

REPORT NO. 54

HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)  
ARMY HEADQUARTERS

Canadian Participation in the Operations in North-West Europe, 1944.

Part I: The Assault and Subsequent Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 6-30 Jun 44.

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R E P O R T N O. 54

HISTORICAL SECTION (G S.)

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

30 Jun 52

Canadian Participation in the Operations  
In North-West Europe, 1944

Part I: The Assault and Subsequent Operations of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde,  
6-30 Jun 44.

1. C.M.H.Q. Report 131 is a preliminary account of the operations of Canadian formations during the campaign in Normandy from the assault on 6 Jun 44 to First Cdn Army's assumption of responsibility for the Caen sector on 31 Jul 44. C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147 is the first of a series of two dealing with the same operations in greater detail and on the basis of a more thorough examination of sources. The period covered is from 6 Jun 44 to 30 Jun 44. The second of the series Report No. 162, considers operations during July 1944.

2. This Report is similar in scope to C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147. It is strictly an account of operations in June 1944. Its starting point is the plan of Operation "OVERLORD"; it does not attempt to describe fully the planning—the very lengthy and complicated preliminaries of the operation which have been dealt with in Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 42, The Preliminary Planning for Operation "OVERLORD": Some Aspects of the Preparations for an Allied Re-entry to North-West Europe, 1940-44. The purpose of this present Report is to expand and 'modernize' Report No. 147 by utilizing the wealth of new material pertaining to operations in North-West Europe which has been written or made available since December 1945. At the same time, certain sections in Report No. 147 which continue to be historically valid—and there are many—will be incorporated in this Report where suitable.

3. For Canada and the Canadian Army, the operations in North-West Europe have a special significance. Over a long period, it will be recalled, the Canadian Army Overseas was denied action against the enemy, its role being limited to what might be termed "garrison duty" in the British Isles. Apart from the raid on Dieppe, (19 Aug 42), Canadian Military forces in the European theatre had no opportunity for large-scale operations until the despatch of 1 Cdn Div and 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde to the Mediterranean for the attack on Sicily in July 1943. This was followed by the concentration in that theatre of a Canadian Corps of two divisions (1 Cdn Corps, comprising 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div), which subsequently distinguished itself in operations on the Italian mainland. Even after 1 Cdn Corps was so committed, however, the greater part of the available Canadian force (including H.Q. First Cdn Army, H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde) still

remained in Britain. Not until Operation “OVERLORD” was well underway did the entire Canadian Army Overseas come to grips with the enemy.

4. It is with the actions of the Canadians in Normandy that this Report is primarily concerned. But it would be most inadequate to consider their important but relatively small contribution as divorced from the general course of events, for to ignore the broad pattern would be to miss the significance of the whole great enterprise. The operations here treated can certainly be said to mark the opening of the final phase of the war in Europe. They represent the return of Allied forces to the French mainland from which British armed forces were driven in the summer of 1940.

5. For this reason, the method followed in the preparation of this Report has always been to keep in sight the progress of events generally so as to provide the background against which Canadian participation may be viewed in its proper perspective. Conversely, detailed accounts of the actions of Canadians will serve, where applicable, to illustrate experiences shared by all members of the Allied Expeditionary Force.

#### THE ALLIED PLAN FOR “OVERLORD” AND “NEPTUNE”

6. The general reduction in 1942 and 1943 of Germany’s farther outposts, both in Russia and the Mediterranean area, and the increased compression of the enemy into a central stronghold – “Festung Europa” – brought about a new situation in the war: the opportunity to achieve the “defeat of Germany by means of heavy and concerted assaults upon German-occupied Europe from the United Kingdom, the Mediterranean and Russia” ((HS) 212B2.016 (DI): Second British Army Operation Order No. 1, Operation “NEPTUNE”, 21 Apr 44). In 1943 the “fortress” was already beset from the East and South; it still remained to commence operations from the West and so complete the triple series of assaults which should result in its final investment and collapse.

7. Although the requirement was easily stated, i.e., the establishment of a third theatre of operations, its realization was far from simple. The task of penetrating a strongly –defended coastline presented an enormously complicated problem; undue haste in arriving at a solution might prove disastrous to the whole enterprise. Report No. 42 outlines the differences of opinion held by the Allied leaders regarding the early opening of a ‘Second Front’. Briefly these may be summarized as follows: Russia, together with a large segment of public opinion in the Allied countries, demanded constantly that Great Britain and the United States should launch an attack on North-West Europe at the earliest possible moment to force a German withdrawal of 30 to 40 divisions from the Eastern Front and so relieve the hard pressed Russian armies. The United States’ leaders appreciated Russia’s position and were fearful lest the Russian armies be defeated, or, worse still, that Russia might make a separate peace with Germany. Nevertheless, if the Americans were agreed upon the object to be achieved, counsel as to the method to be employed was not undivided. Many believed that the Russian demands should be met at once if only to the extent of securing a restricted lodgement on the coast of France by an Anglo-American army. But others, despite their impatience, could not ignore Britain’s advice to be cautious, especially with her extensive experience in combined operations.



Moreover, American commitments in the Pacific and the physical limitations of even American productive power were factors which had to be considered by service as well as diplomatic officials no matter what opinion they held regarding the immediacy of a cross-Channel attack. The United Kingdom, although planning for a return to the continent since Dunkirk, was loath to attempt an invasion of North-West Europe until Anglo-American naval, military and air strength was such as to ensure a successful and decisive blow at the German armies in the West. The experience of Dieppe had made Great Britain more cautious by indicating, among other things, the need to develop new assault techniques and to prepare an overwhelming fire plan. To the island nation the construction and assembling of a great number and variety of assault craft was a very grave problem at a time when all shipping was short and the demands for it were high. Moreover, Prime Minister Churchill believed that the Mediterranean life-line should be completely under Allied control prior to launching an attack on the main bastions of "Festung Europa".

8. Despite the preoccupation of British and American military leaders in the Mediterranean theatre during the latter part of 1942 and 1943, plans were being laid and preparations were underway for the eventual invasion of North-West France. The early detailed planning for such an operation had been carried out by the Joint Planning Staff, Combined Operations Headquarters, and a high-level group known as the "Combined Commanders". Later, planning for the invasion of Europe was centralized in the hands of a British officer, Lieutenant-General F.E. Morgan, B.C., as Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC). A joint British-American planning staff commenced its work, under General Morgan's direction, in April 1943, and an outline plan was produced in July. This plan (C.O.S. (43)416(0): Operation "OVERLORD", Report and Appreciation, 30 July 43) reduced the possible target areas for the invasion to three: the Pas de Calais, the Caen sector and the Cotentin Peninsula. As a result of the limitations imposed by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the "TRIDENT" Conference (See Report No. 42, paras 237 ff), the COSSAC committee chose the Caen sector alone upon which it was proposed to launch a three-division assault. A simultaneous landing in the Cotentin, favoured by COSSAC if the resources were available (See Lt-Gen Sir Frederick Morgan, Overture to Overload (London, 1950), pp 152-3) was ruled out—mainly because of lack of shipping, but partly because too great a dispersal of forces might lead to defeat in detail. It was this plan for the attack on Caen only which was approved at the Quebec Conference in August 1943.

9. The plan, however, was destined to undergo certain alterations. The possibility of broadening and strengthening the assault had been suggested by Mr. Churchill at the first Quebec Conference. General Eisenhower and General Montgomery relate that when they first saw the plan late in 1943, their immediate reaction was to emphasize the need for a greater force than three divisions to pierce the Atlantic Wall. (Field Marshal Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic (London, 1946), p. 7; Morgan, op cit, p. 10; General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force, 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945 (Washington, 1946), p. 3) Thus when both men returned to the United Kingdom early in 1944 as Commander-in-Chief of the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group and

Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, respectively, it was decided to revise the COSSAC plan for “OVERLORD” so as to mount the operation in greater strength and on a wider front (See Report No. 42, “The Organization of SHAEF and Final Changes in the ‘OVERLORD’ Plan” for further details on this revision).

10. The revision of the COSSAC plan was discussed at two meetings which the Supreme Commander held with his Commanders-in-Chief at Norfolk House, London, on 21 Jan 44. At these meetings agreement was reached on a Revised Outline Plan which, under the title of the Initial Joint Plan, was issued on 1 Feb 44 as a directive by General Montgomery, K.C.B., D.S.O., to the commanders of First Canadian Army so as “to provide a basis for planning by subordinate commanders”. The Initial Joint Plan ((HS) 219c1.009(d329): Initial Joint Plan for Operation “NEPTUNE”) contains the final plans for the assault and amply repays close study.

11. Before turning to the plan, it is necessary to explain the use of the two code names bestowed on it. The military operations which was to be launched in Western Europe was known as “OVERLORD”. But “OVERLORD” presupposed penetration of the defended coast. This preliminary phase was termed “NEPTUNE”. The distinction in terms is explicitly stated in the Naval Report of the Operation: “Operation ‘NEPTUNE’ was the assault phase of the invasion of North-West Europe”. ((HS) 952A.013(D3): Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, Expeditionary Force, on Operation “NEPTUNE”, British Admiralty Publication CB04385B). It is likewise to be inferred from the carefully worded ‘Intentions’ in operations orders.

12. Consideration of the operation may properly commence with the definition of its object given in the Initial Joint Plan:

The object of ‘NEPTUNE’ is to secure a lodgement on the Continent from which further offensive operations can be developed. It is not an isolated operation, but is part of a large strategic plan designed to bring about the total defeat of Germany by means of heavy and concerted assaults upon German-occupied Europe from the United Kingdom, the Mediterranean and Russia.

13. In the execution of the plan a primary principle was to be followed: equal British and U.S. participation in the initial stages. The whole assault area, between Ouistreham and Varreville in the Bay of the Seine, was divided into a Western and Eastern half, the former being the responsibility of the U.S. forces (commanded by Lt-Gen Omar N. Bradley) and the latter the responsibility of the British (including Canadian) forces (command by Lt-Gen M.C. Dempsey, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.). The entire Allied operation was directed by General (later General of the Army) Dwight D. Eisenhower, U.S. Army, formerly Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, whose appointment as Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, was announced on Christmas Eve, 1943. Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, G.C.B., was appointed Deputy Supreme Commander. Under the Supreme Commander, and exercising their command jointly, there were initially three commanders: Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, K.C.B., K.B.E., M.V.O., Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, Expeditionary

Force; General (later Field-Marshal) Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Air Force. General Montgomery's appointment was announced at the time merely as commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group; the fact that this included command of all land forces for the assault phase was revealed only after D Day. It may be noted here too that, although initially the operation was to represent an approximate Anglo-American balance, with all military forces under 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group, that balance was to shift steadily at a later date towards heavy U.S. preponderance on the Western Front as increasing numbers of American troops poured into Normandy.

14. Inasmuch as "NEPTUNE" represented a combined undertaking by all services under British and American command, it is difficult to isolate for separate consideration the roles to be played by the Navy, Army and Air Force. Nevertheless, these components must be dealt with separately, at least in general terms, if the method of execution is to be clearly understood.

A. Naval Plan

15. The immense scope of the Navy's share in this vast operation cannot be over-emphasized.

The naval problem that had to be faced can be briefly summarized as first the breaking of the strong initial crust of the coast defences by assault together with the landing of the fighting army formations; and secondly to commence, and continue without a pause for five or six weeks, their reinforcement at as high a rate as possible. The first required the co-ordination of the movement of thousands of ships and landing craft and aircraft and then of their fire power, the second the co-ordination of the activities of hundreds of thousands of men and women of all services, both in the United Kingdom and off the French coast, marshalling, loading, sailing, unloading and returning at least eight ship convoys a day in addition to ten or twelve landing craft groups.

((HS) 022.011 (D26): Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, The Assault Phase of the Normandy Landings (Supplement to the London Gazette), 30 Oct 47, p. 5110)

16. Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay had been appointed Allied Naval Commander, Expeditionary Force, on 25 Oct 43 (Ibid). His "first experience of moving great numbers of troops overseas in the face of the worst that a determined enemy could do was the extrication of the British Expeditionary Force ... from Dunkirk in the dark days of 1940" (Commander Kenneth Edwards, The Royal Navy and Allies (London, 1946), p. 132). Later he participated in the naval planning of the invasion of North Africa and Sicily. No attempt can be made here to expand on the tremendous problems which attended the launching of "what is acknowledged to be the greatest amphibious operation in history" (Ramsay, op cit, p. 5110). Yet some idea of the vast preparations may be imagined when one remembers that the invasion of Normandy involved over 5000 ships

and crafts, and demanded the full use, over a long period, “of every shipping berth in the United Kingdom from London, all round the south coast to Milford Haven ...” (Edwards, *op cit*, p. 138). Indeed it was no exaggeration to say “that the requirements of the invasion of Normandy impinged upon the private lives of every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom ...” (Commander Kenneth Edwards, Operation Neptune (London, 1946), p. 69).

17. The entire Allied Naval Force was divided into two task forces: Western Task Force, commanded by Rear Admiral A.G. Kirk, U.S.N., which was affiliated to the First U.S. Army; and Eastern Task Force, commanded by Rear Admiral Sir Philip L. Vian, K.B.E., D.S.O. and two bars, R.N. (an officer, who, incidentally, had been associated with Canadian military forces in both the Spitsbergen and Sicilian enterprises), and affiliated to Second British Army. Each task force was in turn divided into Naval Assault Forces, each of which carried one assault division. Thus the U.S. (Western) Task Force was divided into Assault Forces “U” and “O”. In addition there was Force “B” which transported the immediate follow-up troops within the First U.S. Army. A similar internal organization of assault and follow-up forces existed in the British (Eastern) Task Force comprising Assault Forces “G”, “J” and “S” and Follow-up Force “L”.<sup>1</sup> (See Appendix “A”).

18. The Canadian assault formations of the Second British Army (3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde) were assigned to the craft of Force “J”. Since this force is of special interest to the Canadian historian, some space can be given to a description of its primary functions as outlined by its commander (Commodore J. Hughes-Hallett D.S.O., R.N.),<sup>2</sup> in a memorandum dated 12 Sep 43.

Force “J” is a Naval Assault Force designed for an eventual lift of one military division at assault scales. It is divided into three Naval Assault Groups, which are known as “J.1”, “J.2 and J.3”, each of which is intended to carry one military brigade at assault scales. In addition a fourth unit is to be attached to Force “J” which will be known as “J.4”. This will be an administrative unit comprising twelve tactically independent Naval units, trained and organized so that each can carry one Commando.

((HS) 239C3. (D17): 3 Cdn Ind Div file 3CD/4-3-11, Force “J”).

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<sup>1</sup> The outline plan prepared by General Morgan (COSSAC) in July 1943 envisaged an assaulting force of only three divisions; Assault Forces “U” and “G” were added to Admiral Ramsay’s command after it was decided to increase the number of assaulting divisions to five early in 1944. Of the original COSSAC plan Admiral Ramsay remarks: “Its soundness was proved later in detailed planning as in no respect were its fundamentals altered, though its scope and range were extended”. (Ramsay, *opcit*, p. 5110).

<sup>2</sup> Naval commander on Dieppe Raid (19 Aug 42); he was afterwards closely identified with pre-invasion planning and with amphibious training in which the Canadian assault force participated.

19. Force “J” like the other Naval Assault Forces assembled for “NEPTUNE”, comprised, in Mr. Churchill’s words, “a mass of wonderful craft of all kinds”. (The Times, (London), 3 Aug 44) developed from the experience of previous assault landings.<sup>3</sup> These consisted principally of landing ships and craft of various specialized types, ranging in size from the Landing Ship Headquarters, H.M.S. HILARY (an ex-merchant ship converted to serve as Headquarters ship for the Force and Divisional Commanders), to the diminutive Landing Craft Assault, carried in Landing Ships Infantry and each capable of landing thirty fully equipped soldiers.<sup>4</sup> But it must be borne in mind that since certain divisions were to launch only one assault brigade, these had a correspondingly smaller number of L.C.A. and support craft. Of the three assault forces of Eastern Task Force, Force “J” was by far the oldest, having been formed 18 months before the assault. By D Day, Force “S” had been in existence for 7 months, and Force “G” only 2 ½ months (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief . . ., op cit, Vol II, Report by the Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force).

20. The craft and shifts which went to make up Force “J” were assembled in the Portsmouth-Southampton area on England’s southern coast. When D Day arrived, they would pass over the hundred miles of water separating England from the Bay of the Seine, “a sea route with a major German naval base on either flank – Le Havre to the east and Cherbourg to the west” (Edwards, Operation Neptune, p. 42). On passage through the German mine barrier and along the inner routes to the assault anchorages, Force “J” would be confined to two of ten narrow lanes cleared by minesweepers proceeding ahead of the assaulting forces. “They would have to move at set times and speeds in rigidly appointed order to exactly defined positions off the coast; and the very immensity of the operation created perils of corresponding magnitude” (Joseph Schull, The Far Distant Ships (Ottawa, 1950), p. 243). Moreover, the danger was not confined to the invasion armada becoming entangled in the German mine-fields, for, aside from over 100 submarines, “the enemy had still available to him, within striking distance of what was to become the cross-Channel highway for Neptune, some 230 vessels” (Ibid, p. 244).

21. The Naval Commander-in-Chief, besides being responsible for the “safe and timely arrival of the assault forces at their beaches”, was charged with “the cover of their landings” ((HS, 952A.013(D2): Gunnery Review Normandy Bombardment Experience, p. 1). For this purpose a great naval striking force was assembled so that “seven battleships, twenty-three cruisers and one hundred and four destroyers, together with monitors, gun-boats and rocket-firing ships would pour their fire upon the concrete emplacements and batteries hidden . . . along the [French] coast”<sup>5</sup> (Schull, op cit, p. 241).

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<sup>3</sup> A description of the various craft in Force “J” is attached as Appendix “B”.

<sup>4</sup> For specifications and photographs of all types of landing ships and craft see (HS) 952A.013(1): Details of Combined Operations, Landing Craft and Barges, and (HS) 952A.013(D4): Details of Combined Operations, Landing Ships. These are British Admiralty publications C.B. 04305 and C.B. 04304 (June 1944).

<sup>5</sup> This figure does not include those ships engaged in protecting the flanks of the cross-Channel route of the invasion fleet against enemy submarine and surface attack, nor those warships engaged in such tasks as convoying the Mulberries to a position off the French coast.

Supporting Force “J”, and thus the Canadian assault troops, were the cruisers Belfast and Diadem (Bombarding Force “E”) Fleet Class destroyers, Kempfenfelt, Venus, Vigilant, Faulkner, Fury, Algonquin, and Sioux; and Hunt Class destroyers La Combattante, Bleasdale, Glaisdale and Stevenstone, (Gunnery Review). In addition there were numerous specialized support craft mounting various armaments designed to give close support to the assaulting troops (See Appendix “B”, Ships and Craft of Force “J”). More will be said of these craft below in connection with the assault fire plan.

22. The third responsibility of the Naval Commander-in-Chief was “the support and maintenance and the rapid build-up of our forces ashore” (Ibid). Providing a steady and uninterrupted flow of men, material, ammunition and stores to the beached involved a convoy system equal in complexity to that demanded by the assault and follow-up phases. The planning to achieve this object involved the co-ordination of the activities of all three Services for a long time ahead of D Day and for months thereafter. Special organizations were formed to assure the minimum of delay and maximum of efficiency in handling both ships and cargoes. Control of the whole process of build-up was to be exercised by three interrelated bodies:

- a. Build-up Control Organization (“BUCO”), forming part of 21 Army Group General Staff and Administrative Staff, with a Second Army Staff attached to it. This staff gives the General Staff and Administrative Staff policy and priorities to War Office Movements Staff.
- b. War Office Movements, who implement the policy and instructions given by “BUCO” insofar as moves, embarkation and loading in the United Kingdom is concerned.
- c. Turn-Round Control Organization (“TURCO”), which is a Naval organization responsible for the quick turn-round of heavy craft and ships.

(Second Army 0.0. No. 1)

23. A naval writer explains two of the above organizations in more simple terms:

Both “BUCO” and “TURCO” were keyed to the same object—reducing to the minimum, and if possible eradicating, any delay of ships; which is in effect the same thing as economizing of shipping space. But, while “TURCO” dealt with the routing of ships to and from ports where berths were immediately available, the marshalling of the ships into convoys, and clearing unloaded ships from the beachhead area as quickly as possible; “BUCO” dealt with the more involved problems of co-ordinating all available shipping with the needs of the military authorities.

(Edwards, Operation Neptune, p. 78.)

In brief, the plan was to ‘build a bridge to France’ via the naval convoy system in order to ensure the successful build-up of the bridgehead.

24. The part played by the Royal Canadian Navy “NEPTUNE” was a most important one, embracing a share in each of the naval assignments referred to above. (CF (HS) 122.013 (D1): R.C.N., The Royal Canadian Navy’s Part in the Invasion) Force “J” included two Canadian Landing Ships Infantry (Medium) – Prince Henry and Prince David. These ships, with their attached flotillas of Landing Craft Assault (also manned by Canadian personnel) joined the force early in 1944. The Commanding Officer of Prince Henry, Captain V.S. Godfrey, R.C.N., was shortly appointed Senior Officer of the ten L.S.I. of Assault Group “J.1”. Three Canadian Flotillas of Landing Craft Infantry (Large) were likewise assigned to Naval Assault Forces. Of these, two were in Force “J” and one in Force “G”. Among the minesweepers charged with the hazardous task of sweeping ten approach lanes through the assault area and forming a safe anchorage in the vicinity of the beaches were sixteen Canadian ships. Covering and support forces included four Canadian Tribal Class destroyers and Canadian escort groups of destroyers, frigates and corvettes. Finally, two Fleet Class destroyers, H.M.C. Ships ALGONQUIN and SIOUX, formed part of the bombarding force attached, appropriately, to Force “J” (Ibid).

## B Army Plan

25. As already mentioned (supra, para 13), the military role in “OVERLORD” was to be carried out by First U.S. Army under Lt-Gen Omar N. Bradley, and by Second British Army under Lt-Gen M.C. Dempsey, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., both initially under the command of 21 Army Group. Each of these armies was to launch its assault on a two-corps front, with a total of five divisions making the opening seaborne attack against the German West Wall. In First U.S. Army, the assault was to be made by VII U.S. Corps with 4 U.S. Inf Div near Varreville, and V U.S. Corps with a composite division (1 and 29 U.S. Inf Divs) near St. Laurent. Second British Army was to carry out its assault between Port-en-Bessin and the River Orne in the following manner: by 30 Corps with 50 (N) Inf Div at Asnelles; and by 1 Corps with 3 Cdn Inf Div at Courseulles and with 3 Brit Inf Div at Ouistreham.

26. Besides the American Ranger and British Commando units supporting the assault by the infantry divisions from the sea, strong airborne forces were to be dropped inland on both the American and British flanks. Troops of 82 and 101 U.S. Airborne Divs were to land, by parachute and glider, in the Cotentin Peninsula prior to H Hour (defined as “the time at which the first wave of landing craft should hit the beach” (Initial Joint Plan)) with the task of aiding the amphibious assault and of preventing the movement of enemy reserve into First U.S. Army sector. Men of the 6<sup>th</sup> British Airborne Division (including 1 Cdn Para Bn) were to begin to land before H Hour along and to the east of the Orne and thus secure the left flank of 1 Corps. Those areas lying between the assault beaches were to be cleared by Commandos and Rangers.

27. Using the method contained in the “Proposed British World-Wide System of Beachmarking”, the entire enemy coastline from the eastern side of the Cotentin Peninsula to the mouth of the River Orne was divided into lettered sectors, each having within its limits two or three beaches designated by the colours “Green”, “White” and “Red”.<sup>6</sup> The portion affecting Second British Army, from Port-en-Bessin to Ouistreham, contained sectors “How” to “Roger”. The area allotted to each Naval Assault Force consisted of three or more sectors. Each such area was given a code name corresponding to the name of the force: “Gold” for Force “G”, (50(N) Inf Div); “Juno” for Force “J”, (3 Cdn Inf Div); and “Sword” for Force “S”, (3 Brit Inf Div).<sup>7</sup> An additional area east of the Orne, designated “Band”, contained coastal batteries which were to be attacked by Commandos. Within Second Army the particular beach sectors through which the assaulting divisions were to pass were as follows:

JIG and KING sectors -- 50 (N) Inf Div  
MIKE and NAN sectors -- 3 Cdn Inf Div  
QUEEN sector -- 3 Brit Inf Div

28. The tasks:

- a. to capture Cherbourg as quickly as possible.
- b. to develop the Vierville-sur-Mer—Colleville-sur-Mer beachhead southwards towards St. Lo in conformity with the advance of the Second British Army.

(Initial Joint Plan).

General Bradley has given a more graphic picture of these tasks.

After gaining a toe-hold on the Normandy shore, First Army was to knit Omaha and Utah together and make contact with Dempsey on its left. Then while First Army cut the Cotentin peninsula to forestall enemy reinforcement of Cherbourg and thereafter capture that port, the British Second Army was to seize the road centre at Caen on D Day and expand its beachhead towards the flat tablelands beyond that city. The American forces would then pivot on the British position like a windlass in the direction of Paris. As we whipped our line first to the south and then east, we would isolate the Brittany peninsula with its enemy-garrisoned ports. Third Army would then advance into Brittany to clean up that peninsula.

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<sup>6</sup> This system of assault areas is illustrated graphically by the map at Appendix “F”.

<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in the American sector, “Omaha” for Force “O” (4 U.S. Inf Div) and “Utah” for Force “U” (1 U.S. Inf Div).



During our battle for Normandy, the British and Canadian Armies were to decoy the enemy reserves and draw them to their front on the extreme eastern edge of the Allied beachhead. Thus, while Monty taunted the enemy at Caen, we were to make our break on the long roundabout road toward Paris.

(General Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York, 1951), pp 239-40).

29. Following the assault, the object of the Second Army was “to secure and develop a bridgehead south of the line Caumont-Caen and SE of Caen in order to secure airfield sites and protect the flank of First U.S. Army while the latter captures Cherbourg and the Brittany ports” (Second Army O.O. No. 1). A preliminary outline plan was even more explicit: “There is n intention of carrying out a major advance until the Brittany ports have been captured” ((HS) 215b2.016 (D5): Second British Army Outline Plan, 21 Feb 44). Field Marshal Montgomery has described the plan to secure the lodgement area as follows:

The intention for operation Overlord was to assault, simultaneously, beaches on the Normandy coast immediately north of the Carentan estuary and the River Orne, with the object of securing as a base for further operations a lodgement area which was to include airfield sites, the port of Cherbourg and the ports of Brittany.

.....

Once ashore and firmly established, my plan was to threaten to break out of the initial bridgehead on the eastern flank—that is, in the Caen sector. I intended by means of this threat to draw the main enemy reserves into that sector, to fight them there and keep them there, using the British and Canadian Armies for the purpose. Having got the main enemy reserves committed on the eastern flank, my plan was to make the breakout on the western flank, using for this task the American armies under General Bradley, and to pivot the whole front on Caen. The American break-out thrust was to be delivered southwards down to the Loire and then to be developed eastwards in a wide sweep up to the Seine, about Paris. This movement was designed to cut off all the enemy forces south of the Seine, over which river the bridges were to be destroyed by air action.

(Montgomery, op cit, pp. 15-16.)

30. The method by which Second British Army was to achieve this object can now be described in greater detail. Operation “NEPTUNE” was to be carried out by Second Army in four major phases by “advancing by bounds from firm base to firm base”. (Second Army O.O. No. 1).

31. Phase I, The Assault. Launching its assaults through the sectors defined above (para 27), Second Army was to secure on D Day a firm base along the line Bayeux-Caen, in front of which an armoured force could operate with the object of seizing Villers-Bocage and Evrecy. On the right, 50 (N) Inf Div<sup>8</sup> with 8 Armd Bde, after assaulting the beach defences in the area of Asnelles, was to capture Bayeux and establish a firm position along the line Bayeux—putot-en-Bessin. 3 Cdn Inf Div, with 2 Cdn Armd Bde under command, attacking the beaches astride the mouth of the River Soules, was to advance inland and take up a covering position roughly including Putot-en-Bessin and the Carpiquet airfield area. 3 Brit Inf Div, with 27 Armd Bde, was to assault west of Ouistreham and capture Caen. 6 Airborne Div on the left flank was to attack coastal installations east of Ouistreham and secure crossings over the River Orne at Benouville and Ranville. Phase I was to be the responsibility of the assault divisions and their attached troops.

32. Phase II. The swift landing of the follow-up troops (carried in Naval Force “L”) meant that both 30 Corps and 1 Corps would be greatly increased in strength in readiness to carry out subsequent phases. Thus, within 30 Corps, 7 Armd Div and 49 (WR) Inf Div should soon be available; similarly, in 1 Corps the follow-up force consisted of 51 (H) Inf Div and 4 Armd Bde. In Phase II, then, 30 Corps was to capture Villers-Bocage, an important centre of communications, gaining contact with V U.S. Corps at Caumont. Simultaneously, 1 Corps was to pivot on Caen and maintain contact with 30 Corps. This phase, it was estimated, could not be carried out before D plus 3 or D plus 4.

33. Phase III. 30 Corps, continuing its southward advance, was to seize the high ground from Bois du Homme to Mont Pinçon, gaining contact once again with V U.S. Corps in the area immediately south of Forêt l’Evêque. 1 Corps, now pressing south from Caen, at the same time to secure the high ground north-east of Bretteville-sur-Laize and east of Argences in order to permit the construction of airfields south-east of Caen. The advance represented by this phase would be made at the earliest on D plus 7 or D plus 8.

34. Phase IV. To complete the capture of the bridgehead, Second Army was to pivot on Argences and advance to secure the high ground St. Pierre d’Entremont-Mont de Cérissi—Condé-sur-Noireau—Falaise, probably between D plus 12 and D plus 17. Contact was to be gained with First U.S. Army at Vire. The grouping for the final phase was uncertain. To what extent it would be possible to employ 8 Corps and 12 Corps would depend upon the rate at which the build-up was implemented. This factor, it was considered, would also control the speed of the advance of the main bodies. But the order contains this further direction:

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<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of the assault, 50 (N) Div was enlarged so as to comprise four, rather than the normal three, infantry brigades.

The depth to which offensive action by armoured mobile forces can take place in advance of main bodies is not limited by considerations of Build-up. Corps will employ these mobile forces with the greatest boldness.

(Ibid)

35. It will be seen, from even cursory consideration of this plan, that the city of Caen assumed very great importance, a fact which the enemy was later quick to appreciate. In straight-line distances, Caen was only 50 miles from the Seine, 120 miles from Paris and 300 miles from the Siegfried Line. Strategically,

The city of Caen was a vital road and rail communication centre through which the main routes from the east and south-east passed. Since the bulk of the enemy mobile reserves was located north of the Seine they would have to approach Normandy from the east and might be expected to converge on Caen.

(Montgomery, op cit, p. 16.)

Also, Caen's proximity to airfields and potential airfield sites made its early capture imperative. Finally, its position on the eastern flank of the bridgehead made it, in enemy hands, a formidable bulwark against the breakout especially since favourable open country for exploiting Allied armoured resources lay to the south-east of the city. Thus one finds the possession of Caen described as "vital to the army plan" (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div (Adv), May 1944: Appx 1, R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O No. 1). It is perhaps worthy of note that H.Q. 1 Corps envisaged the possibility that 3 Brit Inf Div might not, after all, be able to capture Caen on D Day. Should this occur it seemed likely that a renewed frontal assault would be avoided, and that the city would be "subjected to heavy air bombardment to limit its usefulness to the enemy and to make its retention a costly business" (1 Brit Corps O.O No. 1, 5 May 44).

36. Second Army reserves included 1 Airborne Div (nominally in G.H.Q. reserve) and 46 R.M. commando. The latter was to be loaded and ready to sail on D Day to capture either the Houlgate or Benerville batteries on the night of D Day plus 1, should the necessary arise (Second Army O.O No. 1).

37. The build-up, to which the estimated rate of advance was so closely connected was to be effected by the Ferry Service of ships and craft working to the beaches (Supra, para 22). Altogether, "to carry out the mission of invading Western Europe, there were to be available, by D Day, in the United Kingdom 37 divisions: 23 infantry, 10 armoured and 4 airborne" (Report by the Supreme Commander..., op cit, p. 8). Of this number five infantry divisions would be employed in the initial assault from the sea, and three airborne divisions were to land in France some hours prior to the seaborne assault. Following the initial assault, the build-up was to be as rapid as possible.

By the end of D Day it was planned that, including airborne forces, the Allies would have eight divisions ashore together with Commandos, Ranger battalions and some fourteen tank regiments. By D plus 6 the total forces would rise to some thirteen divisions, exclusive of airborne formations, with five British armoured brigades and a proportionate number of American tank units. Between twenty-three and twenty-four basic divisions were due in Normandy by D plus 20.

(Despatch submitted by Field marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein to the Secretary of State for War...(London, 1946), p. 19).

38. The full extent of the Canadian Army's participation in "OVERLORD" can be outlined here. One of the three assault divisions of Second Army was 3 Cdn Inf Div, commanded to Maj-Gen R.F.L. Keller, C.B.E., which formed part of 1 British Corps, under Lt-Gen J.T. Crocker, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C. Under its command, and becoming almost an integral part of the division, was another Canadian formation, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, commanded by Brigadier R.A. Wyman, C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D. The Canadian Army was to be represented in still another aspect of the assault, 1 Cdn Para Bn, as part of 6 Airborne Div, was to assist in that formation's operations east of the Orne. (See hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 26, The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in France, 6 Jun - 6 Sep 1944).

39. Until the capture of the bridgehead should be complete, it was planned that First Cdn Army (which was commanded by Lt-Gen (later General) H.D.G. Carerar, C.B., D.S.O., and which was eventually to include 2 Cdn Inf Div, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 4 Cdn Armd Div, as well as important non-Canadian elements) should remain in the United Kingdom. At that time, i.e., not before D plus 17, First Cdn Army was to commence its concentration within the bridgehead. Thereafter, to quote its operation order, its role would be:

- a. Having concentrated, to assume responsibility for the left-hand sector of the br head.
- b. Then, to prepare to adv East.
- c. And in all circumstances, to be prepared to defend the left-hand sector of the br head against the possible development of hy and determined counter attacks.

((HS) 215C1.016 (D10): First Cdn Army O.O. No. 1, 23 May 44).

#### C. Air Plan

40. By the nature of the forces and equipment at their disposal, the Army, and to a lesser extent, the Navy, were compelled to plan for Operation "OVERLORD" in terms of

moving a vast body of men and strength of fire-power from a non-effective, concentrated and static position to one where the men and fire-power would combine to breach Hitler's Atlantic Wall. The Allied Air Forces, however, had no great concentration of men and aircraft in the United Kingdom condemned to a static role until D Day to unleash their destructive force. Indeed, the air plan for "OVERLORD" was in reality no more than an intensification and reorientation of the air attacks against 'Festung Europa' which had been in progress since the dark days of the 'Battle of Britain'.

41. The whole programme of air operations in "OVERLORD" should be thought of as falling into three broad categories—that of the R.A.F. Bomber Command and the U.S. Eighth Air Force, Coastal Command, and the Allied Expeditionary Air Force. During the preliminary period of operations the strategic bombing of German-held Europe by Bomber Command of the R.A.F. and the U.S. Eighth Air Force was emphasized, with tactical air forces of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force giving the heavy bombers every assistance. In the preparatory period of operations, during which the air forces were more directly concerned with the invading forces, the tables were turned and priority was given to the tactical bombing of 'Festung Europa' by the allied Expeditionary Air Force with some assistance of the heavy bombers. Thus, months before D Day,

... in late 1943 and early 1944, the medium and light bomber forces of the Allied Expeditionary Air Forces continued to lend support to Operation "Pointblank" ... the name given to the combined bomber plan of the strategical bombing forces which had as its aims, first, the reduction of the fighter forces of the G.A.F., second, the general reduction in the war potential of Germany, and third, the weakening of the will of the German people to continue the struggle.

((HS) 002,011(D10): Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, Air Operations by the Allied Expeditionary Air Forces in N.W. Europe from November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1943 to September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1944 (Fourth Supplement to The London Gazette), 2 Jan 47, p. 38). See also Ch 21, ("Pointblank") in U.S.A. Air Historical Group, The Army Air Forces in World War II (Chicago, 1949), vol II).

It is not possible here to dwell upon the success of the strategic bomber forces at this point, but when in the spring of 1944 Operation "POINTBLANK" had lost its priority to the more direct air requirements of Operation "OVERLORD" (*Ibid*), it was apparent that

... the strategic bombers, both R.A.F. and American, had already done one service to the Army which was of incalculable importance in preparing the way for the invasion. Solely as a result of Allied bombing by day and night the German air force which had been used with exceptional efficiency to blast a path across Europe for the German armies, was now incapable of offensive action and hopelessly unbalanced.

(Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris, Bomber Offensive (London, 1947), p. 193).

42. On 14 Apr 44, in addition to the Allied Expeditionary Air Force (commanded by Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, and composed of the Royal Air Force Second Tactical Air Force, the United States Ninth Air Force, and the forces of the Air Defence of Great Britain), General Eisenhower was given operational command of the Strategic Air Forces<sup>9</sup> (i.e., the Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the United States Eighth Air Force) (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p.38). It was intended that this move would expedite the completion of the tasks assigned to the Allied Air Force by the Overall Air Plan. These tasks were:

- a. To attain and maintain an air situation whereby the German Air Force was rendered incapable of effective interference with Allied operations.
- b. To provide continuous reconnaissance of the enemy's dispositions and movements.
- c. To disrupt enemy communications and channels of reinforcements and supply.
- d. To support the landing and subsequent advance of the Allied armies.
- e. To deliver offensive strikes against enemy naval forces.
- f. To provide air lift for airborne forces.

(Ibid, p. 40).

43. During the preparatory period, Coastal Command of the Royal Air Force was employed in carrying out Task (e) of the Overall Air Plan. It was planned that Coastal Command, with some assistance from Bomber Command, should concentrate on clearing the English Channel and its approaches of U-boats, E-boats and enemy destroyers. Further, Coastal Command would provide air cover for Channel and Atlantic convoys, aircraft for Fleet Reconnaissance duties, and cover and close escort to Allied Assault Convoys when those convoys put out to sea ((HS) 002.011 (D27): Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, Liberation of Europe (Operation "Overlord"), Operation of Coastal Command, Royal Air Force, From May to August, 1944 (Second Supplement to The London Gazette), 30 Oct 47.

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<sup>9</sup> General Eisenhower comments on this as follows: "The Strategic Air Forces after this date were to attack German military, industrial, and economic targets in an order of priority established within the Theatre and approved by the Combined Chiefs. Additionally, they were to be available to me upon call for direct support of land and naval operations when needed. This was a role for which they had not been normally used, but the Salerno campaign had afforded convincing evidence of their effectiveness for the purpose". (Report by the Supreme Commander..., op cit, p. 14.)

44. During the assault, and following the identical principle observed in both Navy and Army groupings, the tasks given to the Allied Expeditionary Air Force were to be undertaken in equal degree by the Air Forces of both nations. In effect this came to mean that Western Task Force and First U.S. Army were to be supported by IX U.S. Air Force, while Eastern Task Force and Second Army would receive the support of 83 Composite Group of Second Tactical Air Force, R.A.F. (See Appendix "A"). The tasks included in the air plan of operations during the assaults are listed as follows:

- a. To protect the cross-channel movement of the assault forces against enemy air attack, and to assist the Allied naval forces to protect the assault craft and shipping from enemy naval forces.
- b. To prepare the way for the assault by neutralizing the coast and beach defences.
- c. To protect the landing beaches and the shipping concentrations from enemy air attack.
- d. To dislocate enemy communications and control during the assault.

(Leigh-Mallory, *op cit*, p.41.)

45. As to the strength of the enemy air forces which might be thrown against the Allied invasion forces, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory expressed the general consensus of opinion among the Allied leaders prior to the invasion when he stated at a later period: "I was confident that the German Air Force would constitute no serious threat to our operations on land, sea or in the air" (*Ibid*, p. 40). On 29 May 44, the Air Ministry estimated that the maximum scale of air attack by the German Air Force against the bridgehead would be between 250 and 300 sorties for one night, or 160 to 180 sorties three or four nights a week ((HS) 969 (d21): Air Ministry estimate of "G.A.F. Scale of Attack against the U.K. before and during 'Overlord'", 29 May 44). This estimate is an indication of the effectiveness of the strategical operations of the Allied Air Forces before D Day. A further assessment of the success attending these operations will be given below.

46. Details of the air effort as it more closely affects the ground troops will be considered later in the discussion of the combined fire plan. Direct support was to be of three categories: armed reconnaissance, attacks on pre-selected targets submitted in advance, and immediate support in response to requests made during the operation.

47. In air operations, as in those of the sea and land forces, the Canadian contribution on a wide scale. R.C.A.F. squadrons formed part of Coastal Command and thus joined in attacks on enemy surface and underwater vessels. Moreover,

Fourteen heavy bomber squadrons, comprising No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group, and one squadron operating with the Pathfinder Force were the

R.C.A.F.'s contribution to Bomber Command. In Second Tactical Air Force R.C.A.F. units comprised half of No. 83 Group that operated on the continent in support of the British Second Army. There were nine day fighter squadrons constituting a third wing, and three fighter reconnaissance squadrons in a fourth wing.

(The R.C.A.F. Overseas, The Sixth Year (Toronto, 1949), pp 4-5.)

The above includes only those men and aircraft of the R.C.A.F. overseas most directly concerned with the invasion plan.

48. To complete this survey of the plan it is necessary to describe briefly certain other essential aspects which cannot properly be listed under the heading of any one service.

D. Port and Harbour Facilities

49. The Allied commanders knew that the enemy realized the vital necessity of capturing a port in order to maintain and build up any invading forces, and that consequently the enemy would do everything in his power to deny them the use of a port ((HS) 202A21.014 (D2): "Appreciation of the Possible Developments of Operations to Secure a Lodgement Area: Operation 'Overlord'", 18 May 44). Indeed,

The basic factor in determining where the initial assault was to be made lay in the requirement that the lodgement area would contain sufficient port facilities to maintain a force of some 26 to 30 divisions and enable that force to be augmented by follow up shipments from the United States or elsewhere of additional divisions and supporting units at the rate of three to five divisions per month.

(Report by the Supreme Commander ..., op cit, p. 1.)

The required port facilities were to be supplied by the capture of Cherbourg and the Brittany ports. (Supra, paras 28 and 29) Yet, despite the plan to strengthen the assaulting forces and to widen the area to be attacked to include the base of the Cotentin Peninsula, it was estimated that Cherbourg and the Brittany ports would not be in Allied hands until D plus 30 to D plus 40, and might conceivably take much longer. In the interval, therefore, it was obvious that the discharge of vital stores had to be made over open beaches, supplemented by off-loading through such minor ports as Courseulles and Port-en-Bessin, for there was no harbour of consequence within the immediate assault area. Here was a consideration of utmost importance, inasmuch as inclement weather could prejudice the success of the whole operation.

50. To overcome this difficulty a unique project was conceived involving the construction of two artificial harbours (Mulberries) and five shelters for small craft (Gooseberries) at the beaches themselves. The construction of the prefabricated ports especially, one in the U.S. sector at St. Laurent (Mulberry "A"), and one in the British



sector at Arramanches (Mulberry “B”), was declared to be an essential part of the plan. (For further details of the conception, construction and planned employment of the prefabricated ports and harbours, see the section on “The ‘MULBERRY’ Project” in A.H.Q. Report No. 42).

E. Deception and Diversionary Plans

51. Despite the most thorough security precautions it was impossible to conceal from the enemy the tremendous and complex operations which were underway in the United Kingdom in preparation for the cross-Channel attack. Nevertheless, it was possible to keep the enemy guessing as to the direction, strength and time of the attack, and a Cover Plan was prepared with those objectives in mind. The over-all Cover Plan was named Plan “FORTITUDE”. The part of the plan which affected the Canadian troops in the United Kingdom was named Operation “FORTITUDE (SOUTH)”. The story on which “FORTITUDE (SOUTH)” was based fell naturally into two phases, pre-D Day. These phases were described as follows:

Phase I

The main Allied assault is to be made against the Pas de Calais area.

In the first place, the notional date for the operation will be D Day plus 45. There will come a time, however, when as D Day approaches our preparations will indicate the imminence of the assault, and when the enemy will realize the approx date of our attack. When it is estimated that this period has been reached, the imminence of an attack will be confirmed by special means, but the area of the attack will remain the Pas de Calais area.

Phase II

“NEPTUNE” is a preliminary and diversionary operation, designed to draw German reserves away from the Pas de Calais and Belgium. Once the main German reserves have been committed to the “NEPTUNE” battle, the main Allied attack against the Pas de Calais will take place.

The enemy will be induced to believe for as long as possible after “NEPTUNE” D Day that the main threat to the Pas de Calais is still to be carried out.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, May 1944: Appx “L”.  
“Operation ‘OVERLORD’, Cover and Diversionary Plans”.)

52. The story of the first phase was that the Supreme Commander had under command two Army Groups, the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group and the First United States’ Army Group “which consists of the First Canadian Army with under command 2 Canadian and VIII US Corps, and the Third United States Army with under command XX Corps and

XXII Corps” (Ibid). The story located the First United States Army Group in the East and Southeast of England, and associated with it the Ninth United States Air Force located in the South and Southeast of England.

53. The story of the second phase suggested that the First United States Army Group a proportion of its associated Air Force was ready to attack the Pas de Calais and waited only for the moment when the enemy reserves had been drawn from that area by the “NEPTUNE” attack before launching its own assault<sup>10</sup> (Ibid).

54. Each of the three services of the Allied forces was involved in carrying out certain phases of the Cover Plan. The British and American Tactical Air Forces had to be especially careful not to indicate the proposed assault area by means of their pattern of bombing enemy defences, and “... the only way of doing this was by the wildly extravagant method of bombing at least two coastal batteries or defences elsewhere for every one that was attacked on the invasion coast of Normandy” (Harris, op cit, p. 205. See also (HS) 202A21.014 (D7): Op “OVERLORD” Pre D Day Bombing of Railway Targets). Caution also had to be exercised in regard to the air force plan to disrupt all road and rail lines entering the ‘NEPTUNE’ district. Thus, in order not to bring notice to this front, “attention was paid in the preparatory phase principally to the bridges over the Seine, with some others over the Oise, Meuse and the Albert Canal, leaving to the assault phase the task of attacking bridges south of Paris to Orleans and west along the Loire” (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 45).

55. During both phases the Air Forces were to use such physical means of deceiving the enemy as possible without interfering with the actual “NEPTUNE” operation. Thus arrangements were made to have fighter and bomber craft put on a considerable show of activity both at the airdromes and in the air first as if training for the invasion, and then, after D Day, as if preparing to mount another attack on the Pas de Calais.

56. The Allied naval forces were equally involved in confusing the enemy as to when and where the invasion would take place. Admiral Ramsay has described part of the Naval Cover Plan as follows:

Because the power of manoeuvre at sea was so limited the need for keeping the enemy uncertain as to our precise objectives was paramount. Characteristic wireless traffic accompanying training and movements of assault forces had to be controlled.

Other measures included the berthing of dummy landing craft in Dover and Nore Commands before D Day and the parking of ‘Phoenix’

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<sup>10</sup> The enemy was to be kept guessing in Norway also by Plan “FORTITUDE” (NORTH)”. In April and May (1944) a threat to Norway was established by a notional force in the Clyde area, using joint wireless traffic and special means.

“This appears to have persuaded the enemy not only to retain forces in Norway, but actually to reinforce them ...” (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., op cit, Vol 1, p. 109.)

and 'Whale' Units<sup>11</sup> at Selsey and Dungeness. Arrangements were also made with the Admiralty for the large number of commercial ships that were destined for the Thames and ships for loading to sail in later "Neptune" convoys to wait in Scottish ports until the operation began. Thus the concentration of shipping automatically spread itself throughout the ports of the United Kingdom and, although more congested on the South Coast, it was not confined to that area.

(Ramsay, op cit, p. 5110.)

57. Although wireless traffic was restricted for those preparing for the actual assault, it was left open purposely for those engaged in "FORTITUDE (SOUTH)".<sup>12</sup> It was planned to have some 270 dummy landing craft stationed at Yarmouth, Dover, Folkestone and other harbours opposite the Pas de Calais. To strengthen the belief in this 'threat', the Cover Plan laid down that "naval wireless traffic proportionate to the number of [dummy] craft will be simulated in the mooring areas, appropriate Army wireless traffic being linked to these flotillas as far as possible" (Cover and Diversions Plans).

58. The naval diversion plans which were to be put into operation during the hours immediately prior to D Day can be dealt with but briefly here. In general, the intention was to deceive the enemy through his radar screens rather than by direct attacks on the enemy coast. Three main naval diversions were planned in conjunction with the Air Force. The aim of each operation is given by the Cover Plan as follows:

#### Sea Diversions

##### Operation "BIGDRUM"

The object of this diversion is to engage the enemy radar stations in the North of the Cherbourg Peninsula and to distract the enemy batteries in that area. This diversionary operation will be carried out by a small force of M.Ls.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Phoenix' and 'Whale' Units were components of the artificial (Mulberry) harbours. These Units were in turn subjected to security measures. "A number of disguises were produced, such as the decking of the 'Phoenixes', placing railway lines along the decks, erecting batteries of dummy guns upon them and finally erecting elaborate wireless masts and serials to indicate that they were some form of defence against the anticipated V-1 weapons." ((HS) 952.083 (D1): Rear Admiral H. Hickling and Brigadier I.L.H. Mackillop, The Story of the Mulberries, p. 8.)

<sup>12</sup> At this point it is worthwhile quoting a memorandum on Signals Security issued by HQ, First Canadian Army, on 28 May: "It is known that the enemy's most prolific method of gaining information is by wireless interception and by wireless intelligence. He collates all intercepted wireless transmissions and can, by the correlation of small details -- which by themselves have no significance -- deduce information which is of the highest value to him. It is essential that we make it as difficult for the enemy as possible in this respect." (W.D., C.S.O. Branch, H.Q., First Canadian Army, May 1944, SIGS/9-7-1.)

### Operation "TAXABLE"

The object of this diversion is to give greater breadth to the assault forces and to show our intention of landing North of the Seine. The diversion will be linked with an airborne diversion.

### Operation "GLIMMER"

Plans will be made in order to carry out a similar diversion to "TAXABLE" in the Pas de Calais area should enemy mining permit and the enemy situation prove desirable. Of the possible areas of attack it is considered that the Boulogne area will be most effective.

(Ibid.)

59. To give bulk to the small naval forces engaged in these operations, a considerable number of aircraft circling overhead "were to simulate the reactions which a large convoy would produce in the enemy's coastal radar stations by dropping a special type of 'Window'<sup>13</sup> designed for this occasion" (Harris, op cit, p. 206).

60. The role of the Allied military forces in the Cover Plan, although naturally more static, supplemented that of the naval and air forces. While every effort was made to conceal the location and strength of the assaulting forces by stringent security measures, an open delay of activity and numbers was made in the area facing the Pas de Calais.<sup>14</sup> An elaborate wireless communication network was planned to commence operations from 24 Apr (Cover and Diversionary Plans). Each station on this network would represent one of the various formations in the national forces, and the messages passed would be typical of those passing between formation headquarters. Aside from the dummy landing craft, "the signing of roads and special areas consistent with the story of the embarkation of the force" was to be carried out in the Eastern and South Eastern Command (Ibid). From mid-May onwards, "in order to show activity at night in the areas where dummy craft are indicated, night lighting installations simulating vehicle lights and beach lighting" were to be put into operation (Ibid).

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<sup>13</sup> This was the name given to bundles of metallized paper dropped from aircraft to confuse enemy radar stations.

<sup>14</sup> "... there were camps in East Anglia which might have bivouacked thousands of troops. Actually they were deserted tent cities, given semblance of life by enough men to keep the fires burning for German reconnaissance pilots to photograph". ((HSSSS) 956.011(D1): Lt-Gen W.B. Smith, "Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions" (Part I), The Saturday Evening Post, p. 108).

61. On the night of 5/6 Jun, it was planned to assist the invasion forces by having aircraft drop explosive dummy parachutists, “together with machines which made noises like rifle fire and other sounds of battle, in order to make a diversion and cover the real airborne landings in the Normandy area” (Harris, *op cit*, p. 207). The whole of this simulated airborne attack was called Operation “TITANTIC”, which in turn was divided into four sub-operations. “TITANTIC I” was concerned with simulating the dropping of one airborne division North of the Seine. Its object was “to retain enemy forces North of the Seine and to draw the enemy reserves South of the Seine to the North” (Cover and Diversionary Plans). The object of “TITANTIC II” was “to delay local reserves immediately East of the River Dives from moving Westwards” (*Ibid*). “TITANTIC III”, which was to take place at the same time as the drop of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, had as its object the drawing “of a proportion of local counter-attack troops to the Southwest of Caen” (*Ibid*). The object of “TITANTIC IV” was “to draw the enemy counter-attack forces in the area of St Lô to the West” (*Ibid*). To strengthen the enemy’s belief in wide-spread airborne operations, “TITANTIC I and IV” had included in their drops three and two (respectively) parties of men from the Special Air Service. These men were to “create minor damage to culverts and [to] attack dispatch riders, lone vehicles, etc., allowing individual enemy to escape and thus confirm by personal contact the rumor of paratroop dropping” (*Ibid*).

62. The Canadian Army played a passive, rather than an active, part in the elaborate Cover Plan. The threat to the Pas de Calais was given strength by the movement of 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Corps troops and elements of 2 Cdn Inf Div into the Kent area during April and May (W.D., “G” Branch, Main H.Q., 2 Cdn Corps, April 1944: Appx 105; W.D., “G” Branch, H.Q., 2 Cdn Inf Div, April 1944: Appx 15). The training given these troops before and after D Day intimated their possible use in the situation which the ‘story’ of the Cover Plan attempted to build up in the mind of the enemy. At the same time, the troops were close enough to their real concentration areas that when they received word to embark for Normandy, there would be a minimum of confusion.

63. To give weight to the story that the Canadians in Kent were part of a British-American-Canadian assault force, Canadian signalmen, under the overall direction of C.S.O. First Cdn Army were to be employed in carrying out the wireless part of ‘fleshing up’ the phantom army as described in the Cover Plan. A wireless network designed for this purpose was to commence operations on 24 Apr (W.D., C.S.O. Branch, H.Q. First Cdn Army, June 1944: Appx 11, Operation “QUICKSILVER”) Canadian signalmen were responsible only for the Canadian “Army” formations in the Cover Plan’s story, but worked in conjunction with their British and American counterparts (*Ibid*).

#### F. D Day, H Hour and Y Day

64. The great number of conflicting factors which had to be considered before D Day and H Hour were finally determined are outlined in A.H.Q. Report No. 42 (See section on “Considerations of Timing and Weather”). In general the argument was waged by the Navy, Army and Air Force over their separate considerations of time, weather, tides, daylight and darkness. Meanwhile, those who had the responsibility of planning for and

administering the assault forces while in the United Kingdom required some target date. On 5 Mar 44, therefore, the following instructions were issued:

- a. Since D Day for the operations is not yet definitely fixed, confusion may arise from the designation, with reference to D Day, of dates by which preparations or phases of planning are to be completed. It is also in the interests of security to avoid a procedure whereby the date of D Day may be compromised by being linked with preparations or measures the institution of which may be widely known.
- b. The fixed date of 1 Jun 44 has therefore been selected and will be known as Y Day. Whenever possible reference will be made to dates by which preparations or phases of planning are to be instituted or completed in terms of Y Day, and not of D Day which itself will later be notified in terms of Y Day.

((HS) 969 (D22): G.S. Memo entitled "Institution of Y Day—Overlord", War Office to G.H.Q. Home Forces, 5 Mar 44.)

65. The selection of D. Day<sup>15</sup> was ultimately the responsibility of the Supreme Commander. His decision, naturally, would be based on the weather requirements of the three services. As early as September 1943, Headquarters 21 Army Group had drafted a report showing that in June there would be a period of only a few days during the month which might satisfy the conflicting demands of the three Services (A.H.Q. Report No. 42, p. 175). On the basis of their minimum demands, "the dates of 5, 6 and 7 June were all acceptable..., but any postponement beyond these dates would have necessitated waiting until 19 June for a similar favourable tidal period" (Report of the Supreme Commander ..., op cit, p. 5). Even this postponement would have meant accepting moonless conditions for the airborne drop.

66. Owing to the fact that times of high water varied widely on different beaches, the direction of the incoming tide being from West to East, the decision was taken to select five separate H Hours on any given D Day (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief ..., op-cit, vol 1). For Force "J" and 3 Cdn Inf Div, a still more perplexing difficulty arose. This situation is best described in the words of the Commodore commanding Force "J":

Last-minute intelligence ... indicated that out lying rocks off NAN Sector dried 5 ft instead of 3 ft. H Hour on this sector had therefore to be about 30 minutes later than originally intended, so as to ensure that craft cleared these rocks, and a reduced margin of safety was accepted between the beaching point and the obstacles.

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<sup>15</sup> D Day was defined as the day on which the assaults were to be carried out. H Hour was to be the time at which the first wave of landing craft should hit the beach.

To effect this and to avoid too big an interval between the H Hour of the two neighbouring Assault Groups, the H Hour on MIKE Sector (J.I.) was planned 10 minutes late on the remainder of Eastern Task Force...

(Ibid, Vol 11, Report by Naval Commander, Force "J".)

67. The final decision as to D Day and H Hour was not made until 17 May and 5 Jun was selected, with postponement acceptable to 6 and 7 Jun (Report by the Supreme Commander ... op cit, p. 4).

G. The "Atlantic Wall"

68. Late in 1941 the German High Command became increasingly aware of the pressing need to take coordinated defence measures against possible invasion in the West by Allied forces. Preliminary construction of coastal defences was on a local and independent scale by area commanders, but "during the spring and summer of 1942 some progress was made in converting the field defences into a network of strong-points and defended areas" (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No.36, The Development of the German Defences in the Dieppe Sector (1940-1942), p. 31). By mid-1942, the growing might of the Allies, the severe German Army losses on the Russian front and a greatly weakened Luftwaffe gave additional weight to the idea of constructing a strong, integrated belt of fortifications along the coast of France. This weight to the idea of constructing a strong, integrated belt of fortifications along the coast of France. This "Atlantic Wall", as it was called, received Hitler's close attention later in the year. At a meeting with his generals on 29 Sep 42, the Fuehrer admitted grave concern over the possibility of a 'Second Front' in the west. He gave orders that construction of the "Atlantic Wall" must be increased and decreed the following order of priority:

- a. Further strengthening of the U-boat bases.
- b. Work on the ports of call for convoys.
- c. Work on the harbours suitable for enemy landings.<sup>16</sup>
- d. Development of adjacent islands.
- e. Development of probable landing places on the open coastline.
- f. Development of the less likely landing places.

((HS) 981 HC (D16): "Hitler's Speech on Construction of the Atlantic Wall", (Translated by Capt A.G. Steiger), p. 4).

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<sup>16</sup> This presumably reflected the Dieppe experience.

69. During 1943 work on the “Atlantic Wall” went forward steadily. Towards the end of that year it became apparent to even the most optimistic that concrete bunkers and gun emplacements could not make up for the steady drain of German forces from France to the Eastern front. Thus on 3 Nov 43, Hitler directed that it was “no longer permissible that the west should be weakened so that other fronts should be strengthened” ((HS) 981.013 (D44): “German Anti-Invasion Measures, November 1943-July 1944; Extracts from the War Diaries of the German 7<sup>th</sup> Army”). At the same time he insisted that “iron and concrete should be poured into the main defensive line with all the resources of the Todt organization, while the second position in the fields will be supplied by all available troops with all additional aids” (*Ibid*). With the possibility of an invasion mounting each month as the Allied naval, military and air force potentialities increased, Hitler decided to employ Field Marshal Rommel’s abilities in the West. Among other things, Rommel was ordered to undertake “the study of the defence preparedness of the coasts occupied by German forces, and the submission of proposals therefore” ((Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 40, German Defence Preparations in the West, p. 21).

