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THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE
INFORMATION FROM GERMAN SOURCES

Part I: German Defence Preparations in the West

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ABBREVIATIONS

American

O.C.M.H.	Office of the Chief of Military History
F.S.B.	Foreign Studies Branch
G.M.D.S.	German Military Documents Section
O.N.I.	Office of Naval Intelligence

German

O.B.	Oberbefehlshaber	Commander-in-Chief
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht Armed Forces High Command	
OKH	Oberkommando des Herres Army High Command	
WFST	Wehrmachtsfuehrungsstab Armed Forces Operations Staff	

Other

G.S.C.	General Staff Corps
G.A.F.	German Air Force

GERMAN SOURCES

Guide to full Reference for Sources quoted repeatedly.

Quoted Again in PARA	First Reference in PARA
8	7
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64	63
65	25,53
66	55
67	53,25
68	58
70	25

71,71f	52f,60
72	53
73	25
77	52
78	56
78f	75f
80-82	75f

THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTH-WEST EUROPE
INFORMATION FROM GERMAN SOURCES

Part I: German Defence Preparations in the West

1. In modern warfare the outcome of a very large operation has become a foregone conclusion long before the man in the ranks musters his courage and takes up his rifle for the assault. The fact that a certain number of troops of a given nationality and of a certain state of morale, training and equipment will produce certain results has long before been entered as a known quantity in the complex equation that represents the operation on the planning boards. Possibly more so than ever before this was true in the case of the invasion of Normandy in 1944. The operational phase of the undertaking, glorious as it was, will occupy a limited space in the pages of history; but the factors which inexorably determined the course of these events, will be examined and re-examined in countless volumes dealing with all aspects of the arts of statecraft and of war. For the purpose of a study of the early phases of the invasion, as reflected by German documents, it is necessary, therefore, to adumbrate at least the circumstances leading to the awkward and ineffective German defence against an operation so unique in character and so difficult of execution.

2. In keeping with the purpose of the present report the ante-invasion period is being dealt with rather briefly and merely from the point of view of establishing the broad picture of German preparations in the West. With the launching of the cross-channel attack the events in the successive Canadian sectors assume a position of primary interest, and the story of the German direction of the campaign is being reviewed mainly in its relation to Canadian operations.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3. The bulk of the supporting evidence for this report consists of original contemporary German military documents, which it has been possible, thanks to the unfailing courtesy and cooperation of all concerned, to take on loan from, have reproduced by, or inspect on the premises of one or another of the following United States agencies:

United States Department of the Army, The Adjutant General's Office, German Military Documents Section Washington, D.C. (G.M.D.S.);

United States Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History¹ (O.C.M.H.), Washington, D.C. Foreign Studies Branch;

United States Navy, Naval Records and Library, Washington, D.C.

4. A certain amount of additional information has been derived from some of the very large number of studies, which have been prepared since the conclusion of the Second World War by former German senior officers for the Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C.

¹ Previously styled: Historical Division, U.S. Dept of the Army.

5. In all cases where the reproduction of a source document is being permanently retained by His Sec (G.S.), the first reference to the document is followed by the Hist Sec (G.S.) Master Index Number.

6. Original documents from divisional or lower levels were available only in a few isolated cases; the greater part of this material is known to be in Russian hands. Underlined portions of quotations have been underlined in accordance with the original text. Subject matter enclosed in round brackets appeared so in the original text; subject matter enclosed in square brackets did not appear in the original text but has been added for clarification.

SITUATION IN THE WEST FROM 1939 TO 1941

7. During the first stages of the Second World War the German High Command did not have to reckon with invasion from the West. Coast defence at the time was being regarded merely as a matter of routine precautions resting on such additional strength as the formations near the coast could derive from a limited number of field works. By December 1941 it had become clear, however, that Germany was facing a long and bitter struggle. And on 8 Dec Hitler admitted in directive No. 39 that he had been forced on the defensive in the East (G.M.D.S. B OKH/1611a, Führer Directives, Transl U.S. Navy). A few days later Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel issued an order showing in outline the contemplated measures for the development of the defences in the West² (ibid, 14 Dec 41). The document reveals that Hitler even then was harbouring vague thoughts of a New West Wall³, from which to wreck the fleets and smash the forces of any venturesome invader. On 19 Dec 41 Hitler in person took over the High Command of the Army (OKH), and the previous C.-in-C., Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch was retired. (Ibid, 19 Dec 41)

DEVELOPMENTS IN 1942

8. Coast defence in the West was now a major concern of the German High Command, and by March 1942 planning was becoming firm. At the beginning of the month Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt had been recalled on active duty from the Reserve of Senior Commanders.³ Effective 8 Mar 42 he was appointed C.-in-C. West (O.B. West) and C.-in-C. Army Group AD (G.M.D.S. B OKH; Personnel Files) (Selected Photostats: 981HC(D52)). The guiding principles for the defence of the West were set forth by Hitler on 23 Mar 42 in Directive No. 40 (Führer Directives, op cit). Subordinated only to the Armed Forces High Command (OKW) [in effect Hitler], O.B. West was fully responsible for the defence of France, Belgium and Holland. Quite plainly the probability of enemy landing attempts was increasing. It would be necessary to make one commander responsible in each sector for the preparation and carrying out of the defence by the forces of all branches of the Armed Forces. It would be the task of such commanders to destroy the enemy's means of transportation and his landing troops and to bring about the collapse of the attack off the coast if possible, but after the coast had been reached at the very latest. Enemy forces which had succeeded in landing were to be destroyed or thrown into the sea by immediate counter-attacks. Coastal sectors most likely to be chosen as landing places by the enemy were to be built up as fortified areas, less endangered stretches of coast were to be defended from a system of strongpoints to be built, the least important sectors were to be patrolled. Fortified areas and strongpoints would have to be made suitable for protracted defence against superior enemy forces; they were to be defended to the last. (Ibid: see also H.S. Report No. 36, para 37)

² For a synopsis of this order see H.Q. Report No. 36, Development of German Defences in the Dieppe Sector, para 28.

³ On 30 Nov 41, as C.-in-C. A Gp South, elements of which were then under heavy Russian attack, Rundstedt told the Führer that he could not comply with his order to advance and asked that the order be changed or he be relieved of command. He was relieved. (The Halder Diaries, Copyright 1950 by Infantry Journal, Inc, 30 Nov and 1 Dec 41) (981HC(D34g) and (D34h). He was placed on the Reserve List of Senior Commanders on 3 Dec 41 (G.M.D.S. B Personnel Files, op cit).

9. Early in April 1942 Hitler was netted by the successful British raid on the submarine base of St. Nazaire (G.M.D.S. B OKW/1771; W.D. WFST, Apr-Jun 42, 7 Apr 42) (Photostat 981HC(D21)). To this opening gambit of the invasion season the Führer reacted with an order requiring the most important strongpoints on the coast to be made so secure that an enemy raid could not succeed (ibid, 10 Apr). At the same time the German High Command was beginning to receive the first trickle of invasion rumours (ibid). Partly genuine, but mostly deceptive, they were to fill the pipe lines of German Intelligence in a growing flood that passed its crest on the eve of invasion.

10. Based on their own estimates of prospective Allied strategy, and on the more tangible but equally fragile indications from agents=reports, by midsummer 1942 the Germans were fully expectant of some large-scale British landing operation. In a detailed order Hitler announced on 9 Jul that in the case of an enemy landing he would move to the West in person and conduct operations from there (Führer Directives, 9 Jul). Amongst a number of measures for the strengthening of the West he ordered at that time the transfer from Russia to France of two crack SS Divisions (1 SS Div Adolf Hitler and 2 SS Div Das Reich); command over these formations to be exercised by the SS Corps Command then in formation. (Ibid)

11. In conferences held on 2 and 13 Aug Hitler committed himself fully to the creation of an Atlantic Wall (G.M.D.S. H 22/87a, Küstenschutz Kanalküste, General Jacob's Notes) (Photostats and translations 981HC(D18) and (D23)). His determination to proceed with the undertaking was strengthened by the defence success at Dieppe on 19 Aug 42. Contemporary evidence tends to support the post-war statement of General Freiherr Leo Gehr von Schweppenburg (Rundstedt's tank expert, and later commander of Fifth Panzer Army) who wrote in this connection:

The basic misconception of the anti-invasion defence stemmed from the opinions based on the raid at Dieppe. The personal ambition of a certain military personality in the West,⁴ and above all the subsequent propaganda nonsense, had changed the story of the Anglo-Saxon experimental raid on Dieppe into a fairy-tale of defensive success against a major landing attempt. This was all the more irresponsible as captured orders clearly indicated a time limit for the undertaking. The self-satisfied interpretation could never again be dislodged from the minds at the High Command. Together with Rommel's fallacious theories of defence, it was responsible for the grotesque German situation, which vitiated all tenets of strategical doctrine and all recent war experience.

(O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-466, Pz Gp West, Mid 43 B 5 Jun 44, Report of the Commander, p. 7) (Photostat 981SOM(D122))

12. Until late in November O.B. West consistently reported the opponent as ready for and seemingly intent upon the execution of one or several landings in the West (G.M.D.S. B H 22/41, O.B. West, Weekly Sit Reps. Aug 42 B Oct 43, passim) (Photostat 981CW(D28)). The High Command's desire to bolster the Western forces in the face of mounting danger was reflected mainly in the transfer from Germany to France of a number of reserve and replacement formations; this, however, just as much to have them train and feed there, and assist in the contemplated occupation of Vichy-France, as to have their still feeble strength available in an emergency. With the advent of winter and the landings in North Africa the tension lessened (November 1942). In September 7 F1 Div moved to the East, in November it was followed by 6 Pz Div, and in December the qualitative weakening of the Western forces was carried further by Hitler's orders for the immediate transfer to the East of 7 Pz Div and the SS Corps Command with SS Divisions Adolf Hitler, Das Reich and Totenkopf (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS C-65a, Greiner, Dr. Helmuth, Notes on Fuehrer Conferences, 12 Aug 44 B 17 Mar 43, November and December 1942) (Photostat 981SOM(D107)). Prior to the departure of the SS Pz Corps on 9 Jan 43, the Western garrison consisted of 46 divisions of various types and differing combat value (G.M.D.S.-OKW/WEST, Sit Map France, 14 Dec 42) (Photostat 981HC.(D25)). According to a situation map handed on 15 Dec to Lt Gen Efisio Marras, the Italian Military Attaché in Germany, the German ground forces on 9 Dec 42 were disposed as follows:

<u>Theatre</u>	<u>Divisions</u>
East	204
Balkans	7

⁴ Maj Gen Kurt Zeitzler, C. of S. O.B. West and A Gp AD from 24 Apr 42 to 24 Sep 42; subsequently C. of S. OKH until 15 Aug 44.

Africa	8
West	46
Scandinavia	23
Home Area	<u>27</u>
TOTAL	<u>315</u>

(G.M.D.S. B OKW/OKH, Files Mil Att Br. G.S., 15 Dec 42)

DEVELOPMENTS IN 1943

Continued Acceptance of Risk in the West

13. During the latter part of 1942, the Raid on Dieppe, the British sweep from Egypt to Tunisia and the invasion of North Africa had demonstrated to the German High Command the certitude of an ultimate assault on Fortress Europe (G.M.D.S. B OKW/1607A, Schramm, The OKW Theatres within the Framework of the Whole Conduct of the War, p. 7) (Photostat 981SOM(D101)). Germany was now on the defensive along the inner lines of Europe, but the usual advantages of such lines were not available. Uncommitted Allied reserves in the Mediterranean area, in the Middle East and Near East, in America and Africa, and in England forced a dispersion of German strength. Existing Anglo-American designs were veiled in secrecy and screened by artful rumour; no man could penetrate the mystery of plans not yet conceived or formulated. (Ibid, passim)

14. During the first month of the new year the eyes of the German High Command were rivetted in powerless fascination upon the city of Stalingrad, where the destruction of the Sixth Army was being consummated. The German position had now been greatly weakened by the setbacks on the rim of Africa and the disaster on the threshold of the Asian reaches, but in the West the enemy picture was not changing yet. Throughout the winter months the Marshals' weekly estimates of the situation began with statements to the effect that no change in the situation was discernible (O.B. West, Weekly Sit Reps, op cit, passim). Nevertheless O.B. West felt growing anxiety over the continuing depletion of his forces for the sake of the eastern armies. On 18 Jan he asked for the infusion of some additional strength (ibid), and on 22 Jan OKW admitted that his forces had been weakened to the limits of admissibility (G.M.D.S. B W.D. WFSt 1943, 22 Jan 43) (Photostat 981.013(D19)). A few days later a self-deceptive solution of far-reaching consequence was being urged on Rundstedt. A partial answer to the growing strain on German man-power resources seemed to have been found in the progressive dilution of the German armies with non-German elements of comprehensibly low morale and doubtful combat value. On 27 Jan the following was recorded in the War Diary of the High Command:

On 22 Jan the Armed Forces Operations Staff (WFSt) concurred with O.B. West's view that following the moving-off of strong forces [which had taken place], an increase in the fighting strength on the West coast was to be striven for by all means, and, therefore, in agreement with the Army General Staff (OKH/Genst d.H.) suggested the transfer to the West of the Turcoman battalions which were now either ready or in process of formation, and their incorporation in the western divisions, as at the moment they could not be used in the East with success. It would be a matter of 40-50 battalions, or, in other words, about one battalion for each regiment committed for coast protection. Advantages were outweighing the disadvantages (amongst the latter the political repercussions in France). To begin with the transfer of ten battalions would be ordered, these to be incorporated into the individual coastal divisions in the form of compact units. O.B. West to submit his views on the subject as soon as evaluation of experience possible.

(W.D. WFSt, op cit, 27 Jan)

It will be seen below that at the time of invasion almost all infantry regiments directly charged with the defence of the coast consisted of two German and one Eastern battalion; the policy of dilution, however, was never extended to the highest-grade formations.

15. During February and March the depletion of the West continued with the transfer and the alerting for transfer to the East of some good infantry divisions. What was being offered in exchange existed either merely on paper or had not reached the stage where it could be said to have an immediate tactical value. According to the unconsciously humorous wording of a pertinent order on 17 Feb ~~A~~all this must be done without endangering the defence potential of the West. Dutifully and consistently O.B. West had been reporting that the drain on his forces was creating gaps at the coast as well as further inland. But in a routine report on 10 Mar, and particularly in a telephone conversation which had been arranged by the High Command on 22 Mar for this specific purpose, the Western Command truthfully admitted the absence of any signs of impending attack. This, in view of the pressing needs of the East, was all that was required at the highest level to decide on a policy of continued acceptance of risk in the West. (W.D., Wfst, February and March 1943, passim)

16. On 14 Mar O.B. West suggested manning the guns on the Channel Islands with Navy personnel; this would enable him to use the army elements, which were now immobilized on the islands, for the strengthening of the thinly held coast lines of Normandy and Brittany. But he was told on 17 Mar that the Navy had no forces available for such a purpose. Something more substantial than mere shadows finally hove into sight on 25 Mar, when Rundstedt was notified of Hitler's approval of his request for the transfer of 7 F1 Div to the West. The Division was to be sent to Normandy to be held there as a High Command reserve. It would be available to O.B. West in the case of an enemy landing; at the same time it was to be converted into a parachute formation⁵, and earmarked for either participation in operation ~~A~~Gisela⁶, or against an enemy landing in Sardinia, or for possible transfer to Tunisia. (Ibid)

17. Despite extensive search the War Diary of the German Armed Forces Operations Staff for the second quarter of 1943 has not been found. The gap has now been closed to some extent by a ~~A~~Reconstruction~~@~~, which was prepared for O.C.M.H., F.S.B., on the basis of miscellaneous original German military documents, by General Walter Warlimont, former Deputy Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS #P B 049, Strategy of the German Armed Forces High Command, April B June 1943, usu cited ~~A~~Warlimont Reconstruction~~@~~) (Photostat 081SOM.(D104)). During this period the decisive strategic importance of the West was completely overshadowed by major developments elsewhere. At the end of March the Tunisian situation had become critical, but nevertheless, as late as 28 Apr the German and Italian High Commands were still clinging to plans for reinforcing Tunisia. The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the African situation, namely to make preparations for the defence of Italy, was a subject scarcely mentioned before the middle of April. Only when Tunisia had been lost, the High Command began to direct its full attention to the resulting situation in the whole Mediterranean area. Hitler expected an occupation of Sardinia by the Allies in order to bring Rome within the range of operations. But he felt that the Italian peninsula could easily be sealed off should that become necessary, and what he really did expect and at the same time feared the most, was an attack on the Balkans. Such a campaign would deprive him of vital war materials and might lead to a joining of hands between the Western Allies and the Russians. (Warlimont Reconstruction, op cit)

German Summer Operation ~~A~~Citadel~~@~~ absorbs Major Reserves

18. Both prongs of the pincers which were to have met at the Pursian Golf had been cut off, the Hitler had lost the initiative. Bold strategical thoughts were now giving way to measures of expediency. To regain the initiative to some degree at least was one of the vague thoughts behind the plans for the big operation ~~A~~Citadel~~@~~ (recapture of lost ground near Kursk), which was then being scheduled for the early summer months. At the same time plans were made for the transfer, if and when required, of formations from the East and West to Italy and southern France (Plan ~~A~~Alarich~~@~~) and to the Balkans (Plan ~~A~~Constantin~~@~~). During the spring O.B. West consistently estimated the situation in the sense that Allied attacks on the U-boat bases and on any sector of the coast were possible at any moment. But while a strengthening or at least a stabilization of his forces was clearly needed, he could not close his eyes to the facts that invasion was not yet at hand and that more immediate needs had to be satisfied elsewhere on the over-extended German fronts. (Ibid, passim)

19. Operation ~~A~~Citadel~~@~~ had been postponed several times, but on 18 Jun, brushing aside the misgivings of his closest advisers, Hitler decided to carry out the undertaking. On 25 Jun he set the date for the attack, and in the

⁵ 7 F1 Div was redesignated 1 Para Div on 1 Jun 43 (G.M.D.S. B OKH, Card Index of Divisions)

⁶ Operation ~~A~~Gisela~~@~~: Occupation of Spain under certain circumstances.

morning of 5 Jul his Fourth and Ninth Armies made the opening moves of the ill-starred venture. (W.D. WFSst, 5 Jul 43). Warlimont writes in this connection:

But when by the latter part of June neither an Allied attack on Italy had been launched, nor the attitude of Italy seemed to be giving grounds for concern, Hitler decided to go ahead with operation *ACitadel*..

In doing so he automatically eliminated from the plans *Alarich* and *Constantin* the six armoured divisions which had been earmarked for these cases. This left merely the six infantry divisions from the West, and the two para divisions as possible additions.

(Warlimont Reconstruction, p. 148)

It is not known whether Hitler merely lost patience or whether the swindling number of remaining warm days forced him to launch or cancel *ACitadel*. In any event, had he waited but one week longer, the course of the war might have been greatly altered; his Russian lines might have been shortened; a central reserve might have been formed; the Western theatres might have been strengthened.

20. Fully aware, of course, of the German manpower situation, the interdependence of the fronts, and the consequences to his own command of over-extension or failure elsewhere, Marshal von Rundstedt, in his weekly situation reports in June had never failed to emphasize the growing number of agents=reports pointing to an imminent enemy operation in the Mediterranean area (O.B.West, Weekly Sit Reps, op.cit). But when on the morning of 10 Jul the Allies landed in Sicily, the die had been cast in the East, and in the place of strengthening his forces O.B.West would henceforth have to nourish both, the eastern and the southern fronts. In the War Diary of the Armed Forces Operations Staff the following was recorded on 11 Jul:

In his appreciation of the situation on 27 Jun, O.B.West pointed out that the measures for plan *Alarich* were taken at the expense of the defence potential of the occupied western coasts. Due to the withdrawal of mobile formations operational gaps had appeared behind the thinly occupied coastal defence. In their present condition the remaining mobile divisions could only be assessed as infantry divisions. O.B.West therefore requested that these formations be given priority for immediate re-equipment.

In the answer to O.B.West, OKW admits the extraordinary weakening of O.B.West's operational reserves, and states that these measures were only possible at all because the Atlantic Wall had meanwhile attained a considerable defence potential. The point of main effort of the enemy attack lies in the Mediterranean, and will, as far as can be foreseen, remain there. In the meantime the attack on Sicily has begun. Whether it will be continued subsequently against Sardinia and Corsica, against the Italian mainland, or against Greece, cannot be forecast with any certainty. In the West, on the other hand, no landing operations of any magnitude are to be expected for the present. The French Mediterranean coast is not threatened as long as the enemy is not in possession of Sardinia and Corsica. In this situation, OKW is endeavouring to supplement any measures taken by O.B.West with any equalizing measures in favour of the West which are possible, having due regard to the situation in the Mediterranean.

Priority re-armament of the mobile formations is not practicable, but it is intended to allot to the West the greater portion of the assault guns which will become available in the near future, and to bring the tanks up to strength as quickly as possible. Withdrawal of more divisions from the West in favour of O.B.South and O.B.Southeast will only take place if new reserves are gained in the West by reason of commitment in the West of additional static divisions. As for the arguments put forward by O.B.West in favour of thinning out coastal defence and increasing the depth of the combat zone to the rear, experiences in Sicily have shown that the holding of the coast is the most important pre-requisite for successful defence against enemy landings.⁷ ...

(W.D. WFSst, 11 Jul 43)

⁷ The various and shifting views on coast defence tactics are dealt with at length in later paragraphs.

21. From purely operational points of view a contraction of the German fronts would have offered definite advantages, but Hitler was unwilling even to consider such a course of action. Whether it was nickel from Petsamo, oil and bauxite from the Balkans, wheat from the Ukraine, manganese from the Dnjepr bend or produce from Northern Italy, none of it would be spared lest the war effort of have-not Germany grind to a standstill following by defeat. As early as 16 Dec 42 Count Ciano had suggested coming to terms with Stalin (Greiner, Notes on Fuehrer Conferences, op cit, 16 Dec 42).⁸ Now, with the defence of Italy hastily being improvised, there was plainly need of some good argument to keep the weak and wavering partner from throwing in the sponge. What seemed like a convincing argument to Hitler may have sounded less enchanting to Italian ears, but it is a matter of record that on 19 Jul 43, at the beginning of the Feltre conference, Hitler told Mussolini the raw material and food situation made the control of certain areas an imperative necessity. With that control assured, the war could be continued ad infinitum (W.D. WFSSt, 19 Jul 43)

22. When O.B. West saw his erstwhile mobile reserves being committed in Russia, and moved to or earmarked for the Italian theatre, and, in addition, the promised men and equipment failed to appear in quantity, he examined the question of what could be achieved with the infantry formations actually on hand. He came to the conclusion that the coastal divisions should have a third regiment each, and that they ought to be motorized as far as possible. In asking the High Command to do this, he pointed to the reports from Sicily, which were showing that not only the water-front but also the rear front of the defence line should be prepared for defence. In reply he was told that conversion to triangular divisions would require the creation of 15 new regiments, which was impossible at the moment; that the High Command agreed with him in principle, but was postponing the measure for reconsideration at a later date. (W.D. WFSSt, 21 Jun and 2 Aug 43)

23. O.B. West's weekly situation reports for July indicate that work on the field fortifications was carried out with great energy, and that the number of mines laid during the month was over 160,000, a considerable increase over previous monthly rates. On the other hand withdrawals of R.A.D. (Reichsarbeitsdienst: National Labour Service) and O.T. (Construction Organization Todt) personnel had slowed down work on the Atlantic Wall, where by the middle of the month a total of slightly over 8,200 permanent installations had been completed or taken under construction. (O.B. West, Weekly Sit Reps, July 1943, passim)

24. Late in July the German High Command was considering the advisability of constructing on the coast of Southern France a wall similar to that on the Atlantic coast. It is known that defence construction on the Mediterranean coast was kept within moderate limits; the matter was disposed of in the War Diary of the Armed forces Operations Staff by the following remark:

Due to the development in the situation, construction work on the French south coast is gaining in importance. At the present time it does not meet even the most elementary requirements. WFSSt, therefore, on 18 Jul, asked the General of Engineers and Fortresses how the work on the Atlantic Wall would be affected should equal priority be given to construction work on the Mediterranean coast. In the opinion of the General of Engineers and fortresses, a material increase in the work on the French south coast could be obtained only at the expense of the work on the Atlantic coast.

