World War II.

Prior to the invasion of NORTH AFRICA, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion was known as the "Second Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry". The change was in name only as personnel assignments remained the same. The 509th Parachute Infantry consisted of this one battalion throughout the war.

The battalion arrived in the UNITED KINGDOM on 11 June 1942 and was one of the first combat units to arrive in the European Theater of Operations. Shortly after arrival in the UNITED KINGDOM the Battalion was placed under a British Airborne Division for training, operation and supply. This arrangement proved helpful as the lessons learned by the British from previous combat experiences were given to the Battalion. Through close association with the British Airborne Division, a warm friendship developed between the two units that grew with time. (1)

During the summer of 1942, at a meeting in WASHINGTON, between Mr. Churchill, President Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs

(1) Personal knowledge

of Staff, a plan was conceived and formulated to invade NORTH AFRICA. This plan was an alternate to the previous plan of first invading EUROPE. The problem of organizing and directing the operation was given to General Eisenhower. The name "Torch" was given the operation. (2)

About 1 October 1942, as a part of Operation "Torch", the mission of entering NORTH AFRICA was given the 509th Parachute Infantry. To accomplish the mission would involve flying approximately 1500 miles. (3)

POLITICAL SITUATION IN NORTH AFRICA

The political situation for an invasion of FRENCH NORTH AFRICA was delicate and if not handled well could be explosive. The Germans had not occupied FRENCH NORTH AFRICA with troops as they had received full and complete collaboration through the Vichy Government and Marshal Petain and through Admiral Jean Darlan their administrator in NORTH AFRICA. Under this alliance all French Commanders of troops had sworn an oath of fidelity to the Vichy Government. This pro-Vichy group controlled NORTH AFRICA prior to the invasion. (4)

A second group in NORTH AFRICA was the Free French, a group of French refugees, loyal to General DeGaulle. This group had no control in the government, but were opposed to the pro-Vichites.

A third group of French living in NORTH AFRICA succeeded in establishing an underground known as the "French Liberation Movement". Its aim, like the Free French was to liberate FRANCE, but was operating under German surveillance. General

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- (2) A-6, p. 2
(3) Personal knowledge
(4) A-10, p. 79

Giraud, who had escaped from the Germans, was to become this group's recognized leader.

The unusual political relationship existing among the peoples of NORTH AFRICA imposed a problem of maximum complexity. It was most urgent and desirable that there be as little fighting as possible. FRANCE was wanted as an ally and not as a foe for this operation, as well as future operations.

With the thought of arranging an unopposed landing, General Mark Clark, then deputy to General Eisenhower, landed secretly from a submarine in NORTH AFRICA to contact French representatives cultivated by the United States consul in NORTH AFRICA. The meeting was broken up by police and little progress was made on the important question of an unopposed landing. (5)

In hopes that the resistance would only be token, it was decided that the invasion would be predominately American. British prestige was low in FRANCE because of open conflict between the British and French at ORAN and DAKAR earlier in the War.

THE GENERAL SITUATION (See Map A)

The invasion "Torch" would be undertaken by three task forces striking AFRICA simultaneously with approximately 107,000 troops. Western Task Force consisting of 35,000 troops would sail from the UNITED STATES and land in the vicinity of CASABLANCA. It would capture that city, build up an Army and would be prepared to meet any attack by the

(5) A-6, p. 5

Germans that might come through SPAIN. (6)

Center Task Force, consisting of 39,000 troops, all American, would sail from the United Kingdom to land in the vicinity of ORAN, take that city and nearby airfields. (7)

Eastern Task Force, consisting of 33,000 American and British troops, would sail from the UNITED KINGDOM, land and take ALGIERS. Elements of this force would be prepared to proceed to the east to capture the port of BOUGIE and the airfield at DJIDJELLI. It would ultimately advance into TUNISIA. (8)

PLANS OF THE CENTER TASK FORCE

Center Task Force (See Appendix A for detailed breakdown) in carrying out it's mission of seizing ORAN and adjacent airfield planned to land troops at points "X", "Y", "Z", and Drop Zone "D". (9) (See Map B)

Reinforced Combat Teams 16 and 18 from the 1st Division, were to land on "Z" BEACH, push southwest and attack ORAN from the east.