70. Although Rommel’s recommendations were accepted, they would exceed Germany’s industrial capacity if they were carried out in full. Nevertheless, many of them were put in practice, and soon “in addition to the step-up in the mine-laying programme,<sup>17</sup> a number of partially mined tree trunk palisades were installed on the foreshore, fields of obstacles were created inland to interdict enemy landings from the air, and large areas were flooded or soaked in order to economize forces” (*Ibid*, p. 35). These and other measures inaugurated by Rommel, together with the general increased activity and accelerated pace of the construction work underway, did not escape the attention of the Allies. However, although these measures forced the Allied commanders to make some changes in their tactical plans, their strategy remained the same. Fortunately, the entry of Rommel on the scene resulted in the enemy’s tactical plans changing also, and led ultimately to the Rommel-Rundstedt compromise (See *infra*, paras 42 ff).

71. By June 1944, the “Atlantic Wall” which the Europa” was a very formidable barrier. Mined undersea obstacles, belts of minefields, concrete bunkers and thick-walled gun emplacements, field defences of all descriptions, underground munitions and supply dumps, deep anti-tank ditches, mined roads and booby-trapped houses, heavy naval guns, innumerable protected weapon pits, -- all these and more were planned and integrated by engineers who had had the time and resources of a still powerful nation at their disposal. Supplementing this barrier of steel and concrete was the English Channel, whose waters had served as an excellent “anti-tank ditch” for Britain in 1940-41, and which was now performing the same function for ‘Festung Europa’. Nor was that all the Allied assault troops had to fear, for immediately prior to the invasion the Germans had almost completed their preparations to launch against the United Kingdom the first of their new secret weapons, the V-1 “flying bomb”.

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<sup>17</sup> On 31 Jan 44 Rommel had asked for the delivery of two million mines per month (*Ibid*, p. 34). This was quite beyond the power of the German economy to produce. However, although Rommel by no means received everything he asked, he used what he did get to good effect. (See A.H.Q. Report No. 40 in this respect.)



72. As early as the latter part of 1942 British agents had warned the Allied commanders that the enemy was experimenting with a new type of rocket missile<sup>18</sup> at Peenemunde, an island on the Baltic coast. (Captain Norman Macmillan, The Royal Air Force in the World War (London, 1950), Vol IV, pp. 175 ff). A heavy and successful air attack against the chief experimental station at Peenemunde in August 1943 delayed production of the weapons for many months; but by moving his experimental station to Poland and by using underground factories, the enemy was able to continue his work on the new weapon. Shortly after this air raid, evidence was gathered which indicated that Peenemunde was being used to test new missiles - the long-range rockets, or V-2s.

73. The enemy began constructing launching platforms for the V-1 weapons<sup>19</sup> in the Pas de Calais and the Cherbourg areas during the autumn of 1943 (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 53). "By the end of the year, 88 'ski-sites' had been located and the existence of another 50 was suspected" ((HS) C02. 011 (D68): Air Chief marshal Sir Roderick Hill, Air Operations by Air Defence of Great Britain and Fighter Command in Connection with the German Flying Bomb and Rocket Offensives, 1944-1945. (Supplement to The London Gazette), 20 Oct 48, p. 5587). In December 1943 the air marshal Commanding, Air Defence of Great Britain, was warned to prepare his command for pilotless aircraft attacks against the country on the scale of "two missiles an hour from each of 100 sites [beginning] in February, 1944" (Ibid). On 5 Dec 43, forces from the Allied Expeditionary Air Force and the American Eighth Air Force began a series of bombing attacks on the 'ski-sites'. "The operations against these sites [were] carried out under the title of 'Crossbow' ...," and were continued with such vigor as other commitments, for example "POINTBLANK", would permit (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 53). As the bombing offensive began to achieve its purpose, the Air Ministry revised its estimate of the probable scale of attack and of the time it would be launched. Between 5 Dec 43 and 6 Jun 44, the Allied Air Forces dropped a total of 21,483 tons of bombs on the 'ski-sites'; 8,291 tons on rocket sites and 1,627 tons on supply sites and dumps (Ibid, p. 54). Although a great deal of damage had been wrought, the enemy's reaction was to construct other sites "which were more carefully hidden and harder to destroy". (Hill, op cit, p. 5570). Thus although the Air Forces lessened the menace of the more

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<sup>18</sup> The rocket-bomb was operationally handled by the German Army, the flying-bomb by the Luftwaffe Flak regiment 155 (W). But in December 1943 the LXV Army Corps was instructed to control both weapons, under the Obercommando der Wehrmacht (Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces), or OKW for short" (Macmillan, op cit, p. 175).

<sup>19</sup> The term "ski-sites" was given to the launching platform of the pilotless aircraft "because on each site stood a number of buildings shaped like a ski laid on its side. The buildings seem to have been meant to provide blast-proof shelter for the missiles while they were being stored and serviced". (Hill, op cit, p. 5587).

immediate use of the 'secret' weapons, the menace still existed and was a cause of considerable concern to the Allied Commander.<sup>20</sup>

74. During the early days of the threat, apparently the first official word on German rocket missiles to reach the Canadian Army came at the specific request of General McNaughton to the British War Development Committee. On 24 Mar 43 the Committee sent General McNaughton a note which stated that there was "reason to suppose that the Germans may be developing a weapon ... on the rocket principle ... by which up to 10 tons of high explosive may be projected over a distance up to 125 miles" ((HS) 215X1.98(C173): "Enemy Weapons", Note from M.A. to D.C.I.G.S. to G.O.C. - in-C, 24 Mar 43). There was little additional information available at the time, but the Committee believed the missiles would be used against large cities and that its manufacture would have Hitler's full support.

75. During the summer of 1943 additional information on German progress with the new weapon was made available to Corps, District and Divisional Commanders (Ibid, G.H.Q. Home Forces to H.Q., First Cdn Army, 2 Jul 43). Consequently, Canadian formations were warned to "take necessary measures to ensure that air defence schemes are overhauled, especially in regard to slit-trenches, rescue parties, first aid and anti-gas measures, particularly in quartering and concentration areas" (Ibid, Memo, B.G.S. First Cdn Army to 1 and 2 Cdn Corps, 7 Jul 43).

76. As the evidence of enemy construction of large numbers of "ski-sites" in the Pas de Calais and Cherbourg areas became more marked during the latter part of 1943, plans were laid by Canadian military authorities in London "to ensure the continuance of essential functions of CMHQ, for skeleton staffs to work, eat and sleep in existing CMHQ shelter accn" if London should be subjected to heavy long range rocket or pilotless aircraft attack" ((HS) 312.016 (D1): "Exercise "ROCK", CMHQ Ops Instr No. 1, 11 Feb 44). The same plan (Exercise "ROCK") made arrangements for surplus CMHQ staff to be evacuated from the area if the scale of attack warranted it (Ibid).

77. Although normal precautions were taken by the military authorities to meet the threat of a German flying bomb or rocket attack, those training for the invasion were warned by H.Q. 21 Army Group, that "it is of great importance that the possibility of this form of attack should not lead to diversion of effort from our offensive preparations" (Ibid, 18 Aug 43). Thus while Canadian Heavy and Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments were prepared to play their part in the overall A.A. defence for British cities should the rocket

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<sup>20</sup> No V-1's landed in the United Kingdom until a week after D Day, thus the capabilities of the V-1 could not be definitely established. General Eisenhower wrote of these weapons later as follows: "...If the German had succeeded in perfecting and using these new weapons six months earlier than he did, our invasion of Europe would have proved exceedingly difficult, perhaps impossible. I feel sure that if he had succeeded in using these weapons over a six-month period, and particularly if he had made the Portsmouth-Southampton area one of his principal targets, Overlord might have been written off". (Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, op cit, p. 260.)

attack materialize, the remainder of the Canadian Army carried on its normal pursuits<sup>21</sup> (W.D., H.Q., 1 Cdn AA Bde, January 1944).

### PREPARATIONS BY 3<sup>RD</sup> CANADIAN INFANTRY DIVISION

78. During the long period of planning for the invasion of Europe, especially by COSSAC and later by SHAEF, the formations which were to take part in the assault were going through a process of training designed both to bring them to the highest pitch of efficiency in combined operations and to demonstrate the workability of the various phases and ideas in the invasion plan. The assault divisions of Second British Army had varying backgrounds insofar as training and battle experience were concerned. The 50<sup>th</sup> (N) Division, once a part of the B.E.F. in France in 1940, arrived in the United Kingdom in November 1943, having taken part in the North African and Sicilian campaigns (See Major Ewart W. Clay's The Path of the 50<sup>th</sup> (London, 1950)). The 3<sup>rd</sup> (British) Division had also seen action in France with the B.E.F. in 1940, but since Dunkirk it had been kept in the United Kingdom (See Norman Scarfe's Assault Division (London, 1947)). The 3<sup>rd</sup> (Canadian) Division had as yet seen no action.

79. The pattern of training for the cross-Channel attack by 3 Cdn Inf Div was very similar to that followed by the other assault divisions. The exception, of course, lies with 50 (N) Div which started its "NEPTUNE" training during the latter part of 1943. However, early in 1944 the brigades of 50 (N) Div "went for combined operational training at the Combined Training Centre at Inverary [sic]" (Clay, op cit, p. 229), and throughout April and May, the division's schedule of training conformed with that of the other assault divisions. ((HS) 969 (D36): "NEPTUNE"; Training Programmes: Second Army; Combined Training, Appendix "A"). Since space does not permit the full description of the training of all three assault forces, the description of 3 Cdn Inf Div's training below may be accepted as paralleling that of the others.

#### A. The Earlier Training of 3 Cdn Inf Div and its Inclusion in 1 British Corps.

80. The inclusion of 3 Cdn Inf Div in the assault phase of "OVERLORD" had been decided upon nearly a year before the operation. An early forecast of its coming operational role is to be found in a letter from Lt-Gen A.G.L. McNaughton, G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, to the Commander, 1 Cdn Corps. This letter, which is dated 3 Jul 43, reads in part as follows:

- a. The 3 Cdn Div has been selected for assault training with a view to taking part in the assault in Operation 'Overlord'. The plan for this operation will not be available for some months.... It is intended that 1 Cdn Corps will be responsible for the training and operations of 3 Cdn Div....

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<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed history of civil and military precautions taken to counter the "V-1" threat, see C.M.H.Q. Report No. 137, Enemy Air Attack and the Canadian Army in the United Kingdom, 1943-1945: The V-Weapons; and General Sir Frederick Pile, "Ack-Ack": Britain's Defence against Air Attack During the Second World War (London, 1949).

((HS), P.A. 1-0-4-1: "Future Operations - 3 Cdn Div".)

81. Thus it was that 1 Cdn Corps provided the guidance for the assault training of the division through its preliminary phases. At the same time the evolution which its training was to follow was set forth in a memorandum--Combined Ops Trg, 3 Cdn Inf Div<sup>22</sup>-- issued to that formation by H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps on 8 Jul 43 (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, July 1943: Appx 12). The training programme was to be divided into four stages. It will be sufficient here to describe these stages briefly and to indicate approximately the timetable followed.

82. The first stage, preliminary training, was to be carried out under the arrangements of the divisional commander, Maj-Gen R.F.L. Keller. It involved, first, a study of the principles of combined operations, and secondly, practice in embarkation and disembarkation, scaling obstacles, clearance of minefields and similar training. This was done through July and early August in Southern England wherever the units were located. To quote a regimental history on this activity:

Assault training was stepped up and every camp parade ground throughout Sussex became studded with mock-up Landing Crafts, Assault (LCA) and Landing Crafts, Mechanized, (LCM). H.Q. 7 Canadian Infantry Brigade even went so far as to make all visitors enter the building by means of a scramble net.

(Lt-Col R.M. Ross, The History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (Ottawa, 1946), p.31.)

83. In addition, staffs of divisional and brigade headquarters were engaged during August on a preliminary planning exercise, known as "DIPPER", the theme of which was "an assault landing to secure the Port of Dieppe for use as a base port for subsequent ops" (Combined Ops Trg, 3 Cdn Inf Div.). Exercise "DIPPER", which made use of the air photos, the relief model and the intelligence data available as a result of the previous year's raid, represents the first practice at planning in combined operations by the staffs of the division. It contains too a significant indication of the method eventually to be employed in the divisional assault, for it calls for an initial attack by two brigades (7 Cdn Inf Bde on the right and 8 Cdn Inf Bde on the left) with 9 Cdn Inf Bde in reserve (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, August 1943: Appx 28, Exercise "DIPPER", 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O No. 1, 28 Aug 43). This grouping was to be followed invariably throughout the months of planning and training which lay ahead. Its fire plan, moreover, shows in embryo those methods which culminated in "OVERLORD" for it includes not only the employment of warships and small naval support craft but also self-propelled field artillery firing from the sea (*Ibid*). Mention should be made, too, of the Combined Operations Study Period held by 1 Cdn Corps, 26-31 Jul 43, which had likewise considered "a suitable plan for an assault landing and attack" on Dieppe.

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<sup>22</sup> This memorandum was based upon an 'outline of the training arrangements' which had been made in consultation with 21 Army Gp and Combined Operations H.Q. This outline was appended to the letter mentioned in para 80.

General Crerar's views on fire support in the assault are contained in his remarks made at the conclusion of the study period (Summing Up by Comd 1 Cdn Corps, copy appended to C.M.H.Q. report No. 128). Very briefly, General Crerar emphasized the "absolute need for overwhelming fire support ... to get the assaulting forces on to, and through, the beach defences" (Ibid). This weight of fire, he proposed, might be carried out by four successive waves or flights of craft approaching the beaches, each of the four flights capable of laying a pattern of fire on the beaches at varying distances from the shore. The flights would engage enemy beach defences when their guns came within range, those flights with the longer range guns allowing the flights with the shorter range guns to pass through them so that a crescendo of fire would be laid on the beaches by the time the flight carrying the assault troops landed (Ibid). Although D Day operations saw a different method employed, the theme, i.e., a drenching fire support for the assault troops, was the same as the General proposed.

84. The second stage, basic training, was designed to bring the troops to grips with the actual mechanics of assault landings. To this end, training by brigade groups was carried out during August and September at the Combined Training Centres at Inveraray and Castle Toward. The war diary of one of the units attending the Centre at Castle Toward gives a revealing picture of the training. The unit, the North Nova Scotia Highlanders, arrived at the Centre on 4 Sep 43 (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, September 1943). A day later, all ranks were engaged in the hard but efficient training given at the Combined Training Centre. On 7 Sep, the war diarist wrote:

This afternoon all companies practiced swimming in full kit wearing Mae Wests under their equipment in the harbour. [sic] They embarked in Landing Craft Mechanized and moved approximately fifty yards away from shore and then jumped off and swam in. The water was very cold, some estimate of which could be formed by the various groans, mutterings, etc. Several of the boys had to be helped ashore mainly because they could not swim and did not have full confidence in the Mae West.

(Ibid.)

85. The following day "all companies carried out Dryshod training, ... assault from dummy Landing Craft Assault, scrambling nets, rope climbing, etc" (Ibid). A week later the companies of the battalion were going through an exercise which "consisted of making an assault landing on a beach, with the support of twenty-five pounders firing from Landing Craft, Tank and aircraft laying smoke to cover the approach of the craft to shore" (Ibid). By 18 Sep the unit as a whole was engaged on a scheme, the object of which "was to exercise the reserve battalion (of a brigade) in the breakthrough of a beach-head and to capture an important objective [an airfield] approximately five miles inland" (Ibid). Eleven days later, the unit was engaged in a brigade exercise. "The purpose of this exercise was to practise the brigade in the establishing of a beach-head and the capture of an airfield several miles inland" (Ibid). A few days after this exercise the unit

left Castle Toward and other battalions and brigades moved in to train in the same manner.

86. The opportunity thus to become acquainted with ‘the peculiarities of combined ops’ was not restricted to the infantry gunners,<sup>23</sup> sappers and others in the division also underwent training in their own functions. This stage was “basic training” only in the sense that it was carried out “without practice in the fire fight or ref to particular enemy defs” (Combined Ops Trg, 3 Cdn Inf Div).

87. The third stage, assault training by brigade groups, was characterized by increased realism. It was carried out in the Portsmouth area in conjunction with Force “J”, and at times made use of actual fire support. While 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes were still completing Stage 2 in Scotland, 7 Cdn Inf Bde had already begun its first training with the Naval Assault Force early in September. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, September 1943.)

88. The first significant manifestation of the swift development of the assault technique was Exercise “PIRATE”,<sup>24</sup> held at Studland Bay, 16-21 Oct. Although its central theme was an assault by only one brigade group, yet its broad scope far surpassed even divisional resources. Planning was done by a special staff detached from main divisional headquarters, as was to be the case in “OVERLORD” itself. The fire plan comprehended the combined effort of naval, army and air arms, subject to certain safety restrictions. The assault phase was carried out by 7 Cdn Inf Bde Group. The second phase, the build-up, was to be undertaken by the remainder of the division and its attached troops (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, September 1943: Appx 23, 3 Cdn Inf Div 0.0. No. 1, 30 Sep 43). “PIRATE” must be considered as the pattern in miniature after which all later assault exercises were fashioned.

89. It might appear at first that the aims of “PIRATE” were over-ambitious. In view of its early date, it is hardly to be wondered at that it did not, in practice, fully realize the numerous objects which had been set for it. These are detailed in the divisional report on the exercise:

- a. To exercise the forces of all three services in their functions during a major combined Operation.

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<sup>23</sup> One of the artillery regiments taking part in this training was the 14<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Regiment. The regimental historian wrote of this period: “The training consisted of assault landing exercises. Drivers and gunners were taught to load and unload guns and vehicles on LCT’s and LST’s. On two LCT’s, eight 25 Pdr guns were lashed to the deck and put on line by means of two directors, the ZL being the axis of the craft. The GPO on the bridge with the ship’s commander fired the guns on targets as the craft sailed in towards Strone Point. The Infantry landed our FOOs with them after the firing ceased. This was new and interesting and all ranks took great pride in doing their best”. (Lt G.E.M. Ruffee, The History of 14 Field Regiment, 1940-1945 (Amsterdam, 1945), p. 19).

<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed description of Exercise “PIRATE” SEC A.H.Q. Report No. 42, especially the section “The Problem of Fire Support: Exercise ‘PIRATE’ and the Graham Committee”.

- b. To exercise the embarkation and the “Turn Round Control Organization” within the Solant group of ports.
- c. To exercise a brigade group in the assault on a heavily defended beach.

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, November 1943: Appx 1, “3 Cdn INF Div Report on Exercise “PIRATE”, 31 Oct 43”.)

Owing to the intervention of bad weather the Turn Round Control and Build-Up Phase had to be cancelled entirely. Poor weather also prevented a full test of the co-ordination of certain critical phases of the air and surface bombardment. Moreover, the seaborne divisional artillery bombardment revealed certain deficiencies in equipment and training.

90. Nevertheless its limitations do not detract from the essential importance of “PIRATE” in the evolution of a practicable assault plan.

In spite of limitations on the performance of seaborne artillery and supporting aircraft, Exercise ‘PIRATE’ showed that the assault technique had reached an advanced stage of preparation for ‘NEPTUNE’. It was obvious that further training and certain modifications to equipment were necessary; but the essential principles of the technique had been tested and proved satisfactory.

(A.H.Q. Report No. 42, para 329; see also 3 Cdn Inf Div Report on Exercise “PIRATE”, op cit.)

The ultimate significance of “PIRATE” was that it tested for the first time the lessons of Dieppe. On 7 Jun 44 General Crerar stated that from the experience of Dieppe “emerged the technique and tactics first demonstrated by the 3 Cdn Inf Div in ‘PIRATE’ exercises last October, and that this technique and these tactics were those adopted for the vast combined operation which took place yesterday” (C.M.H.Q. Report No. 128: Appx “B”, Introduction to Briefing of Officers, H.Q. First Cdn Army).

91. No single exercise could be expected to solve all problems. “PIRATE” was followed, therefore, by a succession of similar schemes which it is not within the scope of this report to enumerate in detail. A double exercise, “VIDI” and “PUSH”, was designed to speed up and simplify planning, especially the allotment of shipping space; to practice 8 Cdn Inf Bde Group in an assault; and to practise 9 Cdn Inf Bde Group and 27 Cdn Armd Regt in their now accepted reserve role (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, October 1943: Appx 31, Instructions, Exercises “VIDI” and “PUSH”, 31 Oct 43). The exercise was mounted on 3 Dec 43; once again bad weather intervened and the R.A.F. could not take part. Of the lesser exercises of this period, it is sufficient to cite “OZONE” (29 to 30 Jan 44) as an example of the thoroughness with which the plan was being worked out. A regimental historian writes of this exercise as follows:

... the regiment, along with other units in 3 Div, supplied some 250 men and officers to carry out tests of sea-sickness remedies. This exercise, known as 'Ozone', entailed the men boarding landing craft and cruising about the Channel, their reactions being observed and three or four different remedies being taken. Oddly enough the M.O. ... who was along in the role of an observer was one of the most affected and claims to this day that there is just no remedy for sea-sickness.

(Regimental History, 19 Canadian Army Field Regiment, RCA (Holland, 1945), p.20.)

In the opinion of the divisional medical authorities, the exercise was "not conclusive" (W.D., A.D.M.S., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 31 Jan 44).

92. During this third stage of training 3 Cdn Inf Div had been under the command successively of three higher formations. In October, the impending embarkation of H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps for the Mediterranean theatre deprived the division of its guidance. As an interim measure 3 Cdn Inf Div was placed directly under the command of First Cdn Army on 13 Oct, while at the same time 2 Cdn Armd Bde came under the command of the division (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, October 1943: Appx 18A, Message 05, G First Cdn Army to G 1 Cdn Corps, 13 Oct 43). A month later, 3 Cdn Inf Div (which now included 2 Cdn Armd Bde) was placed under new direction, if not as yet command. This change was communicated to the G.O.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div (which now included 2 Cdn Armd Bde) was placed under new direction, if not as yet command. This change was communicated to the G.O.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, by General McNaughton on 12 Nov 43:

- a. Owing to the departure of HQ 1 Cdn Corps and for the necessity of co-ordinating the trg and operational planning for op OVERLORD, it has been agreed that operational direction and the trg related thereto for op OVERLOAD will be entrusted to the Comd 1 Brit corps.
- b. In accordance with this decision, 3 Cdn Inf Div as now constituted will be associated with 1 Brit Corps for operational direction and trg related thereto for the purpose of op OVERLORD only from 1 Dec 43 until released by orders of Senior Combatant Officer Overseas. 3 Cdn Div will remain under comd First Cdn Army for all other purposes....

((HS) P.A. 1-0-4-1: "Future Operations - 3 Cdn Div".)

93. The period of 'association' lasted until 30 Jan 44, on which date 3 Cdn Inf Div was placed under the actual command of 1 British Corps for further training, operational planning, and eventually operations themselves (C.M.H.Q. file 3/Op Old/1/1: Letter Lt-Gen K. Sturart, A/G.O.C.-in-C., First Cdn Army, to G.O.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jan 44).



## B. Divisional Planning and Final Exercises

94. The final stage, collective assault training, was carried out concurrently with later exercises on the brigade group level. It may be said to begin about 30 Jan 44, for it was at this time that detailed planning was entered upon by the division. The relationship between these “collective” exercises and the final divisional plan for “OVERLORD” is very close. The exercises were, that is, to be rehearsals, “carried out on the landing tables of the operation, and to include, if possible, the actual overheads taking part in the operation” (Source destroyed, but quoted in Report No. 147 as First Cdn Army file 82-4-2/Trg: Directive, B.G.S., 1 Brit Corps, to 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Dec 43).

95. Except for calculations of requirements of craft and shipping space, no planning on the divisional level for the actual assault was undertaken prior to January 1944. Until that time few of the divisional staffs had had any acquaintance with facts of time and place—facts which henceforth were to be shrouded by the code work “NEPTUNE”. From 30 Jan to 24 Feb the planning staff of H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div was quartered in Ashley Gardens, London, to prepare a detailed divisional plan. On 1 Feb 44 the members of the staff were given an outline appreciation of the operation, together with intelligence summaries and maps. The G.O.C. and the .A.A. & Q.M.G. held daily conferences and each branch commenced to develop its plan (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div (Planning Staff), 30 Jan - 24 Feb 44). Security became a major problem; planning instructions emphasized the need for caution, even remarking of a certain member of Parliament that “the m/n MP at causing considerable trouble by asking questions in the House with reference to this Planning Headquarters” ((HS) 235C3.016 (D11): Planning Instructions, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Jan 44). As a further security measure this activity was to be described to the curious as Exercise “GLITTER”, in which “some elements” of divisional headquarters were taking part.

96. Planning on the brigade level, known as Exercise “GOLD”, began after a week’s postponement at H.M.S. Vectis, Cowes, Isle of Wight, on 6 Mar, lasting until 21 Apr. Each brigade headquarters sent there its planning staff, retaining only a skeleton headquarters on the mainland. After a preliminary discussion, the brigade commanders submitted to the G.O.C. on 9 Mar an outline plan, on the basis of which detailed arrangements could then be made (W.Ds., H.Q. 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, 9 Mar 44). On 31 Mar infantry battalion commanders were called in to be informed of their respective brigade group plans (Ibid, 13 Mar 44).

97. The collective exercises which were to be based on this planning consumed what little time remained to be new heavily overtaken staffs. One of these reflects the urgent necessity for efficient communications. Exercise “SODAMINT” was designed “to exercise communications and staffs of Force “J”, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division and Royal Air Force in a divisional assault” ((HSS) 212C1. (D76): Exercise “SODAMINT”, Naval 0.0. No. 1, 15 Feb 44). The exercise was held on 24 Feb at Bracklesham Bay. It was “of a skeleton nature” with few naval craft taking part, and the success of the exercise was to “depend upon the thoroughness in which messages [were]

transmitted and upon the sound imagination used to 'paint' the tac picture" (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Feb 44: Appx 9, Exercise "SODAMINT", 8 Cdn Inf Bde Exercise Instrs).

98. The appearance of new problems and the need to find solutions to them frequently circumvented the aim of the planners to mount a full-scale rehearsal. Exercise "TROUSERS" exemplifies some of the difficulties encountered. Prominent amongst them was the fire plan. Thus it was that "TROUSERS", "originally scheduled to be a full-scale rehearsal of the planning of Exercise "GOLD" ... changed to a full scale fire sp with skeleton HQ down to an incl coys or equivalent, participating" (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde (Adv), 21 Mar 44). "TROUSERS", as finally formulated, was intended to exercise Force "J" in the passage, approach and assault landing and to exercise the divisional signal communications and fire support in the assault. It was held at Slapton Sands on 12 Apr. A regimental historian describes the area and exercise in part:

Exercise 'Trousers' was carried out from Southampton and involved an assault landing on Slapton Sands, on the South English Coast. Slapton Sands ... resembled almost exactly the place where the real assault landing was to be made on the Continent. The contour of the shoreline, the type of sand, the depth of water, even the approach inland was the same as the men were to confront later. To make it even more realistic, German defences and traps were set up on the beach to conform to the defence system on that part of the beach on the Continent. One of the officers after D Day remarked that the similarity between the two beaches 'shook him'.

(The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment, RCA, 1940-1945, p. 23.)

There was evidently some uncertainty as to the value of "TROUSERS".

The criticisms ... are so conflicting that it is impossible to discover whether the exercise was a success or not. We are of the opinion that the arty sp was satisfactory.

(W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. (Adv), 3 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Apr 44.)

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(W.D., H.Q. R.C.A. (Adv), 3 Cdn Inf Div, 12 Apr 44.)

99. It should be noted here that these seaborne exercises off the coast of England did not go unnoticed by enemy naval forces. To quote Admiral Ramsay on this problem:

It had always been felt that the enemy might react when large scale exercises were carried out in the channel. He did not do so until Exercise “Tiger”, which was the final rehearsal for Force “U”, when during the night of 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> April three groups of E-Boats penetrated the patrols covering Lyme Bay and delivered a successful attack on the last convoy to sail to the exercise consisting of eight L.S.T. Two L.S.T. were sunk and one was damaged and there was a regrettable high loss of life.<sup>25</sup> Naval defensive measures on this occasion were undoubtedly on the weak side and this incident underlined the need for every available warship and craft to take part in the opening phases of “Neptune”...)

(Ramsay, op cit, p. 5112.)

Of the final rehearsal, Operation “Fabius” (see below), Ramsey remarks:

Enemy reaction to ‘Fabius’ was negligible, being confined to an aircraft attack on a destroyer in one of the covering forces. That it was not greater, and indeed that naval preparations proceeded with so little interruption must be largely attributed to the very high degree of air superiority achieved in the months before D Day.

(Ibid.)

100. It is possible to detect in these huge schemes, of which “TROUSERS” is only one example, a note of disappointment that all did not function as planned. The tone of confidence which pervades the comments on earlier exercises seems largely to have been lost. By May 1944 there remained time for one more full-scale rehearsal—without fire support. This was Exercise “FABIUS III”,<sup>26</sup> held at Bracklesham Bay on 4 May 44. Its general theme, intention and method, and even the topography of the locale selected, show clearly that it was “based on ‘OVERLORD’” (W.D., HQ 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Apr 44). But “FABIUS III”, like its predecessors, was destined to have its shortcomings. One factor in particular once again prevented a full practice being mounted—the weather. There was something prophetic in this recurrent deterioration of the elements, as if to warn against the expectation of ideal conditions in the operation itself. Initially, “FABIUS III” was postponed twenty-four hours, “la mer étant trop agitée (W.D., R de Chaud, 2 May 44). Even when the exercise was finally held on 4 May, increasingly heavy seas soon caused the naval authorities to call a halt to off-loading (W.D., Hist Offr, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 4 May 44). Its chief value was that it revealed minor defects in the concentration and marshalling system, and provided practice for the Beach

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<sup>25</sup> General Bradley notes that this attack resulted in “a loss of more than 700 men”. (Bradley, op cit, p. 249.)

<sup>26</sup> “FABIUS III” was but one of the six parts of a grand final rehearsal called Exercise “FABIUS”. “FABIUS I” involved Naval Force “O” and V Corps U.S.A.; “FABIUS II” involved Naval Force “G” and 50 (N) Div, and “FABIUS IV” involved Naval Force “S” and 3 (Brit) Div. Fifty-five squadrons of U.S. IX Air Force and the British Second Tactical Air Force were to take part in the exercise. ((HS) 969 (D12): “Exercise ‘Fabius’, Operations Orders and Instructions: “FABIUS V And VI” were “concerned only with practising the machinery for loading personnel and equipment in the Thames Estuary and East Coast Ports, and in the Southampton and Portsmouth areas”. (Ibid.)

Groups ((HS) 215c1. 053 (D1): “Highlights of Administration, First Cdn Army”). “OVERLORD” was to prove that this exercise made final loading a smoother process.

### C. 2 Cdn Armd Bde

101. For nearly eight months prior to the operation, 2 Cdn Armd Bde worked closely with 3 Cdn Inf Div, of which it had become temporarily a part. Its planning programme followed the same pattern as those of the divisional infantry brigades. In February 1944 Brigadier N.A. Gianelli (later succeeded as brigade commander by Brigadier R.A. Wyman, D.S.O., E.D.) attended Exercise “GLITTER” in London (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 2-22 Feb 44). During March and April a brigade planning staff took part in Exercise “GOLD” on the Isle of Wight, which as we have seen was devoted to planning on the brigade level (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde (Adv), 1 Mar - 20 Apr 44).

102. Intensive amphibious training was carried out by the armoured regiments in conjunction with their respective infantry brigades. They participated, for example, in Exercises “TROUSERS” and “FABIUS III”. But this training was limited by the shortage of special equipment required. In January the headquarters diarist had been able to speak of the “ten Sherman tanks which at the moment are the entire Sherman strength of the brigade” (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 23 Jan 44). Nor did the situation improve rapidly, as is clear from the following excerpt from the brigade report:

For trg the bde was equipped with Rams (radical) and Valentines (diesel). Op AFVs were an assortment of Sherman III (diesel) and Sherman V (Chrysler). It was intended to complete the changeover by the end of Apr. The changeover was not in fact completed until the end of May. Moreover the majority of tks received were far from up to date in essential modifications. It was only thanks to trojan work by unit fitters and bde RCEME personnel, that the regts were able to go into battle with more or less ‘battle-worthy’ tks.

((HS 275C2.013 (D1): ‘2 Cdn Armd Bde, Operation “OVERLORD”, The Assault on the Beaches of Normandy, 6-11 Jun 44, hereafter referred to as 2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation “OVERLORD”).)

103. The requirements of the assault phase necessitated complete reorganization of 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts (under the command, respectively, of 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes). Two squadrons in each regiment were equipped with D.D. or swimming tanks (Sherman V Duplex Drive amphibious tanks),<sup>27</sup> the third squadron retaining its normal Shermans, including five Sherman Vc (17-pounder). 27 Cdn Armd Regt, under command 9 Cdn Inf

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<sup>27</sup> Officially, “DD (Duplex Drive) was the name given to flotation equipment which, when fitted to a tank, renders it amphibious” ((HS) 171.009 (D3): D.R.A.C.’s Monthly Liaison Letter No. 25.) This source gives a full description of the subject together with photographs of DD tanks in use.

Bde, comprised three normally constituted squadrons, but with only four Sherman Vc per squadron.

104. The training of the Canadian Tankmen with the D.D. tank took place at Great Yarmouth under the over-all supervision of 79 (Brit) Armd Div.<sup>28</sup> As the D.D. tank was on the secret list, full security measures were taken. Mention of the training in war diaries and instructions refer only to “trg of a special nature” (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde. Appx 9,2 Cdn Armd Bde, Trg Instr No. 3), and one unit diarist, not wishing to mention even the scene of the secret training” (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 30 Mar 44). Even on exercises troops were warned to refer to the D.D. tanks only as “leading flight” or “first wave” (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, April 1944: Appx 27, Directive from H.Q. 3 Cdn Div, 19 Jan 44).

105. A description of the D.D. tanks with which men of 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts trained during December 1943 and the early months of 1944 is as follows:

The Sherman D.D. Tank was an ordinary Sherman to which flotation gear and propellers were attached. The flotation gear consisted of a thick canvas screen and a number of rubber pillars about the size of an ordinary motor tyre inner tube. The canvas screen was raised by inflating the rubber pillars from two bottles of compressed air, which were strapped to the hull of the tank. The screen was then held in position by elbow-jointed struts which had to be fixed and adjusted by the crew.

When the screen was thus raised and held in position on the tank floated. When floating the top of the turret was about level with the surface of the water, having about three feet of canvas freeboard.

The tank was driven through the dwater by two propellers, which were attached to the back of the hull, below the deck, and driven through a bevel box off the tracks.

Streerage was obtained by turning the propellers (outboard principle). The tank was normally steered with a tiller by the crew commander, who stood on a platform behind the cupola. The tank could also be steered by means of a hydraulic steering lever and a form of periscope. The steering was not easy and required considerable practice.

As the tracks were going round driving the propellers it followed that as soon as the tank touched ground (Touch-down, as it was called) the tank moved forward in the normal way.

When in about five feet of water the Commander would get into his turret and hand over steering to the driver. The driver would be

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<sup>28</sup> For a detailed description of the D.D. tank training of 6 Cdn Armd Regt see W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, July 1944: Appx “A”, “Special Memorandum on ‘DD’ training of 6 Canadian Armoured Regiment”.

ordered to break struts, which was done by hydraulically operated plungers. These broke the elbow-joints and the air was then released from the pillars by means of valves. The screen then fell to the deck and the tank became an almost normal land tank.

The three major dangers to the Sherman D.D. Tank were: first, that the canvas screen could easily become torn, which might cause the tank to sink immediately; second, that, whilst afloat, the normal tank armaments could not be fired; and, third, that the commander had normally to remain standing on his platform in a rather exposed position until the tank had firmly touched down.

(Major-General C.H. Miller, History of the 13<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own 1922-1947 (London, 1949), pp 73-74).

### THE PLAN OF THE ASSAULT BY 3<sup>RD</sup> CANADIAN INFANTRY DIVISION

Si tu veux être heureux,  
Vas entre Caen et Bayeux

(Norman Proverb)

106. Certain details of the plan of 3 Cdn Inf Div have already emerged in the preceding remarks. By developing the plan further, it is intended not only to illustrate the method of assault by Canadian forces, but to shed light as well on the means employed by all assault divisions, especially those of Second Army. In like manner, the topography and enemy defences described may be taken as typical of the problems to be solved throughout the "NEPTUNE" area.

107. The source of most of the voluminous body of intelligence Section (T.I.S.). Originally formed under G.H.Q. Home Forces to study intelligence in Western Europe, T.I.S. came in time under the command of SHAEF. Its many pertinent findings were published at first in weekly, and later in daily, publications, together with reference maps (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., op cit, p. 51). A representative selection of these publications is to be found in the files of A.H.Q. Historical Section (Old file SAEF/L/F).

#### A. Intelligence: Topography

108. The general area to be assaulted by 3 Cdn Inf Div lay within the agricultural plain of Caen. Specifically it consisted of two regions: the Pays de Bessin<sup>29</sup>, a marshy clay plain west of the River Seulles, the general outline of which can be traced by the incidence of the suffix "en-bessin" in place-names; and the Campagne de Caen, a region

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<sup>29</sup> "Bessin" is a Norman word referring to a Roman governmental district around Bayeux. (Information from the French Embassy, London.) Cf also ZFi-1 (D Hist library), France, Vol. 1, Naval Intelligence Division, 1942.

of limestone east of the Seulles. The character of this level countryside is quite distinct from the Norman Bocage to the West and South.

109. The beach sectors allotted to 3 Cdn Inf Div have already been identified as MIKE and NAN. (Supra, para 27). These sectors lay on either side of the western breakwater at the mouth of the River Seulles. MIKE Sector, on the west, was 2100 yards in length and contained two beaches, Green and Red. NAN Sector, being longer (5600 yards), comprised three beaches, Green, White and Red (cf map at Appendix “G”). Exact map references of sectors and beaches are given in Appendix “A” to R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1.

110. The character of the coastline across the divisional front is summarized in one of the series of illustrated Landmark Data Sheets used by the planning staffs (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., June 1944: Appx “A”). The sheet in question (LM/4250/7e/5) describes the entire strength of coast as shown on the map of 1/50,000 scale (G.S.G.S. 4250, sheet 7E/5, Creully):

Approaching the strength of coast from the sea at the east, or left, is the village of Lion-sur-Mer... From this village a coastline of low cliffs backed by cultivated land extends west-north-west past the villages of Petit Enfer... and Language-sur-Mer..., 3½ miles west-north-west of Lion-sur-Mer. From St. Aubin-sur-Mer to Bernières-sur-Mer..., a distance of 1½ miles, the coast is low and sandy, dotted by numerous villas and summer houses. The low, flat coastline continues west for 1½ miles to the small port of Courseulles-sur-Mer..., readily distinguishable by the basins for small shipping, and the broad meandering mouth of the La Seulles River. From Bernières-sur-Mer to Courseulles-sur-Mer short groynes extend into the sea from the sandy beach.

.....

The coast continues westward without change in the low sandy shoreline. 2½ miles west of Courseulles-sur-Mer the hamlet of La Rivière is marked by a lighthouse and wireless mast....

(Ibid.)

Inland, the countryside presented “an unbroken expanse of open, rolling cultivated land”. (R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div, O.O. No. 1, Int Summary.) In this agricultural setting the main villages were Reviers, Douvres la Délivrande and Las Délivrande, each of not more than 500 souls. In addition there were “numerous small villages and hamlets surrounded by orchards and trees, some by stone walls” (Ibid).

111. Despite its natural simplicity and lack of pronounced configuration, however, the area presented certain serious problems, chiefly affecting ease of movement. To begin with, there were only two existing roads from MIKE Sector beaches, and each of these

would require widening and surfacing before it could be used by vehicles. Although NAN Sector could show nine potential exists for vehicles, nearly all of them demanded surfacing or demolition of obstacles. Offshore, moreover, NAN Sector was marked by scattered rocky outcroppings and sand flats (Les Iles de Bernières) which rendered the approach dangerous, except near high water. A sea-wall of 6 to 10 feet in height existed along most of NAN Sector. MIKE Sector was more open, and the beach was backed by sand dunes. Additional exists could, of course, eventually be made from the flanking sectors, LOVE and OBOE. Immediately behind the beaches there was extensive inundation, in the form of soft, marshy ground which had not been drained. This made cross-country movement unsuitable for tracked vehicles.

112. The road system generally, however, was satisfactory. There was a main lateral road along the coast across the entire divisional front from La Rivière to Luc-sur-Mer. A second lateral road joined Creully and La Délivrande, about two miles inland. The main inland routes, which were hard-surfaced, ran from Courseulles and Langrune, to Caen, with numerous secondary roads connecting all villages (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Int Summary).

113. The divisional intelligence summaries contain a quite remarkable volume of information gathered from various sources. Included are detailed analyses of tidal properties, beach gradients, river depths and crossings, railway systems, etc., all set down with uncanny accuracy and completeness. Careful study of this material, supplemented by reference to photographs (cf Landmark Data Sheet cited above), provided the troops with an almost intimate knowledge of the ground they were to traverse. Even the physical appearance of the coastline became familiar, so that the word of caution in one order seems superfluous:

NOTE: From sea level on the approach, Bernières, St. Aubin and Langrune all appear very similar and have the same distinguishing feature -- a church spire.

(R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Int Summary.)

#### B. Intelligence : Enemy Dispositions and Defences

114. Before discussing the knowledge held of the enemy's disposition and defences as it directly concerned 3 Cdn Inf Div, it is worthwhile reviewing very briefly his overall organization. In this respect it is sufficient to quote General Montgomery in part:

The German commander in France and the Low Countries was Field Marshal von Rundstedt; his title was Commander-in-Chief West. Under his command were two Army Groups: the larger, comprising more than two thirds of the operational troops available, was Army Group "B", commanded by Field Marshal Rommel, which consisted of Seventh Army (Normandy and Brittany), Fifteenth Army (Pas de Calais and Flanders) and 88 Corps (Holland). Rommel was appointed to this command in



February 1944 at the direct instance of Hitler. It was his first operational command since he had left Tunisia, nearly a year previously.

Army Group “G”, commanded by Blaskowitz, had the First and Nineteenth Armies, stationed on the Biscay coast and in the Riviera respectively.

There was a third headquarters in France of Army Group status, called Panzer Group West under General Schweppenburg. It was responsible for the administration and training of the Panzer formations while they were operationally under command of the other Army Groups.

(Montgomery, *op cit*, p. 17.)

115. It was estimated that Field Marshal von Rundstedt had under his command about sixty divisions<sup>30</sup> ((HS) 215A21.023 (D7): “21 Army Gp Weekly Intelligence Reviews (NEPTUNE)”, 28 May 44). Of this number, 38 were Infantry Divisions, three were Parachute Divisions, nine were Infantry Training Divisions, nine were Panzer Divisions and one a Panzer Grenadier Division (*Ibid*). All but two or three of the German infantry divisions were plotted by Allied Intelligence as either manning the coastal defences of the ‘Atlantic Wall’ or being within a 20-mile radius of the coast. Some 10 to 30 miles behind the infantry line of defence were the armoured divisions whose dispositions reflected the Rommel-von Rundstedt compromise over the strategy to be followed when the invasion should come<sup>31</sup> (See A.H.Q. Report No. 40 for further information on this compromise).

116. Allied Intelligence thought it quite probable that there would be conflict between von Rundstedt and Rommel over the command and control of the German forces in the West, and that consequently this might lead to confusion coupled with rivalry once the invasion was underway. (This estimation proved later to be quite accurate.) An Intelligence Review read in part:

Although Rundstedt is Commander-in-Chief, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the somewhat elderly infantry-man has handed over, or has had wrenched from him, the command of the two Armies from Brittany to Holland and that within this area the majority of the best Panzer divisions is assembling. Rundstedt appears directly to command the Biscay and Mediterranean Armies and to exercise a general suzerainty only over the younger and more favoured Field-Marshal. What Geyr [General Schweppenburg] is doing it is difficult to see. Nominally Panzer Group West controls the armoured formations in France directly under

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<sup>30</sup> “... or about one quarter of the field force of the German army” (Montgomery, *op cit*, p. 17). A map showing the disposition of German divisions in France, Belgium and Holland is attached as appendix “I”.

<sup>31</sup> An important exception to the design of having the armoured divisions fairly well back of the infantry was the location of the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division, which the Intelligence Review reports as “besides being the nearest [to the coast], is the most obscure of the Panzer divisions” (21 May 44).

Rundstedt. Yet it is difficult to see how, with the majority of them in what has become so evidently Rommel's sphere of influence, Geyr can be very much more than a general who sees that the armour is ripe for a battle in which it will be commanded by somebody else. Geyr is Rundstedt's tank man, perhaps, before the advent of Rommel, intended by the Commander-in-Chief to fight the armoured battle for him. But Hitler's Panzer protégé is unlikely to brook much interference and it is far more likely that Rommel will be early at Caen and Bayeux, exercising a very personal command while Geyr bellyaches to Rundstedt and Rommel sidetracks them both because of his favour with the Führer.

(21 Army Gp Weekly Neptune Review, op cit, 14 May 44.)

117. It was with, Rommel, or more specifically with the Seventh Army of Rommel's Army Group "B", that the Allied assault forces would meet on D Day. In the "NEPTUNE" area itself, British and American troops were expected "to be confronted with three coastal and the makings of three layback infantry divisions rapidly supported by 21 Panzer Division; and 12 SS Division should be on the scene so soon as our Eastern boundary is evident" (*Ibid*, 21 May 44).

118. The entire front allotted to Second Army was held by 716 Infantry Division, with Headquarters in Caen.<sup>32</sup> This was a static formation not distinguished by heroic tradition. It had been stationed in France as part of the force of occupation until 17 Jul 41, at which time it was assigned to defence duty on the west coast of the Cherbourg peninsula. Early in 1942 716 Inf Div was moved to the Caen-Carentan area of Normandy. Here it remained until March 1944, when it was concentrated in the Caen area (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 41, The German Defences in the Courseulles-St Aubin Area of the Normandy Coast, p. 2). The following description of the division is taken from the intelligence summary issued with 3 Cdn Inf Div Operation Order for "OVERLORD":

This division, like others in the 700 series, is a low category division of two regiments of infantry and one regiment of artillery (two field and one medium battery). All personnel are trained in coast defence although the better trained have been transferred to field divisions. The remainder consists of young soldiers, men of older classes unfit for service on the Eastern front and men who have been wounded and are only slightly disabled. In comparison with a first class field infantry division its fighting value has been assessed at 40% in a static role and 15% in a counter-attack. The division should be up to strength in personnel (13,000) and equipment, and is probably over-strength as it has been

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<sup>32</sup> A map showing the disposition of 716 Inf Div and attached units is attached as Appendix "J".

reported that non-German soldiers, Russians, Mongols, etc. have been seen in the divisional area...<sup>33</sup>

(3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Int Summary.)

This was the division, then which was to oppose the British and Canadian landings in Lower Normandy. Its two infantry regiments were disposed as follows: 726 Grenadier Regiment in the Bayeux area; and 736 Grenadier Regiment between Arromanches and the River Orne. The latter regiment, with which 1 Corps was to be concerned, was thought to hold its front with two battalions forward on the coast and one in reserve in the Caen-Bieville area (*Ibid*). East of the Orne the coastal sector was held by 711 Inf Div (of Fifteenth Army).

119. But if 716 Inf Div was not counted a formidable opponent, the mobile reserves which would inevitably be rushed to the battle-field gave cause for greater concern. Amongst those listed as “available for counter-attack on the beachhead” were two armoured formations with a background of battle experience. The first of these the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division, command by Generalleutnant Edgar Feuchtinger. The division had been virtually destroyed in Tunisia and later reformed with young, well-trained troops (*Ibid*). Stationed near Falaise, 21 Pz Div was considered to be able to make the first German counter-attack against the Allies. The second was 12 SS Panzer Division (Hitler Youth of what, in another context, would be tender years, but with officers and N.C.Os. who had seen active service. 12 SS Pz Div was located farther east, near the Seine, so as to be able to deal with a landing on either side of that river (3 Cdn Inf Div O.C. No. 1).

120. The first obstacles on the “OVERLORD” beaches were identified on air cover in the middle of February ((HS) 312.009 (D50): C.O.H.Q. Bulletin Y/35, “Underwater Obstacles in Operation Overload”). “Juno” area at first showed few beach obstacles, but in March 1944 a noticeable increase in their number gave rise to uneasiness. “Whereas originally there had been a single row, not very far below high water, the number of rows was now increasing and, as most of the obstacles were brought round from a neighboring estuary by barge or landing craft, successive rows were placed lower and lower down the beach” (Maj-Gen Sir John D. Inglis; “The Work of the Royal Engineers in North-West Europe”, R.U.S.I. Journal, May 1946, p. 180). This rapid multiplication was thought, however, to represent not so much the enemy’s awareness of the target area as part of a general defensive programme ordered by Field Marshal Rommel, that officer’s recent

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<sup>33</sup> Allied Intelligence officers realized Rommel’s concern over these non-German elements. On 7 May 44 they reported: “In his [Rommel’s] more recent pronouncement he betrays two of the major worries of the German Command in the West: Allied airborne operations and the morale of the German defenders who have either fought too long in Russia or waited too long in France; or, worse still, who are not German at all and whose impure pulses therefore may not quicken as readily as that of a German who has been warned that the consequences of defeat outweigh the unpleasantness of the coming battle”. (21 Army Gp Weekly Intelligence Review.) The report continues: “To offset the second worry, Rommel has depicted General Montgomery as a killer without mercy, a portrayal far more revealing of the Field Marshal’s own fears.” (*Ibid*.)

inspection having resulted “in his very severe condemnation of existing defts” (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Mar 44). Offshore obstacles<sup>34</sup> were of three principal types - “herissons” (or hedgehogs), Element “C”, and timber stakes.<sup>35</sup> The disposition of these devices along the beaches is shown on Trace “R” appended to 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1. The obstacles completely covered both MIKE and NAN Sectors except for a gap of about 400 yards on the eastern end of NAN. The extent of the enemy’s heightened preparedness is evident in the description of the “herissons” which follows:

Extending across the whole of MIKE and NAN Sectors, hedgehog defences have been erected from 80 to 250 yards from the coast. These obstacles consist of three 6-inch angle irons, approximately 6 feet 6 inches long joined at their centres with gusset plates to form a double tripod .... Individual obstacles are placed 12 - 15 feet apart with 25 - 30 yards between rows .... All obstacles are below high water mark. From the location and distribution of these obstacles it seems that they are intended to be anti-craft rather than anti-vehicle.

(Ibid.)

121. The second category—Element “C”—consisted of steel anti-tank barriers of gate-like appearance, made to serve as anti-craft obstacles. These were of the Belgian or De Cointet type and were disposed liberally across the divisional front.

122. The third type of offshore obstacle consisted simply of wooden stakes, approximately 10 feet high and spaced 60 feet apart, set in rows west of Courseulles and in front of Bernières (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Int Summary). A proportion of these had mines (75-millimetre shells) attached to them. There was also a series of timber ramps placed across a portion of MIKE Beach (Ibid, Trace “R”).

123. A clear conception of the appearance of the beach with these various obstructions in position can be gained by reference to the several series of oblique air photographs taken prior to the operation. Some of these are appended to the War Diary of H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde for June 1944 (Appx 1).

124. The beach defences are best described in the dwords of the Intelligence summary:

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<sup>34</sup> For excellent descriptions, detailed drawings and photographs of the various types of beach obstacles, see C.O.H.Q. Bulletin No. Y/35 mentioned above.

<sup>35</sup> The Chief Engineer, 21 Army Group, wrote later: “Had the enemy put all the energy into devising and laying ... mines [on the beaches] that he devoted to his beach obstacles, the story of the Normandy landings would have been very different”(Inglis, op cit, p. 181). He went on to add: “It is true that we had flails to clear the intial gaps for the assaulting armoured fighting vehicles, but the problem of clearing the beaches to make way for the hordes of men and vehicles and craft which would ... spread all over them would have been appalling.” (Ibid, p. 182.)

The coast is held by a system of linear defences arranged in strongpoints occupied by either one section, two sections or in some cases one whole platoon.

Each battalion has three companies forward with support weapons sub-allotted down to sections; there is therefore probably no battalion reserve. Each strongpoint may however be expected to have an immediate reserve within the position.

Defences consists mainly of pillboxes and open machine gun positions with open emplacements for 75 mm guns reinforcing the stronger positions. Strongpoints are usually set astride exists to cover the beaches with enfilade fire. In addition it can be assumed that each platoon will have a 2 inch (50 mm) mortar, and that a total of six 3 inch (81 mm) mortars per battalion will be shared out to particular strong points.... Each strongpoint is surrounded by a protective minefield and wire as well as the minefields and wire on the beaches.

(3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Int Summary.)

The summary also contains an analysis of nine strong points which, directly or indirectly, could affect the divisional area. Of these, the most formidable were located at Courseulles (on either side of the river mouth), at Bernières and at St. Aubin (Ibid. A full description of the German defences in the Courseulles area, together with maps showing the location of units of 716 Inf Div, is given in A.H.Q. Report No. 41).

125. During the three months prior to "OVERLORD" the enemy commenced work on a system of dugout positions 2,000 - 3,000 yards inland. These were thought to contain heavy mortars and machine guns. The Radar Station near Douvres la Délivrande was prepared for all-round defence. The airfield immediately south of Carpiquet showed strong perimeter defences consisting principally of anti-aircraft gun positions (Ibid.).

126. Enemy artillery which could be brought to bear on the divisional area was of three categories:

- a. heavy and medium coastal guns;
- b. field artillery of 716 In Div and heavier independent artillery; and
- c. Infantry guns on the coast.

No coastal artillery of the first category was to be found within the actual divisional boundaries, but batteries of 155-millimetre guns, notably those at Ouistreham and Houlgate, might be expected to cover the beaches. Batteries of field and medium artillery, however, were located in the area near Ver-sur-Mer, Mont Fleury, Beny-sur-Mer and Tailleville; of these, the battery at Beny-sur-mer was most important, since it lay

almost in the centre of the divisional sector. It was believed to consist of four 105-millimetre guns, but later examination showed them to be of smaller calibre. Gun positions and headquarters were defended by a perimeter of infantry positions, wire and minefields. Infantry defences on the coast included 75-millimetre guns in casemates and open emplacements (Ibid; R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Int Summary).

C. Administrative Intelligence

127 Under this heading were listed such material resources as water supply and electric power facilities in the Caen area. As to the attitude of the civilian population of Lower Normandy, one summary (evidently quoting a higher source) has this to say:

The greater part of the population look forward to liberation by the Allies. Those patriots who are already in the Resistance Movement in collaboration with the Allies will at the time of invasion carry out to the best of their ability specific military tasks allotted to them.

The comparatively few who have so far committed themselves in collaboration with the Germans may be expected to aid the enemy in maintaining order in the rear, and to withdraw with him in an endeavour to avoid falling into Allied hands.

Many middle class industrialists and administrative and police officials, who have been forced into a certain measure of collaboration with the Germans in order to keep their jobs, will do everything possible to help the Allies in order to prove their good faith.

The remainder, that is to say the great majority of the population, will do its best to impede the German resistance. This effort is more likely to take the form of strikes and petty sabotage than of armed resistance. It will probably be at its peak in the first few days after it is known that the invasion has started. After this, if our advance is slow, repression will tend to diminish it.

(W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1944: Appx 10, 8 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 13, 18 May 44.)

It is a tribute to Allied Intelligence that this sober and reasonable appreciation proved to be a quite accurate prediction.

128. Finally, the intelligence summaries of certain services gave information of particular interest to the branch concerned. Thus, divisional engineers devoted much more space to the description of rivers in the area. Citing such data as limits of tidal influence and salinity, speed of currents, etc (W.D., H.Q. R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div, Jun 1944: Appx 4, R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, 14 May). Signals supplied information concerning existing signal exchanges, and P.T.T. (Postes Telegraphes

Telephones) line and cable construction (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, May 1944: Appx 10, 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs O.O. No. 1, 14 May).

D. Intention

129. The logical starting point for consideration of the divisional assault plan is 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, "OVERLORD" of 13 May 44. But this document alone, by its very inclusiveness and breadth of coverage, cannot suffice to set forth adequately the method of execution. Reference will therefore be made to brigade group and battalion operation orders. In due course, likewise, the description of the fire plan will be based largely on the information contained in the operation order of H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div.

130. Although the Army plan (cf paras 31 to 34 above) detailed the four phases of the operation which were to culminate in the capture of the bridgehead area, the plan of 3 Cdn Inf Div extended only as far as Phase I of the Army operation. It dealt, thus, only with the objectives to be gained on D Day. Beyond that point, of course, it was possible only to speak of the role of main bodies of corps: the disposition of component formations would depend largely on circumstances, and could not be exactly foreseen. Only against the contingency that serious enemy resistance might fail to develop on D Day was a further penetration visualized and planned for an advance.

131. The intention, so simply stated, says merely:

3 Cdn Inf Div and attached troops will assault through MIKE and NAN Sectors and seize a covering position on the general line railway crossing 995682.

(3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1.)

This represents the task allotted to 3 Cdn Inf Div in the intention of Second Army to "secure on D Day a firm base along the line Bayeux-Caen".

132. The team "3 Cdn Inf Div and attached troops" embraced a very large force. It included not only the division itself and the troops under its immediate command, e.g., 2 Cdn Armd Bde, but a host of "Corps, Army and external overheads" embarking and landing as part of the divisional assault group. The division's order of battle, as it existed for the assault phase, is attached at Appendix "C". Certain other units and detachments (A.S.S.U. Tentacles, Contact Detachments, etc.) are not shown on the order of battle of the division, but only on those of the brigade groups to which they were attached. The same is true of additional naval and air force detachments. With the addition, however, of these various externals, "in support and under command for landing only", 3 Cdn Inf Div retained its normal organization of three brigade groups, corresponding to the three Naval assault Groups of Force "J" (see para 18 above). Thus, 7 Cdn Inf Assault Bde Group in G.J. 2; and 9 Cdn Inf Bde Group in G.J. 3. Each Naval Assault Group was commanded by a Captain, R.N.

133. Since shipping space was at a premium and since so much of it had to be given over to essential equipment, 3 Cdn Inf Div was pruned to “assault scales”. This meant, first, that its total of vehicles had to be stringently cut, and second, that certain units had to be excluded altogether from the assault phase. 7 Cdn Recce Regt, which was assigned no task in the assault, was thus not represented except by small parties in a special role (Beach Group and Contact Detachments).<sup>36</sup> Those units included, moreover, were to land at a greatly reduced scale, leaving their residue of personnel and vehicles to follow at intervals as shipping traffic permitted. This process of bringing units gradually up to strength, which was called “Phasing in”, is detailed at Appendix “G” of 3 Cdn Inf Div 0.0. No. 1.

#### E. Method

134. The divisional assault was envisaged as being executed in four phases. These will first be considered with reference to the ground which they were to include. (See Appendix “G”.)

135. Phase I was to consist of the assault and the capture of the beachhead objective known by the code work “YEW”, the assault itself being made on a two-brigade front through MIKE and NAN Sectors. “YEW”, as will be seen from the map at Appendix “G”, was merely a shallow foothold enclosing the towns of Vaux, Graye-sur-Mer, Courseulles, Bernières and St. Aubin.