(W.D. WFSSt, 25 Jul)

⁸ At the meeting of the two Chiefs of State at Castle Klessheim in Salzburg at the beginning of 1943, Mussolini had again urged Hitler to seek an understanding with Russia. Diplomatic sources state that the Italians had come with the firm intention of pressing for peace with Russia. (Warlimont Reconstruction, p. 32, quoting: Elizabeth Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, Oxford-University Press, 1949, p. 296).

25. In midsummer 1943 the attention of the High Command was being absorbed ever more by the developments in the East and Italy, and O.B.West was increasingly left to his own devices. In his weekly estimates of the situation he continued to report the enemy as being ready for tactical landings and having free choice of the target area. But it was not possible, he admitted, to ascertain whether the preparations were to culminate in a landing, or were deceptive and merely designed to pin down forces in the West (O.B.West, Weekly Sit Reps, August 1943, passim). In the meantime, for his own information as well as for the purpose of obtaining data for his future recommendations to the High Command, the Marshal was conducting a searching inquiry into all aspects of the defence potential and requirements of his command. Lt Gen Bodo Zimmermann (O.B.West's First Operations Officer from 26 Oct 40 B 11 May 45) writes in this connection:

For this inspection, which began about the end of May 43, the Armies had to set up special teams, including experts on all military matters. The German Navy and the Luftwaffe furnished representatives. O.B.West sent his General Staff Corps officers and the Chiefs of Arms and Services (Waffengeneräle) to all investigations. The inspection was made in meticulous detail and required a great deal of time; it lasted from the end of May until about the middle of October 1943. Each detailed report was immediately examined for deficiencies which O.B.West could remedy himself. Then from all these reports O.B.West in the autumn of 1943 completed a very detailed memorandum for OKW.

(O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-308,
Zimmermann, Bodo, Lt Gen,
AO.B.West, From Atlantic Wall to
Siegfried Line, A Study in
Command, English text, paras 35 and
37) (Photostat 981SOM(D94))

26. An appointment which under normal circumstances would have meant a definite strengthening of the Western command had been made on 1 Jun 43, when the highly rated General of Panzer Troops, Freiherr Geyr von Schwappenburg, was made General der Panzertruppen West (General of the Armoured Troops West) (G.M.D.S. B OKH, Personnel Files). He and his staff, which later formed the nucleus of Panzer Group West (subsequently Fifth Panzer Army), were at that time assigned the task of supervising the training of all armoured units in the West and of advising the Marshal on matters pertaining to the armoured forces. It was von Geyr's conviction that panzer units should be used for mobile, basically strategic employment (A Study in Command, op cit, p. 41) and that panzer divisions could be no match for naval artillery (Pz Gp West, Cmdrs Report, op cit, p. 1). In the light of subsequent developments it is interesting to note that in the summer of 1943 General von Geyr reported to the Inspector General of Armoured Troops that the Atlantic Wall was worth exactly as much as the panzer divisions behind it. (Ibid, p. 5)

27. At the end of August, with the Western Command continuing to be weakened by the withdrawal of entire formations, WFS notified O.B.West on 27 Aug that in addition to this and despite the Marshal's remonstrations of 25 Aug, the Führer insisted on drawing off from the army components in the West a draft of 45,000 individuals fit for employment in the East. Despite promises to replace this

seasoned personnel with men from the age class of 1925, it was obvious that depletion was turning into evisceration. With Allied demonstrations at the channel coast in full swing (STARKEY), and with the invasion season by no means ended, O.B. West was bound to make serious representations at the seat of power. In the War Diary of the Armed Forces Operations Staff the matter was recorded in the following entry:

On 6 Sep, the Chief of Staff, O.B. West, Lt Gen Blumentritt, indited a personal letter to Chief WFSt, in which, among other things, he set forth that in the West, in September 1942, there had been 22 infantry divisions (two thirds of which had three regiments), 7 panzer and motorized divisions (first class and fully mobile), with six infantry divisions as reserves. Today, on the other hand, in a far tenser situation, and with a front extended to the Mediterranean, there are 27 infantry divisions (mostly of two regiments, and rating lower than those of last year), 6 Panzer and motorized divisions which are less well equipped and seven infantry divisions in reserve (three of which have only just been formed).⁹ Since October 1942 the following have been released for other fronts:

For the <u>East</u>	22 infantry, 6 panzer and/or motorized divisions
For the <u>Balkans</u>	1 infantry, 1 panzer division
For <u>Tunis and Italy</u>	8 infantry, 9 panzer and/or motorized divisions

Added to this there is the constant draining away of arms and equipment. According to the reports made by enemy agents, our opponent is aware of this deterioration. Lt-Gen Blumentritt states that loss of ground can be borne anywhere but on the channel, from which the frontier of the Reich is only 280 km distant. Most of the Western divisions are not suited for the mobile warfare which would follow the loss of the coast and its fortifications. If a major landing must be reckoned with up to the middle of October, the West can stand no further thinning and combing out between now and then. If the enemy does not attack advantage must be taken of the winter months to strengthen the static coast divisions (triangular, mobile). From six to eight mobile formations were required....

(W.D. WFSt, 11 Sep 43)

Danger Signs appear in the West (Sep-Oct)

28. Allied operation STARKEY at the beginning of September confirmed O.B. West in the belief that a major Allied landing attempt might now occur at any moment. The demonstrations in the Channel, however, seemed to bear some of the characteristics of deceptive operations and apart from alerting the troops O.B. West did not take any special measures; he kept an open mind as to the prospective landing

⁹ A glance at contemporary situation maps might create the impression that the West had not fared too badly. On closer analysis, however, it becomes apparent that the Western Command had been drained of substance and continued to remain in that condition until the spring of 1944, when much strength was being pumped into the West.

area and did not move his operational reserves. In his situation reports he expressed the opinion that the Allied activity might be a diversion in connection with the Italian capitulation; when the activity subsided he concluded that it might have been a dress-rehearsal for a major undertaking against the West coast. (O.B.West, Weekly Sit Reps, September 1943, passim). ASTARKEY succeeded in bringing home to the German High Command that a decision would be sought in the West and that the denudation of the West would have to cease as soon as the difficult situation elsewhere made this possible. If, in addition, STARKEY had been meant to draw increased German strength to the Pas de Calais, this fact did not become quite clear to the Germans for the reason that their attention was already fully centred on the area. Ultimate invasion there had been consistently predicted by the generals, and the importance of the sector had been stressed by Hitler at the end of June for a new and specific reason:

At the Führer Conference of 28 Jun the Führer reiterated that top priority of development should be accorded above all to those portions of the Atlantic Wall where the projected new weapons would be committed.

(W.D. WFSt, 14 Jul 43)

29. In October minelaying and the work on field fortifications proceeded without hindrance, but in spite of unabated tension in the West, OKW continued making demands for transfer of entire formations to the East, and there was no improvement in the O.T. construction picture (O.B.West, Weekly Sit Reps, October 1943, passim). On 18 Oct WFSt went on record as requiring additional forces for the East:

As even with a retrograde movement of Army Group North the Eastern Front could not be stabilized with the forces on hand (W.D. WFSt, 20 Oct 43). This was immediately followed by further demands from the Führer, accompanied by the usual promises. The most substantial one of these was an order for the formation of six new infantry divisions (five in the area of O.B.West, and one in Denmark). They were to be ready for commitment by 1 Jul 44, the personnel to consist of convalescents and men of the age class 1926. (Ibid, 25 Oct 43)

30. To the commanders in the West it was clear that the erstwhile calculated risk was becoming an abnormal risk, and that matters were drifting towards certain disaster unless drastic action was taken soon. During the latter part of October, all within the same week, Lt Col Freiherr von Roenne, Chief of the Intelligence Section Foreign Armies West, and Col Gen Hans von Salmuth, Commander of Fifteenth Army, gave stern warning in personal letters, the recognized safety valve for frustrations boiling over, and Marshal von Rundstedt issued his comprehensive and subtly pessimistic report with the findings of the big inquiry from May to October. (Para 25 above; para 33 below)

31. The original text of Roenne's letter is unavailable, but it was accorded the distinction of being summarized in the WFSt War Diary:

In a personal communication dated 19 Oct (received 23 Oct), the Chief of the Foreign Armies West Section of the Army General Staff set forth his views to the Deputy Chief WFSt on the strength ratio in the West. He estimates that there are 43 first class large enemy

formations available for a landing in France (26 infantry, 14 Panzer and three airborne divisions). As opposed to these, there are 26 German formations of a like fighting value. If in the first wave the enemy should commit from 12-15 divisions with the object of capturing from 2-3 bridgeheads on a front of about 100 km, each of these would be opposed by from 4-5 German divisions. Within a short space of time he could commit 43 formations. If in from 3-4 weeks, from 15-20 battleworthy German formations could be thrown against him, this would represent a noteworthy peak performance. The strong coastal fortifications and the high fighting value of the German soldier could be set against the enemy air superiority as a material asset. But according to the basis for calculation available to the enemy, the strength situation was no reason for desisting from an attack. The picture might further change in the enemy's favour by the bringing up of additional American divisions.

(W.D. WFSt, 25 Oct 43)

In addition to this, at the Führer Conference of 25 Oct the representative of the Foreign Office reported the resumption of the enemy press and news barrage. Through open and through secret channels every landing beach from Norway to the Solomons was being named as marked for imminent attack. At the Moscow conference the Western Allies might well have decided to disregard the approach of unfavourable weather and to attempt the establishment of a second front. Hitler seemed impressed, possibly because it had been reported on the same day that Allied landing craft were leaving the Mediterranean, presumably for England. (Ibid)

32. General von Salmuth's personal letter to General Jodl consisted of the copy of a report from Fifteenth Army to O.B. West and a long letter of explanation in which the Army Commander, in a manner neither optimistic, nor pessimistic, but frankly realistic, aided by double and triple exclamation marks, set forth in briny language the ills besetting his command. The Atlantic Wall, he wrote, was not a wall capable of stopping a determined foe, but rather a thin cord with little knots at intervals. A landing was certain to succeed at the focal points; the decisive battle would be fought inland. Forces for this were inadequate, construction work was lagging, direction was muddled, available labour unharnessed, material in short supply. Sticking one's head in the sand like an ostrich would be followed by a rude awakening. General von Salmuth's accompanying letter was rich in contemporary information; it appears in translated form as Appendix AA to the present report. (G.M.D.S. B 59363/1, Fifteenth Army, W.D. No. 4, October **B** December 1943, Chefsachen, Salmuth to Jodl, 26 Oct 43) (Photostat and translation 981A15(D2))

The Rundstedt Report (28 Oct)

33. Greatly differing in form and scope from the plea of the Army Commander was the carefully prepared and coldly worded report that was released by Marshal von Rundstedt on 28 Oct 43 (Paras 25 and 30 above) (Photostat¹⁰ and translation 981CW(D50)). A full translation appears as Appendix AB to the present report; some highlights are being cited in the following:

¹⁰ Reproduction forthcoming at early date.

The general estimate of our situation is the function of the Highest Command. It alone knows its objectives and intentions and it alone disposes of the necessary basis for that purpose....

Also troop movements and other signs in England pointed to an attack. The expected attack has not yet been launched. On 10 Sep the enemy made known that on 9 Sep the Agrand manoeuvres@ in the Channel were concluded. It is difficult to say whether the whole thing was a well thought out feint employing very large forces in connection with the Italian operation, or whether, for some political or military reason or other, the attack was not to be carried out or was postponed....

In England alone the enemy has at his disposal today just as many divisions for an attack against the Continent as we have in our own forces in the entire West. Because we are unable to obtain reliable information the enemy is in a position to ensure full surprise....

Normandy with Cherbourg, and Brittany with Brest are additional important areas on the Channel front....

[Due to the length of the front and the scantiness of defence forces] a Adefence@ in the true sense of the word, is not possible on many portions of the front of the Western Command, but only a Aguarding@, and on the First Army and Nineteenth Army fronts merely a reinforced Aobservation@. This is a direct result of the general situation. We must make the best of it....

We cannot and may not fall back in the West because the space separating the Channel from the Western German frontier is too restricted....

Fixed fortifications are indispensable and valuable for battle as well as for propaganda. But it must not be imagined that his wall cannot be overcome when the enemy attacks it from the sea, from the air and from the rear with the most powerful weapons of American might....

Wherever possible the construction of the installation must make allowances for the new point of view that the enemy will come not only from the front, by water, but also from the rear with airborne troops. As many installations as possible must therefore be put in on an Aall around defence@ basis, otherwise they will be useless if attacked from the rear (see para 34 below)....

The enemy is in a position to attack from England across the Channel at any time. His military preparations have come to a conclusion on the whole. Whether and when he will attack, will depend to a great extent on his political intentions. In comparison with 1942 the situation in the West must also be considered much more critical in view of the general situation. In 1944 O.B. West must expect large-scale attacks on his fronts. [Detailed, unfavourable comparison with forces in the West in 1942]....

I am aware of the fact that in view of the present rather unfavourable situation in the East, nothing can be done to aid the situation in the West.¹¹ Therefore one must not be surprised if the enemy makes a large-scale attack employing all the means of power he has available and we are unsuccessful in the defence, despite the Atlantic Wall and the very intensive efforts of troops and the command. To be sure I do not have the general over-all view of the entire situation and the deeper knowledge of all the political and military-political connections known probably to the High Command alone. If the factors known to the Supreme Command indicate that the area in the West is not immediately threatened by an Anglo-American attack, then I must get along with the forces and means considered sufficient by the Supreme Command. However, if it develops that in the year 1944 the enemy will seek a decision in the West **B** all present indications point that way **B** then everything must be done from now on to increase the defensive power of the units to the maximum and to assemble and prepare the decisive strategic reserves in such manner that the enemy can be defeated....

A sufficient reinforcement of the defensive power of the coastal fronts can only be assured by triangular divisions of some mobility and with sufficient artillery and anti-tank equipment....

If the Supreme Command assumes that a decisive large-scale operation of the Anglo-Americans against the West is imminent for year 1944, then the time has now come to take the aforementioned measures and to prevent any further dilution of the Western formations. The essential point of the coast defence behind the front lies in the assembly of sufficient, completely mobile large-sized motorized reserves capable of striking a blow....

34. It has been seen above (para 33) that a **A**new point of view[@], namely preparation for all around defence, had crept into the picture of Western defence. The creation of a **A**Second Position[@] was ordered by O.B. West on 21 Oct in Basic Order No. 31 (Development of Coast Defence in Depth):

... These experiences in other theatres of war, as well as the probable greater depth of operations to come, must be taken into account forthwith.

Now, where through years of work on field fortifications and permanent works the main line of resistance on the West coast has acquired a considerable strength,

I order:

1. That the Netherlands Command and the Armies make a general reconnaissance **B** where this has not already been done **B** in co-operation with the competent local headquarters and other branches of the Wehrmacht, of the course of a second position.

¹¹ It would be difficult to believe that Rundstedt at the time considered a German victory as possible. Who is there to tell whether his co-called **A**weakness[@] was not the wisdom of the long view; whether he did not prefer defeat in the East and West to permanent perdition coming from the East alone.

Good liaison and harmonious co-operation at all points of junction are particularly important.

2. The course of this second position must not be rigid, but it must, in as open and broken a form as possible, contain a system of anchorages, resistance nests, prepared positions for heavy weapons, and at especially suitable places, flanking switch positions etc. Along the course of this second position, installations, air fields, ammunition and supply dumps, etc, already there, are to be drawn into this system as strongpoints; likewise the quarters of reserves and staffs already there. Any flak must be installed in such a manner that it can equally well be used for ground fighting, and be depended on all sides.
3. It is important that these explorations be followed as quickly as possible by the partly permanent, but primarily field-fortification-like construction of a skeleton position, and that a like procedure be followed simultaneously in the rear areas of all coastal defence sectors.

(G.M.D.S. 75144/1, O.B. West, Basic Orders for Coast Defence (Grundlegende Befehle), 27 Aug 43 B 20 Dec 43, Basic Order No. 31, 21 Oct 43) (Photostat 981CW(D40), O.B. West, Basic Orders Nos 27-32, and No. 34)

O.B. West's intentions in this respect were noted in the War Diary Wfst on 21 Oct; and on 25 Oct the following was recorded:

O.B. West is now beginning to prepare field works for a second position situated rearwards of the Atlantic Wall. For this work, 31,000 men of the French Labour Service are being placed at his disposal....¹²

(W.D., Wfst, 25 Oct 43)

35. At the end of the month the Western situation was summed up in the same War Diary:

The marked denudation of the West resulting from transfers to the South and the East is still causing grave concern. Enough forces and shipping tonnage are ready in the South of England for a major operation, and the deadline for the attack may be advanced on account of

¹² With work on the Atlantic Wall being seriously hampered by lack of men and materiel, this Second Position apparently was never fully developed. In the absence of original documentation the following is quoted from a post-war statement by Col Gen von Salmuth:

The development of a rearward position, which the [Fifteenth] Army finally was permitted to carry out in the winter 1943/44 after overcoming extremely strong resistance from higher authorities, was also completely up to the troops, which by higher orders, were not even allowed to use either steel or concrete for this purpose. It was, of course, impossible to create a continuous line. Following the plans prepared by the Army, each division started to construct independent strongpoints.... With the beginning of the ordered construction of the chain of fortresses, work on this position had to be almost completely discontinued since there were no longer any forces available for this purpose.

(O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-746, von Salmuth, Col Gen, Answers to Questionnaire regarding the Operations in Normandy, p. 11) (Photostat 981SOM(D119))

pressure from Russia. O.B.West has submitted an order, which provides for commitment of civilian forces for the construction of a second position. OKW has no objection to this.

Now as before, the French Mediterranean coast can only be developed in a field-fortification-like manner; two Italian construction battalions among others are being employed for this work.

At present the entire construction work in the Western area is handicapped by construction forces having been transferred to the East, and by units of the German National Labour Service having been withdrawn. The output of concrete construction has dropped.

(Ibid, 30 Oct 43)

Führer Directive No. 51 (3 Nov)

36. The feeling that the Western Allies might be under strong pressure at the Moscow Conference, as well as the chorus of warning voices from various quarters, induced the Führer to acknowledge the danger in the West and announce his plans for definite remedial action. In the last of the numbered major directives of the war, Directive No. 51, of 3 Nov, Hitler stated that invasion was to be expected in 1944 at the latest, that the issue would decide the whole war, that the Fifteenth Army sector was the probable scene of action and that the German armies in the West were henceforth to be strengthened and not weakened as before. A translation of the document appears as Appendix AC@ to this report. (G.M.D.S. B OKW/104, Misc Führer Directives and Orders) (Photostat 981HC(D27))

Rommel enters the Western Sphere (6 Nov)

37. In matters of construction work and the coming and going of troops the month of November was uneventful. O.B.West reported the furtherance of invasion preparations in England and the continuing capability of the enemy for a large attack. In the meantime, ever in quest of political safety by means of ruling and dividing, the restless brain at the top of the pyramid had contrived an important change in the set-up and balance of the command machinery in the West. This was the introduction and gradual interpolation of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel into the Western scene. Originally Rommel had been slated for the post of O.B.South:

On 16 Aug, respectively 7 Sep, orders were given for Army Group B [Rommel] to assume command over the whole Italian theatre at a date to be set later. On 12 Oct WFS^t produced a corresponding draft order. After some changes had been made it was submitted to the Führer by Chief OKW [Keitel] on 14 Oct. The Führer expressed the desire to see Marshal Rommel first [before issuing an order]. On 17 Oct Rommel reported to the Führer (according to a note made by Chief WFS^t [Jodl] on 12 Oct, thoughts were then being entertained of making Marshal Kesselring ^AMilitary Commander Norway@ and entrusting General Hube with the command of Fourteenth Army). On 17 Oct WFS^t submitted a new draft order naming Marshal Rommel Commander-in-Chief of the whole Italian theatre. The Führer

read it on 18 Oct. The order was never issued.... A new draft was submitted on 25 Oct. In that order the name of Marshal Rommel had been replaced by that of Marshal Kesselring.¹³

(W.D. WFSt, 6 Nov 43)

38. It was, therefore, between 18 and 25 Oct that Hitler made up his mind to use Rommel in the West. A significant note was made in the War Diary of WFSt on 28 Oct:

WFSt note regarding the tasks of Intervention Staff Rommel (Eingreifstab Rommel), creation of which is under consideration:

1. Command in case of enemy large-scale landing in Western Europe with elimination of the present Commanders-in-Chief in the coastal areas concerned.
2. Authority of an Inspector of Coast Defence.

(Ibid, 28 Oct)

The final decision was made on 30 Oct; on 6 Nov the matter was ready for promulgation:

Formation of the Army Group for Special Employment (General Field Marshal Rommel)

On 30 Oct the Chief WFSt issued instructions for a Führer Order to be prepared, which defines the task to be assigned to General Field Marshal Rommel. The draft was submitted on 1 Nov. It is being issued today, 6 Nov, and dated 5 Nov.

On the Führer's orders, after the unified command in Italy has been taken over by O.B. Southwest, the Army General Staff is to form an Army Group for Special Employment under General Field Marshal Rommel. It will be directly under the Führer, and will receive his instructions through WFSt. The Army Group is to be kept as small and mobile as possible; it will select its administrative headquarters in conformity with the tasks assigned it.

These comprise:

1. The study of the defence preparedness of the coasts occupied by us, and the submission of proposals therefor.
2. The arrangement of operational studies for offensive operations against an enemy landing force.

¹³ At that time the decision was made of re-designating O.B.South as O.B.Southwest to prevent confusion with Army Group South on the Eastern Front (ibid, 6 Nov). The change became effective on 21 Nov 43, when Kesselring assumed command over the whole Italian theatre. (ibid, 6 Nov, p. 4; H.S. Report No. 18, para 105)

Detailed instructions will be issued. As its first task, the Army Group for Special Employment will examine the defence of Denmark and submit proposals therefor. Next, operational studies are to be submitted for counter-attack in Denmark and Artois; then, in the Cotentin Peninsula, the Netherlands and Brittany. The required data are to be furnished to Marshal Rommel by all Wehrmacht commands and administrative headquarters.

(Ibid, 6 Nov, p. 5)

On 21 Nov Fourteenth Army assumed the previous responsibilities of Army Group AB@, which then, designated as Army Group for Special Employment, and consisting of Rommel and a small staff, embarked on its new task. (Ibid, 21 Nov)

39. On 13 Dec Rommel submitted his report on the defence preparations in Denmark. He suggested a regrouping of German forces in the area and stated that Denmark could be defended successfully if certain additions in personnel and materiel were made. Subsequently (and leaving out much that would have been of interest) an entry on 31 Dec in the War Diary WFS^t recorded that WFS^t B A acting on yesterdays request by O.B.West@B had decided to integrate A Gp B¹⁴ under O.B.West into the Western command machinery. The Army Group was to consist of the Netherlands Command and the Fifteenth and Seventh Armies:

On the Führer's Orders, therefore, A Gp B to be under O.B.West from 1 Jan 44...

A Gp B ceases to be subordinated directly to the Führer...

Field Marshal Rommel will submit his suggestions to O.B.West.