Reinforced Combat Team 26 from 1st Division, was to land on "Y" BEACH, capture DJEBEL MURDJADJO, AIN EL TURK, MERS EL KEBIR and attack ORAN from the west.

Combat Command B, organized into Task Forces Green and Red, were to land at "X" BEACH (MERSA BOU ZEDJAR) and "Z" BEACH (ARZEU). Task Force Red was to advance rapidly inland, help seize TAFAROURI and LA SENIA airfields and assist 1st Division by attacking ORAN from the south. Task Force Green

(6) A-8, p. 177

(7) A-8, p. 212

(8) A-8, p. 218

(9) A-9, p. 50

was to procure the beach at MERSA BOU ZEDJAR, advance to the east, capture the airfield at LOURMEL and assist Task Force Red in the capture of its objective.

The 3d Battalion, 6th Armored Battalion, with forty specially trained engineroom technicians were to make a frontal attack on the harbor of ORAN, to seize several French warships in the harbor and prevent destruction to port facilities. They were to be loaded aboard two ships that were to ram and break the boom blocking the ORAN HARBOR and knock out the guns. The technicians were to board the ships to prevent scuttling.

The 509th Parachute Battalion in conjunction with the 60th Transport Group was to fly from bases in southern ENGLAND to ORAN and secure the airfields in that vicinity.

Because of the uncertain political situation, higher headquarters directed that the airborne operation proceed on two plans, (1) "War Plan", (2) "Peace Plan". The "War Plan" as developed required dropping at 0100 hours, 8 November and securing its objectives. The "Peace Plan" directed the landings be made on LA SENIA airdrome at 0500 hours, 8 November. (10)

Combat efficiency of all landing troops prior to the invasion, could be expected to be high. However, most troops lacked experience, and staleness could be expected from the long boat or plane trip.

TERRAIN, WEATHER AND OPPOSING FORCES (11)

Except for the several beaches selected for the land-

(10) A-4, p. 2; Personal knowledge
(11) A-9, p. 5, 46-48

ings, the coast in the area of ORAN is extremely rocky and has many high cliffs. ARZEW BEACH is the most suitable landing beach. To the southwest and dominating ORAN is a large hill, 1600 feet high, known as DJEBEL MURDJADJO. South of this hill lies the SEHKRA of ORAN, a salt lake about 50 miles long and 15 miles wide that is dry most of the year. Roads in and around ORAN are good. The weather is hot and dry in the summer and cold and wet in the winter. French naval guns manned the coastal defenses of ORAN and ARZEW. Some 45 guns, ranging in caliber from 3 to 9.4 inch, defended ORAN and 6 guns defended ARZEW. Many were sighted for all-around traverse that could fire inland as well as to the sea.

The total strength of the ORAN garrison consisted of approximately 16,000 troops. (See Map C) Except for the French Foreign Legion, the ORAN troops were considered second class, since they were of mixed nationalities and lacked training. The Axis had controlled and had limited the equipment of the French to prevent a well developed army that might rise against them. All units were short of vehicles, spare parts, and gasoline. French Air Forces located at TAFAROURI and TUNISIA consisted of about 100 aircraft of all types. Troops at these fields consisted of two anti-aircraft battalions at each field, a French Air Cadet Naval School at TAFAROURI, and sufficient Air Corps personnel to operate the aircraft.