136. In Phase II, the right assaulting brigade group was then to secure crossings over the River Seulles and establish itself on the southern bank southeast of Creully. At the same time the left brigade had the important task of establishing a firm base on the high ground Basly-Anguerny-Anisy in order to integrate the advance of both 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs landing on widely separated beaches (1 Corps 0.0. No. 1). This intermediate objective was called “ELM”.

137. For Phase III, the reserve brigade having landed was to advance as swiftly as possible, with the support of armour, to secure the area Authie-Ardenne-Carpiquet, while the right assaulting brigade moved forward in conformity with it to seize and hold its final objective: Putot-en-Bessin - Bretteville-l’Orgueilleuse - Norrey-en-Bessin (*Ibid*). This would see the division by the evening of D Day on the objective “OAK”, i.e., astride the Bayeux-Caen road, the extremities of which were to be in the hands of 50(N) Inf Div and 3 Brit Inf Div. Second Army’s firm base would thus be achieved.

138. The final phase, planned for D plus 1, was to consist simply of reorganization on the final objective “OAK”. These phases can now be dealt with in greater detail, with specific reference to infantry objectives.

139. Phase I. The grouping for the assault phase was as follows: 7 Cdn Inf Assault Bde Group on the left; and 9 Cdn Inf Bde Group in reserve.

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<sup>36</sup> For an account of these see Captain W.G. Pavey, An Historical Account of the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment in the World War, 1939-1945 (Montreal, 1948), pp 39 ff.



140. 7 Cdn Inf Bde. The tasks allotted to 7 Cdn Inf Bde were the following:

- a. Assault astride the mouth of the River Seulles....
- b. Mop up the coastal region from exclusive LaRiviere ... to inclusive Courseulles-sur-Mer ....
- c. Seize the beachhead objective Yew.

These tasks were to be carried out by two battalions. On the right R. Wing Rif were to assault through MIKE Sector with three companies (including one of 1 C. Scot R. under command). One company was to capture Vaux and enemy positions on the right; one company was to capture La Valette and Graye-sur-Mer; and the third was to “overwhelm and mop up” the beach defence area west of the Courseulles breakwater. The battalion’s reserve companies were to advance beyond “YEW” to seize and hold Ste. Croix-sur-Mer and Banville (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, June 1944: Appx 5, R. Wpg Rif Op Memorandum No. 1, 24 May 44). On the left Regina Rif were to assault through NAN Green Beach and commence to clear Courseulles, a reserve company passing through to capture Reviere (W.D., Regina Rif, May 1944: Appx 10, Regina Rif 0.0 No. 1, 24 May 44).

141. 8 Cdn Inf Bde. 8 Cdn Inf Bde’s tasks can be summarized as follows:

- a. Assault through NAN Sector.
- b. Mop up coastal area from exclusive Courseulles-sur-Mer to inclusive St. Aubin-sur-Mer.
- c. Seize the beachhead objective (YEW) ....

(3 Cdn Inf Div 0.0 No. 1.)

Here again the assault was to be made on a two-battalion front. On the right Q.O.R. of C. were to land with two companies through NAN White Beach and overcome the beach defences between Courseulles and Bernieres. The reserve companies, landing somewhat later, were to clear Bernières and the beachhead area within the battalion sector. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., May 1944: Appx 12, Q.O.R. of C. 0.0 No. 7, 22 May 44.) N. Shore R. was to attack on the left through NAN Red Beach with two companies forward. The battalion was then to overcome the beach defences between Bernières and St. Aubin and mop up St Aubin itself. A reserve company was to press on beyond “YEW” and capture Tailleville (W.D., N. Shore R., May 1944: Appx 3, N. Shore R. 0.0 No. 1, 23 May 44). 48 R.M. Commando (of 4 S.S. Bde) was to land on NAN Red Beach immediately behind N. Shore R., turn left and capture Langrune-sur-mer (8 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0 No. 1, 18 May 44). In summary, then, an essential feature of Phase I was the seizure by reserve companies for the four intermediate positions, Ste. Croix, Banville, Reviere and Tailleville. This extension of the immediate beachhead was to pave the way for Phase II.

142. Phase II. The divisional object in Phase II was to secure crossings over the first main river obstacle--the River Seullès--and to seize the high ground selected as the intermediate objective "ELM".

143. 7 Cdn Inf Bde. The crossings over the Seullès were to be gained by R. Wpg Rif and 1 C. Scot R. in the area of Creully, following which these units were to consolidate south of the river. Meanwhile, Regina Rif was to complete its clearance of Courseulles block by block and proceed via Revières to seize the dominating ground northeast of Le Fresne-Camilly (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde (Adv), 6 May 44: Appx 17, 7 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0. No. 1, 18 May 44).

144. 8 Cdn Inf Bde. When R. de Chaud had been landed through Bernières, it was to proceed at once to capture Beny-sur-mer and the battery positions near it. The battalion would then continue southwards to capture Basly and establish a firm base on the high ground west of Colomy-sur-Thaon. When this had been effected, Q.O.R. of C. were to advance through R. de Chaud and seize the village of Anisy and the high ground to the north of it. N. Shore R., meanwhile, with the assistance of "X" Troop of 30 Assault Unit, Royal Marines, was to seize intact the radar installations west of Douvres. Later, when R. de Chaud had completed its task, N. Shore R. was to reorganize on the spur northeast of Anguerny (8 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0. No. 1). This would complete the capture of the divisional intermediate objective "ELM". It represented the final objective for 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and in the Anguerny area a brigade fortress was to be formed, in rear of which 9 Cdn Inf Bde would probably assemble prior to advancing to the divisional objective.

145. Phase III. The final objective lay astride the Bayeux-Caan road on either side of the river Mue, which crosses it at La Villeneuve. Its capture was to be the task of 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, the latter having been moved into position for this next phase.

146. 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Prior to a general advance by the brigade, 1 C. Scott R., with the support of an armoured squadron, was first to secure an intermediate position on the high ground to the west of Camilly. R. Wpg Rif and Regina Rif were then to advance and capture the final objectives, respectively Putot-on-Bessin and Norrey-en-Bessin, while at the same time 1 C. Scot R. took up a position at Secqueville-en-Bessin (7 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0. No. 1).

147. 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Some recapitulation is required in order to clarify the role of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, which was, essentially, the capture of the eastern half of the divisional final objective. In view of the uncertainty attached to the success of the assaulting brigades, two separate plans were conceived for the commitment of the reserve formation. These will be briefly summarized.

148. Plan "A". During Phase I, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to be landed through NAN Sector behind 8 Cdn Inf Bde, the precise time being left to the discretion of the G.O.C. While Phase II was in progress, the brigade was to assemble in the vicinity of Beny-sur-Mer, again behind 8 Cdn Inf Bde. For its part in Phase III, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to move forward with the support of armour "at greatest possible speed", Nth N.S. Highrs leading. The

route to be followed led through Basly, Villns-les-Buissons, Buron, Authie and Franqueville to the airfield of Carpiquet, which was the ultimate objective (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, May 1944: Appx 3, 9 Cdn Inf Bde 0.0. No.1, 18 May 44).

149. Plan “B”. In the event of 8 Cdn Inf Bde being held up, or of the beaches near Bernières being unsuitable for landing, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was, alternatively, to go ashore through MIKE Sector behind 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Assembly would then take place south of Banville. The route forward to the final objective from this area was not selected in advance (Ibid).

150. 8 Cdn Inf Bde. During Phase III, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was required merely to organize its position against possible enemy counter-attacks (3 Cdn Inf Div 0.0. No. 1).

151. Phase IV. All three infantry brigades were to adjust their battalion dispositions to meet possible counter-attacks. In 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 1 C. Scot R. was to strengthen the brigade fortress by moving south beyond Secqueville-en-Bessin. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was expected to be relieved in the Anguerny area by 153 Inf Bde of 51 (H) Inf Div (follow-up). In that case it was planned that the former would move almost due west to a position behind 7 Cdn Inf Bde in the general area Cal t-Camilly - Secqueville-en-Bessin - Cully. There it was to consolidate the area “against possible enemy armoured attack with special consideration to the approaches from the south and SW on the divisional right flank” (Ibid). A counter-attack force composed of units of 2 Cdn Armd Bde was to take up a central position on the feature between the rivers Chiromme and Mun (Ibid).

152. The foregoing remarks represent only the bare skeleton of the infantry assault and the advance to the final objective. Little mention has been made of the tasks assigned to the other members of the assault team, upon whose skill much would depend. To attempt to describe these tasks concurrently with the four phases of the operation outlined above would result in losing the continuity of the plan. They must therefore be dealt with separately.

#### F. Naval Assault Force “J”

153. So important was the naval share in the approach to the beaches that command even of the military formations embarked in the assault groups was to be exercised by Naval Force Commanders, until such time as the Army should be “firmly established ashore” (Source quoted in CMHQ Report No. 147 as: Operation “Neptune”, Naval Operation Orders, Part I). In large measure the success of Phase I depended upon the navigational ability of the craft commanders, for the history of combined operations contained numerous instances of troops being landed at the wrong beaches. The experience of 1 Cdn Inf Div in the assault on Sicily is a case in point: several battalions found themselves incorrectly landed, fortunately not in the face of heavy opposition. Such incidents served to reinforced the argument for a daylight assault. On this matter the military requirements in “OVERLORD” were most exacting: battalion operation orders even gave six-figure references in specifying landing points. Yet the possibility of error remained. Accordingly the following direction appeared in Naval Orders:

“Landing craft are to press on regardless of loss or of the fact that they may find themselves opposite the wrong beach” (Source quoted in C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147 as Operation “Neptune”, Naval Operation Orders (Eastern Task Force), Part 7). Orders to commanding officers of landing craft contained this advice: “Do not worry too much about how you are to get out again, the first and primary object is to get in and land your load without drowning the vehicles” (Source quoted in C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147 as: Force “J” Naval Operation Order, 19 May 44, Admiralty, Military Section).

#### G. Commandos

154. Elements of 4 S.S. Bde, comprising 41, 46, 47 and 48 Royal Marine Commandos, were to perform certain special tasks in co-operation with 3 Cdn Inf Div. Between the assault areas of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 3 Brit Inf Div (PETER and OBOE sectors), a line of cliffs made landings impossible; the resort towns of Langrune, Petit-Enfer, Luc-sur-Mer and Lion-sur-Mer would therefore have to be cleared by Commandos working in from either flank. During Phase I, 48 R.M. Commando was to land behind N. Shore R. and capture Langrune (see para 141). There it would join with 41 R.M. Commando landing under orders of 3 Brit Inf Div. In Phase II, these two units were charged with capturing the villages of La Délivrande and Douvres la Délivrande (N. Shore R. O.O. No. 1). Finally, to permit 7 Cdn Inf Bde to proceed with Phase III, 4 S.S. Bde, less 46 and 47 Commandos, was to relieve the bridge guards at the crossings over the Seulles from Creully to Reviers (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). The task of 30 Assault Unit, R.M., operating with 8 Cdn Inf Bde, has been mentioned above (para 144).

#### H. Armour

155. Amidst all the diverse machinery of amphibious operations there is perhaps nothing which more arouses the imagination than the special equipment of the armoured regiments in support of the assaulting infantry. Hardly a hint of what this support was to be is discernible in the stated intention of 2 Cdn Armd Bde to “sp 3 Cdn Inf Div onto the Div final objective OAK and ... be prepared to adv on afternoon of D Day to secure the high ground at Evrecy...” (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Apr – 31 May 44: Appx 3, 2 Cdn Armd Bde Operation Order No.1, 23 May). The latter half of this intention has reference, of course, to the possible failure of the enemy to muster effective opposition.

156. During Phases I and II, 2 Cdn Armd Bde was to be decentralized. 6, 10 and 27 Cdn Armd Regts would operate under the command of 7, 8 and 9 Inf Bdes respectively, with brigade headquarters under the command of 9 Cdn Inf Bde for landing only. In Phase III, 10 Cdn Armd Regt and two squadrons of 6 Cdn Armd Regt were to be concentrated in reserve to protect the divisional right flank; 27 Cdn Armd Regt and the third squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt were to remain under the command of 9 and 7 Cdn Inf Bdes to support the advance to the final objective. Finally, in Phase IV, when 8 Cdn Inf Bde had assumed responsibility for the right flank, 2 Cdn Armd Bde was to be concentrated, as noted above (para 151), in divisional reserve as a counter-attack force.

157. The organization of 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts each into two squadrons of normal Shermans has been referred to previously (para 103). This arrangement was designed to give close support to each assaulting battalion at the crucial moment of landing. Reserve battalions, making an unopposed landing, would be supported ashore by “normal” squadrons. For a detailed description of the manner in which it was proposed to operate the amphibious tanks, reference should be made to the memorandum, Drill for Launching and Run-in of DDs, issued by 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 13 Apr 44 (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 20 Apr – 31 May 44: Appx 11). Launching was to take place at 5000 yards from the beach under cover of smoke laid by L.C.G. (L), touchdown being made at H minus 5 minutes. D.D. tanks were thus to form the first wave of the assault, going in five minutes before the leading flight of landing craft hit the beach (See diagram at Appendix “H”). Although it was considered improbable that the operation would be mounted if seas were rough, it was nonetheless entertained as a possibility that the launching of D.D. tanks might have to be cancelled altogether (Ibid), 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts were each in addition to supply two Sherman tank Vc to be employed as “concrete-busters” in the assault. These would be borne in L.C.T. (C.B.) (see Ships and Craft of Force “J”, Appendix “B”) and would disembark so as to deliver observed fire from their 17-pounder guns against emplacements (R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). Concrete-busters would revert to regimental command on completion of their tasks (2 Cdn Armd Bde O.O. No.1).

158. If enemy opposition failed to materialize on D Day, 2 Cdn Armd Bde, plus a force composed of one infantry battalion and supporting arms, was to strike forward and seize the high ground near Evrecy. (Ibid.)

159. “C” Squadron, Inns of Court, consisting of armoured cars, and a party of Royal Engineers, was ordered to land shortly after H Hour on MIKE Sector. The definition of its task may be quoted from the divisional order:

...This force is to push forward as soon as coastal defences have been overcome, and is to destroy all bridges over the River Orne from inclusive road bridge 937471 to inclusive rail bridge 022621. This force is to impose maximum delay on the enemy.

(3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1.)

Destruction of these bridges would prevent the enemy crossing the Orne below Thury-Harcourt. The role given to this detachment, together with 2 Cdn Armd Bde’s projected advance to Evrecy, may be taken as fulfilling Second Army’s injunction concerning the bold use of armoured mobile forces operating in advance of main bodies (Cf para 34 above).

160. One troop of “B” Squadron, 22<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons, (Flail tanks) was to land under the command of 5 Assault Regt, R.E., to prepare safe lanes through the minefields on the beaches. During Phases II and III the “Flails” would continue with this task but under command of 102 Beach Sub-Area. Finally, in Phase IV, they would pass under the

command of 2 Cdn Armd Bde to move with that formation to the area reserved for the counter-attack force (2 Cdn Armd Bde O.O. No. 1).

I. Machine Gun Battalion

161. The heavier support weapons (medium machine guns and 4.2 inch heavy mortars) of C.H. of O. (M.G.) were not suitable for employment in the assault in the capture of the final objective (Operation Orders, 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes).

J. Engineers

162. Because of the multitude of tasks confronting the sappers, engineer resources were considerably swelled in excess of divisional strength. These tasks, which had all to be co-ordinated by C.R.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div, included clearance of obstacles, opening of beach exits, development of beaches and Beach Maintenance Areas, clearance and maintenance of inland routes, bridging, laying of defensive minefields and establishment of water points (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). In addition to the normal engineer complement of 6, 16 and 18 Cdn Fd Coys and 3 Cdn Fd Pk Coy, there were also under command the following: 5 Cdn Fd Coy; part of 5 Assault Regt, R.E. (26<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> Assault Squadrons); 262 Fd Coy, R.E.; a detachment of 19 Fd Coy R.E.; and engineer elements of 102 Beach Sub-Area (R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). It is impossible to set forth fully the function of each engineer group, for the allotment of tasks was exceedingly complicated. Only a general statement of the division of labour is necessary.

163. 5 Cdn Fd Coy, in support of 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes, was charged with clearing four gaps through the underwater obstacles by H plus 75 minutes, using bulldozers and explosives. These gaps, distributed across the divisional front, were to vary in width from 600 yards on MIKE Green Beach to 200 yards on NAN Green. On each brigade front a Naval landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Unit (L.C.O.C.U.) was to assist in the removal of underwater obstructions (Ibid). Two sapper assault teams, composed each of one platoon from 6 and 16 Cdn Fd Coys, were to be placed under the command of the assaulting brigades to assist the battalions in clearing beach defences (Ibid).

164. Each brigade front was to be provided with four beach exits. Lanes were to be cleared and marked across the beach and exits breached through to the first inland lateral. This work was to be undertaken by personnel of 5 Assault Regt, R.E., using Assault Vehicles, Royal Engineers (A.V.R.E.) assisted by the "Flails" of 22 Dgns (Ibid). A preparatory measure was of course the blasting of lanes by L.C.A. (H.R.). Engineers of 102 Beach Sub-Area had as their task the development of the beaches and Beach Maintenance Areas. This included the construction of a twenty-foot lateral along the beach, the improvement and maintenance of the exits, and the conversion of the railway line between Courseulles and Bernières into a road suitable for traffic (Ibid). Road clearance was the responsibility of the divisional engineers and involved the normal removal of mines, road blocks, etc (Ibid). Particular importance was attached to the construction of Class 40 bridges over the River Seulles at Pont de Revières and Colombiers-sur-Seulles. These crossing places, it will be recalled, were to be secured by

7 Cdn Inf Bde. The bridges were to be completed by H plus 7 hours and H plus 11 hours respectively (Ibid).

K. Administration

165. A complete and detailed description of the multifarious provisions for maintenance and supply is set forth in 3 Cdn Inf Div Adm Plan, which contains thirty sections devoted to such topics as Maintenance, Transportation, Provost Services, Burials and Graves Registration, and Discipline ((HS) 235C3.056(D1)). During the early days of the operation, it was planned that there should be three successive maintenance periods, as shown below:

a. Assault Maintenance (D to D plus 1)

3 Cdn Inf Div will control maintenance through Beach Stores Dumps, Div Administrative Area and the Beach Maintenance Area established by 102 Beach Sub Area.

b. Beach Maintenance (D plus 1 to D plus 4)

Headquarters 1 Corps will control maintenance, utilizing Beach Maintenance Areas formed by 102 Beach Sub Area.

c. Line of Communication Terminal Maintenance (D plus 5 onwards)

Headquarters Second Army Troops controls Beach Maintenance Areas which are merged to form No.1 Line of Communication Terminal.

The co-ordination and organization of all beaches will be the responsibility of HQ 11 Line of Communication exercised through Beach Sub Areas.

(Ibid.)

166. Some conception of the scale of maintenance requirements can be found from the numbers of troops and vehicles to be landed. It was estimated that provision would have to be made on D Day plus 1 these figures, which included British Commando, Engineer and other troops attached to 3 Cdn Inf Div, would have been increased to 23,711; 2,665 and 931 (Ibid).

167. It was planned that “on D Day and D plus 1 the Assault Formations would ‘live’ on landing reserves and ammunition brought in under their own arrangement” (Major J. Lee-Richardson, 21 Army Group Ordnance, The Story of the Campaign in North West Europe (BAOR, 1946), p. 16). The only exception to this was the supply of

ammunition and petrol for tanks, SP Artillery and DUKWs (3 Cdn Inf Div Admin Plan)  
Individual rations to be carried by infantrymen were the following:

- a. 1 Emergency ration
- b. 1 x 24 hours ration "A") Personnel landing on D Day  
1 x 24 hours ration ) ONLY
- c. 2 x 24 hours rations - personnel landing D plus 1 and subsequently
- d. 20 cigarettes
- e. 1 Tommy Cooker complete and 5 hexamine refills.
- f. 1 Water Sterilising Outfit.

(Ibid.)

168. Following the assault landings would come the problem of building up the reserve stocks on the beachhead. This has been described as follows:

The rapid build-up of reserves was clearly a matter of paramount importance throughout the early stages if the fighting formations were to be afforded liberty of action in the event of a sudden crack in the enemy's defences. The urgency was at its greatest in the initial few days when sufficient reserves would have to be landed not only to allow for a rapid advance but to be available for resisting the fierce and lengthy counter-attacks which might be launched against the shallow bridgehead. In addition to normal maintenance, therefore, reserve stocks were to be landed at the following scales:

- a. By midnight D plus 3

Ammunition: Four days' expenditure at 21 Army Group rates for the forces ashore by D plus 5.

POL: Fifty miles per vehicle ashore on D plus 5.

Supplies: Two days' supplies for the forces ashore on D Plus 5.

Ordnance Stores: Maintenance from D plus 1 to D plus 9 would be dependent



(less ammo)

Landing Reserves. A specially scaled Landing Reserve Set<sup>37</sup> would be landed as early as possible for each brigade group or equivalent formation ashore. From D plus 10 maintenance would be by Beach Maintenance Pack. Each pack was scaled for a division or an equivalent formation and contained first and second echelon spares plus equipment for thirty days at special wastage rates.

((HS) 215A21.053 (D15): Administrative History of 21 Army Group (BAOR, 1945), p. 7.)

169. During the first eight days of the assault while 9 and 10 C.B.R. Bns were establishing themselves in the beachhead, it was planned to send reinforcements to 3 Cdn Inf Div by predetermined drafts (3 Cdn Inf Div, Operation "OVERLORD", Admin Plan, Appx "Q"). For 3 Cdn Inf Div, the total reinforcement per day was estimated as follows:

Day	Offrs	ORs	Total
D	41	384	425
D plus 1	36	539	575
D plus 2	14	461	475
D plus 3	28	763	791
D plus 4	16	314	330
D plus 5	11	329	340
D plus 6	17	233	250
D plus 7	5	195	200
D plus 8	105	1395	1500

(Ibid.)

A more complete account of the administrative aspects of "OVERLORD" is given below, under the assault.

#### L. Intercommunication

170. Signals instructions for the assault present a bewildering complexity of wireless frequencies, code signs and diagrams. When it is considered that communications had to be maintained under constantly changing conditions, this multiplicity of technical detail is not to be wondered at. To ensure adequate passage of information, alternative channels

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37 "For planning purposes and to allow for losses, delays in off-loading and to ensure adequate reserves to meet possible heavy demands, it was assumed that one of these sets [each one comprising approximately 8,000 cases calculated to maintain a brigade group or equivalent formation in ordnance stores for thirty days] would maintain a brigade for fifteen days only". (Administrative History of 21 Army Group, op cit, p.18.)

had to be devised. In addition to the wireless system for the seaborne artillery, divisional signals had to provide for communications throughout the following stages of the battle:

- a. A.V.R.E., D.D. tanks and assault companies landed.
- b. Battalion headquarters ashore and brigade and divisional headquarters afloat.
- c. Assault brigade headquarters landed, reserve brigade and divisional headquarters afloat.
- d. Divisional headquarters ashore.

(3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs O.O. No. 1.)

171. Beach Signals Sections of 102 Beach Sub-Area were required to establish a Main Beach Signal Station (M.B.S.S.) on each sector; these would initially serve as headquarters for brigade staffs on first landing. Advanced Beach Signal Stations (A.B.S.S.) were also to be set up on MIKE Red, NAN Green, NAN White and NAN Red Beaches (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1).

#### M. Enemy Strategy

172. Some indications of the enemy's defences and the disposition of his divisions has been given above (paras 114-126 inclusive). Intelligence officers made every effort to give the invasion commanders as full and comprehensive a picture of the forces opposing them as possible. The tactics the enemy commanders would employ once the invasion was launched, however, was one of the chief imponderables facing the Allied leaders. Nevertheless, some forecast of the possible development of operations had to be made if only as a basis for administrative planning. An appreciation written on 7 May 44 under General Montgomery's authority expected enemy resistance to fall into four phases. These phases were:

- a. Effort to defeat us on the beaches and immediately inland.
- b. Effort to prevent the capture of Cherbourg and the establishment of a safe beachhead.
- c. Failing this, an effort to prevent us from breaking out from the beachhead line.
- d. Failing this, an effort to prevent us from reaching any other large ports.

((HS) 202A21.014 (D2): 21 Army Gp, "Appreciation on Possible Developments of Operations to Secure a Lodgement Area: Operation 'OVERLORD' ".)

173. This appreciation does not deal with the anticipated pattern of enemy resistance which would be offered in the first two phases. A partial estimate of what was expected in these phases, however, was given under different headings in Canadian Intelligence Report No. 1 on 1 Jun 44:

#### Immediate Battle

The enemy fmns which will have the unenviable task of meeting the full weight of allied assault are 711 and 716 coastal divs. Ensconsed in their concrete in which they obviously pin so much hope these tps ... will be backed up during the early part of D Day by the full weight of 21 Pz Div, 352 and 243 Inf Divs. Their immediate task will be the destruction of the allied forces on the beach and if this fails and if ground is gained, to hurl us back to the landing craft by well timed armd counter-attacks. If this, in its turn, achieves no success then vital ground must be occupied that will ensure sufficient time for the arrival of further rifts and the deliberate counter-attack to be mounted. During D Day 12 SS Pz Div will be moving into action. In addition the local Coprs Tk bn and elements of 17 SS Pz Gren Div will probably be identified on one or the other part of the front.<sup>38</sup>

By the evening of D Day the enemy will have realized that the major Allied thrust has been launched. Furthermore, he will have a shrewed idea of the approx str and frontage covered. He must, therefore, consider what fmns may conveniently be moved, without weakening the rest of his def layout to such an extent to allow a diversionary attack the opportunity of achieving good results. Therefore it is likely that, though 179 Pz Div from Mantes and the unidentified Pz Div to the South of OVERLORD area will receive orders to move, 2 Pz Div will probably remain at Amiens, capable of dealing with any diversion that might be made between Le Havre and Calais.

#### The build-up

Once a firm footing has been gained by the Allies, the enemy will make an all out effort to build up sufficient forces to carry out a deliberate counter-attack with all possible speed. From D plus 2 to approx D plus 5 it is likely that about thirteen divs may be moving in against OVERLORD. These may incl:

Five Pz Divs (2 Pz, 272 Pz, 2 SS Pz, 1 SS Pz, the armd elements at Nancy.)

Six Inf Divs (3 Para Div, 5 Para Div.)

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<sup>38</sup> See map outlining the disposition of enemy divisions in the West at Appx "I".

Two Para Divs(3 Para Div, 5 Para Div.)

(W.D., G.S. (Int), H.Q. First Cdn Army, June 1944: Appx 1.)

174. Clearly the Allied view of the possible turn of events was based on the principle that one should never underestimate his enemy. Thus one Intelligence Summary states: “By D minus 1 the enemy, having watched our posts fill up, is likely to have adjusted his general dispositions” ((HS) 215B2.023 (D3): Second British Army Planning Intelligence Summary No. 23, Pt 1: “Enemy Reaction to Operation OVERLORD”). Similarly it is obvious that consideration was given to the possibility that the Cover Plan might fall or that the Tactical Air Force would be unable to ‘seal off’ the “NEPTUNE” area. Yet, when estimating the progress of the invading forces, the Allied commanders planned on the basis of being able to meet successfully such forces as the enemy might launch against them, a basis which is reflected on 21 Army Gp phase-line maps. (See (HS) 212a21.013: 21 Army Gp, “Planning Forecast of Operations” for reproductions of these maps). In writing about General Montgomery’s “Presentation of Plans” conference on 7 Apr 44, his Chief-of-Staff (Maj Gen de Guigand) gave the following description of a phase line:

Let me explain what is meant by a phase line. A Commander must have a definite idea how he intends to swing the battle. He must aim at a definite pattern. Having given this, the staff works out the optimum progress of development in accordance with that pattern. Upon this all planning is based. The amount of transport, the number of airfields to be constructed, the amount of bridging material; all such items as this have to be equated to the time factor. These decisions reflect back upon the loading of ships, and the planning of the build-up. I stress the ‘optimum’ classification. A phase line does in no way imply a guarantee that we shall reach such a position by a certain date. It should mean that the armies will not be caught napping if things go really well, by being held up through some shortage or other.

(Maj-Gen Sir Francis de Guigand, Operation Victory (London, 1947), p. 358.)

175. Another writer describes General Montgomery’s lecture on Rommel’s probable reaction to the invasion during the first two phases at his ‘Final Presentation of Plans’ conference held on 15 May 44:

‘Last February’, he said, ‘Rommel took command from Holland to the Loire. It is now clear that his intention is to deny any penetration: OVERLORD is to be defeated on the beaches’. He then went on to state in detail what changes Rommel had made, and he continued: ‘Rommel is an energetic and determined commander: he has made a world of difference since he took over. He is best at the spoiling attack; his forte is

disruption; he is too impulsive for a set-piece battle. He will do his level best to 'Dunkirk' us--not to fight the armoured battle on ground of his own choosing, but to avoid it altogether by preventing our tanks from landing by using his own tanks well forward. On D Day he will try to force us from the beaches and secure Caen, Bayeux, Carentain.... Thereafter he will continue his counter-attacks. But, as time goes on, he will combine them with a roping-off policy and he must then hold firm on the important ground which dominates and controls the road axes in the bocage country'.

(Chester Wilmont, The Struggle of Europe (London, 1952), pp 215-16.)

176. It would seem that the line which it was expected Rommel would hold -- "The important ground which dominates and controls the road axes of the bocage country" -- ran parallel to the "Bridgehead line".<sup>39</sup> Thus the bridgehead area included "two pdr of Cherbourg, the beaches, Mulberries and small ports which have been estimated to be sufficient in toto to accept and maintain approximately thirty Allied divisions". (Appreciation of Possible Development of Operations....). It was estimated the bridgehead line "would be approximately 100 miles in length" and that the enemy would "no doubt try to hold in some strength along the whole of the line, but .... [would] retain a number of divisions for use in offensive pushes of his own, designed to take the initiative from us, or to meet and stop any advance by us" (Ibid).

177. It was assumed that to stop any breakout from the bridgehead line, (the third phase of enemy resistance), the German commander would have some 20 divisions along the 100 mile phase line with eight divisions in reserve. This would mean that enemy divisions in the line would hold fronts five miles long. "A disposition of this nature would mean that the enemy strength actually on the line might not be superior to ours, but it would still be extremely difficult for us to advance because of the size and mobility of enemy reserves" (Ibid). Should the enemy react in this manner, the appreciation went on to state:

... we may be held up on the D plus 14 line for some time and may even suffer local setbacks. This possibility must be squarely faced and may well come to pass since it is an obvious end towards which enemy dispositions have been aimed for some months past. If we are held up at this time we must build up our combat strength as rapidly as possible even tot he exclusion of administrative build-up and combined our increasing strength with an all out air effort designed to reduce the mobility and effectiveness of the enemy reserve divisions. By such means we should

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<sup>39</sup> "The D plus 14 line at its western extremity is anchored in Lessay and the mouth of the River Ay. The Germans held the higher ground along the low ridge line which runs from North-east of Coutances down to the main arc of high ground, also held in enemy hands, which commences at Villedieu and swings around to Falaise. On the East the Bridgehead line comes up to the River Dives". (Appreciation of Possible Development of Operations.... See also map appended to this document.)

gradually be able to build up once more a forward momentum and slowly expand the bridgehead along its whole perimeter.

(Ibid.)

178. It was thought that if the enemy were able to build up his forces to the optimum appreciated by Allied Intelligence, ‘it may well be D plus 30 or even later before we can break out from the enemy’s effort to contain us’ (Ibid). Nevertheless it was felt that the type of formation the enemy would be bringing in at this time would be inferior to his earlier build-up. Moreover, within the limits of the bridgehead the Allied forces would have room to manoeuvre and so “permit the massing of a force to drive forward in any chosen direction”. This, (the beginning of the fourth phase), might lead the enemy to:

... change his defensive tactics into a more elastic and mobile defence, utilizing grouped reserves and strong counter-attacks against our successful penetrations. Also, he might well try a strong attack designed to split our forces, temporarily regain the initiative, and thus delay our advance against the ports. He will certainly appreciate that our build-up and maintenance capabilities over the beachhead are limited, and will be greatly reduced when the autumn storms commence. He will therefore do all in his power to prevent or delay our capturing and using any additional large ports.

(Ibid.)

#### THE FIRE PLAN<sup>40</sup>

179. Before embarking on this topic,<sup>41</sup> it is appropriate to turn back briefly to that operation which had also involved an assault landing on the French channel coast. The costly but invaluable experience gained at Dieppe almost two years prior to “OVERLORD” was closely studied and the lessons learned from that experience carefully formulated (Cf (HS) 594.013 (D1): The Dieppe Raid, Combined Report (C.O.H.Q. 1942)).

180. Not the least of these lessons, although it is not included in the Combined Report, must have been the knowledge that much time must elapse before the invasion could take place. “I believe”, said Lt-Gen Crerar with reference to Dieppe, “that when this war is examined in proper perspective it will be seen that the sobering influence of that operation on existing Allied strategical conceptions, with the enforced realization by the Allied Governments of the lengthy and tremendous preparations necessary before invasion could be attempted, was a Canadian contribution of the greatest significance to final victory” (Introduction to Briefing of Officers, H.Q. First Cdn Army, 7 Jun 44,

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<sup>40</sup> See also “The Problem of Fire Support” in A.H.Q. Report No. 42.

<sup>41</sup> The Fire Plan is treated here as a separate topic outside 3 Cdn Inf Div’s assault plan because of its importance.

op cit). General Crerar's remarks on that same occasion shed light on another aspect of the assault--the relative value of tactical surprise:

Until the evidence of Dieppe proved otherwise, it had been the opinion in highest command and staff circles in this country that an assault against a heavily defended coast could be carried out on the basis of securing tactical surprise, and without dependence on overwhelming fire support, in the critical phases of closing the beaches and overrunning the beach defences.

(Ibid.)

181. If tactical surprise was not to be the basis of the plan, it followed that a daylight assault, supported by heavy and accurate observed bombardment, was preferable to one made under cover of darkness. The first lesson of Dieppe, therefore, was the need for " 'overwhelming' fire support ... during the initial stages of the attack". The report defined the methods by which this must be provided:

... by heavy and medium Naval bombardment, by air action, by special vessels or craft working close inshore, and by using the fire power of the assaulting troops while still sea-borne.

(The Dieppe Raid.)

182. An important source of the "OVERLORD" fire plan is the Graham Report, "Fire Support of Sea-borne Landings Against a Heavily Defended Coast", ((HS) 952.013 (D46)) which had considered the problem of distributing a sufficient weight of high explosive over an area to be assaulted (Cf Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief ..., Appx 5). Our concern here is not so much with that principle as with the means employed to produce an adequate volume of fire. Examination of the fire plan conceived for "OVERLORD" reveals close parallels with the Dieppe recommendations. The huge scale of support to be furnished by heavy and medium naval bombardment has already been outlined (supra, para 21); at Dieppe naval fire had been limited to "a short bombardment carried out by destroyers" (The Dieppe Raid). Air support, which at Dieppe had proved "adequate to cover the operation" and had included no preliminary bombing, was expanded for "OVERLORD" to comprehend attacks by heavy and medium bombers as well as fighter bombers, so that the total effect of the air assault should extend far beyond the target area proper.

183. The numerous strange craft making up the Naval Assault Forces may be said to have had their genesis in the recommendation for support delivered by "special vessels or craft working close inshore". This support was to be given during the "vital minutes while troops are disembarking, cutting or blasting their way through wire, clearing beach mines and finding routes over obstacles", for at that very time they would be least able to support themselves (Ibid).

184. We come finally to the suggested use of “the fire power of the assaulting troops while still sea-borne”. This, the Dieppe report goes on to say, might be further developed by the employment of “self-propelled mobile artillery provided that it is put ashore immediately” (Ibid). But it does not envisage that such artillery might be fired even while still at sea. This was a later development, growing out of the original recommendation for sea-borne military fire-power. Assault divisions in Operation “OVERLORD” were accordingly equipped with “Priests”--U.S. 105-millimetre self-propelled guns (M.7). Owing to the fact that 3 Cdn Inf Div was to make its attack on a two-brigade front, it was deemed advisable to strengthen its artillery component by the addition of a fourth field regiment, thus giving each assaulting brigade the support of two regiments. The additional unit first selected was 8 Cdn Fd Regt, but on its departure to the Mediterranean with 1 Cdn Corps it was replaced, in October 1943, by 19 Cdn Fed Regt (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, October 1943: Appx 20, Message 067, G First Cdn Army to 2 Cdn Corps, 18 Oct 43).

185. Turning now to the divisional fire plan, it may be observed first that its most remarkable feature was the very high degree of co-ordination it achieved by combining the efforts of Navy, Army and Air Force. The importance of such exercises as “PIRATE” in arriving at this co-ordination has been mentioned above (para 90). The intention of the fire plan, broadly, was threefold:

- a. to provide “drenching” fire against beach defences from all weapons;
- b. to destroy enemy batteries by naval fire and air bombing; and
- c. to attack inland targets by air action.

The schedule which this programme was to follow is tabled at Appx “O” of R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No.1. This document is in fact invaluable to an appreciation of the divisional fire plan.

#### A. The Air Force

186. The role of the Air Forces in the fire plan was unlike that of the other two services. (Supra, para 40.) The factors of space combined with mobility which permitted aircraft to act as “artillery” enabled the Air Forces to commence their fire plan weeks, if not months, in advance of the navy and army. Despite the two-for-one Air Force policy of attacking bridges, coastal batteries, etc. (Supra, para 54), the greatest part of the ‘aerial’ fire plan had been carried out before 5 Jun. The results, too were impressive (see infra, paras 227-39); so much so that Reichsmarshall Hermann Göring later stated that “the Allies owe the success of the invasion to their air forces. They prepared the invasion; they made it possible, and they carried it through” ((HS) 295AF. 023 (D1)): Göring Interrogated”, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe, Air Intelligence Summary No. 81 p. 10).



187. Although the bulk of the Air Forces fire plan might be said to have been carried out in the preliminary and preparatory phases of the Overall Air Plan, an even more direct and concentrated air attack on the assault area was planned for the night of 5/6 Jun. It was to be carried out:

... by R.A.F. Bomber Command between 11.31 p.m. on June 5 and 5.15 a.m. on June 6 against ten selected coastal batteries at Crisbecq, Saint-Martin-de-Varreville, Ouistreham, Maisy, Mont Fleury, La Parnelle, Saint-Pierre-du-Mont, merville-Franceville, Houlgate and longues; the number of sorties against each target varied from 99 to 131 and the bomb tonnage from 382 to 698.

(Captain Norman Macmillan, The Royal Air Force in World War II Vol. IV (London, 1950), p. 158.)

This was to be only the beginning of the air attacks in direct support of the assault forces, for shortly after the naval bombardment began, the Air Force was to continue its attacks. From H minus 30 to H minus 15, light bombers of the R.A.F. were to attack the MIKE and NAN beach defences (R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1, Appx "C"). From H minus 15 to H Hour, heavy bombers were to attack LOVE and OBOE beach defences (Ibid). From H Hour onwards, R.A.F. heavy and medium bombers were to attack the defences of Caen (where H.Q. 716 Div was located), Tailleville and the Carpiquet airfield (Ibid). From H up to 30 minutes, R.A.F. fighter or medium bombers were to attack the Ver-sur-Mer, Beny-sur-Mer and Mount Fleury batteries, an attack timed so as to follow the naval bombardment of these positions (Ibid).

#### B. Navy

188. The naval fire plan was timed so as to overlap the air attacks on the coastal defences and thus to keep an almost steady rain of fire on the 'Atlantic Wall'. The bombarding ships of Eastern Task Force associated with Force "J" are listed above (para 21). Fleet Class destroyers were to bombard the flanking beaches commencing at H minus 40 minutes, while at the same time, Hunt Class destroyers engaged MIKE and NAN Sectors. Cruisers, directed by air spotting sorties, were to engage the Ver-sur-Mer and Beny-sur-Mer batteries. After H Hour certain of these ships would become available on call to the Forward Observers Bombardment accompanying the assaulting troops (Ibid).

189. The tasks of the naval support craft require only to be summarized. Descriptions of each type are included in the table, Ships and Craft of Force "J", at Appendix "B". L.C.G. (L), disposed on the flanks of assaulting battalions, were required to close to 1000 yards and open fire with their 4.7-inch guns on targets of opportunity. L.C.T. (R.), approaching the beach in two waves, were to fire their patterns of rockets just prior to touch-down on the strong points at Courseulles, Bernières and St. Aubin (R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). The A.V.R.E. teams, touching down at H Hour, were to be accompanied on the run-in L.C.A. (H.R.), which would fire when within range so as to

create blast lanes through the mines and wire at the eight points where it was intended that exits should be constructed (Cf para 164) (Ibid).

### C. Army

190. The expanded divisional artillery was divided into two groups for the assault phase: 12 Cdn Fd Regt Artillery Group, supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde, and composed of 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts and one battery of 2 R.M. Armd Sp Regt (“Centaur”);<sup>42</sup> and 14 Cdn Fd Regt Artillery Group, in support of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and comprising 14 and 19 Cdn Fd Regts and the second R.M. Armd Sp Regt’s battery (Ibid).

191. Two batteries of 2 R.M. Armd Sp Regt, equipped with Centaur tanks mounting 95-millimetre guns, were to be borne in L.C.T. (A.) and L.C.T. (H.E.). Beaching at H Hour, they were to deploy on land in order to support troops coming ashore (Ibid). The role of L.C.T. (C.B.) has been described previously (para 157).

192. The “drill” evolved for the employment of seaborne artillery is fully described as to its technical detail in a memorandum issued by H.Q. R.C.A.: The Use of SP Artillery in Support of a Beach Assault ((HS) 235C3.2033 (D1)). But a clearer conception of the procedure can perhaps be gained from the following excerpt from an account given to the Historical Officer, 3 Cdn Inf Div:

There were several curious difficulties attached to the use of the artillery at sea. The craft had to be under way at the time of firing, since they were not sufficiently steady while merely standing off. No switches could be put on the guns. The only way therefore that they could be kept in line was to direct the craft on the target and maintain them on their course. Thus, from the time that the guns came within range and opened fire they were closing on the beach at 5 knots per hour. This made necessary a steadily decreasing elevation on the guns. The rate of close on the beach had to be calculated constantly in order to keep the fire where it was wanted ‘just where the grass starts to grow on the beach’. This was done by the Regimental Fire Control Officers operating radar apparatus in navigational motor launches.

For the SP artillery the schedule of fire support was as follows. Range clocks were started at 15,000 yards; ranging with smoke began at 10,000 yards and fire for effect at 9000 yards. This latter had to be timed so as to commence at H minus 30 minutes. From then until H plus 5 minutes (i.e., at a range of 2000 yards, having covered 1000 yards per 5 minutes) each gun fired 3 rounds in every 200 yards. The total HE expenditure at H plus 5 minutes was thus 105 rounds per gun.

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<sup>42</sup> The Centaur 95-mm cruiser tanks were “originally intended as gun turrets in L.C.T. to compensate for a shortage in L.C.G.”. ((HS) 212C1.2009 (D89): “21 Army Group Interim Report on Equipment in the Early Stages of Operation ‘OVERLORD’, Sec 5.) The final role of the R.M. Armd Sp Craft Regt was “to engage targets that had escaped the main bombardment”. (Ibid.)

At this point, the LCTs, now 2000 yards off shore, did not continue on their course in order to touch down and offload the guns, for the beach was not yet ready to receive them. Instead they turned off to a flank to a waiting position.... On landing they deployed and went into actions as quickly as possible.

((HS) 235C3.2011 (D1): Artillery Communications in Operation "OVERLORD", account given by Maj H.S. Paterson, R.C. Sigs, to Hist Offr, 3 Cdn Inf Div.)

To complete this picture it is necessary to envisage 24 L.C.T. approaching shore, each craft carrying four guns (one troop). The total volume of fire from these 96 guns would equal 10,080 rounds during the run-in. The fall of shot was to be observed and controlled by Forward Observation Officers travelling in L.C.S. (M) far in advance of the assault waves (Ibid). Artillery reconnaissance parties accompanied infantry battalion headquarters, so as to select suitable gun positions ashore.

193. Each regiment was to bring down a concentration on one of the four principal strong points in "Juno" sector, i.e., those at Courseulles (on either side of the breakwater), at Bernières and at St. Aubin, ending just as the leading infantry touched down (R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). These four regimental concentrations were thus designed to complement the fire delivered against the same targets by L.C.T. (R.). But it must be emphasized that their effect was to be neutralizing, not destructive. Neither sufficient weight nor accuracy to achieve penetration of concrete defences could be expected of field artillery afloat.

194. Although Exercises "PRIMROSE" and "PIRATE" had demonstrated the feasibility of firing S.P. artillery from sea (A.H.Q. Report No. 42, paras 210 ff), subsequently a series of unexpected difficulties in the actual mechanicals of the problem was found to be critical. One of the many collective exercises of the final stage of training was, therefore, made to serve as a final test of its practicability. All references to Exercises "SAVVY" (12 Feb) make it clear that the whole case for sea-borne artillery would stand or fall on its merits (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div; and H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, February 1944). Officially, the object of Exercise "SAVVY" was listed as:

- a. to develop and practise the Fire Support Plan (Army, Navy and Air Force) for an assault by 8 Cdn Inf Bde Gp on a heavily defended coast; and
- b. to practise calling for fire support and cooperation between Inf Comds, F.O.Bs. and B.L.Os.<sup>43</sup>

(W.D., 14 Fd Regt, R.C.A., February 1944: Appx 5, Exercise "SAVVY", 14 Fd Regt O.O. No. 1.)

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<sup>43</sup> B.L.O. - Bombardment Liaison Officer.

The exercise, the first of its type when Canadians in D.D. tanks made use of their recent 'secret training', (supra, para 104; "B" and "C" Squadrons of 10 Cdn Armd Regt were employed in the exercise) was attended by many high ranking officers (W.D., 10 Cdn Armd Regt, February 1944). These latter caused a war diarist to comment: "During the afternoon the office became very much like cooks [sic] travel agency we had so many brass hats trying to get us to obtain accn for them for Exercise "SAVVY'..." (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 22 Jan 44). Chief among the observers were His Majesty George VI and General Montgomery. The divisional artillery staff, which had suspended detailed planning until its conclusion, noted with relief that the exercise was considered "a great success" (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Feb). In one instance "some difficulty was experienced in landing when one craft grounded on a sand-bar and mistaking it for the beach, two SPs and 1 carrier unloaded [and] finally dropped off the bar into about 6 ft of water" (W.D., 19 Cdn Fd Regt, 12 Feb 44). This was a minor difficulty, however, S.P. artillery would continue to be included in the assault phase.

D. Anti-Aircraft

195. Anti-aircraft protection for ships and craft was to be given by L.C.F. and L.B.F. Two anti-aircraft assault groups ("O" and "P"), comprising several British anti-aircraft batteries, a searchlight troop, a smoke company and four L.B.F., were entrusted with the protection of the beachhead area. The divisional light anti-aircraft regiment was to supply one battery to cover the crossings of the River Seulles (R.C.A. 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). Very careful instructions were issued concerning anti-aircraft fire, the engagement of friendly aircraft by our own troops having been an unfortunate feature of the Dieppe raid (The Dieppe Raid, para 371; 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1). An extra precaution a special system of distinctive markings on certain types of Allied aircraft was devised to come into force on D Day; these markings consisted of black and white stripes painted on wing surfaces and fuselages.

E. Anti-Tank

196 The advance to the final objective was to be supported by two anti-tank sub-units: a battery of 62 A tk Regt, R.A., in support of 7 Cdn Inf Bde, and 105 Cdn (Composite). A tk Bty of 3 Cdn A tk Regt, in support of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. At the conclusion of Phase III they were to be withdrawn to the divisional mobile reserve. During the consolidation phase, anti-tank weapons were to be deployed so as to guard against enemy armoured thrusts against the flanks of the division (R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1).

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197. In summary up, it may be found useful to examine diagrammatically the order in which the leading assault groups of 3 Cdn Inf Div were to approach the beach.

H minus	5	D.D. Tanks
H Hour		Centaures, A.V.R.Es. and R.E. bulldozers
H plus	5	Infantry Assault Coys

H plus	20	Infantry Reserve Coys
H plus	45	Reserve Battalions

The disposition of the essential elements of an assault brigade group is shown in perspective on the diagram at Appendix "H".

### **3<sup>rd</sup> CANADIAN INFANTRY DIVISION PREPARES TO SAIL**

#### **A. Concentration, Marshalling and Embarkation**

199. The vast and complicated procedure by which the Allied assault and follow-up forces concentrated on the southern coast of England prior to embarking for France can be mentioned here only in outline. An idea of the complexity of the operation and the amount of planning it involved is described by General Montgomery:

The mounting of an amphibious operation may be defined as the process of concentrating the troops taking part into suitable areas, from which they move to marshalling areas, where in turn they are called forward to the points of embarkation. The process is one of great complexity, particularly when concerning an operation of the magnitude of Overlord, in which over 20,000 vehicles and 176,000 personnel were to be landed on the far shore in the first two days. Formations and units had to be concentrated with relation to their approximate marshalling areas and embarkation points, which extended from Felixstowe to Plymouth and South Wales; during the mounting, the final stages of waterproofing vehicles and equipment had to be completed to enable them to disembark from landing craft and wade ashore; the assault troops had to be packed up for the operation, and therefore during the last stages 'hotel' servicing had to be arranged for them by other units, which, in many cases, themselves had subsequently to prepare for embarkation; 'residues', in other words the portions of units which were not necessary in the initial phase, had to be separated from their parent formations and subsequently despatched overseas to rejoin them; marshalling areas and embarkation points had to be laid out in great detail, often in very confined areas; a highly complicated security system had to be organized and implemented to prevent leakage of information, and in particular to ensure that once the troops had been briefed about the role they were to play, they would be denied contact with the outside world.

(Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, op cit, p. 38.)

200. The beginning of May found 3 Cdn Inf Div and its attached troops concentrated, along with thousands of others, in "suitable areas" in the Southampton-Portsmouth area. The number of men, and the problems their presence presented, may be imagined from the following extract of a memo written by General Keller regarding discipline:

The congestion in the Hants Sub Area is extreme. The area contains six British Divisions or part of six Divisions, one American Division, many troops of 21 Army Group, some 10,000 men working under Hants and Dorset District and a huge quantity of small units, HQ and installations, not to mention US big and small units (including colored

ones) and the Royal Navy and crews of very many small craft plus a big civil populations.

(W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, May 1944: Appx 8, "Memo, HQ 3 Cdn Inf Div to 9 Cdn Inf Bde (Adv)" dated 23 Apr 44.)

The Canadian War Correspondent, Roos Munro, gives another account of the congestion of Allied troops on the southern coast of England:

It was one of the most populated areas in all Britain, jammed with British, Canadian and American troops. Soldiers were bivouacked in every field for miles around certain ports. There were thousands of tents in groves and on farms. Vehicles and masses of tanks with Bren carriers, armoured cars and guns were parked along the highways and network of country roads.

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The poor civilian in those areas was the person to pity. Even if his house had not been requisitioned, he would have tanks in his back yard, armoured cars on the lawn in front and probably a couple of jeeps parked in the garage with a 'duck' in the laneway.

(The Montreal Daily Star, 6 Jun 44.)

201. While the Canadians were thus concentrated, distinguished visitors inspected 3 Cdn Inf Div. These DVs included His Majesty King George VI (25 Apr), and General Eisenhower (13 May). an amusing sidelight on the feeling of the troops at the succession of visits, both official and unofficial, is supplied by the War Diary of H.Q. R.C.A.:

We are starting to feel like birds in a cage. Everyone seems to want to look at us.

(W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 19 May 44.)

202. Detailed plans had been drawn up months beforehand to enable unit commanding officers of the assaulting forces to follow a set course of procedure designed to guide the troops from their camps in England to the shores of France with a maximum of administrative efficiency. Two of the printed administrative orders issued to unit exemplifying the above were Preparatory Administrative Orders, Part I and Part II, issued by 21 Army Gp on 28 Mar and 22 Apr respectively ((HS) 232C3. (D): Adm Orders - 3 Cdn Inf Div). Part I covered:

- a. Preparations to be carried out by units before leaving normal locations.

- b. Moves to and certain action to be taken on arrival in Concentration Area.

(Ibid.)

Part II covered “the preparations to be carried out by units in Concentration, Marshalling and Embarkation Areas” (Ibid.). An excellent idea of the working of the “sausage machine” (infra, para 207) may be had by reaching Part II of the Orders.

203. The May war diaries of all assaulting formations reflect the great activity during that month in preparation for D Day. Except for special 24-hr passes, or for duties in connection with their training, all troops were confined to camp. New operational equipment, varying from Anti-Vapour battledress and assault helmets to light (“James”) motorcycles and heavy tanks, was issued. At the same time, units and men were stripped of all surplus gear, such as training vehicles and kit-bags, not on assault scales. ‘Residue’ transport and personnel left the battalions; inoculation parades were held; rifles, Brens and heavier weapons were zeroed; canteen accounts were closed out; vehicle water-proofing kits were received and some water-proofing commenced; and practice loading of assault-scale company and personnel equipment on vehicles was carried out. One unit made “a survey of all French speaking personnel in the Battalion” thinking it possible “that if we carry out an operation they will be of great help” (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 10 May 44). A regimental historian, writing what was doubtless typical of all such officers, states that during May “the Adjutant ... was in his office until close to midnight every day of the month ... Work continued seven days a week...” (Ross, op cit, p. 22).

204. On 15 May commanders, commanding officers and staff officers were briefed<sup>44</sup> by the G.O.C. at divisional headquarters in Cranbury House, Hampshire (W.D., H.Q. R.C. A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 15 May). This was followed a week later by similar briefings held at brigade headquarters for all unit and serial commanders in the respective brigades (W.Ds., H.Q., 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, May 1944). But for the great majority of the division the plan, down to its most minute detail, existed in a vacuum divorced from identifiable localities. One doubting diarist wrote: “Preparations are pretty well complete for the coming waterborne scheme called “OVERLORD”. This scheme promises to be very realistic” (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 24 May 44). Briefing of sub-unit personnel was done from “bogus” maps, i.e., maps with false place names and co-ordinates. Caen, for example, was known as “Poland”, Courseulles as “Alba”, and so on (See 7 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 1). Bogus map sheets of 1:25,000 scale were issued, complete with tinted contours and an overprint of enemy defences; certain battalion operation orders even went so far as to make use only of false names (Cf for example, W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, May 1944: Appx 7, S.D. & G. Highrs O.O. No. 1, 26 May, and bogus maps).

205. On 26 May all camps were sealed so that no one could “get in or out of the wire without a pass from the Camp Commandant countersigned by the Camp Security Officer” (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 26 May 44). Even the civilians “within the camp area

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<sup>44</sup> The term ‘Briefing’ implies the issue of orders and instructions to units and individuals for the implementation of the plan in the theatre of operations”. (Second Army O.O. No. 1.)



had to stay put. They were fed army rations” (Ross, op cit, p. 37). On that day all officers of the units and sub-units were briefed on the coming operation. Security measures surrounding the briefing of both officers and men were through (Cf W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde Gp (Adv), May 1944: Appx 15, “Instructions for Briefing”). Briefing rooms (either in tents or huts) contained wall maps, serial photographs, plaster and sand models of the area to be assaulted, etc. As one diarist described the process: “The exercise was reviewed in its entirety on bogus maps. Nobody left the room without a complete understanding of the plan. Throughout the day the briefing room was guarded. Two officers remained in the room day and night” (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 27 May 44). From 27 May until the end of the month the men were briefed at platoon and associate levels. “Model rooms are being used 24 hrs per day, “wrote one officer (W.D., Regina Rif, 27 May 44). At the same time, last minute administrative instructions were being carried out. Vehicles were being waterproofed and loaded for their final move; the men were issued with 200 francs as an emergency measure, muster parades were being held and units were broken into serials preparatory to moving off to camps in the Marshalling Areas.

206. For the infantry, the movement of serials to these camps began on 30 May. (Armoured squadrons had started to move into their marshalling positions as early as 15 May (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 15 May 44)). The control of movement from Concentration Areas to Marshalling Areas, then from Marshalling Areas to Embarkation Areas and through these to Embarkation Points, was exercised by the Movement Control/Transportation Corps organization of Southern Command ((HS) 969. (D21): Op “OVERLORD”, GHQ Home Forces Op Instr No. 43 dated 15 Feb 44; see also W.D., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde May 1944: Appx 10, Op “OVERLORD”, these to Embarkation Points, was exercised by the Movement Control/Transportation Corps organization of Southern Command ((HS) 969. (D21): Op “OVERLORD” GHQ Home Forces Op Instr No. 43 dated 15 Feb 44; see also W.D., H.Q., 8 Cdn Inf Bde May 1944: Appx 10, Op “OVERLORD”, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Admin Order No. 7). The “siting, composition, staffing and works services of Marshalling Areas and Embarkation Areas” was the responsibility of the G.O.C.-in-C. Southern Command (GHQ Home Forces Op Instr No. 43, op cit). As the serials began to move into the Marshalling Areas, even the most skeptical felt that this was not just a ‘realistic’ exercise. “At long last”, wrote one diarist, “this looks like the real thing” (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 31 May 44).

207. Once in the “sausage machine” -- a term commonly used to describe the ‘assembly line’ or mass productive methods employed in the Marshalling Areas -- he men were presented with more of the paraphernalia of assault: lifebelts, sea-sickness tablets and even vomit bags, (the last a seeming aspersion of the efficacy of the tablets). During their short stay at these camps, the men were fed on the ‘hotel system’. Loading for the infantry was started almost immediately, at Southampton and Stokes Bay, and by 3 Jun most of the assaulting troops were on board their craft, where they at once relaxed.

208. The loading of the armoured elements taking part in the assault had started somewhat earlier. Two regimental histories give a graphic picture of the scene on the docks during this period:

On the docks themselves everything was turmoil. To a casual observer it would probably have appeared as a hopeless muddle. Roar of tanks filled the air and vehicles shuttled backwards and forwards. Men ran about shouting and waving their arms, trying to make themselves heard above the beat of the motors. But in spite of outward appearances, embarkation was accomplished quickly and with a maximum of efficiency.

(19 Canadian Army Field Regiment, RCA, Regimental History, September 1941-July 1945, p. 23.)

Another historian continues:

Months of training had made the drivers so proficient that there was little or no confusion at the docks or yards. Vehicles loading into Landing Ships, Tank, had to back up into a steep ramp into the ship and from there up another ramp onto the lift. From here they were hoisted up to the main deck where they had to back over innumerable manhole covers to their allotted position according to the loading plan. Everything was then chained securely to the deck. As soon as a ship was loaded it moved out to its anchor station in the Solent or Southampton Water.

Every L.S.T. carried at least one barrage balloon. Great floating hulks, which later turned out to be parts of the famous "Mulberry" dock, were in evidence but meant nothing to us at the time. Destroyers, mine sweepers and M.H.Bs. [M.T.BS.?] swept through the long lines of anchored craft. Churchill rode by in a launch giving his famous "V" salute. His progress could be followed by the cheers of the men as he passed each ship. Fighter aircraft rode unceasing herd in the sky.

(Ross, op cit, p. 37.)