(Ibid, 26 and 31 Dec 43)

40. To German minds the month of December was characterized by the unfavourable developments on the Russian front, where Field Marshal Fritz Erich von Manstein's Army Group South was expending great forces and immense quantities of materiel in an unpromising effort to retain its hold on the Crimean area. Contrary to the spirit of Directive No. 51 (para 36 above), it had been necessary to deprive the west of another 10,000 men and of 60 Pz Gren Div (W.D. WFS^t, 11 Dec). But clearly Hitler was now seriously alarmed about the Western situation and took definite steps to rebuild the weakened forces (ibid, December 1943, passim). This was due not so much to his intuition, or to the weekly warnings from O.B.West (ibid), as to a fortuitous circumstance which made him temporarily one of the few persons accurately informed of Anglo-American plans and intentions. As a result of the German Intelligence operation ACicero@B by no means a brilliant feat of espionage, but merely a moderately clever exploitation of a lucky break B the Germans had been receiving photostatic copies of the most recent top secret British documents. In German hands at that time, the complete minutes of the Moscow, Cairo and Teheran Conferences and Staff Talks enabled a selected few to peruse at leisure

¹⁴ After 11 Dec the Army Group for Special Employment was again being referred to as Army Group B (W.D. WFS^t, 12 Dec 43)

the blue prints for their own destruction. But it was too late for them to save the situation or, indeed, their necks. (Moyzisch, L.C., Operation Cicero, Wingate Ltd., London & New York, 1950)

41. With invasion in the not too distant future now a foregone conclusion, WFSt and O.B.West were occupied with the preparation of final plans for dispositions and the moving up of reserves to the various possible areas of attack:¹⁵

On 24 Dec WFSt submitted a memorandum on the concentration movement in the zone of O.B.West, which was to begin on 15 Jan, and which was to strengthen the defence potential of Fifteenth Army and the right wing of Seventh Army (Cotentin Peninsula). On 25 Dec the Chief of the Army General Staff defined his own conception. Due to the existing situation the date set by O.B.West must be advanced. O.B.West is informed that the enemy's concentration in the South of England will probably be completed by the middle of February. As the moving up of our forces, especially in view of the probable breaks in the traffic network, requires time, the concentration must begin earlier. The Führer has therefore ordered that the mass of the available forces be assembled at once behind the front of Fifteenth Army and the right wing of Seventh Army. The movement [to the final positions] then to begin on 1 Jan 44.

(W.D. WFSt, 27 Dec 43)

42. On the same day Hitler issued an order forbidding forthwith the drawing off of personnel and materiel from O.B.West and the Denmark Command. Specific exceptions were enumerated in the

¹⁵ Plans were made for the following cases:

- : Attack on channel Coast
- Blume 1
- Blume 2 : Attack on French Mediterranean Coast
- Falke : Landing in Central or Northern Norway
- Hanna : Landing in Denmark
- Marder 1 : Landing on Ligurian Coast
- Marder 2 : Landing on Adriatic Coast
- Getrud : Commitment of German forces in Bulgaria in the event of a breach of Turkish neutrality by the Western Allies
- : (Attack in the Aegean Archipelago, 1)
- Forelle 1
- Forelle 2 : (Attack in the Aegean Archipelago, 2)

(W.D. WFSt, 20 Dec 43)

order (ibid). While it was inadvisable for members of Hitler's entourage to make pessimistic remarks in his presence, possibly sobered by the turn of events in Russia and the secret Allied information available to him, on 28 Dec the Führer himself made a rather revealing statement. He said that apart from making a landing in the West, the Western Allies were certain to make one in Norway, as in the case of an eventual German collapse it would be intolerable for the British to see the Russians suddenly appear in Narvik. (Ibid, 28 Dec)

Tactical Aspects of Coast Defence

43. Ever since the fundamental principles for the defence of the West coast had been laid down in Führer Directive No. 40, in March 1942, it had been axiomatic that a landing must be defeated off the coast if possible, but after the coast had been reached at the latest (para 8 above). In the meantime O.B. West had increasingly made mention of the need for a strong mobile reserve, and recently he had given orders for the exploration of a second line. To General von Salmuth, commanding the Army most likely to bear the brunt of the approaching enemy assault, it seemed that Marshal von Rundstedt was deviating from the original concept. Salmuth was a heavy-set, solid soldier with a mind of his own and a reputation for speaking it (G.M.D.S. B OKW, Personnel Files). It is not known whether he acted solely according to his own lights or whether he had already fallen under the spell of Rommel's theories; in any case on 25 Dec he undertook to point out to O.B. West the advisability of concentrating strength close to the coast. Under present dispositions, he wrote, the reserves would come too late; the decisive struggle in the landing area must be precipitated as quickly as possible, the coastal front should be strengthened, the large reserves, including armoured and mechanized formations, should be held in the sectors likely to become focal points. Translations of this memorandum and the accompanying letter appear as Appendix AD@ to the present report. (Fifteenth Army, W.D. October B December 1943, op cit, Salmuth to Rundstedt, 25 Dec 43)

44. In his reply on 27 Dec Rundstedt agreed in the main with the suggestions made, but pointed out at the same time that the large formations were not yet fit for commitment. No doubt the focal point would be on both sides of the Somme, but only actual events could prove this; in the meantime he had to protect the entire coastal front and could not place his panzer divisions too far forward without impeding later lateral moves. Quite apart from this the situation in the East might force at any time the withdrawal of formations from the West; there was no other remedy at hand. A translation of this letter appears as Appendix AE@ to the present report. (Ibid, 27 Dec 43)

STRENGTHENING OF WESTERN FORCES DELAYED (JANUARY B MARCH 1944)

45. The dominant personalities in the West were now the wise but aging strategist von Rundstedt, and the young, dynamic and fascinating tactician Rommel. Each in his own way tried to solve a problem that due to circumstances beyond their control was bound to prove insoluble. In addition to the difficulties arising from the progressive deterioration of the German situation generally, the probability of failure was enhanced by the lack of clear-cut delimitation of power between the two commanders, and the shackling of their forces at the critical moment as a result of Hitler's insistence on holding all the main strings in his own hand.

46. Early in January the strengthening of Fifteenth Army's sector by shifting formations within the Western command was completed. As far as troop dispositions were concerned preparations in this most important sector were now considered complete (G.M.D.S. B OKW/1605, Schramm, Developments in the West, 1 Jan B 31 Mar 44, p. 16) (Photostat 981SOM(D98)). At that time the other coastal sectors were being regarded with lesser concern. But the Allied landings at Anzio on 22 Jan, and agents' reports in February and March, led to new apprehensions and to growing perplexity and confusion as to the probable invasion sector. Two days after Anzio Jodl told Hitler that the Allies would carry out various peripheral operations to force a dispersal of German strength. Then they would undertake the decisive assault across the channel. Hitler agreed. (Ibid, p. 49)

47. In the middle of February the Führer was alarmed by reports of concentrations in south-western England. Brest and Brittany now seemed threatened, and he urged a movement of reserves to that sector (ibid, p. 47). On the basis of a comprehensive estimate of the situation by Foreign Armies West, Jodl at the same time predicted enemy operations against the ill-prepared southern coast of France. Hitler agreed to strengthen this sector too (ibid, p. 60). On 4 Mar the Führer called Normandy and Brittany the most endangered sectors.¹⁶

The Führer does not believe the Allies will make cross-Channel attacks at many points. For this their forces are not large enough. As particularly threatened he names Normandy and Brittany, both suitable for establishing bridgeheads. Garrisons of important strongpoints are to be strengthened.

(Ibid, p. 28)

¹⁶ It would be interesting to know whether this sudden inspiration was not a fruit of operation Cicero (para 40 above). A slender clue may be contained in a statement made by Moyzisch:

It seems ironic that the last piece of invaluable information supplied by Cicero should have been treated by Berlin with the same lack of comprehension as all the others.

I say the last piece, for indeed that roll of film with the reference to operation Overlord, delivered at the beginning of March, was the last we ever had from Cicero.

(Operation Cicero, op cit, p. 166)

48. In the meantime the question of coast defence tactics had again come to the fore. On 13 Mar Hitler indicated that thought should be given to the question of incorporating the second line infantry divisions into the coast defence line proper. Only mobile formations were to be held as operational reserves. Exceptions were the areas east of Brest and south of Cherbourg, where there was great danger of landings from the air (*ibid*, p. 29). WFSt pointed to the dangers of cramming all forces into the first line; the field fortifications might be obliterated by bombardment (*ibid*). But the Führer seemed to agree with Rommel that invasion must be defeated on the beaches and that it would be too late once the enemy had gained a firm lodgement on the coast.¹⁷ (*Ibid*)

49. The main purpose of Directive No. 51, of 3 Nov, (para 36 above), had been to make an end to the continuous robbing of the West for other fronts. It was, however, not yet possible to keep this resolution fully. Schramm notes in this connection:

The intention expressed in Directive 51, no longer to use the West as a reservoir of troops for the other fronts, but to strengthen it to the point where a major landing could be opposed with prospects of success, was not abandoned. But it could not be carried out strictly since:

- 1) On 22 Jan the Anglo-Americans landed at Nettuno.
- 2) The internal situation in Hungary made it necessary on 28 Feb to order the preparation of operation AMargarethe@ (occupation of Hungary), and to put it into effect on 19 Mar.
- 3) Developments on the southern wing of the Eastern front were so threatening that the front could not be shored up by speedy contributions from the other fronts.

Thus, all other fronts had to be called on, including the West. The troops taken were replaced in part by new formations whose organization had meanwhile been completed.

(*Ibid*, p. 33)

50. During the first three months of the year many efforts were made to bolster Western strength. New formations were created, existing ones refitted and brought up to strength, reserve formations upgraded to full combat status and supplied with men and new equipment. On balance, however, by the end of March the Western garrison was weaker than it had been in December. A few good divisions had been replaced by weaker ones; four divisions had to give up their assault guns for the East; in

¹⁷ Without assured reserves, without assured supplies, without assured assistance for the air, Rommel had blithely operated in a vacuum in Africa. Now again he could be likened to a costly race horse running best when sheltered from distraction by a pair of blinkers. The coastal rim was certain to be covered by a hail of fire from the world's most deadly naval guns; the coastal crust was certain to be pierced by concentrated forces at a place unknown beforehand. And once this crust was broken Allied spearheads might roam freely through the empty hinterland. It was easier indeed to sit with Hitler, thinking up new gadgets, than to ponder a strategic answer to the problem. (Conversations of the writer with senior officers of the Africa Corps, Grande Ligne Internment Camp, 1945).

January Hitler ordered the transfer of Pz Div H.G. from Italy to O.B. West, but the move was cancelled because the Division could not be spared from Italy; in February he ordered the transfer of 1 SS Pz Div A.A.H. (17,000 strong) to O.B. West, but the move was cancelled because it could not be spared from Russia. And by the end of March the Eastern situation was so critical that the whole Second SS Panzer Corps with the Ninth and Tenth SS Panzer Divisions had to be sent East post-haste. (*Ibid*, pp 34-36)

51. Lack of troops was not the only reason for concern. Work on the Atlantic Wall was hampered by the chronic lack of concrete. On 8 Dec Rundstedt had reported requirements of 27 million cubic metres. But at best a mere 3.8 million cubic metres would be forthcoming (W.D. Wfst, 8 Dec 43). To make matters worse, in February and March the transport situation deteriorated gravely. Bombing damage to freight yards and rights of way could be repaired almost without delay. But the vulnerable spot was locomotives. These the enemy was hunting and destroying without cease. For instance, from 1-10 Mar, the Western command lost 129 locomotives; 50 through air attacks, and 70 through sabotage by French resistance forces (Schramm, *Developments*, p. 11). Artillery strength was more satisfactory. Early in the year 20 complete batteries and 260 individual guns (mostly Russian) had been added. And the naval defences had been augmented by two 21 cm batteries and some of lesser calibre. Only the Luftwaffe failed to show any signs of being strengthened.¹⁸ (*Ibid*)
52. During the latter part of March Foreign Armies West received many reports that the Allies might abandon or postpone invasion. Judged to be of deceptive nature, the reports were disregarded. The section was now mainly interested in the when and where of the invasion. Employment in England of the highly regarded General Patton conformed with the significant allied policy of replacing inexperienced officers by seasoned commanders with landing

¹⁸ According to Schramm, ration strengths in the West on 1 Mar 44 were as follows:

	806,927
Army	
SS and Police	85,230
Volunteers (Foreigners and Eastern troops)	61,439
Allies	13,631
Luftwaffe	337,140
Navy	96,084
Armed Forces Total	1,400,451

Armed Forces Auxiliaries 145,611; Prisoners of War 48,018.

(*Ibid*, p. 32)

experience (22 Mar). The attack would probably be carried out by two British armies and the First and Ninth American Armies (20 Mar). What would be the role of the Canadians?

... The appointment of General Crerar, former Canadian Chief of Staff, and until now in Italy, as Commander of the First Canadian Army in England, as well as an unconfirmed report about concentration of the Canadian forces in England (altogether five infantry divisions and three armoured divisions)¹⁹ in the Wiltshire area, seem to indicate that the highly-rated [hochbewerteten] Canadian formations are to play a role in the forthcoming operations. Whether they will operate independently or under the command of Army Group Montgomery cannot be foretold as yet (22 Mar).

(G.M.D.S. B H2/170, OKW, AForeign Armies West@, Daily Sit Reps, March 1944, 20 and 22 Mar 44) (Photostat 981HC(D30))

The extreme stringency of recent traffic and security measures in England seemed to preclude any thoughts of permanent enforcement. Clearly, time was running short.

(Ibid, 31 Mar)

TWO MONTHS OF GRACE (APRIL B MAY 1944)

Estimates of Anglo-American Intentions

¹⁹ This faulty picture of Canadian forces was being maintained by German Intelligence up to the time of invasion. Location and designation of Allied forces in the United Kingdom were entered on Wfst Sit Maps AFrance@ for 28 May, and ALage West@ for 6 Jun 44. On these maps Canadian divisions were shown as follows:

Definitely identified: 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Divs
4 Cdn Armd Div

Tentatively identified: 6 and 7 Cdn Inf Divs

Believed to be Canadian divisions: Two

ALocation unknown but believed to be in U.K. or Northern Ireland@ 1(?) Cdn Armd Div

(G.M.D.S. B Wfst/Ops, Sit Map France, 28 May 44 (Photostat 981HC(D26) and OKW Sit Map West, 6 Jun 44 (Photostat 981.004(D2))

53. On 25 Mar Jodl had noted in his diary: **M**ove 2 SS Pz Corps to the East at maximum speed (G.M.D.S. **B** OKW/1760, Jodl, Diary Notes, Transl p. 21, 25 Mar 44) (Photostat 981HC(50)).²⁰ This meant an immediate and palpable weakening of the West just when Allied invasion preparations seemed to be virtually complete and **A**the assault by fresh and superlatively equipped forces might be unleashed at any moment (Schramm, OKW Theatres, p. 51). By 9 Apr **A**Foreign Armies West saw the situation as follows:

With the weather situation now favourable too, the general picture is rounded off in the previously reported sense of the launching of a major attack being possible at any moment. The timing of the attack is strongly influenced by political considerations, and despite countless rumours pertinent concrete information has not become available.

(Foreign Armies West, Sit Reps, op cit, 9 Apr 44)

A number of excerpts from the **A**Foreign Armies West estimates of the enemy situation in April and May 1944 appear as Appendix **A**F to the present report.

54. Foreign Armies West however was not the top level in the intricate and confused pattern of German Intelligence. Clearly Hitler was receiving special information that was never reflected in Foreign Armies West reports. On the whole the failure of German Intelligence during the pre-invasion era was spectacular. German records show that the most potent contributory factor was the brilliancy of Allied deception and the thoroughness of Allied security. But there seems to have been one noteworthy exception, one signal triumph for the Germans. What made Hitler feel so sure in the spring of 1944 that Normandy and Brittany were the most threatened sectors? Did intuition tell him that attack would not come at the strongest point? Or was it rather news from Cicero (para 40 above) or other secret sources? He did not tell the generals who were so sure that the attack would come across the Channel narrows. The surmise that Cicero was the original source of Hitler's emphasis on Normandy is further nourished by a reference to the time element in an incidental post-war comment by Rundstedt:

²⁰ At the time it seemed 2 Pz Div would have to follow 2 SS Pz Corps, but the quick success of the Corps in the East made this unnecessary. (Schramm, OKW Theatres, p. 49)

... When the reinforcement of Fifteenth Army had been accomplished on an adequate scale and, through our intelligence services, the possibility of a landing in Normandy came to the force (about the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944), we strove by every means -- as did OKW -- also to strengthen the forces there.²¹ (AA Study in Command@, op cit, p. 65, fn 2, quoted from O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-633, von Rundstedt's Commentary to AA Study in Command@)

55. Late in April and early in May the Führer insisted on the further strengthening of Seventh Army:

²¹ Touching briefly on a subject being dealt with further below, it must be noted that Maj-Gen von Buttlar [Horst, Freiherr Treusch von Buttlar-Brandenfels, Chief of Army operations, Armed Forces Operations Staff, Jan 42 B Nov 44] was not so sure of O.B.West's enthusiasm for reinforcing Normandy:

The doubling of the forces in the Cotentin and Normandy beginning at the end of April is to be attributed solely to the continual demands of Hitler, and O.B.West did not fulfil these with enthusiasm at the time, as the [Zimmermann] report would have us believe, but only with much delay.

According to the War Diary of WFSt, O.B.West reported on 4 May that A.Gp B could not carry out the ordered reinforcement of Normandy. At 1900 hrs 6 May 44, the Chief WFSt [Jodl] pointed out to the Chief of Staff O.B.West, by telephone, that the Cotentin peninsula would be the first enemy objective, and demanded B on Hitler's orders B that the following be used as reinforcements: 91 LL Div, 243 Inf Div, and 6 Para Regt of 2 Para Div. O.B.West requested, on the contrary, that 91 LL Div be transferred to the Nantes area and not into the Cotentin, but this request was refused and Hitler demanded even more forces for Normandy. It was only on this further demand that O.B.West made available 10 Proj Regt and 100 Pz Repl Bn.

(Ibid, p. 66, fn, quoted from O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-672, Maj-Gen von Buttlar, O.B.West Command Relationships).

On 6 May O.B. West transmitted a message from Marshal Rommel regarding the Channel coast. It contained further suggestions for the strengthening of the Cotentin peninsula and Brittany as demanded by the Führer. O.B. West as well as WFSt voiced misgivings, but at 1900 hrs Chief WFSt told C. of S. O.B. West on the telephone that the Cotentin was to be the first target of the enemy.²²...

(O.C.M.H., F.S.B., Schramm, *The West*, 1 Apr 44 B 16 Dec 44, [Prepared on basis of notes from original WFSt documents], p. 13 (Photostat 981S0M(D102))

As the enemy target the Führer saw the Cotentin peninsula and Brittany with the ports of Cherbourg and Brest. ... (*Ibid*, p. 12, citing WFSt, W.D., 7, 8 and 9 May 44)

56. At the end of May O.B. West himself began to feel that Normandy might be the landing site. On 22 May he was still noncommittal:

O.B. West appreciates the situation as follows: The focal point of the enemy's concentration for invasion is in the South and Southeast of England. The Isle of Wight area (Portsmouth-Southampton) is a focal point of preparations. The threatened main front is still definitely the Channel front between the Schelde and Normandy, as well as the northern part of Brittany, including Brest. ... (G.M.D.S. B H2/602, OKH, Misc docs O.B. West, O.B. West Weekly Sit Rep 22 May 44) (Photostat 981CW(D51))

But on 29 May he pointed guardedly to Normandy:

O.B. West appraises the situation as follows: Systematic bombing, especially of all traffic installations within the zone of O.B. West, by the enemy Air Force ... demonstrates the enemy's intention of destroying and disrupting the traffic network, and thereby, troop movements and supply services [from the coast] to the far rear areas. Successful attacks carried out recently on the Seine bridges have considerably interfered with the cross-river traffic, and thereby cut off the Channel front north of the Seine from direct contact with the Seine estuary and Normandy. This may indicate enemy designs on Normandy (formation of a bridgehead).

(*Ibid*, O.B. West Sit Rep 29 May)

57. The weekly estimates of A. Gp B in the latter part of May were vague on the subject. The estimate of 5 Jun shows the Army Group thinking in terms of an enemy thrust north of the Seine:

²² According to Lt-Gen Dr. Hans Speidel (C. of S. A Gp B from 15 Apr B 1 Sep 44), Rommel at the time demanded that III Flak Corps, scattered over the whole of central and northern France, be concentrated and put under his command. Its four regiments (24 up-to-date batteries) would have provided considerable fire power for aircraft and tank defence between the Orne and Vire rivers. Goring turned down this request. (Speidel, Dr. Hans, *Invasion 1944*, Hentry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1950, p. 23).

Systematic prosecution and intensification of enemy air attacks, combined with increased mining of our harbours with improved mining equipment, point to a higher degree of preparedness for the take-off on the part of the enemy. Concentration of air attacks on the coastal fortifications between Dunkirk and Dieppe and the Seine and Oise bridges confirms the previously assumed focal point of the major landing, and the possibility of communications being cut in flank and rear ... (G.M.D.S. B 75145/5, Army Group B, Weekly Sit Reps, 20 May B early Oct 44, Sit Rep 5 Jun 44) (Photostat 981AgpB. (D3))

58. The May War Diary of the Naval Operations Staff (Seekriegsleitung) merely confirms Hitler's belief in the imminence of invasion. It would be impossible to throttle the invasion at this stage without serious political repercussions (10 May). To the number of divergent rumours from more or less suspected sources was added on 15 May a formal warning from more serious quarters. The Japanese Embassy at Lisbon advised that invasion preparations were meant in earnest, political pressures made an early landing attempt a necessity. (O.N.I. B W.D. Seekriegsleitung, 1 B 31 May 44) (Photostat 981HCN(D1))

Strengthening of Western Forces

59. At the end of the first week of April it was clear that the Russian spring offensive had passed its peak and that from now on the obstructive effects of the muddy season would become apparent. On the Pruth and the Sereth, in the Carpathian forcefield area and in Galicia there again existed a cohesive German front. ...

(Schramm, the OKW Theatre, p. 59)

The Germans made the best use they could of the welcome breathing spell. Every day gained meant a stronger West, and much was accomplished during this time in every field of defence preparations:

It was a great relief that the enemy did not realize the extent to which strength in the West had been reduced as a result of the withdrawal of 2 SS Pz Corps, the assault gun detachments etc. As, contrary to expectations, he did not begin invasion operations during the next two months either, it was possible to replace them in some measure, and above all to place once more in readiness the minimum of battleworthy mobile formations that was considered necessary. The most important step in this field was the formation of three panzer divisions from three reserve panzer divisions, as already ordered on 11 Mar; by the end of April, 9, 11 and 116 Pz Divs, which had been formed in the same way, were already nearly complete as regards personnel, and each could be regarded as equal to half a panzer division. At about the same time, 2 Pz Div, 21 Pz Div and 12 SS Pz Div were completely ready for commitment, and by reason of their number of tanks could be considered particularly strong. 2 SS Pz Div too had already more than 100 tanks. In addition there was Pz Lehr Div, whose return movement to the West only began at the beginning of May, and 1 SS Pz Div, which had been arriving from the East since the middle of April, the reorganization of which, however, was only now beginning.

Thus in the West, from the middle of May, four panzer divisions fully fit for action could be counted on, besides another four, of, for the time being, somewhat lower fighting potential.

Furthermore, the increasing strength accruing to the West from the creation of new formations [inf and para divs] began to tip the scales in ever increasing measure. ...

(Ibid, p. 60)

60. By the middle of April, 12 SS Pz Div (H.J.) had been moved [from the training area at Beverloo, Belgium] to Normandy, and was quartered in the general area Elbeuf B Evreux B Dreux B Laigle B Argentan (G.M.D.S. B 59364/11, Fifteenth Army, Apps to W.D. 5, sit map 15 Apr 44) (Photostat 981A15(D7)). The transport movement of 21 Pz Div [to the Caen area] was concluded on 6 May. On 16 May 91 LL Div was complete in the area north-west of Carentan, and Pz Lehr Div was complete in the triangle Le Mans B Chartres B Orleans. (G.M.D.S. B H22/57, O.B.West, Daily Sit Reps 1 May B 30 Jun 44, Sit Reps 6 and 16 May) (Photostat 981CW(D29)); OKW/WFSt, Sit Maps West, 28 May 44) (Photostat 981HC(D26)). A graphic picture of the composition of O.B.West's forces, from divisional level up, on 15 Apr and 15 May 44, appears in Appendix AG@ to the present report. This Appendix consists of the O.B.West portions of the OKW/WFSt Schematic Orders of Battle of the German Army on 15 Apr, 15 May and 15 Jun 44 (G.M.D.S. B OKW/WFSt, Periodical Schematic Orders of Battle of the German Army) (Photostats of complete documents: 981.045(D1))

61. An addition to the command structure in the West was authorized by WFSt on 26 Apr and became effective on 12 May, when Armeegruppe G, under O.B.West, assumed command over the First Army (Bay of Biscay and Pyrenees) and the Nineteenth Army (French Mediterranean Coast) (O.B.West, Daily Sit Reps, op cit, Sit Rep 13 May 44). Schramm writes in this connection:

In order that he might be able to concentrate on his tasks as C.-in-C. West, O.B.West proposed that the First and Nineteenth Armies should also be controlled by an Army Group [Headquarters]. (Notebook 22, 24 and 25 Apr). On 26 Apr the order was given to form Army Group G²³ ... The determining factor was that, in the event of an attack against the South of France, [Headquarters] Army Group B would be committed in that region; then, if there should be a subsequent landing in the North, O.B.West himself would have to lead the Armies committed in that area (Notebook 28 Apr). Since initially it was not possible to provide an establishment as laid down in the tables of organization, on 3 May an order was issued for only an Armeegruppe²⁴ to be formed. (Col Gen Blaskowitz was appointed C.-in-C.; he assumed command on 12 May 1200 hrs)

(Schramm, AThe West@, p 7)

Cordon Defence preferred to Mobile Defence

²³ A translation of the order appears in AFührer Directives@, Vol II, P. 132.