BATTALION PREPARATION

For purposes of planning, the battalion commander assumed that the Battalion would operate under the "War Plan". Maxi-

imum security was maintained. Initially only the battalion commander and key staff officers knew the mission. As time developed, unit commanders, NCO's, and finally each private knew the details of the mission, but only a few knew its location and time. Detailed models of landing areas and airfield objectives were studied, but only enough information was revealed to accomplish the mission. (12)

Training was accelerated and problems were developed to represent the assigned mission. Night jumping and problems were conducted. Because of the limited area available for flying in ENGLAND and because of the employment of the troop carrier transports on other missions, difficulty was encountered by pilots and paratroopers in their combined training. Crews of the transports did not have an opportunity to practice long range instrument flights over strange territory at night. As yet the squadrons did not have assigned navigators. The two units -- Air Corps and Paratroopers were able to accomplish only one relatively long range training problem: a drop in IRELAND. Because of the very bad weather this problem was only partially successful. (13)

Maximum payload for each airplane was set for 4,000 pounds, which would allow for 14 fully equipped paratroopers and one equipment bundle per plane. Logistics had to be exact and hours were spent in drawing up loading plans, weighing personnel and equipment and checking for accuracy.

Replacements were requisitioned on the basis of 20% of the enlisted strength and 30% of the officer strength. These replacements were requisitioned in time to join the unit prior

(12) Personal knowledge

(13) A-3, p. 24; Personal knowledge

to its departure and were sent via boat. 100% replacement of parachutes were requisitioned to be sent via boat to be available at the new location.

Thirty nine C-47 airplanes were allocated to the Battalion. Each of the four companies were given nine and three were allocated for Battalion supplies. The rear echelon, consisting of organizational equipment and replacements would arrive via boat on D plus 14. (14)

PLAN OF 509TH PARACHUTE BATTALION

The Battalion Drop Zone selected from available intelligence and maps was located two miles north of TAFAROU. (See Map D) Upon landing at 0100 hours on D day, Company D would march to LA SENIA, using the highway as a guide, and destroy the enemy fighters on the field. A patrol from Headquarters Company would accompany Company D, but would cut communications between LOURMEL and LA SENIA. The Battalion, minus Company D and the patrol from Headquarters Company, would seize and hold TAFAROU AIRFIELD until relieved by Combat Command B. Battalion radio net would be opened at dawn to receive radio contact from Combat Command B. (15)

From available intelligence and map study reports the drop zone was believed undefended. Intelligence indicated TAFAROU could be expected to be defended by approximately 500 naval air cadets and two batteries of anti-aircraft guns. LA SENIA would also be defended by two batteries of anti-aircraft weapons and available air corps troops occupying the fields. (16)

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- (14) Personal knowledge
(15) Personal knowledge
(16) Personal knowledge; A-9, p. 47

FINAL PREPARATIONS

Five days prior to D day the Battalion, less administrative personnel and replacements, was secretly moved to a marshalling area and later to two airfields in southern ENGLAND. In interest of security all patches, badges and other identifying paraphernalia was removed. The personnel left back in camp was conspicuous by its presence, while strict security was observed in the marshalling area. Additional orientation and briefing of the mission was conducted. Everyone knew exactly what his duties were in the carrying out of the mission. On 7 December a final check of equipment was made. Two day's K rations were issued to be used upon landing; one day of fire of ammunition was issued. Special equipment such as life saving jackets, American flags (6" x 6") to be sewed on individual jackets, escape kits, sulfanilamide tablets, and morphine syrettes were issued. A fully loaded parachutist would weigh between 230 - 250 pounds and each was checked to insure that the 4,000 pound payload limit was not exceeded. The three supply planes were loaded to include one unit of fire of ammunition, one day supply of K rations, and extra medical, signal and ordnance equipment. All equipment was loaded and prepared for dropping by parachutes. (17)

Navigators had now been assigned to the squadrons. Their abilities were unknown, but it was good to know that at least there was one in each squadron. Additional navigational assistance was to be received from a British homing vessel to be spotted on the sea along the route of the transports and close to the objective. Also Allied agents located in the

(17) Personal knowledge; A-4, p. 2; A-7, p. 1

vicinity of TAFAROUI were to send a homing to the transports that had now been equipped with homing instruments. (18)