209. By the time the troops and vehicles were loaded, much of the tension felt prior to embarkation was gone. This is partly to be explained by the cheerful hospitality of the ships' crews with whom a spirit of close comradeship had been developed during months of trading. More important, however, was the knowledge that this was at last the very threshold of action. A tribute to the Canadians at this moment was paid by Commodore G.N. Oliver, C.B., D.S.O., commanding Force "J", in these words:

During embarkation and prior to sailing the high spirits of the soldiers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division were outstanding; their enthusiasm infused itself throughout the Force.

(Report by Naval Commander, Force "J".)

210 The rifle companies of the battalions of 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes were embarked in 15 L.S.I., each with its complement of L.C.A. at the davits. Two companies of reserve battalions found themselves quartered in Canadian ships: "A" Company of R. de Chaud in H.M.C.S. Prince Henry, both L.S.I. (M.). For this reason the latter sub-unit was accounted by the rest of its battalion as "the luckiest of the serials" (W.D., R. de Chaud and 1 C. Scot R., 2 Jun 44). Headquarters of the four assaulting battalions were established in L.C.H. (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1.) The rifle companies of the reserve brigade were, on the other hand, boarded on ten L.C.I. (L) of the 262<sup>nd</sup> Flotilla, R.C.N. ((HS) 122.013(D1): R.C.N's Part in the Invasion. Narrative by R.C.N. Historical Section.) These later craft would in time beach themselves, since they were not to participate in the assault phase. Formation and unit priority vehicles, i.e., those essential to the conduct of the battle ashore, were loaded in L.C.T. The first of these were to disembark at H plus 80 minutes (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1).

211. Throughout the force certain larger vessels were specially fitted out as headquarters, both naval and military. Chief among these was H.M.S. Hilary, the flag ship of the Commodore commanding Force "J". She carried also H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div (reduced) and the Commander, 1 Brit Corps and his staff. It will be recalled that Hilary had served as headquarters ship to 1 Cdn Inf Div in the Sicilian operation (Cf C.M.H.Q. Report No. 126). Each brigade commander and his naval equivalent, the Senior Officer Assault Group (S.O.A.G.), were accommodated in an Assault Group Headquarters Ship - the frigate H.M.S. Lawford for 7 Cdn Inf Bde (J.1), and H.M.S. Waveney for 8 Cdn Inf Bde (J.2). H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde (J.3) was set up in L.S.I. (H), H.M.S. Royal Ulsterman, Alternate headquarters ships (stand-by ships) were named as a precautionary measure. In the event of Hilary being put out of action, for example, command was to be exercised from Royal Ulsterman (3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No.1).

212. The two assault regiments of 2 Cdn Armd Bde - 6 and 10 Cdn Armd Regts - were borne mostly in L.C.T. 27 Cdn Armd Regt was carried in L.C.T. and L.S.T. Brigade Headquarters was split for the passage, each portion travelling on L.S.T. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD", *op cit*).

213. A word here as to loading and assembling generally may help to clarify the movements of the invasion fleets. All along the Southern English coast, in the order corresponding to their objectives across the Channel, the assault forces were preparing to sail. From West to East, these loading points were:

Force "U" Torquay, Brixham, Bartmouth, Plymouth East

Force "O" Portland and Weymouth

Force "G" Southampton

Force "J" Southampton and Portsmouth

Force "S" Portsmouth, Newhaven, Shoreham.

The follow-up forces were embarked on the flanks of this huge area -- those of force "B" at Falmouth and Plymouth West, and those of Force "L" at Tilbury and Felixstowe. The first build-up forces were to be loaded and assembled in the Bristol Channel and the Thames. "MULBERRY" concrete units were collected in anchorages clear of the other forces on the South coast. Most of the heavy units of the bombarding forces were assembled at ports on the west coast (Source quoted in C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147 as Operation "NEPTUNE", Naval Operation Orders, Part 4.) Routes to be followed by all outward-bound groups, convoys and other units from D minus 1 to D plus 3 are clearly illustrated by the series of "Mickey Mouse Diagrams" in Naval Orders (Ibid, Part 20).

## B. The Selection of D Day

214. The problem of selecting a D Day and H Hour that would satisfy the conflicting demands of the three services, together with the attention it received from the Allied Commanders, is dealt with in A.H.Q. Report No. 42 (see Section entitled "Considerations of Timing & Weather). The same source (paras 405 ff) gives Eisenhower's reason for requesting, in January, the target date for D Day to be postponed from 1 May 44 (the original COSSAC D Day) to 31 May. Later, on 17 May, 5 Jun was set "as the 'final' revision if the weather should prove unfavourable" (Report by the Supreme Commander ..., op cit, p. 5). General Eisenhower explains his selection of 5 Jun as follows:

The selection of this date was based primarily on tidal and light conditions. It was necessary that the tide be sufficiently low to enable the initial assault elements to land and prepare lanes through the heavy obstacles which were above water only at or near a low tide. Also, this tidal condition had to coincide with a period of sufficient light to permit visual bombing by aircraft of the beach defences and bombardment by the naval vessels. The dates of 5, 6 and 7 June were all acceptable on this basis, but any postponement beyond these dates would have necessitated waiting until 19 Jun for a similar favourable tidal period. This later date would have necessitated the acceptance of moonless conditions.

(Ibid.)

215. The possible effects of postponement are not dealt with in General Eisenhower's Report, but the grave problems arising from such an action -- and ultimately the decision was his -- are fully revealed in his book:

If none of the three days should prove satisfactory from the standpoint of weather, consequences would ensue that were almost terrifying to contemplate. Secrecy would be lost. Assault troops would be unloaded and crowded back into assembly areas enclosed in barbed wire, where their original places would already have been taken by those to follow in subsequent waves. Complicated movement tables would be

scrapped. Morale would drop. A wait of at least fourteen days, possibly twenty-eight, would be necessary -- a sort of suspended animation involving more than 2,000,000 men. The good-weather available for major campaigning would become still shorter and the enemy's defences would become still stronger.

(Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 239.)

216. The perfect summer weather during May which had worked in favour of the Air Forces completing their pre-invasion bombing came to an end during the first week of June. During this time, General Eisenhower held bi-weekly meetings with the tri-service Meteorological Committee, headed by Group Captain J.M. Stagg, R.A.F. (Ibid, p. 249; see also Wilmot, op cit, pp 221 ff for an excellent description of these meetings). From 1 Jun onwards the Supreme Commander held daily conferences with his commanders at his Advanced Headquarters at Portsmouth to consider the weather situation. (Capt H.C. Butcher, My Three Years With Eisenhower (New York, 1946), p. 545). These conferences, aside from General Eisenhower, included the Deputy Supreme Commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir A.W. Tedder, General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General W.B. Smith, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, Rear-Admiral G.E. Creasy, General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, Major General de Guingand, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, Air Vice Marshal H.E.P. Wigglesworth and the Heads of the Naval, Army and Air Meteorological Services (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p.55).

217. The evening conference on 3 Jun took place at 2100 hrs and lasted until after midnight. The decision on D Day was postponed by General Eisenhower "until the meteorological staffs could collect later reports" (Ibid). Nevertheless, it was decided "to allow the movements of the Forces to commence, despite the unfavourable outlook in view of the many advantages in launching the operation on the first possible day" (Ramsay, op cit, p. 5114).

218. The next conference took place at 0400 hrs on 4 Jun "and in the light of weather forecasters then available... [the Supreme Commander] decided to postpone the time of the assault for 24 hours primarily on the ground that the air forces would be unable to provide adequate support for the crossing and assault operations, and could not undertake the airborne tasks" (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 55). Yet by this time, "all of Forces 'U' from Devonshire and a proportion of Force 'O' from Portland were at sea, and ships and craft had to reverse their course and return to harbour" (Ramsay, op cit, p. 5114). No further decision was taken at the evening conference on 4 Jun.

219. The final conference was held during the early hours of 5 Jun. At that time the Allied commanders were told by Group Captain Stagg that "by the following morning a period of relatively good weather, heretofore completely unexpected, would ensue, lasting probably thirty-six hours" (Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 249). Although this was predicted as a calm speck in the midst of generally poor weather, General Eisenhower, after hearing the opinion of his commanders, "quickly announced the

decision to go ahead with the attack on June 6. The time was then 4:15 a.m., June 5 (Ibid).

C. D Minus One

220. The final executive order to sail was received by Force "J" at 0445 hrs on 5 Jun (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). During the day, which it was now possible to describe as D minus 1, sealed parcels of maps were broken open and final briefing began. Bogus names and co-ordinates were exchanged for genuine ones. Troops spent their remaining time cleaning weapons and priming grenades. Then, following the customary procedure on such occasions, messages were read to the troops from the Supreme Commander, from General Montgomery and from General Crerar.

221. The Canadian Army Commander's words made pertinent reference to the operation which at this moment inevitably came to the minds of the assault troops in the Dieppe raid. His message closed with a significant prophecy.

It is not possible for me to speak to each one of you, but by means of this personal message, I want all ranks of the Canadian Army to know what is in my mind, as the hour approaches when we go forward into battle.

I have completed confidence in our ability to meet the tests which lie ahead. We are excellently trained and equipped. The quality of both senior and junior leadership is of the highest. As Canadians, we inherit military characteristics which were feared by the enemy in the last Great War. They will be still more feared before this war terminates.

The Canadian formations in the assault landing will have a vital part to play. The plans, the preparations, the methods and the technique, which will be employed, are based on knowledge and experience, bought and paid for by 2 Canadian Division at Dieppe. The contribution of that hazardous operation cannot be over-estimated. It will prove to have been the essential prelude to our forthcoming and final success.

We enter into this decisive phase of the war with full faith in our cause, with calm confidence in our abilities and with grim determination to finish quickly and unmistakably this job we came overseas to do.

As in 1918, the Canadians, in Italy and in North West Europe, will hit the enemy again and again, until at some not distant time, the converging Allied Armies link together and we will be rejoined, in Victory, with our comrades of 1 Canadian Corps.

(H.D.G. Crerar) Lt-Gen.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 1).

222. The troops, accustomed as they were to the sight of a multitude of vessels, were nevertheless astonished at the endless expanse of ships, each with its nodding silver balloon, and much comfort was drawn from this formidable array. As one diarist observed, “the concentration of shipping in Southampton and the Solent has to be seen to be believed” (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 3 Jun 44). Yet this concentration represented but two fifths of the assault forces (Forces “G” and “J”).

223. One important factor gave additional cause for cheerfulness. The Luftwaffe had failed to appear, either during the loading period, or even now when the vulnerable forces lay assembled and ready to sail. It was evident that the crippling of the German Air Force had been no idle boast, but was an indisputable fact.

224. Early in the afternoon, the convoys commenced to weigh anchor and slip out of their harbours towards Spithead Gate. Among the first was Royal Ulsterman and her attendant L.C.I. (L.). The departure has been described by a diarist:

... There were no bands or cheering crowds to give us a send off on the biggest military operation in history. A few dock workers silently waved good-bye. Friends called farewell and bon voyage from one craft to another. A few craft blew their whistles and up on the bridge Sagan the piper played ‘The Road to the Isles’. The 9<sup>th</sup> ‘Highland’ Bde ws on its way.

... There were craft of every type imaginable. There were blunt nosed LCTs butting their way along, small LCIs riding the crests like corks, big channel packets with their LCAs lashed to their sides ad proud cruisers running hither and yon in search of an enemy who would dare to poke his head out of the water. In the distance big ‘battle wagons’ lent an air of confidence and security to the scene.

(W.D., H.L.I. of C., 5 Jun 44.)

225. It was evening when the L.S.I. of the assulting brigades sailed. Because of their superior speed, they were permitted to leave later than the slower L.C.T., which had sailed in mid-afternoon and would be overtaken in the approach channels. The L.S.I. groups were each formed into two divisions escorted by destroyers. Parallel, in line ahead, they proceeded along the swept approach channels 7 and 8, which were marked at intervals by tossing buoys (R.C.N.’s Part in the Invasion). By evening H.M.S. Hilary was also under way; she was to be escorted during the sea passage by H.M.C.S. Algonquin.

226. Conditions in the Channel were not such as to inspire confidence. The sky was overcast, the wind blew in strong gusts, and waves of five to six feet gave landing craft a rough passage. The ponderous L.S.T. following the assault groups rolled heavily in the

seas, their loads of vehicles straining at the chains which anchored them to the decks. Many men, even naval personnel, were ill, and sea-sickness pills provided little relief. To those who were not so affected, it seemed incredible that the operation could take place. Yet the meteorological forecast had revealed improved conditions for the early hours of 6 Jun. On that basis, "OVERLORD" was to commence.



## D DAY

### A. The Bombardment

227. a. The Air Force. Since “air superiority was the principal prerequisite for the successful assault of Europe from the West” (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 41; see also Air Vice-Marshal E.J. Kingston-McCloughry, War in Three Dimensions (London, 1949), p. 85), and since bomber aircraft and airborne troops were employed in great numbers prior to H Hour, a summary of the Air Forces’ “preliminary” and “preparatory” activities, as well as their D Day operations during the initial assault, will be given at this point. Indeed, the air activity which now reached its cumulative peak in support of “NEPTUNE” had a direct effect on the success or failure of the assault troops approaching the shores of Normandy under the cover of darkness.

228. The aims of Operation “POINTBLANK”, the Allied strategic operation in the air, had met with considerable, but not complete, success (Supra, para 41). The effectiveness of the G.A.F. fighter forces, as well as the war potential of Germany, had been reduced by the constant day and night hammering of the enemy’s cities and factories, supply bases and power sites, by light, medium and heavy bombers.<sup>45</sup> However, the German will to continue the struggle had not noticeably weakened, although Germany’s great offensive potentialities had withered with each successive strike of Allied bombers deep inside “Festung Europa”.

229. In April 1944, when emphasis shifted from strategic to tactical considerations, the Allied Air Forces’ operations against the enemy were even more directly concerned with the assault. Strategic bombing, hitherto “under the direction of the British Chief of Staff acting as a representative of the Combine dChiefs of Staff” was now directed by the Deputy Supreme Commander, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur W. Tedder, who coordinated the operations of both strategic and tactical air forces so as to best ensure the successful completion of the Overall Air Plan (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 38; see also supra, para 42).

230. The chief object of this plan, air superiority, had been won well before D Day.<sup>46</sup> Another main objective of the Overall Air Plan “was to produce a lasting and general dislocation of the railway system in use by the enemy” (Ibid, p. 40). Complementary to this was a further objective covering the destruction of road and railway bridges. Air

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<sup>45</sup> “In the six weeks immediately prior to D Day, ... the enemy flew only 125 reconnaissance sorties in the Channel areas and 4 sorties over the Thames Estuary and the east coast. Very few of these sorties approached land, most of them being fleeting appearances in mid-Channel. Our fighters rarely got even a glimpse of these enemy aircraft, which could have seen very little and only could have taken back, therefore, information of very small value...” (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 53; see also W/Cde. Asher Lee, The German Air Force (London, 1946) pp 152 ff; and Air Chief Marshal Sir Norman Bottomley, “The Strategic Bomber Offensive Against Germany”, R.U.S.I. Journal, May 1948, p. 228).

<sup>46</sup> See Lord Tedder, Air Power in War (London, 1948), pp 108 ff, for further elaboration on air strikes against the enemy’s transportation system. Also see Air Marshal Sir Robert H.M.S. Saundby, “Air Attacks on Communications”, R.U.S.I. Journal, November 1945, for an excellent account on this subject.

operations designed to complete this task had been going on months before D Day approached. As the weight of bombs dropped on transportation targets increased, so too was the overall area of operations contracted so as to seal off the invasion area. An idea of the effort and effects of these strikes against the enemy's transportation may be imagined from the following extract:

On ... 21<sup>st</sup> May, 504 Thunderbolts, 233 Spitfires, 16 Typhoons and 10 Tempests of A.E.A.F. operated throughout the day, claiming 67 locomotives destroyed, 91 locomotives damaged and six locomotives stopped. Eleven other locomotives were attacked with unknown results and numerous trains were attacked and damage inflicted on trucks, carriages, oil wagons, etc.

On this same day, United States Eighth Air Forces Fighter Command sent out 131 Lightnings, 135 Thunderbolts and 287 Mustangs against similar targets in Germany. They claimed 91 locomotives destroyed and 134 locomotives damaged. In addition, one locomotive tender, six goods wagons and three box cars were destroyed, whilst seven goods wagons, seven trains, three rail cars, four box cars and thirteen trucks were damaged, and sixteen trains set on fire.

(Leigh-Mallory, Op cit, p. 45.)

231. Attacks against railway centres, marshalling yards, repair depots, signals and ancillary services, railroad junctions, etc., added as much to the enemy's transportation and communication paralysis on D Day as did the air attacks against road and railroad bridges and tunnels.<sup>47</sup> All such attacks not only contributed to deny the enemy freedom of movement, but also caused him to draw more heavily on his precious supplies of oil and rubber. The attacks on the bridges, which had started in April, reached "a crescendo of effort over a period of about ten days prior to D Day" (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 46). So successful was this effort that:

By 6 June 1944, twelve railway and twelve road bridges over the Seine were impassable; three bridges at Liege, and bridges at Conflans, Hasselt, Herenthals, Hirson, Konz-Harthaus, Namur, Saumur, Tours and Valenciennes, were down. Altogether, 118 bridges were affected, in addition to a few others not scheduled as targets, but chosen by aircrews as targets of opportunity.

(Macmillan, op cit, p. 147.)

232. Important features in the Overall Air Plan were air attacks against enemy coastal defences, military facilities, communications, Radar stations and enemy airfields.

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<sup>47</sup> See Lord Tedder, Air Power in War (London, 1948), pp 108 ff, for further elaboration on air strikes against the enemy's transportation system. Also see Air Marshal Sir Robert H.M.S. Saundby, "Air Attacks on Communications," R.U.S.I. Journal, November 1945, for an excellent account on this subject.

Regarding the latter, air operations were carried out to destroy enemy airfield bases “within 30 miles radius of the assault area” so as to drive G.A.F. fighter forces as far from the battle area as were Allied fighter bases (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 41). “Attacks on forty main enemy operational fields began on 11 May 44. Fifty-nine other operational bomber bases ... within range of the assault area and ports of embaration in the United Kingdom were also elected for attack, as opportunity permitted...” (Ibid), p. 50.) By D Day four airfields were completely destroyed and fifteen severely damaged. To quote a German source:

The systematic destruction of the ground organization of the Luftwaffe, especially of the fighter airfields, was very effective just before and during the start of the invasion.

((HS) 981.013(D32): “The Normandy Invasion -- June 1944”, A Study Prepared by the German Air Historical Branch (6 Aug 44); Translated by the Air Ministry, 23 Jun 47.)

233. Air attacks against enemy means of communication were carried out with equal vigor. The destruction, among many other W/T stations, of the Headquarters of the German Air Force Signals Intelligence near Cherbourg on the night of 3- Jun “contributed greatly to the feeble enemy air resistance ont he first day of the assault” (Macmillan, op cit, p. 148). A German report stated later that “the start of the invasion was marked by the complete breakdown of land-line communication” (“The Normandy Invastion - June 1944”, German Air Historical Branch, op cit, p. 2). Attacks against key enemy Radar stations begun on 10 May and reaching a peak of intensity three days before D Day, saved the lives of countless soldiers, sailors and airmen at a most decisive time. Those Radar stations not destroyed were subjected to deception measures ont he night of 5- Jun (See below para 236).

234. Further air operations designed to prepare the way for the assault landing were attacks against enemy military facilities, such as ammunition and fuel dumps, military comps and headquarters, etc., and against coastal defences. Strategic and tactical air forces made a total of 1562 sorties against such military targets between 1 May and 6 Jun (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 50). Attacks against “forty-nine known coastal batteries capable of firing on shipping approaching the assault area” commenced well before D Day (Ibid, p. 46). Those batteries which it was thought the navy would find difficult to destroy were the special targets of the air force. Up to 5 Jun, a total of 2495 sorties against coastal batteries within the “NEPTUNE” area had been made, and over 6,000 tons of bombs had been dropped on these targets.

235. On the night of 5-6 Jun, Royal Air Force bomber aircraft began their aerial bombardment of ten selected coastal batteries within the assault area (Supra, para 180) whcih was the opening phase of the fire plan designed to support the assault troops. An hour after the beginning of this six-hour bombardment, (which lasted from 11:31 p.m. 5 Jun to 5:15 a.m. 6 Jun) the first Canadian soldiers to land in Normandy were dropped east of the Orne. These were parachutists from “C” Company, 1 Cdn Para Bn, who were

dropped near Varaville with other elements of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division half an hour in advance of the main body (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 26, The First Canadian Parachute Battalion in France -- 6 June - 6 September 1944). Shortly thereafter, while the aerial bombardment was not yet half completed, parachutists of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division and of the American 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions were dropping on the eastern and western flanks, respectively, of the assault area. The British/Canadian parachutists would be engaged in a ten to twelve-hour battle with the enemy before seaborne troops came inland west of the Orne to their aid. American parachutists dropped behind "UTAH" Beach would be engaged for approximately the same time before VII U.S. Corps troops were due to arrive.

236. During the night operations, the combined air and naval-air diversionary plans were being implemented (Supra, paras 58-61). An air historian writes of one part of the deception and diversionary plans:

... while the assault craft were underway across the Channel, 105 radio counter-measure aircraft were employed to blind and deceive the remaining enemy radar and radio stations. Between one and four on the morning of June 6 no enemy radio station was heard operating between Le Havre and Barfleur, and only eighteen were working instead of a normal ninety-two in the area covering the 'spout', as the contained sea area of the crossing from coast to coast was called.

(Macmillan, op cit, p. 148.)

He continues:

The German mistook the Cap d'Antifer diversion for a real threat and operated searchlights and opened gunfire on the ghost convoy. They sent twenty-four night-fighters against the jamming formation over the Somme, who hunted the night skies for three hours for an imaginary bomber stream that never came. And all this great intelligence and counter-radar war was entirely British.

(Ibid, p. 149.)

237. Shortly after R.A.F. Bomber Command ceased their bombardment of enemy coastal batteries, light and medium bombers, fighter-bombers, and other aircraft of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force swarmed over the assault area (Allied Expeditionary Air Force, Daily Intelligence/Operations Summary No. 133, 6 Jun 44. Copy in custody of Air Historian, R.C.A.F., Ottawa). These aircraft fulfilled a multitude of tasks both before and after H. Hour. Offensive and beachhead patrols were maintained, attacks were made on military installations both on the shore and inland, strongpoints and targets of opportunity were bombed and strafed, smokescreens were laid, reconnaissance sorties carried out, aircraft 'spotters' corrected naval gunfire, and so forth.

238. The United States Eighth Air Force provided the final heavy air bombardment against the “NEPTUNE” area immediately prior to H Hour. “In the thirty minutes immediately preceding the touch-down hour, 1,365 heavy bombers attacked selected areas in the coastal defences, dropping 2,796 tons of bombs” (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 56).

239. The air attacks by Second Tactical Air Force and the United States Eighth Air Force overlapped the naval bombardment. A naval historian comments on this overlapping in the “Juno” area:

The [Naval] bombardment would have been even more accurate had not the Air Force bombing thrown up clouds of smoke and dust which at times obliterated the targets and called forth some choice invective from the gunnery officers. At 0720 just after the bombers had been bombing through the cloud, there was a note in “Algonquin’s” log: ‘God Damn Air Force is messing up our target again.’

(R.C.N.’s Part in the Invasion.)

These aircraft, presumably, were those of the Eighth Air Force.

240. Only meagre reports are available regarding the close support air effort, but insofar as a comparison exists between the neutralizing effect of air and naval fire, it would appear that the naval bombardment had a greater stunning effect on the enemy. A report on the bombardment reads in part:

They [the enemy] were bowled over less by aerial bombardment, which they were somewhat accustomed to, then by the deadly accuracy and weight of naval gunfire, in which the heavies, i.e., the fire of distant major warships were most effective, because of the penetrating power of their shells.

.....

Even when it was not reinforced by simultaneous air bombing, the [naval] drum fire inspired in the defenders a feeling of utter helplessness, which in the case of inexperienced recruits cause fainting or indeed complete paralysis. The instinct of self-preservation drove their duty as soldiers ... completely out of their minds.

(Army Operational Research Group Report No. 264, Opposition Encountered on the British Beachs in Normandy on D Day, p. 152, Copy in custody of Director of Weapons and Development, A.H.Q.)

Poor visibility, made worse by smoke and dust, was believed by some to have cancelled entirely the projected bombing attacks on beach defences. The diarist of H.Q. R.C.A., observing that naval and artillery bombardment had commenced, added: "We are all wondering what became of the Air Force" (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Jun 44). Senior officers, acknowledging that the attacks were delivered, commented on their want of accuracy, which they ascribed to low cloud base. (Cf above naval statement that aircraft were "bombing through the cloud".) Brigadier Foster stated that "the terrific devastation which was to have been caused by hy bombing on the coast defs on either side of the R Seullles did not materialize" ((HS) 265C7.011 (D1): Memorandum of Interview with Brigadier H.W. Foster. Similarly Interview with Brigadier Blackader: "On the left bn front [St Aubin] neither the RAF hy Oboes, the rockets, nor the S.P. arty covered the main strong pt ....").

241. Comments by observers in the "Juno" area leave the impression that only two aerial attacks were made against the beaches. The diary of Group Captain Cleland, Air Representative aboard Hilary, contains this entry:

... At approximately 0530 hrs ... bombing was seen to be taking place on the beaches. Naval gunfire from cruisers and destroyers had by now opened up, and kept up continuous fire until the commencement of bombing by U.S. heavy day bombers at approximately H-30....

(From 540, Air Representative, Force "J", Copy in custody of Air Historian, R.C.A.F., Ottawa.)

Canadian naval reports confirm this statement (R.C.N.'s Part in the Invasion). The lack of documentary material dealing with the part played by the United States Eighth Air Force during the pre-H Hour bombardment,<sup>48</sup> the conflicting reports that exist in available sources, and the loose terminology used in many cases among the three services as to what constituted beach defences, coastal defences and strongpoints, prevent further elaboration on this point.

242. Aircraft of the R.C.A.F. played a prominent part in the D Day air operations. R.C.A.F. Halifax and Lancaster heavy bombers provided the major striking force attacking the houlgate and Merville/Franceville coastal batteries (H.G. R.A.F. Bomber Command, "Bomber Command Intelligence Narrative of Operations No. 818", Appx A92: R.C.A.F. Record Book of Bomber Command Operations for the Month of June 1944. Copy in custody of Air Historian, R.C.A.F., Ottawa). Over a third of the aircraft attacking the coastal battery at Longues was also provided by No. 6 (R.C.A.F.) Group and No. 405 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron Lancasters (Ibid). R.C.A.F. fighter, fighter-bomber, pathfinder and reconnaissance squadrons were also involved in D Day

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<sup>48</sup> On the OMAHA Beach, American heavy bombers had to bomb by instruments owing to the low cloud ceiling. To avoid hitting the assaulting troops, they deliberately delayed releasing their bomb loads for several seconds, with the result that the bombs landed well inland from the beach defences. (Gordon A. Harrison, Cross-Channel Attack. (Washington, 1951, p. 300.) It is quite possible that the same situation arose on the Eastern beaches.

operations ((HS) 180.015 (D1): “Brattle Order of R.C.A.F. on 6 Jun 44” shows the number and types of Canadian squadrons operating under R.A.F. overall command).

243. One Canadian squadron of fighter-bomber aircraft (No. 439 Sqn of No. 143 (R.C.A.F.) Wing) was allocated to H.M.S. Hillary for close support. It carried out a successful attack on a three-gun battery near Vaux (942857), and the C.R.A. later confirmed that no further fire was experienced from this position.<sup>49</sup> (Report by Naval Commander, Force “J”.) The other Typhoon aircraft in this Wing, as well as Canadian squadrons throughout Second Tactical Air Force, made continuous sorties throughout D Day supporting the assault by providing air cover and attacking enemy defences and forces on the ground.

244. b. The Navy. The following comments, written by a Canadian naval historian, describe the movement of the assault forces from the coast of England toward their rendezvous in the Baie de la Seine.

Group by group, moving at set speeds and along routes dictated by their allotted stations, the arriving vessels passed into the assembly area and took up their formations. Joining the columns of troop-carrying craft came lines of the heavier and larger tank landing-craft, loaded with the soldiers’ vehicles. Troop carriers and vehicle carriers would sail together in double-columned convoys, accepting the difficulties created by their varying sizes and speeds in order that their interdependent cargoes might be delivered to the beaches together.

Warships, transports, and weirdly assorted special craft of every size and kind, were ranging themselves in the order designed to bring them to the required positions off the beaches at the required time. The formed groups began to take on the appearance of individual convoys, each separated by exact intervals from the one behind and the one ahead. Escorts moved into stations beside them, and the whole began to feed outward from the assembly area in ten great streams. Leaving behind it a weaving, ordered chaos fed continually by new floods of shipping, it flowed toward the mid-channel positions where dimly lighted buoys marked the entrances to the approach lanes.

Dusk closed down on the Channel at a little after ten. A southwest wind set briskly across the tide and lifted the sea into a choppy swell. By midnight a full moon, rarely seen among patches of ragged, scudding cloud, had lifted from the horizon. Beneath it the dark face of the Channel was combed by twenty lines of white and red lights, winking faintly at one-mile intervals along the port and starboard boundaries of the ten lanes. Between the bordering lights the ribbons of dark water were restless with

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<sup>49</sup> No subsequent requests for air support were made by the G.O.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, while on board ship, following the initial pre-arranged attack. (Air Representative, Force “J”, op cit.)

shadowy movement, churned by an endless series of wakes whose ragged V's pointed steadily southward toward Baie de la Seine.

(Schull, op cit, pp 263-64.)

245. Admiral Ramsay comments on the latter part of the passage to Normandy as follows:

There was an air of unreality during the passage of the assault forces across the Channel curiously similar to that on D-1 in "HUSKY" as our forces approached Sicily. The achievement of strategical surprise was always hoped for in 'NEPTUNE' but was by no means certain, whereas that of tactical surprise had always seemed extremely unlikely. As our forces approached the French coast without a murmur from the enemy or from their own radio, the realization that once again almost complete tactical surprise had been achieved slowly dawned.

(Ramsay, op cit, p. 5114.)

The achievement of both strategic and tactical surprise was indeed an exceptional combination of well-executed planning and good fortune in the form of German miscalculation. (Infra, paras 401 ff.) Certainly everything had been done to blind and deceive the enemy's radar chain, but the success gained in this operation was something to be hoped for rather than expected. The first tentative warnings of the invasion for the enemy came from code words broadcast to the French Resistance groups by the B.B.C.<sup>50</sup> and from a report at 0120 hrs from 711 Inf Div (headquarters at Le Quesnay) telling of parachutists dropping near divisional headquarters and of hearing "battle noises". (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 50, The Campaign in North-West Europe, Information From German Sources; Part II: Invasion and Battle of Normandy, para 7<sup>51</sup>). These latter were actually the 50 dummy parachutists and 'noise' machines dropped as a diversion for 6 Airborne Div ("TITANTIC II" -- Supra, para 61). At approximately 0130 hrs, both Fifteenth and Seventh Army were given "Alert II" orders, the highest form of alert, because of the wide-spread reports of parachutists landing (Ibid, para 10). Naval Group West, which "at the very time when the Channel was crowded with Allied craft ... [had] deemed the 'weather' unfavourable for the movement of patrol boats," slow ordered 'Alert II', 'recording at the same time their concurrence with O.B. West's and Air Fleet's views that a major landing attempt was improbable" (Ibid, para 9).

246. Shortly after 0500 hrs on the morning of 6 Jun the warships of Eastern Task Force took up their bombarding positions. A War Correspondent describes the moment:

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<sup>50</sup> These were understood by the enemy "to be warnings of invasion within forty-eight hours". (Harrison, op cit, p.272.)

<sup>51</sup> At the time of writing, Report No. 50 is in draft form.



We got closer, and as the light improved and the mist cleared we made out landmrks -- the strips of white beach and the brown dunes, slender church spires at Coureulles, Bernieres and St. Aubin, the water towers behind the towns. Back of the dunes were the rich green and brown fields on gentle slopes where some of the finest crops in France are grown. Woods dotted the fields and ribbons of roads led back from the coast toward Caen adn Bayeux, over the slightly rolling countryside. This was the new Canadian battlefield, but at that moment it looked like a travel poster.

Not a single gund fired from the shore.<sup>52</sup> The entire fleet was now in full view of the German coastal garrisons, with the first line of landing ships and support craft only a mile or so from shore. Others were massed for miles and miles out to sea. The Bay of the Seine was choked with Allied shipping. Four thousand ships and landing craft were participating in this operation and most of them seemed to be here off the Normandy shore at this tense time between the dawn and H. Hour.

(Ross Munro, Gauntlet to Overlord (Toronto, 1946), pp 55-56.)

247. At approximately 0530 hrs the guns of Eastern Task Force opened fire on their targets ashore. Inasmuch as no very formidable enemy batteries lay within 3 Cdn Inf Div's area, the bombarding force provided was accordingly small. On the Eastern flank, Bombarding Force "D", in order to deal with coastal batteries on either side of the Seine setuary, comprised two battleships, five cruisers and one monitor (Gunnery Review, Normandy Bombardment Experience, op cit). In "Juno" area, the achievement of the cruiser Diadem in silencing the battery at Beny-sur-Mer is adequate evidence of the efficiency of naval bombardment. The Diadem opened fire on this battery at 0552 hrs with air observation. The same battery was re-engaged at 0725 hrs, the total expenditure amounting to 223 rounds. Although the battery suffered no direct hit, the effective neutralization of the battery could not be doubted. The crew of one such gun position retired in great disillusionment to a cave in the vicinity of Fontaine-Henry, where their depression was such that they later permitted a few Canadians whom they had captured to take their whole number (109) into custody (Infra, para 482). The failure of the coastal defence guns to cause any damage to the closely packed shipping off shore gives final proof of the results of naval counter-battery fire coupled with aerial bombardment.

248. The beach drenching fire achieved its object of neutralizing interference of the run-in, and was said to have been delivered "with clock-like precision" (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). The preparatory bombardment was so much admired by one assaulting company that the soldiers stood up in the L.C.A. to watch it (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., June 1944; Appx 2, "C" Coy Diary). While its effects were never intended to be totally destructive, the actual damage to enemy defences caused by this very heavy volume of fire was later found to be somewhat less than expected. Poor visibility was

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<sup>52</sup> Force "J" was able to report the remarkable fact that no offensive action by enemy aircraft or surface vessels was encountered throughout the passage (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J").

undoubtedly a contributing factor. Thus although Rear Admiral Vian was later able to declare that the “main batteries opposing Force “J” were effectively neutralized during the assault and subsequently captured before they could interfere with ships or craft” (Report by Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force), it was also true that the stunning effect of naval bombardment had greater effect on the defenders of major strongpoints than did the physical damage wrought by bombardment (Ibid). In this connection a significant point was brought to light: the emplacements housing infantry guns had been defiladed from direct fire from the sea by a heavy concrete wall running almost parallel to the shoreline. This, while it denied shelling to seaward, meant that the beaches could be swept by enfilade fire. Admiral Vian points out that had Intelligence been aware of this peculiarity, destroyers and support craft might have this peculiarity, destroyers and support craft might have been stationed farther to the flanks of the assault so as to bring cross-fire against the vulnerable embrasures of these bunkers.

249. It must not be supposed, however, that every enemy position withstood this saturation with complete immunity. Examination of the area showed that 7 Cdn Inf Bde’s sector contained six guns, two mortars, and 19 machine guns, of which 20 per cent were believed to have been knocked out by the preparatory bombardment. In 8 Cdn Inf Bde’s sector there were three guns, three mortars and 13-15 machine guns; of these a smaller percentage was destroyed by drenching fire (Opposition Encountered on the British Beaches in Normandy on D Day, op cit, Part IV). By way of comparison, it may be noted that of a total of about 106 such positions in the whole British assault area not more than 14 per cent were estimated to have been put out of action by naval gunfire (Gunnery Review).

250. On the whole, the lethal effect of this massed fire power appears to have been slight. Despite considerable damage in Bernieres and Courseulles, it was believed that “less than a dozen” civilians were killed by the bombardment, although neither town had been evacuated (Report by Naval Commanders, Eastern Task Force and Force “J”). The War Diary of R. Wpg Rif observes somewhat bitterly that the drenching fire “failed to kill a single German or silence one weapon” (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44). While acknowledging that there was good reason for this statement (sub-units of this battalion suffered very severe casualties), it is only fair to note that the assault company of 1 C. Scot R. which landed under orders of R. Wpg Rif found that its beach objective had been demolished by naval gunfire (Infra, para 271).

251. It is impossible to present accurate evidence of the performance of each class of weapon, there being no sure method of differentiating the effects on the targets. Results must therefore be discussed in the broadest terms.

252. Neutralizing fire by destroyers was described by the G.O.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, as “accurate and sustained” ((HS) 235C3.013(D8): Comments on Operation “OVERLORD” by Maj-Gen R.F.I. Keller, 21 Jun 44). The observed shoots carried out by H.M.C. Ships Algonquin and Sioux are typical. Algonquin silenced a battery of two 75-millimetre guns situated between houses on the sea-front just west of St. Aubin. Thereafter she proceeded to demolish other buildings in the same area. Sioux, in support

of 48 R.M. Commando, opened fire at 10,000 yards on a gun position near Langrune. Both ships ceased fire at about 0745 hrs, as the first assault wave was approaching shore. (R.C.N.'s Part in the Invasion) Farther west, Kempfenfelt engaged a three-gun battery near Courseulles, but this fire could not be observed (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). The general deployment of destroyers was as follows: on the right, Venus, Faulknor, Fury, Stevenstone and La Combattante, engaging beach sector targets; and similarly, on the left, Vigilant, Algonquin, Sioux, Bleasdale and Glaisdale (Ibid).

253. L.C.G.(L) working on the flanks of the assaulting battalions, opened fire at ranges between 9,000 and 6,000 yards and thereafter continued to engage concrete defences from 1,000 yards until the landing craft had touched down (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). Their position close inshore gave them better opportunities for observed shooting (Gunnery Review).

254. L.C.T. (R.) were said to have fired their salvos of rockets "accurately and a little early" (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). Short rounds were observed by R. Wpg Rif (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44). An unfortunate, though spectacular, incident occurred when a Typhoon fighter, swooping in low over Bernières, flew into a pattern of rockets and was instantly destroyed (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J").

255. Since enemy aircraft discreetly absented themselves from the assault area, the L.C.F. of Force "J" were not exercised in an anti-aircraft role, and were therefore used to supplement close support fire (Ibid). One of these craft was observed close inshore firing tracer at the beach (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 6 Jun 44). This method of adding to drenching fire by L.C.A. was also practised by Force "G" (Gunnery Review).

256. The diaries of the armoured regiments make no mention of the performance of L.C.T. (C.B.). One instance is recorded of a concrete-buster engaging a casemate ((HS) 145.2R11011(D4): Memorandum of Interview with Lt -Col F.M. Matheson). The commander of Force "J" further reported their fire to be very destructive when used against buildings (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J").

257. The little naval "hedgerows", towed to the beaches in L.C.A. (H.R.), while not properly contributing to drenching fire, may be mentioned here. They too seem to have run afoul of heavy seas for it was reported that of nine craft of the first division (G.J.1) only one appeared; the second division arrived intact. This may help explain the difficulty experienced in opening exists on the right sector. (See below.)

258. c. The Army: In the weather conditions which prevailed, the Royal marine Centaurs were hampered by the unseaworthiness of the L.C.T. (A.) and L.C.T. (H.E.). There were some craft casualties (Infra, para 315) and others arrived late, but the batteries performed their tasks to good effect (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). An artillery signaller called for fire from a troop of Centaurs against a block-house on the beach which was holding up Regina Rif. The Royal Marines quickly "eliminated this nuisance" (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun 44).

259. The success of the seaborne S.P. artillery in the assault is beyond doubt, and all observers, both naval and military, acknowledged its value. General Keller's comment was:

The SP arty put on the best shoot that they ever did on the four areas pre-selected for them....

(Operation "OVERLORD", op cit.)

More specific was the statement of the commander of 7 Cdn Inf Bde that "the only damage visible from sea was that effected by our SP arty fire..." (Interview with Brigadier Foster).

260. Curiously enough, the gunners themselves are non-committal in their remarks on the run-in shoot (probably because it had become a drill) and provide almost no detailed information about it. It can be gathered, however, that no disappointment was felt over the performance, which several diarists perfunctorily described as "very effective" or "most effective" (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A.; 13 and 19 Cdn Fd Regts, 6 Jun 44). Only one diary notes, what is common to all, that "the concentration was NOT as tight as had been attained in some training exercises due to the running sea" (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun 44). The infantry unit which this regiment's concentration was designed to support makes particular mention of shells falling in the town of Bernières and of the beach being obscured by their smoke (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 6 Jun 44). The statement in the diary of H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde that at 0800 hrs "some unknown reason SP arty had switched all fire to St. Aubin" is not easily explained; according to 14 Cdn Fd Regt, the Bernières strongpoint was under fire from H minus 30 to H plus 5, as planned (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde and 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun 44). The unavoidable dispersion of shot doubtless gave the impression to some observers that fire was being largely wasted: one diarist speaks of "SP guns afloat firing short as usual" (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44). Here again it is pertinent to recall that fire for effect was both observed and corrected by Forward Observation Officers in L.C.S. (M), whose advanced station gave them better opportunity to judge its results.

261. External evidence may be adduced to support the conclusion that S.P. artillery made an important contribution to the fire preparation. In "Gold" area the strongpoint at Le Hamel offered unexpectedly fierce resistance; this has been attributed not only to the failure of the bombing programme in this area, but also the fact that the artillery concentration designed to cover it failed altogether to materialize, owing to navigational difficulties. (Gunnery Review)

262. Finally, it should not be forgotten that these same regiments, in addition to performing the astonishing feat of firing from sea, were able to disembark at an early hour with relatively few casualties and thus afford the infantry normal field artillery support during the initial stages of land battle. The dual role assigned to field and S.P. guns stands out as one of the most arresting features of the operation.

263. The ultimate proof of the validity of the Dieppe lessons is established by the following conclusions: “All reports confirm that the British principle of employing special support craft in the assault is sound” (Gunnery Review). There is moreover a striking reminder of the recommendation for “overwhelming fire support” in the finding of the Gunnery Review that there was “no evidence to show that the fire support provided was excessive”.

B. 3 Cdn Inf Div Assault

264. Half an hour after the ships of Force “J” opened fire, the headquarters ship dropped anchor (0558 hrs). By this time distinctive landmarks on the shore could be recognized easily. Gun flashes were now visible from the coast, but as yet no fire appeared to be directed against the “Juno” area.

265. But all was not well everywhere throughout the force. Already the heavy seas had caused four groups of Force “J” to enter the wrong swept channels leading to the beaches; one of these errant groups consisted of the L.C.T. bearing the A.V.R.E. of 7 Cdn Inf Bde Gp. It was clear that time would inevitably be lost in making to the proper channel. (Report by Naval Commander, Force “J”) This lamentable circumstance was to have an effect on H Hour. The agreed times set for the assaulting brigades on 6 Jun were 0735 hrs for 7 Cdn Inf Bde and 0745 hrs for 8 Cdn Inf Bde, ten and twenty minutes late, respectively, of the H Hour for the neighbouring assaults. (Supra, para 66) But the tardiness of certain groups caused both Assault Group Captains to defer H Hour to a further ten minutes. It was thus decided that the times of H Hour should be 0745hrs for 7 Cdn Inf Bde and 0755 hrs for 8 Cdn Inf Bde (Ibid; see also W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx “Q”, Message Log, 6 Jun 44, Serials 10 and 15). It was not a happy situation, for it meant that the swiftly rising tide, aggravated by heavy seas, shortened the interval before high water and deprived engineer groups of the minimum time to complete demolition of obstacles. In consequence, “craft beached among the obstacles instead of short of them, and clearance of the outer obstacles was not practicable until the tide had fallen” (Report by Naval Commander, Force “J”).

266. Even before Hilary dropped her anchor, the L.S.I. of Force “J” had arrived punctually at their lowering positions.<sup>53</sup> All had come through the two swept channels of the German mine belt unharmed, “and by 5:35 the nineteen vessels were swinging at anchor in an eerie half-dawn light, each an exact three hundred yards from the next” (Schull, op cit, p. 273). No time was lost in lowering and forming up the L.C.A. (Report by Naval Commander, Force “J”). A naval historical describes this operation as it concerned some of the men who were to land shortly after H Hour:

With the pipers of the Canadian Scottish playing cheerfully in the bright morning as they had the evening before when the ship sailed, 227

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<sup>53</sup> “The choice of the ‘lowering positions’ ... had been a matter of considerable discussion, the conflicting factors of being outside the range of the enemy’s shore batteries and south of the known mined area having to be balanced. The Eastern Task Force (British) finally chose their ‘lowering positions’ about 7 to 8 miles off shore...” (Ramsay, op cit, p. 5115).

assault troops of the Canadian Scottish Regiment embarked in the Prince Henry's seven landing craft assault (L.C.A.) as they hung at boat deck level, and the craft were lowered at 0645 hrs. As the troops left they gave three rousing cheers for Prince Henry, which her ship's company heartily reciprocated. While Prince Henry was lowering her troops, Prince David lowered her remaining five L.C.A.'s with 148 troops and the L.C.A.'s from both ships then formed up with their respective beaching flights, three flotillas to a flight, and, each led by an MGB, they proceeded towards their beaches.

(R.C.N.'s Part in the Invasion.)

While the L.S.I. were disgorging their assault craft, divisional wireless silence was broken (at 0634 hrs) and the first of a constant stream of urgent messages commenced to flow to and from the operations room. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "Q", Message Log, Serial 2,6 Jun 44.)

267. It was still too early to perceive much tangible evidence of the bombing programme. Fires had been observed inland, and at 0715 hrs, when the leading assault waves had begun their one-hour passage to the beach, bombers were heard passing overhead. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 8, Message Log, 6 Jun 44.)

268. a. The Assault by 7 Cdn Inf Bde.<sup>54</sup> On the right, opposite MIKE Sector, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, commanded by Brigadier H.W. Foster, was able to report most of its group intact; the only really serious omission was the A.W.R.E. group, which as we have seen (para 265) would inevitably be late. Otherwise, all seemed in order; the L.C.A. groups were formed up and ready; the L.C.T. bearing the D.D. tanks had arrived. Only the weather remained unruly. Still unmolested by enemy fire, the infantry companies in L.C.A. commenced their six-mile voyage to the beach. The noise of the bombardment accompanied them on their way. At 0715 hrs the men in the craft heard the close support bombardment roar into life as S.P. artillery, L.C.G. (L) and L.C.T. (R) let loose their fire against the beach strongpoints. (Messages Log, H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Jun 44, Serial 14) A F.O.O. of 12 Cdn Fd Regt Artillery Group reported the first fall of shot to be effective (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Jun 44, Serial 13), but smoke soon obscured further observation. For the artillerymen, "the noise on board the craft was deafening as round after round was pumped onto the shore" (Lt W.W. Barrett, The History of 13 Canadian Field Regiment R.C.A., 1940-1945, p. 30). From the gunner's viewpoint "it looked as if the whole area would be completely pulverized and annihilated..." ((H.S.) 142.4f12013 (D2): History of 12 Cdn Fd Regt, RCA, 27 May 40 - 5 May 45).

269. It had been decided not to launch the D.D. tanks because of the roughness of the waves, but instead to beach their L.C.T. at H Hour. But the Deputy Senior Officer Assault Group (D.S.O.A.G.) in charge of the L.C.T. of G.J.1 reversed his decision when within about 2500 yards of the beach, and ordered the two D.D. squadrons of 6 Cdn

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<sup>54</sup> A map showing the advance inland of the Canadian formations on 6 Jun is attached as Appendix "K".

Armd Regt to swim ashore. The problems confronted by the D.D. tanks of “A” Squadron during the run-in through the heavy seas is told by the regimental historian:

As ‘As’ D.D. tanks headed for Mike sector of the beach it was immediately noticeable to all crew commanders that the [canvas] screens were in great danger of collapsing as the struts began to bend from the pounding of the giant waves. Most of the commanders called the turret crews from the tanks to stand with them on the decks to support the screen. In addition the size of the waves made steering exceptionally hard. The pressure of a strong tide running from west to east increased this difficulty and kept carrying the D.Ds. to the left towards the pier at the river’s mouth. However, the squadron shook itself out and on approaching land crew commanders were able to recognize the positions allotted to them on the beach.

(Lt F. Stark, Comp, A History of the First Hussars Regiment 1856-1945 (London [Canada], 1951), p. 54.)

On the run-in seven tanks were sunk by enemy fire, and another was run down by rocket craft (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 6 Jun 44). The unit’s historian gives a vivid description of the D.D. tanks in action when ashore.

When they were in sufficiently shallow water and not likely to be swamped by huge waves the D.Ds. quickly deflated and began to engage the pill-boxes. The advantages of remaining in the water were three-fold. The sudden appearance of tanks on the beaches in front of their positions had momentarily disorganized German gunners. The pill-box on the extreme right of Mike sector near Nan beach was never manned. The tanks wished to make full use of the surprise by knocking out the guns before they could destroy them. Any further movement towards the beaches benefited the enemy, giving him time to collect his wits. In addition, by remaining in the water the tanks presented smaller targets and the deflecting qualities of water gave more protection to the vulnerable lower hull where the armour was thinnest. Lastly, it was to be expected that the beaches would be heavily mined, and no crew commander wanted his tank to go up on a mine and be rendered immobile on that fire-swept expanse of sand.

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As soon as the anti-tank guns on the beach had been liquidated, the ... D.D. tanks began to cruise up and down the beach engaging the machine gun nests. At first the fire was so intense that the crew commanders had difficulty in locating the targets, but gradually these were found and neutralized, permitting the infantry to sweep on over the dunes to begin their push inland.

(Stark, op cit, pp 55-56.)

The first of the D.D. tanks reached shore twenty minutes before the leading infantry (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "K", Report by 2 Cdn Armd Bde, DD Tanks in the Assault; see also Message Logs, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div; H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde; and Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). Their presence ashore proved invaluable to the infantrymen, as both assault battalion commanders testified.

270. Approximately 2,000 yards from the shore the craft carrying the seaborne artillery ceased fire and swung to the flanks to await their time for landing. The L.C.A. continued on toward their planned landing places. The Royal Navy was praised later for the accurate manner in which they landed the troops in their assigned sectors.<sup>55</sup> There were no instances of major inaccuracy throughout Force "J". The navigational difficulties faced by craft commanders are described in a Canadian naval account.

From the LCA's it was impossible to see the beach except from the crests of the waves, but in these fleeting moments the assault personnel got glimpses of landmarks that had been made familiar to them by the photographs and diagrams which they had been shown in their briefing.

(R.C.N.'s Part in the Invasion.)

271. The precise time of touchdown in each battalion group is uncertain, hardly a circumstance to be wondered at. One authority has it that the first infantry were ashore at 0810 hrs, twenty minutes late of the deferred time. (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). Reports by participants do not all support this timing. In general, it may be said that assault companies, although a few minutes late, made their landfall with striking perfection. R. Wpg Rif, command by Lt-Col J.M. Meldram, reported that its three forward companies landed "all within seven minutes of one another", a remarkable achievement considering sea conditions<sup>56</sup> (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44.) On the extreme right flank, "C" Company 1 C. Scot R., under the command of R. Wpg Rif, disembarked at the junction of MIKE and LOVE Sectors "in about three feet of water just short of the beach obstacles" (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., June 1944: Appx 2, "C" Coy Diary). Opposition was negligible, and these troops soon discovered that their first objective - a pill-box - had already been demolished by naval gunfire. This was, incidentally, one of the few

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<sup>55</sup> "A particular[ly] fine job was done by the RN, who, under unfavorable circumstances, made their landings exactly at the right spot, even to the coy level" ((HS) 265C8.013(D1): Memorandum of Interview with Brigadier K.G. Blackader, M.C., E.D., by Historical Officer, 3 Cdn Inf Div).

<sup>56</sup> Weather conditions off the beaches immediately before H Hour were described as:

Wind	-	Westnorthwest, force 4.
Sea	-	Moderate, waves 3-4 feet.
Sky	-	fair to cloudy with clouds increasing.

(Ramsay, op cit, p. 5116.)

On the Eastern Task Force front, the wind is reported somewhat stronger (Report by Naval Commanders, Eastern Task Force and Force "J".)



acknowledgments of the effectiveness of supporting fire. The remainder of R. Wpg Rif Assault Group encountered much more serious opposition to the west of the Courseulles breakwater (MIKE Green). “B” Company’s L.C.A. were engaged while about 700 yards from shore and disembarkation had to be done while under fire; in consequence heavy casualties were sustained by this sub-unit (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, June 1944: Appx 6, “B” Coy Diary). The strongpoint in this area consisted of three casemates and twelve machine-gun emplacements which seemed not to have suffered from the immense volume of fire which had been brought to bear on the beaches. This circumstance left to the infantry and tanks the grim prospect of clearing it by direct assault, as proved to be necessary with all four major strongpoints. In the course of the battle the company was reduced to its commander and 26 other ranks (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44).

272. While this fighting was going on, the D.D. tanks of “A” Squadron, which were “deflated”, remained to seaward of the obstacles and fired from this position. (Supra, para 269) The squadron commander told of one enemy group surrendering in their fortifications because of their dismay at seeing tanks already in action. Unfortunately it is not possible to discover the exact location of this incident. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, June 1944: Appx 5, Report on D.D. Tks by “A” Sqn).

273. On NAN Green Beach, the two assaulting companies of Regina Rif, (Lt-Col F.M. Matheson, O.C.), made their run-in without enemy interference. The code word “Brandy”, reported by “A” Coy at 0809 hrs, signified that that company had made its touchdown. (W.D. Regina Rif, June 1944: Appx 3, Message Log, 6 Jun) “B” Company landed a few minutes later. “A” Company’s task, the clearance of the strongpoints at the northwest corner of Courseulles, soon developed into a fierce infantry battle. The unit’s regimental historian writes of this incident:

Able company ... found the bombardment had not cracked the huge casemate on their sector. This fortress had reinforced concrete walls four feet thick and housed an 88-millimetre gun as well as machine-guns. In addition there were concrete trenches outside the fort liberally sprinkled with small arms posts. It was grim going but eventually they executed a left flanking attack and with the support of tanks succeeded in breaking through the defences.

(Captain Eric Luxton (Editor), 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Regina Rifle Regiment, 1939-1946 (Regina, 1946), p. 34; see also Interview with Lt-Col F.M. Matheson.)

“B” Company, meanwhile, managed “to get through the wire obstacles and closed in on the beach defences in their sector and over-powered them” (Luxton, op cit, p. 34.)

274. The first A.V.R.Es. had touched down at 0815 and 0821 hrs on MIKE Sector and NAN Green Beach, respectively (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jun 44); this meant added close support for the infantry and the commencement of obstacle clearance. Shortly afterwards a succession of reports told of the arrival of reserve companies.

“C” Company of Regina Rif was ashore at 0835 hrs, and companies of R. Wpg Rif slightly later. Battalion headquarters of the latter unit found the beaches and dunes under heavy fire and was pinned there for two hours. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44) Leaving the still active beach defences to the assault companies, the remainder of the battalion scrambled over the banks and set out for their objectives inland -- Ste. Croix-sur-Mer and Banville. By 1030 hrs they had arrived in these villages, overcoming scattered resistance en route. The tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt, (Lt-Col F.E. White, O.C.), were skilfully employed to assist in the capture of Ste. Croix. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx “Q”, Message Log, Serial 122; W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44).

275. The attack by Regina Rif against Courseulles was now taking shape. The town had been sub-divided into twelve blocks, to be cleared in order by designated companies, assisted by a squadron of armour. In the words of the commanding officer, “nearly every foot of the town was known long before it was ever entered” (Interview with Lt-Col Matheson, op cit). Block 1 contained the formidable stronghold engaged by “A” Company was to be passed through to capture Reviere, some two miles inland. But on the run-in several of that Company’s L.C.A. struck and detonated mines 250 yards off shore. Only 49 survivors managed to reach shore, but these few nonetheless assembled and pressed on through the waist-high grain-fields towards Reviere as planned. The leading elements reached the town at about 1100 hrs; by 1215 hrs it was reported by “C” Company, which had followed “D” from Courseulles, that the bridges in Reviere were secured. (Interview with Lt-Col Matheson, op cit; W.D., Regina Rif, 6 Jun 44.)

276. The balance of the reserve battalion, 1 C. Scot R., (Lt-Col F.N. Cabeldu, E.D., O.C.), found opposition still alive as its three companies approached the shore. Men from this regiment were in the assaulting waves described below:

At 0827 the three flotillas comprising the flight of LCA’s with which Prince Henry’s LCA’s beached deployed from line ahead and commenced to run in forming up roughly in line abreast. Ahead of them they could see the obstacles coming up through the surf. Beyond were the sandy beaches of Normandy already the scene of a remarkable amount of activity considering that the beach was still under heavy mortar fire from inshore mortar positions and machine gun posts that had escaped the attentions of our bombardment. The awful quiet which had fallen along to beaches just after the bombardment had ended and before the first landing craft touched down was now broken and the noise and smoke added to the apparent confusion. Riding a moderately heavy swell, the LCA’s surged in among the obstacles wherever they could find an opening, but, since they had to charge in at full speed, there was very little chance of manoeuvring to avoid obstacles which could only be seen a few feet ahead, and many of the craft were brought to a stop on the prongs of the obstacles.

(R.C.N.’s Part in the Invasion.)

“A” and “B” Companies, under mortar fire<sup>57</sup> on the beach, had to remain there until exists could be prepared through R. Wpg Rif’s area. Just beyond the dunes, and A.V.R.E. had sunk far into a crater and troops were clambering over it. Later, protected by the D.D. tanks, assault engineers of 26 Aslt Sqn threw a bridge and then chespaling over it to form a “primitive but usable exit” ((HS) 265c7.011(D1): Memorandum of Interview with Brigadier Foster; (HS) 693.3013(D1): Royal Engineers Battalefield Tour-Nrmandy to the Seine (B.A.O.R., 1946), p. 107). Assembling in La Valette, 1 C. Scot R. then followed the leading companies of R. Wpg Rif through Ste. Croix and Banville, dealing with by-passed pockets of enemy resistance and collecting a considerable number of prisoners as they advanced (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 6 Jun 44).

277. Although a false conception of the battle may result, it is perhaps advisable to pause and consider now the general progress of events in the western part of the Canadian sector. Reduction of the beach defences took fully two hours (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jun 44), and the beached objective “YEW” was secured only by about H plus 4 hrs (Interview with Brigadier Foster). But it must not be forgotten that by this time infantry and armoured groups were already far inland and that substantial progress had been made towards the next objective. More serious even than enemy resistance was the difficulty of clearing obstacles and breaching exits. Owing to rough seas and the lateness of A.V.R.E. and sapper teams generally, the rising tide soon cancelled further removal of offshore obstructions. On land, the preparation of exists was found unexpectedly slow and arduous, especially on MIKE Sector; everywhere snipers harried the sappers striving desperately to clear routes to link with the first lateral. Until that work was done, the beach was “crowded with milling men, tks and recce cars of the Inns of Court Sqn, unable to proceed further inland” (Ibid). By 0900 hrs no exit had as yet been opened on MIKE beaches or on NAN Green.<sup>58</sup> Armoured support was thus for a time denied to the leading infantry beyond the beaches. Only at 1112 hrs was it reported that one exit was working with difficulty on MIKE Sector; this was later developed into a satisfactory route. (Report by Naval Commander, Force “J”).