²⁴ The German equivalent for Army Group is AHeeresgruppe@. An AArmeegruppe@ is smaller than an army. Still smaller is an AArmeebteilung@, which is a reinforced Corps.

62. It would be hard to tell whether Rommel actually believed himself capable of saving the West. In any case he strove hard to gain full control over the anti-invasion forces. If he failed to escape from the irksome formal subordination to O.B.West, he succeeded ultimately at least in persuading Hitler to prefer his way of dealing with the prospective invasion. In the absence of original documentation, and with ample coverage of the subject in post-war writings, Schramm's contemporary work may be cited as the most authentic information on hand:

Following the representations made by Field Marshal Rommel at the Führer's headquarters on 20 Mar, the Führer approved the Marshal's suggestion of granting him greater influence on the mobile formations (O.B.West Reserve) and to place First and Nineteenth Armies under A Gp B as far as work on coastal defences was concerned. He was given authority to examine their measures, make suggestions for changes and assign tasks. Thus the position of A Gp B in the O.B.West set-up became stronger than originally intended. ... O.B.West saw in all this such a narrowing down of his own authority that he expressed the opinion his own employment was no longer called for. It was possible to straighten out these difficulties. ... (Schramm, Development, p. 40)

One of the difficulties was the lack of a clear delimitation of Marshal Rommel's powers. In the Führer Order of 31 Dec 43 he had been placed under the command of O.B.West, and on 12 Jan O.B.West had defined the tasks of A Gp B. Marshal Rommel then urged a widening of his powers and, in the middle of March, at Bad Klessheim, asked Hitler to place the armoured formations, motorized troops and G.H.Q. artillery elements under his command even then, so that all preparations for defence could be made. In addition he asked for influence on First and Nineteenth Armies. After discussion with O.B. West the powers of A Gp B were re-defined, but Marshal Rommel was not yet satisfied. As O.B.West declined to make further concessions it became necessary to obtain a decision from the highest level, particularly with regard to the mobile formations.... The Führer decided for O.B.West's point of view. The armoured groups and the two Armies were not placed under the command of A Gp B, but it remained possible for Marshal Rommel to exert influence on them within the framework of their tasks. This was bound to lead to conflicting orders.

(Schramm, *The West*, p. 8)

63. From all this wrangling for superiority in the West Rommel emerged, however, with full freedom of action as far as A Gp B was concerned. General von Buttlar (para 54f above) writes that Rundstedt should not have agreed to such a rubber order, but that after lengthy telephone conversations with OKW, he compromised in the belief that an elevation of Rommel to the position of O.B.West would mean disaster in the West. Not knowing Rommel well, he believed also that the junior commander would defer to the wishes of the more experienced senior. (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS T-121, O.B.West History, 2000 page symposium, p. 813) (Excerpt photostat 981SOM(D113))

64. According to Buttlar, in the early part of the year Hitler was in agreement with the views of O.B.West and the Chief of the WFS regarding the methods to be employed in coping with attempted invasion. After his inspection trip to the West in January, Jodl reported to Hitler:

... I therefore concur with the plans of O.B. West, who **B** while proceeding with the construction work on the coast with all available means **B** intends to place the panzer divisions which he has at his disposal, as well as a number of fully mobile infantry divisions, in groups as O.B. West reserve behind the most threatened sectors, in such a way that they can intervene without any delay in the battle for the coast, and, by counter-attacking, throw any enemy troops which may have landed back into the sea.

Furthermore, I concur with the plans of O.B. West to prepare for the movement, according to [predetermined= time-tables, of as many coastal defence divisions as possible **B** with the exception of the fortress troops **B** to the frontal sectors under attack.

In the event of an enemy landing, and accepting all attached risks, at first everything must be committed at one place and the situation fully cleaned up at that place. Should the enemy subsequently and elsewhere, operations must then be concentrated at that place.

The prerequisite for this is that the Air Force be in a position to give adequate air protection (which it said it could do; and which General Jodl at the time believed possible).

Results: Hitler agreed on the whole with these ideas expressed by General Jodl. ... O.B. West's basic idea of, in the event of an enemy landing, committing everything that could be made available against the first enemy troops to set foot on shore **B** while drastically denuding the other sections of the coast **B** received approval. But during the spring **B** largely due to Field Marshal Rommel's influence **B** Hitler's attitude underwent a change from that expressed after the report on the inspection tour.

(Ibid, pp 808-810)

65. Field Marshal von Rundstedt believed that the enemy naval and aerial supremacy and the enemy technical and material resources would make the first attempt to get ashore a success (A Study in command, p. 39). Subsequent acts of the drama would be a matter of mobile operations. Rommel's point of view was reflected in Jodl's diary: **Rommel says mobile operations with panzer formations are a thing of the past** (Jodl, Diary Notes, p. 26, 13 Apr 44). Rundstedt could not hope that, as long as nothing irrevocable had happened, unforeseen developments might offer opportunities for bold strategic or political decisions. Rommel on the other hand pressed ceaselessly for linear tactical dispositions and gambled all on the one card of making landing physically impossible. Under existing circumstances this was unrealistic from every point of view.

The Atlantic Wall

66. During April and May work on the Atlantic Wall and related projects suffered greatly from transportation difficulties arising from Allied air attacks. According to Schramm, at the beginning of May there developed a backlog of 1,600 train-runs, and 18,000 men of Organization Todt had to be withdrawn from the Wall for work on damaged railroad lines. Lack of coal and concrete prevented the completion of half-finished defence installations. From a mere 277 locomotive casualties in February,

totals had steadily risen to the prohibitive number of 500 in the period 20-28 May alone. (Schramm, *The West*, pp 20-21)

67. In face of all this Marshal Rommel worked unceasingly on the improvement of the coastal defences. Contemporary documents show the engineering authorities were consulted, inventors encouraged, and new devices tested and installed as quickly as possible (G.M.D.S. B H21/52.2, H21/52.3 and H21/55, A Gp B, Gen of Engrs Files). The Army Group demanded 8000 tons of explosives per month for foreshore mines alone. One hundred tons was all that was received (*ibid*, letter to OKH, 23 Apr 44) (Photostat 981AgpB(D4)). On 13 Jan Rommel had asked for the delivery of two million mines per month (Jodl, Diary Notes, p. 8, 13 Jan 44). This was impossible. But his demands kept growing: *AA Gp B's* request for the delivery of at least ten million mines per month could not be even remotely complied with (A Study in Command, p. 53). The measures of the Army Group for improving the defences have been described in *AA Study in Command*. The full text of the passage appears as Appendix *AH* to the present report. Briefly stated it shows that, in addition to the step-up in the mine-laying programme, a number of partially mined tree-trunk palisades were installed on the foreshore, fields of obstacles created inland to interdict enemy landings from the air, and large areas flooded or soaked in order to economize forces. Rommel's ideas received very ready approval from Hitler, whereas Rundstedt regarded them as being of secondary importance. In his opinion the enemy would make short shrift of such expedients.

68. By the end of May Hitler felt that the advantages to be gained from destroying certain harbours outweighed the disadvantages:

27 May On the occasion of the presence of C.-in-C. Navy at the Führer Headquarters, the Führer ordered that those harbours in the zone of O.B. West not essential to our naval operations or shipping be destroyed, dismantled or blocked. In this connection Naval Operations Staff issues a directive naming as criterion for the selection of harbours to be destroyed the question of whether they are essential for our own use or whether they can be dispensed with without detriment to the military situation. Naval Group West is directed to closely re-examine in this light their report on the harbours to be destroyed. In view of the ever closer approaching invasion, accelerated execution of this task is required. (W.D. Seekriegsleitung, 27 May 44, p. 475)

The magnitude of the part to be played by artificial harbours in the forthcoming allied operations was not realized by the Germans:

The existence of transportable harbour installations was already known from the Allied landings in the Mediterranean, apart from being reported by agents. Air reconnaissance too had **B** in isolated cases **B** confirmed the assembling of such installations on the south coast of England. However, the records on hand did not reveal that these installations were available on anything like the actual scale; nor yet that they would compensate for the lack of an adequate harbour for as long as they actually did during the invasion. (O.C.M.H., F.S.B., MS B-675,

Staubwasser, Col, Enemy Situation before Invasion, as seen by A Gp B, p. 17) (Photostat 981S0M(D116)).

SITUATION ON THE EVE OF INVASION

Chain of Command, Order of Battle, Dispositions and Commanders

69. The artfully contrived chaos of command authority at the highest levels enabled Hitler to cling to power a little longer but at the same time caused the German effort to collapse more quickly. There was neither a combined Axis Planning Staff nor a German Joint Planning Staff. The different components of the industrial, political and military command apparatus had been isolated from each other and set one against the other. Within theatres dualism of command sapped vigour and initiative. The sole common denominator was Hitler's will. Like physicians learning more from the diseased than from the healthy, students of high command problems will for long be delving into the lessons to be learned from Hitler's unique patterns of command. For the present report it must suffice to say that the West was an OKW theatre, and that O.B. West was directly responsible to Hitler. O.B. West was a Commander-in-chief only in name. He was hobbled by limitations of authority and by encroachments on his rights by lesser men. His influence on the forces on the sea and in the air was limited to applications for cooperation. His influence on the well manned and well equipped S.S. formations was confined to operations and supply. His operational plans were frustrated from above by Hitler, from below by Rommel. He had become a cynical and weary man.

70. A graphic presentation of the command channels in the West at the beginning of the invasion has been supplied by Lt-Gen Zimmermann in AA Study in Command. A reproduction of the chart appears as Appendix AJ to the present report.

71. Below Army Group level the chain of command conformed with accepted military practice; it may be followed on the Orders of Battle in Appendix AG to the present report. An authentic record of the German dispositions in the West on 6 Jun is available in the form of the Army High Command situation map AWest for that day.²⁵ (G.M.D.S. B OKH, Sit Maps West, Sit Map 6 Jun 44). (Photostat 981.004(D2)). All divisions shown on that German map appear on the AEnemy Order of Battle in the West on 6 Jun 44 in the Volume: ANormandy to the Baltic.²⁶ All German headquarters and formations shown on the German Order of Battle for 15 Jun (Appx AG to present report) may be located on the High Command situation map for 6 Jun.²⁷

72. The 58 or 59 German formations then in the West were of many types and grades of quality. It would be difficult to estimate the collective fighting value of divisions ranging from a 12 SS Pz Div AH.J. with 20,516 men and 150 tanks on 1 Jun 44 (G.M.D.S. B H16/52, OKH, Insp Gen of Pz Tps,

²⁵ This map shows also the presumed dispositions of the Allied forces in the United Kingdom just prior to the launching of the cross-Channel attack.

²⁶ Field Marshal The Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, *Normandy to the Baltic*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1948.

²⁷ On Field Marshal Montgomery's chart 19 GAF Div is shown in the Scheldt estuary. On the Germany Army High Command situation map it is shown as leaving the area. Actually the formation had been in transit to O.B. Southwest since 0001 hrs, 4 Jun. (G.M.D.S. B 59364/1, Fifteenth Army, W.D. Jun 44, 3 & 4 Jun) (Photostat 981A15 (D1)). On the O.B. West Order of Battle for 15 Jun (as of 12 Jun) [see Appx AG to present report], the formation is not shown in the area of O.B. West.

Condition Reports of SS Pz Divs) (Photostat 981HC(51)), to sorry lots which had returned from Russia Acomposed of one division commander, one medical officer and six cooks@. (Hist Sec C.M.H.Q., Special Interrogation Report Field Marshal von Rundstedt, 1 Feb 45; Jodl, Diary Notes, 10 May 44)

73. The armoured divisions were distributed as follows:

Fifteenth Army	1 SS Pz (OKW Reserve) 2 Pz 116 Pz
Seventh Army	21 Pz 12 SS Pz (OKW Reserve) Pz Lehr (OKW Reserve)
First Army	11 Pz (under rehabilitation)
Nineteenth Army	2 SS Pz 9 Pz (under rehabilitation) ²⁸
	(A Study in Command, <u>op cit</u>)

74. For purposes of reference a limited list of German Commanders in the West at the time of the invasion is supplied below:^{29, 30}

O.B. West and Army Group D

C.-in-C.	Field Marshal Gerd <u>von Rundstedt</u> (8 Mar 42 B 2 Jul 44) (4 Sep 44 B 9 Mar 45)
C. of S.	Gen Inf Guenther <u>Blumentritt</u> (24 Sep 42 B 10 Sep 44)
1 Ops	Col G.S.C. Bodo <u>Zimmermann</u> (26 Oct 40 B 11 May 45)
1 Int	Lt Col G.S.C. <u>Meyer-Detring</u>
Gen Arty	Lt Gen Heinrich <u>Meyer-Buerdorf</u>

²⁸ II SS Pz Corps (9 and 10 SS Pz Divs) (para 50 above), at the time was still in the East. Orders for the immediate return to the West were given by OKH on 12 Jun 44 (G.M.D.S. B 63181/1, Fifth Panzer Army, W.D. 10 Jun B 8 Aug 44, 12 Jun) (Photostat 981PA5(D1))

²⁹ G.S.C.: General Staff Corps

First names and dates supplied where known.

³⁰ During the campaign the turnover in German key personnel was very rapid. That an officer held a rank or appointment on 6 Jun cannot be taken as an indication that he held it for any length of time. As far as they are known, changes of particular interest are mentioned in later paragraphs.

Gen Engrs Col Rose

Naval Liaison Lt Cmdr Koenig

Air Liaison Major von Schaper

Gen of Pz Tps West: Gen Pz Tps
Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg

Army Group B

C.-in-C. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel
C. of S. Lt Gen Dr. Hans Speidel
1 Ops Col G.S.C. Hans Georg von Tempelhoff
1 Int Lt Col G.S.C. Anton Staubwasser

Gen Arty Col Gen Lattmann
Gen Engrs Lt Gen Meise

Naval Liaison Vice-Admiral Ruge

Armeegruppe G

C.-in-C. Col Gen Johannes Blaskowitz
C. of S. Maj Gen Heinz von Gyldenfeldt

Armies

Fifteenth Army

Cmdr Col Gen Hans von Salmuth
(15 Aug 43 **B** 23 Aug 44)

C. of S. Lt Gen Rudolf Hoffmann
1 Ops Col G.S.C. Metzke

Seventh Army

Cmdr Col Gen Friedrich Dollmann (till 28 Jun 44)

C. of S. Lt Gen Max Pemsel (till 30 Jul 44)

First Army

Cmdr Gen Inf Kurk von der Chevallerie
(2 Jun 44 **B** 6 Sep 44)

Nineteenth Army

Cmdr Gen Inf Georg von Sodenstern
(1 Jan **B** 29 Jun 44)

Corps Commanders

47 Pz Corps Gen Pz Tps Hans Freiherr von Funck
(1 Mar 44 **B** 5 Sep 44)

81 Corps Gen Pz Tps Adolph Friedrich Kuntzen
(till 20 Sep 44)

84 Corps Gen Arty Marcks

I SS Pz Corps SS Obergruppenfuehre und General der Waffen SS Joseph Dietrich
(Sepp)

II SS Pz Corps SS Obergruppenfuehrer und General der Waffen SS Paul Hausser (till
29 Jun)

Divisions

716 Inf Cmdr Lt Gen Wilhelm Richter
Ops Col Bachus

12 SS PZ Cmdr SS Standartenfuehrer Fritz Witt
(till 13 Jun)
SS Standartenfuehrer Kurt Meyer
(from 13 Jun)

2 Pz Gen Pz Tps Heinrich Freiherr von Luettwitz

9 Pz	Maj Gen Erwin <u>Jolasse</u> (22 Jul 43 B 6 Sep 44)
11 Pz	Lt Gen Wend von <u>Wietersheim</u> (1 Sep 43 B 10 Apr 45)
21 Pz	Lt Gen Edgar <u>Feuchtinger</u> (1 Jun 43 B 25 Jan 45)
116 Pz	Gen Pz Tps Gerhard <u>Graf von Schwerin</u> (1 May 44 B 20 Sep 44)
Pz Lehr	Lt Gen Fritz <u>Bayerlein</u> (10 Jan 44 B 20 Jan 45)

Naval Group West

Cmdr	Admiral <u>Krancke</u>
C. of S.	Rear Admiral K. <u>Hoffmann</u>

Third air Fleet (Paris)

Cmdr	Field Marshal Albert <u>Sperrle</u>
C. of S.	Lt Gen (G.A.F.) Karl <u>Koller</u>

Military Governors

Netherlands	Gen (G.A.F.) Karl <u>Christiansen</u>
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Belgium and Northern France

Gen Inf Alexander von Falkenhausen

France

Gen Inf Karl Heinrich von Stülpnagel

The Intelligence Picture (1 **B** 5 Jun)

75. From the Intelligence point of view the first days of June were much like all the previous ones. Invasion was possible at any time, but it had been so for months. And in the flood of rumours and reports from agents and from diplomatic sources, some positive indications were not appreciated fully and thus failed to produce appropriate reactions.^{31, 32}

³¹ According to the War Diary of the Naval Operations Staff, on 2 Jun the Abwehrbericht (Daily top level Intelligence Summary) was issued for the first time by the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Central Office for National Security) (O.N.I., W.D. Seekriegsleitung, Jun 44, 2 Jun) (Photostat 981HCN(D2))

³² The Abwehr was reorganized on 1 Jun 44, and was transformed into a military office under SS leadership. Direction of espionage came into the hands of party fanatics who were dilettantes in this field. (G.M.D.S. Production: A German Operational Intelligence, p. 134 (981.023(D5)))

76. On 1 Jun, in his report to WFSt, the officer responsible for the total appreciation of the enemy situation in the Western theatre contemplated the subject of invasion with marked detachment and complacency:

The controversial questions of this war of coalition **B** whether and when the decision-seeking operations against Central Europe by the Western powers will be undertaken, and how to tackle the concomitant postwar problems **B** appear to remain unsolved, both those between Great Britain and the Soviet Union, and Great Britain and the U.S.A. ...

No unified policy seems to have emerged from the recent Empire Conference, either regarding Commonwealth policy towards its ally, the U.S.A., or towards its partner in the 20 year agreement.

Hence the political climate does not appear to be favourable as yet for embarking immediately on decision-seeking major operations.³³

(G.M.D.S. **B** OKW/226, Information from Abroad, Enemy Situation Reports, Report No. 34, 1 Jun 44) (Report and Supporting Evidence: Photostat and Translation 981HC(D53))

77. In the eyes of the military intelligence section **A**Foreign Armies West[@], the days from 1 **B** 4 Jun brought forth nothing to change the previous estimates of the situation. In the **A**Brief Estimate of the Enemy Situation West[@], attached for a limited circle of readers to the Enemy Situation Report No. 1287, of 5 Jun, the following was said:

The enemy command is continuing its endeavours to conceal its invasion plans by all means of the war of nerves. Dissemination of items pointing to a postponement of the invasion due to political differences alternates with announcements of imminent attack. The presumable objective of these machinations is a gradual blunting of German vigilance in order to create the conditions required for a surprise success.

Against this must be stressed as the only concrete, but decisive fact, the state of preparedness for the take-off of about 60 enemy major formations in the South of England, of about ten in the central zone of England, and from five to six in Scotland. There is as yet no evidence that embarkation has begun, though considerable concentrations of shipping have been noted.

Movements along the lower Thames indicate that formations (among them the Ninth Armoured Division) are being moved towards the large harbours in that area, which will be used, perhaps, to relieve the harbours on either side of Dover which lie within the range of German gunfire.

³³ In accordance with established practice the report was accompanied by a rich accumulation of supporting evidence from agents, foreign military attaches and **A**special diplomatic sources[@]. In addition to offering a glimpse behind the scenes of international intrigue, this material constitutes a record of the effectiveness of Allied measures of deception.

From the U.S.A. comes another hint that the next convoys of troops may be destined for a continental port.

(Foreign Armies West, Daily Sit
Reps, 1-5 Jun 44)

78. The last weekly situation report to be issued by O.B. West before the Allies struck was dispatched on 5 Jun. In the portion reserved for his usual carefully worded synopsis, O.B. West expressed the opinion that the invasion was not yet imminent:

O.B. West appraises the situation as follows:

The systematic continuance and noticeable intensification of the enemy air attacks indicate the progress made in his preparations for the take-off. The centre of gravity between the Scheldt and Normandy is still the most probable focal point for the attack. The possibility of extension up to the North of Brittany, including Brest, is not excluded. Where within this entire sector the enemy will attempt a landing is still obscure. Concentration of the enemy air effort on the coastal fortifications between Dunkirk and Dieppe, and on the Seine-Oise bridges, in conjunction with the paralysing of the southern flank from Rouen to and including Paris, might be indicative of the focal point of an intended enemy major landing. Elimination of traffic across the Seine would have an identical effect on troop movements in the event of a possible attack on the western part of the Seine estuary, Normandy and the northern coast of Brittany. As yet there is no immediate prospect of the invasion. Even though there has been some increase in losses of equipment and personnel, it remains still very small in proportion to the effort made by the enemy.³⁴

(O.B. West, Misc Docs 1944, op cit, Weekly
Sit Rep 5 Jun 44)

79. The German naval commander most directly concerned with the invasion was Admiral Krancke, Cmdr Naval Group West. In his Review of the Developments in April he had advanced the opinion that the attack would come between the ports of Boulogne and Cherbourg, quite possibly in the Contentin (O.N.I.-Naval Group West, W.D. 16-30 Apr 44, Review of the Developments in April).³⁵ But on 4 Jun, just when weather conditions were causing General Eisenhower to postpone the assault from 5 to 6 Jun, Admiral Krancke thought the Allies might be bluffing.³⁶

To sum up, I appreciate the invasion situation as follows:

³⁴ Despite frequent air attacks, up to 4 Jun only 2.75 of all guns on the Channel coast had been put out of action. (W.D. Seekriegsleitung, op cit, 4 Jun, Report by the Admiral of the Channel Coast)

³⁵ Reproduction forthcoming at early date.

³⁶ When fifteenth Army issued the first invasion alert at 2300 hrs 5 Jun, Naval Group West felt the need of recording in the war diary that the invasion would hardly be announced beforehand in signals to the resistance forces, that nothing had happened after similar occurrences in the past, and that the Chief Intelligence Officer of O.B. West appreciated the situation in the sense that invasion at this time was not particularly probable. (O.N.I. Naval Group West, W.D. 1-7 Jun 44, p. 6228, night 5/6 Jun 44) (Photostat 981NGpW(D2)). [Note: The subject is dealt with at greater length in section invasion Alert, Part II of the present report.]

Without having fixed an exact date for the invasion, since the beginning of April the enemy has proceeded with his invasion measures according to schedule. In so doing, his aim has been to contain our forces in the North of France, and, at the same time, if we, under enemy pressure in the East and in Italy, should withdraw appreciable forces from these regions, to have suitable conditions for beginning operations himself at any time. Since we have made no move, he sees regions, to have suitable conditions for beginning operations himself at any time. Since we have made no move, he sees neither compelling strategical reasons for invasion at the present stage of the war, nor a prospective victory in keeping with his efforts to avoid risk. Thus his measures are a well calculated mixture of bluff and preparations for invasion at a later date. He will continue this strategy systematically, and only seek a decision when he thinks that we have become so weak in Northern France, as a result of the pressure on the other two fronts, that invasion can be embarked upon without any undue risk. Meanwhile, he steadily continues his softening-up tactics from the air.