By 1600 hours the entire battalion was loaded in transports and was waiting for the important flash from GIBRALTAR, indicating which plan was to be followed. If the signal "Advance Alexis" was not received by 1630, the Battalion would proceed on the "Peace Plan". It was a tense wait there in those loaded airplanes. Everyone echoed a shout of happiness when word was received to proceed on the "Peace Plan". A hearty welcome was expected at LA SENIA and TAFAROUI. (19)

NARRATION

LANDING AT ORAN

Landings began by Center Task Force 0100 hours D-day and initial landings met with good success. The landing Combat Teams encountered minor opposition except for the 3d Battalion 6th Armored Regiment. Most assault echelons were on land by daylight and by 1100 hours Task Force Green, landing on X BEACH, had taken LOURMEL without opposition. Task Force Red, landing on Z BEACH had moved south and by 1100 hours TAFAROUI was attacked and was captured within an hour. By noon D-Day, the 16th and 18th Combat Teams had moved out for their attack from the east on ORAN and the 26th had moved out to attack ORAN from the west. (20)

The 3d Battalion, 6th Armored Regiment travelling in British vessels, HMS Walney, and HMS Hartland had disastrous results in the ORAN HARBOR. At 0230 hours D-Day they were spotted. A search light picked up the ships and they were

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- (18) A-11(Film #1601); Personal knowledge
(19) A-3, p. 30
(20) A-9, p. 51-52

fired on at close range. Though under fire the Walney rammed the iron gates and entered the harbor while the Hartland followed. They were hit several times and finally exploded with 80% loss of life and the remaining survivors interned. (21)

THE LONG AIRBORNE FLIGHT

The airborne "take-off" began at 2130 on D -1. Flight formations were formed and by 2200 hours the force had begun a long flight on the supposedly "Peace Plan". Pilots and airborne staff, charged with the loadings, were greatly relieved that no airplane was overloaded to the extent that a mishap might have occurred on the take off. (22)

Shortly after "take-off" the formation flew into heavy fog and had to break up to avoid mid-air crashes. The paratroopers settled down on the floor of the ships to try to get some rest. Over the southern coast of SPAIN, anti-aircraft flak was received but no aircraft was severely damaged. By dawn all transports were badly dispersed, the largest group that could be seen consisted of only six planes. Several knew approximately where they were, but over half were entirely ignorant of their position. By daylight the thirty nine transports with their personnel were scattered over an area extending from SPANISH MOROCCO to a point east of ORAN. One had engine trouble and landed at GIBRALTAR; three ran out of gas over SPANISH MOROCCO, landed and were interned there; one landed southeast of ORAN; two landed at LA SENIA airport and personnel were taken prisoner; and the others landed in the SEBKRA of ORAN. (See Map D) None of the aircraft contacted

(21) A-8, p. 215

(22) A-4, p. 2

of Combat Command B saying that TAFAROUI Airdrome had been captured and he requested troopers to guard 500 prisoners. It was decided to pool the available gasoline of several airplanes in an attempt to fly Company E to guard the prisoners. About 10 minutes after the take-off the three plane formation was attacked by six French fighters that attacked the formation three times in the air and twice on the ground causing all aircraft to crash, killing five officers and men and wounding fifteen. The dead and wounded were left in care of medical personnel and the remainder of Company E continued to march to the field. They arrived at dawn D plus 1 and assumed guard of the airdrome and it's prisoners. (26) (See Map D)

On arrival at the field 1500 prisoners were practically unguarded. Arms and ammunition rooms were open and unguarded and there were no defenses around the field. The paratroopers placed a secure guard over the prisoners and a strong defense about the field. (27)

The remainder of the battalion proceeded to march to the south side of the SEBKRA and proceed on the "War Plan". The march across the lake bed was very difficult. The sudden change from the cool temperate climate of ENGLAND to the hot semi-desert heat of AFRICA was bad. But the long fatiguing ride from ENGLAND, the heavy underwear that was worn and the sticky mud of the lake bed made the march more difficult. The Battalion in its training had become very adept at long marches, but in spite of their training this march proved too much for a good many who dropped by the wayside. Most heavy underwear was shed along with some heavy equipment. About 1600 hours,