278. Everywhere, it was clear, progress was considerably slower than planned. But the situation was not unfavourable and normal conditions of command were quickly being established. The Main Beach Signal Station was reported in operation at 0935 hrs. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 5 Jun 44, Serial 78) The brigade commander therefore landed, and by 1215 hrs brigade headquarters was independently set up in a farmyard near Graye-sur-Mer. It was now purely a land battle for 7 Cdn Inf Bde.

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<sup>57</sup> Major A.E. Younger, O.C. 26 Aslt Sqn (R.E.) on D Day writes: “... it is worth noting that it was later found that the Germans had set up a battery of eighty 32-cm rockets aimed at the COURSEULLES beaches. The wires to these were cut by the RAF bombing and they were never fired” (Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour-Normandy to the Seine, p. 107).

<sup>58</sup> Six D.D. Tanks managed to get across the improved exit mentioned above (supra, para 276) before it gave way. The turret of the A.V.R.E. which had foundered was used as a pier to support a tank-carried bridge. The sunken tank’s fascine plus chespaling provided a crossing over the landward side of culvert (Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour-Normandy to the Seine, op cit, p. 107).

279. b. The Assault by 8 Cdn Inf Bde: In many ways the experiences of the left assaulting brigade duplicated those of its right-hand neighbor. Shortly before H Hour (now set at 0755 hrs) Group J.2 was ready to go into action. The L.C.T. bearing 19 Cdn Fd Regt (Lt-Col L.G. Clarke, O.C.) had earlier been carried off their proper course, but had made to their appointed station on time. (Interview with Brigadier K.G. Blackader) The A.V.R.E. craft were also present. In the unavoidable confusion of launching, one reserve company of Q.O.R. of C. did not receive word of the postponement until almost too late, "when they were beginning to think they would be assaulting the beach". Luckily, the company was recalled in time. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 6 Jun 44.)

280. At 0725 hrs the L.C.G.(L) opened fire on the beach defences. They were joined by the S.P. artillery, after a slight delay in transmission of orders, at 0730 hrs. Bernières and St. Aubin were seen to be receiving a terrific pounding although the main points of impact appeared to be somewhat beyond the immediate coast defences. At 0749 hrs the rocket craft fired their salvoes, the effect by this time being quite invisible. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jun 44) The L.C.A. of the leading infantry were now approaching landfall without opposition; to one observer they looked "like schools of water bugs" (W.D., 19 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun 44). The first A.V.R.E. touched down at 0805 hrs (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). The D.D. tanks of 10 Cdn Armd Regt, (Lt-Col R.E.A. Morton, O.C.), which landed 'dryshd', as earlier agreed, were in consequence put ashore behind the leading infantry. (Supra, para 269.)

281. The forward companies of Q.O.R. of C., (Lt-Col J.G. Spragge, O.B.E., E.D. O.C.), disembarked on NAN White Beach in front of Bernières, about 15 minutes behind schedule. Mines blew up certain craft on the approach but fortunately caused only a few casualties. "A" Company, landing on the right on the open beaches between Courseulles and Bernières soon made its way to the railway line; "B" Company, charged with the reduction of the strongpoint of Bernières, found it untouched (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 6 Jun). After suffering heavy casualties, the company outflanked the strongpoint, whose occupants surrendered; the reserve companies were soon ashore and consolidating on the southern edge of Bernières, which had been quickly cleared ((HS) 265C8.001: Interview with Major J.N. Gordon, Q.O.R. of C.).

282. To the east, the assault companies of N. Shore R., (Lt-Col D.B. Buell, O.C.), were similarly engaged, having landed on NAN Red somewhat earlier (0810 hrs). This battalion's "B" Company engaged the St. Aubin strongpoint. The action, as related by the company commander to the division's Historical Officer, is typical of such fighting along the "Juno" beaches, although it continued somewhat longer here than elsewhere. ((HS) 145.2N3011(D4): Memorandum of Interview with Major R.B. Forbes, N. Shore R.) The first tanks to arrive were shortly knocked out by the anti-tank gun in the emplacement. Later, a "dustbin" fired by an A.V.R.E. was successful in cracking the concrete and after 45 minutes the strongpoint was contained and its fire against the beach stopped. But not until evening did its last defenders finally give in. "From this troublesome blockhouse 49 prisoners were taken. A search revealed that approximately the same number of enemy had been killed" ((HS) 145.2N3013(D1): Regional History

of the North Shore (NB) Regiment). Meanwhile, the reserve companies had landed, cleared the remainder of St. Aubin and reached Tailleville (Ibid).

283. The reserve battalion, R. de Chaud, (Commanded by Lt-Col P. Mathieu, E.D.), came ashore about 0850 hrs. At that time, to quote their regimental history, “L’artillerie et le mortier ennemis tombaient sans arrêt lorsque nos troupes atteignirent la terre” (Major Armand Ross and Major Michel Gauvin, Le Geste du Régiment de la Chaudière (Rotterdam, 1945), p. 28). The unit waited on the beach until word was received of the success of the Q.O.R. of C. in Bernières, whereupon the R. de Chaud proceeded through the village to its assembly area in the woods south of Bernières. From here, the advance towards Beny-sur-Mer was begun. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 6 Jun 44.)

284. A survey of the assault by 8 Cdn Inf Bde (commanded by Brigadier K.G. Blackader) shown that this formation overcame its first difficulties rather more quickly. The immediate beachhead was considered to have been secured about H plus 2 hrs, considerably earlier than was the case on the western sector. (Interview with Brigadier K.G. Blackader, op cit) Shellfire was undoubtedly less severe but mortars proved troublesome. Exits were more readily established: the sea-wall on NAN White (Bernières) had been bridged at 0850 hrs. By 1040 hrs two exits had been opened on NAN Red and three on NAN White, a decidedly more favourable situation than that obtaining on the beaches to the West, where flooded ground proved a serious hindrance. (Report by Naval Commander, Force”J”) There were other contributing factors to this success: the A.V.R.Es. had arrived in better time and had been able to lend their support to the infantry; the D.D. tanks, although late, had landed almost intact and without confusion, and had thus given more coordinated aid. Even before gaps were prepared, a squadron of tanks had crossed a mined area so as to enter St. Aubin and assist in its clearance. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation “OVERLORD”.)

285. An especially unlucky landing was experienced on this sector by 48 R.M. Commando. Even before touching down on NAN Red beach in six L.C.I.(S.) at H Hour plus 45 minutes, these troops were engaged by machine-gun and mortar fire from the beach defenders, who chose at this moment to return to life. Previously they had been subdued by the neutralizing fire from sea. The Commando suffered heavy casualties before reaching its objective, Langrune-sur-Mer. ((HS) 285SS4.008(D2): W.D., 4 S.S. Bde, June 1944: Appx “H”, Royal Marine Commandos in Normandy; see also H. St G. Saunders, The Green Beret (London, 1949), pp 272-73).

286. Despite setbacks and delays, the divisional beachheads by 1300 hrs on 6 Jun had taken shape as visualized and, except for timing, satisfaction could be felt that the assault had been executed substantially as written. The G.O.C. left H.M.S. Hilary with some of his staff to go ashore on NAN Sector at 1145 hrs; the remainder, under the G.S.O.1, followed about two hours later. The first divisional headquarters ashore was set up in an orchard in Bernières. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Jun 44.)

C. The Intermediate Objective

287. Perhaps the most striking demonstration that the operation had become a land battle was the arrival of the ubiquitous field artillery. The eagerness of the artillery to be landed was earlier thwarted by the congested state of the beaches. On MIKE Red, 12 Cdn Fd Regt, (Lt-Col R.H. Webb, O.C.), disembarking from six L.C.T. about 0900 hrs, was unable for the time being to proceed further; with commendable resourcefulness the regiment promptly prepared for action on the beach itself, in some instances engaging the enemy over open sights. "Our beach", writes the regimental historian, "strewn with dead and wounded, rocked to the sound of our fire and the answering enemy guns. The two exits from the beach were blocked and to prevent overcrowding our guns were deployed side by side" (History of the 12<sup>th</sup> Canadian Field Regiment, op cit; see also W.D., 12 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun; and (HS) 142.4F12013(1): Memorandum of Interview with Lt-Col R.H. Webb). 13 Cdn Fd Regt, (Lt-Col F. Le P.T. Clifford, O.C.), landing somewhat later, established a battery position south of Courseulles. About 1800 hrs both field regiments, supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde, occupied their designated gun positions between Ste. Croix and Banville (Gun Area "MARY"). (W.Ds., 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, 6 Jun.)

288. In 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector, 19 Cdn Fd Regt commenced its disembarkation at 0910 hrs and had a battery in action between Bernières and St. Aubin some 20 minutes later. One troop lost three S.P. equipments in a fire which spread when one gun was hit; another was delayed in landing until 1500 hrs, its L.C.T. being damaged. By 2050 hrs the regiment was deployed south of Bernières (Gun Area "JANE"). (W.D., 19 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun) 14 Cdn Fd Regt (Lt-Col H.S. Griffin, O.C.) likewise suffered loss in the early stage of its career ashore. Its first guns were being landed at 0925 hrs, but the regiment was not clear of the beach until an hour later. By 1130 hrs, when it took up its first position in the fields west of Bernières, only 18 of its 24 guns were in action: three were entangled in a traffic jam and three more had been destroyed by direct hits from an 88-millimetre gun on emerging from the cover of the town. (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, 6 Jun 44.) During Phase II, the regiment moved forward by batteries, giving continuous support and sorting its guns into their respective troops, until at 2030 hrs Gun Area "JANE" was occupied (Ibid).

289. The misfortunes experienced by the two last-named regiments will serve to illustrate the relative character of the battle in Phase II. If 8 Cdn Inf Bde had been more fortunate in the assault phase, it was now to encounter serious delay in advancing to its objective "ELM". This circumstance was to have far-reaching consequences affecting both the success of 9 Cdn Inf Bde and, by extension, the division's attainment of the final covering position. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, on the other hand, pressed forward quickly during Phase II. The enemy's rear areas were overwhelmed by our infantry, and the tanks of 6 Cdn Armd Regt, once clear of the coastal inundation, found his staff cars and light vehicles easy targets.

290. a. 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Beyond Banville, R. Wpg Rif discovered resistance to be lighter, especially after "A" Company, with the assistance of portions of "A" and "C"

Sqdns, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, captured enemy machine-gun positions south of Ste. Croix. The bridge at Tierceville (915808) was captured intact. A half mile to the west, 7 Green Howards, advancing abreast of the Canadians (as part of 69 (Brit) Inf Bde, (50 (N) Div )), captured another bridge over the Seulles River (Clay, op cit, p. 243). By 1700 hrs R. Wpg Rif was consolidating southwest of Creully (9179-9279). The first reinforcements arrived during the evening and were posted to "B" Company which had been so badly depleted on the beach. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 6 Jun 44.)

291. Having followed R. Wpg Rif to Ste. Croix and Banville, 1 C. Scot R. moved on swiftly to seize the bridges at Colombiers-sur-Soules and Reviers, finding much evidence of the enemy's disorderly withdrawal. By 1830 hrs the unit had positioned itself in the area south of Les Planches, beyond the river. Later that evening a new battalion area was occupied in the vicinity of Pierrepont, Cainet and Le Fresne-Camilly. It will be seen from this that 1 C. Scot R. was actually in advance of the area planned for it. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 6 Jun 44)

292. Regina Rif, pressing on from Reviers, were no less successful. During the afternoon, while streetfighting was still in progress in Courselles, Le Fresne-Camilly and Fontaine-Heary were cleared. At 2100 hrs the unit was directed to move to a new position on the high ground northwest of Le Fresne. This was carried out in darkness, not without some confusion, and was completed by 0300 hrs, 7 Jun. "A" Company, previously left to guard the Reviers bridge, was reinforced and withdrawn into the battalion area during the night. (Interview with Lt-Col Matheson, op cit; W.D., Regina Rif, 6 Jun 44.)

293. In Phase II, armoured support by 6 Cdn Armd Regt had been of great value, one squadron having been placed in support of each battalion. But this support was not given without cost, for mines and 88-millimetre guns had exacted a heavy toll. By evening it was found that only four tanks of "B" Squadron were still operational; "A" Squadron was better off with nine. The C.O. therefore decided to form these thirteen remaining tanks into a composite squadron. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 6 Jun 44.) But on the other hand the collapse of co-ordinated enemy resistance beyond the immediate beachhead was indicated by the fact that during D Day two troops of tanks had actually penetrated as far south as Bretteville-1'Orgueilleuse before withdrawing, thus reaching the final objective, if only briefly. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 6 Jun 44) The regimental historian writes of one of these troops:

The troop commanded by Lieut. W.F. McCormick failed to contact the infantry and kept going returning an hour and half later after a ten mile ramble inland through Bretteville and almost into Carpiquet. The incident was the cause of humorous accusations that the troops had planned a dash to Paris, but the lucky venture raised the morale of the men considerably. The fact that no opposition had been encountered ensured that there was ample time for consolidation of all gains before the heavy counter-attack which all invaders on enemy soil must hourly expect.

(Stark, *op cit*, p. 64.)

294. The intermediate objective “ELM” was firmly held by 7 Cdn Inf Bde by the evening of D Day. Brigade headquarters moved forward to Colombiers-sur-Seulles. There was an added source of satisfaction in the fact that the vital bridges over the River Seulles were all intact and safely in Allied hands.

295. b. 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes: On the Eastern sector, 8 Cdn Inf Bde, endeavouring to break out of its beachhead, met a serious check to its right flank. By 1025 hrs R. de Chaud was assembled with its squadron of tanks in support, and the S.P. artillery was now ashore. But to move out from the cover of Bernières to the open plain to the south meant coming under machine-gun and 88-millimetre fire; the latter had already demolished several S.P. equipments (Cf para 288). Armour and infantry were held up for nearly two hours until artillery and medium machine-gun fire could silence the opposition. Then the infantry was gradually infiltrated up the road from Bernières towards Beny-sur-Mer, subduing pockets of enemy resistance and taking prisoners as it advanced. On the left flank progress had been at first much swifter, and a company of N. Shore R. had approached Tailleville during Phase I. It was first entered at 1352 hrs. The regimental historian writes of the enemy position at Tailleville as follows:

The enemy was more strongly entrenched here than had been anticipated.<sup>59</sup> Numerous tunnels led from one gun pit to another; in addition his weapons were so disposed that all approaches were completely covered by fire.

(Regimental History of the North Shore (NB) Regiment, op cit, p. 6.)

By mid-afternoon the strongpoint had still not been cleared, and its early capture was becoming increasingly problematical. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 1, Message Log, 6 Jun 44.)

296. In order to clarify the situation in this sector of the divisional beachhead, it will be expedient to consider here the introduction of the reserve Brigade Group (commanded by Brigadier D.G. Cunningham) which had been circling about the anchorage since early morning. The course of events during Phase I did not warrant a decision to alter the original intention to land the reserve formation through NAN Sector (Plan “A”). Accordingly, at 1051 hrs H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde (aboard Royal Ulsterman) received the signal, “Katnip now”, which was the executive order to land (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 3, Message Log, 6 Jun 44). But even on 8 Cdn Inf Bde’s sector congestion was such as to make it impossible to spread the brigade group over both NAN Red and NAN White Beaches as planned, and all units had to land over the latter alone. This very naturally created a delay and meant that only one route (from Bernières to Beny) could be taken forward to the assembly area. At 1140 hrs the L.C.I.(L) carrying

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<sup>59</sup> The Tailleville strongpoint was the headquarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 736 Grenadier Regiment. See Appendix “J”.



the rifle companies touched down, but in some cases troops were not disembarked at once because of the confusion on the beach. Offshore obstacles were still in position and landings were made even more difficult by the presence of so many wrecked landing craft. But with very few casualties the entire brigade group (including its armoured regiment) moved across the beach into Bernières, which was found to be still occupied by the troops of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. Just south of the town the battalions formed up and waited until the advance of R. de Chaud should make it possible for them to occupy their assembly area around Beny-sur-Mer. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, and infantry battalions, 6 Jun 44.)

300 The capture of Beny, in addition to opening the way for 8 Cdn Inf Bde, had made it possible for 9 Cdn Inf Bde to commence its assembly. At 1605 hrs, therefore, Nth N.S. Highrs (Lt-Col C. Petch, O.C.) left off from Bernières, arriving at Beny at 1645 hrs. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 6 Jun 44) By 1915 hrs, S.D. & G Highrs (Lt-Col G.H. Christiansen, O.C.) and H.L.I. of C. (Lt-Col F.M. Griffiths, O.C.) were also in position. The village and its vicinity were crowded with troops of two brigades, including their headquarters, and enemy mortar fire did not make the enforced halt there more pleasant. At 1820 hrs Nth N.S. Highrs commenced their southward advance, leading 9 Cdn Inf Bde towards the final objective. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, S.D. & G. Highrs, and H.L.I. of C., 6 Jun 44.)

301. The entire brigade group had been specially equipped and trained for rapid movement. Three companies of Nth N.S. Highrs (the advanced guard) were carried on the tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt, (Lt-Col M.B.K. Gordon, O.C.) with the fourth travelling in unit transport. In each of the other two battalions, three companies rode on bicycles (airborne pattern), the fourth again being borne in other vehicles. ((HS) 265C9.011(3): Memorandum of Interview with Brigadier D.G. Cunningham, D.S.O.) The vanguard of Nth N.S. Highrs was grouped as follows. In front, the reconnaissance troop of 27 Cdn Armd Regt provided a screen of Stuart tanks. This was followed by the infantry carrier platoon, each section carrying one platoon of "C" Company. Next came a platoon of medium machine guns ("C" Company, C.H. of O.), a troop of M.10s (3 Cdn A tk Regt), two assault sections of pioneers and four battalion 6-pounders. Behind the vanguard rode the main advanced guard mounted on Sherman tanks: "A" Company on the right, "B" Company on the left and "D" Company bringing up the rear. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 6 Jun 44) Behind the advanced guard again were S.D. & G. Highrs and H.L.I. of C.

302. The vanguard passed the start point (Basly) and met no serious opposition until it reached Villons-les-Buissons. By nightfall, however, it was still engaged in clearing three machine-gun positions there. Inasmuch as the main advanced guard had likewise become involved in fighting in Colomby-sur-Thaon (by-passed by the leading elements), it was decided that no further advance should be made on D Day. Nth N.S. Highrs were therefore ordered to consolidate for the night astride the main road to Caen, around the crossroads 007757 (Ibid). S.D. & G. Highrs and H.L.I. of C. were also directed to remain in Beny, from which they had not yet set forth. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs and H.L.I. of C., 6 Jun 44.)

303. At last light on 6 Jun the divisional situation was as follows: the line “ELM” (the intermediate objective) had been reached, though it was not yet fully consolidated on the left. There, however, the reserve brigade had already made some progress towards the final objective. If the next day did not bring a counter-attack in force the division could still be expected to press forward to secure its ultimate covering position.

304. Delays on the beaches, attributable chiefly to weather conditions, very naturally slowed the whole tempo of the advance inland. One brigade commander believed that “the timing as planned had been too fast” (Brigadier Foster, op cit). But the insistence on speed was made necessary by the possibility that mobile reserves might be thrown against the division either before it had secured a beachhead in sufficient depth, or while it was on the move and unprepared to ward off attack. The latter eventuality occurred on 7 Jun; fortunately only one brigade group was affected by it. By the evening of D Day the operation could be reckoned five to six hours behind schedule (i.e., the approximate time required by the main body of 7 Cdn Inf Bde to advance from “ELM” to “OAK”). It therefore seems hardly possible that the division could have arrived in strength on the final objective by nightfall of D Day unless an earlier start had been made. From every point of view, it would have been infinitely more desirable if the times of touchdown had not had to be deferred. (In this connection it may be noted that the need to postpone H Hour for Group J.2 on account of offshore rocks on NAN Sector has been called in question by the Commander of Force “J”. (Report by Naval Commander, Force “J”)).

## SURVEY OF D DAY

### A Air Force

305. The aerial bombardment of German coastal batteries and defences in the assault area, together with the pre-H Hour airborne operations which “constituted the greatest air lift of assault forces” ever attempted, were but the beginning of the Air Forces’ operations on D Day (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 58). Excluding sorties flown by Coastal Command and A.E.A.F. Airborne operations; the A.E.A.F., R.A.F. Bomber Command, U.S. Eighth Air Force and the Fleet Air Arm flew a total of 10,743 sorties on D Day (Ibid, p. 59). After the “heavies” had left, medium, light and fighter bombers carried out a multitude of tasks throughout the day. Fifteen squadrons of fighters were allotted the task of protecting the shipping lanes (Ibid, p. 56). Nine squadrons of fighters continuously patrolled the British and American beaches flying, 1,547 sorties on beachhead cover (Ibid, p. 57). Almost 400 sorties were flown in answer to the heavy calls for spotting naval gunfire. A large number of sorties were also flown on long and short reconnaissance duties, strafing missions, offensive patrols, and so on. (A breakdown of numbers and types of sorties flown by the Air Forces is given in ibid, p. 59) Altogether, the air effort over the “NEPTUNE” front “surpassed in strength any air operations that had ever before been mounted” (Ibid, p. 58).

306. The entire air effort was by no means confined to the assault area. At either end of the English Channel and beyond, R.A.F. Coastal Command was implementing its plans to combat German U-boat attacks against “NEPTUNE” convoys. During the proceeding

months, Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz had concentrated large numbers of his U-boats in the Bay of Biscay. His plan,<sup>60</sup> evidently, “was to deploy his Biscay U-boats up Channel as soon as the landings brought to light the exact position of the Second Front. The U-boats were to sever the first assault force from contact with England and to prevent any build-up” ((HS) 692.-13 (D2): “An Account of Coastal Command in the Invasion”, prepared by R.C.A.F. Operations Record Officer, Coastal Command).

307. On D Day the enemy reacted swiftly. U-boats made for the assault area “with the utmost speed -- that is, on the surface whenever possible” (Douglas, *op cit*, 5127). The first U-boats sighted were approaching from the western entrance to the Channel on the night of D Day. Six of these U-boats were attacked<sup>61</sup> (Leigh-Mallory, *op cit*, p. 77). During the next day and night, a further ten sightings were made and seven were attacked. Some of these attacks resulted in kills” (*Ibid*). It is not possible here to give a full account of the anti-submarine battle waged by Coastal Command, of which the above was the opening phase. It should be remembered, however, that the land battle was dependent upon the security of the ‘bridge to France’, and so upon the success of the anti-submarine campaign.

308. German air opposition to the assault was, much to the disgust of the German army, on an extremely restricted scale. Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory writes of it as follows:

On D Day the first enemy air reaction to the assault was a reconnaissance of the Channel areas. At approximately 1500 hours, the first enemy fighters and fighter-bombers appeared. This was nine hours after the assault began and fifteen hours after the first of very large formations of airborne transports and of the air bombardment squadrons had arrived over enemy territory. The enemy formations consisted of some FW 190s and one formation of 12 Ju 88s; four of this latter were destroyed.

On the night D/D plus 1, approximately 85 enemy aircraft were active over the beaches and shipping lanes. Some of the units operating were known to be specialized anti-shipping units. Activity on this scale was maintained on most nights during June.

(*Ibid*, p. 72.)

309. Fortunately for the Allies, the invasion was not the signal for the enemy to launch his campaign of rockets or pilotless aircraft against England or the beachhead. (*Supra*, paras 72-77) Although it was feared for some time that this campaign would coincide

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<sup>60</sup> For a brief summary of German naval anti-invasion measures see Rear Admiral H.G. Thursfield (Editor), *Brassey's Naval Annual - 1948* (London, 1948), pp. 378-79.

<sup>61</sup> Active in Coastal Command's operations were five R.C.A.F. squadrons. (*Battle Order of R.C.A.F. on 6 Jun 44, op cit.*)

with the invasion (Hill, op cit, p. 5588), the success of Operation “CROSSBOW” against the enemy “ski-sites” seemed to lessen the danger that “pilotless aircraft might be used against assembly areas on the south coast, and particularly round the Solent” (Ibid, p. 5589). Even when the enemy began to build a large number of ‘modified’, well-camouflaged sites in April -- sites whose launching platforms were aligned on London and the southern coast -- the threat from these was “not felt as keenly as the original threat from the ‘ski-sites’ six months earlier” (Ibid, p. 5591). Nevertheless, defensive measures against these ‘secret weapons’ were in readiness on D Day as they were a week later when the first pilotless aircraft made their appearance over England. (Pile, op cit, pp 323 ff.)

310. The lack of German air resistance on D Day, despite increased enemy fighter production,<sup>62</sup> has been explained quite simply by Göring: “... due to the immense numerical superiority of Allied air forces, the GAF simply lacked sufficient strength to cope with the invaders” ((HS) 295AF.023 (D1): “Gathering Interrogated”, U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe, Air Intelligence Summary No. 82, p. 15). More detailed information regarding the reasons for the defeat of the G.A.F. is contained in “The Normandy Invasion -- June 1944”, op cit; (HS) 981.009(D21): German Air Forces, “Interrogation of Generalleutnant Adolf Galland re Fighter Arm of German Air Force”; (HS) 981.013 (D15): Air Ministry (Trans), “Survey of Anglo-American Air Operations Against the Reich and Western Europe, 1942-1944”; (HS) 981.013 (D28); “Some Aspects of the German Fighter Effort During the Initial Stages of the Invasion of North-West Europe”; and (HS) 981.013 (D58): “Some Aspects of the Allied Air Offensive on German Economic Life”; to quote but a few of the more pertinent primary documents. Broadly speaking, aside from the direct consequences of Allied air superiority over the beaches on D Day, the failure of the German Air Force during the assault was due to the pre D Day havoc wrought on G.A.F. bases, depots and airfields; the lack of trained and experienced German pilots; the inability of the G.A.F. to employ ‘decisive forces at decisive times’ because the need to protect the Reich and other fronts; the impossibility of rapid movement of fuel, supplies, etc. over the wrecked transportation system; the poor German system of aircraft reporting and ground control in France; and miscalculation by G.A.F. officials. As a result, the tempting targets of massed ships and craft together with vast, concentrated numbers of men and supplies in Southern England and Normandy were comparatively unharmed by German air attacks.

## B. The Fire Plan

311. In endeavouring to estimate the success of the combined fire plan, it must be realized that the morale factor played almost as great a role as the actual destruction caused. This being so, it is more difficult to arrive at a true evaluation. But it is safe to assume that the massed invasion force, moving in a relentlessly on the beaches and loosing so great a volume of fire-power, must have seemed irresistible to the defenders huddled in their concrete enclosures, waiting until the nearest troops should be within

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<sup>62</sup> See Tedder, op cit, p. 43, for a chart showing the comparative strengths of Allied and German operational aircraft on the Western Front. See also Air Vice Marshal Sir Thomas W. Elmhirst, “The German Air Force and its Failure”, R.U.S.I. Journal, November 1946; and Lee, op cit, Ch 12.

range of their mortars and guns. With the din of the bombardment ringing in their ears, the confident advice of their superiors -- 'Keep them at bay until our Panzers break through to relieve you' -- must have appeared a vain hope indeed. Interrogation of prisoners produced adequate testimony of the power of the fire plan, as the following passage shows:

The results of our preliminary aerial and naval bombardment were most impressive. PW were unanimous in describing its overwhelming and demoralizing effects. In several strongpoints comms were completely severed and the occupants, who had gone to ground, were totally unaware of what was happening until they emerged to find themselves prisoners. PW used such phrases as 'it was absolute hell' and 'we had no chance'. The naval bombardment seems to have been especially terrifying.

((GS) 215C1.023: First Cdn Army Int Summary No. 7.)

312. In the Canadian sector, there are isolated incidents which show that enemy morale was seriously affected. A company commander of Q.O.R. of C. told how a German machine-gun crew ran away when our troops began to scale the sea-wall before their position. Such enemy soldiers he described as "mere boys" and "very frightened" (Interview with Major J.N. Gordon, op cit). Others, locked in concrete emplacements, had no such opportunity for flight and in most cases fought it out till the end. It seems probable, however, that the intense initial bombardment momentarily stunned them, for the battle generally took shape when these positions were closely invested and our leading troops had crossed the intervening open stretch of beach. This conclusion is borne out by the experience of 48 R.M. Commando, which was fired on even before landing by the defenders of the St. Aubin strongpoints, who had previously allowed N. Shore R. to approach with much less show of resistance (Supra, para 285).

313. The physical damage wrought by aerial and naval bombardment has already been mentioned (Supra, paras 227-63). A summary of the bombardment generally has been given by General Montgomery as follows:

Despite the massive air and naval bombardment, the coastal defences in general were not as effectively destroyed as had been hoped, but the enemy opposition was effectively neutralized for the vital period of the assault; field works behind the beaches were largely eliminated, wire entanglements were broken down and some of the mine fields set off, and the defenders were thoroughly shaken by the weight of our fire. The enemy's communication network was paralysed and his radar system thrown into confusion, with the result that during the period of the landings the enemy High Command remained in ignorance of the true extent, strength and objectives of the assault.

(Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, pp. 43-44.)

C. Force "J"

314. Because of choppy seas and crowded beaches the L.S.T. could not begin to beach their unwieldy Rhino ferries until 1500 hrs, and in some cases these ships had not completely discharged their cargo until the early morning of 7 Jun (Report by Naval Commander, Force "J"). Throughout D Day the anchorage was shelled sporadically and ineffectively, and at night there was a most brilliant display as gunners enthusiastically (if not entirely accurately) opened fire on enemy aircraft.

315. Despite active opposition and the danger of obstacles, casualties to landing craft in Force "J" were not excessively high. These were listed as follows:

Sunk	3 L.C.T. (A.)
Badly damaged	2 L.C.T. (3)
	7 L.C.T. (4)
	7 L.C.T. (5)
	5 L.C.I. (S.)
	2 L.C.S. (M.)
	14 L.C.A.
Damaged or Disabled	18 L.C.T. (4)
	8 L.C.T. (5)
	2 L.C.I. (S)
	22 L.C.A.

(Ibid.)

Judging from these figures, almost 75% of the L.C.A. escaped damage. (A total of 142 was to be employed.)

D. Engineers

316. Clearance of gaps through offshore obstacles, which was to have been completed by H plus 75 minutes, was set back many hours by the unexpectedly high tide. The engineers of 5 Cdn Fd Coy, with one platoon of 18 Cdn Fd Coy under command, experienced severe difficulty on landing close to H Hour, but succeeded in putting most of their bulldozer ashore. After a brief period of work, further attempts at mass removal of the dense obstacles had to be abandoned until the tide commenced to recede. Gaps totalling 1600 yards in which were cleared on NAN Sector between the first and second tides on D Day; on MIKE Sector two sections continued to work until D plus 1, by which time they had cleared 1700 yards. Casualties to these teams had been relatively light. (W.Ds., 5 and 18 Cdn Fd Coys, 6-7 Jun 44) The sapper assault teams landing in company with the leading infantry of 7 Cdn Inf Bde sustained heavy casualties both in their craft and on the beach, and were unable to perform their allotted tasks. In view of this the company commander considered that their inclusion in the assault phase had not

been justified (W.D., 6 Cdn Fd Coy, June 1944: Appx 4). A similar experience was met on 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector, where the sapper teams found that little call was made on them in their proper role (W.D., 16 Cdn Fd Coy, 6 Jun 44). The principal task of 18 Cdn Fd Coy on D Day was to have been the construction of Class 40 crossings at Pont de Reviere and Colombiers-sur-Seulles. To this end, reconnaissance parties went forward with the leading infantry, only to find the existing bridges intact. These were at once checked and classified. 1622 Bridging Platoon, which had landed safely, "felt rather lost and simply sat in the Assembly Area" (W.D., 18 Cdn Fd Coy, 6 Jun 44).

317. The difficulty of opening potential exists (which in any event were few) considerably delayed the employment of heavy weapons in support of the infantry: many tanks were compelled to remain on the beach for some hours, while badly needed guns and other equipment could not be landed until the beaches were cleared. This fact makes particularly cogent Admiral Ramsay's conclusion "that the rate of landing will always be governed by the availability of exits", which had not perhaps been fully appreciated by military planners (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief...).

#### E. Armour

318. The experiences of the armoured regiments in the operation have been included with those of the infantry to whom they gave support. Here it is appropriate to consider how valuable was that support.

319. Despite a measure of confusion in their launching and beaching, the D.D. tanks were able to arrive ashore as a fighting entity, where their early arrival unquestionably contributed to the enemy's discouragement and downfall. The performance of the tanks crews generally was described as "gallant rather than brilliant", improving as the battle developed (Interview with Brigadier Foster, op cit). It was the opinion of Lt-Col J.M. Meldram, O.C., R. Wpg Rif, that "A" Squadrons, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, "literally made possible the overwhelming of the defences" of MIKE Sector (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd, Regt, June 1944: Appx 4, Letter from O.C., R. Wpg Rif, to O.C., 6 Cdn Armd Regt). To this expression of appreciation the Commander of 7 Cdn Inf Bde added the minute, "I heartily agree with these sentiments" (Ibid). The tanks proved no less valuable farther inland in the villages and open fields, according to infantry commanders. One may conclude that the landing of tanks in the initial stages was entirely justified. (It may be noted that this conclusion seems to conflict with the Dieppe lessons, which had recommended that tanks be not landed during the beach fighting. ((HS) 594.O13 (D4): The Dieppe Raid (Combined Report) 1942, p. 35) The explanation of this apparent rejection of earlier experience lies in the fact that D.D. tanks, requiring no craft to bring them ashore, formed a series of mobile forts which could contribute to close support at H Hour.)

320. It is hardly necessary to say that 2 Cdn Armd Bde's plan to advance to Evrecy on D Day was not realized. Nor did the special force supplied by "C" Squadron, Inns of Court Regiment, which was entrusted with the blowing of the bridges over the Orne beyond Caen, meet with success. Landing near Courseulles from two L.C.T. (4) at

0830 hrs, 6 Jun, the detachment lost seven vehicles on the beach itself from mines and anti-tank weapons. Owing to difficulty with exists, release from the beach was not given until about 1045 hrs. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 6 Jun 44, Serial 129) At 1500 hrs, the force crossed the River Seulles, but must have worked well to the right, it harboured during the night of 6/7 Jun at Vienne-en-Bessin, about four miles east of Bayeux. Setting forth again the next morning, the squadron suffered thirteen casualties - 7 killed and 6 wounded -- when bombed by Thunderbolts; the farthest points reached on D plus 1 were Norrey-en-Bessin, Bronay and Ducy-Ste. Marguerite, all near the Bayeux-Caen railway. ((HS) 693.O18 (D11): W.D., Inns of Court, 6-7 Jun 44).

#### F. Intercommunication

321. Wireless communication functioned extremely well from the moment wireless silence was broken on D Day. Some difficulties were encountered on the beach, for snipers took a heavy toll of those carrying wireless sets in the first wave, and the wireless sets in handcars were found awkward to manhandle. (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, June 1944: Appx 17, Report on Operation "OVERLORD". Other assaulting divisions made the same complaint.) Artillery wireless communications were highly satisfactory, both on sea and land. The special problems entailed and the means adopted to solve them are treated in two reports: Memo of Interview with Major H.S. Patterson, op cit; and Report on 3 Cdn Div Arty Comms, Operation "OVERLORD", W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, June 1944: Appx 17.

322. Cable sections, whose work was very hazardous in the first days ashore, used jeeps with 10-cwt trailers and found them admirable. Lines had constantly to be repaired, owing to their being cut by tracked vehicles and gunfire. (Signals Report on Operation "OVERLORD", op cit) The commander of 8 Cdn Inf Bde reported that lines were laid to all battalions by the night of D Day (Interview with Brigadier Blackader, op cit).

323. Very good work was done by the Contact Detachments supplied by the divisional reconnaissance regiment (7 Cdn Recce Regt). A Contact Detachment, usually consisting of an officer, an N.C.O. and two operators, was attached to divisional and brigades headquarters, to each assault battalion, and to each battalion in the reserve brigade (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, May 1944: Appx 10, 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs O.O. No. 1). Each Detachment was "equipped with a jeep, a No. 22 crystal-controlled wireless setm a No. 68R [portable] crystal-controlled set, batteries, and a chore-horse"<sup>63</sup> (Capt W.D. Pavy, 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment in World War II (Montreal, 1948), p. 41). The main role of the Contact Detachment was to keep General Keller informed of events on a battalion level.<sup>64</sup> Owing to the nature of their employment, they were also able to keep battalion commanders informed of events on their flanks -- "The Contact Det

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<sup>63</sup> A chore-horse was a machine used to re-charge the wireless set's batteries.

<sup>64</sup> Similarly, 'Phantom' patrols kept the Corps, Army and Army Group Commanders informed on the progress of operations. Each division had one 'Phantom' patrol attached to it. For further information on these small British wireless detachments, see R.J.T. Hills. Phantom Was There (London, 1951), pp. 144 ff.



is doing a good job keeping us informed”, writes one unit diarist (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 6 Jun 44). For further information on these Detachments see (HS) 141.4A7011 (D2): Memorandum of Interview with Captain G.V. Newsam, 7 Cdn Recce Regt: “The Role and Org of Contact Dets”.

#### G. Machine Gun Battalion

324. The three machine-gun companies of C.H. of O. (M.G.) were prevented from landing from their L.C.T. on the morning of D Day owing to the congestion on the beaches. By 1430 hrs, however, all three companies were ashore and their platoons made off to join the battalions they were to support. (W.D., C.H. of O. (M.G.), 6 Jun 44) “A Company supported 7 Cdn Inf Bde on to the brigade’s intermediate objective. “B” Company gave considerable assistance to the battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde by silencing a number of snipers in the area and laying its fire on stronger pockets of resistance. “C” Company’s platoons joined their respective units somewhat later in the day and performed similar tasks. The heavy mortar company, (“D” Company), had been divided into two parts for its role in the assault. Two platoons of this company reached 7 Cdn Inf Bde when the brigade was on “ELM”. The other two platoons, owing to the congestion on the beaches, were unable to start unloading until the following day. As it happened, there was no call for 4.2-inch mortar fire on D Day (W.D., C.H. of O., 6 Jun 44: Appx 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10).

#### H. Anti-Aircraft

325. The only L.A.A. Battery to land with 3 Cdn Inf Div on D Day was the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battery (Major J.M. Cousins, O.C.) of 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt. Two troops of this battery, after experiencing some difficulty with the “Rhino” ferries, landed on the afternoon of D Day. “A” Troop went to protect the bridge at Reviere, while “C” Troops took up a position near the bridge at Colombiers-sur-Seulles (W.D., 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt., July 1944: Appx 10, “Activities of 32 Bty, D Day to D plus 6”). 32 Bty, while taking up positions hastily overrun by the infantry, captured 196 prisoners: “B” Troop was unable to land on D Day, and what was more galling, was unable to fire its guns when enemy aircraft strafed and bombed the landing craft during the night 6/7 Jun. On D plus 2 this troop landed and took up positions guarding divisional headquarters. By that time the battery’s 40-millimetre S.P. guns had already shot down two FW 190s and one JU 88 (Ibid).

#### I. Anti-Tank

326. War Diaries give little indication of what anti-tank batteries landed on D Day. “In 62 A tk Regt it seems certain that only 248 Bty came ashore, the time being 1700 hours. Three guns were not able to disembark, and another is reported to have been drowned. The equivalent of two troops then supported 7 Cdn Inf Bde, one being with R. Wpg R. and the other with Regina Rif in their final positions south-east of Creully” ((HS) 952.O13 (D96): Historical Section of the Cabinet, OVERLORD: D Day, 6 June 1944, Book II, p. 285). On the left sector 105 (Composite) A tk Bty (of 3 Cdn A tk Regt)

experienced considerable difficulty when unloading. Some portion of the battery was landed, however, for one troop gave assistance to the Nth N.S. Highrs when it moved forward from Beny-sur-Mer at 1820 hrs (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 6 Jun 44). It was a day or so later, however, before the regiment was able to gather its forces together.

## J. Casualties

327. Complete evidence is not available regarding the number of casualties expected among the Canadian forces landing in Normandy on D Day. It seems probable, however, that the method used by the Canadians to estimate casualties was the same as that employed by the British. (The Administrative History of 21 Army Group, 6 June 1944 - 8 May 1945 (Germany, 1945) states on p. 7: "The estimates of casualties for the BRITISH and CANADIAN forces were based on the Official War Office Casualty Rates known as the Evetts Rates." see also (HS) 133.o65 (d579): "Forecasting Rates of Wastage" for further information regarding the Evetts Rates. The theory upon which the British, and presumably the Canadian, estimate of casualties was based is contained in the following source: (SHO 133.O65 (D580): War Office Estimate of Casualties, dated 6 Jan 44. This document contains precisely the same information given in W.D., G.S. Branch, 3 Cdn Inf Div, March-May 1944: Appx "I" to Appx "T", which is part of the Joint Outline Maintenance Project/Administrative Plan (issued in conjunction with the Initial Joint Plan (NJC 10040 dated 1 Feb 44). The material and tables in the following paragraphs are taken from the source.

328. In estimating the casualties likely to be sustained during the early stages of Operaton "NEPTUNE", consideration had to be given to casualties by drowning during the run-in as well as the normal land battle casyaktues. It was anticipated that of the craft which became lost or damage,<sup>65</sup> 60% would be lost or damaged on the outward journey, e.e., when loaded. In craft which were total losses 70% of the passengers would become casualties. Thus 42% (70% of 60%) of the personnel carried by lost craft would be casualties. In craft which were damaged 20% of passengers would become casualties, i.e., 12% (20% of 60%) of the personnel carried in damaged craft would be casualties.

329. It was assumed also that 0.17% of the total force ashore would be sick or hospitalized.

330. The battle casualty rate was to depend upon the strength, composition and organization of the forces involved and the type and severity of the action anticipated. The following table indicates the battle casualty rate (in percentage) based on the nature of the operation and expected opposition to be encountered. The operations staff was to determine the severity of the losses to be expected in terms of "light", "severe" or "maximum" for each of the formations or units involved.

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<sup>65</sup> Naval estimates of the losses likely to occur on D Day are not available. Admiral Ramsay states, however: "In the Assault the damage to ships including L.S.T. was less than expected. In the case of L.C.T. and craft generally suffering damage from beach obstruction ... were considerable and above expectation" (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., p. 78).

## BATTLE CASUALTY RATE

<u>Type of Formation</u>	Light Battle Day %	Severe Day %	Maximum Day %
Brigade or Regiment	2.5	15	25
Division	1.0	8	15
Corps	.5	3	5
Army	.35	1	2.5
L of C troops, SOS, and service Units not included in other Estimates		25	0.6

The totals of these estimates were subdivided as follows:

- a. D Day and D plus 1
 

Killed, captured and missing	30%
Wounded	70%
  
- b. D plus 2 and thereafter
 

Killed, captured and missing	25%
Wounded	75%

The number of wounded was further sub-divided as follows:

Litter cases	50%
Walking cases	50%

331. It had been planned to land on D Day about 14,460 Canadian troops (3 Cdn Div O.O. No. 1, Appx "G"). The number actually landed was somewhat less. Had this planned number been landed, however, presumably the anticipated casualties, based on a "Maximum Day" in the theory, would number well over 2,000 exclusive of those casualties sustained on the run-in.

332. Whatever the final figures the Canadian operations staff arrived at, it can be safely assumed that casualties in the assault were lighter in practice than in theory. The total losses of the Canadian assaulting troops on D Day were 946 all ranks. A breakdown of the type of casualty suffered by Canadians in Normandy on D Day is attached at Appx "D" to this Report.

333. An attempt has been made by the Army Operational Research Group to tabulate the casualties actually sustained on the beach itself, as distinct from those occurring inland. It is thus concluded that each infantry assault battalion incurred between 60 to 80 casualties within the immediate coastal area. This estimate is perhaps too low, for in

some cases battalions are known to have been more seriously depleted on the beach than these figures would indicate. (Opposition Encountered on the British Beach in Normandy on D Day, op cit, Part III.)

334. It seems to be well established that casualties on each sector varied in direct ratio to the number of enemy mortars in action. His machine-guns, on the other hand, although more effective in causing delay, probably did not inflict proportionately as many casualties. (Ibid, Part IV) This can be accounted for by the fact that machine-gun fire, with its wide sweeping arc of fire, causes troops to go to ground, where they are largely immune from flat-trajectory weapons.

#### K. Progress by Other Allied Divisions in the Assault

335. (i) 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. Brief mention has been made regarding the role to be played by 6 Airborne Div on D Day (Supra, para 26). More particularly, the division had primary and secondary tasks. The former involved the capture of the bridges over the River Orne and Canal de Caen at Benouville and Ranville respectively and the establishment of bridgeheads each side of this water obstacle. ((HS) 255B6.013 (D1): 6 Airborne Division -- Report on Operations in Normandy, 5 Jun-3 Sep 44.) While 5 Para Bde Gp was employed in these operations, 3 Para Bde Gp (which included 1 Cdn Para Bn<sup>66</sup>) was to silence the enemy's Merville battery which commanded the beaches where 3 Brit Div was to land. This group was also to demolish a series of bridges over the Rivers Dives and Divette from Troarn to Varaville. (Ibid) When these primary tasks had been completed, 6 Airborne Div was to develop the operation east of the Orne in order to:

- a. Mop up and secure the area between R Orne and Dives, north of the rd Troarn 1667 - Sannerville 3368 - Colombelles 0770.
- b. Having secured a firm base East of the R Orne, operate offensively to delay any res attempting to move towards the covering posn from the East and SE.

(Ibid.)

336. In order to carry out these latter tasks, 1 S.S. Bde was to be placed under command after it had landed from the sea at Ouistreham. It was to pass through 5 Para Bde and mop up the coastal area as far as possible between Franceville Plage and Cabourg. In the evening (at 2100 hrs) 6 Airdlg Bde Gp was to arrive by glider and would take over the southern portion of the divisional area.

337. By 0300 hrs 6 Jun, the advance parties of the parachute brigades, together with a 'coup de main' glider force which was to seize the vital Benouville and Ranville bridges,

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<sup>66</sup> Since a report has been written covering the activities of this unit (Hist Sec, A.H.Q. Report No. 26, The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion in France, 6 June-6 September 1944), no elaboration on the part it played during D Day will be given here.

had landed in France. Between 0100 and 0130 hrs the main body of 3 and 5 Para Bde Gps landed. The drop was scattered<sup>67</sup> which resulted in the units having to perform their tasks well under strength. On the other hand, the wide dispersal of the parachutists misled the enemy as to the area and extent of the airborne landings. (Ibid.)

338. The division as a whole was very successful in carrying out its D Day plans. The bridges over the Orne and Canal de Caen were quickly taken by the glider force and bridgeheads were found on either side of the water obstacle by 5 Para Bde Gp. Enemy counter action to the small western bridgehead began to develop at 0550 hrs but the men defending this area, although greatly outnumbered, held their ground until relieved by the advancing seaborne forces later that day. (Ibid) The larger eastern bridgehead was also held, although at high cost, against repeated armour-supported attacks by the enemy. In the early afternoon of D Day a Commando of 1 S.S. Bde, which had fought its way inland from the beaches, was diverted to reinforce the defenders. The diversion of this Commando, although it was released in the evening, resulted in the curtailment of the offensive activities of 1 S.S. Bde in the coastal area.

339. Although widely dispersed, 3 Para Bde Gp's operations on D Day met with equal success. So widely was this brigade scattered, however, that 9 Para Bn, whose task was to silence the Merville battery, moved off to accomplish its mission "only 150 strong and having only 1 MG" (Ibid). Special engineer and other supporting detachments were also missing. This unit completed its task despite these handicaps, but at the end of this action its strength had been reduced to 80. (Ibid) The remainder of 3 Para Bde destroyed the bridges over the Dives and Divette as planned. By the end of D Day the brigade took up pre-arranged defensive positions along the Sallenelles-Troarn ridge, a feature which formed the easternmost 'shield' of the "NEPTUNE" area.

340. At 2100 hrs the glider landing of 6 Airdlg Bde (less 1 Bn) took place. With it came the division's Armd Recce Gp. 6 Airdlg Bde set out to help 5 Para Bde contain continuous enemy attacks from the south and to extend the Ranville bridgehead to include Longueval and Herouvillette. 1 Airdlg Recce Regt, meanwhile, prepared to reconnoitre southeastwards using the area occupied by 8 Para Bn as a base. To the north, 1 S.S. Bde was held up by stiff enemy resistance on the line Bréville-Le Plein. (Ibid; see also By Air to Battle, The Official Account of the British First and Sixth Airborne Divisions (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1945)).

341. By the end of D Day the eastern flank of the "NEPTUNE" area was well secured by 6 Airborne Div. All its primary, and most of its secondary, tasks had been carried out with dispatch despite the wide dispersion of the parachutists. The division's casualties had been heavy, many men having been taken prisoner owing to the scattered drop. Surprise, essential especially to an airborne operations, had been achieved and, coupled with individual initiative and dash, helped to make up for the division's lack of heavy support weapons. The enemy had been hit hard and the westward movement of

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<sup>67</sup> General Eisenhower states in his Report (p. 22) that "... the 6 Airborne Division troops were dropped precisely in the appointed areas east of the Orne River". The 'coup de main' glider force did achieve a remarkably accurate landing, but the parachutists' drop was widely scattered.

reinforcements from the Seine area had been denied him. The divisional commander, Major-General R.N. Gale, O.B.E., M.C., summed up the feeling of his command at the end of the day as follows:

... we felt we could face the morrow with confidence. The division had passed a critical phase. Although the morrow would certainly bring heavier German attacks, we would be in so much better state to deal with them.

(Lieutenant-General R.N. Gale, With the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division in Normandy (London, 1948), p. 88).

343. (ii) 3<sup>rd</sup> British Infantry Division. The task of 3 Brit Inf Div was “to land on QUEEN White and Red beaches in conjunction with Naval Force “S” and to capture Caen and a bridgehead south of the R. Orne at that place” (Overlord, D Day, 6 Jun 1944, op cit, Book II, p. 295). The division was to assault on a front of one brigade with 8 Brit Inf Bde Gp. Aided by two Commandos and supported by an armoured regiment, 8 Brit Inf Bde Gp’s task was to secure a beachhead from the high ground at Periers-sur-le Dan to St. Aubin-d’Arquenay, both inclusive, after which it was to assist 6 Airborne Div at the Benouville-Ranville bridgeheads. 4 Commando (of 1 S.S. Bde) was to clear Ouistreham, while 41 R.M. Commando (of 4 S.S. Bde) was to clear the coastal area westwards to Luc-sur-Mer. 1 S.S. Bde, landing under command 8 Brit Inf Bde in the second wave, was to go immediately to the relief of 6 Airborne Div.

343. 185 Brit Inf Bde Gp, landing at approximately H plus 2-1/2 hrs, was “to capture Caen and secure a bridgehead south of the R. Orne at Caen” (Ibid). 9 Brit Inf Bde Gp, the reserve brigade, was to land at about H plus 5-1/2 hrs. This was a mobile brigade and after it had assembled at Plumetot, its employment would depend upon the tactical situation. Should 27 Armd Bde become available from its initial tasks with the brigade groups, it would concentrate in the area of Cazelle and be used by the divisional commander, Maj-Gen T.G. Rennie, D.S.O., M.B.E., as the situation warranted.

344. H Hour for 3 Brit Inf Div was fixed at 0725 hrs, but the actual touchdown of the assaulting craft was a few minutes late. Heavy seas, beach obstacles and enemy fire created problems similar to those encountered by 3 Cdn Inf Div. Beach exits, however, were established with somewhat less trouble, but the lack of good routes leading inland caused some delay.

345. The assault by 8 Brit Inf Bde met with stubborn resistance on the beaches and especially inland. The beach strongpoint at La Brèche was overcome by 1000 hrs. A mile inland, however, a series of strongpoints from the Canal de Caen to Colleville sur Orne<sup>68</sup> prevented the brigade from reaching its objective. It was not until the evening of D Day that the last of these strongpoint was cleared. While the brigade’s advance was being slowed up, other forces were fanning out along the coast. 4 Commando, together with supporting infantry and armoured detachments, set out to clear Oistreham. This was

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<sup>68</sup> In July 1946 this village rechristened itself Colleville-de Montgomery (Scarfe, op cit, p. 75).

almost completed by the end of the day. 41 R.M. Cdo, after suffering severe casualties on the beaches, struck westwards along the coast toward Luc-sur-Mer. Even with the aid of additional support later in the day, the Commando was unable to advance beyond the Hermanville - Lion-sur-Mer line, leaving a 2-1/2 mile gap between it and 48 R.M. Cdo. (See supra, paras 154 and 285)

346. 1 S.S. Bde's route to 6 Airborne Div ran through the line of inland strongpoints. The brigade avoided combat with these where possible and, after overcoming scattered enemy resistance, reached the Benouville bridgehead early in the afternoon.

347. 185 Brit Inf Gp was divided into two parts for its dash to Caen and beyond. One was a mobile group (infantry riding on tanks) called 2 K.S.L.I. Gp; the main body (composed of 2 Warwick, 1 Norfolk and supporting detachments) was to mop up as it followed in the wake of the mobile column. This brigade was landing at 1000 hrs. Owing to their armoured vehicles being held up on the beaches, it was not until some two hours later that 2 K.S.L.I. Gp began its advance southward along the main road from Hermanville to Caen. By 1400 hrs this group, "the hope of the whole division" (Scarfe, op cit, p. 80), was on the outskirts of Beuville. Three hours later, tanks and infantry of the mobile column were engaging the enemy along the line Periers-Bieville. The Main body, advancing slowly east of the main axis, had been divided, 2 Warwick going to the Benouville area from whence it would advance on Caen, while 1 Norfolk came closer westward to the mobile column. Scarcely had 1 Norfolk reached a position protecting the flanks of the mobile column (at about 1700 hrs) When the latter was counter-attacked by tanks of the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division which had advanced northward from the Caen area in the gap between 3 Brit Inf Div and 3 Cdn Inf Div. Anticipating such a move, the brigade group's tanks, S.P. and 6-pdr guns beat off these attacks with heavy loss to the enemy. Fear of further attacks, plus increased enemy resistance as the group approached Caen, led the brigade commander to consolidate his position for the evening. One company, which had reached the Lebisey woods (only a few miles from the centre of Caen) was recalled to the brigade fortress area. 2 Warwick, moving toward Caen along the canal from the Benouville bridgehead, was also halted by superior forces on the outskirts of Blainville. The Blainville-Bieville line formed the southernmost line of 3 Brit Inf Div at the end of D Day. (Overlord..., Book II).

348. 9 Brit Inf Bde (the reserve brigade) landed in the early afternoon of D Day. It was engaged in comparatively little fighting during the day, but suffered the loss of its commander after it had landed.

349. The dispositions of 3 Brit Inf Div at the end of D Day are shown at Appx "L". The operations which had been planned for it on D Day were ambitious, a fact which stands out even without the benefit of hindsight. It was realized beforehand that the enemy would be sensitive to any drive on Caen, and that stubborn resistance could be expected (Scarfe, op cit, p. 66). Thus although the division was heavily supported to accomplish its role, its success would depend a great deal upon good fortune and speed. As the former disappeared during the day, the latter became a walk rather than the hoped-for race.

350. (iii) 50<sup>th</sup> (Northumbrian) Division. The intention of 50 (N) Div was “to penetrate the beach defts between Le Hamel and La Riviere” and to secure by last light on D Day a line which ran along the high ground immediately east of the Drome River southward to the Monunirel feature, crossed the Aure River south of Bayeux at Guéron, then went along the high ground east of this river as far south as La Vallerie, thence almost directly east until it cut the Caen-Bayeux road southeast of St. Leger (Overlord, D Day, 6 June 1944, op cit, Book I). “The divisional commander also intended to exploit, with a mobile force including armour, to Villers Bocage...”, an important communications centre some 20 miles inland (Ibid). The division was to land on a two brigade front with two infantry brigades in reserve.

351. During Phase I, the two assault brigades (231 Inf Bde Gp right, 69 Inf Bde Gp left) would assault through JIG and KING Sectors respectively, and would establish a beachhead between Le Hamel and La Rivière (inclusive) some two miles in depth. During Phase II, 69 Inf Bde Gp would advance southward flanking 3 Cdn Inf Div to the Creully-Le Manoir line along the River Seulles, while 231 Inf Bde Gp would drive west to a line running from the coast through Longues to Ryes. Coastal defences in the area would be taken from the rear. During this phase, 47 R.M. Commando, after landing and assembling in 231 Inf Bde’s firm base, would strike out westward to capture Port-en-Bessin. Also, the two reserve brigades (56 Inf Bde and 151 Inf Bde) would land and assemble in the areas of Buhot and Meuvaines - Ver-sur-Mer respectively. During Phase III, the reserve brigades would move southwestward against Bayeux with 56 Inf Bde right and 151 Inf Bde left. 69 Inf Bde would continue its advance south to a position along the Caen-Bayeux road. During Phase IV, 231 Inf Bde was to exploit towards Escures where, it was hoped, contact would be made with 16 RCT of 1 U.S. Inf Div. 56 Inf Bde would capture Bayeux, secure the high ground beyond the city, and make contact with 1 U.S. Div along the Drome River. 151 Inf Bde was to advance and secure a line running southeastward along the eastern bank of the Aure River from the Guéron Bridge to Ellon, thence east to Condé sur Seulles. 69 Inf Bde, continuing south, would reach the Caen-Bayeux railway line between the River Seulles and Putot-en-Bessin. The thrust to Villers-Bocage was to be accomplished by 8 Armd Bde Exploitation Force which, after assembling in the Martragny-Brécý area, would drive south to its objective on the St. Leger - Foutenay-le Pesnel - Monts axis. It was believed this force would be ready to carry out its task on D plus 1.

352. H Hour for 50 (N) Div was at 0725 hrs. The assault brigades’ landings were carried out under circumstances similar to 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs, with the exception that in 50 (N) Div, all D.D. tanks were landed dryshod after the infantry were ashore. On the right 231 Inf Bde Gp met with unexpectedly strong resistance (Ibid, p. 135). In general, as the brigade swung westward, those forces charged with clearing the area nearest the coast made slower progress owing to the need to overcome the more numerous and well defened coastal strongpoints. Thus the Le Hamel strongpoint was not reported clear until 1600 hrs, although Ryes, several miles south and west of this point, was captured by 1625 hrs. The advance of this brigade went forward slowly during the remainder of the day. At last light, the Arromanches-La Rosiere line formed the



brigade's westernmost boundary, a position approximately half way to its D Day objective at Longues.

353. 47 R.M. Commando, after landing 1-1/2 miles east of Le hamel at H plus 1 hour, set out across country to capture Port-en-Bessin, the small coastal town on the British-American army boundary. By the end of D Day the Commando had reached a position a few miles south of their objective, where it remained undetected during the night. On D Plus 2 it had secured its objective at heavy coast.

354. 69 Inf Bde Gp succeeded in overcoming the beach defences in its sector and pushing inland without undue difficulty. The Mont Fleury and Ver-sur-Mer positions were quickly overrun, but the La Rivière defences held out longer and caused many casualties. Early in the afternoon the leading elements of the brigade had crossed the River Seulles at Creully. By the end of D Day, the whole brigade was well across the water obstacle and had firmly established itself on a line a short distance north of Rucqueville-Coulombs. For his valour during these operations, C.S.M. S.E. Hollis, (Green Howards) won the Victoria Cross (Clay, op cit, p. 244).

355. 56 Inf Bde landed about noon and, after assembling southwest of Buhot, moved off to seize Bayeux. The leading battalions reached the line Rosiere-Ryes about 1930 hrs. The two leading mobile columns, followed by the main body, made good progress and met only light opposition. By the end of D Day, the right-hand column had consolidated at Vaux sur Aure -- about 2500 yards short of its objective. No contact with American forces was made. The left-hand column, meanwhile, reached St. Sulpice about 2130 hrs and consolidated on the St Sulpice feature for the night. The main body established itself at Magny, midway between and to the rear of the advance battalions.