This appreciation is, of course, fraught with unknown factors. They are the compelling reasons for our remaining prepared for possible surprises and for continued execution of required measures at top speed. ...

(Marinegruppenkommando West, Review of the Developments in May, p. 3, Appx to W.D. 16-31 May 44, O.N.I. Duplicate of British Admiralty Property No. 3 PG 37579 N.I.D.)
(Photostat 981NGpW (D6))

80. As usual the most realistic picture was recorded in the War Diary of the Naval Operations Staff:

3 Jun According to word from the Reichssicherheitshauptamt, 28 advance alert messages from Radio London to groups of agents have been intercepted on 1 Jun. Clearly they are orders to make ready for immediate action. Orders to proceed are to be expected for the time being by 15 Jun at the latest.

A long established channel for giving orders has thus been used for the first time. Commencement of invasion by 15 Jun at the latest must therefore be reckoned with. It is, however, not impossible that it [the signal traffic] is being carried out for training purposes.

(W.D. Seekriegsleitung, 3 Jun, p. 46)

4 Jun The Foreign Press shows an increase in the number of indications for the imminent invasion of Europe. ...

(Ibid, 4 Jun, p. 59)

81. But the Allies had played their cards well, and the Germans were not in a state of acute alarm. The Naval situation conference of 5 Jun was mainly devoted to a discussion of the oil shortage (ibid, 5 Jun, p. 59). Apparently the sole highly placed person to show concern was the senior Gestapo official at Paris. On 3 Jun he made strong efforts to convince the hierarchy that invasion was a matter of hours, not

days or months. He was amazed and distressed when his information was called Afantastic@by the military.³⁷

82. On 2 Jun Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz left his headquarters and went on leave (W.D. Seekriegsleitung, 2 Jun, p. 23). On 5 Jun Field Marshal Rommel left by car for his home at Herrlingen, near Ulm. It was his intention to report to the Führer at Berchtesgaden on 6 Jun (Speidel, Invasion 1944, p. 77). 5 Jun was a quiet day. (Ibid)

83. During the night 5/6 Jun invasion became a fact. Hitler was wont to work late; according to standing orders his rest was not to be disturbed. At the midday conference on 6 Jun he received first word of the invasion. The event from the invasion alarm to the conclusion of the battle of Normandy are being dealt with in Part II of the present report.

84. This report has been prepared by Capt. A.G. Steiger, Historical Section (G.S.).

For (C.P. Stacey) Colonel
Director
Historical Section (G.S.)

³⁷ Pending the expected receipt of additional evidence, reference is made to a deposition retained in this connection by Hist Sec (G.S.), (H.S. 021.021, Secret)

APPENDICES

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GERMAN SOURCES

- A. Original Documents
- B. Narratives prepared by WFSt War Diarist on basis of original High Command Documents
- C. Secondary Sources

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A. Original Documents

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981HC(D17)	Führer Directives, Vol I Führer Directives, Vol II	7, 8, 10 61f
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981HC(D21)	WFSt, W.D., Apr B Jun 42	9
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981HC(D18) & (D23)	AKüstenschutz Kanalküste@ (incl Reports on Führer Conferences re Atlantic Wall, 2 and 13 Aug 42)	11
981HC(D53)	OKW, Information from Abroad, Enemy Sit Reps, 1944 (Misc, incl Sit Rep 1 Jun 44)	76

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981HC(D51)	OKH, Insp Gen Pz Tps, Condition Reports of SS Pz Divs (Selected Photostats, incl 12 SS Pz Div AH.J.@, 1 Jun 44)	72
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981.004(D2)	OKH, Genst d H, Sit Maps West, 1942, (incl Sit Map 6 Jun 44)	52f, 71, 71f

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981CW(D40)	O.B. West, Basic Orders for Coast Defence (incl No. 31)	34
981CW(D28)	O.B. West, Weekly Sit Reps, (3 Aug 42 B 10 Oct 43)	12, 14, 20, 23, 25, 28, 29

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981A15(D1)	Fifteenth Army, W.D. Jan B Jun 44 (Reproduction of text for Jun)	71f
981A15(D7)	Fifteenth Army, W.D. Jan B Jun 44, Appx, (Sit Map 15 Apr 44)	60

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981PA5(D1)	Fifth Panzer Army, W.D. 10 Jun B 8 Aug 44	73f
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981SOM(D98)	Schramm, Developments in the West (1 Jan B	46-51, 51f

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981SOM(D102) Schramm, AThe West@, (1 Apr B 16 Dec 44) 55, 61, 62, 66

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981SOM(D122) Geyr von Schweppenburg, Pz Gp West, Mid 11, 26
43 B 5 Jul 44, Report of the Commander

981SOM(D107) Greiner, Notes on Führer Conferences 12, 21
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981SOM(D116) Staubwasser, Enemy Situation before Invasion, 68
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981SOM(D113) O.B. West History 63, 64
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Apr B Jun 43

981SOM(D94) Zimmermann, AA Study in Command@ 25, 27, 54, 54f, 65, 67, 70,
73

Salmuth to Jodl

26 Oct 43

981A15(D2)

Ref: para 32

Dear Jodl:

Attached I am sending you direct a report from the Army to O.B. West. Its arrangement was prescribed by O.B. West.

The details of the first sections will interest you little. For you, the summaries from page 28 on have special significance, although you can see from the particulars of the individual sections that personnel and materiel are not amounting to much.

Again I draw particular attention to the following points, which, though treating in particular of special fields, are of a decisive nature:

- 1) The landing will succeed at its point of main effort.
- 2) It follows from 1) that the decisive battle will be fought in the interior.

To meet this situation the following are necessary: Forces adequate in size and quality, which can conduct the great counter-attack with prospects of success.

The forces now available are adequate neither in size nor in quality. The draining away process must cease. In contrast to the past, an elite army must come into being. Both leaders and led must be equal to the tasks required of them. In the case of the latter, this is ensured in but few cases. Therefore the West must not be made a dumping ground; the West must receive especially good treatment.

If at OKW the view is held that here sooner or later the decisive battle will be fought, then the resultant conclusions must be drawn by those at high levels. There must be no ostrich-like policy; otherwise there may be a very unpleasant awakening! No enemy invasion will be shattered at the Atlantic Wall!!!!

- 3) Explanations of sections C and D from page 31 of the report:
 - 1a) The primadonna-like behaviour of the navy is insufferable. The chain of command now effective for sea and land bombardment is worthy of an idiot. This is an expression which I have used frankly to the General of Artillery, O.B. West. The joke of the matter is that it is really realized in all quarters. But no one has the courage to pull the cart out of the mud.
 - 2) If an airborne division should drop from the sky at Antwerp **B** then Antwerp is lost!

- 3) If it is desired to give definite strength and depth to the defence of the Atlantic Wall, triangular divisions are unquestionably required. And these divisions must be equipped with heavy weapons, to enable them to cope with the ultra-modern equipment of the enemy approximately on equal terms. All the little anti-tank guns and baby cannon will not put enemy tanks and landing craft out of action.
- 4) & 5) It is a foregone conclusion. The withdrawal of the reserve divisions from the front **B** looked at as a whole **B** weakens O.B. West's defensive potential and striking power insupportably. And with just what is one supposed to strike in the decisive battle?
- 8) If you could see the enemy Air Force exercising over our zone, you would make the same demands **B** probably considerably higher ones.
- 9) The Atlantic Wall is no wall!! Rather is it like a thin, in many places fragile, length of cord, which has a few small knots at isolated points, such as Dieppe and Dunkirk. The strengthening of this length of cord was no doubt well under way during the past spring and summer. Since August the effort has been getting steadily weaker. This retrograde development is continuing. Any considerable strengthening in fortress-like construction will not take place until spring. For this materiel and labour are lacking. When I visit the position, I invariably receive the report: **A**... workers have been transferred to O.T. construction work for the Air force, -- usually, of course, **A**on the Führer's orders@. Hell! Are we soldiers of the Army just dirt?? We are supposed to stand, up to the last man, up to the last cartridge. And we do it. Then they should treat us accordingly! In my opinion, there is enough potential labour here in the country. The people are loafing about in the streets. But the military area commander does not dare to seize these French and Belgian gentlemen!! What does it profit us that the French and the Belgians are handled with gloves on, while our soldiers must suffer in their midst in the decisive fighting against the Anglo-Americans, whom these pampered citizens will gladly join whenever possible?? It would be better if the French and the Belgians cursed us roundly and with full justification; in that case they would at least have contributed to our defence potential. With what are we supposed to construct Position II, ordered by O.B. West as a result of our repeated demands? With our babes in arms, who must first be turned into soldiers??? These can and should form only the skeleton of the labour force.

Conclusion: The military area commanders must be forced to pass a law, whereby Belgians and French would be forced to contribute their construction firms, complete with machinery and labour, to the war effort. The countries hide behind the pretext that these building projects **A**serve enemy ends, and that they are therefore punishable by death according to the law of the land@, furthermore that the Hague Convention forbids compulsion to serve. I hold the view that in these countries too there is still war, in which we are so far the victors!

Another point:

According to the plan provided for the distribution of concrete in the West, the following percentages are allotted to the various branches of the Armed Forces and to special construction:

Atlantic Wall	24%	(including construction for Navy and Air force within the Atlantic Wall)
Operational Purposes of the Navy	28%	
Operational Purposes of the Air Force	36%	
Special Construction	12%	

In the distribution of concrete, sufficient attention does not appear to have been given to the fact that the Atlantic Wall represents above all the prerequisite for the safeguarding and therewith the effectiveness of the operational conduct of the air and sea war.

In addition it appears that both Air Force and Navy are making efforts, unfortunately successful efforts, to classify all operational construction which by chance or for reasons of location lies within the coastal zone, and therefore within that of the Atlantic Wall (for example, orientation equipment, long-range search installations, etc), as falling under the Atlantic Wall allotment. Thus naturally, the soup, which is already too thin, is watered down still more.

The Air Force could not or would not understand even drastic hints not to saw off the thin branch on which we can all just find a seat.

These are all things which one only discovers little by little. One is far too trusting. I had though that after three years= activity on the coast all that would at least be in order. I put the question: How, in view of this distribution, will the so-called Atlantic Wall be brought into being in accordance with the Führer Order???

References are continually being made to authoritative conduct of operations. Just where is it? You can imagine my annoyance. One wants to do one=s best for the general good, to accomplish much. But everywhere one meets with insurmountable difficulties B insurmountable for me at least. It is high time that we received help here, and that remedies were applied.

11) Sluice Fighting

There is a very important district which may become decisive in the defensive fighting. On this subject I request a well-defined stand! It may even become desirable, in a time of stress, to carry out suitable flooding operations!! Thereby opportunities for landing would be decreased. Smaller forces would be required! On this point too I request that a stand be taken.

12) According to the experience reports from the South, the landings are always protected by heavy naval gunfire. Our counter-attacks, successful at first, are shattered by this. Conclusion: If possible, this heavy naval artillery must be eliminated. This can only come about if we, with our concrete-protected guns, drive the heavy enemy vessels far from the coast. For this the requirement in 12).

13) My Operations Officer, Colonel Wolff, explained my anxieties to you some time ago.

If you wish to show wisdom in furthering matters, in commitment and in defence, put everything in the hands of an especially capable, infinitely rough, but energetic commanding General with an Air force Chief of Staff, who is directly under the Führer. This man must have dictatorial powers! Otherwise there will be no unity. Now the O.T. plays first fiddle, and this should not be. The present solution with Engr Regtl Staff Hellwig is only the beginning of a complete solution.

Then I draw attention to the following, regarding tasks for the special equipment. In this connection I attach herewith the proposal which is going out today to O.B.West, as well as the requests already made regarding the safety of the equipment. Maps showing the proposed positions were forwarded to you by C. of S. O.B.West under No. 536/43 Top Secret 23 Oct 43.

14) The time limits here required have meanwhile been ordered by O.B.West. They are intended more as covering for the special equipment than as operational for Position II.

But the firing positions for the special equipment lie for the most part **B** despite our demands **B** so far forward that they cannot be included in Position II. Advanced strongpoints must be constructed here in front of Position II. In order to bring all this into line with the plans of the Air Force, the dictator for long-distance equipment, as requested by me, is urgently required immediately. The good Lt-Col Thom vom Wa. [?] is doing his utmost; but alone, with his administrative headquarters in Berlin, he can do nothing.

For me the situation is clear: If the long-distance equipment reaches the firing stage, we shall force the British to begin their invasion as soon as possible; and we shall force them into the area in which these things are. All the more necessary is it to have strength in personnel and materiel in this area!!

My dear Jodl, this letter has been very frank on all points. It gives neither a pessimistic nor an optimistic viewpoint, but a purely realistic one. I feel myself bound to put things into words as I see them, and to make the requests which I deem necessary. I am aware that you cannot fulfil all my requests; for that the cloth is too thin everywhere. But with good will much can still be accomplished here which will benefit the situation as a whole.

I should very much like to be able to explain all this to you in person, as in writing one can only touch on things. If you are not able to come here yourself, try and send someone over. But not someone small; let it be one of the key-men of OKW/WFSt, for example, Buhle, who can see and hear things for himself on the spot.

Heil und Sieg!

Yours
(signed) von Salmuth

Appendices:

Fifteenth Army, Ops No. 0161/43 Top Secret 19 Oct 43	Copy No. 3
Fifteenth Army, Ops No. 0170/43 Top Secret 25 Oct 43	Copy No. 2
Copy of Fifteenth Army, Ops No. 0159/43 Top Secret 13 Oct 43	Copy No. 1

Dear Jodl, I have just read through this scribble again. You must not infer from it that I and we do nothing but complain. This is not so. We are in good spirits. We wish to accomplish much, and we will. But we want to accomplish much more than is possible for us under existing conditions. The most encouraging thing of all is and remains the German soldier, old or young, who does not allow himself to be easily discouraged. It is this that justifies all manner of hopes, especially if you will help us.

(Signed) v. S. 26 Oct

Rundstedt Report

28 Oct 43

981CW(D50)

(Adapted from O.C.M.H., F.S.B., Draft Translation)

Ref: para 33

ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION ON THE WESTERN FRONT

OCTOBER 25, 1943

A

Prefatory Remarks

This estimate of the situation is based on the conditions which existed on October 25, 1943.

It is the result of:

- a. The general inspections I ordered made by the three components of national defense.
- b. My own visits to the armies.
- c. The closing reports of the commanders-in-chief of the armies according to the situation of October 1, 1943.

B

Military **B** Political Estimate

The general estimate of our situation is the function of the Highest Command. It alone knows its objectives and intentions and it alone disposes of the necessary basis for that purpose.

The extent of command of the Western Supreme Command is a subarea in the case of the European theatre of war. Nevertheless the West stands in close interrelationship to the other theatres of war. Reserves here or there are bound to have an influence on the opposite theatre.

A military estimate of the situation in the Western High Command area is often difficult because, according to numerous reports that have been submitted, politics, with the Anglo-Americans, seem to influence strongly the purely military intentions, so that many military acts of the enemy are at first not understandable. According to all available intelligence, the last word on the ~~A~~second@front, that is the decisive attack against Europe proper, will be spoken in Moscow. The estimate of the situation in the immediate future in the Western theatre will depend on that.

In this connection I shall confine myself to military observations in my command area.

C

Estimate of the Enemy Situation

In the Western Command Area

Weeks ago the enemy began, in England, preparations for a major attack which had to be taken seriously when it turned out that the enemy, in board daylight within the radius of observation of our coast, was engaged in extensive mine-sweeping operations, which could perhaps be considered as a clumsy deception.

Strong forces of the enemy air force systematically neutralized airdromes close to the coast, important railroad installations and military camps and installations. Also troop movements and other signs in England pointed to an attack.

The expected attack has not yet been launched.

On September 10 the enemy made known that on September 9 the grand *Amanoeuvres* in the channel were concluded. It is difficult to say whether the whole thing was a well thought out feint employing very large forces in connection with the Italian operation, or whether, for some political or military reason or other, the attack was not to be carried out or was postponed.

In connection with the enemy operations in Italy and in the Mediterranean theatre, an attack against the occupied French south coast is to be expected at a later time.

As I see it, the Anglo-Americans can attack in the following manner:

1. Primarily in the channel, probably combined with an attack from the South against the French Mediterranean coast.
2. In local attacks against Normandy and Brittany to establish bridgeheads with good harbours and to eliminate submarine bases.
3. In a coordinated attack from the South against the French southern coast and from the Bay of Biscay against the First Army along the Midi canal.

It is to be presumed that the enemy will coordinate his attacks against the occupied west so that our forces are tied down as much as possible, so that the few reserves we have are drawn in opposite directions. In England alone the enemy has at his disposal today just as many divisions for an attack against the continent as we have in our own forces in the entire West. Because we are unable to obtain reliable information, the enemy is in a position to ensure surprise to its full extent.

In the cold part of the year a major attack, especially across the Channel, is less probable because of the weather; nevertheless local operations must be reckoned with all the time.

The technical equipment of the Anglo-Americans in landing craft permits a landing at this time of the year also, but on the other hand the increasing fog and storms in the Channel area are an obstacle to systematic use of the enemy air force and permit no absolutely sure plans for its employment.

In the Mediterranean area the climatic conditions are more favourable for the enemy, but the strong winds of the Rhone delta (mistral) are a drawback.

Examined in detail:

I

Channel Front

Now as before I consider the Channel front, that is the sectors of the commander of the Army of the Netherlands, the Fifteenth and Seventh Armies, the most important.

I have given the reasons for it repeatedly:

1. On this front the channel is the narrowest.
2. The distance to the German frontier is the shortest.
3. In case of success the strategic situation of the German forces located in France would be difficult.
4. The English isle offers the best and most prepared jump-off bases for the enemy air force and air borne troops.
5. Shortest supply route.

It can be countered that this attack would strike the strongest front of the Western Command. To this it should be said however that the Anglo-Americans can and will carry out this attack with the strongest means also. It is true that they will meet a relatively strong front, but by no means so strong that this major attack would have no prospects of success. The role which is played by heavy naval artillery in operations of this character has been demonstrated in North Africa, Sicily and South Italy.

It is much more probable that for military and political reasons the enemy does not yet consider this attack as timely, and has postponed it. (Moscow conferences) Many indications however point to the fact that he is preparing it.

In the following paragraphs I shall come back to the value of the defensive power of the Channel front.

Normandy with Cherbourg, and Brittany with Brest are additional important areas on the Channel front.

The regions jutting far out into the Channel, the possible encirclement from the sea, the gaining of important harbours involved in such a situation, the cutting off of convoys, may drive the enemy to attempt to gain bridgeheads.

II

Bay of Biscay

The importance of the submarine bases is well known, but equally so is the barely endurable weakness of the forces of the First Army. Even if a landing south of the Gironde estuary is, by and large, made difficult by beach and terrain (absence of adequate harbours), still it is not impossible.

According to information we possess the enemy is aware of the weak defence of the coast, which is as yet little fortified by the First Army.

A mass landing is only probable in combination with landing intentions on both sides and west of the mouth of the Rhone.

Seeking junction via Toulouse, the object of such an enemy operation can be to cut us off from Spain, which would be more easily accomplished by water than by occupation of Spain and an arduous advance by land through the Pyrenees.

Pyrenees Front

For political reasons this front seems not yet endangered. If however, besides the occupation of the Azores an occupation of Portugal were to take place later and pressure thereby increased in Spain, then the Pyrenees front would take on new importance.

This front is approximately 600 kilometres long. The mountain chain is very difficult, isolated, remote and in no wise to be compared with the ~~A~~cultivated@ Alps. For generations it has been inhabited, especially on the Spanish side, by daring men, born smugglers who alone know all the secret paths.

The ~~A~~hermetic@ closing of such a frontier with the forces available, as has been demanded in many quarters, is theory and impossible.

In spite of all their zeal and efficiency the 3275 employees of the V.G.A.D.³⁸ are numerically not in a condition to accomplish it. The smugglers= paths and the isolation of the mountain chain are too much of an obstacle.

If then, through the removal of the younger classes, participants of World War I between 40 and 50 years of age have to perform this difficult duty, then I agree with the opinion of the customs frontier protective forces when they report that an absolute closing is not possible.

In winter difficulties become even greater in the snowed-in Pyrenees.

The V.G.A.D. must therefore be reinforced and the best classes must not be taken away from them if these important but also difficult frontiers are to be secure to any degree. On the Spanish side forces of all sorts much stronger numerically are employed, therefore the closing there is much more thorough.

Mediterranean Front

The points where the enemy's chances of effecting a landing are best lie on either side and especially west of the Rhone estuary. In the former sector of the Italian Fourth Army the landing possibilities are limited by the bays west and east of the Hyeres islands and the bight of St. Raphael. Here and there the terrain (steep slopes) permits the execution of minor operations. The very weak defences on this front give food for thought especially because later in the course of the enemy Mediterranean operations this coast will play an important role.

The Rhone delta is especially favourable for extensive airborne landings. The possibility of making this area secure with the troops available is at the present time highly problematical.

Apart from political considerations (France) the gaining of Toulon and Marseilles by envelopment is important for the enemy. The Rhone valley is the natural gate of invasion to the North in the direction of Lyon, a decidedly important direction of attack for the enemy and for us.

A landing, favoured by the terrain, between Sete and Perpignan would presuppose an attack on Bordeaux via Toulouse in conjunction with a possible enemy attack from the Bay of Biscay.

Alps Crossings on the French-Italian Frontier

The few crossings over the Alps between Menton and the Swiss frontier eastward of Chamonix, with their railroads very difficult to maintain in operating order, their tunnels and passes, are especially important for the rapid shifting of forces from the Western Command to Army Group B and vice versa. According to the developments of the situation they can acquire strategic importance,

³⁸ Reinforced Border Control Service (Verstaerkter Grenz Aufsichts Dienst)

especially the few railroads in winter when the passes are frozen and snowed-in so that land marches over the range of mountains are possible only to a limited degree.

The coastal railroad and road can be considerably disrupted at any time from the sea by the fire from warships, by air bombing or by sabotage.

D

Principles of Defence

I

General Principles

The attacker has the advantage of free choice of time and place for his plans of attack.

He has the means of deception and diversion at hand and can concentrate at the real decisive point or points all personnel and material forces on the ground and in the air.

The defender, on the other hand, must wait and is usually one move behind because he must adjust himself with his reserves to the time and place chosen by the attacker.

In 1914/18 the western front was short.

In comparison with today the divisional sectors at the point where the main effort was being made were narrow. In many cases the division could count on a 2 to 1 proportion between **A**front line@ and **A**local reserve@. The battalion commander had in most instances 1 company, the regimental commander 1 battalion in reserve. Many times the division could even hold 1 entire regiment in reserve because the sectors were not wide.

As a rule this enabled the units, from the company to the division, to have at their disposal rather strong local reserves, whether for counter-attack or for closing a gap in the line.

If a major enemy attack was suspected, more divisions could be put in line at the front and counter-attack divisions brought forward behind them.

The position consisted in a trench system kilometres deep that the troops had dug all along in day and night work. They were strong enough to do so because of the narrowness of the sectors.

This deep defensive system allowed also tactical disposition in depth. In this system it was possible to fight in a **A**mobile@ way, i.e. by counter-attacks.

Through this disposition in depth and thanks to the reserves, attrition on the troops in line was lessened, as even in periods of heavy fighting at least a certain amount of relief within the units was possible.

In the battle of materiel the attacker had at his disposal a very powerful mass of artillery and much ammunition to be able to maintain a sustained barrage.

Nevertheless in the circumstances described above it was very often possible to hold a position, that is to block off unavoidable penetrations or to eliminate them.

But even at that time it was not possible to prevent a penetration every time.

Today the Anglo-Americans have at their disposal additional powerful armed forces, a numerically superior air force and numerous airborne units.

On the water, with the heavy artillery of his fleet he can substantially support the landing.

Consequently the circumstances to 1914-18 and today are entirely different in the West. Length of front and density of occupation are in contradiction.

A defence, in the true sense of the word, is not possible on many portions of the front of the Western Command, only a security and on the First Army and nineteenth Army fronts even only a reinforced observation.

This fact is a direct result of the general situation. We must make the best of it and try with all means to apply the type of defence that offers us the greatest likelihood of success.

II

Principles of Leadership for

The Western Command

We cannot and may not fall back in the West because the space separating the channel from the western German frontier is too restricted.