(26) A-5, p. 3; A-12 (Film 1201)

(27) A-11 (Film No. 1201)

The race for TUNISIA was on. Success enjoyed by the Allies on the initial landing was due in a large measure to complete surprise, but no longer did we have surprise. The enemy recognized that a pincer movement against his Afrikan Korps was developing and that it would be necessary to keep open the ports of TUNIS -- BIZERTE for supplies and a route of withdrawal for the advancing Afrikan Korps, that was being pursued by the British Eighth Army. (32)

Knowing this, the Germans acted with speed in building up TUNISIAN strength. Beginning 9 December they were transporting over 700 troops a day by air alone. Boats began unloading at TUNIS and BIZERTE. The French Commander in that area took orders from Vichy and thus allowed free entrance to the ports by the Germans.

The floating reserve of the Eastern Task Force, part of the British 78th Division had not unloaded at ALGIERS. It sailed on the 10th of November and captured BOWGIE on the 11th and DJIDJELLI on the 13th. General Anderson was placed in command of this northern unit, known as British First Army, and the Commander of the 509th Battalion was alerted to seize strategical airfields in north central AFRICA. (33)

REORGANIZATION AND PREPARATION FOR A SECOND MISSION

The Battalion was flown 12 November with its equipment to MAISON BLANCE AIRFIELD and was there reorganized pending assignment of mission. While here, an enemy bombing attack destroyed a hanger and over one-fourth of the unit's parachutes were lost. These were difficult to replace as the

(32) A-6, p. 16

(33) A-6, p. 17

parachutes requisitioned back in ENGLAND had not been received. It was believed by the Service of Supply that they had been shipped, but were lost in the tons of supply stored at the depots. (34)

The Battalion Commander was called to Allied Force Headquarters on 14 November and was given the mission of jumping to seize TEBESSA AIRFIELD and to deny its use to the enemy. Information and intelligence concerning the mission was practically non-existent. Speed seemed to be the essence of this operation. Photographs were unavailable and reconnaissance, or terrain study was impossible. No assembly areas were selected, neither was there a weather report available over the proposed area. No one knew what to expect from the enemy. The Germans might be occupying the field, certainly the French would be there. Would they be friendly? After the scrap at ORAN it was wondered. Orders were issued not to fire unless fired upon. (35)

TEBESSA, located in eastern ALGERIA (See Map A) near the TUNISIAN border, was over 400 miles from the nearest Allied troops. The only available map was found in Allied Force Headquarters, a French Aeronautical map. By accident in conversation with some Frenchmen, the Battalion Commander learned that a large and more important airfield was located at YOUKS LES BAINS. The Battalion Commander pulled out his aeronautical map and the French marked the airfield. On receiving information of the YOUKS FIELD the First Army Commander agreed that it, too, must be denied the Axis. (36)

(34) Personal knowledge

(35) A-3, p. 51

(36) A-3, p. 54

Having less than a day to prepare for the operation, the Battalion worked late into the night getting ready. Over 300 paratroopers had to be equipped and ready to take-off by 0800 the next day, 15 November. Three day's extra supplies had to be prepared. Pilots of the transports (which were assembled over night) were then briefed by their squadron commanders, generally to "follow me". (37)

SECOND MISSION

The understrength Battalion of twenty two C-47 transports were airborne by 0800 hours on ¹⁷15 December from the MAISON BLANCHE AIRDROME to YOUKS LES BAINS. Six fighters from MAISON BLANCHE accompanied the transports as fighter escort. The sole navigational aid that the group leader, or anyone, had was the French aeronautical map with the encircled drop zone. The map indicated the height of the field to be 3000 feet. Normally air is too thin for safe landing at that altitude. (38)