356. The second reserve brigade, 151 Inf Bde, landed late in the morning and was assembled on the Meuvainos ridge by 1331 hrs. Its axis of advance lay between 56 Inf Bde on the right and 69 Inf Bde on the left. At 1530 hrs the advance mobile columns of the brigade, each followed by a battalion group, started off. The reserve battalion followed close behind. The advance was rapid and resistance was scattered. By 2000 hrs the right-hand column was on the Caen-Bayeux road and had tanks probing into the outskirts of Bayeux. The left-hand column reached Esquay-sur-Seulles at approximately the same time. After consolidating its position for the night, the brigade's southernmost line ran about three miles to the west through Esquay-sur-Seulles from the River Seulles.

357. The disposition of 50 (N) Div at the end of D Day is shown at Appx "L". Although it had not gained all its D Day objectives, the division had made rapid progress on a wide front. Bayeux stood almost within its grasp, and there was nothing to indicate that on the morrow the city and the high ground beyond would not fall into its hands. The threatening thrust of 50 (N) Div towards Bayeux caused the enemy to react in such a way as to favor the hard pressed American forces on OMAHA Beach. By drawing an enemy regiment toward itself, and away from a position where it could counter-attack the weak in relieving the greatest crisis in the "NEPTUNE" area on D Day. (Harrison, op cit, pp. 320 ff.)

358. (iv) First United States Army.<sup>69</sup> Some indication of the operations planned by the First United States Army had been given above (paras 25-39). In brief:

The general plan of attack called for a simultaneous landing on two main beaches. The VII Corps, with 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division making the assault by sea and assisted by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division landing in the rear of the German coastal defences, was to establish a beachhead in the neighborhood of Varreville near the southern portion of the east coast of the Cotentin Peninsula.<sup>70</sup> The V Corps, with one combat team of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on the right and one combat team of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division on the left, all under the command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, was to establish a beachhead on the northern coast of the Calvados near St. Laurent-sur-Mer.<sup>71</sup>

(First United States Army Report of Operations, 20 October 1943 - 1 August 1944, Book I, p. 26.)

359. Before outlining the divisional plans and operations, the geographical problems facing First US Army should be noted. UTAH and OMAHA Beaches were some 18 miles apart, and between them were two main water obstacles, the Vire and Douve Rivers and their numerous tributaries. Behind each beach were areas inundated by the enemy. The flooded sector behind OMAHA stretched along the Aure River (roughly parallel to the coast) from Isigny to Trévières, some five miles inland from the coast. This left the eastern sector of OMAHA unaffected. The situation behind the UTAH Beach was more serious. Immediately inland from the beach the enemy had flooded an area from one to two miles wide stretching from Pouppeville to Quinéville. Four narrow causeways over this inundation provided the only exits from UTAH Beach.

360. The enemy had control of further potential flooding around the neck of the Cotentin Peninsula. From La Barquette, the land bordering the upper reaches of the River Douve and its main tributaries was below sea level at high tide. This land can be flooded by opening the locks at La Barquette.<sup>72</sup> If the lock was controlled by the invaders, and the bridges over the rivers seized or destroyed, the area thus flooded could funnel enemy forces attempting to reinforce the Cherbourg garrison through two easily defended corridors at the base of the peninsula. Furthermore, this area so flooded would

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<sup>69</sup> American military abbreviations will be used where applicable when referring to United States military formations.

<sup>70</sup> This was "UTAH" Beach, between Varreville 4299 and the Carentan Estuary 4590. (Initial Joint Plan).

<sup>71</sup> This was "OMAHA" Beach, between vierville-sur-Mer (6491) and Colleville-sur-Mer (6888). (Initial Joint Plan).

<sup>72</sup> The Germans had flooded this area for their own purposes before D Day. (Harrison, op cit, p. 287.)

protect the flank of American forces moving on Cherbourg, while drained it would facilitate a breakout to the south.

361. Originally, it was planned to drop 82 A/B Div near La Haye du Puits so as to block enemy movement through the western corridor. Late in May, however, reports of the movement of an additional German division into the area were confirmed, leaving the Army Commander “little choice but to shift the 82d nearer the beach in support of the seaborne landing” (Bradley, *op cit*, p. 235).

362. With these geographic factors in mind, it will be easier to comprehend the divisional plans and operations on D Day.

363. (v) 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. The D Day plan for 101 A/B Div.

... was to clear the way for the seaborne assault [on UTAH Beach] by seizing the western exits of the four roads from the beach across the inundated area. At the same time it was to establish defensive areas along the northern and southern edges of the invasion area and establish bridgeheads across the Douve at two points for later exploitation in a southward drive to Carentan to weld VII and V corps Beachheads.

(Historical Section, Department of the Army, Utah Beach to Cherbourg, 6 June 1944 (U.S.A. War Office Publication, 1947), p. 10.)

364. The landing zones of the division’s three parachute regiments<sup>73</sup> were in an almost straight line between Carentan and Foucarville behind UTAH Beach. (*Ibid*; see the maps at the end of this book for a graphic description of the airborne divisions’ D. Day plans.)

365. 502 Prcht Inf was to drop in an area a mile inland from St. Martin de Varreville. One battalion was to seize the western exits of the two northern causeways leading from the beaches. The two remaining battalions were to secure the division’s northern flank after knocking out certain enemy battery positions at St. Martin-de-Varreville. (Leonard Rapport and Arthur Northwood Jr., Rendezvous With Destiny, A History of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Washington, 1948), pp 99 ff) The regiment’s -- and thus the division’s -- D Day objective line in the north ran due east from Beuzeville-au-Plan to the sea.

366. To the south, 506 Prcht Inf (less 3d Bn) was to drop in the area northeast of Hiesville. This regiment was to seize the western exits of the other two causeways leading inland from UTAH Beach. Landing in the same zone would be 3d Bn, 501 Prcht Inf, as divisional reserve. (*Ibid*.)

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<sup>73</sup> On D Day 101 A/B Div comprised three Parachute Infantry Regiments (which resembled British Parachute Brigades) and one Glider Regiment, together with other supporting subunits. Only 315 glider troops were to land in support of the division on D Day. (Utah Beach..., *op cit*, p. 14.) The bulk of the division’s 327<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry landed from the sea on D plus 1. (*Ibid*, p. 15).

367. One battalion of 506 Prcht Inf, together with the main body of 501 Prcht Inf, was to drop in an area about one mile south of Vierville, close to the Douve River locks. 506 Prcht Inf's battalion was to seize the locks at La Barquette and hold a small bridgehead across the river at that point. The second was to destroy the railway bridge over the Douve northwest of Carentan and two road bridges a mile to the east. These operations, together with the water obstacles, would secure the southern flank of the divisional area and would complete the establishment of a firm base for the attack on Carentan.

368. The main body of 101 A/B Div was scheduled to start their drop at 0119 hrs, approximately an hour after the 'Pathfinders',<sup>74</sup> had landed. (Harrison, op cit, pp 280 ff.) Owing to enemy flak and poor visibility, the drop was widely dispersed and, like their British counter-parts in 6 Airborne Div, men from various units and subunits were collected together in groups to accomplish regimental missions.

369. 502 Prcht Inf, widely scattered as it was,<sup>75</sup> was successful in carrying out its main tasks. One group, finding the St. Martin battery had been moved and the position deserted, took possession of the western exit of one of the northern causeways without a struggle. It made contact with the seaborne forces at 1300 hrs after inflicting many casualties on enemy forces retreating inland from the beach defences. Another regimental force, meeting with stiffer opposition, managed to secure the most northern causeway and later, in company with other regimental units, established a defensive line from Foucarville to a point east of Beuzeville-au-Plain by the end of D Day.

370. 506 Prcht Inf, although similarly scattered, was able to assemble more quickly. However one unit, charged with securing the exits of the two southern causeways, was delayed to the extent that seaborne troops had crossed the causeway before the parachutists arrived. The other causeway was not cleared until noon owing to the understrength forces which could be gathered together to attack it. (Ibid)

371. Further south, the third battalion of 506 Prcht Inf made a scattered drop among an alerted enemy. An extremely weak group seized the two bridges over the Douve northeast of Carentan but was unable to hold a bridgehead on the southern bank of the river. Meanwhile, the main body of 501 Prcht Inf set about its tasks. The La Barquette locks were quickly seized with little opposition and a bridgehead over the Douve established. Stubborn enemy resistance prevented the regiment from destroying the railway and road bridges northwest of Carentan, however, and these were still in enemy hands that night.

372. The division's position at the end of the day's action is described as follows:

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<sup>74</sup> The Pathfinders were dropped in advance to mark out the regimental dropping zones with colored lights, etc.

<sup>75</sup> One battalion of this regiment was so scattered that it did not fight as a unit on D Day. Another (artillery) battalion, dropped in supprot, lost the great part of its equipment. (Ibid.)

By the end of D Day the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division had assembled only about 2,500 of the 6,600 men who had dropped during the early morning hours. They were distributed in mixed units of varying size. But despite the handicaps of scattered landings and heavy losses in both men and equipment the division had carried out the most important of its D Day tasks. Above all, the paratroopers had succeeded in clearing the way for the move of the seaborne forces inland. This was the task which had been considered so vital to the whole Allied invasion plan as to warrant the extraordinary risk of airborne landings in heavily defended enemy territory. If the division's defensive line north and south was weak, the weakness was for the moment balanced by the enemy's failure to organize concerted counterattacks.<sup>76</sup>

(Ibid.)

373. (vi) 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. The D Day plan for 82 A/B Div was:

... to secure the western edge of the [UTAH] bridgehead, particularly by capture of Ste. Mère-Eglise, a key communication centre, and by establishing deep bridgeheads over the Merderet River, on the two main roads westward from Ste. Mère-Eglise, for a drive toward St. Sauveur-le Vicomte.

(Utah Beach..., op cit, p. 10.)

The division, landing further inland than 101 A/B Div, was to drop one regiment east and two regiments west of the Merderet.

374. The 500<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry, landing east of the Merderet, was to:

... capture Ste. Mère-Eglise, seize and secure the river crossing near la Fièrè and Chef-du-Pont, and secure a line in the north running through Neuville-au-Plain and tying in with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in the vicinity of Bandienville or Beuzeville-au-Plain.

(Ibid, p. 30.)

375. West of the Merderet, landing hard by Gourbesville, 507 Prcht Inf:

... was to assist the 505<sup>th</sup> in securing the la Fièrè bridgehead and then establish a defensive line running southwest from Gourbesville to Renouf.

(Ibid.)

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<sup>76</sup> Total D Day casualties [for 101 A/B Div] calculated in August 1944 amounted to 1,240 including 182 known killed and 501 missing and presumed captured or killed" (Harrison, op cit, p. 284).

It was then “to be prepared to assume the offensive westward and secure the line of the Douve River” (Ibid.). Also landing west of the Merderet (in a zone northeast of Pont l’Abbé) was 508 Prcht Inf. It was:

... to destroy the crossings of te Douve at Beuzeville-la Bastille and Pont l’Abbé and extend the 507<sup>th,s</sup> defensive line south from Renouf.

(Ibid.)

From this it can be seen that this western defensive line would be about three miles west of the Merderet and would have its southern line resting on the flooded portion of that river.

376. H Hour for the division was approximately one hour later than that of 101 A/B Div, i.e., between 0230 and 0300 hrs on D Day.

377. The 505 Prcht Inf experienced an exceptionally good drop in its sector which, fortunately, was devoid of enemy (Harrison, op cit, p. 289). One force moved immediately on Ste. Mère-Eglise and occupied the town before dawn. Another force, after setting out to establish the defensive line in the north, was diverted in mid-morning to help defend Ste. Mère-Eglise against enemy counter-attacks from the south. These attacks were successfully contained. A third force proceeded toward the two crossings over the Merderet, but it soon became entangled with elements from 507 and 508 Prcht Inf.

378. The 507<sup>th</sup> and 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry suffered a very wide dispersal. Many dropped in the Merderet swamps and, in order to survive, had to abandon equipment sorely needed later in the day. West of the river, scattered sub-units of both regiments, out of contact with the division and each other, were engaged in a number of actions throughout the day. Some of the larger groups were unable to link up with the remainder of the division for several days.

379. The major part of the fighting took place along the eastern part of the Merderet. Many parachutists from 507 Prcht Inf, dropping in the marshy area east of their planned DZ, made for the high railway embankment running east of the Merderet. Assembling in La Fièvre, the river came between them and their objective. Attempts to seize the La Fièvre and Chefdu-Pont crossings were made throughout the day but were unsuccessful. At one point a small bridgehead was established on the western exit of the La Fièvre causeway, but since it was not reinforced, the group holding it was dispersed by enemy action shortly thereafter. A quick enemy counter-attack across the bridge gained him a temporary foothold on the eastern bank. Poor communications (made worse by the obstacles offered by the hedgerow country), strong enemy resistance coupled with his armor and artillery support, and the failure of expected glider and seaborne reinforcements to arrive by the end of D Day, made impossible the attainment of a divisional bridgehead west of the Merderet. (Ibid.)

380. The division's position at the end of the day has been summarized as follows:

At the end of D Day, the division was strongly ensconced in the vicinity of Ste. Mère-Eglise but was precariously situated outside the main VII Corps beachhead. It had no contact with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne or 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions. It had assembled only a fraction of its own men. Planned seaborne reinforcements had not arrived. The bulk of the glider reinforcements (the 325 Glider Infantry) were not due until the next morning. At the end of the day, the division reported that it controlled only 40 per cent of its combat infantry and 10 per cent of its artillery. The first estimate sent on to VII Corps indicated total casualties of about four thousand. The bulk of these, however, were the missing paratroopers scattered far and wide in enemy territory. Revised calculations in August 1944 showed D Day losses of 1,259 including 156 known killed and 756 missing, presumed captured or killed.

(Ibid, p. 300.)

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381. There are many interesting comparisons one can draw between the planned employment and actual operations of the British and American airborne forces. Both lacked the support of heavy weapons, and thus planned to make use of existing water obstacles, whether rivers or marshes, to defend themselves against enemy armoured counter-attacks. Each operation counted upon -- and achieved -- surprise, an essential factor to parachutists dropped in enemy territory. The drop of the airborne divisions was widely scattered, with the result that objectives had to be seized by groups whose strength in men and equipment was much less than planned, a disadvantage which could only be made up, at least in part, by the initiative and speed of both officers and men.

382. It is difficult, if not impossible to contrast the success of one airborne division against another. The wide dispersion alone prevents such a contrast even if other factors were not taken into consideration. What is more to the point is the success achieved by the three divisions in spite of their dispersal. That, if anything should be the real measure of their success and contribution to the assault. Using this measurement, their operations achieved a degree of success greater than even the most optimistic could have planned.

383. (vii) 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The sea borne attack on UTAH Beach was to be made by VII Corps with the 4<sup>th</sup> Division in the assault. H Hour was at 0630 hrs. At H minus 2:

... a detachment of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Group was to land on the Iles St. Marcouf [lying four miles off UTAH Beach] to capture and destroy any installations there capable of hindering the landing operations.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> After the attack the islands were found to be mined but unoccupied.

(Utah Beach ..., op cit, p. 10.)

384. After an air and naval bombardment similar to that preceding the other assault forces, the division planned its assault in the following manner:

... the 4<sup>th</sup> Division ... planned to land in column of regiments on a two battalion front of about 2,200 yards. The 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry ... with the 3d Battalion of the 22d Infantry attached, would make the initial assault. It would first occupy the high ground along the road between Ste. Marie-du-Mont and les Forges and would be prepared to move with the bulk of its force thereafter westward across the Merderet River in the zone of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. One battalion would be left in the area west of St. Martin to protect the division's north flank until the arrival of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry..., next infantry unit to land, beginning at H plus 85 minutes, would turn north from the beaches to seize the causeway across the inundations at les Dunes de Varreville. Continuing the push northwest, the regiment would capture Quinéville and occupy the high ground at Quinéville and Fontenay-sur-Mer. In the centre of the beachhead the 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry ..., landing after H plus 4 hours, would advance with two battalions abreast to seize the high ground between Emondeville and the Merderet River [and the le Port Bréhay bridge across the Merderet].

.....

One regiment (the 359<sup>th</sup> Infantry) of the 90<sup>th</sup> Division, the first follow-up division, was attached to the 4<sup>th</sup> Division to begin landing on D Day. It would assemble in reserve near Foucarville.

(Harrison, op cit, pp. 302-04.)

385. 4 Div encountered less opposition from enemy beach defences during the assault force. Although the sea was comparatively calm and the landing made on time, the first assault waves were landed over a mile to the south of their planned sectors.<sup>78</sup>

Fortunately, enemy underwater obstacles and defences were fewer here than in the planned area. Within a short time, "... company size forces ... reduced the very lightly defended field fortifications covering the two middle beach exits ..." (Harrison, op cit, p. 304). D.D. tanks, landing 15 minutes after the infantry had touched down, played a minor role in these and subsequent operations. Underwater obstacles were cleared in about an hour, and "well before H plus 3 hours the beach area had been cleared and landings were virtually routine, harassed only by sporadic enemy artillery fire" (Ibid).

386. The 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry had little trouble crossing the causeways and moving inland once the beach defences were subdued. Two battalions of the regiment reached the Les Forges

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<sup>78</sup> Smoke and dust thrown up by the air and naval bombardment obscured landmarks from the sea; a strong current also contributed to this mislanding.



crossroads and consolidated there during the evening. Another battalion reached the outskirts of Turqueville by nighfall. Thrust into the Les Forgas-Turqueville - Ste. Mère-Eglise triangle, however, was a strong enemy pocket which acted as a barrier between 505 Prcht Inf and 8 Inf. Glider reinforcements for 82d Prcht Div, landing very close to this pocket late on D Day, suffered severe casualties from enemy ground fire.

387. Operations of the other regiments of 4 Div can be summarized as follow:

In the northern portion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division zone neither the 12<sup>th</sup> nor the 22d Infantry Regiment reached its D Day objective. Delays were caused not by enemy opposition but by the difficulty of moving up through the marshes. The 22d was halted in the general area from Hamel de Cruttes onthe coast to St. Germain-de-Varreville. The 12<sup>th</sup> came up on the left of the 502d Parachute Infantry which was holding the 101<sup>st</sup> Division north flank near Beuxeville-au-Plain.

(Ibid, p. 329.)

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388. The following sums up the position of VII Corps at the end of the day's operations:

General Bradley's right corps on UTAH Beach had its weaknesses at the end of D Day, but on the whole it was in a sound position, smaller than planned but better organized and stronger than might have been expected. The beach, though still under intermittent enemy artillery fire, was cleared and prepared for the orderly reception of reinforcements. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division was present in the beachhead virtually intact, organized and equipped for offensive action. Its casualties for the day were less than 200.<sup>79</sup> If the position of the 82d Airborne Division caused some concern, the force was at hand to consolidate it.

(Ibid.)

389. (viii) 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. Leading the assault of V Corps landing on OMAHA Beach was the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. This division was also faced with the problem of exits from the beach because of the 100-170 foot bluffs behind the beaches. However,

At four points along Omaha Beach small wooded valleys slope back inland and provide natural corridors for exit from the beach flat.

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<sup>79</sup> General Eisenhower states that it was on UTAH Beach, "... we had expected our greatest losses" (Eisenhower, Report ..., p. 24). It is remarkable that the D Day casualties of Force "U" were less than half the casualties this force lost while training at Slapton Sands (Supra, para 99).

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These corridors were, inevitably, key areas both in the plan of attack and in the arrangement of defenses. The advance inland of assaulting units would depend on opening exit roads for traffic and supply from the beach, and armor used in the attack could only get up to the high ground through the draws.

(Historical Division, U.S. War Department, Omaha Beachhead (6 June - 13 June 1944) (Washington, 1945), p. 16).

390. Another major feature of the enemy's defence system received special attention from the planners. About three miles west of OMAHA Beach,

... at Pointe du Hoe ... there was a battery believed to consist of six 155-mm howitzers (French make), mounted partly in casemates. This position was regarded as the most dangerous in the American zone, for guns of that calibre could cover not only the V and VII Corps landing beaches but also both transport areas.

(Ibid, p. 25.)

391. The 1<sup>st</sup> Division was to make its assault on OMAHA Beach with

... two regiments abreast, the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry (attached from the 29<sup>th</sup> Division) on the right, the 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the left. Each regiment was to land two battalion landing teams at H Hour [0630 hours] with initial missions to clear the beach defenses and seize and secure that portion of the beachhead maintenance line in their respective zones. The beachhead maintenance line roughly followed the ridge of high ground parallel to the main coastal road and was in most places from two to three miles inland. From this line the assault regiments, supported by 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry landing after H plus 3 hours and the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry landing on order of the Commanding General, V Corps would punch out toward the D Day phase line. Occupation of that phase line would mean securing a coastal strip five or six miles deep astride the Bayeux highway.

(Harrison, op cit, pp 307-308.)

392. Capture of the Pointe du Hoe battery was to be effected as follows:

The 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry was responsible for capturing the Point du Hoe coastal battery. On the assumption that the six partially casemated 115 mm guns would not have been destroyed by pre D Day bombardment and the heavy naval fire directed on them just before H Hour, two Ranger battalions were attached to the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry with the special H Hour mission of

taking out the guns. Three companies of Rangers from the 2d Rangers Battalion were to land at the foot of the cliff which the fortified battery surmounted, scale the cliffs by means of rope ladders, and attack the German position. Another company, landing on the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry main beaches to the east, would attack the fortifications at Pointe et Raz de la Percée and then continue westward to cover the flank of the Ranger force at Pointe du Hoe, provided the initial landings succeeded; otherwise they would come in on the 116<sup>th</sup> beaches and assist the right battalion of the 116<sup>th</sup> in attacking westward.

(Ibid, p. 308.)

393. The D Day operations on OMAHA Beach are so confused that they can be treated only very broadly here. In all, the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's assault presents a panorama of misfortune and miscalculation which together almost resulted in complete failure.

394. H Hour was at 0630 hrs. Before that time, owing to weather conditions, the heavy bombers assigned to hit the coastal fortifications in the OMAHA area overshot their targets, leaving them unscathed. Naval fire preceding the assault was also not as effective as it was hoped. During the run-in, high seas took a heavy toll of landing craft. Of 32 D.D. tanks launched, only five reached shore; the remainder of the division's tanks were landed dryshod. Craft carrying guns also suffered severely, so much so that "the artillery that was planned to support the infantry particularly in the advance inland did not reach the shore" (Ibid, p. 313.)

395. Major errors in landing the engineer and infantry units, coupled with withering enemy fire directed at the assault troops even before their craft touched down, led to an indescribable state of confusion on the beach itself. Units and subunits were intermingled and most of them suffered heavy casualties while crossing the beach. Officer casualties were high and the "mislanding of command groups had left many units leaderless..." (Ibid, p. 319). Confusion was compounded by the lack of communication owing to the loss and destruction of radios, and enemy fire further isolated those groups who had reached the safety of the sea-wall.

396. "The heavy losses and disorganization of the first wave had repercussions on each succeeding wave through the morning of D Day" (Ibid, p. 315). The inability of the engineers to clear sufficient lanes through beach obstacles<sup>80</sup> for the succeeding waves added to these difficulties. One of the major features which led to the crisis<sup>81</sup> on the beach was the unexpectedly strong enemy resistance. This has been explained as follows:

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<sup>80</sup> Those assigned to clear the beach of obstacles faced the same problem of tide and rough seas as encountered on the British beaches. Moreover, losses in men and equipment, together with many parties being mislanded, caused additional delay.

<sup>81</sup> General Bradley writes: "When V Corps reported at noon that the situation was 'still critical' on all four beach exits, I reluctantly contemplated the diversion of Omaha follow-up forces to Utah and the British beaches" (Bradley, op cit, p. 271.).

Deprived of the expected air support by accident of weather and preceded by a generally ineffective beach drenching, the 1<sup>st</sup> Division had gone in against the one sector of the Normandy coast that had anything like the kind of cordon defense which Field Marshall Rommel counted on to hold and smash the Allies onto the beaches. Instead of attacking in the sector of one regiment of an overextended static division as expected, General Huebner's troops hit on the front of a full attack infantry division, the 352d, whose presence in the coastal zone had been missed by Allied intelligence even though it had been in place for almost three months.

(Ibid, p. 319; see also Bradley, op cit, p. 272.)

397. Although the crisis on OMAHA Beach in the first hours of the assault was grave, it was not overwhelming. By mid-morning, small mixed groups of men were making their way inland by scaling the bluffs and avoiding where possible strongly defended enemy strongpoints. Without the aid of armour and heavy support weapons, however, these forces were unable to make much headway.<sup>82</sup> Indecisive and confused fighting continued throughout the day and the area immediately behind the beaches was cleared.

398. Further westward, at the Pointe du Hoc, the Ranger companies landed late but, with the aid of naval fire, managed to reach and destroy the enemy guns which were found further inland than expected and the sites unmanned. The real difficulties for this group "began later in the day with the first of a series of counterattacks ... that would keep them in a state of siege for two days, and reduce their combat effectiveness to about ninety" (Ibid, p. 322; see also Historical Division, U.S. War Department, Small Unit Actions (Washington, 1946)).

399. The situation in the OMAHA area at the end of D Day was as follows:

The main V Corps position at the end of the day was the narrow sector between St. Laurent and Colleville, a toehold on the enemy shore nowhere more than a mile and a half deep. The right flank at Vierville-sur-Mer, held by elements of the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the Rangers, was isolated from the main body although the beach exit was open and reinforcements thus could be brought in. All units were lacking vehicles, supplies, ammunition, artillery, and armoured support necessary for further advance inland.

No artillery could be landed during the morning. The elements of five battalions which beached in the afternoon all suffered heavy losses of

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<sup>82</sup> "Conditions at OMAHA resembled[d] in some respects those at DIEPPE during the Canadian raid of Aug 19, 1942. In both cases troops on the beaches were enfiladed by fire from strong natural positions, and in both cases there were few tanks available to support the infantry in the early stages of the assault" ((HS) 952.013 (D37): A.O.R.G. Report No. 292, "Comparison of British and American Areas in Normandy in terms of Fire Support and Effects"). "Here DD tanks were unable to reach the shore, and they had no flails or AVRE" (Ibid).

equipment, including a total of twenty-six guns. Two anti-aircraft gun battalions scheduled to arrive on D Day could not come in until the following day. Only one artillery mission was fired on 6 June. The V Corps losses for the day were about 2,200 killed, wounded and missing.

(Omaha Beachhead..., pp. 329-30).

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400. General Montgomery reviews the situation in the “NEPTUNE” area at the end of D Day operations we had gained a foothold on the Continent of Europe.

As a result of our D Day operations we had gained a foothold on the Continent of Europe.

We had achieved surprise, the troops had fought magnificently, and our losses had been much lower than had ever seemed possible.<sup>83</sup> We had breached the Atlantic Wall along the whole Neptune frontage, and all assaulting divisions were ashore. In spite of the bad weather the sea passage across the Channel had been successfully accomplished, and following this the Allied Naval Forces had given valuable support by fire from warships and craft; the Allied Air Forces had laid the foundation of success by winning the air battle before the invasion was launched, and by applying their whole collective striking power, with magnificent results, to assist the landings.

In spite of the enemy’s intentions to defeat us on the beaches, we found no surprises awaiting us in Normandy. Our measures designed to overcome the defences proved successful. But not all D Day objectives had been achieved and, in particular, the situation on Omaha Beach was far from secure; in fact we had only hung on there as a result of the dogged fighting of the American infantry and its associated naval forces. Gaps remained between Second British Army and V United States Corps and also between V and VII United States Corps; in all the beachhead areas pockets of enemy resistance remained and a very considerable amount of mopping-up remained to be done. In particular, a strong and dangerous enemy salient remained with its apex at Douvres.

It was early to appreciate the exact shape of the German reaction to our landings. The only armoured intervention on D Day was by 21 Panzer Division astride the Orne, north of Caen. Air reconnaissance, however, showed that columns of 12 SS Division, quartered in the area :osoeux-Laigle-Bernay, were moving west.

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<sup>83</sup> General Eisenhower states that “... the resistance encountered on Omaha Beach was at about the level we had feared all along the line” (Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 253).

To sum up, the results of D Day were extremely encouraging, although the weather remained a great anxiety. I ordered the armies to proceed with the plan; First United States Army was to complete the capture of its D Day objectives, secure Carentan and Isigny so as to link up its beachheads, and then to thrust across the base of the peninsula to isolate Cherbourg as a prelude to its reduction. Second British Army was to continue the battle for Caen, develop the bridgehead southwards across the Bayeux-Caen road and link up with V United States Corps at Port-en-Bessin.

(Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, pp 48-49.)

L. Enemy Reaction to the Invasion

401. It is not intended here to treat fully the German reaction to the Allied invasion of Normandy. This has been done in detail in another Report. The following sections, therefore, are intended only as a sketch or outline which paraphrases the contents of the more detailed Reports so as to present a picture of the pre-D Day situation in Occupied France and a summary of the main events on D Day itself.

402. (i) The Atlantic Wall: The “Atlantic Wall”, which loomed so large in the minds of Allied planners prior to D Day, was found to have been less an obstacle than was feared. We know now that on 8 Dec 41, Hitler admitted the German army had been forced onto the defensive in the East. Moreover, at that time coast defence in the West was becoming a major concern of the German High Command, and Hitler revealed that he was thinking of a new ‘West Wall’ to ensure that any attempted Allied landing would be repelled by a relatively small force of permanently assigned field troops. (A.H.Q. Report No. 36, pp 11-12). But whilst the troops were continuing with the preparations of field fortifications in the coastal area, and preliminary planning and reconnoitring was carried on at high levels, it was not until the Führer Conference of 13 Aug 42 that Hitler formally and unequivocally committed himself to the execution of the gigantic project which became known as the “Atlantic Wall”. (Ibid, pp 31-32.)

403. During 1943, as Allied air reconnaissance was quick to note, work upon the Atlantic Wall was intensified. The mounting German casualties on the Eastern front and in Africa, together with the growing strength of the Allies, combined to further the enemy’s apprehension of invasion in the not far distant future.

404. By the spring of 1944, however, Field Marshal von Rundstedt was well aware of the unsatisfactory condition of the ‘Wall’, and also of the immensity, if not impossibility, of his task of defending some 3,000 miles of coastline with about “58 or 59 German formations... of many types and grades of quality” (A.H.Q. Report No. 40, p.37).

405. The construction of an Atlantic Wall as ordered by Hitler was beyond the capabilities of the German industrial economy. Although a great deal was done to improve the coastal defences by Field Marshal Rommel during the first half of 1944, it

remained true that there was “not enough to go around of anything but propaganda” (Hist Sec, A.H.Q., Report No. 41, The German Defences in the Coureulles-St. Aubin Area of the Normandy Coast). Thus

With the fortifications along the channel so inadequate and with manpower almost unavailable, measures had to be taken to impress the Allies that there was a sufficient force to meet an invasion should it occur. A huge deception programme was undertaken designed to build up the strength of Germany’s western forces in the minds of her enemy. Intensive propaganda about the invincibility of the Atlantic Wall was carried on. This was aided by the laying of dummy minefields and by the circulation of maps and legends showing formidable concrete defences and minefields. These latter were passed to the Allies by means of German agents in Paris and Switzerland.

((H.S.) 981.023 (D6): Special Interrogation Report - Field Marshal von Rundstedt.)

406. Since it was obviously impossible to construct an Atlantic Wall on the scale and strength desired, it was planned that the ‘Wall’ would be strongest and thickest at those places along the coast where it was estimated the Allies would assault.

Rundstedt appreciated that the most likely area for invasion was the Pas de Calais. There were a number of reasons for this choice. In the first place the attack from Dover against Calais would be using the shortest sea route to the continent. Secondly, the V-1 and V-2 sites were located in this area. Thirdly, this was the shortest route to the Ruhr and the heart of industrial Germany.

(Ibid.)

Consequently in June 1944, the defences of the Pas de Calais area more closely approximated the planned Atlantic Wall than any other portion of the French coast. Since it was also appreciated that a major port, such as Le Havre or Cherbourg, would be essential to an Allied build-up, the ports and the areas around them received attention only second to be Pas de Calais.

407. Although the strategically tempting sectors of the northern coast of France was given priority, the Normandy beaches were not forgotten. Preliminary work in the form of mine fields, road blocks, field defences, etc., had begun in the “NEPTUNE” area as early as 1942 and continued throughout 1943 and 1944. (See A.H.Q. Report No. 41 for further details regarding the construction of these defences.) As men and material became available, elaborate strongpoints, artillery positions and other fortifications made of reinforced concrete and surrounded by barbed wire and mine-fields, were constructed. Moreover, as we have seen (Supra, para 70), beach obstacles were added in 1944 and greater use was made of flooded areas. Nevertheless, because major landing in this area

were thought improbable by German naval experts,<sup>84</sup> “... the ‘invasion’ sector was the least developed of all sectors along the channel coast, which were endangered by large-scale landings” (Ibid, p. 6).

408. (ii) Disposition of Enemy Forces in France. During 1943, while work was being rushed on the Atlantic Wall, the quality and quantity of German formations in France was being drained to meet the demands of other, more active, fronts. This weakening of his forces became so serious during the autumn of that year that von Rundstedt warned his superiors:

In England alone the enemy has at his disposal today just as many divisions for an attack today just as many divisions for an attack against this 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....

(A.H.Q. Report No. 40, p. 15.)

He cautioned further,

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 from the sea, from the air and from the rear ....

(Ibid.)

He concluded with a demand for additional forces to strengthen the coastal divisions and to create a mobile, hard-hitting army reserve. Rundstedt’s warning did not go unheeded, and in November Hitler directed that the West should “... henceforth ... be strengthened and not weakened as before” (Ibid, p. 19; see also supra, para 69). At the same time, Field Marshal Rommel was sent to France for special employment. (Supra, para 69)

409. On 1 Jan 44, Rommel was given command of Army Group “B”, which consisted of the Netherlands Command and the Fifteenth and Seventh Armies. (A.H.Q. Report No. 40, p. 21) This, in effect, placed Rommel in command of the ‘invasion’ coast of France.

410. During the following months, and in the spring when the strength of the German army in France was increased (in quantity if not in quality), the Pas de Calais area continued to be the primary concern of the German commanders. Consequently, those sectors where the Atlantic Wall was strongest were further reinforced by the movement

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<sup>84</sup> On 25 Dec 43 however, von Rundstedt warned: “Special attention is again to be paid to just those coastal sectors which are rated as ‘not threatened by a landing’. Today this is no longer so. At precisely such places the enemy will attempt to penetrate our coastal defence with specially training troops...” (A.H.Q. Report No. 41, Appx “B”).



of additional troops into these areas. Other coastal sectors, such as Normandy, were also reinforced, but on a lower priority basis.

411. From time to time, apprehension was expressed over the possibility that the weaker sectors of the coast might be the targets for invasion. For example, “on 4 Mar the Führer called Normandy and Brittany the most endangered sectors” (*Ibid*, p. 24).<sup>85</sup> The German strategists, however, faced with the same problem regarding the disposition of their force as they were with the Atlantic Wall, continued to regard the area of the Fifteenth Army as the most likely to be invaded. The last weekly situation report issued by Field Marshal von Rundstedt before the invasion read in part 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’.

(*Ibid*, pp 41-42.)

412/ (iii) Enemy Tactical Planning. The best method of employing German ground forces to defeat an Allied invasion was a problem which received the greatest attention by those charged with the task of defending Germany’s western front. As late as January 1944, von Rundstedt’s plan to defeat such a landing was accepted in the highest quarters. General Jodl, Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff, reported at that time to Hitler:

... I therefore concur with the plans of O.B. West, who, -- while proceeding with the construction work on the coast with all available means -- 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.

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<sup>85</sup> Hitler’s demands that the forces in the Cotentin and Normandy be strengthened could only be met in part by von Rundstedt. (*Ibid*, pp 28 ff)

Furthermore, I concur with the plans for O.B. West to prepare for the movement, according to [predetermined] time-tables, of as many coastal defence divisions as possible -- with the exception of the fortress troops -- 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 at one place and the situation fully cleaned up at that place. Should the enemy subsequently land 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).

(A.H.Q. Report No. 40, pp 33-34.)

It can be seen, therefore, that Field Marshal von Rundstedt

... believed that the enemy naval and aerial supremacy and the enemy technical and material resources would make the attempt to get ashore a success. Subsequent events of the drama would be a matter of mobile operations.<sup>86</sup>

Von Rundstedt, however,

... was 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 co-operation. 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.

(Ibid.)

413. Commanding the armies which would ultimately meet the invasion, Rommel had other ideas regarding the disposition of the armoured forces - ideas which conflicted also with those of Gen Pz von Schweppenburg, who counselled von Rundstedt on all questions pertaining to armoured operations. Rommel

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<sup>86</sup> To meet this coming threat [of invasion] Rundstedt felt he had to have adequate mobile reserves. According to him each division should have a regiment in reserve, each corps a division in reserve, and each army two or three mobile divisions in reserve. In addition to this, the Commander-in-Chief himself needed a pool of armoured and motorized divisions which would be under his direct control ready to be sent to whatever area was threatened. 'With such a force I could operate properly', the Field Marshal said" (Special Interrogation Report - Field Marshal Von Rundstedt, p 7).

... argued that the bulk of the mobile reserves must be as close to the threatened coastal areas as possible, so that they could immediately affect the battle before the Allies had gained a serious foothold. Up to a point, Rundstedt agreed with these principles, but since he did not know where the main invasion effort would be, he did not want to spread his armour too thin along the ground, where most of it would be useless once the assault began.

(Special Interrogation Report-Field Marshal Von Rundstedt.)

414. The result as shown on the 6 Jun 44 German High Command Situation Map 'West' ((HS) 981.004 (D2)), appears to be a compromise between the theories of the two Field Marshals. To account for this situation, it should be remembered that

... Rommel in common with all German field marshals enjoyed at all times the right of appeal directly to Hitler. That privilege was especially important for the west because of the personalities involved. The evidence indicates that Rommel had an energy and strength of conviction that often enabled him to secure Hitler's backing, whereas Rundstedt, who was disposed whenever possible to compromise and allow arguments to go by default, seems to have relaxed command prerogatives that undoubtedly remained formally his. It is possible, of course, that he too came under Rommel's influence and failed to press acceptance of his own ideas because he was content to allow Rommel to assume the main burden of responsibility. In any case the clear fact is that after January 1944 Rommel was the dominant personality in the west with an influence disproportionate to his formal command authority.

(Harrison, op cit, p. 247.)

415. On 6 Jun 44, the disposition of the armoured divisions were as follows: of the panzer divisions directly under Rommel's command (2, 116 and 21 Pz Divs), two were placed in locations immediately behind the infantry divisions manning the coastal defences while the third was situated some forty miles inland between Rouen and Paris. Three other armoured divisions were in the area of the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies. These were 1 and 12 SS Pz Lehr Div, all of which had been designated as Armed Forces High Command reserves<sup>87</sup> and, consequently, could be tactically employed only with its permission. (A.H.Q. Report No. 40, p. 37) One of these reserve divisions was stationed close to Antwerp; the other two (12 SS Pz Div and Pz Lehr) were southwest of Paris in the Rouen-Orleans-Le Mans triangle. (See Appendix "I")

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<sup>87</sup> Also in Armed Forces High Command Reserve was 17 SS Pz Gren Div. This division, located in the Poitiers-Gours-Loudun area, was situated within the German First Army zone, over a hundred miles from the "NEPTUNE" area. (Situation Map 'West', op cit; see also the map showing the disposition of German divisions in the West at Appendix "I".)

416. The dispositions of the armoured divisions are an indication, perhaps, of the success of Rommel's representations to Hitler in March that he be granted greater influence over the mobile formations. (A.H.Q. Report No. 40, p. 32) His success at that time, however, was not complete, since on von Schweppenburg's protest four panzer divisions (i.e., those in OKW Reserve) were still beyond his control ((HS) 981SOM (D122): Panzer Group West-Report of the Commander, Gen Frhr Geyr von Schweppenburg, (MS #B-466)). This 'solution', based as it was on the fundamental problem of there being insufficient armoured forces in the west to satisfy the requirements of Rommel or von Rundstedt, even if their opinions regarding the best tactical employment of armour were similar, added to the confusion of command and purpose when the Allies struck on 6 Jun.

417. On the eve of the invasion, Allied Intelligence estimates of the type and strength of German formations likely to be encountered on D Day were not very dissimilar from the actual state of these formations. (Supra, paras 114-126) An important gap in the knowledge of Allied Intelligence, however, was the disposition of these forces in the "NEPTUNE" area. In the British Second Army area, 716 Inf Div was plotted as manning the coastal defences while 352 Inf Div was thought to be a 'layback infantry division'. 21 Pz Div, located in the Caen area, would support 716 Inf Div in a counter-attack role. (21 Army Group, Weekly Neptune Review, op cit, 21 May 44) Nevertheless, it was known that

... in other areas coastal divisions have been narrowing their sectors while divisions, the role of which had hitherto been read as layback, have nosed forward into the gap provided by the reduced responsibility of the coastal divisions.

(Ibid, 4 Jun 44.)

It was believed not unlikely, therefore, that this might be the case in the Normandy area also. (Ibid)

418. Indeed, this is precisely what did happen in the Normandy sector some months prior to D Day. (Supra, para 396) 716 Inf Div became responsible for the coastal sector stretching from Franceville Plage to Asnelles sur Mer, while 352 Inf Div held the sector west from Asnelles to the Vire Estuary. ((HS 981A7.(Ds) (a): Seventh Army Situation Map, 6 Jun 44) 21 Pz Div was also closer to the coast than was expected. Moreover, certain elements of this division --two Panzer Granadier battalions, an artillery battalion and the greater part of an anti-tank battalion -- were placed under command of 716 Inf Div. (A.H.Q. Report No. 41, Appx "G"; see also Appx "J" to this present Report)

419. The disposition of the regiments and supporting units of 716 Inf Div are described in detail in A.H.Q. Report No.41. Contrary to expectations, 736 Regiment of this division, defending the area assaulted by 1 Brit Corps, had placed all three battalions forward on the coast. (Ibid)

420. (iv) The Assault. The surprise achieved by the Allied assault on the “NEPTUNE” beaches has already been mentioned. (Supra, para 245) At 0140 hrs, while parachutists were still dropping on the flanks of the “NEPTUNE” area, Seventh Army ordered the highest form of alert. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 10) Fifteenth Army was alerted at approximately the same time. For some hours the extent of the airborne attack was unknown.

Indeed, with the German air and sea forces at bay, German Intelligence checked and defeated and little operational information coming to hand, O.B. West<sup>88</sup> was not in a position to tell immediately whether he was confronted by a big raid, a major diversion or the strategical main effort.

(Ibid, para 14).

421. Indecision also reigned at OKW.<sup>89</sup> Thus at 0445 hrs when a request was made that the armoured divisions in OKW Reserve be employed by O.B. West if the situation warranted, it was refused on the grounds that it was still uncertain whether this was the beginning of the invasion or merely a feint.

422. Early in the morning, while 716 Inf Div was being pounded by the drum-fire from Allied naval forces, elements of 21 Pz Div prepared to attack the airborne troops on either side of the Orne. However, in mid-morning “the Calvados coast emerg[ed] as the focal area of the Allied effort...” (Ibid, para 31). It was decided, therefore, to commit the bulk of 21 Pz Div to a counter-attack west of the Orne in the general direction of Lion-sur-Mer. The division struck northward late that afternoon. “The attack virtually reached the coast...” (Ibid). Evidently the losses this armoured spearhead suffered from the armour and guns of 3 Brit Inf Div (supra, para 347), but especially the sight of 6 Airborne Div’s Airlanding Brigade descending in their rear later in the day, led to the withdrawal of 21 Pz Div to defensive positions a few miles north of Caen.

423. While elements of 21 Pz Div had been committed at once, a ‘Tug-of-War’ had been in progress over the employment of the armoured divisions in OKW Reserve. During the early morning hours, Fifteenth Army (on behalf of 81 Corps whose 711 Inf Div<sup>90</sup> was under airborne attack) made repeated requests to O.B. West to move up 12 SS Pz Div. Shortly before 0600 hrs, O.B. West placed 12 SS Pz Div under Army Group

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<sup>88</sup> O.B. West - Oberbefehlshaber West: Commander-in-Chief West (von Rundstedt).

<sup>89</sup> O K W - Oberkommando der Wehrmacht - Armed Forces High Command, Berlin.

<sup>90</sup> 711 Inf Div hoped to have 12 SS Pz Div clear the area east of the Orne of airborne troops. The scattered drop made it impossible for it to know that the main airborne objectives were within 716 Inf Div’s area.

“B”,<sup>91</sup> and ordered it to the Lisieux area so it would be able to intervene on behalf of 711 Inf Div. By so doing, O.B. West overstepped his authority, and attempted in vain for the rest of the morning to secure OKW’s permission to countenance this move. 716 Inf Div, feeling the main force of the airborne drop, requested aid from 711 Inf Div, unable to comply, suggested the commitment of elements of 12 SS Pz Div to clear the area. It was not until 1615 hrs, however, that Fifteenth Army was informed that 12 SS Pz Div was required for clearing the Calvados bridgehead in the combination with 21 Pz Div and Pz Lehr under 1 SS Corps. (Ibid, para 24)

424. The absence of Rommel, the delay at OKW,<sup>92</sup> the uncertainty of the situation at O.B. West, the Allied air power which hampered road movements by enemy armoured divisions, the perplexity felt by the higher commanders as to the possibility of the Allies striking elsewhere, the conflicting orders given to the panzer divisions -- all this led to a state of confusion among the enemy which greatly favoured the Allies at a descisive time. Elements of 21 Pz Div were the only enemy armoured force with which the British assault troops had to contend on D Day. On D plus 1, however, the Canadians were to run into the leading elements of 12 SS Pz Div.

425. During this time, 716 Inf Div was being ground down by the Allied seaborne forces and its defences overrun. The following exemplifies the impact of 1 Brit Corps on this coastal division:

On the eve of the assault the personnel of 716 Inf Div was within 1% of authorized strength. The formation lacked tanks and assault guns, but the lack of guns had been conterbalanced by placing elements of G.H.Q. and 21 Pz Div artillery under command of the Division. By last light on D day the Division had been wrecked. Of a total of four German and two Eastern battalions, there remained only one German battalion (less 20% casualties); all other battalions were mere remnants. The artillery suffered to the same degree; by evening it had been reduced to 1/5 of its initial strength, there were six guns left west of the Orne, and five or six on the east bank. Anti-tank elements had lost 75% of their initial strength, anti-aircraft elements about 2/3 and others about 1/3.

(Ibid, para 30)

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<sup>91</sup> The Army Group Commander, Field Marshal Rommel,” ... left by car for his home at Herrlingen, near Ulm [on 5 Jun]. It was his intention to report to the Führer at Berchtesgaden on 6 Jun” (A.H.Q. Report No. 40, p. 44).

<sup>92</sup> Hitler did not hear about the invasion until midday, 6 Jun, and it was not until after the usual daily conference that Hitler gave permission to von Rundstedt to employ the armoured divisions in OKW Reserve. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 37)

426. As D Day drew to a close and the reports of the progress of the battle came to General Montgomery's headquarters, he formulated his plans for the coming struggle for the bridgehead. He writes of this period as follows:

It was clear to me that we should now have to deal with three immediate problems, the solution of which was vital in order to start the campaign on a proper footing.

First it was necessary to join the individual beachheads into one continuous bridgehead. This was a task of considerable magnitude since the two Armies had assaulted on a front of about fifty miles, and in particular the American assaults were separated by the deep Carentan estuary and the system of water lines and floods associated with it. The second essential was to retain the initiative during the early stage when we were concentrating on forming a secure bridgehead; we had started with the initiative and we had to retain it in order that the battle should be swung our way. The third problem was to guard against any setback or reverse. During the initial days the Allied forces were relatively thin on the ground and time was necessary to get the whole organization sorted out and working smoothly; while this was happening there was a danger of the enemy catching us off balance. A reverse would have had very serious repercussions....

(Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic, p. 50.)

### **THE BATTLE FOR THE BRIDGEHEAD**

#### A. Phase III, 7 Jun<sup>93</sup>

427. (i) 7 Cdn Inf Bde on the Final Objective. At 0130 hrs, 7 Jun the commander of 7 Cdn Inf Bde held an Orders Group at his headquarters. The advance was to be resumed at 0600 hrs, led by R. Wpg Rif and Reginal Rif, with 1 C. Scott R. remaining temporarily in position to provide a firm base. The depleted state of 6 Cdn Armd Regt and its consequent regrouping into two squadrons necessarily altered the plans for armoured support during Phase III (cf para 146 above). At 0500 hrs the tank commander informed the brigadier "C" Squadron would be available in two hours' time. The other (composite) squadron required refuelling and would be ready only somewhat later. But as luck would have it, no tanks were required during the final advance, for groups of snipers constituted almost the sole opposition. At 0855 hrs, when it had become evident that no effective resistance was being offered, all three infantry battalions were directed "to go flat out for their final objectives" (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44).

428. R. Wpg Rif commenced to move forward on the right flank at 0615 hrs, encountering only scattered and ineffective resistance. At 1150 hrs their leading troops,

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<sup>93</sup> A map showing the advance of 3 Cdn Inf Div on 7 Jun is attached as Appendix "M".

proceeding astride the axis Lantheuil-Le Grand Vey - Putot-en-Bessin, were just short of the line "OAK",<sup>94</sup> and by 1205 hrs the whole battalion had entered Putot. (*Ibid*) The advanced guard, which had lost its way, the last to arrive. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 7 Jun 44)

429. Reina Rif, advancing in two columns on either side of the River Chiromme, set forth at 0715 hrs. At 1030 hrs "C" Company, proceeding by road through Camilly and Bray, entered Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and found it clear of enemy. The company then pushed forward across the Bayeux-Caen railway line to Norrey-en-Bessin. Here the company consolidated its position and prepared for the inevitable counter-attacks. ((HS) 145.2R11011 (D7): Personal Account of C.S.T. Tubb re Attacks on Norrey-en-Bessin, June 1944) "B" Company, at the head of the second column, followed a route through Thaon, Cairon and Rots, where the advance was more heavily contested than on the right. The remaining companies on arriving took up positions in and near Bretteville, one sub-unit guarding the railway bridge over the River Mue (947703). (Lt-Col Matheson; W.D., Regina Rif, 7 Jun 44) So swift was their progress that "C" Squadron of 6 Cdn Armd Regt, having completed its refuelling, was unable to find the battalion; and the composite squadron was despatched instead, arriving just in time to share in the unopposed entry into Bretteville. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Jun 44)

430. When these two units were well on their way, 1 C. Scot R. was ordered to advance at 0850 hrs. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., June 1944: Appx 3, Message Log, 7 Jun 44) At 1225 hrs, the Brigade's capture of the objective "OAK" was brought to completion by the arrival of this battalion in the area between Secqueville-on-Bessin and La Bergerie Farm. Battalion headquarters was established in a farmhouse at Secqueville by 1250 hrs (923745). (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde; W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 7 Jun 44) During this advance, one company had operated independently on the left flank. (*Ibid*: Appx 23, "B" Coy Diary.) It may be observed that the course of action taken by 1 C. Scot R. (as confirmed by the Orders Group of the night 6/7 Jun) does not agree with the original intention whereby that battalion should first secure an intermediate position on the high ground west of Camilly "prior to a general advance by the brigade" (cf para 146). In the absence of information on this point it may be assumed that three factors dictated alteration of the plan:

- a. the lack of firm opposition;
- b. the already advanced location of the battalion on D Day; and
- c. the reduced scale of available armour, which made it impossible to allot a squadron in support of a preliminary attack.

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<sup>94</sup> An entry at 1020 hrs in the Brigade Message Log ("Wpgs on OAK") is not substantiated by other evidence. (Serial 210, Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44) References to this report in divisional documents are merely repetitious. (W.D. and Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 7 Jun 44, Serial 18) The brigade commander, however, credited R. Wpg Rif with being the first unit to reach its final objective (Brigadier Foster, op cit) Also claiming the honour of "having been the first battalion in 21 Army Group to reach [the] final objective..." is Regina Rif. (W.D., Regina Rif, June 1944: Appx "A").



431. (ii) 9 Cdn Inf Bde. In the eastern sector, the night 6/7 Jun was marked by minor patrol actions, rather more vigorous than those experienced by 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Such enemy efforts were particularly strong in the rear, where small groups found themselves cut off and attempted to fight their way through 8 Cdn Inf Bde's area. At 2130 hrs 6 Jun a prisoner taken in Anguerny was identified as a member of 21 Pz Div, and a warning was promptly issued to be on the alert for enemy tanks. (Message Log, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 6-7 Jun 44) A whole platoon of R. de Chaud was taken prisoner when attacked at about 0200 hrs by a company of infantry mounted on half-tracks. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 7 Jun 44) There were also disturbances on the front of Nth N.S. Highrs at approximately the same time. Prisoners taken in these skirmishes were discovered to be Panzer Grenadiers (infantry components of an armoured division). (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 7 Jun 44) In the morning, Q.O.R. of C. identified a prisoner as belonging to 192 Panzer Regiment of 21 Pz Div. (Message Log, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44) As we have seen, two Panzer Grenadier battalions of 21 Pz Div had been placed under command 716 Inf Div. The axis of advance of 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes lay right through the positions of 192 Pz Gren Bn which had companies in Plumetot, Epron, Buron, Anisy adn Cairon. (A.H.Q. Report No. 41, Appx "C") It is quite possible that those companies which had been situated in the area between 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs -- an area still in enemy hands -- made these night attacks. The other Panzer Grenadier battalion under command 716 Inf Div (125 Pz Gren Bn) was located east of the Orne. (See Appx "J" to this Report)

432. The warning order to prepare to resume the advance was received by Nth N.S. Highrs at 0645 hrs. One hour later the battalion was on the march, adopting the same tactical order as used on the previous day. Just at this time "several enemy gliders" were seen to land south of Basly (9978) (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 7 Jun 44). Oddly enough, it is not possible to determine what these "gliders" actually were; references to them appear in various message logs but no further explanation is offered.<sup>95</sup>

433. For reasons which will become apparent, the experiences of the advanced guard on 7 Jun were not at first fully known. The contemporary accounts appearing in the War Diaries of Nth N.S. Highrs and 27 Cdn Armd Regt supplied a framework on which a fuller report could be formed. The first effort to piece together a connected narrative was made in June 1944 by the Historical Officer, 3 Cdn Inf Div, in two interviews with regimental officers. ((HS) 145.2N2011 (D3): Memorandum of Interviews with Capt (A/Major) A.J. Wilson, and Capt (A/Major) E.S. Gray.) These collated the facts as known by two participants who had seen quite different phases of the action; they were then verified by other officers, among them the second in command.<sup>96</sup> Subsequently, the

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<sup>95</sup> An oblique reference appears in a brigade log: "2 Armd Bde confirms report gliders landed...and have dealt with same" (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44, Serial 179). It is possible that the rumour arose from an earlier report of a Spitfire crashing near 1 C. Scot R. at 995775. (*Ibid*, Serial 168). In any event, the likelihood of enemy gliders being used can be ruled out. It is interesting to speculate on how they were dealt with; the War Diary of 2 Cdn Armd Bde does not refer to the matter.

<sup>96</sup> The Second in command (then Major, now Colonel D.F. Forbes) read this present account of the battle and in a conversation with the present writer, (June 1952), gave further valuable information which helped clarify the extant confused accounts.

escape of the vanguard commander (who had been taken prisoner in the engagement) made it possible to augment the body of evidence. ((HS) 145.2N2011 (D4): Account of the Experiences of Major J.D. Learment.) From these sources, supplemented by later intelligence revelations, emerged the complete story.

434. The initial stage of the advance of Nth N.S. Highrs was characterized by only light opposition. "A" Company on the right flank successfully cleared the enemy from the woods near Les Buissons. The vanguard soon met firmer resistance near the area and was successful in knocking out an 88-millimetre gun, three half-tracks, and an astonishing contrivance-- a 16-barrelled mortar mounted on a half-track (Reihenwerfer). (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 7 Jun 44) By 0930 hrs Les Buissons was virtually cleared and the advance continued. The vanguard proceeded along the axis to enter Buron, destroying another 88-millimetre gun at its outskirts by a direct hit from a tank gun. Mortar fire from St. Contest on the left was now proving troublesome, but Buron was in our hands at 1150 hrs. (Ibid)

435. While "C" Company was searching the town, "B" Company arrived with its Sherman squadron and commenced to advance on Authie. Before very long the tanks deployed around the cross roads (987718) in order to engage targets in Authie, the infantry company remaining in Buron. "C" Company was soon under way again and two platoons in carries passed through "B" Company along the axis and after a sharp skirmish were successful in taking Authie. They then proceeded to dig in south of the town. Mortaring and shelling of Authie were growing to such intensity that neutralizing fire on St. Contest was urgently requested. But the field artillery was now out of range (Buron being its extreme limit) and communications were too faulty to produce early cruiser fire. By this time, "A" Company, passing around the western side of Buron, was also nearing Authie. Owing to the heavy fire on the village, the platoon dismounted from their tanks around the same crossroads (987718) while the tanks proceeded ahead alone leaving the infantry unsupported. (Capt Wilson and Capt Gray, op cit.)

436. It was considered impossible to advance beyond Authie, for the open ground beyond Buron was under devastating fire. The sudden stiffening of enemy opposition had produced a serious situation, the whole advanced guard being isolated on its flanks and rear. It was therefore decided to withdraw the elements of the vanguard from Authie, which it was seen might become untenable, and form a battalion fortress on the rising ground to the north of the village. "A" Company on the right accordingly dug in near the road (985718). "B" Company, which was directed to join it on the left, found itself unable to leave Buron, owing to the severity of the fire. The two platoons of "C" Company meanwhile prepared to evacuate Authie. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 7 Jun 44; Capt Wilson and Capt Gray, op cit.)

437. It was now about 1400 hrs. Before "C" Company could make its withdrawal, that which had been feared at last occurred. Enemy tanks and infantry suddenly appeared from the direction of Cussy and Ardenne and proceeded to launch a strong counter-attack on Authie. This abrupt turn of events forced the vanguard to make a stand in the village itself. In the course of the ensuing battle the two platoons of "C" Company suffered

severe casualties. Major Learment, the vanguard commander, who had not reached Authie, returned to Buron to discuss with the commanding officer the question of rescuing the troops of "A" and "C" Companies in and near Authie. (Major Learment; Capt Wilson and Capt Gray, op cit) But the force despatched to relieve them came under such heavy fire south of Buron that it could not accomplish its object and was therefore instructed to withdraw to a position behind that village. (Ibid).

438. Meanwhile, as enemy tanks broke through and around Authie, all available Shermans were rushed to engagement of the operation; it was fought savagely with heavy losses to both sides. In Authie itself the situation deteriorated rapidly and the Canadian troops there were overrun, only a few escaping. (Capt Wilson and Capt Gray, op cit.)

439. Between Buron and Authie, the bulk of "A" overcome and most of its personnel captured. (Ibid) Then, after two hours of continuous shelling and mortaring Buron itself was attacked about 1830 hrs. In spite of the very heavy fire brought to bear on them, two waves of German infantry followed by tanks pressed forward with determination, at last penetrating the forward positions north of the town and assailing the defenders with bayonets. Fire was brought to bear on the enemy as he debouched from Buron and the attack was not pressed. Meanwhile, desultory fire was kept up on "D" Company which remained immediately north of Buron for some time.