To give up terrain would have only disadvantages:

1. We would lose the sea and the coast as a most effective obstacle.
2. The defensive installations constructed long ago would lose their value.
3. The numerous fixed batteries and heavy weapons would have to be destroyed.

4. The ports of the French coast would be at the disposal of the enemy on the broadest possible front. The submarine bases would be lost.
5. Convoy traffic would be interrupted.
6. The ensuing fighting in open terrain would have to be conducted with divisions which in personnel and materiel and especially in their mobility are unequal to the requirements of a war of movement against an enemy so strongly equipped materially.

III

Conclusions

1. The coast and its fortifications must be held to the last. The next thing is, under a single responsibility and a single command and with all the batteries and heavy weapons at all suitable, to smash the enemy with fire when he is still on the water, that is to say in a weak moment, or to weaken him to such a degree, that he either turns back or can only land with disorganized elements.

Then the main effort of all the weapons suitable for the task must be directed on this enemy who had reached the land, to annihilate him while part of the coastal batteries will keep up the fire on the enemy ships out on the water to prevent further reinforcements from being put ashore.

In spite of this the enemy will succeed in many places in landing heavy forces, especially on fronts where only a security force was possible.

On land it is of importance now to hold defensive zones, in any case the strong points. Any available local reserves must be employed in counter-attacks which must be launched at once. Every hour is precious. If the enemy is allowed time to consolidate his position, his ejection will be difficult in almost every case.

In this fighting the enemy strength will already be considerably weakened. The many defensive installations which are holding out will break up his attack and sap his strength. He will lose time and become uncertain.

In the second phase the main reserves intervene in order to annihilate the enemy in a coordinated counterattack against the weakest point of his landing.

3. Whether the main reserves or the small units that had been held in support for this express purpose should be committed against the strong forces of airborne troops that can certainly be expected in the wide back area depends only on the actual situation and cannot be determined in advance.

4. Conclusions: In spite of all fortifications a rigid defence of the long stretch of coast is impossible for any considerable length of time.

This fact must be kept in mind.

The defence therefore is based primarily on the general reserves, especially of tanks and motorized units. Without them it is impossible to hold the coasts permanently. But these reserves must not only be available in sufficient number; they must be of such quality that they can attack against the Anglo-Americans, that is, against their materiel, otherwise the counter-attack will not go through.

The requirements necessitated by the foregoing are set forth at the end of the Estimate of the Situation in the Western Command.

IV

The Atlantic Wall

Because of the materiel superiority of the Anglo-Americans, the enemy influence from the air and from the heavy artillery of the enemy navy is so great that either fixed fortifications of concrete or field installations disposed in depth, well camouflaged and concealed are indispensable. If they are lacking, the defender and his weapons are crushed even before the beginning of the enemy attack.

1. Fixed fortifications are indispensable and valuable for battle as well as for propaganda.

But it must not be imagined that this wall cannot be overcome when the enemy attacks it with the most powerful weapons of American might from the sea, from the air and from the rear.

With the available means in men and materiel and in the time at our disposal it is out of the question to erect a deep continuous wall of permanent construction. This would require years of steady work, uninterrupted by anything.

It is therefore a question of accepting limitations dictated by a proportioned, sober reckoning of time and availability in personnel and materiel.

This requires the most careful concentration of available means on the absolutely essential installations and the most valuable weapons (for instance, the modern coastal batteries).

The heavy infantry weapons and the infantry cannot and must not disappear in thick concrete shelters. There is great danger that were this to happen, infantry fighting would become rigid, and the infantry would not emerge from the concrete shelters at the given time.

The infantry must employ active tactics and be able to leave its shelters when the actual ground fighting begins, in order to fight on the terrain according to the situation.

As it is altogether impossible for the infantry to erect concrete bombproof structures, it must be content with numerous shelters, disposed in depth, hidden and camouflaged, if rather weak, for itself and its weapons (as has been ordered by the Führer).

Its protection therefore is in its disconnectedness in inconspicuous terrain, in deep, narrow trenches, holes, earthworks and weak concrete installations (Tobruk shelters, etc.).

2. The fixed fortifications must be, as heretofore, supplemented with field works, using all means at hand. Field fortifications have not lost their value.

The fact that without Reich labour service or other civil forces, work on the field fortifications can only make slow progress on the present lengthy front cannot be helped.

3. In recapitulation, these are my conclusions concerning fixed fortifications:

- a. They are indispensable and worthwhile, but are not invincible and no cure-all.
- b. It is better to have a few installations really completed, camouflaged, and therefore fit for defence than to begin many works which lie unfinished, without camouflage, and obstruct the field of fire, and which can only be of use to an enemy force that has landed, by affording him shelter.
- c. Field fortifications are indispensable as a supplement to the main fortifications.
- d. Wherever possible the construction of installations must make allowances for the new point of view that the enemy will come not only from the front, by water, but also from the rear with airborne troops.

As many installations as possible must therefore be put in on an all around defence basis, otherwise they will be useless if attacked from the rear.

In this connection I point out again that with the limited means in personnel and materiel available, it is just absolutely necessary that so extensive and time-consuming a construction project be carried out by a single authority. In the circumstances, the soldier who has to fight must decide where and which installations have priority while the engineer, in agreement with the soldiers, will be responsible for the best technical execution. This one authority is all the more necessary since the three components of the national defence and other authorities make demands which one authority inevitably must decide upon.

Brief Estimate of the Other Components
of the Armed Forces

I

Navy

The outstanding point is the concept of the Naval Group of the Western Command that the mission of the coastal artillery defence, to smash the enemy's attempt to land, if possible, before he reaches the coast, can hardly be accomplished with the present forces in the western zone.

Brief reasons:

1. The construction requirements for the 1942 westwall type of construction could not be met on account of the personnel and materiel situation.

The heavy demands for concrete for the submarine bunkers have seriously taxed the materiel division of the Navy. The westwall type of construction of the artillery defences has consequently not progressed in the sense planned and intended by the Führer and lags behind the present status of the Army's defensive works. It is only recently that as a result of priority allocations of concrete protection for individual objects and appropriate classification according to relative tactical importance that a satisfactory status of construction is said to have been reached.

2. Extensive dead spaces in the zone of fire of the heavy coastal batteries against hostile landing, because they were mostly emplaced at the beginning of 1941 with a view to their offensive employment.
3. Shortage of materiel in many batteries which so far it has not been possible to assign:

Little suitable ordnance from captured materiel for firing on naval targets.

Little suitable ammunition for firing on naval targets.

Inadequate supply of ammunition in some of the captured calibres.

Shortages of range finding and fire control equipment

Unsatisfactory condition of accessories and unsatisfactory operating efficiency of radar equipment which is of special importance considering the tactics the enemy is likely to employ **B** an attack under cover of darkness or with smoke.

4. Shortage of personnel by detail of precisely the most proficient officers for submarine service and sea-going units. Training of suitable replacements in sufficient number not yet completed.
5. Serious lack of anti-aircraft forces.

Note: Detailed report of the Navy will be submitted through Navy channels.

II

Air Force

In the opinion of the 3rd Air Corps Tactical Command the enemy air force was greatly expanded in the last year. Especially as a result of the increased employment of the American air arm operating from England it is well established that our air force has considerably depreciated as compared with the enemy air arm. Of additional importance is the fact that the enemy machines have been further developed technically, which is especially apparent in the improvement of the defensive armament and the increase in the radius of action of pursuit aviation. The current improvement of our air defence, particularly strengthening of our pursuit and anti-aircraft, it is true, is effecting some amelioration, but the picture in view of the further strengthening of the enemy air arm will not alter materially.

The principal responsibility for the protection of all installations in the area northwest of the line Brussels-Paris-Orleans will fall on the ground defence. In this area therefore the main effort must be on passive aerial defence.

The tactics of Area bombing@compels dispersion and to an increased degree necessitates the use of labour forces taken from the inhabitants to effect quick repairs.

The conduct of the air battle within the framework of the coastal defence requires the concentration of all available forces in the area of the main effort, particularly at the beginning of the enemy landings.

Our superior fighting spirit and readiness to engage the enemy will help compensate some of our weakness.

Note: Detailed report of Air Force Tactical Command will be submitted through Air Force channels.

F

Forces in the Coastal Defence

I

Netherlands Army Command

1. Extend of front: 537 km (including Friesland sector and the land fronts of the defensive area and support groups).
2. In line on the coast: 3 divisions.
3. Average length of each divisional front: 119 kilometres.
4. Combat value of the coastal defence divisions:
 - a. 347th Inf. Div. (front 129 kilometres)
2-regimental, partially mobile, with auxiliary motor vehicles and bicycles. Obtained by local requisition.
Artillery: 2 mixed battalions (partially mobile); in addition 1 provisional battery organized from personnel within the Division.
Heavy weapons: Machine gun companies and infantry howitzer companies are lacking.
Besides the static anti-tank guns the division has only 6 5-cm guns.
State of training was good but has become poor and uneven due to constant transfers and exchanges.
Final conclusion: Fit for defence except against mass tank attack.
 - b. 16th Air Force Field Div. (front: 106 kilometres)
2- regimental.
Artillery: 2 mixed battalions and 1 anti-tank battalion; in addition 1 provisional battery (partially mobile).
Heavy weapons: Each machine gun company: 8 heavy machine guns; each rifle company: 6 heavy machine guns.
Antitank battalion of 3 antitank companies 1 assault gun company of 2 guns.
State of training: has made good progress but has been impeded by transfers and exchanges.
Conclusion: Fit for defence.
 - c. 719th Inf. Div. (front: 123 kilometres)
2-regimental
Artillery: 1 light battalion with mixed equipment.
(Only the headquarters of 2nd Bn available).
Partially mobile. In addition 1 provisional battery.
Heavy weapons: machine gun and infantry gun companies are lacking.
Antitank defence: 1 antitank company of
10 7.5 cm guns (self-propelled mounts)
3 7.5 cm guns (tractor-drawn)

State of training: impeded by many transfers and exchanges.
Conclusion: Fit for defence.

II

Fifteenth Army

1. Extent of front: 720 km. (exclusive of the deep mouths of the rivers Scheldt, Somme and Seine which must be defended)

2. In line on the coast: 9 divisions. In addition, in the defensive sector Antwerp, insufficient forces of the Military Commander in Belgium and Northern France, as well as alarm units.

3. Average extent of front per division 80 km. (In the defensive sector Antwerp and additional 45 km).

4. Combat value of the coast defence divisions

(a) 19th air Force Field Div. (front about 135 km):

2-regimental

Artillery: 2 light, 1 heavy, 1 antiaircraft artillery Bn.; light Bn. And antiaircraft Bn.

Completely mobile (motorized), heavy Bn. Only partially mobile. Artillery fighting power good as long as antiaircraft Bn. Remains. In addition 5 provisional batteries.

Heavy weapons: equipment good, except for infantry howitzers, which are missing.

Antitank defence: Divisional antitank battalion adequate; no inf. Antitank company.

State of Training: In need of further training and not yet equal to an average coast defence division.

Conclusion: Owing to the fact that the division consists of young men, it is fully qualified for defence, but for offensive missions only to a limited extent.

(b) 712th Inf. Div. (front about 90 km):

2-regimental, partially mobile.

Artillery: 1 light Bn. With mixed equipment, partially mobile. Of 2nd Bn there is only the headquarters present. Equipment therefore insufficient. In addition, 1 provisional battery.

Heavy weapons: Equipment insufficient. No heavy machine guns, light infantry howitzers and medium mortars.

Antitank defence: Only 1 company, 7.5 cm (f) tractor-drawn available, therefore insufficient.

State of Training: Good

Conclusion: The division is well able to execute all missions in the coast defence. However, it can be used only to a limited extent for mobile warfare.

- (c) 171st Res. Div. (front 48 km) Triangular. Div. with combat units 100% mobile. (Made mobile by auxiliary means)
Artillery: 1 light Bn., 1 mixed Bn.
Heavy weapons: Equipment sufficient. 2 provisional batteries.
Antitank defence: Division antitank Bn. is absent.
Inf. antitanks less medium and heavy antitank guns.
State of Training: Varies according to the condition of the recruit detachment. Cadre personnel good.
Conclusion: Equal to the missions to be executed in the coast defence. Only of little combat value when used for other missions, owing to insufficient mobility and insufficient equipment in artillery, pioneers and signal communications.
- (d) 18th Air Force Field Div. (front 51 km):
 2-regimental.
Artillery: 1 Bn. With 2 heavy batteries and 1 light battery, 1 Bn. 2 heavy horse-drawn batteries, 1 antiaircraft artillery Bn.
 Fighting power of artillery sufficient, as long as antiaircraft Bn. stays. In addition, 1 provisional battery.
Heavy weapons: Sufficient
Antitank defence: No inf. antitank companies; only 6 guns of the heavy antitank guns model 1940, therefore insufficient. 2 assault guns.
State of Training: has improved.
Conclusion: Completely suitable for defence, but not suitable for offensive missions except on a small scale, under limited conditions. Commander and troops have very little experience in infantry fighting. As the personnel is of good calibre, there is a prospect that the combat value will increase.
- (e) 156th Res. Div. (front 48 km): Triangular, but 2 regiments with 2 Bns. Each.
Artillery: 1 light Bn. with 2 batteries, and 1 heavy Bn. with 2 horse-drawn batteries. The artillery combat value is good but not sufficient for the mission.
 In addition 5 provisional batteries.
Heavy weapons: Insufficient; some heavy machine guns; no light or heavy infantry howitzers or medium mortars.
Antitank defence: Insufficient; there are no heavy antitank guns and no antitank battalion.
State of training: Varies according to the change in recruits, but in general sufficient.
Conclusion: The majority of the commanders and subalterns have experience at the front, likewise the cadre personnel, but no combat experience. Suitable for the missions of coast defence and attack on a small scale and under certain conditions, but not suitable for mobile warfare.
- (f) 191st Res. Div. (front 50 km.): Organized for employment in 3 combat teams of 2 battalions each.

Artillery: 1 light Bn. with 2 horse-drawn batteries; combat value sufficient, but too low for the mission. In addition, 5 provisional batteries.

Heavy weapons: In general sufficient; inf. high-angle weapons are lacking.

Antitank defence: Insufficient; heavy antitank guns are lacking.

State of training: Completely satisfactory as far as cadre personnel and field units are concerned. However, there is a large number of racial Germans. (at present 8225 men), and no clear picture has been obtained so far concerning their morale and will to fight.

Conclusion: In general suitable for defence, capable of executing local attacks on a small scale. Combat value on the whole cannot be estimated with certainty, owing to the rather high percentage of racial Germans.

(g) 348th Inf. Div. (front about 75 km.): 2-regimental.

Artillery: 2 light artillery Bns. Equipment is believed to be too weak for attack missions. In addition 3 provisional batteries.

Heavy weapons: No machine gun Co.-s; only 1 mortar Co; no infantry howitzer Co. Equipment insufficient; old machine guns, model 1908.

Antitank defence: No antitank Bns.; 2 antitank Co.-s, as personnel units, with only medium and light antitank guns. 1 antitank Co. with 10 7.5 cm. Antitank guns (rapid fire) organized as provisional unit.

State of training: Completely sufficient for the fight on the coast; good.

Conclusion: Completely suitable for defence, little combat experience.

(h) 17th Air Force Field Div. (front 90 km.):

2-regimental

Artillery: 1 light Bn., 1 heavy Bn., 1 Antiaircraft-artillery Bn. In addition, 3 provisional batteries.

Heavy weapons: Per battalion averaging 20 to 30 heavy machine guns, model 1934, and 10 medium mortars; no infantry howitzers, therefore insufficient.

Antitank defence: Antitank Bn. (motorized) available, 2 Coys, each with six 7.5 cm. Antitank guns model 97/38 and 1 assault gun battery with 2 assault guns so far. Equipment insufficient.

State of training: Does not completely suffice for the attack.

Conclusion: Completely suitable for defence. Commanders and troops lack experience in ground fighting.

(i) 711 Inf Div (front 40 km.): 2-regimental

Artillery: 1 light Bn., of 2 Bns only headquarters present. In addition, 1 provisional battery. Artillery too weak for the mission.

Heavy weapons: No machine gun Coys, no heavy machine guns; 3 gun carriages per Coy for use of light machine guns as heavy machine guns. No infantry howitzer Coys. Insufficient.

Antitank defence: Per grenadier regiment 1 antitank platoon with three 7.5-cm. Antitank guns (horse-drawn); in addition, divisional antitank coy (rapid fire) with ten 7.5-cm.

Antitank guns (provisionally motorized.) Equipment not sufficient for the width of the sector.

State of training: Good

Conclusion: Completely fit for defence, but little combat experience.

(j) Note

The troops in the coastal defensive sector Antwerp (1st Bn 16th Security Regt., 736th Landsturm Bn. and training units, headquarters, etc.) of the military Commander in Belgium and North France, and of the navy and airforce have varying strengths, no artillery and only insufficient antitank defence. Accordingly, combat value is low and cannot be improved.

Conclusion: Fitness for defence: low.

III

Seventh Army

1. Extent of front: 1700 km.

2. In line on the coast: 8 divisions.

3. Combat value of the coast defence divisions

(a.) 716th Inf. Div. (front about 100 km.):

2-regimental mobile under certain conditions (to be motorized).

Artillery: 1 light Bn. (partially mobile); of 2nd Bn. only headquarters present. 5 batteries provisionally organized.

Heavy weapons: Machine gun and infantry howitzer Co.s are lacking; some emergency equipment instead.

Antitank defence: No antitank Bn., only 1 Co. with 6 heavy antitank guns. The grenadier regiments have no mobile heavy antitank guns.

State of training: Good; not uniform, owing to an exchange of age classes and detachments.

Conclusion: Completely fit for defence.

(b.) 709th Inf. Div. (220 km. of front): Triangular with 8 battalions.

Artillery: 2 light Bn.s, partially mobile and an additional Bn. headquarters. In addition, 5 provisional batteries.

Heavy weapons: Machine gun and infantry howitzer Co.s are lacking; in their place some emergency equipment available. (Per regiment 1 horse-drawn echelon with 3 heavy antitank guns).

Antitank defence: No antitank Bn., only 1 antitank Co. with heavy antitank guns (9-7.5 cm.)

State of training: Good; not uniform owing to an exchange of age classes and detachments.

Conclusion: Completely fit for defence.

- (c) 319th Inf. Div. (coastal front B Coannel Islands B about 120 km.) triangular, (with strong coast artillery) 1 M.G. Bn., 2 mobile Bn.=s and 1 armoured Bn. (additional).
Artillery: 4 light Bn.=s
Heavy weapons: Per regiment 1 infantry howitzer platoon; in addition, numerous emergency weapons.
Antitank defence: Per regiment and mobile Bn., 1 antitank Co.
State of training: Good; not uniform owing to the exchange of age classes and detachments.
Conclusion: Completely fit for large-scale fighting on the islands.
- (d) 346th Inf. Div. (270-km. front): 2-regimental, mobile under certain conditions.
Artillery: 2 mixed Bn.=s (partially mobile); in addition, 2 provisional batteries.
Heavy weapons: No infantry howitzer Co.=s; the majority of the division is equipped with old machine guns model 1908/15.
Antitank defence: No antitank Bn., only 1 Co. 7.5-cm (self-propelled mount) antitank guns.
State of training: Good; impaired by the exchange of age classes and detachments.
Conclusion: Partially fit for defence.
- (e) 266th Inf. Div. (240-km. front): 2-regimental, reorganized May 1943, partially mobile.
Artillery: 1 light Bn. of 3 batteries, 1 heavy Bn. of 4 batteries; in addition, 1 provisional battery; partially mobile.
Heavy weapons: No heavy infantry howitzer platoon with the grenadier regiments, no heavy mortars.
Antitank defence: No antitank Bn., only 6 7.5-cm. Antitank guns, motorized, makeshift type.
State of training: Insufficient, as division was put in line after brief training. Considerably impaired by the exchange of age classes and detachments.
Conclusion: Partially fit for defence.
- (f) 343rd Inf. Div. (240-km.): triangular, partially mobile.
Artillery: 1 light and 1 mixed Bn., partially mobile.
Heavy infantry weapons: 2 gren. Regiments still have machine guns model 1908/15.
Antitank defence: Good; not uniform, owing to the exchange of age classes and detachments.
Conclusion: Completely fit for defence.
- (g) 265th Inf. Div. (270-km. front): Reorganized May 1943, triangular, but only 7 Bn.=s.
Artillery: 2 light Bn.=s, 1 heavy Bn of 4 batteries, partially mobile.
Heavy weapons: No heavy mortars.

Antitank defence: Per gren. Regiment 1 platoon 7.5-cm. Antitank guns; no antitank Bn; 1 Co. 7.5-cm. (tractor-drawn)

State of training: Insufficient, owing to the fact that the division was put in line immediately after being organized. The exchange of age classes and detachments has impaired the state of training still further.

Conclusion: Completely fit for defence.

IV

First Army

1. Extent of front: 1040 km. (including land fronts of the defence areas and of Bordeaux)
2. In line on the coast: 3 divisions, including 1 res. div.
3. Extent of front per division: (average) 347 km.
4. Combat value of the coast defence divisions
 - (a) 158th Res. Div.: (front 540 km): Triangular, scarcely mobile.
Artillery: 2 light Bn.s of 2 batteries each, mobile, and 2 provisional batteries.
Heavy weapons: Insufficient, worn out by constant use in training.
Antitank defence: Only light and medium antitank guns, partially motorized, makeshift type. Insufficient in numbers and calibers.
State of training: Varies according to length of training; mixed in all units.
Conclusion: Not completely fit for combat, but useful in the defence under its present good commanders.
 - (b) 708th Inf. Div.: (front 171 km.): 2-regimental (less 6th Bn.)
Artillery: 1 light Bn., headquarters only of 2nd Bn.; in addition, 5 provisional batteries, mobile.
Heavy weapons: Machine gun and inf. howitzer Co.s are lacking to some extent, shortages made up by some emergency equipment.
Antitank defence: 1 Co. 7.5-cm. Antitank guns, (tractor-drawn). As for the rest, only 5-cm. Antitank guns.
State of training: Impaired (compared to its former condition) owing to constant change and detachments.
Conclusion: Division not completely fit for action at present; partially fit for defence.
 - (c) 344th Inf. Div.: (front 267 km.): 2-regimental, (at present less the 6th Bn.)
Artillery: 2 mixed Bn.s, partially mobile; in addition, 4 provisional batteries.
Heavy weapons: Weakness consists in the fact that machine guns are model 1908 and 1905/15. No infantry howitzer Co.

Antitank defence: 1 Co. 7.5-cm antitank gun, (tractor-drawn).

State of training: Varies and has been greatly impaired by detachments and exchange.

V

Nineteenth Army

1. Total extent of front: 650 km.
2. In line on the coast: 4 divisions, 2 security regiments.
3. Extent of front per division (average): 130 km.
4. Combat value of the coast defence divisions:
 - (a) 326th Inf. Div. (front about 155 km.):

Triangular.
Artillery: 1 light Bn. with 3 batteries, 1 light Bn. with 2 batteries, 1 heavy Bn. partially mobile; in addition, 3 provisional batteries.
Heavy weapons: All complete, condition good; no inf. howitzer Co.s.
Antitank defence: Only 1 Co. 7.5-cm. (tractor-drawn), bulk replaced by 3.7, 4.7 and 5-cm. antitank guns.
State of training: Impaired at present, owing to the constant change in personnel
Conclusion: Completely fit for defence, only partially fit for counter-attack.
 - (b) 338th Inf. Div.: (front about 135 km.):

Triangular, but only 6 Bn.s.
Artillery: 1 light Bn. and 2 heavy Bn.s of 2 batteries each; mobile to a very limited extent. In addition, 3 provisional batteries.
Heavy weapons: Available and in serviceable condition. No Inf. howitzer Co.s.
Antitank defence: 1 Co. 7.5 cm. (tractor-drawn); predominantly only 3.7 and 5-cm. antitank guns.
State of training: Impaired at present owing to current detachments.
Conclusion: Fit for defence.
 - (c) 242nd Inf. Div.: (front about 210 km.): 2-regimental, at present 2 additional security regiments; only partially mobile.
Artillery: 1 light, 1 heavy artillery Bn. of 4 batteries, mobile to a limited extent. In addition, 2 provisional batteries and 3 light and 2 heavy Bn.s provisionally with Italian equipment.
Heavy weapons: Only light mortars and light infantry howitzers.
Antitank defence: 1 antitank Co., 6 7.5-cm. antitank guns.