After two and one half hours of flying and excellent navigation by the pilot he signalled, "objective in sight". At first the field was difficult to locate as the surrounding terrain for miles around was level and flat. Almost anywhere would have been a good drop zone, however, the field was soon located and entrenched troops could be seen below on it. After circling the field the transports flew over at 350 feet and the troops jumped. (39) (See Map E)

Looking down, in the short interim while in the air, the defending troops could be seen below well dug in. The troops

(37) A-5, p. 3; A-4, p. 4
(38) A-3, p. 54,60; A-4, p. 4-5
(39) A-3, p. 60-61; A-4, p. 4-5

floated rapidly down. Fortunately the paratroops did not fire a shot, so the French withheld their fire. The defending troops were well dug in and machine and small arms fire covered the entire landing zone. The field had been organized to resist just such an air operation. Had the defending troops been unfriendly the jump would have been a slaughter for the Americans. Fifteen paratroopers received injuries in the jump. (40)

After a conference by the Battalion Commander with the French Commander, the airfield was occupied by the Americans and its defense was coordinated with the French. Company D was quickly dispatched to TEBESSA for the defense of that field. Two excellent airfields had now been secured by the Americans and cordial relationship had been established far to the east. (41)

Within a period of ^{seven} seven days this Parachute Battalion had moved over 2000 miles to make two airborne landings. Casualties amounted to one officer and three enlisted men killed, 30 wounded and 84 missing. The missing eventually rejoined the Battalion. Although unsuccessful in accomplishing its assigned mission on the initial assault, the Battalion nevertheless aided in the invasion. In the race for forward airbases, the Battalion was moved 400 miles forward of friendly troops. In this bold move speed meant a great deal; for the force that could get there first would get the fields. The presence of American troops in the forward outpost of TUNISIA aided in winning over an ally in the French, whose large forces there could have become impotent had the enemy

(40) A-4, p. 2

(41) Personal knowledge

reached the position first.

A great many lessons, both good and bad, were learned in this early airborne operation. These lessons were destined to play an important part in future airborne operations.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. FAILURE TO REACH OBJECTIVE

Well laid plans for taking the objective on the initial assault were worthless because of the failure of the troops to reach the objective. The responsibility for this mistake was that of the Air Corps since the Air Corps was responsible for flying their troops to the drop zone. Failure of the transports to reach the objective maybe directly traced to:

- (1) Insufficient navigators for the transports.
- (2) Lack of training of air crews with navigators.
- (3) Failure of homing communication between the naval ship and aircraft and between the agent and aircraft.
- (4) Heavy fog.

An Airborne Operation requires a great deal of planning, training and rehearsal. Airborne and air transport personnel must work together as a team. Transport aircraft should not be used on cargo and transport duty and then, without sufficient training, be expected to transport Airborne troops a great distance. Had sufficient preparation and rehearsals in night flying and navigation been accomplished by the air crews, the transports would not have been scattered over such a wide area on 8 November 1942.

2. LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS

Logistical planning of the operation for their long flight was good. Even though there was a desire to take the maximum payload, the fact of overloading was considered and preparations and loading plans were made accordingly. All aircraft on the take-off became airborne without mishap.

Careful and timely salvage of parachutes and parachute equipment from the aircraft in the SEBKRA provided the necessary equipment for a second airborne operation. Though 100% replacement of parachutes and parachute equipment had been requisitioned long before its intended use, it was not available when needed for the second operation.

Critical equipment should not be stored where enemy bombing can destroy. The Battalion lost over one-fourth of its equipment in the bombing of the airfield of MAISON BLANCHE on 13 February. This critical equipment probably could have been saved had it been stored in a safe place away from possible enemy targets.

3. FAILURE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND HOMING EQUIPMENT

Failure to maintain communication with Supreme Headquarters resulted in the Battalion coming in on the "War Plan" instead of the expected "Peace Plan". Communications should have been maintained and the signal given of any unexpected changes. Homing signals between the sea vessel and aircraft were not effected. Had training rehearsals been effected, prior to the operation, between the aircraft and vessel this failure perhaps could have been avoided. The

homing between the aircraft and agent in the SEBKRA was definitely uncertain. If at all possible, the homing should be effected between known and proven pathfinder teams of the airborne unit. This team should proceed the main flight, jump and set up homing equipment to guide the main body in.