440. Later in the evening, some of the remaining tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt advanced on Buron. The enemy had not secured Buron, although his fire and attacks had prevented our own forces from occupying the town. The armoured advance enabled "D" Company to withdraw from its position and to rejoin the rest of the battalion. The battalion had been ordered to withdraw into the brigade fortress on the high ground at Les Buissons when it had become apparent that Authie was beyond reach and that an enemy counter-attack was underway. The move to Les Buisson was completed by approximately 2145 hrs. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., June 1944: Appx 9, Message Log, 7 Jun 44.)

441. The remaining two battalions of the brigade had spent an anxious day, continuously receiving messages telling of bitter fighting, while unable themselves to advance and participate in it. When the first enemy armoured counter-attack took shape early in the afternoon, S.D. & G. Highrs, who had reached Les Buissons, proceeded to consolidate there. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 7 Jun 44) By mid-afternoon, H.L.I. of C., had moved up to Villons-les-Buissons. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 7 Jun 44) As German armour swept northward, Les Buissons became a forward locality and S.D. & G. Highrs were able to add to the heavy fire directed against the attackers. The sight of the first withdrawals into their line impressed them as "a bloody mess indeed" (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 7 Jun 44). Amazed, they witnessed our armoured advance and braced themselves for what must have seemed the inevitable onslaught against their own perimeter. But it

did not come.<sup>97</sup> At 2205 hrs, noted the unit diarist, “the firing seems to be dying down now” (Ibid)

442. The advance guard group, caught off balance by a forceful counter-attack before it could consolidate and offer co-ordinated resistance, had suffered severe loss. Of the twenty rifle company officers of the Nth N.S. Highrs only eight remained. By the end of the day, the unit had suffered a total of 242 casualties: 84 fatal, 30 non-fatal and 128 prisoners-of-war ((H.S.) 133.065 (D594), (D570) & (D593): Fatal, Non-fatal, and Prisoners-of-war (Ibid.) Most of these were caused by 88-millimeter guns. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Jun 44) But the wisdom of allotting an entire armoured regiment to the leading battalion had been amply demonstrated: the same enemy counter-attack might have inflicted more terrible loss and reached critical proportions had only a small force been available to meet it. The ferocity of the tank battle may be judged from the tank losses: 27 Cdn Armd Regt reported 21 of their tanks were knocked out and another seven damaged. 41 enemy tanks were claimed to have been destroyed. (Ibid) (It may be noted here that the enemy tank losses are given as 31 in the brigade War Diary.) (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 8 Jun 44); this figure is also implied in a later statement that “the score was about 2 to 1 in favor of the 27 Cdn Armd Regt” (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation “OVERLORD”). Large numbers of German infantry were run down by our tanks, especially in the evening attack on Buron. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 7 Jun 44) These tanks had ranged over a considerable area during the day: “C” Squadron had reached the outskirts of St. Contest in order to engage approaching enemy armour, and “A” Squadron had even penetrated to the edge of Frabqueville, in sight of Carpiquet airfield. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, June 1944: Appx 3, Personnel Accounts of Participants, and trace of movements of 27 Cdn Armd Regt.)

443. The full story of events on the enemy’s front during 7 Jun, insofar as it has been possible to reconstruct them from available German documents, is given in A.H.Q. Report No. 50.<sup>98</sup> A brief summary of these events as it concerned the Canadians will suffice here to round out the picture of the Buron-Authie engagement.

444. The main opposition met by the Nth N.S. Highrs and 27 Cdn Armd Regt in the Buron-Authie engagement was provided by elements of 12 SS Pz Div “Hitler jugend”.

While many other German divisions will be remembered with the respect accorded a worthy and defeated foe, the name of 12 SS Pz Div stands forever sullied by the murders committed by its young savages on defenceless captured Canadians. When the division launched its counter-

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<sup>97</sup> The War Diary of brigade headquarters tells of a further enemy attack being launched from Buron and repelled by S.D. & G. Highrs; a similar statement reappears in an account by the G.S.O. 1 (Liaison). (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44; (HS) 235C3.013 (D11): Assault of the 3 Cdn Ind Div) It is, however, quite certain that such an attack did not take place, for it could not have escaped notice of the three units in Villons-les-Buissons whose diaries fail to mention it. (W.Ds., Nth N.S. Highrs, S.D. & G. Highrs and 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 7 Jun 44.)

<sup>98</sup> In General Eisenhower’s Report ..., this German armoured thrust is reported incorrectly as having “penetrated to the coast ...” (p. 25).

attacks against the Canadians, it was over-strength, well equipped, well trained and a typical produce of Nazi ideology applied to the military sphere. The officers were either ardent Nazis who had shown military prowess in Russia, or professional army officers not devoid of some affinity to the Nazi way of doing things. In part at least the NCOs were selected young veterans of the war of extermination as practiced in the East; the rank and file were largely recent conscripts, fruits of the brutalizing ideology under which they were born and failed to reach maturity in years and spirit.

(A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 56.)

An examination of the records of one of the units of this division reveals that two thirds of the men were in the 18-year-old age group, while three quarters of the unit were in or under the 19-year-old age group. (*Ibid*)

445. We have already noted the enemy's decision to move 12 SS Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div to the Calvados bridgehead late in the afternoon of D Day (*Supra*, para 422). These divisions, in conjunction with 21 Pz Div (already on the scene north of Caen), were under command 1 SS Pz Corps. It was the intention of the Corps Commander, General Josef ("Sepp") Dietrich, to use this armoured force to drive the Allies back into the sea. "Due to casualties and delays from air attacks it had not been possible on 7 Jun to commit 12 SS Pz Div as a compact force" (*Ibid*, para 64). However, swinging into a position on the left of 21 Pz Div for a drive to the sea, and thus facing the line of the Canadian advance, "the leading elements of the division had reached the area SW Caen - Villers-Bocage" by about 1000 hrs (*Ibid*). In the afternoon these elements -- 3 Bn, 25 SS Pz Gren Regt<sup>99</sup> and one of the division's two tank battalions -- launched their attack against the Canadians in Authie<sup>100</sup> and suffered considerable casualties. (*Ibid*, paras 56 ff) Canadian estimates of the type of German tanks met in this engagement are conflicting. Approximately half of those hit were claimed to be Tigers (Mk VI's), a quarter Panthers (Mk V's) and the remainder Mk IV's or Mk III's. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, June 1944: Appx "A") However, 12 SS Pz Div documents show no record of having any Mark VI (Tiger) tanks on strength at this time. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 60) Moreover, the enemy 'mocked up' both Mark IV and Panter tanks to give them the appearance of Tigers. (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, June 1944: Appx 3, "2 Cdn Armd Bde Intelligence

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<sup>99</sup> This regiment was commanded by Obersturmbannführer Kurt Meyer, who was later to command the division. Although the whole regiment was in this advance-guard, only 3 Bn was employed against the Canadians as far as is known.

<sup>100</sup> In his book *Cross Channel Attack*, Mr. Harrison speaks of the German force which took part in this engagement as a "reconnaissance unit" which "tangled with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division near Authie and an engagement resulted heavy enough to give the Canadians the impression of an enemy counter-attack..." (p. 348). A United States military pamphlet describes a counter-attack as "An attack by a part or all of the defending force against a hostile attacking force for the purpose of regaining lost ground or destroying hostile element" (United States War Department, *Handbook on the British Army ....* (Washington, 1943), para 171). Using this definition in conjunction with the events, it would appear that the enemy did counter-attack.

Summary No. 3” AND “3 Cdn Inf Div Intelligence Summary No. 6”) A review of the available evidence indicates that the tanks were probably for the most part Mark IV's with six or more S.P. guns giving additional fire.<sup>101</sup>

446. The significance of the engagement is seen in the high fighting quality of the enemy troops employed, a fact which serves to foreshadow the shape of the next phase of the campaign. It reflected the German's extreme sensitiveness concerning their right sector, their recognition of the Caen area as the vital pivot of their defence, and their determination to resist any penetration of it with every means at their disposal. Hence, it is not to be wondered at the 9 Cdn Inf Bde's thrust, breaking into the arc of jealously guarded territory centred on Caen, sustained so heavy a blow. Over a month was to pass before Canadian troops again entered Authie.

447. The despicable treatment accorded to the Canadian prisoners was found to be characteristic of 12 SS Pz Div, which throughout the Normandy campaign was to present a consistent pattern of brutality and ruthlessness. In the course of this first battle and immediately thereafter, at least 27 prisoners of war, mostly of Nth N.S. Highrs, were murdered in cold blood by members of 12 SS Pz Div. These incidents continued throughout June whenever the formation was engaged. For further information on this subject see (HS) 205S1.023 (D9): “Supplementary Report of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Court of Inquiry re Shooting of Allied Prisoners of War by 12 SS Panzer Division (Hitler-Jugend) in Normandy, France 7-21 June 1944”.

448. (iii) 8 Cdn Inf Bde. D plus 1 found 8 Cdn Inf Bde continuing to quell resistance on the divisional left flank and in the rear of 9 Cdn Inf Bde's advance. Around Colomby-sur-Thaon and Anguerny, both R. de Chaud and Q.O.R. of C. were engaged during the day in clearing out the snipers who infested the area. The latter battalion captured at least 12 enemy vehicles in Anguerny. (W.Ds., R. de Chaud and Q.O.R. of C., 7 Jun 44)

449. By far the heavier task lay with N. Shore R., which had already met difficulty on the beach and in Tailleville. It was now required to capture the Douvres Radar Station, supported by 19 Cdn Fd Rgt and a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt. This done, the battalion was to join the remainder of its brigade on the objective near Anguerny.

450. Setting out from Tailleville at 0700 hrs, the leading troops began to clear an enemy headquarters northwest of the Radar Station. This lengthy process resulted in the taking of only four prisoners; later it was learned that many more had escaped only to be rounded up in H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde at Basly. (W.Ds., N. Shore R., and H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf

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<sup>101</sup> The commander of this battle group, General Meyer, states that he fought this battle with a battalion of Mark IV tanks. ((HS) 981.023 (D6): Special Interrogation Report, Brigadeführer Kurt Meyer) The commander of 21 Pz Div, Generalleutnant Feuchtinger, states that the Panther battalion was used. ((HS) 981.023 (D6): Special Interrogation Report, Generalleutnant Edgar Feuchtinger) If the Canadians inflicted as many casualties on the attacking tanks as claimed (31, see para 442 above), it is doubtful, providing it was a Panther battalion, that the same unit could make such a strong attack as it did on 7 Cdn Inf Bde the following day. Infra, paras 458 ff)

Bde, 7 Jun 44) A company attack on the main defences of the Radar Station produced little result, and eventually even a battalion effort met with no more success. Like Tailleville, the position was a labyrinth of tunnels and concrete works and could not be reduced without overwhelming fire support, which was not available. Late in the evening permission was obtained to by-pass it and rejoin the brigade. At 0200 hrs, 8 Jun, N. Shore R. had arrived at its allotted area north of Anguerny. (Message Log, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jun 44)

451. The Radar Station was left to be contained by troops of 51 (H) Inf Div. Ten days were to elapse before its reduction.<sup>102</sup> In the Canadian sector, the Douvres strongpoint was thus the only one to fulfill its designated task of holding out against the initial assault. The corollary to this determined stand -- the break-through which was to relieve it -- did not come to pass. So far, German defensive policy could be dismissed as a theory based on unjustified optimism.

452. The balance of 10 Cdn Armd Regt was in reserve on 7 Jun, and took up a regimental position on the high ground south of Colomby-sur-Thaon, where the squadron operating with N. Shore R. later joined it. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD") In the afternoon the commander of 2 Cdn Armd Bde ordered the regiment to stand by ready to move in full strength to reinforce 27 Cdn Armd Regt, should the situation in front of Les Buissons deteriorate further. This was not found necessary. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 7 Jun 44.)

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453. The news of the fierce fighting in Buron and Authie gave 7 Cdn Inf Bde a warning to be prepared for similar enemy attacks. The battalions were now firmly dug in on ground of their own choosing, with supporting weapons in position. It was apparent that there was a dangerous gap between the two forward brigades in the vicinity of Cairon, through which the Caen-Creully road passed. About 2100 hrs, therefore, 1 C. Scot R. was directed to despatch a company to that area, supported by a squadron of armour and a troop of M. 10's ("Jill" Force). The remainder of 6 Cdn Armd Regt was concentrated at Le Bout Cachard (925748) to be prepared "to restore any portion of the Bde fortress" (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 7 Jun 44).

454. On the morning of 7 Jun, the still diminutive divisional headquarters had moved up on foot from Bernières to Beny-sur-Mer, where the inconsiderateness shown by enemy snipers was much remarked on. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 7 Jun 44) At 1805 hrs a message from Major-General Keller to General Crerar informed the Army Commander of the attainment of the final objective (by 7 Cdn Inf Bde), adding, "courage,

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<sup>102</sup> A description of the defences and defenders at the Douvres Radar Station is given in (HS) 981SOM (D97): "The Battle of 716 Inf Div in Normandy, 6 Jun-23 Jun 1944". By means of its underground cable connections, "in the days which followed, hostile preparations for attack and assemblies for an assault on Douvres itself and on the defence positions of the 716 [Inf Div] and 21 Pz Div could often be successfully countered by the remainder of the 716 Div artillery and by the 21 Pz Div artillery, using Douvres as [an] observation post" (Ibid).

dash and initiative of the Canadian soldier truly amazing". (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "Q", Message Log, 7 Jun, Serial 74).

455. By evening on 7 Jun forward dispositions had already taken the shape (discounting adjustments and minor advances) which they were to retain for some weeks, a fact which invites comparison with the positions planned for Phase III (cf paras 145-150 above and Appx "G") Essentially these positions were based on two brigade fortresses -- one centred on Bretteville-l' Orguelilleuse and one on Villons-les-Buissons, the third brigade occupying a position in the left rear of the Anguerny-Anisy feature. It will be recalled that the plan had specified that the left forward brigade should be disposed equal with the right, that is, centred on Carpiquet; on the right and rear positions were occupied as planned. The fact that 9 Cdn Inf Bde was actually some miles short of its objective left open the wooded valley of the Mue, which would otherwise have formed the boundary between the two forward brigades. This subsequently necessitated moving 8 Cdn Inf Bde into a central position between 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes to seal off this potential entry into the divisional area. As a result, all three brigades were required to hold the line, which left no reserve formation to provide relief and made impossible a renewed offensive. As planned, the role of 8 Cdn Inf Bde would have been to act as reserve in the right rear (Phase IV, para 151 above). Thus, for a considerable time the role of 4 Cdn Inf Div became a purely defensive one.

B. Phase IV, 8-11 Jun<sup>103</sup>

456. On D plus 2 it was possible to take stock of the divisional situation, to lay plans for a renewed advance, and, in the meantime, to consider how best to prevent enemy penetration. At 1100 hrs, 8 Jun, the G.O.C. held an Orders Group at divisional headquarters and informed his officers that both H.Q. 1 Corps and Tactical H.Q. Second Army had landed. 4 S.S. Bde was now under the command of 51 (H) Div, which was responsible for the area Douvres-St. Aubin-Tailleville. An assault was soon to be made on the Radar Station, proceeded by air attack. (This was later cancelled) Concern was expressed over reports of enemy tanks appearing on the right flank between 69 Inf Bde and 7 Cdn Inf Bde, but these were believed to be "only reconnaissance elements". For the present, 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes were to remain in their positions, the former reestablishing contact with formations on either flank. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was directed to capture Buron with the support of the full divisional artillery. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "A", Div O Gp)

457. With a view to concentrating the armoured brigade for an advance beyond the final objective, Brigadier Wyman ordered 27 Cdn Armd Regt to move to the vicinity of Camilly, and to be relieved in Les Buissons by 10 Cdn Armd Regt. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD").

458. (i) The Attacks Against 7 Cdn Inf Bde. Having succeeded in halting 9 Cdn Inf Bde, the enemy was now showing signs of preparing to dislodge 7 Cdn Inf Bde from its position astride the Caen-Bayeux road. There were persistent reports of enemy tanks

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<sup>103</sup> A map showing the advance of 3 Cdn Inf Div between 8-11 Jun is attached as Appendix "N".



in the area; in the afternoon a considerable force of German armour made its appearance far up on the left flank between Lasson and Cairon. Fortunately at this moment 27 Cdn Armd Regt arrived on the way to its concentration area in company with 15 reinforcement tanks from the Forward Delivery Squadron, and their combined show of strength was sufficient to cause the enemy to withdraw. (Ibid)

459. A more serious situation had developed on the right, where R. Wpg Rif bore the brunt of the enemy's attacks. Before first light, enemy patrols were so active as to prevent minefields being laid, and tanks could be heard south of the railroad. The enemy infantry in the area were from 25 SS Pz Gren Regt which had moved up between Villeneuve - Fontenay-le-pesnel during the previous day, too late to prevent the capture of Rots and Bretteville. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 65) Soon infantry and a small force of armour, supported by artillery and mortars, attempted to cross the railway into "A" Company's area. They were driven back at about 0630 hrs by small-arm and medium machine-gun fire, and a Mark III was destroyed by a 6-pounder.<sup>104</sup> (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 8 Jun 44)

460. But the enemy was not so easily discouraged. Putot-en-Bessin was found to be full of snipers who made movement increasingly difficult throughout the battalion area. During the whole morning enemy infantry<sup>105</sup> pressed forward and by noon had infiltrated between company areas, so that nearly all positions were completely encircled. It was impossible to replenish ammunition, which was by this time dangerously low. Armoured support was requested but the tanks were busily engaged elsewhere on the brigade perimeter. Under cover of smoke, the three forward companies attempted to make a withdrawal, but did not succeed in extricating most of their number and many positions were overrun. The survivors reached battalion headquarters just east of Putot (908725); and "D" Company, which was nearly intact, established a defensive position there. (Ibid; see also (HS) 145.2R20011 (D1): Memo of Interview with C.S.M. Belton, R. Wpg Rif) The sequence of events was not easy to reconstruct, but it was later concluded that "A" Company, on the right, had come under sudden attack by a force of enemy tanks and infantry and had been overcome. The enemy had taken swept on through "B" Company's position into the village of Putot. ((HS) 159.95023 (D9): "Statement of Lt-Col J.M. Meldram" in Report of No. 1 Canadian War Crimes Investigation Unit ...) Artillery was brought down on the village, but did not dislodge the enemy who had by now enveloped even battalion headquarters by fire. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 8 Jun 44)

461. By 1830 hrs the brigade commander had formed his plan to recapture Putot and the road and the railway crossing in front of it (895720). The counter-attack was to be launched by 1 C. Scott R (the detached company returning from "Jill" Force), supported

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<sup>104</sup> In their move to support 7 Cdn Inf Bde late in the day, 27 Cdn Armd Regt also destroyed a Mark III tank in the vicinity of Cairon (W.D., 27 Cdn Armd Regt, 8 Jun 44).

<sup>105</sup> Possibly 2 Bn, 26 Pz Gren Regt. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50 para 65) supported by a battalion of (Panther?) tanks.

by a platoon of 4.2-inch mortars from C.H. of O. (M.G.),<sup>106</sup> a squadron of tanks, 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts and a troop of M. 10s. H Hour was set at 2030 hrs. (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jun 44)

462. At 2020 hrs the companies of 1 C. Scot R. formed up southeast of Secqueville and the counter-attack began on schedule, "D" Company leading. The advance followed the road leading to the railroad crossing, which was without cover of any sort. At 2100 hrs the leading troops reported their arrival on the objective. (Message Log, 1 C. Scot R., 8 Jun 44) At the same time, R. Wpg Rif advised that the artillery concentration had been very effective. (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 8 Jun 44) Not only was the enemy thrown off the objective, but the impetus of the attack carried "A" and "D" Companies well beyond it, across the railway line, from which they later retired. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 8 Jun 44) During the night patrols were sent into Putot and found it unoccupied. (*Ibid*: Appx 12, Personal Accounts)

463. This gallant action, which had cost "D" Company heavily, restored the situation on the divisional left flank. Putot was in our hands again, and "the Scottish remained there for a week of almost incessant shelling and mortaring" (*Brigadier Foster, op cit*). At dark, 6 Cdn Armd Regt withdrew once more to Le Bout Cachard. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 9 Jun 44<sup>107</sup> R. Wing Rif, who until now had not had time to reorganize their many reinforcements, were placed in reserve near La Bergerie Farm, moving on 9 Jun to Secqueville. During this time, the battalion flank protection group had remained intact near Bronay (8872), in liaison with 50 (N) Inf Div. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 8-9 Jun 44)

464. On the left half of the brigade front there was equal evidence of growing enemy aggressiveness. Enemy armour had penetrated between Lasson and Cairon, as described above. At 1100 hrs, "D" Company, Regina Rif, stationed near the bridge south of La Villeneuve, observed enemy tanks "in considerable strength" 1,000 yards to its front. The same company was withdrawn during the afternoon into the battalion fortress at La Ferme de Cardonville (919713). (W.D., Regina Rif, 8 Jun 44)

465. In the evening, after a day of threats and rumors, the attacks began. At 2050 hrs, (when the counter-attack was being launched by our forces against Putot) "C" Company in Norrey repulsed an infantry sortie; but this was followed by the appearance of armour,

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<sup>106</sup> Although more attention is given to the infantry and armoured battalions in this Report, it should be remembered that those units in support of these battalions played an invaluable part in the success of the operations, and indeed, were frequently as heavily engaged in the fighting as the "front line troops". For example one of "A" Company's platoons, (C.H. of O.) supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde, was overrun by the enemy when he attacked Putot. The machine-gunners then fought as infantry. During this engagement alone two officers and two men of C.H. of O. won decorations for their courage and gallantry. (W.D. C.H. of O. (M.G.), June 1944: Appx 6, "A" Company War Diary; (HS) 713.065 (D1): Honours and Awards, Officers and Other Ranks.

<sup>107</sup> It is curious that two diaries (6 Cdn Armd Regt and 12 Cdn Fd Regt) show faulty chronology in describing the counter-attack on Putot as taking place on 9 Jun, rather than 8 Jun 44. This is no doubt due to their having been both 6 Cdn Armd Regt and 1 C. Scot R. say that the greater part of 6 Cdn Armd Regt's tanks were employed in this action. It is probable that additional tank support was given 1 C. Scot R. as the attack was in progress.

against which artillery fire was requested. (Message Log, Regina Rif, 8 Jun 44) From this point on, the story of the night-long battle in Bretteville is taken from the graphic account given by the battalion commander to 3 Cdn Inf Div Historical Officer:

The tks came in from the East along the Caen-Bayeux rd. The carrier pl and the MG pl were caught while digging in. Several carriers were knocked out and their posns overrun. About 2230 hrs, with B, C and D Coys all engaged, some tks continued forward to Bretteville to within about 300 yards of Bn HQ. There they remained for 1-1/2 hrs shelling and machine-gunning the town. About 2400 hrs two Panthers (Mk V) entered the town. One came opposite Bn HQ and was struck by a PIAT bomb, fired from behind a low stone wall at 15 yds range, safe from the tk's huge gun. It halted for a moment, started again and after 30 yds was hit again by a second PIAT. It stopped, thurned around and headed out of town. A third PIAT hit finished it off so that it slewed around, out of control, running over a necklace of #75 grenades which blew off a track. The crew dismounted and attempted to make off, but were killed by SA fire. During this incident the second Panther had remained further up the rd. Seeing the fate of its companion, it commenced to fire both 75 mm and MG wildly down the street 'like a child in a tantrum', doing no damage whatsoever except to set fire to the first Panther. . . .

Altogether 22 Panthers circled about Bn HQ and A Coy posn during the night, and it is hard to picture the confusion which existed. Contact with all but D Coy was lost. Fires and flares lit up the area, and the enemy several times appeared to be convinced that opposition had ceased. . . .

(Lt-Col Matheson, *op cit*)

466. The chief point emerging from this engagement was that, even when German tanks had rolled through the defended area, the infantry held on firmly. These tactics were to become a rule in the protracted period of defensive warfare which followed. This was not the last of the attacks against the Regina Rif; every night saw them renewed in varying strength, but always they were repelled. The battalion area was not easily defended with one company detached to hold Norrey. The fwd posn was too exposed and Brigadier Foster more than once suggested it be withdrawn. The bn comd . . . and the comd of the coy in question protested vigorously, arguing that they would only have to recapture the village later. They were allowed to remain. The town was a ruin and the strength. . . . of German dead added to its unpleasantness" (Brigadier Foster, op cit).

467. (ii) Events in the Left Sector: The Capture of Vieux Cairon. The plan considered at the Orders Group on 8 Jun (*supra*, para 456), whereby 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to recapture Buron, did not come to fruition, although on several occasions during the period 8-11 Jun it seemed on the point of being put into effect. The original intention was that H.L.I. of C., still intact and in reserve at Villons-les-Buissons, should pass through the two forward battalions to recover the village. But the scale of the attacks against 7 Cdn Inf Bde, coupled with the growing threats against the Les Buissons area,

made it necessary to postpone the plan. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 8 Jun 44) It was to be revived at intervals.

468. On 8 Jun, 10 Cdn Armd Regt relieved 27 Cdn Armd Regt at Les Buissons, and immediately proceeded to carry out a squadron raid on Vieux Cairon, withdrawing into the brigade fortress at its conclusion. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD") With this exception, however, 9 Cdn Inf Bde found itself committed during 8 and 9 Jun to a defensive role, while there developed a continuous fire fight, punctuated by strong enemy probing. The weight of the enemy's pressure was borne by S.D. & G. Highrs, who were dug in east of Les Buissons; on their right were Nth N.S. Highrs, now operating with two rifle companies. (W.Ds., S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs, 8-9 Jun 44)

469. Enemy troop concentrations were heavily shelled by artillery and by the cruiser Belfast. No ground was gained by the enemy, whose infiltration tactics on one occasion made it necessary to bring down artillery fire close to our positions. (Ibid, 9 Jun 44) On that same day there arose once again the question of the capture of Buron and Gunch by H.L.I. of C., to be followed by a rapid advance to the final objective, which now seemed more remote than ever. But the left flank of the brigade was considered too dangerously exposed to warrant such a move and the decision was later taken to hold. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 9 Jun 44)

470. Efforts were already being made to improve the situation on that flank. On the afternoon of 9 Jun, 9 Brit Inf Bde advanced under a heavy artillery barrage against Cambes, intending later to seize Galmanche, St. Contest and Malon. (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 1, Confirmatory Notes, 9 Brit Inf Bde) The attack was made from Anisy, in Q.O.R. of C.'s area. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 9 Jun 44) After very severe fighting against troops of 25 SS Pz Gren Regt, the brigade was established by nightfall on its first objective, Cambes, and there it called a halt. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Jun, Serial 46) At noon on the next day, 3 Brit Inf Div reported that enemy dispositions were "now clear"; it appeared that 21 Pz Div held the right flank from La Bijude to Herouville with 192 Pz Gren Regt, and that 25 SS Pz Gren Regt held the line from Galmanche to Rosel. (Ibid, Serial 80)

471. During this period patrols investigated enemy positions, especially in Buron and Vieux Cairon, and on occasion found both villages empty. (Cf, e.g., W.D., H.L.I. of C., 10-11 Jun 44) On 11 Jun a new plan was formed: S.D. & G. Highrs were first to attack and capture Vieux Cairon, after which H.L.I. of C. would seize Buron. (Ibid) The operation began that same afternoon. Skirting Les Buissons, S.D. & G. Highrs entered Vieux Cairon almost without opposition and consolidated there. (W.D., S.D. & G. Highrs, 11 Jun 44) By 1600 hrs, H.L.I. of C. was ready to commence its phase when the order was given "to stay the assault" (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 11 Jun 44). The expected attack was not to be launched after all, and Buron still remained in enemy hands. Dispositions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde on 11 Jun were as follows: S.D. & G. Highrs in Vieux Cairon; H.L.I. of C. and Nth N.S. Highrs in the area of Villons-les-Buissons; and brigade headquarters at Colomby-sur-Thaon.

472. (iii) The Armoured Advance Towards Cheux. As noted above, the seriousness of the enemy threat to 7 Cdn Inf Bde on the final objective was not dissipated with the failure of his first violent efforts to carry the position. Early on 9 Jun, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde reported to divisional headquarters that enemy tanks were “cruising freely” through the forward positions and that “rather a sticky time was expected” (Message Log, H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jun 44). Deprived of success in Bretteville, the enemy turned his attention once again to Putot, where 1 C. Scot R. and tanks of 27 Cdn Armd Regt were busy throughout the day repelling his sharp counter-attacks. The battalion area became a tank killing-ground, and the high spirits of the defenders are illustrated by such messages as the following: “Scottish reports track clear, situation restored. Send up run ration” (Ibid). On the right flank a squadron of 27 Cdn Armd Regt was moved into the area of Bretteville, where it also engaged enemy armour. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation “OVERLORD”)

473. Special concern was felt about the open left flank of the brigade along the River Mue. 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, deployed near Bray (in Gun Area “DOROTHY”), found themselves without infantry on their front, so that the order, “Prepare for tanks”, took on urgent meaning (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 8 Jun 44). It was reported that enemy tanks and infantry, which had worked their way around to the east of Bretteville, approached the gun positions and were engaged by small arms fire and even field guns firing over open sights. (Lt-Col R.H. Webb, op cit) In order to seal this gap, Q.O.R. of C. were placed under the command of 7 Cdn Inf Bde on 9 Jun and moved from Anguerny to Bray, where they would also be available to attack when the occasion arose. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 9 Jun 44) Their former location was taken over by N. Shore R., which in turn was relieved north of Anguerny by 46 R.M. Commando, now under the command of 8 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 9 Jun 44)

474. Although the attacks on the right sector continued without cessation, the enemy achieved no success and plans were therefore resumed for offensive action, in which 2 Cdn Armd Bde was to be employed. Tank holdings were now improved as replacement tanks were steadily brought forward. On 10 Jun Brigadier R.A. Wyman attended a conference at divisional headquarters to discuss a scheme by which 2 Cdn Armd Bde, with Q.O.R. of C. in support, should attack through 7 Cdn Inf Bde to seize the high ground between Cheux and Le Haut du Bosq, about three miles south of the Caen-Bayeux railroad. By late evening, in preparation for this advance, 6 Cdn Armd Regt had been concentrated in the area of Bray and 10 Cdn Armd Regt northwest of Cairon. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation “OVERLORD”) Q.O.R. of C. moved from Bray to Neuf Mer. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 10 Jun 44) After further study of the problems the armoured brigade commander came to the conclusion that more time was required to carry out preliminary reconnaissance on the front of 7 Cdn Inf Bde, and that the presence of enemy in unknown strength in the Mue Valley constituted too great a hazard to the flank. At a conference with his regimental commanders at 2200 hrs, 10 Jun, the new plan was outlined. For the first phase, 46 R.M. Cdo and a squadron of 10 Cdn Armd Regt were to clear the enemy from the Mue Valley on 11 Jun. Then, at first light on 12 Jun, 6 Cdn Armd Regt, with Q.O.R. of C. under command, and supported by the divisional artillery, was to advance south through Le Mesnil-Patry and Le Haut de Bosq, swinging

left to seize the high ground north of Grainville-sur-Odon. The plan was approved and preparations to execute it were begun. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report on Operation "OVERLORD" Air attacks by Typhoons on the Cheux area were scheduled, but a request for heavy bombers was refused. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 10 Jun 44, Serials 100 and 105; 11 Jun, Serials 14 and 53) On 10 Jun, 30 Corps had already begun its powerful offensive on the axis Tilly-sur-Suelles - Villers-Bocage (infra, paras 520 ff); 2 Cdn Armd Bde's attack was evidently designed to complement 30 Corps' offensive and protect the left flank of 7 Armd Div, the attacking formation. (Infra, paras 523-25)

475. On the morning of 11 Jun, the preparatory moppin-up operations in the river valley had commenced, when word was suddenly received at H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde that the second phase, the advance to Grainville, must be begun as soon as possible.<sup>108</sup> (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44) This acceleration of timing prevented adequate briefing of the troops who were to participate; as late as 1000 hrs, 11 Jun, the diarist of Q.O.R. of C. had noted: "Rumors of an attack to be put in but nothing definite as yet" (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 11 Jun 44). With H Hour set at 1300 hrs, the brigade Orders Group was held only two hours previous and unit orders in consequence were issued even later. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, and 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44) The artillery plan, moreover, could not be properly co-ordinated. (Ibid)

476. It was proposed the "B" Squadron, with "D" Company, Q.O.R. of C., should lead the advance, first seizing Le Mesnil-Patry so that the River Mue could be crossed at its narrowest point (i.e., southwest of Norrey). (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44; Major J.N. Gordon, op cit) A second squadron and another infantry company were then to by-pass Cheux and seize the high ground to the south of it. Finally a battalion fortress would be formed there and the armour withdrawn. ((HS) 145.2Q2011 (D4): Special Report on Q.O.R. of C's action at Le Mesnil-Patry.)

477. The attack was attended by misfortune from the very first.<sup>109</sup> The start line selected was the railway south of Bretteville and at this point the tanks were to be deployed. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report . . .) But insufficient knowledge concerning the location of minefields on either side of road in this area made it necessary to proceed through Norrey-en-Bessin in line-ahead formation. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44) The railway line was crossed by the leading squadron at 1437 hrs (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44); with a company of infantry riding on the tanks, the squadron then passed through Norrey and moved to the west towards Le Mesnil-Patry, followed by the

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<sup>108</sup> Canadian War Diaries give no reason for this order. However, "...it must be assumed that the decision was taken at a conference held by the Army Commander at 1700 hours 10 June with the Commanders 1 and 30 Corps, and that it was designed in order to protect the left flank of 69 Infantry Brigade of 50 (N) Division (30 Corps) who were planned to advance through Bronay (8872) on to the feature point 103 (856704) on the morning of 11 June" ((HS) 952.013 (D97): Historical Section of the Cabinet, Liberation Campaign North West Europe 1944-45, Operations 7-16 June 1944, Ch III, Book II, p. 201).

<sup>109</sup> This day's action, which their regimental history calls "The Black Day of the Hussars", is vividly described in A History of the First Hussar Regiment, op cit, Ch XVIII.

remainder of the regiment and the second infantry company. The tanks had not gone far across the wheat fields between Norrey and Le Mesnil-Patry, when a very heavy volume of mortar and machine-gun fire from concealed enemy positions compelled the infantry to dismount and take cover. Although the tanks proceeded ahead to shoot the enemy out of his slit trenches, "D" Company, Q.O.R. of C., suffered numerous casualties and could not reorganize successfully. "C" Squadron, which was following, moved to the right to give covering fire and a small party of infantry actually reached Le Mesnil-Patry (or its twin village, Les Saullets; the point is not clear), from which it eventually withdrew to Norrey. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 11 Jun 44). The enemy's positions could not easily be located, but elements of "B" Squadron moved forward and likewise entered Le Mesnil. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44)

478. At 1615 hrs came a report that enemy tanks had been observed in the area of Cristot (8770). (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44) But only a little earlier word had been received that Cristot was in the hands of 8 Armd Bde, and accordingly the Canadian Shermans were directed to display their recongintion signals. It was soon all to evident that the armour in question was hostile and the situation reapidly grew worse as more tanks and anti-tank guns opened fire from St. Mauview to the south. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report. . . .) Seeing that the whole regiment was in danger of being outflanked, the commanding officer ordered a withdrawal to the start-line, and "A" Squadron was despatched to a position east of Bretteville to cover the return of the infantry. But the order to withdraw was not received by "B" Squadron, with which all contact had been lost, and it continued to fight on. All its officers and all save three N.C.Os. were listed as missing, and only two of its tanks returned. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 11 Jun 44) Although the 6 Cdn Armd Regt had suffered heavy casualties, they "inflicted heavier ones on the enemy, especially on his infantry" (Ibid). Moreover, the regiment, claimed to have knocked out three anti-tank guns and 13 tanks, mostly Panthers. (Ibid) "D" Company of Q.O.R. of C. was found to have suffered 96 casualties, of whom more than half were missing. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 11 Jun 44) At the close of this disastrous day the infantry battalion returned to Neuf mer (Ibid), and the following day was ordered to rejoin its brigade. At the end of the day, Brigadier Wyman decided to "withdraw the [armoured] brigade three miles behind the forward infantry positions, and to concentrate it within a circle of two miles diameter" (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44). Brigade headquarters was moved to Camilly and the three armoured regiments were placed in a semi-circule around the outskirts of that village. (Ibid)

479. The following day 6 Cdn Armd Regt was told by the Corps Commander "that while the battle yesterday had seemed futile, it actually put a Panther Div attack on the skids" (Ibid, 12 Jun 44). Moreover, the Canadian attack supplemented the attack by 7 Brit Armd Div on its right flank. (Infra, para 523) It is significant that the scale of the enemy's counter-attacks on the brigade fortress materially diminished after this date. Also, the operation had served to relieve the pressure against 30 Corps, whose armoured offensiveness was now in full course. (2 Cdn Armd Bde Report. . . .)

480. Later, as reports began to filter in, it once again became evident that SS troops were ruthlessly shooting those soldiers who fell into their hands. A rifleman of "D"

Company, Q.O.R. of C., described how after the action the enemy searched the grain fields and shot any Canadians found lying there, whether wounded or not. (Special Report on Q.O.R. of C.'s Action at Le Mesnil-Patry) Similar experiences were related by tank crews who subsequently escaped from imprisonment. (W.D., 6 Cdn Armd Regt, 17 Jun 44) After Le Mesnil-Patry was captured, a burial party was dispatched to search the area. At one point five bodies were found lying in a row: All had been wounded and had had their wounds dressed and all had been shot at close quarters through the head. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., Jun 1944: Appx 75, Report of Burial Party) To this atrocity, known to have been committed by members of 26 SS Pz Gren Regt, must be added that occurring on 8 Jun at the Château d'Audrieu (864713), in which personnel of R. Wpg Rif, captured at Putot-en-Bessin, were similarly put to death. (Report of No. 1 Canadian War Crimes Investigation Unit ..., op cit) When the incidents at Buron and Authie are recalled, it becomes quite obvious that these practices were common throughout the entire 12 SS Pz Div.

481. (iv) The Clearance of the Mue Valley. To complete this record of activity in the right sector up to 11 Jun, it is necessary to describe more fully the 'mopping-up' operations undertaken by 8 Cdn Inf Bde. These had properly begun as early as D plus 2, when it was found "that the wide front on which the assault was made and the stress which had been laid on advancing inland with all possible speed had prevented a thorough search ... being carried out between the various axes of adv" (Brigadier Blackader, op cit). The operations in the Mue Valley and adjoining area fall into two stages:

- a. the elimination of snipers within the divisional area as far south as Thaon; and
- b. the clearance of the valley beyond Thaon, which was to be integrated with the attack on Cheux described above.

482. The first stage was chiefly the responsibility of R. de Chaud, which on 8 Jun was engaged in clearing the woods about Fontaine-Henri. Guided by civilians, the unit accounted for numerous snipers. It might be observed that it was in this role that the members of 716 Inf Div seemed to excel; unreliable in defence and hopeless in the attack, their snipers nonetheless "very tenaciously and bravely" continued to harass the divisional area when they might have been expected to attempt escape (Ibid). On the first day of this 'anti-sniper campaign', a party of R. de Chaud was led to a cave sheltering a large body of enemy artillerymen, who had previously captured certain Canadian provost and signal personnel. When their position was besieged, 109 Germans surrendered without a fight, acting on the suggestion of a Canadian officer. (For details see W.D., 4 Cdn Pro Coy, June 1944: Appx 4 and W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, June 1944: Appx 2) The same activity continued throughout 9 and 10 Jun, with troops of 51 (H) Div assisting. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 9 Jun 44) The diarist of 9 Cdn Inf Bde remarked on the efficiency shown by R. de Chaud in this work, saying that it was now "comparatively safe to walk through the village" of Colomby-sur-Thaon (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jun 44).



483. The second stage, which involved clearing the same valley almost as far south as the Caen-Bayeux road, was at first designed, as we have seen, to prepare the way for the armoured advance on Cheux. This task was assigned to 46 R.M. Cdo, placed under command 8 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by "A" Squadron, 10 Cdn Armd Regt, a troop from R.M. Armd Sp Gp, a section of engineers, and a field regiment of artillery on call. ((HS) 285SS4.018 (D1): War Diary Extracts - 46 R.M. Cdo) As the clearance of the valley progressed it was planned to move the units of the brigade into position there, so that the enemy, once driven out, could not re-occupy the area. The movement of the brigade was to be carried out in the following manner; R. de Chaud would proceed first to Bray and then, following 46 R.M. Cdo, would occupy the village of Rots (9571); N. Shore R. was to move to the area of Camilly, later taking up positions in Rosel (9673). (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 10 Jun 44) Brigade headquarters was to be moved from Anguerny to Bray. The conclusion of the operation would see 8 Cdn Inf Bde in control of the wooded valley which still threatened the security of the divisional area, and a firm left flank thus established to permit further advances from 7 Cdn Inf Bde's sector. These movements were begun on the morning of 11 Jun, with R. de Chaud being transported to Bray in troop carrying vehicles. (W.D., R. de Chaud, 11 Jun 44) At the same time N. Shore R. moved from Anguerny to the western outskirts of Cairon, the village itself still being in enemy hands. As events fell out, the timing of the Cheux attack was advanced, so that the two operations proceeded almost simultaneously.

484. The operations in the valley were to be carried out by R.M. Cdo in four phases: Phase I, the clearance of the woods from Barbière to Cairon, Phase II, the capture of Cairon; Phase III, the capture of Rosel; and Phase IV, the capture of the twin villages of Le Hamel and Rots (W.D. Extracts, 46 R.M. Cdo, 11 Jun 44) "A" Squadron 10 Cdn Armd Regt, was to move along the right flank of the ridge running southwest from Thaon between Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and Le Hamel. (R.M. Commandos in Normandy, op cit)

485. Although initially opposition was light, the operation proved to be a slow task. The Commando crossed its start line at 0845 hrs. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 11 Jun 44) The advance continued during the afternoon and Lasson and Rosel were cleared. Serious resistance was encountered in the evening when the force entered Le Hamel and Rots, where bitter street fighting took place against SS troops. To assist the Royal Marines, Shermans were brought from the high ground into Rots itself. Panthers had been concealed in the center of the village and knocked out several of the tanks. The Shermans replied and two Panthers were in turn destroyed, but the attacking force was compelled to withdraw temporarily in the face of stern opposition (R.M. Commandos in Normandy; 2 Cdn Armd Bde Report....) The Commando was given the assistance of a company of R. de Chaud, and reported the area clear at 0605 hrs, 12 Jun. (Message Log, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 12 Jun 44) The fierceness of the fighting in Rots is reflected in the fact that 122 German dead were later discovered in the town. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Jun 44: Serial 9) N. Shore R. entered Lasson and Rosel. (W.D., N. Shore R., 12 Jun 44) Q.O.R. of C., now released by 7 Cdn Inf Bde after their unfortunate attack on the previous day, completed the occupation of the new brigade fortress by taking up a position in Bray. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C., 12 Jun 44) During the

night 12/13 Jun, a patrol of R. Wpg Rif entered La Villeneuve (949707), found it unoccupied and remained there until relieved some hours later by a platoon of R. de Chaud. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Jun 44)

### SURVEY OF THE ASSAULT<sup>110</sup>

486. 11 Jun may be said to mark the end of the first phase of Operation "OVERLORD". Main Headquarters, Second Army was now in operation at Creully. By this date, moreover, the permanence of the Allied bridgehead in Normandy had been assured. On the previous day General Montgomery, in a personal message to all the forces under his command, had written:

After four days of fighting, the Allied Armies have secured a good and firm lodgement area on the mainland of France.

.....

British, Canadian and American soldiers, fighting gallantly side by side, have achieved a great success and have placed themselves in a good position from which to exploit this success.

(W.D., Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army, June 1944: Appx "G".)

487. On 11 Jun General Keller sent to General Crerar the following message:

From Keller to Crerar. Following letter received by me today from Army Commander. Quote. My dear Keller the first phase of the operations the gaining of the beachhead is over. You and your division played a major part and I want to tell you how much I admire and appreciate the magnificent work you have all done. A battalion of 3 Canadian Division was the first unit in the Second Army to reach the final objective. That is something which you will always remember with pride. Yours ever Dempsey. Unquote.

(W.D., G.S. (Ops), H.Q. First Canadian Army, June 1944: Appx 55.)

488. 3 Cdn Inf Div had indeed lived up to all expectations. By 12 Jun the men of 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, who but a week previous had been 'green' troops, had not only broken through the Atlantic Wall but had sustained the weight of the enemy's counter-attacks without losing ground. They could now consider themselves firmly established. "OVERLORD" now entered upon its second stage.

489. Important as were the infantry and armoured battalions which engaged, for the most part, the enemy at closer quarters than other units in the division, theirs is not the whole story. This survey will sketch the work of those supporting arms and services

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<sup>110</sup> A map showing the advances of 21 Army Gp during 7-13 Jun is attached as Appendix "C".

behind the lines whose contribution to the success of 'NEPTUNE', if less spectacular, was nonetheless equally essential. Also, a review of the events on the whole "NEPTUNE" front will be given to place the Canadian effort in its proper perspective.

A. Artillery

490. By 11 Jun, 3 Cdn Inf Div had almost doubled the artillery support with which it started on D Day. On the right, 12 and 13 Fd Regts, R.C.A., were in support of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. 6 Fd Regt, R.A., and 14 Fd Regt, R.C.A., gave support to 8 Cdn Inf Bde while 191 Fd Regt, R.A., and 19 Fd Regt, R.C.A., supported 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Troops of 2 R.M.A.S. Regt were attached to various artillery units throughout the division and acted as field artillery or in an anti-tank role as the situation demanded.<sup>111</sup> Also under command C.R.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 11 Jun 4) Frequently these British and Canadian artillery regiments were called upon to give support to the British divisions on either flank of 3 Cdn Inf Div.

491. All artillery units, whatever their role, were kept very busy during the first week of battle. Not only did they give supporting fire to the infantry both in offensive and defensive actions but, owing to the fluidity of the battle, frequently had to perform infantry tasks to clear snipers, etc., from their gun areas. An example of the tasks carried out by one of the field artillery units is given by the regimental historian of 12 Cdn Fd Regt. The fighting he describes took place on 9 Jun when the unit was in Bray. This was to same attack on 7 Cdn Inf Bde as described above (paras 458 ff).

On no occasion did the artillery play a more vital role than they did on that day. The weather was too bad for air support so that if the tanks were to be stopped we had to stop them. We fired first an "Uncle" target directly in front of us and then the guns would switch ninety degrees and fire on the attack on the right. While all this was going on the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the 3<sup>rd</sup> British Division on our left flank called for help and we fired "Uncle" and "Victor" targets that required switches of 180 degrees and ranges of seven to nine thousand yards. What a day it was; the Gunners responded magnificently and the piles of empty cartridge cases beside the S.Ps. grew by leaps and bounds. Each time we switched back to the tanks in front of us the range would be shorter and appeals of the F.O.Os. more desperate. When we finally stopped them the range was just over 1600 yards -- much too close for comfort, especially when we were firing at 8000 yards in the opposite direction.

(The History of 12 Candian Field Regiment, op cit, p. 19.)

492. During this same attack 94 Bty of 3 Cdn A tk Regt, supporting 7 Cdn Inf Bde in Putot and Bretteville, saw heavy fighting and suffered considerable casualties. The regiment "had six 6-pdr guns knocked out and 3 M10s put out of action" during the first few days of mixed fighting (W.D., 3 Cdn A tk Regt, 9 Jun 44). By 12 Jun the unit's guns

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<sup>111</sup> This regiment continued to work with the Canadians until 20 Jun by which date 25 of the original 32 Centaur tanks were still in action. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44)

were distributed as follows: 4 Bty supported 8 Cdn Inf Bde in the Bray area; 94 Bty supported 7 Cdn Inf Bde in the Norrey area; and 105 (Composite) Bty, together with 52 Bty, with both in Villons-les-Buissons area supporting 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (Ibid, 12 Jun 44)

493. By 12 Jun also all the batteries (less one troop of each battery) of 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt had landed in Normandy. Prior to this time 32 Bty, which had landed on D Day (supra, para 325), had shot down six enemy aircraft and damaged others. (W.D. 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, July 1944: Appx 10, "War Diary of 32 Bty, 4 L.A.A. Regt, 6-11 Jun 44") On the day the remainder of the unit landed, this same battery "shot down 3 FW 190s between 1415 hrs and 1520 hrs" (W.D., 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, 12 Jun 44). Within forty-eight hours of their landing, 69 and 100 Btys were deployed in 3 Cdn Inf Div's gun areas and were engaging enemy aircraft. (Ibid, 14 Jun 44)

## B. Engineers

494. After the obstacles had been cleared from the beaches, no further main engineering tasks confronted 3 Cdn Inf Div. Nevertheless, there was a variety of sapper duties to be performed. Chief among these for all companies was route clearance for infantry brigades. This included not only checking the roads and their verges for mines, but removing knocked-out vehicles which blocked the roads. Areas were also swept for mines to provide sites for assembly areas, headquarters, vehicles 'harbours', etc. Enemy guns and ammunition dumps were destroyed along with other enemy equipment and emplacements. Water points were established, houses and buildings searched for booby-traps and deloused, and a general reconnaissance was made of the area for local resources, airfield sites,<sup>112</sup> and so forth. In some cases small mine belts were laid in conjunction with the infantry. The largest of these minefields was one containing 1250 mines laid on 9 Cdn Inf Bde's front by 16 Cdn Fd Coy. (W.D., 5, 6, 16, and 18 Cdn Fd Coys, 6-12 Jun 44)

495. On the whole, the assault forces had comparatively little trouble with large minefields. Aside from the enemy's inability to lay the number of mines he would have desired (supra, para 70), the allies were further aided by the geographical problems besetting the enemy. These problems have been explained as follows:

One unexpected feature of the invasion was the ineffectiveness of the land minefields behind the beaches in holding up the advance inland. The Germans had compromised between military and civil considerations by placing the minefields so as to avoid much interference with the life of the region. The fishing villages and holiday resorts that cover nearly half of the coast between the Orne and Courseulles were comparatively clear of mines. To prevent children and cattle from straying into the minefields, they were usually surrounded with barbed-wire fences with warning notices. And the vast extent of the West Wall led to stratagem -- more than half of the minefield defence lay in covering their

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<sup>112</sup> Canadian Engineers made a reconnaissance of an airfield site south of Amblie which, by 12 Jun, was well under construction. (W.D., 18 Cdn Fd Coy, R.C.E., 12 Jun 44: Appx 6, "Message from C.R.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div to 18 Cdn Fd Coy")

gaps with fire, but the surprise achieved as a result of the ... [weather in which the Allies attacked] made this impossible.

(Arthur Davies, "Geographical Factors in the Invasion and Battle of Normandy", The Geographical Review, October 1946, p. 618.)

C. Intercommunication

496. Communications, which functioned well during D Day, improved during the first week of battle as more men and equipment were made available to signal officers. In short time "line was put into everyone but 7 Cdn Inf Bde", the latter being omitted "owing to a dangerous route" (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, June 1944: Appx 17, Report on Operation "OVERLORD"). By 11 Jun the signals war diarist wrote: "It is our boast ... that at no time since the Operation commenced have we not been in communication with everyone" (W.D., 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs, 11 Jun 44). Cable-laying sections had learned by this time to keep a man covering them as they laid their lines. One signals section "ended up with 85 prisoners from this policy" (Report on Operation "OVERLORD"). Little use was made of enemy or French equipment in the area by 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs.

497. The Contact Detachments remained with their formations until D plus 8, at which time they were withdrawn to divisional headquarters. (Interview with Capt Newsam, op cit) Should the division go on the offensive once more, these detachments would be returned to their respective units. (Ibid) The regiment supplying these Contact Detachments was further represented in Normandy by 11 Jun. On that day "B" Squadron, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, landed in France, accompanied by Lt-Col T.C. Lewis, the unit's commanding officer. (Pavey, op cit, pp 44-45) On 12 Jun "the Squadron moved to the village of Camilly, where it took up positions around the village to give local protection to Divisional Headquarters in case of enemy infiltration or paratroop attacks" (Ibid, p. 44).

D. Administration

498. Until such time as higher formations assumed responsibility, maintenance was controlled by the division. Beach stores dumps were quickly accumulated by using amphibious load-carriers (DUKWs) as well as all types of landing craft. (Highlights of Administration, op cit) "The op proved that planning had been sound as to admn arrangements. Assault scale tpt had been properly loaded to provide the immediate essentials during the early days. No one went short of amn, tools, food or wate" (Brigadier Blackader, op cit)

499. The provision of ammunition and petrol was the responsibility of the divisional R.C.A.S.C., which for the early stages of the operation had created a number of special departments to meet the abnormal supply situation. (See 3 Cdn Inf Div Admn Plan, op cit) A Beach dump was established on both MIKE and NAN Sectors and ammunition stored there was available either on call from the infantry or for subsequent removal to

the gun areas. Distributed throughout ships and craft of Force "J" were 420 trailers 5-cwt, loaded with petrol, small arms ammunition and mines; these were brought ashore by any available vehicles, and when assembled in a trailer park constituted a mobile store for immediate replenishment. They were towed to forward localities by a 'jeep platoon' formed for this purpose. Ammunition dumps were established in "MARY" and "JANE" Gun Areas, the first stocks of infantry ammunition and mines being carried forward on the field artillery "Priests" which occupied these areas. On 8 Jun, the beach dumps were closed down and the Divisional Administrative Area proper was formed. ((HS) 235C3.6011 (D1): Interview with Capt L.A. Brennan, R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div) A full description of the work of the divisional Army Service Corps is given in a unit history ((HS) 235C3.6013 (D1): History of R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, June to December 1944).

500. The medical components of the Canadian assault force "were three field ambulances, one light field ambulance, two field dressing stations, and a field hygiene section. Only the three field ambulance were to participate in the initial assault; apart from these the Canadians were to be dependent upon British medical units" (Revised Draft, Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939-1945), Vol. 1, p. 358). By D plus 1 the entire units of Nos. 14, 22 and 23 Cdn Fd Ambs were ashore supporting 7, 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes respectively. During the first hours of the landing, the assault sections of the field ambulance units

. . . remained in the beach area collecting casualties, giving them first aid, and 'nesting' them in the shelter of sea-walls, buildings or wherever they could be kept from the withering fire that still swept the beaches.

(Ibid, p. 361)

By 8 Jun, however, casualty collecting posts, advanced dressing stations and field dressing stations were in operation as well as Jeep ambulances.

501. British medical units (see Order of Battle at Appendix "C") working in conjunction with Canadian medical units were also functioning smoothly by this time. British advanced surgical centres "were in operation and performing surgery before 11 p.m. [6 Jun]. In four days they had performed about 220 major operations and handled in all about 1800 casualties. . ." (Ibid, p. 364).

502. On 8 Jun organized evacuation of casualties from the beaches by L.S.T. was underway, thus relieving the crowded beach dressing stations. Canadian medical officers and personnel were on board these L.S.T. and "casualties were given treatment . . . in an improvised operating room on the lower deck, fed, and cared for so that they would arrive in England in the best possible condition" (Ibid, p. 366). Evacuation of casualties by air began on 13 Jun, "a week earlier than had been anticipated" (Ibid). For further details on the medical aspect of the assault phase, see the Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939-1945, Vol I, Ch XVIII.

E. 1 British Corps

503. (i) 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. By the evening of 8 Jun,

... the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division was established firmly on the eastern bank of the River Orne, holding a half circle round the little villages of Ranville, Le Mariquet and Herouvillette, with the 1st Special Brigade under their orders on the high ground of Le Plein and near the little village of Bréville, soon to become the scene of a fierce battle. The fighting during those forty-eight hours had gained for the Division all its objectives with the exception of a small coastal strip near Franceville. They had suffered 800 casualties, and more than 1,000 parachutists had not yet reached their rendezvous.

(By Air to Battle, op cit, p. 89)

504. During the next few days 6 Airborne Div was engaged in “consolidating its position, beating off counter-attacks, and welcoming the arrival of small, scattered bodies of parachute troops, who had gradually made their way ... to the sound of the guns” (Ibid, p. 91).

505. Enemy attacks against the division were launched from the south (by elements of 21 Pz Div) and from the east (by elements of 711 and 346 Inf Divs, the latter having come from the Le Havre area). (A.H.Q. Report No. 50 paras 67 ff) Although most of these armoured-supported infantry attacks were beaten off by the parachutists and commandos, the enemy continued to hold a position in Bréville -- one forming a dangerous salient across the Troarn-Sallenelles ridge. It was 1 Corps’ intention to extend the division’s bridgehead south (infra, para 519) and to this end the southern section was to be taken over by 51 (H) Div. However, “no serious attack south was ... safe with the Bréville gap still in the enemy’s hands” (6 Airborne Division - Report on Operations in Normandy, op cit). An attempt by the enemy to extend and widen the gap on 10 Jun had been stopped, but it was realized that the airborne troops would need assistance to eliminate the salient altogether.

506. During the night of 10/11 Jun the leading elements of 51 (H) Div (153 Inf Bde) began to cross the Orne. “This was in connection with a proposed 1 Corps operation, to be carried out by 51 (H) Division, to break out of the bridgehead [on 12 Jun] to the south and east of Caen, (Operation ‘SMOCK’)”.<sup>113</sup> (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book II, p. 248). 5 Black Watch, placed under General Gale’s command, made, an attack on Bréville on 11 Jun but was repulsed with heavy casualties. On 12 Jun,

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<sup>113</sup> On the morning of 7 June, General Montgomery stated in a message to Main 21 Army Group: “Dempsey to proceed relentlessly with original plan. He will hold a flank on the River Dives and capture CAEN and BAEUX. He will then pivot on CAEN moving east of River ORNE. Likely that 51 Div will cut in behind CAEN moving east of River ORNE” (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 2).

...enemy attacks from Bréville began at 0500 hrs sp by tks. A counter attack restored the situation at 0615 hrs. Further enemy attacks came in at 0630 hrs and 1500 hrs. DF tasks being fired by 3 Br Div and 51 (H) Div, to repel these. At 1700 hrs another very determined attack came in which pressed tps back from their fwd posns.

(6 Airborne Division-Report on Operations, *op cit.*)

“The situation was only restored”, wrote General Gale, “by a gallant counter-attack by Canadian parachutists, led by Brigadier James Hill himself”. (Gale, *op cit.*, p. 99; see also A.H.Q. Report No. 26, pp 10-11). But the “situation restored” was still one which called for drastic action. It was decided to attack again at last light. Supported by one medium and four field regiments of artillery<sup>114</sup> and a squadron of tanks the attack went in at 2230 hrs. It was completely successful. After this battle for Bréville, “neither in the North nor in the South were we [the Airborne troops] seriously attacked again” (Gale, *op cit.*, p. 101).

507. Meanwhile, on the morning of 11 Jun, General Dempsey

...was warned by Intelligence sources that the Germans were concentrating for an attack from Caen. This seemed to be the major armoured counter-stroke which he had been expecting since D plus 1 and, as his primary task was to safeguard the Allied left flank, he postponed the airborne plan,<sup>115</sup> called for aerial bombardment of Caen and ordered Crocker (the commander of 1 British Corps) to convert the Canadian attack into a ‘spoiling operation’ and to dispose the rest of his forces defensively.