State of training: Cannot yet be fully estimated, as the division has been put in line only recently.

Conclusion: Fit for defence under special conditions. The same holds true of the 2 security regiments.

- (d) 715th Inf. Div.: (front about 75 km. plus 60 km. AFeldherrnhalle@): 2-regimental. (Organization of a third regiment ordered; proposed to incorporate the third regiment in the 242nd Inf. Div.).

Artillery: 2 light Bn.s; in addition 4 heavy Bn.s provisionally with Italian equipment.

Heavy weapons: Equipment sufficient; no infantry howitzer Co.s.

Antitank defence: Antitank Co. exists.

State of training: Good.

Conclusion: Completely fit for defence; fit for attack missions.

Personnel Components of the Provisional Divisions

Within the unit, 1 to 2 Bn.s of Eastern Front troops. In the German units, with the exception of an average of 20% of class of 25 recently called up or to be called up, only rather old classes beginning 1907 and earlier, including men with 3rd degree frostbite, men unfit for use in the East and up to 8%, men from the German folklist III. Calling up of men of the class of 25 has lowered the average age.

Average age within a provisional division

Bn. commanders:	45 1/4 years
Co. commanders:	35 years
Platoon commanders:	31 years
Noncommissioned officers:	30 years
Men:	30 to 31 years

VII

Equipment in Materiel

Has already been outlined in the estimate of the combat value of the coast defence divisions and the average must be described as being insufficient in artillery, heavy infantry weapons and especially antitank defence. No uniformity of type in the guns; 10 different gun types in the division artillery of one Army! There are numerous captured weapons in some of the coast defence Armies (French, Belgian, Dutch, Polish, Russian and Italian), especially in new organizations there are captured guns of various origin. The Bn.s from the Eastern Front also have some Russian and other weapons.

This situation causes difficulty in ammunitioning and bringing up new supplies. The Commander of the Western Front will use the winter of 1943/44 to attempt to bring about greater uniformity of types

by combining them and shifting supplies wherever it is possible and can be done quickly and without endangering the readiness for defence.

The Commander of the Western Front again directs attention to the special importance of equipping the troops with modern antitank guns, capable of smashing heavy tanks, and of having sufficient armour-piercing ammunition, as well as weapons for close antitank defence. These antitank guns must be completely mobile in order to be able to execute their missions in a major action.

They will be of decisive importance as weapons for the antitank defence in the main zone of resistance.

As far as machine gun equipment is concerned, machine guns models 1908 and 1908/15 do not meet the requirements of modern full-scale warfare. Equipment with machine guns model 1942 is considered necessary.

VIII

Supplies

The supply situation is in general secure under the present circumstances.

Details

1. Ammunition

- (a) Troop supplies: The necessary quota of ammunition has been reached for artillery, motorized guns, antitank guns (only high-explosive shells); for rifles and pistols the quota has almost been reached. The quota has not been reached as far as machine guns, Mauser pistols, heavy infantry weapons, antitank guns (armour-piercing ammunition) and anti-aircraft guns are concerned.

Hand grenades: The required amount has been completely reached in the First Army, Seventh Army, and Netherlands Defence Command, while only about 75% of the quota has been reached in the Fifteenth Army and Nineteenth Army.

Close-quarter antitank weapons: Weapons for close-quarter antitank defence are available only to a limited extent (magnetic antitank hollow charges, 0.7 equipment).

- (b) Supplies of the Commander of the Western Front: The necessary quota for reserve supplies in the army ammunition depots has only been reached as far as ammunition for artillery and chemical projectors is concerned. Ammunition for small arms, including rifle grenades and antitank rifles is available in such small quantities, that it is impossible to

make up shortages or forward supplies to the troops at present. Antitank weapons for close combat are completely lacking.

- (c) Conclusion: Supply of ammunition for machine guns, Mauser pistols, armour-piercing ammunition for antitank guns and antitank weapons for close quarters is insufficient, particularly in view of the fact that sufficient training ammunition is not allotted but has to be taken from the supplies available.

2. Gasoline: Gasoline supply is in general assured. In the area of the Commander of the Western Front a total of 13 VS [unit per 100 km.] is available, including the supplies with the troops. Gasoline allotments for training are still insufficient.
3. Rations: Supply of rations is assured. In general the coast has been supplied with rations for an average time of 8 weeks.
4. Medical equipment and material: Stores are on hand for about 3 months.
5. Veterinary equipment: On hand for about 2 months; farrier's material on hand for about 3 months.

G

Morale of the Troops

As Commanding General of Army Group AD, I am entitled to judge only the morale of the army units in the area under my control.

Despite the fact that this is the fifth year of war, morale and conduct as well as confidence of the troops are gratifyingly good. Of course the terrorising enemy attacks on the homeland are just as depressing for the soldiers concerned here as on other fronts. But here too the observation has been made that very often the soldier is the one who encourages and consoles the people back home.

On my trips I was able to see for myself that the other units of the Army are just as well-disciplined and full of fighting spirit in conduct and morale as my own units; however I do not have the right to judge those other units.

The fact that members of Volkliste III do not always come up to expectations is not always caused by any illwill. In many cases these people are depressed because they are supposed to fight as soldiers in our lines while their families at home apparently are not always treated accordingly. Reports about these cases have been made regularly.

I have accepted the ATurk Bn. in exchange for German battalions for the East in order to have some Amer to show on the thin fronts.

Everything will depend on their reliability, about which we cannot judge yet today. If they prove unsatisfactory, then they will constitute more of a liability than an asset.

I have issued orders as to the way they are to be handled, as it seems to be very important to pay attention to their peculiarities. We have to learn from the British officers and French colonial officers who have had many years of experience in commanding troops of all races and colours.

H

Comparison between 1942 and 1943

I

Situation in 1942

1. Last year the Commander of the Western Front also had to take into account attacks on the Channel and Atlantic from England. Today we know that the enemy was not well enough prepared from a military standpoint to execute this attack in superior force in accordance with his principle Play safe.
2. The following forces were available in the fall of 1942:
 - (a) 22 Inf. Divs. In the coastal front of the Channel and Atlantic. About two-thirds triangular, personnel and material good, training, ditto. A large portion consisted of Aostverwendungsfähige Divisions [divisions suitable for employment on the East Front].
 - (b) Motorized units in reserve: 7 first-class armoured and motorized divisions, all completely mobile and fit for the East.
 - (c) In addition, in reserve: 6 inf. divisions (including 4 triangular divisions).
3. There was no Mediterranean front, and the fighting for Italy, Sardinia and Corsica did not cast its shadow. The fighting was taking place on African soil.

II

Situation in 1943

1. The enemy is in a position to attack from England across the channel at any time. His military preparations have come to a conclusion on the whole. Whether and when he will attack, will depend to a great extent on his political intentions. In comparison with 1942 the situation in the West must also be

considered much more critical in view of the general situation. In 1944 the Commander of the Western Front must expect large-scale attacks on his fronts.

2. On October 31, 1943, the following forces are available:

- (a) 27 divisions on the coast of the Channel, Atlantic and the additional 650 km. of the new Mediterranean front (including 5 reserve divisions, 2 security regiments and 1 grenadier regiment, 715th Inf. Div.).

Many divisions consist of 2 regiments and are very willing and courageous, but not to be compared with the personnel and material of 1942. As new organizations, hardly suitable yet for attack missions, primarily little mobility and much too weak in artillery.

- (b) Motorized units in reserve: 6 armoured and motorized units, none completely organized; Motorized Hitler Youth Division just in its beginning.

Our entire defensive system rests on them! Where they stand at present as far as training and equipment is concerned, is known.

In addition for replacement 3 reserve motorized divisions with small mobile combat teams of 1 reinforced Bn. each.

- (c) In addition, in reserve: 2 reserve divisions as army group reserve with little combat value and small mobile counterattack groups as well as 3 combat teams (reinforced regiments) of the 349th, 352nd, and 353rd Inf. Divisions and the 244th and 245th Inf. Divisions in process of organization.

3. To the former fronts is added in 1943 the entire Mediterranean front of about 650 km. in length. Furthermore the protection of the Alps on the Franco-Italian frontier as far as Switzerland must be mentioned.

J

Forces Detached from the Area of the Commander of the Western Front

Between October 1942 and October 1943 the following divisions were detached, not to mention the numerous and continuous instances of detaching battalions, batteries, personnel fit for the East, certain classes, weapons, ammunition and materiel etc.:

36 inf. divisions (including 2 air force parachute divisions).

12 army armoured divisions.

5 army motorized divisions.

A total of 53 large units. Although some replacements were made in numbers by organizing new units, the essential and decisive fact remains that the value of the Army of the West is considerably lower at present, owing to the endless practice of detaching and selecting and interspersing with battalions from the East. This circumstance must be clearly borne in mind in the event of large-scale Anglo-American landings, which will be effected with the most powerful material means.

I am aware of the fact that in view of the present rather unfavourable situation in the East, nothing can be done to aid the situation in the West.

Therefore one must not be surprised if the enemy makes a large-scale attack employing all the means of power he has available and we are unsuccessful in the defence, despite the Atlantic Wall and the very intensive efforts of troops and the command. To be sure I do not have the general overall view of the entire situation and the deeper knowledge of all the political and military-political connections known probably to the High Command alone.

If the factors known to the Supreme Command indicate that the area in the West is not immediately threatened by an Anglo-American attack, then I must get along with the forces and means considered sufficient by the Supreme Command.

However, if it develops that in the year 1944 the enemy will seek a decision in the West -- and all present indications point that way **B** then everything must be done from now on to increase the defensive power of the units to the maximum and to assemble and prepare the decisive strategic reserves in such a manner that the enemy can be defeated.

At present the state of the personnel and materiel of many divisions as described in section F and above not only lowers the combat value for a possible large-scale battle in the area of the Western Front Command, but also **B** and this even to a higher degree **B** does not come up to the expectations and requirements of the fighting theatres of war, if such divisions must be moved up there, as is often done within a very short time. I have already received reports about the disappointments concerning the state of personnel and materiel when these divisions arrived on the new fronts; which shows that a false concept prevails on these fronts as to the **AWest** divisions.@

K

Interior Situation

The development of the military situation, greatly exploited by effective enemy propaganda, plants the idea in the minds of the population of the occupied western territories more and more that the war can no longer be won by Germany. The developments in Russia interest them primarily as a measure of the German power of resistance and nourish the hope for Germany's collapse. The danger arising from such a collapse for Europe is given hardly any consideration. It is cheerfully welcomed by the communists in France, who are again finding a firm moral support in the activities of the lawful Communist Party.

The mass of the population continues to be passive and outwardly correct as before. However, the activity of the resistance groups in the western territories is steadily on the increase. The resistance movements originally carried on by a few individuals and organized on a small basis in the national as well as the communistic camp, have increased very considerably in the course of the year 1943 in extent, organization and armament. One of the main reasons for this development, according to the unanimous reports of the military and armed forces commanders as well as the Security Service, is the hated idea of being shipped to work in Germany. Most of the objectors resort to illegal action. The native administrative and police authorities exercise passive resistance to a great extent.

The resistance movements in the country are given strong support by a liberal supply with weapons and explosives from England via the air. The effect can already be felt in the rapidly increasing cases of sabotage on installations of traffic and supply as well as other establishments of military importance. (In September 534 cases of railroad sabotage, compared with an average of 130 per month the first half of the year)

Until the present this sabotage is predominantly the work of communist groups. The national resistance movements and the British sabotage organization in the West have instructions to make thorough preparations for actions behind the rear of the German Army to assist the Anglo-American large-scale attack and not to strike upon the rear communications with all available forces until that moment.

In this manoeuvre lies the threat to the interior situation which will assume special importance in the event of a full-scale battle. To be sure, the resistance movements in the West are being fought with all available means and in some instances with great success, but the forces available are limited and those of the enemy are steadily on the increase. The time until spring of 1944 will be utilized to reduce the dangers in rear of the fighting troops to the greatest possible extent by combining all security forces and putting aside all missions of a secondary nature.

It is then of paramount importance to place large numbers of troops in the rear area at the right moment.

L

Conclusions Concerning the Increase of Defensive Power

A sufficient reinforcement of the defensive power of the coastal fronts can only be assured by triangular divisions with sufficient artillery and antitank equipment. In addition, all divisions employed in the coast defence must have sufficient mobility in order to:

- (a) Be able to organize centres of resistance quickly within the division.
- (b) Assure their withdrawal from coastal sectors that have not been attacked and their commitment for attack purposes against areas of main enemy effort.

In this solution **B** triangular divisions, a 3-Bn. artillery regiment, including 1 heavy battalion, sufficient antitank equipment and sufficient supply troops, sufficient mobility **B** I see the vital factors of the coast defence at the front.

Only in this manner will it be possible to constitute really fresh reserves in view of the oversized divisional coast sectors, and effect the training for attack which is absolutely necessary.

From unattacked coastal sectors, divisions can be withdrawn for attacks against points of main effort only if they are in reality sufficiently mobile to be put in line and supplied and are able to fight.

Otherwise in the event of an enemy attack against a single sector of the front a number of urgently needed divisions would lie idle and be absent from the decisive battle for lack of mobility.

Consequently, if the Supreme Command assumes that a decisive large-scale operation of the Anglo-Americans against the West is imminent for the year 1944, then the time has now come to take measures as above described and to prevent every further **Adilution@** of the West units.

The essential point of the coast defence behind the front lies in the assembly of sufficient, completely mobile large-sized motorized reserves capable of striking a blow.

The greater the depth the enemy can reach with strategic objectives behind the back of our coast defence in a future large-scale landing **B** this includes major airborne operations **B** the more will it be necessary to assemble strong mobile units in the depth of the West area. These units must be independent of the railroad net and capable of being quickly assembled and launched as a powerful assault group of decisive importance, either to overwhelm major airborne landing operations, or to annihilate enemy elements that have broken through the main line of resistance into the depth of the main zone of resistance.

Taking the French south coast into account, I consider it necessary to have 9 completely fit armoured and motorized divisions available for the area in the West.

M

Final Conclusion

Conscious of the responsibility vested in me and on the strength of it, I have described the present state of the personnel and materiel of the army troops within the area of my command, true to fact, as I have always done.

The Supreme Command can make correct decisions and take anticipatory measures only if the data submitted are clear and factual.

In section L I have enumerated the requirement for improving the defensive power against major offensive operations of the Anglo-Americans seeking a decision against the heart of Europe.

In the near future everything depends solely on whether or not, on the basis of the total military and political situation, the Supreme Command expects a decisive attack against the area of the Commander of the Western Front.

If it is expected, then it is not only necessary that sufficient large-sized reserves be brought up at the right time so that enemy forces effecting a large-scale landing will be defeated by counterattack, but it is of special importance that the inherent value of the present forces be increased.

Furthermore, behind them a centrally-located army, completely mobile so as to be able to execute the offensive missions assigned to it, must be ready for action in the area of the Commander of the Western Front.

Only units that are inherently firm will possess tenacity in defence and attack against Anglo-American materiel. This toughening requires time and cannot be obtained in a few weeks. Therefore the units, primarily the coast divisions in line, must be allowed some rest. They must not be continuously combed through and subjected to changes in personnel and materiel.

I have already mentioned that the ATurk@battalions will be of assistance only if they hold out; otherwise they will be a burden. It is not possible to form a final opinion at present.

If the Supreme Command does not expect any large-scale attacks in the near future against the area of the Commander of the Western Front, then the units must be accepted as they now are, in view of the situation of the other fronts which are fighting hard.

The army commanders were placed under my command by virtue of Order No. 40 of the Führer for the common defence in the West, and I will continue to make use of all possible measures to bring about a steady improvement of the defence with our own means.

In this endeavour the Commander of the Western Front will be substantially supported by the intelligent cooperation of all authorities of the Army, the Navy and the Air force, as well as by the confidence, good will and the gratifying readiness of all troops to fight.

If the day of the large-scale attack arrives, we shall not hesitate to do everything in our power that can be done with the means then available, down to the last man!

(Signed) von RUNDSTEDT
Commander of the Western Front

Field Marshal General

APPENDIX AC@
to H.S. Report No. 40

Führer Directive No. 51

3 Nov 43

981HC(D27)

The Führer
Armed Forces High Command
Armed forces Operations Staff
Ops No. 662656/43
Top Secret

Führer Headquarters
3 Nov 43
26 copies
Copy No. 22

Directive No. 51

For the last two and one-half years the bitter and costly struggle against Bolshevism has made the utmost demands upon the major part of our military resources and energies. This commitment was in keeping with the seriousness of the danger, and the overall situation. The situation has since changed. The threat from the East remains, but an even greater danger looms in the West **B** the Anglo-American landing! In the East, the vastness of the space will permit, as a last resort, a loss of territory even on a major scale, without inflicting thereby a mortal blow on Germany's chances of survival.

Not so in the West! If the enemy succeeds here in penetrating our defences on a wide front, consequences of staggering proportions will follow within a short time. All signs point to an offensive against the Western Front of Europe no later than spring, and perhaps earlier.

For that reason, I can no longer justify a further weakening of the West in favour of other theatres of war. I have therefore decided to strengthen the defences in the West, particularly at places from which we shall launch our long-range war against England. For those are the very points at which the enemy must and will attack; there -- unless all indications are misleading -- will be fought the decisive invasion battle.

Holding attacks and diversions on other fronts are to be expected. Not even the possibility of a large-scale offensive against Denmark may be excluded. It would pose greater nautical problems and could be less effectively supported from the air, but would nevertheless produce the greatest political and strategic impact if it were to succeed.

During the opening phase of the battle, the entire striking power of the enemy will of necessity be directed against our forces manning the coast. Only an all-out effort in the construction of fortifications, an unsurpassed effort that will enlist all available manpower and physical resources of Germany and the occupied areas, will be able to strengthen our defences along the coasts within the short time that still appears to be left to us.

Stationary weapons (heavy A-Tk guns, immobile tanks to be dug in, coast artillery, shore-defence guns, mines, etc) arriving in Denmark and the occupied West within the near future will be heavily concentrated in points of main defensive effort at the most vulnerable coastal sectors. At the same time, we must take the calculated risk that for the present we may be unable to improve our defences in less threatened sectors.

Should the enemy nevertheless force a landing by concentrating his armed might, he must be hit by the full fury of our counterattack. For the purpose of preventing the enlargement of the beachhead

and of throwing the enemy back into the sea it is important to bring up ample forces and materiel quickly. In order to achieve this the available large formations must be converted by intensive training into fully mobile and high-grade operational reserves fit for assault.

In addition, well-planned emergency measures, prepared down to the last detail, must enable us instantly to throw against the invader every fit man and machine from coastal sectors not under attack and from the home front.

The anticipated strong attacks by air and sea must be relentlessly countered by Air Force and Navy with all their available resources.

I therefore order the following:

A) Army:

1. The Chief of the Army General Staff and the inspector General of Panzer Troops will submit to me as soon as possible a schedule covering arms, tanks, assault guns, motor vehicles, and ammunition to be allocated to the Western Front and Denmark within the next three months. That schedule will conform to the new situation.

The following considerations will be basic:

- a) Sufficient mobility for all panzer and panzer grenadier divisions in the West, and equipment of each of those formations by December 1943 with 93 Mark IV tanks or assault guns, as well as large numbers of anti-tank weapons.

Accelerated conversion of the 20th Luftwaffe Field Division into an effective mobile reserve force, equipped with assault guns, by the end of 1943.

Accelerated issue of all authorized weapons to the SS Panzer Grenadier Division Hitler Jugend,³⁹ the 21st Panzer Division, and the infantry and reserve divisions stationed in Jutland.

- b) Additional shipments of Mark IV tanks, assault guns, and heavy A-Tk guns to the reserve panzer divisions stationed in the West and in Denmark, as well as to the Assault Gun Training Battalion in Denmark.

³⁹ The formation of an SS Division Hitlerjugend was first suggested in February 1943 by Himmler. The immediate organization of SS Pz Gren Div Hitlerjugend (at Camp Beverloo, near Bruxelles) was promulgated on 24 Jun 43. Hitler's order for conversion into a panzer division was passed along the chain of command by the SS Main Operational Department (SS Hauptfuehrungsamt) on 30 Oct 43. (G.M.D.S. B Himmler's Personal files, Footlocker 57, vol 16) (Photostat 981SSPzD12(D1)).

- c) In November and December, monthly allotments of 100 heavy A-Tk guns, models 40 and 43 (half of these to be mobile), in addition to those required for newly activated units in the West and in Denmark.
 - d) Allotment of a large number of weapons (including about 1,000 machine guns) for augmenting the armament of those static divisions committed for coastal defence in the West and in Denmark, and for standardizing the equipment of elements to be withdrawn from sectors not under attack.
 - e) Ample supplies of close combat A-Tk weapons for the formations in threatened areas.
 - f) Improvement of artillery and A-Tk defences in formations stationed in Denmark, as well as those committed for coastal protection in the occupied West. Strengthening of G.H.Q. artillery.
7. Units and formations stationed in the West or in Denmark, as well as panzer, assault gun, and A-Tk units to be activated in the West, must not be transferred to other front without my permission. The Chief of the Army General Staff, or the Inspector General of Panzer Troops will submit to me a report through the Armed Forces Operations Staff as soon as the issue of equipment to the panzer and assault gun battalions, as well as to the A Tk battalions and companies, has been completed.
3. To a greater extent than heretofore, O.B. West will make preparations for the bringing up, according to carefully timed plans, of supporting formations from quiet sectors; these formations to be rendered fit for offensive missions by improvised training, such as war games and command post exercises. In this connection, I demand that sectors not threatened by the enemy be ruthlessly stripped of all forces except small guard detachments. For sectors from which reserves are withdrawn, security and guard detachments must be set aside from security and alarm units. Labour forces drawn largely from the native population must likewise be organized in those sectors, in order to keep open whatever roads might be destroyed by the enemy air force.
4. The Commander of German Troops in Denmark will take measures in the area under his control in compliance with paragraph 3 above.
5. Pursuant to separate orders, the Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of Replacements will form Kampfgruppen in regimental strength, security battalions, and engineer construction battalions from training cadres, trainees, schools, and instruction and convalescent units in the Zone of the Interior. These troops must be ready for shipment on 48 hours notice.

B) Luftwaffe:

The offensive and defensive effectiveness of Luftwaffe formations in the West and in Denmark will be increased to meet the changed situation. To that end, preparations will be made for the release of units suited for commitment in the anti-invasion effort, that is, all flying units and mobile Flak artillery that can be spared from the air defences of the home front, and from schools and training units in the zone of the Interior. All those units are to be earmarked for the West and, if need should arise, for Denmark.

The Luftwaffe ground organization in southern Norway, Denmark, northwestern Germany and the West will be expanded and supplied in a way that will **B** by the most far-reaching decentralization of our own forces **B** deny targets to the enemy bombers, and split up the enemy's offensive effort in case of large-scale operations. This is particularly important for our fighter aircraft. Opportunities for their commitment must be increased by the establishment of numerous advanced landing fields. Special emphasis is to be placed on good camouflage. I also expect that the Luftwaffe will furnish unstintingly all available forces, by stripping them from less threatened areas.

C) Navy:

The Navy will prepare the strongest possible forces suitable for attacking the enemy landing fleets. Coastal defence installations in process of construction will be completed with the utmost speed. The emplacing of additional coastal batteries and the possibility of laying additional flanking mine fields should be investigated.

All school, training, and other shore-based personnel fit for ground combat must be prepared for commitment so that, without undue delay, they can at least be employed as security forces within the zone of the enemy landing operations.

While preparing the reinforcement of the defences in the West, the Navy must keep in mind that it might be called upon to repulse simultaneous enemy landings in Norway and Denmark. In that connection, I attach particular importance to the assembling of numerous U-boats in the northern area. A temporary weakening of U-boat forces in the Atlantic must be risked.

D) SS:

The Reichsführer SS will determine what Waffen SS and police forces he can release for combat, security, and guard duty. He is to make preparations for organizing effective combat and security forces from training, replacement, and convalescent units, as well as schools and other home-front establishments.