4. LONG AIR ASSAULTS

Air assaults over very long distances are extremely difficult. Eight hours were required to fly the distance of 1500 miles. During these eight hours the troops were cramped in close quarters and were under considerable mental strain. Constant threat of enemy air attacks and anti-aircraft fire added to the physical fatigue. The change from a temperate climate to a semi-tropical climate was not taken into consideration in planning and the troops suffered on landing. Had serious opposition been encountered on landing, it is doubtful that maximum resistance could have developed. Certainly it would have been greater if a shorter move had been undertaken. If possible arrangements should have been made to land the Battalion at GIBRALTAR and from GIBRALTAR proceed to the drop zone.

5. ADEQUATE TIME ESSENTIAL FOR ADEQUATE PREPARATION

Adequate time was allowed for planning and preparing for the initial landing. By use of models, sand tables, and assimilated mission objectives, each member of the Battalion knew his part. By judicious use of intelligence information, much was known of the enemy, terrain, and our own situation. Had this unit been delivered to its objective, it would have

in complete success, illustrates the potentialities of flexibility by airborne troops. Failure in the success of the initial objective resulted from lack of planning and training of the Airborne-Air Corps team. Success and flexibility can be achieved through careful planning and training.

LESSONS

1. Long airborne operations at night require training and rehearsals of the aircraft crew which must include well trained navigators who can be depended upon to reach their destination.

2. a. Airborne operations require exact and accurate logistical planning.

b. When parachutes are expected to be used again shortly, salvage details from the initial jumpers must be designated to recover the parachutes and equipment containers.

c. To have at new destination, replacement parachutes must be requisitioned and received in time to ship with T/O & E equipment from old destinations, if not the equipment will be lost in the piles of equipment at the depot.

d. Critical equipment should not be stored where enemy bombing will destroy.

3. Pathfinder teams from the airborne unit should precede the assault force instead of depending on unrehearsed Allied services or unknown agents.

4. 1500 miles is too far for an airborne assault unit to fly in slow transports without a rest stop.

5. A reasonable amount of time must be allowed to prepare for an airborne mission.

6. Small scale unit parachute drops on known enemy defended areas is considered unsound.

7. Great flexibility from well trained airborne units may be expected in combat.

APPENDIX "A"

Army Units Participating in "Operation Torch"

First Infantry Division

16th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (Reinforced)
18th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (Reinforced)
26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (Reinforced)

Combat Command "B", 1st Armored Division

Task Force "Red"
Task Force "Green"

2d Battalion, 503d Parachute Regiment

1st Ranger Battalion

Combat Team Organization

1 Infantry Regiment (Rifle)
1 Field Artillery Battalion
2 Batteries, Anti-Aircraft Artillery
1 Engineer Company
1 Platoon, Division Reconnaissance Troop
1 Tank Company
1 Collecting Company
Regimental Component of Army Shore Party
Special Communications and Liaison Group
for Naval and Aerial Support

Combat Command "B" Organization

Task Force "Red"
Hq & Hq Co, CCB
1st Bn, 1st Armd Regt.
2d Bn, 13th Armd Regt.
2d Bn, 6th Armd Inf Regt.
27th Armd FA Bn (-Btry C)
106th CAC Bn (AA) (-Btry D)
Co B, 701st TD Bn.
2d Bn, 591st Engr Boat Regt. (-Co E)
Rcn Co, 13th Armd Regt. (-Plat)
Co B, 16th Armd Engr Bn.
Det, Co E, 16th Armd Engr Bn.
Det, 141st Armd Sig Co.
Co B, 47th Armd Med Bn. (-Det)
Co B, 1st Armd Sup Bn.
Co B, 1st Armd Maint Bn.
Sv Co, 13th Armd Regt. (-Det)
Maint Co, 13th Armd Regt. (-Det)