E) The commanders-in-chief of the services, the Reichsführer SS, the Chief of the Army General Staff, the Commander-in-Chief West, the Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of the Replacement Army, the Inspector General of Panzer Troops, as well as the Commander of German Troops in Denmark will report to me by 15 Nov all measures taken or planned.

I expect that all agencies will make a supreme effort towards utilizing every moment of the remaining time in preparing for the decisive battle in the West.

All authorities will guard against wasting time and energy in useless jurisdictional squabbles, and will direct all their efforts towards strengthening our defensive and offensive power.

Signed: Adolf Hitler

Salmuth to Rundstedt

25 Dec 43

981A15(D2)

Ref: para 43

C.-in-C. Fifteenth Army
Ops No 0282/43 Top Secret

Army H.Q.
25 Dec 43

By officer only

2 copies
Copy No. 2

Herr Feldmarschall!

Attached I am sending a communication in which I express my views very frankly on the conduct of operations in the event of an enemy landing, and on the development of the Atlantic Wall.

The directives of O.B.West for the conduct of operations, according to O.B.West/Ops No. 635/43 Top Secret, are in my opinion a divergence from the previous basic principle of dealing the enemy a fatal blow at the moment of landing. Rather are they based on the assumption that the enemy will succeed in thrusting through the Atlantic Wall and in forming beachheads. And subsequently it would be the task of the Army Group for Special Employment to attack this enemy advancing from the beachheads, and by attacking him with concentrated forces, throw him back into the sea.

Up to this time a few divisions have been left to the Armies as Army Reserve, or have been newly brought up for the purpose of carrying out with these, local counter-thrusts, or at least of delaying the enemy advance to the interior.

I draw attention to the fact that two of these divisions (352, 353) can only reach Fifteenth Army on X-4 Day -- later that is, than the panzer divisions stationed behind the Army could be committed. The assembling of all forces destined for the Army Group for Special Employment will in my opinion take so long that their commitment as a compact body cannot be reckoned on; rather will the enemy situation force us, before completion of the assembly movement, to throw single elements -- especially panzer divisions -- into the fighting. Thereby the concept of striking with concentrated force is brought to nothing. The enemy will make good use of the breathing space allowed him from the moment of landing up to the time strong elements of our forces can be committed.

He will, with little interference from us, land such strong forces, above all panzer forces, mechanized formations and artillery, that the strength ratio to our operational reserves will not only be equal, but in his favour.

I do not think that we can accept this great risk. Moreover, it must be remembered that the enemy will be given time and opportunity to make full use of his undeniably great air superiority. He will considerably harass and delay the moving up of our large reserve formations, and this again will benefit his massing of forces.

From the above assumptions I draw the following conclusions:

1. The decisive battle in the landing area should be precipitated as quickly as possible.

2. The coastal front should be strengthened.
3. With this in view, the reserves -- also the large formations, including panzer or mechanized formations -- should be held in the sectors which will probably become focal points. The Army must have authority here over this. The formation of the Army Group for Special Employment should not be awaited. A change of authority at the decisive moment of the battle will have unfavourable effects. It might be examined whether the Army Group for Special Employment, whilst remaining under the command of O.B. West, should not immediately be placed in charge of the probable focal centre of the landings (sectors of Fifteenth and Seventh Armies).

The wishes expressed by me in the attached communication are founded -- as explained therein -- on the statements of C. of S. O.B. West regarding reinforcements to be allotted to O.B. West during January. Taking into account the small reserves which O.B. West has at his disposal at the present time, I would not have made this proposal, since I realize that it is not only the zone of Fifteenth Army which has to be protected by O.B. West.

(signed) von SALMUTH

C.-in-C. Fifteenth Army
Ops No 0282/43 Top Secret

Army H.Q.
25 Dec 43

By officer only

2 copies
Copy No. 2

To: O.B.West

- I. According to information obtained from experience reports received here, and from statements of high-ranking officers who have been committed in the South, every effort should be made to destroy the enemy landing force precisely at the moment of the attempted landing -- that is, on the sea or on the beach in front of the main line of resistance -- or by immediate counter-thrusts by reserves waiting close behind the front line.

Should the enemy succeed in forming a beachhead of any size, the longer the interval the more difficult it would become to throw him back into the sea, due to his probable great superiority in tanks, anti-tank weapons and aircraft, and to danger from naval artillery support in the 20 km coastal zone.

From this the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The coast to be occupied more strongly than before.
2. Stretches of coast which cannot be occupied to be provided with broad mixed bands of mines under less close supervision.
3. Reserves to be on hand close behind the front, that can counter-thrust immediately. Tanks must certainly take part.
4. Behind these local reserves in the probable focal sector of the enemy landing a mechanized or armoured group to be held in readiness, which can be committed immediately, should the enemy succeed, despite commitment of local reserves, in establishing a beachhead.

I assume that the enemy, apart from deception manoeuvres at other places on the coast, will attempt his landing on a broad front, approximately in the Dunkirk-Cherbourg sector. He will locate his point of main effort in the Calais area -- on both sides of the mouth of the Somme. We are forcing him to this by installation of the reprisal weapons, which he certainly already knows of.

It follows therefrom, that the measures requested in 1-4 for this sector must be taken.

To what extent this is possible depends on the forces available. But according to the statements made by C. of S. Army Group at the Commanders' Conference on 11 Dec 43, it

appears feasible to still interpolate at least one division in the Fifteenth Army zone, and what is desirable, to push up one division with an armoured or assault gun battalion close behind each of the most threatened divisional sectors -- 156 and 191 Res Divs, 245 Inf Div and 17 Air Force Fd Div. This will ensure that sufficient assault reserves will be immediately available at the probable focal point of the landing.

If this focal point should unexpectedly lie further to one side, the lateral movement must be carried out in the same way as if it had to take place from far back in the rear areas of the O.B. West zone.

I again put forward the proposal -- as already provided for by O.B. West -- that 165 Res Div be committed in place of 19 Air Force Fd Div, in order thereby to free a young division suitable for training in the attack.

Furthermore I request that assignment of strong engineer forces for some considerable time, for the purpose of thoroughly mining both in width and depth the focal sector Calais - the mouth of the Somme.

Finally, I request that drafts of personnel and materiel for all large and small newly organized formations may be completed by 20 Feb at least.

II. I am aware that O.B. West has been making every effort to have labour forces released for the Atlantic Wall, in order that the Führer Order to make it fit for defence by 1 Mar 44 may be carried out.

However, the labour forces that are actually at the disposal of the Army are so small that I am bound to make the following report:

Only a small part of the construction materiel allotted to the Atlantic Wall, especially that for protection of the artillery, the anti-tank guns and the L.A., can actually be used, because the required labour forces are lacking.

Thus the defence potential of the Atlantic Wall does not reach the strength desired by the Führer.

(signed) von SALMUTH

Rundstedt to Salmuth

25 Dec 43

981A15(D2)

Ref: para 44

C.-in-C. West
Ops No 818/43 Top Secret

Army H.Q.
27 Dec 43

By officer only

2 copies
Copy No. 1

To: C.-in-C. Fifteenth Army
Col-Gen von Salmuth

Dear Herr von Salmuth!

I thank you for your letter of 25 Dec 43!

Far be it from me, not to assess the suggestions of responsible Commanders-in-Chief from a purely technical standpoint, and with a view to the general good. You may therefore rest assured that I welcome every suggestion and every proposal, and that I will have their practicability examined.

At the Headquarters of O.B. West too the experiences of the fighting in the South are evaluated from every possible angle, as you will see from Basic Observations of O.B. West No. 28, 25 Dec 43. In the main I am entirely in agreement with you.

Every effort must be made to wreck the enemy landing in its initial stages -- that is, while still on the sea and on the beach before the main line of resistance. With this in view, it is anticipated that the local reserves quartered close behind the front will always have to be committed.

I also agree that, granted the recognized stubbornness of the enemy, especially of the British, and of his strong support from the air, from the sea and from heavy weapons and tanks, the formation of a beachhead of any size must definitely be prevented if possible. This counter-action must take place quickly. Here each side is fighting for time!

In my appreciation of the situation of 28 Oct 43 (O.B. West, Ops No. 550/43 Top Secret) to OKW/WFSt I have reported clearly on the small size of the coastal garrisons, while pointing out the in most cases exceptional width of the divisional sectors, the inadequacy of the permanent construction of the Atlantic Wall, and the too small number of major reserves, above all of mechanized formations really fit for commitment, apart from condition, composition and equipment of individual divisions.

This resulted in Führer Directive 51, which, though not giving us all that is necessary, at least made possible a beginning in that direction.

The large formations at present in and behind the front on the west and south coast of the O.B. West zone, are in my opinion by no means adequate for the conduct of all-out decisive warfare. The major formations especially, with few exceptions, are not yet completely fit for commitment; two of them are really only in the initial stages. This is known to KIW, and here too I am pressing for help or reinforcement. But at the same time I must qualify this by saying that despite all efforts to centre the main

effort in the West, the situation in the East may at any time give rise to strains which may force a withdrawal of forces -- because, in our present situation as regards personnel, there is really no other remedy.

Even though, for known reasons, it may be assumed that there is great probability that Fifteenth Army will be the main target of the enemy, still within the whole area of possible enemy landings, the real focal point cannot as yet be determined definitely. It will only come to light during the course of the landing engagements, in accordance with the enemy's success or lack of success at different points. The area affected by such an invasion may embrace the entire coastal zone, including the mouth of the Schelde to the other side of the Seine Bay and Normandy. The at present still small reserves must therefore, at first, be prepared by their grouping for quick movement and a variety of employment in this whole area.

I have therefore intentionally avoided placing panzer divisions in particular too far forward, in order still to allow an advance from the rear areas, or a lateral movement without too great a sacrifice. Circumstances may change, if -- as OKW foresees -- additional forces, including mechanized formations, are placed at O.B. West's disposal within the next few weeks. I will then place large bodies of troops, including mechanized or armoured formations at the disposal of Fifteenth Army too as operational reserve divisions, and I shall perhaps also be able to strengthen the forces on the coast.

The idea of including the Army Group for Special Employment in the chain of command in good time, that is before the beginning of the great enemy landing, has already been considered here, and the intention is to do this, as soon as the studies of the Army Group for Special Employment ordered by the Führer have been completed. I will then take the necessary steps.

Regarding the probable focal point on both sides of the Somme, I too have no doubts.

The other wishes expressed regarding engineer and labour forces I will deal with later. Everything possible will be done, after the labour question has been clarified in a Führer Conference on 3 Jan 44.

Quite apart from the questions dealt with above, I should like to take this opportunity to make the following request:

Though I fully recognize the responsibility of the Commanders-in-Chief of the Armies within their spheres of command, and though as far as possible I leave them a free hand, I am unable to countenance any detouring of O.B. West in any matter whatsoever regarding personnel or tactics, when approaching OKW, OKH, etc. By virtue of my office I represent the Führer here in the West. Any diviation from official channels will only give rise to misunderstandings and consequent disagreements. I will find an opportunity to again draw the attention of all Army Commanders to this attitude of O.B. West.

With comradely greetings always yours

(signed) von RUNDSTEDT
General Field Marshal

After dispatch:

Ops (E) Copy No. 2

"Foreign Armies West"

Excerpts from Sit Reps

April and May 44

981HC(D30)

Ref: para 53

- 3 Apr Troop movements in England have been completed on the whole as the troops seem to have reached their concentration areas. ---
- 6 Apr No change in the general impression of readiness for taking-off ---
- 9 Apr Several weeks of large scale troop movements have lead to an extraordinary thickening of the forces held in readiness in southern England and in somewhat lesser density in eastern England.
- 10 Apr Demands by the enemy high command for information on German plans for demolition of the harbour area of Le Havre and orders for organized hindrance of these demolitions confirm the opinion that this port lies in the main area of the invasion.
- 16 Apr [Synopsis]
Picture of virtually completed concentrations in England impressively confirmed by reports on military emptiness of London. --- Concrete information on landing date is not available ---
- 18 Apr [Synopsis]
Mail and travel restrictions for diplomatic personnel, and interruption of Air Mail Service to foreign countries emphasize probability of decision having been made for decisive undertaking in near future.
- 20 Apr [Synopsis]
Confirmed picture of dispositions supports previous conclusions to effect main attack to come in area of Eastern Channel ports.
- 29 Apr Regarding the invasion date and the question of bluff a Moscow declaration is significant. [Russia had proclaimed her successes made possible the opening of mighty operations in the West and South of Europe] The section is of the opinion that the Russian High Command attaches considerable value to the opening of the Second Front, as it expects therefrom a good blood-letting affecting the general post-war situation in Europe. It is therefore improbable that the Russians would support a bluff designed to cover actual desistance from invasion.
- 5 May England:

The weather situation for the month of May, reckoned on the basis of comparable values in past years, will probably be retarded about 14 days this year on account of the late spring. Thus, in the opinion of the section -- insofar as can be seen at present -- only after approximately the middle of May can a spell of favourable landing weather be expected. The period of tension which will then set in requires special consideration. ---

The air attacks in the North of France during the past days continued to be centred on the traffic network in the known areas (from the mouth of the Somme to the east side of the Cotentin Peninsula). The comparatively slight effect, even of the heavier attacks, on our coastal batteries is remarkable.
- 13 May England:

The identification by a reasonably reliable source of Eighth American Army Corps in Southeast England -- probably in the Folkestone area -- seems to indicate that besides 25 U.S. Div, already reported in that area, there are one or two other American formations, so far not further identified as to locality. Thus the overall picture shows that, besides the strong Anglo-American fighting force in the Southwest of England, other American divisions will probably be committed from all jumping-off places. The identification of 3 Brit Div in the South of England gives fresh point to the assumed limited assignment of the force stationed in Scotland, in favour of the centre of gravity in the South of England.

13 May

Great Britain:

The focal point of the enemy troop movements is becoming more and more defined as the South and Southeast of the Island. In addition to the but recently identified transfer of 3 Brit Div to the South of England, it is now reliably reported that 47 Brit Div has been moved from NE York to the Portsmouth area.

The picture of the Anglo-Saxon concentrations is highlighted by the following information from Air Force Operations Staff/Intelligence regarding enemy Air Force assembly movements:

- 1.) Identification of nine advanced radio detachments (probably direction-finding stations and sub-stations) on the south coast of England, of which at least two are on flagships, just as they were in the Mediterranean landings.
- 2.) The transfer of an operational headquarters from near York to the Portsmouth area.
- 3.) The probable partial transfer of the commitment area of 9 American Air Fleet from Southwest England to Southeast England.

Enemy serial activity, which has increased by leaps and bounds in occupied western territory since the end of April, is marked primarily by the spread of offensive operations against our defence installations between the mouth of the Seine and Cherbourg, without simultaneous attacks on transport west of the Seine, and the continued sparing of Netherlands territory. Equally deserving of notice is the lively air barrage activity which has been observed since the beginning of May off the South coast of England between Beachy Head and the Mouth of the Thames, and which presumably is for the protection of the assembly area in this district.

Worthy of note is the instruction given in London to the French sabotage detachments at Le Havre, ordering a state of alert after 15 May, but that they should do nothing in Le Havre itself during the "coming actions". It emphasizes the particular value which the enemy leadership attaches to taking over Le Havre in an undamaged condition.

The weather situation is obscure at the moment; the naval authorities (Sk1) judge it to be still favourable in the main for the western part of the Channel, while the central weather bureau describes it as subject to disturbances (störanfälligt). It is therefore doubtful whether the enemy leaders will bring themselves to make the decision to attack at this moment.

23 May

England:

The over-all picture of the enemy distribution of forces in England has developed considerably, by reason of the fact that five additional divisions have been identified within the zone of the South of England group, of which only recently three were transferred from the zone of the Northern and Central England group. Moreover there are indications that more forces (allegedly one or two armoured formations) have been moved from Central to Southern England. It is worthy of note that the Scottish group in particular has been permanently weakened by the withdrawal of approximately four formations in all (3 and 50 Brit Divs, 1 Pol Armd Div and possibly also 52 Brit Inf Div). To sum up therefore, there has been a further substantial increase in the density of forces stationed in the South of England, which gives special emphasis to the existence of the focal point in that region, while the strength of the Scottish group has sunk to a level which now makes operations of any magnitude from this zone unlikely; and the Central England group too is more clearly revealed as an appendage suited only for a task of minor importance. The assumed location of the objective between the Schelde and Brittany remains unchanged thereby; but it emphasizes the need for a particularly sustained German state of alert in the middle and western Channel zone.

Within the framework of the invasion preparations, a recently issued evacuation order to the French population, requiring them to evacuate the large towns immediately, is deserving of notice. Under certain circumstances, the consequences of this might be not inconsiderable. In this connection, attention must be drawn to the extraordinarily bad effect there would be on the French population if the invasion did not take place, and the serious consequences for the Anglo-Saxons; a precedent which at a later date must considerably lessen the readiness for commitment of an otherwise willing section of the populace. Since this must be quite clear to the enemy leaders, it cannot be assumed that these and similar announcements are just bluff.

Also worthy of note at this time are statements in the American press, which hint at the direct transfer of American troops from the USA to France once a bridgehead has been established.

Due to the abnormal weather conditions this year, there has so far been no period of weather of any length favourable for a landing; but it looks as though, from now on until about the end of the month, such a period may be expected.

A report emanating from a good political source is deserving of attention; according to this, the Anglo-Saxon leaders have informed Moscow that they are ready to begin operations, but before the actual invasion, they require that Russia make a statement defining her aims in Western Europe. It is not improbable that the beginning of the invasion is dependent on political considerations.

25 May
Sit Rep

Great Britain:

On 24 May air reconnaissance on the South coast of England from Weymouth-Portland revealed an old French battleship, and a considerable increase in the number of landing craft compared with the last reconnaissance, made on 21 Jan. In Poole, in comparison with the last reconnaissance, made on 12 Aug 43, an increase in the number of landing craft was remarked; in Folkestone and Dover, in comparison with 26 Jul 43, a small increase.

Thus, landing craft tonnage identified since 25 Apr off the South coast of England shows the following troop-carrying capacity:

Southampton-Portsmouth	about 3	landing divisions
Poole-Weymouth-Portland	about 2-1/2	landing divisions
Salcombe-Dartmouth-Brixham	about 2	landing divisions
Plymouth	about 1	landing divisions
Falmouth	about 1-1/2	landing divisions
	in all about 10 landing divisions	

Thus the entire capacity of landing craft and shipping tonnage identified since the end of April amounts to about 16-1/2 landing divisions.

25 May
Estimate

British Zone

The extraordinarily small number of troops quartered near the harbours of eastern Scotland is remarkable, and this, in connection with the transfer of troops from this zone to the South of England, confirms the view (see Brief Enemy Appreciation West, 23 May) that an expedition of any size against Norway from this region is not being planned.

On the other hand, a feeler reconnaissance in the Portland zone (south coast of England) showed an increase in the landing vessel tonnage since 20 Jan of from 80 to 1200 loading units. This reconnaissance result demonstrates afresh the extensive state of preparedness of the landing vessel tonnage on the south coast of England, which already certainly makes the transshipment of

ten landing divisions a possibility, but probably of a still larger force. Transport tonnage is not taken into account.

British Zone

Apart from a fixed tendency to continue reinforcing the Southern area, and a steady movement of shipping tonnage to the Bristol area, no new events of any importance were apparent in England.

According to latest information, 52 Brit Inf Div must be taken to be still in the Scottish zone, in the vicinity of the shipping tonnage which has been allotted to it.

Credible reports of the sounding of a senior British air Force officer in Sweden, who was trying to obtain permission to use Swedish air bases for invasion purposes, can be taken to indicate a planned minor operation in the Scandinavian zone (Southern Norway or Denmark). The dispatch of a force of any size in this direction having an operational objective, is considered unlikely at this time.

29 May
Sit Rep

Great Britain

According to information from various reliable defence sources, strong elements of the British armoured formations hitherto assumed to be in central England have been transferred to the South of England, to Military District Southeast. This refers to the British Guards Armoured Division, elements of which were observed in the Dorking area on their march south, and to 11 Brit Armd Div, which was identified in the vicinity of Worthing. Presumably H.Q. 8 Brit Corps is in the same area (previously Military District North). According to a reliable agent's report, 83 U.S. Inf Div is in the Dover-Deal area. An unidentified American infantry division is now assumed to be in the Norwich area.

29 May
Estimate

British Zone

Over and above the movement of five divisions into the assembly area in the South of England, which has become known during the last 14 days, the transfer is now reported by several reliable sources of at least three more divisions (11 Brit Armd Div, Guards Armd Div and 83 U.S. Div) to south-eastern England, thereby the moving up of the valuable armoured divisions into the zone of the jumping-off harbours deserves particular attention, and indicates heightened preparedness for a take-off.

The forces in central England have thereby been weakened afresh, a circumstance which of late has given rise to the conclusion that the objective of any forces launched from that area is limited.

The rapid increase of enemy air activity in NW France during the last few weeks also merits attention. From all appearances, efforts are being concentrated on disrupting our mobility behind the Channel front (the Seine bridges) and in a north-south direction (Angers, Tours, Orleans). In this too is seen a merging into the final phase of invasion preparations.

In this connection also the air attacks against our airfields in the South of France are worthy of attention.

O.B. West

Order of Battle

15 Apr, 15 May, 15 Jun 44

981.045(D1)

Ref: para 60

Army Group B

Measures for improving Defences

981SOM(D94)

Ref: para 67

(Quoted in full)

IV. Lessons from African and Italian Campaigns Applied by A Gp B

74. One of the techniques that soon found practical application in the western defence system was the construction of tree-trunk palisades, partially mined, along sectors of the coast in danger of sea and air landings. They were placed in front of the MLR (the shore line at high tide) and were visible at low tide, under water at high tide. There was, of course, no guarantee that the posts would stand up under a rough sea, and trials with heavy flat barges proved that the posts could be pushed aside. Nevertheless they had a deterring and - seen as a whole - perhaps terrifying effect. Behind the coastal front, areas particularly susceptible to air landings were likewise thickly interlaced with posts. This could, of course, be done only in certain limited areas because the required lumber and transportation were both exceedingly scarce and also because labour forces were inadequate. Evidence of the practical value of this technique is not available, but it can be assumed that the enemy determined the location and extent of these obstacles by aerial reconnaissance and modified his tactics accordingly.

75. Another A Gp B technique was to increase tremendously the laying of mines in front of, behind, and around the strongpoints and especially the unoccupied areas. A Gp B's request for the delivery of at least ten million mines a month could not be even remotely complied with. Still, the mine-laying program was stepped up feverishly and much was achieved. In this program also, the sector of main effort (channel Coast) received primary consideration. In conjunction with the increase in mine-laying, the construction and camouflage of defence installations was furthered. There is no doubt that A Gp B accomplished a very great deal in these matters, but the troops were completely exhausted by the terrific amount of labour they had to do and they consequently received very little or no training.

76. A third technique was the flooding or soaking of extensive areas in order to conserve forces, render terrain impassable, and bring about a frightening effect. Out of consideration for the civilian population and its food problem, O.B. West did not want to adopt these measures, particularly that of flooding the land with sea water. OKW heard of these proposals of Rommel, liked them, and ordered that fresh water be dammed up in the region southeast of Dunkirk-Calais, while additional fresh-water floodings of a more or less local nature were undertaken in the Somme low-land just behind the coast, utilizing some lagoon-like depression there. The same thing was done in Normandy, where the swamp areas were utilized, and the landward fronts of fortresses were flooded as a reinforcement of the anti-tank obstacles. In Holland, careful preparations of flooding the low islands as well as the so-called Polder area around the IJsselmeer were begun. O.B. West opposed also this measure because it felt that the harm to the food supply outweighed the tactical advantages. Here again, however, OKW later gave the order indicated. Whether and to what extent this technique of flooding actually handicapped the enemy, is uncertain. In this case, too, air reconnaissance must have furnished

definite information to enable the enemy to draw his own conclusions and take the necessary countermeasures.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Pt 6 of 24 pts of MS # B-718, Lt Gen Speidel:

Field Marshal Rommel was the first to encourage practical training by personally conducting field exercises. His untiring activity disturbed the quiet which had hitherto prevailed in the West. The technical side of the defence preparations and of the ideas of Marshal Rommel are discussed in Admiral Ruge's report, MS # A-982.

O.B. West

Chain of Command

981SOM(D94)

Ref: para 70