(Wilmot, *op cit.*, p. 302)

The enemy field commanders, however, had by this time given up what plans they had for an armoured offensive to drive the Allies into the sea. On 7 Jun, Panzer Group West, commanded by General Geyr von Schweppenburg, was ordered to take over from 1 SS Pz Corps “the task of eliminating the beachhead and regaining the coast” (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 48). By 10 Jun, Tactical Headquarters of Pz Gp West was a few miles from Thury-Harcourt, having assumed command from 1 SS Pz Corps during the evening of 9 Jun. On the afternoon of 10 Jun, “Marshal Rommel was present at the headquarters of the Panzer Group and discussed the 1 SS Pz Corps attack then being planned for the night of 10/11 Jun” (*Ibid.*, para 49). This attack was to be launched, however, with armoured divisions already deeply engaged in the bridgehead fighting, and there were no infantry divisions available to replace them. This, together with the aggressiveness of the Allies

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<sup>114</sup> The divisional commander wrote that during the first week of action, “...except for the artillery support which I could get out of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and the 1st Corps, which incidentally was never begrudged and was always effective, I had only one eight-gun battery of 75-mm Howitzers in the bridgehead...” (Gale, *op cit.*, p. 109).

<sup>115</sup> This was a plan to drop parachutists south of Caen in conjunction with a pincer movement on that city. See *infra*, para 519.



and the speed of their build-up, resulted in the 1 SS Pz Corps' offensive being called off. As a finishing touch, not long after Rommel had left Geyr's headquarters, it came under a heavy air attack.

General von Geyr was only slightly wounded, but his C. of S., Maj Gen von Dawans, and most of his staff officers were killed, the signal section was destroyed, and early on 11 Jun Seventh Army returned the command authority in the sector to 1 SS Pz Corps.

(Ibid)

Thus it was while these events were forcing the enemy on the defensive that General Dempsey received word of a possible German armoured offensive.

508. While the fighting for the Bréville ridge was in progress, 152 Inf Bde of 51 (H) Div arrived east of the Orne. During the night 13/14 Jun, 51 (H) Div assumed responsibility for the southern portion of the bridgehead. 51 (H) Div made some small gains against stubborn enemy resistance in their new position. Operation "SMOCK" was drastically curtailed on 12 Jun, however, owing to information received at Corps Headquarters which indicated a strong enemy armoured attack against 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Inf Divs. Thus the remainder of 51 (H) Div was held west of the Orne which limited, naturally, the division's operations in the bridgehead. 6 Airborne Div was reinforced by 4 S.S. Bde which came under divisional command on 11 Jun.

509. (ii) 3<sup>rd</sup> British Infantry Division. The operations of 3 Brit Inf Div during the first week of the assault were in many respects parallel to those of 3 Cdn Inf Div. During the days immediately after the initial landing there followed a series of bitter attacks and counter-attacks on brigade and battalion levels, after which the division settled down to a period of consolidation and active patrolling. The following account is based on Scarfe, op cit, Ch III; (HS) 235B3.018 (D1): G Ops Log, 3Brit Inf Div, 6-30 June 1944; and Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book II, pp 206a ff.

510. On D plus 1 the task of eliminating the salient which separated 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs was undertaken by 4 .S.S. Bde on the coast, 8 Inf Bde a few miles inland and 9 Inf Bde in the south. 8 Inf Bde entered Plumetot and Casserons soon after midday on 7 Jun. It also gave some support to 41 R.M. Cdo on the coast. At the same time the bridge patrolled Ouistreham to clear out such enemy pockets as remained in the town.

511. At noon on 7 Jun 9 Inf Bde was ordered to attack the base of the salient, i.e., to clear Cazelle and thrust on to St. Contest. Periers and Cazelle were taken with little trouble. The brigade then pressed on to Cambes but was forced to withdraw to Le Mesnil after meeting strong enemy opposition. On 9 Jun brigade troops made another attack with strong artillery support plus cruiser gunfire. The village was taken in spite of determined enemy resistance, and by last light 9 Inf Bde was firmly consolidated on its position. Contact between 3 Brit and 3 Cdn Inf Divs was by now firmly established along the divisional boundary.

512. Except for small local gains, all attempts by the division to push closer to Caen itself proved fruitless. On 7 Jun 185 Inf Bde launched an attack to secure the Lebisey ridge which overlooked Caen. The units taking part in this attack met fierce resistance and were forced to withdraw that night after suffering heavy casualties. Except on the right flank (in the Cambes area), the F.D.Ls. of 3 Brit Inf Div were little closer to Caen by the end of the first week of action than they had been on D plus 1.

513. The strong resistance met at Cambes by 9 Inf Bde and on the Lebisey ridge by 185 Inf Bde on 7 Jun had its parallel in the Buron-Authie battle by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. Both Canadian and British troops were forced back from their objectives, the former by an attack by elements of 12 SS Pz Div. 3 Brit Inf Div's thrust to Caen on 7 Jun doubtless met with 21 Pz Div's attempt to launch an attack towards Douvres, and attack supposed to be coordinated with Meyer's attack on the Canadians. (Special Interrogation Report - Generalleutnant Edger Feuchtinger, op cit) The battle on Lebisey ridge evidently cancelled the intentions of both friend and foe. Nevertheless, if during the first week of the assault the British were denied Caen, it was equally clear to the enemy "that the Allied consolidation ... had progressed to the point where it could no longer be defeated with forces within reach" (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 66).

514. It was in this first week of battle, sometime between 10-13 Jun, that SS Brigade-Fuhrer Fritz Witt, officer commanding 12 SS Pz Div, was killed. (Ibid, para 58) On 13 Jun, Major-General T.G. Rennie, D.S.O., M.C., commanding 3 Brit Inf Div, was seriously wounded when his Jeep ran over a mine near Cambes. (Scarfe, op cit, p. 104) His place was taken on 22 Jun by Major General L.G. Whistler, D.S.O. (Ibid, p. 110)

515. (iii) 4<sup>th</sup> Special Service Brigade. 48 and 41 R.M. Cdos, charged with clearing the enemy from the coastal strip separating "Juno" and "Sword" landing beaches, had both suffered heavy casualties during the run-in and during the D Day, 48 R.M. Cdo had entered, but had not cleared, Langrune. Attacking from the east, 41 R.M. Cdo was unable to advance beyond the Hermanville - Lion-sur-Mer line by last light on 6 Jun.

516. On 7 Jun, aided by 5 Centaurs and 1 Sherman tank, 48 R.M. Cdo (now reduced to 210 all ranks) attempted to clear the remainder of Langrune but was unsuccessful ((HS) 285.CD4.018(D1): Chronology of 4 Commando [Special Service]<sup>116</sup> Brigade, 6-11 June 1944; W.D., 4 S.S. Bde, June 1944. The following account is based on these two documents). In the afternoon it was planned to have 46 R.M. Cdo<sup>117</sup> attack through 48 R.M. Cdo to seize Luc-sur-Mer. This attack was successful. Contact was made with patrols from 41 R.M. Cdo in Luc late in the afternoon, and shortly thereafter 48 R.M. Cdo reported the end of organized resistance in Langrune.

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<sup>116</sup> 4 S.S. Bde became 4 "Commando" Bde on 15 Dec 44 ((HS) 225B1.042(D1): Organization of 1 Brit Corps, Circula Notice 529/G of 15 Dec 44 from B.G.S. 1 Corps).

<sup>117</sup> 46 R.M. Cdo had been held in Army Reserve "with alternative tasks, the destruction of one or other of two formidable batteries east of the Orne [Merville and Houlgate batteries]. ...Owing to the success of the bombardment directed against the batteries, it was cancelled and the Commandos came under command of 4 S.S. Brigade on D plus 1" (Royal Marine Commandos in Normandy, op cit).

517. On 8 Jun 4 S.S. Bde, came under command 51 (H) Div. After clearing the remaining small pockets of enemy resistance in the coastal area, the brigade was concentrated in the La Délivrande-Douvres area. In the afternoon of the next day 1 Corps placed 46 R.M. Cdo under command 3 Cdn Inf Div to assist the Canadians in the Anguerny area. This Commando later helped clear the Mue valley. (Supra, paras 481-85) On 10 Jun 4 S.S. Bde was given the responsibility of laying siege to the Douvres Radar Station, a commitment which had been held up to this time by 51 (H) Div. 4 S.S. Bde was reinforced on this day by the arrival of 47 R.M. Cdo which had completed its task for 30 Corps at Putot-en-Bessin on D plus 2. A number of Centaurs and Shermans from 30 Assault Unit, Royal Marines, were also placed under the brigade's command on the same day.

518. On 11 Jun further orders were received from 1 Corps. 41 R.M. Cdo was to continue to lay siege the Radar Station under command 1 Corps, but the remainder of the brigade (less 46 R.M. Cdo, still with the Canadians was ordered to move east of the Orne and take up a position on the left flank of 1 S.S. Bde. (W.D., 4 S.S. Bde, June 1944: Appx "C", 4 S.S. Bde O.O. No. 3) The Radar Station consisted of two heavily defended localities, each built around the huge coast-watching and anti-aircraft-reporting installations. Locality "A", centred on 004800, was the larger; it was surrounded by wire and mines and equipped with guns in concrete and open emplacements. Locality "B", farther north at 006808, was similarly defended. 41 R.M. Cdo, ordered to capture the Radar Station, started its attack at 1700 hrs, 17 Jun, after a half hour intensive artillery programme had been fired on the defenders. A.V.R.E. teams flogged gaps through the minefields and planted "Beehive" charges on the emplacements. The enemy at once sought shelter in the deepest concrete structures and the infantry who followed the armour were confronted with almost no opposition. Organized resistance in both localities ceased at about 1830 hrs. Casualties were very light, and prisoners taken numbered about five officers and 200 other ranks. ((HS) 225B1.013 (D1): 1 Brit Corps, Immediate Report No. 9, "Capture of Enemy Radar Station Douvres La Délivrande") Of these the majority were German Air Force personnel, the remainder coming from 11 Bn, 736 Gren Regt (716 Inf Div) and 1 Bn, 192 Pz Gren Regt (21 Pz Div) ((HS) 225B1.023 (D1): 1 Brit Corps Intelligence Summary No. 5). On 19 Jun, 41 R.M. Cdo rejoined 4 S.S. Bde east of the Orne. 46 R.M. Cdo, released from 3 Cdn Inf Div, rejoined the brigade on 17 Jun.

#### F. 30 British Corps

519. Realizing that Caen could not now be taken by direct assault and that his attempt to by-pass it to the west was in danger of being frustrated, Montgomery determined to keep the battle mobile. 'If the Germans wish to be offensive,' he wrote to his Chief of Staff, de Guingand, on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 'and drive in our lodgement area between Bayeux and Caen, the best way to defeat them is to be offensive ourselves'. He intended, he said, that the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division should strike through Tilly 'to secure Villers-Bocage and Evrécy and then exploit south-east'. Meantime, the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division would 'attack southwards, east of Caen, towards Cagny'. When these gains had men

made, he planned 'to put down the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division somewhere south of Caen in a big 'air lock' and to link up with it from Evrécy and Cagny', thus enveloping the city.

This was a bold and ambitious plan, in which the first essential was the capture of the Villers-Bocage ridge. Accordingly, Dempsey ordered 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured to crack the German defences at Tilly before they crystallized further and told the Canadians to seize the Cheux ridge south of the Caen-Tilly road so as to protect the flank of the 7<sup>th</sup> when it thrust on to Villers-Bocage.

(Wilmot, op cit, p. 302)

.....

520. On 7 Jun 50 (N) Div, as with the other assault divisions, was concerned with enlarging its bridgehead to the D Day objective line and with linking up with the American V Corps bridgehead on its right. The enemy's 352 Inf Div, whose right wing 50 (N) Div had pried from its coastal fortifications on D Day, was given no time to recover. Fortunately, the enemy's closest armoured reserves were committed in the Caen area and during the day 50 (N) Div was able to advance south and west without encountering the armoured resistance met by 1 Corps. On the morning of 7 Jun Bayeux was entered and early in the afternoon of the same day was firmly secured. The division also occupied the high ground immediately north and south of the city. (Clay, op cit, pp 251 ff; (HS) 235B50.015 (D1): 50 (N) Div-Extracts from Ops Log, 7 Jun 44) On the morning of 7 Jun elements of 7 Armd Div were landing at Arromanches. (Captain Martin Lindsay and Captain M.E. Johnston, History of 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division (B.A.O.R., 1945), p. 31) During the first few days, 7 Armd Div "assisted 50<sup>th</sup> Division to hold and improve its positions around Bayeux..." (Lt-Col R.M.P. Carver, "The Seventh Armoured Division", The Army Quarterly, October 1948, p. 53).

521. It was not until late on D plus 1 that 8 Armd Bde was given orders to prepare to launch its attack south to Villers-Bocage through Tilly-sur-Seulles early on the morning of 8 Jun (Extracts from 50 (N) Div Ops Log, 7 Jun; supra, para 351). This armoured thrust made fair headway and by last light on 8 Jun the advance elements of the column had positioned themselves on Point 103, a dominating feature about 1-1/2 miles from Tilly. (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 81).

522. This attack, as might be expected, stirred up a hornet's nest. We have already noted the attack on 7 Cdn Inf Bde by 26 Pz Gren Regt (of 12 SS Pz Div) on the same day. (Supra, paras 458-66) The only force of 12 SS Pz Gren Regt was the division's reconnaissance battalion. ((HS) 981A7 (D3) (c): Seventh Army Situation Map-8 Jun 44) This force, together with the leading elements of the Panzer Lehr Division (the main leading elements of the Panzer Lehr Division (the main body of which had reached the Thury-Harcourt area on 7 Jun) were the main effective German elements in the Tilly area opposing the attack by 8 Armd Bde, and thus the first enemy armour encountered on 50 (N) Div front. (It can also be appreciated that the weight of the enemy's armoured attack absorbed by 7 Cdn Inf Bde in Bretteville and Putot proved very advantageous to

8 Armd Bde. The axis of advance of 26 Pz Gren Regt lay roughly along the line of the Caen-Bayeux road, while that of 8 Armd Bde lay directly across this road).

523. On the night of 8 Jun, the main body of 8 Jun, the main body of 8 Armd Bed was as yet uncleared. The next day, reinforced with additional infantry, the advance was continued. Audrieu and St. Pierre were cleared but Tilly was too strongly held. An enemy counter-attack made “by tanks and infantry of the 130<sup>th</sup> Panzar Lehr and the 12<sup>th</sup> SS Hitler Jugend Divisions...” to clear 8 Armd Bde from St. Pierre failed to dislodge it (Clay, op cit, pp 2530-58). At this point it was decided to consolidate the ground gained and reorganize for further operations.

524. On 9 Jun General Montgomery stated his intention “to launch 7 Armd Div...[on 10 Jun] southwards through BAYEUX to secure VILLERS-BOGAGE and NOYERS 8762 and then EVRECY; then to explott to the S.E.”<sup>118</sup> (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 16). 56 Inf Bde, formerly under the command of 50 (N) Div, came under command 7 Armd Div for this operation. On the morning of 10 Jun 22 Armd Bde Gp made its attack west of the Seulles roughly parallel to the main Bayeux-Tilly road. Owing to the nature of the Bocage country,<sup>119</sup> to stiffened enemy resistance from additional Pz Lehr div troops which had reached the Hottot-Tilly area, and to an “unholy mix-up” in the control of the battle, the attack slowed down until by 12 Jun it came to a standstill on the outskirts of Tilly<sup>120</sup> (Ibid, pp 103 ff).

525. Even before, 7 Armd Div’s attack on Hottot ground to a halt, 30 Corps’ Commander had “instructed Commander 7 Armoured Division to consider transferring the axis of advance of his division further west, in order to effect deeper and easier penetration into enemy held territory” (Ibid, p. 126). On 12 Jun, hearing that V U.S. Corps was meeting little resistance on their drive to Caumont, 30 Corp’s Commander received General Dempsey’s permission.

... to disengage 7 Armoured Division and with this Division to launch a right hook round the western flank of Second Army through the American sector towards Villers Bocage.

(Ibid, p. 128)

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<sup>118</sup> This operation would be launched at approximately the same time as 51 (H) Div’s breakout from the Orne bridgehead towards Cagny (supra, para 506), and if both thrusts were successful General Montgomery envisaged dropping 1 Airborne Div south of Caen to close the pincers. (Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 16; supra, para 518)

<sup>119</sup> Of the area around Tilly, 50 (N) Div’s historian writes: “This country was true bocage. It was closer than any country in which the Division had ever fought before -- steep hills, deep valleys, small fields and tall hedges, ditches, and narrow, twisting lanes were its characteristics. It was difficult country for tanks and nerve-racking country for infantry, and called for a battle technique of its own” (Clay, op cit, p. 252).

<sup>120</sup> The attacks on Tilly-sur-Seulles by 8 Armd Bde and 7 Armd Div caused Pz Lehr Div, already badly battered from our air attacks, to be committed in a piecemeal fashion similar to 12 SS and 21 Pz Divs on 1 Corps front.

50 (N) Div was to take over the responsibility for the whole 30 Corps front and provide a firm base for the Corps.

526. The new plan was quickly implemented, and during the afternoon of 12 Jun 22 Armd Bde, the division's leading formation, began its southward thrust along the new axis to Villers. "The move was skillfully carried out without encountering other than light opposition..." ((HS) 215A21.013 (D11): 21 Army Group Reports - Immediate Report No. 5, "Operations 30 Corps"). Contact with 1 U.S. Inf Div (advancing on a parallel axis to Caumont east of the Aure) was made at Livry, a short distance from Caumont, at the end of the day and early on the morning of 13 Jun "Villers Bocage was entered without incident" (Lindsay and Johnston, op cit, p. 36). The town, however, soon became the scene of a fierce battle.<sup>121</sup> After entering Villers 22 Armd Bde sent out a small force to secure the high ground to the northeast (Point 213). Scarcely had the group set out to accomplish this task when it was ambushed by a number of Tiger tanks, one of which almost wiped out the small group.<sup>122</sup> Later that morning 22 Armd Bde (the division's own infantry brigades, 131 Inf Bde, was still north of Livry) was attacked by what was soon identified as the leading elements of 2 Pz Div. This Panzer division, in reserve near Amiens when the invasion was launched, had been moved south to Normandy during the intervening days and was approaching Villers from the Mortain-Vire area during 11-12 Jun. (Seventh Army Situation Maps, 10-12 Jun) As part of XLVII Pz Corps, the object of 2 Pz Div was to close the gap between Pz Lehr Div and 352 Inf Div -- a gap opened by the assault formations and widened by 7 Armd Div's attack on Villers. ((HS) 981SOM. (D122): Report of the Commander, Panzer Group West (Gen Pz Geyr von Schweppenburg), p. 37)

527. Unable to hold Villers with the small forces at hand, 22 Armd bde withdrew to the commanding high ground east of Amaye-sur-Seulles, hoping to hold on until the advance of 50 (N) Div on the left relieved them. (Lindsay and Johnston, op cit, p. 38)

528. By last light on 13 Jun the bulk of 22 Armd Bde was in position east of Amaye, while 131 Inf Bde remained in Granville (7664). Early on the morning of 14 Jun, 131 Inf Bde set out from Granville to clear the road to Amaye. 2 Pz Div's attempts to isolate 22 Armd Bde were frustrated and the Livry-Amaye road was kept open. After visiting 22 Armd Bde's position during the afternoon, however, the Divisional Commander,

... in view of the increasing enemy strength and also on account of the disappointingly slow progress of 50 Division to the north, ... made up his mind to withdraw 22 Armoured Brigade during the night 14/15 June.

(Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 146.)

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<sup>121</sup> "Which was much complicated", writes a war correspondent, "by the local fire brigade turning out in a mistaken effort to put out fires in knocked-out tanks" (The Times (London), 22 July 49).

<sup>122</sup> For a description of this battle, see Major R.H.W.S. Hastings, The Rifle Brigade in The Second World War (Aldershot, 1950), pp 349-52.

Later that afternoon, orders were issued for a withdrawal of the division from its exposed position.

529. 2 Pz Div made another attack on 22 Armd Bde before it could extricate itself through 131 Inf Bde. The attack was beaten off, and during the late evening the brigade withdrew successfully. By 15 Jun the division had established itself in the Briquesard - Ste. Honorine-de Ducy area.

530. Although 7 Armd Div's 'right hook' against Villers was unsuccessful, the two-day battle with 2 Pz Div had important results:

... 2 Panzer Division's intention was to drive a wedge between the British and American armies through Balleroy and the Forêt de Cérisy beyond. In fact, to their great surprise they met the Division at Villers Bocage, and were forced to fight an offensive battle in close country which undoubtedly favoured anti-tank defence, particularly the six-pounder anti-tank gun ...

.....

The result was that, temporarily, 2 Panzer Division, at a crucial stage in the landing, when the build-up was much delayed by the weather, was severely crippled for a time as an effective offensive force.

(Lindsay and Johnston, op cit, p. 40)

General Montgomery, writing to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff at the time, commented as follows on the setback as it affected his plans:

The arrival of 2 Pz Div at this place puts a different complexion of the problem.

I have got to be very certain of my position, step by step; I must at all costs remain well balanced and able to handle easily any situation that may develop as the enemy reserves come into the battle.

I am now very strong defensively on the left of Second Army, in the CAEN sector: I would be stronger still if I had CAEN itself, but I am quite well positioned as things are at present.

I have not yet sufficient strength to be offensive on both flanks of Second Army.

I have therefore decided to be defensive in the CAEN sector on the front of 1 Corps, but aggressively so. I am going to put all my offensive power, ammunition and so on, into the offensive by 30 Corps on the right of Second Army.

(Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, p. 42)

531. Commenting on 7 Armd Div's withdrawal at Villers, one military writer states:

Thus the fruits of the initial success, which might have been turned into a striking victory, were handed back to the enemy. Erskine's troops had suffered no defeat after the first costly encounter with the single Tiger and if Bucknall [Lt-Gen G.S. Buchnall, C.B., M.C. and Bar, Commander, 30 Corps] had reinforced and persisted with the attack by 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured, he would have proved a serious threat to the rear of Caen and would have forced Panzer Lehr to abandon the Tilly salient in order to help close the gap which the Americans had created at Caumont. This great opportunity of disrupting the enemy line and expanding the Allied bridgehead was lost not so much in the woods and orchards around Villers-Bocage, as in the Corps Commander's mind.

.....

The failure of this operation, and the simultaneous repulse of the Highland Division's attempt to expand the bridgehead east of the Orne, led Dempsey to write at the time that there was 'no chance now of a snap operation with airborne troops either to seize Caen or to deepen the bridgehead on XXX Corps front. It is clear now that Caen can be taken only by a set-piece assault and we do not have the men or ammunition for that at this time'.

(Wilmot, op cit, pp 310-311)

G. The First American Army

532. (i) V Corps. In the two days following the initial landings, the operations of V Corps "were a continuation of the assault phase as all units sought to reach their D Day objectives" (Harrison, op cit, p. 336). During this time, 29 Inf Div operated in the western sector of the corps bridgehead and 1 Inf Div in the eastern sector. Early on the morning of 7 Jun, General Montgomery met General Bradley in the "OMAHA" transport area. The Army Group Commander "was anxious that the Allied Beaches be joined before Rommel could concentrate his forces against any single beach and there break through" (Bradley, op cit, p. 279). That same morning, General Bradley "slipped ashore on Omaha to prod Gerow on Montgomery's order for an early link-up of the beaches" (Ibid, p. 280; in his book, Mr. Harrison states that General Eisenhower gave the order for the link-up and that General Bradley, "gave orders accordingly" on the afternoon of 7 Jun. (Harrison, op cit, p. 352) The Bradley version, however, seems to be true. Cf Liberation Campaign North West Europe, op cit, Ch III, Book I, pp 1-2). In V Corps 29 Inf Div would thrust westward to make contact with VII Corps, while 1 Inf Div made contact with the British on their left.



533. 1 Inf Div's drive east against the enemy forces which continued to hold a narrow wedge along the Drome River valley to the sea, and south to the high ground across the Bayeux-Isigny highway, met with medium opposition. Squeezed by the British on the right and the Americans on the left, the enemy withdraw from the corridor during 8 Jun. Contact with 50 (N) Div, first made at Port-on-Bessin between 16 R.C.T. and 47 R.M. Cdo at noon on 8 Jun, was widened and made more secure the following day. By 8 Jun also, 1 Inf Div was within a few hundred yards of its southern D Day objective line.

534. While the 1<sup>st</sup> Division advanced east

... the 29<sup>th</sup> Division on D plus 1 still found itself entangled in the enemy's coastal defenses and spent most of the day cleaning up the fragments of enemy units that were shattered but not destroyed by the initial shock of the landings.

(Ibid, p. 340)

The greatest advance made by 29 Inf Div on 7 Jun was along the coast to St. Pierre-du-Mont. Elsewhere, the division was able to advance little more than a mile from its original, narrow D Day beachhead. Although the division's territorial gains were not striking, "in reality the crust of enemy defences was broken and the division was set for a full scale attack [on Isigny] on the morrow" (Ibid, p. 341). The attack to link up V and VII Corps beachheads, launched late on 7 Jun, made good progress during the following day. By the night of 8/9 Jun Isigny had been entered and cleared. By this time also the remainder of the division had established itself on the high ground north of the Aure River. (Ibid,p. 353)

535. From its D Day objective line,

... V Corps ordered a three-division attack designed simply to push out the lodgement area in conformity with the advance of the British on the left.

(Ibid, p. 366)

This move was evidently the outcome of a meeting between Generals Montgomery and Bradley on the morning of 9 Jun. General Bradley writes of this meeting:

Monty had called a meeting that morning at the fishing village of Port-en-Bessin to coordinate First Army movements with those of the British Second Army. Dempsey had plotted an attack south of the unspoiled town of Bayeux, partly to extend his beachhead and partly to envelop Caen from the west.

.....

The Panzer divisions were dug in before Caen and Dempsey sought to outflank them in his attack from Bayeux. We were to parallel this British attack and drive south in the direction of Caumont. There Gerow was to establish a strong defensive outpost for V Corps.

(Bradley, op cit, pp 282-83)

536. By 9 Jun V Corps had an additional division under its command. This was 2 Inf Div which had started to land on 7 Jun and which became operational on 9 Jun. With a 5000 yard front north of Trévières, and thus in the center of the corps front, it was given the main corps objective -- seizing the Forêt de Cérisy. 1 Inf Div, flanking 50 (N) Div, flanking 50 (N) Div, was to put its attack in on the left and was to seize the high ground between Agy and Vaubadon on the Bayeux-St. Lô Road. 29 Inf Div was to gain the north bank of the Elle River from La Communette west to the Vire. A portion of its forces would also operate west of the Vire to establish contact with VII Corps. (Harrison, op cit, pp 366 ff).

537. “Enemy resistance broke first on either flank of the attack and then disintegrated all through the corps zone” (Ibid, p.367). By the evening of 10 Jun, 29 Inf Div was in tenuous contact with VII Corps west of the Vire and had also reached the north shore of the Elle. In the center, the newly landed 2 Inf Div had a more difficult time “because it hit the center of the 352d Division, which despite the collapse of both wings continued to hold out during 9 Jun in strong defenses about Trévières...” (Ibid, p. 368). By midnight 9 Jun the town was occupied, the enemy commander having been ordered to withdraw to form a new defensive line along the Elle River some six miles to the south. This withdrawal “allowed the 2d Division on 10 June to march to its objectives west and south of the Forêt de Cérisy” (Ibid, p. 369). It was this lack of resistance that influenced General Dempsey to have 7 Armd Div disengage itself from Tilly and move on Villers-Bocage along an axis closer to the American advance (Supra, para 525).

538. Both 1 and 2 Inf Divs spent 11 Jun “virtually out of contact with the enemy, reorganizing the ground won and preparing for a new attack” (Ibid). The situation which had developed was as follows:

The 1st and 2d Divisions on 10 and 11 June were in fact facing a gaping hole in the German lines more than ten miles broad from Berigny due east to Longraye where the Panzer Lehr Division was attacking. This hole grew directly out of the D Day collapse of the left wing of the 716<sup>th</sup> Division followed by the capture of Bayeux and the smashing of the 352d left flank. The ten-mile-wide corridor opened the way through Caumont to the high wooded terrain in the vicinity of the Bois du Homme and le Bén-y-Bocage. Occupation of that high ground would have placed V Corps in a deep southern wedge in Seventh Army lines which the Germans feared could be gradually reinforced and then exploited either to outflank Caen or move decisively to drive westward toward Avranches.

(Ibid, pp. 370-71)

539. The only force available to the enemy to plug the gap was the reconnaissance battalion of 17 SS Pz Gren Div, and it was this unit which ‘literally held’ the Caumont gap during 10 Jun. (Ibid, p. 372) “Plans were made that day to bring the XLVII Panzer

Corps (General Funck) into the gap with the 2d Panzer Division...” (Ibid, p. 373). V Corps troops, meanwhile, had contacted the reconnaissance battalion of 17 SS Pz Gren Div and had been led to believe that it might represent the leading elements of an armoured counter-attack which had been expected since D Day. This belief was soon dispelled and the attack went on. After the rest and reorganization of the corps on 11 Jun:

... V Corps mounted a new attack, this time with the deepest southward penetration planned on the left flank of the 1st Division zone. This was designed primarily to assist the British Second Army attempt to outflank Caen,

(Ibid, p. 374)

1 Inf Div’s advance to the high ground at Caumont would protect the right flank of 7 Armd Div’s advance on Villers down the valley of the Aure (Supra, paras 525 ff). Conforming to 1 Inf Div’s drive to Caumont, 2 and 29 Inf Divs were to continue to push southwest. It was hoped also that V Corps advance would relieve pressure on VII Corps, “which was making the main army effort aimed at the capture of Chergourg” (Ibid, p. 374).

540. The attack on Caumont, starting on 12 Jun, made good progress. By the evening of the same day 1 Inf Divs was on the outskirts of Caumont, astride the Caumont-St. Lô highway. By the following morning the town was cleared. In view of the strong enemy opposition to the British advance, 1 Inf Div was ordered to hold at Caumont while 2 and 29 Inf Divs pushed further south against the enemy in front of St. Lô. These divisions, however, made little headway against stubborn resistance by the enemy’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Division and the remnants of the 353nd Infantry Division. On 13 Jun, therefore,

... the V Corps attack toward St. Lô was halted by order of General Bradley. The Carentain-Isigny link between his two corps was still thin and weak, and despite success in beating off the attack of 17<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer Grenadier Division, it still seemed possible that the enemy might try again. Furthermore, XIX Corps was just becoming operational in this area and it was necessary to adjust troop assignments between the corps.

.....

In calling off the southward push, General Bradley was also influenced by the desire to avoid a general engagement of V Corps which might absorb resources needed for First Army’s main effort -- the VII Corps attack to cut the peninsula and take Cherbourg. Finally, since the British seemed to be stopped north of Tilly-sur-Seulles, any advance by V Corps would expose both flanks to possible enemy armoured attack.

(Ibid, pp 376-77)

541. (ii) VII Corps. The fighting in the VII Corps area, as with the other Allied corps “aimed first at clearing the beachhead already staked out and second at pushing on toward D-Day objectives” (Harrison, op cit, p. 341). On 7 Jun 4 Inf Div managed to drive the enemy back some two miles to the north. In the center of the corps, “the day was occupied chiefly with eliminating the strong enemy forces south of Ste. Mère-Eglise who on D Day had prevented firm junction between the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the south and the 82d Airborne Division” (Ibid, p. 342). An enemy armoured attack on Ste. Mère-Eglise was beaten back, and at the end of 8 Jun “the enemy had retired west of the Merderet River ...” (First United States Army Report ..., op cit, p. 48). 82 A/B Div was unable to complete its D Day task of establishing a bridgehead over the Merderet. Indeed, “during the morning of 7 Jun it was touch and go whether a determined enemy counterattack might not break the division’s hold on the east bank of the river” (Harrison, op cit, p. 345).

542. The task of capturing Carentan, the first step in joining UTAH with OMAHA beachheads, was given to 101 A/B Div. This proved to be a far more difficult operation than 29 Inf Div’s capture of Isigny. Stubborn resistance by an enemy who realized the strategic value of the town, together with geographical factors which favoured its defence, resulted in Carentan holding out until the early morning hours of 12 Jun. For the final assault, 101 A/B Div had to be reinforced by other units from 29 Inf Div of V Corps, (with whom contact had been made by 10 Jun) operating in the eastern sector of the six-mile area between Isigny and Carentan. The enemy had scarcely been forced out of Carentan when he tried to regain the town by attacking it with 17 SS Pz Gren Div. This attack, coming in on 13 Jun, forced the Americans back to within 500 yards of the town before it was repulsed and the positions regained. By this time also:

... V and VII Corps were securely joined, although the strip between them still lacked depth for adequate communications and defence. First Army, however, now had resources to deepen it and on 13 Jun the mission was assigned to XIX Corps, which became operational the next day.

(Ibid, p. 365)

543. After the lodgement area was cleared, VII Corps “organized a full-scale attack to the north” (Ibid, p. 386). This attack was launched mainly by 4 Inf Div along the wide corridor between the sea and the Merderet. Slow but steady progress was made, with resistance stiffening as the troops reached the enemy’s main defensive line which stretched “north along the railroad from le Ham to Montebourg and thence northeast following the main highway to Quinéville” (Ibid, p. 387). This line held the enemy’s “last prepared defensive positions south of the Cherbourg Landfront (landward fortifications of th port)” (Ibid, p. 388). By 14 Jun, after four days of hard fighting, 4 Inf Div had cleared the enemy from the corridor up to this main defensive line, but it was temporarily unable to advance beyond it.

544. Meanwhile,

On the VII Corps west flank on the Merderet River a similar delay of about a week in reaching D-Day objectives was caused principally by the original accidents that befell the airborne drops and by terrain difficulties in subsequent attempts to force the river crossing.

(Ibid, p. 396)

Hard fighting during 7 Jun by troops determined to gain a bridgehead across the Merderet was ultimately successful, and by 8 Jun the bridgehead was consolidated. "With all units west of the Merderet at last brought within a single bridgehead, the crossing was ready for exploitation in the first step of the major corps effort to cut westward across the peninsula" (Ibid, p. 401). This mission was given to 90 Inf Div, which had commenced landing on D Day. The attack, launched early on the morning of 10 Jun, went badly from the start, and it was not until 13 Jun that the division "struggled to its initial objectives roughly on a line from Gourbesville to Pont l'Abbé" (Ibid, p. 402). The poor showing of 90 Inf Div resulted in the divisional commander and two of his regimental commanders being relieved of their command.

545. The Corps Commander then decided to reorganize his attack scheme. 9 Inf Div and 82 A/B Div were ordered to pass through 90 Inf Div and seal off the peninsula. This attack began on 14 Jun, the day when 4 Inf Div, attacking north was forced to a halt. On 15 Jun, therefore, the Corps Commander ordered that "the main effort of the corps ...would be to cut the peninsula" (Ibid, p. 406). The attack to close the enemy's corridor on the western side of the peninsula went well.

By the end of 16 June, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 82d Division together had broken the last enemy defences east of the Douve in their zones and had given impetus to what looked like a precipitate German withdrawal that might be followed rapidly to the sea. As a matter of fact, the way was open, and the withdrawal was actually the retreat of disorganized remnants; the 91<sup>st</sup> Division had been smashed beyond repair.

(Ibid, p. 408)

By 18 Jun, the last enemy road leading from the Cherbourg peninsula was in American hands and the advance to secure the port of Cherbourg itself again became the main corps objective.

H. Air Force

546. The strength of Allied air power which was launched in support of the ground forces during D Day continued to protect and further the "NEPTUNE" operations during the first week of the first week of the assault. In the opinion of Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, the most important contribution which the air forces could make once the armies

had joined in battle was to continue the work of dislocating the enemy's transportation system and so "... to impose the maximum delay and to inflict the heaviest casualties on the flow of reinforcements and supplies to the enemy armies" (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 61). On D plus 1, Leigh-Mallory drew a line around the tactical area,

... beyond which enemy movement by rail to the battle zone could not proceed. R.A.F. Bomber Command attacked Rennes, Alençon, Fougères, Mayenne and Pontaubault and followed up with attacks on the next two nights, on Dreux, Evreux and Achères. Within the boundary of the tactical area thus drawn, A.E.A.F. fighter bombers caused such destruction that after three days, all railway and major road movement by day had been virtually halted.

(Ibid. See also Appx "O" to this Report)

Outside the tactical area fighters of the United States VIII Air Force hammered away at enemy rail and road transport, while at night, inside the tactical area, specially trained R.A.F. crews harassed enemy movement.

547. On 12 Jun Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory,

... re-drew the boundary of the tactical area as follows - along the Seine to Vernon, thence to Dreux, Chartres, Le Mans, Laval and St. Nazaire. Within that area the tactical air forces policed all roads and railways. Outside that area the United States Eighth Air Force was busy attacking the Loire bridges to prevent any reinforcements from the south....

(Ibid)

548. The weather during June, which severely hampered air operations in general<sup>123</sup> had less effect on R.A.F. Bomber Command operations.

On every one of the seven nights after D Day Bomber Command was able to operate, mostly against roads and railways of immediate tactical importance, and, with D Day Bomber Command was able to operate, mostly against roads and railways of immediate tactical importance, and, with the American heavy bombers largely inactive because of the unfavourable weather, this was of critical importance for the success of the invasion. Besides bombing railways, we were able to block essential road junctions by blowing up buildings round them and choking the crossroad with debris...; we were now able to keep the German reserves out of the battlefield during a most critical period by a whole series of heavy and extremely accurate attacks.

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<sup>123</sup> "For a whole fortnight after 6<sup>th</sup> June the weather was most unfavourable for air attack either by day or by night, with 6/10<sup>th</sup> to 10/10<sup>th</sup> cloud prevailing, and often hanging low, and it was a remarkable achievement that Bomber Command should have been able to operate in support of the invasion as it did..." (W.J. Lawrence, No. 5 Bomber Group, R.A.F., 1939-1945 (London, 1951), p. 193).

(Harris, op cit, p. 209)

549. Aside from the many and diverse operations in which the air forces were engaged -- such as reconnaissance, protecting the main naval approaches, giving direct support to the ground forces, acting as aerial observation posts, bringing in and escorting troop carriers, supplying the airborne forces, and so forth -- great attention was paid to air cover for the beachhead.

Commencing at 0430 hours on D Day and continued throughout the daylight hours during the assault period, a continuous fighter cover was maintained at nine squadrons strength over the whole assault area.

.....

The scale of effort described above was maintained, whenever weather permitted, until 13<sup>th</sup> June, when the force involved was reduced to three low cover and two high cover squadrons. All these squadrons operated from England.

.....

The strength of squadrons based on the continent was gradually built up in the first fourteen days of the operation; eight Spitfire, three Typhoon and three Auster squadrons moved in to, and were operating from, beachhead airfields<sup>124</sup> by the end of this period.

During the following week, United States forces began moving in and nine Thunderbolt and three Mustang squadrons arrived. A further British contingent of one Spitfire, three Typhoon and one Auster squadrons arrived to make a total of thirty-one Allied squadrons operating from beach-head airfields three weeks after D Day.

(Leigh-Mallory, op cit, pp 69-71)

550. The reduction of the Allied air effort over the beachhead area was a result of the unexpectedly weak enemy's need to protect the Reich, to the destruction of his airfield facilities, to his lack of fuel and lubricants and to the difficulty he experience in replacing consumed stocks. (Ibid, p. 71; see also supra, para 310) Although greatly weakened, the German Air Force was by no means impotent.

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<sup>124</sup> "The first British squadrons to land in France since 1940 were Nos. 130 and 303 which put down at 1200 hours on D plus 4 on a strip on "Gold" area. They were quickly followed by No. 144 (R.C.A.F.) Fighter Wing, consisting of Nos. 441, 442, and 443 squadrons, which at 1637 hours that same day, were airborne for a sweep" (Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 71). For a detailed description of the planning, location, construction, etc., of landing grounds in the Normandy campaign see (HS) 693.3013 (D1): Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour, Normandy to the Seine (B.A.O.R., 1946), Chapter VII, "The Construction of the First Landing Grounds in France."

Throughout June, the [enemy] squadrons which showed the most aggressiveness were bomber units which operated by night, principally on sea mining in shipping lanes but also on bombing operations against shipping in the approach lanes and against the beaches. The fighter units operated mainly in a defensive role against Allied bomber attacks....

(Ibid, pp 71-72)

551. Mention has already been made of the air attacks against enemy submarines on D Day (supra, paras 316-317). Once the Allies had landed in Normandy, the U-Boats in the Bay of Biscay made every effort to reach the Channel and cut the Allies' waterborne line of communications and supply. R.A.F. Coastal Command, supported by aircraft from A.E.A.F., had anticipated the enemy's reaction.

The air patrols which had been planned to counter this move were already being flown and successes soon materialized. Off the Brest Peninsula and in the mouth of the Channel, thirty-six U-Boats were sighted by Coastal Command in the first four days of the assault and twenty-three were attacked. Six were destroyed and four seriously damaged. Sixteen of the attacks were at night.

.....

In almost every case the enemy fought back desperately with his anti-aircraft armament, for in those four days the U-Boats were in too much of a hurry to be able to proceed submerged. They inflicted a high proportion of casualties on our attacking aircraft, but very few got through. Prisoners of war from the U-Boats have told us that the penetration of the Channel was a nightmare.

After D plus 4 the enemy was forced to change his tactics. During their sojourn in the Bay ports almost all the UBoats had been fitted with the exhaustible air intake (Schnorkel), and from the fourth day of the assault until the end of June sighting mainly consisted of periscopes and 'Schnorkels' of U-Boats trying to get through by remaining submerged continuously ...

Between D plus 4 and the end of June forty-seven sightings of U-Boats were made by Coastal Command in southern waters and twenty-four were attacked. During this period at least one more U-Boat was sunk by aircraft and two kills were shared with ships of the Royal Navy, who were taking an ever increasing part in the policing of the Channel and its approaches. In addition, aircraft damaged another four U-Boats and shared with the Navy in damaging a fifth.

(Sholto Douglas, op cit, pp 5127-28)

552. While these anti-submarine operations were underway, air attacks:



... against enemy surface vessels, including naval vessels, were made by aircraft of A.E.A.F. and by R.A.F. Coastal Command. The first of these actions took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> June, when the enemy endeavoured to bring into action three heavy destroyers from the west coast of France. These ships were attacked west of Brest by R.A.F. Coastal Command. Some damage was caused, one was set on fire and the ships were delayed. On 6<sup>th</sup> June, they again attempted to move, but were met by Allied destroyers. One was sunk, one driven ashore and the third forced back to Brest.

(Leigh-Mallory, op cit, p. 77)

Smaller enemy surface vessels also received attention from the air.

One the night of 7<sup>th</sup> June, Beaufighters and Albacores attacked a formation of E-boats in the Channel; two E-boats were sunk and a further three damaged.

(Ibid)

#### H. Navy

553. The first week of the assault was a busy one for the Allied naval forces.<sup>125</sup> Upon their shoulders, rested the responsibility of nourishing the armies ashore while ensuring the stream of men and material essential for the 'build-up' remained uninterrupted. Thus during this period.

... Task Force, Assault Force and Assault Group Commanders were fully occupied in combating the various forms of attack which the enemy tried to bring against the assault area, whilst at the same time developing their organizations, first afloat and later ashore, in order to speed up the unloading and turn round of shipping and craft.

(Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief ..., op cit, p. 14)

554. Possibly the most aggravating type of attack on the naval forces was enemy bombers laying mines, attacks were "almost impossible to prevent", and added further burden to the hard-working mine-sweepers engaged in widening the original ten lanes swept on D Day.<sup>126</sup> (Ibid). On the whole, attacks by enemy surface vessels were easier to cope with.

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<sup>125</sup> The United States' contribution to the Allied naval forces engaged in "NEPTUNE" operations was "about 124,000 United States naval officers and men..." (Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945 (Washington, 1946), p. 137). "By 1 June, when the loading of troops began, 2,493 United States Navy ships and craft had been assembled for the operation, and of these only 14 were unable to take part because of material difficulties" (Ibid).

<sup>126</sup> "The sweeping of the ten approach channels was the largest single minesweeping operation ever undertaken in war; 309 British, 16 Canadian, and 22 United States minesweepers took part" (Mr. A.V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, The Times, (London), 8 Mar 45).

During the night of 6<sup>th</sup>/7 June, enemy R-Boats came out from Havre and E-Boats from Cherbourg. Both were intercepted by our coastal forces and the enemy was forced to retire after suffering damage. Similar sorties were made almost nightly from Havre and Cherbourg during the next few weeks but the measures taken by Task Force Commanders nearly always prevented the enemy from penetrating the protecting screen.

(Ibid, p. 13)

555. It was not until D plus 3 that heavier enemy surface units attempted to strike at “NEPTUNE” operations. Early in the morning of 9 Jun an Allied destroyer force, (which included two Canadian destroyers<sup>127</sup> - H.M.C.S. Huron and Haida),

... consisting of eight destroyers operating under the orders of Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth, made contact with four enemy destroyers 20 miles north-west of the Iles de Bras. A spirited action followed, which resulted in two of the enemy being destroyed and the other two being damaged. This action virtually ended the threat to ‘NEPTUNE’ conveyed from attack by enemy destroyers.

(Ibid, p. 14)

556. While ships and craft guarding the approaches of the Allied ‘bridge to France’ were combating enemy surface and submarine attempts to penetrate their protective screen, naval forces continued to give supporting fire to the army.

From D Day onwards Battleships, Monitors, Cruisers, Destroyers and L.C.G. (L) engaged enemy targets ashore until our armies had advanced beyond the range of their guns. Ships and craft on both flanks engaged coast defence batteries when these fired on our shipping or at the beaches.

(Ibid)

On the British sector, after D plus three

... Forces “J” and “G” required only one cruiser each to answer the few calls for fire; the remainder of the bombarding ships were accordingly disposed to cover the SWORD beaches and to support 1<sup>st</sup> Corps’ operations between the sea and Caen.

(Report by Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force, op cit, p. 12)

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<sup>127</sup> For a graphic account of this action and the part played by Canadian destroyers see Schull, op cit, pp 286-95.

557. The build-up of the army began almost immediately after the assault forces and their equipment had been put shore. Eight ship convoys were due to arrive on D plus 1 in the assault area. "The convoys all arrived on time but unloading was severely restricted due to the unfavourable weather..." (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., p. 12). However,

From p.m. D plus 1 until D plus 8 better weather enabled the rate of build-up to be progressed, despite some shortage of ferry craft due to casualties from the first two days. Convoys sailed from the U.K. and arrived in France on time. As had been anticipated, some difficulties naturally arose initially in the assault area with regard to the great volume of shipping that had to be unloaded and sailed back to England. This resulted in a slower turn round than had been planned, and for a period there was some shortage of ships to be reloaded in the U.K.

(Ibid, p. 13)

Some idea of the scale of sea traffic to and from the "NEPTUNE" area may be gathered when one realizes that during the first week of the assault, on an average day the following number of ships and craft arrived off the assault coast:

25 'Liberty' ships, 38 Coasters, 40 L.S.T., 75 L.C.T., 9 Personnel ships, 30 L.C.I.(L). The identification, unloading, marshalling and sailing of such a volume of shipping off an open coast was a gigantic problem...

(Ibid, Appx 9)

Further information regarding the build-up is given below.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE BUILD-UP

558. The whole structure of the campaign during June 1944 rests on two opposing factors -- the Allied build-up and the German reinforcement of troops containing the bridgehead.

### A. The Allied Build-up

559. The Allied build-up, which commenced on D Day, gained momentum daily as an ever-increasing amount of men and equipment flowed across the Channel to the Normandy beaches. As we have seen, it was correctly anticipated by the Allied commanders that the enemy would do everything in his power to deny us the use of any ports (Supra, para 172). To alleviate the lack of port facilities, therefore, the Allied planners had conceived and put into operation a plan for bringing prefabricated harbours to the beaches (Supra, paras 49-50). A.H.Q. Report No. 42 sketches the planning period of the now-famous "Mulberry" harbours and the construction of their component parts in the United Kingdom prior to D Day. Here it will be sufficient to describe briefly their construction and operation in France in relation to the build-up.

560. The tremendous amount of material, labour and time needed for the organization, construction and assembly of the "Mulberries" in the United Kingdom meant, in effect, that the fabrication of their component parts had to be well underway many months before D Day. Originally, the "Mulberries" were designed to serve the invasion of Normandy as envisioned by General Morgan, and when COSSAC's plans were strengthened from a three-to a five-division seaborne assault on a broader front, it was too late to increase the scope and capacity of the two "Mulberries". (Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, p. 3) Nevertheless, "the enlarged scope of the assault and build-up involved a material increase in the number of minor craft to be employed and the MULBERRIES by themselves would not be able to shelter them all" (Ibid). It was decided, therefore, to provide small-craft shelters, called "Gooseberries", one for each assault beach. Each "Gooseberries", one for each assault beach. Each "Gooseberry" would "provide protection from the weather ... [and] give facilities for landing craft to be serviced and repaired and for their crews to get meals and rest" (Rear-Admiral H. Hickling, "The Prefabricated Harbour", R.U.S.I. Journal, August 1945, p. 272).

561. Basically, the main difference between a "Mulberry" and a "Gooseberry" was that the former had a larger and stronger breakwater and was provided with "Whale" piers. These latter were either "Stores" or "L.S.T." piers, and each consisted in the main of two principal elements, the pierheads and the floating pier roadway connecting the pierhead to the shore. The breakwaters were fashioned from blockships (codenamed "Corncocks"); "Bombardons", 200-foot floating steel breakwaters (a mile long when positioned outside the harbours); and "Phoenixes", huge concrete ships which formed the outer breakwater and the side arms of the harbour. "Mulberry 'B'", which served the British Second Army at Arromanches, used and improved the blockship breakwater of the "Gold" Beach "Gooseberry" located in the same position.

562. Prior to D Day all the components of the harbour were organized and assembled in suitable anchorages on the south coast of England as convenient as possible to the Normandy coast.

This involved a total of over 600 tows from all round the coast of Great Britain; 200 tugs were fully occupied for three months and... the job was only just completed in time to enable the tugs to be serviced and ready to take on the second job of the cross-Channel tows.

(Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, p. 24)

563. The towing of the “Phoenixes”, “Bombardons”, and other parts of the harbours, across the Channel was accomplished with greater speed and fewer craft casualties than had been expected. (Ibid, p. 27) In the Canadian sector, the first “Corncob” blockships arrived in the early afternoon of D plus 1 as the first step in constructing “Gooseberry No. 4”, at Courseulles. (Report of Naval Commander, Force “J” The following day construction of the “Gooseberry” began<sup>128</sup> and was completed on D plus 4, “all ships being very neatly planted as planned” (Ibid, p. 15). All “Gooseberries” were completed by D plus 5. Moreover,

By D Plus 8, the Bombardon had been finished and was giving very good results with a wave suppression of about 40 per cent. By D plus 10 the Mulberry breakwaters were about half completed and the Whale Piers about one-third.

(Hickling, op cit, p. 281)

In the meantime, the flow of men and material across the Channel continued unabated.

564. While the “Gooseberries” and “Mulberries” were being constructed, men, vehicles and stores were being unloaded on the open beaches. As early as 1800 hrs, 8 Jun, 21,400 marching personnel, 3,200 loaded vehicles and 2,500 tons of bulk stores had been discharged on “Juno” Beach. (Report of Naval Commander, Force “J”) The beaching of Stores Coasters and L.S.T. greatly aided the rate of discharge and permitted more economical use of smaller craft used for transferring material to the beach. By 13 Jun, when the “Gooseberry” shelter had been in operation for three days, a total of 56,773 marching personnel, 14,589 loaded vehicles and 19,710 tons of bulk stores had been moved over the “Juno” beaches alone. (Ibid)

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<sup>128</sup> On this day (8 Jun) also, “the port of Courseulles was opened to traffic and proved most suitable for working L.B.V. [Landing Barge, Vehicle] and minor landing craft except for two hours either side of low water” (Report of Naval Commander, Force “J”, p. 13). The Commander goes on to say: “It was not long before Courseulles was handling 1,000 tons of stores per day...” (Ibid). the “Juno” anchorage was further improved by the construction of Naval Landing Pontoons. On 9 Jun a 700-foot length of these pontoons was built out near the entrance to Courseulles harbour, and two more such lengths were constructed on the following day. These were used for discharging L.C.T. and for landing troops “dry-shod”.

565. Discharge of cargo “commenced at MULBERRY B on D plus 7 and exceeded 2,000 tons per day by D plus 10...”<sup>129</sup> (Hickling and Mackillop, *op cit*, p. 27). “Mulberry ‘B’” was not yet complete, however. All the “Phoenixes” had not been ‘planned’, nor were the pierheads and roadways assembled to enable vehicles to be accepted from L.S.T. in the harbour. Before the final touches could be made, a critical situation arose which was to test fully the worth of both “Mulberries” and “Gooseberries”. Admiral Ramsay describes it as follows:

On 19 Jun a north-easterly gale, unexpected and unforecast, began and at once stopped all unloading to the beaches. Conditions deteriorated rapidly and a large number of landing craft was soon in difficulties. Steps were taken to stop the sailing of further build-up convoys, but some of those already at sea had to continue, to prevent congestion in U.K. anchorages. Additional tugs were dispatched to the Far Shore to assist ships and craft in difficulty until the weather moderated. Casualties were suffered by MULBERRY tows that were already at sea and all further sailings of these had also to be stopped. By 20<sup>th</sup> June a large number of ferry craft had been stranded by the onshore wind and had received serious damage. All the unloading was on this day suspended, although a quantity of stores had been discharged the two previous days in the shelter of MULBERRY B.... To meet this situation it was decided to dry out, regardless of risk of damage, a number of stores coasters and all L.S.T. awaiting discharge. It had previously been considered that L.S.T. should not dry out except in an emergency, but the operation was so successful when attempted on a large scale that thereafter this became the normal method of discharge. Coasters were also beached successfully and only a few of these ships suffered damage. By the 21<sup>st</sup> June it was apparent that the continued high seas were seriously damaging the MULBERRIES. The BOMBARDONS protecting both harbours broke adrift and sank and generally proved useless to withstand weather with force 6 and above. The damage to blockships and the PHOENIX breakwaters was far more severe at MULBERRY A (ST. LAURENT) than at ARROMANCHES. GOOSEBERRY I [serving “Gold Beach” at Ouistreham] also lost all protective value.<sup>130</sup>

(Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, *op cit*, p. 16)

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<sup>129</sup> Mulberry ‘B’” was designed to supply 7,000 tons of stores a day irrespective of weather. In addition, the harbour was to handle 1,200 vehicles a day. (Hickling and Mackillop, *op cit*, pp 1-2)

<sup>130</sup> The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. A.V. Alexander, stated that “June 1944, was the worst June of the present century” (Mr. A.V. Alexander presenting the Naval Estimates for 1945, The Times, 8 Mar 45). Of the storm, Admiral Hickling states: “It blew... such a summer gale from the North as had not been known in eighty years; it was a gale which was comparable only to that which in 1588 dispersed the Spanish Armada, and had we not had the Gooseberries and the half-completed Mulberries I think the Allied Armada would have shared the same fate as the Spanish...” (Hickling, *op cit*, p. 281)

566. The damage to “Mulberry ‘A’” in the American sector was indeed severe.<sup>131</sup> Admiral King, U.S.N., describes it as follows:

When the storm ended on the morning of 22 June, the beach was a shambles. More than 300 craft had been washed up high and dry, many of them damaged beyond salvage. The only ferry craft undamaged were the DUKW’s, which had remained safely parked ashore during the storm.

The blockships of the “Gooseberry” shelter had held together, although several of them had broken their backs and all had settled, but the storm had been disastrous to the “Mulberry”. The concrete caissons had either broken apart or had become submerged in the bottom sands. The roadway to one of the Loebnitz pierheads had been smashed by the impact of LCT’s driven against it, and many of its pontoons were flooded. The causeway had held together but was twisted. Many of the steel caissons had carried away from their moorings and had drifted about as a menace to shipping. Others were flooded and half submerged.

(Admiral King, op cit, p. 141)

567. On the whole “NEPTUNE” area, an army estimate suggested “that from 19<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> June inclusive the unloading loss due to the gale was in the neighbourhood of 20,000 vehicles and 140,000 tons of stores” (Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief..., op cit, p. 16). “From the naval point of view, the most serious result of the gale was the stranding of about 800 craft of all types...” (Ibid). The build-up had been dealt a severe -- but by no means a decisive -- blow. Fortunately, on land, as we shall see, the armies were firmly established and aggressive. The enemy, who had no idea the Allies would bring their own harbours and shelters with them, were unable to take advantage of a time when these were unable to take advantage of a time when these were rendered almost useless by the storm. Allied air activity had seen to that.

568. After the gale recovery was rapid.

All hands set to work to clear up the mess and to recommence the discharge of stores and vehicles; four days after the storm, the daily overall discharge had risen to 40,000 tons of cargo and the backlog of MT ships -- there were 55 on the British sector alone -- had been cleared in addition to subsequent current sailings.

(Hickling and Mackillop, op cit, p. 29)

The “Mulberries”, however, had been badly battered, especially “Mulberry ‘A’”. “The British harbour though breached, had managed to survive and discharge in the harbour never actually ceased; even on the worst day of the storm some 800 tons of sorely needed

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<sup>131</sup> For the full story of “Mulberry ‘A’”, see Commander Alfred Stanford, Force Mulberry (New York, 1951).

ammunition was landed (Ibid). After a survey was made of the damage on the American beaches, it was decided

... to write off MULBERRY A as a harbour and to concentrate all the remaining equipment, including that which could be salvaged, on MULBERRY B; it was, however, decided to restore the GOOSEBERRY at MULBERRY A and to make it into an enlarged craft shelter by double banking the blockships with suitable PHOENIX equipment.

(Ibid, p. 30)

569. By the end of June, the grand total of ship and craft arrivals in France was as follows:

570 'Liberty' ships  
180 Personnel ships  
788 Coasters  
905 L.S.T.  
1,442 L.C.T.  
372 L.C.I. (N).

(Report by the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief...., op cit, Appx 9)

Daily rates of discharge of personnel, vehicles and stores over the three British beaches is given in the Report by the Naval Commander, Eastern Task Force, p. 14.

570. Admiral Ramsay's conclusions on the success of the build-up may be quoted:

... so far as I know, the position of the Expeditionary Force was never in doubt from D plus 2 onwards. The naval view had always been that the build-up plan should be an optimum plan at which was should aim but that its attainment was most improbable....

(Ibid, p. 18)

This opinion coming from one of the joint Commander-in-Chief, is a most important one. It was meant to refute the claim that the Royal had not achieved the fullest possible results in the build-up.

## B. THE ENEMY BUILD-UP

571. In his "Estimation of the situation on 11 June 1944, Field Marshal Rommel wrote:

The course of the fighting in Normandy so far clearly shows that the objectives of the enemy are:



- (1) To establish a deep bridgehead between the Orne and the Vire as a base for a later attack with strong forces into central France....
- (2) To cut off the Cotentin peninsula and to take Cherbourg as quickly as possible, in order to gain a large and serviceable harbour.

((HS) 981.013 (D46): German Situation Reports in Normandy, May-October 1944)

Rommel went on to say that stubborn resistance by German coastal forces had slowed the course of Allied operations, despite the fact that the Anglo-Americans were employing the “most powerful means of warfare” (Ibid). He continued:

The enemy is visibly reinforcing on land, under cover of very strong aircraft formations. The Luftwaffe and our navy are not in a position to offer him appreciable opposition, especially by day. Thus the strength of the enemy on land is increasing more quickly than our reserves can reach the front.

.....

The Army Group must content itself for the present with forming a cohesive front between the Orne and the Vire with the forces which are gradually coming up, and allowing the enemy to advance. In these circumstances it is unfortunately not possible to relieve troops still resisting in many coastal positions. The Army Group is trying to replace the panzer formations in action with infantry divisions as soon as possible, and to form mobile reserves with them.

In the next few days the Army Group intends to remove the center of its operations to the Carentan-Montebourg area, in order to annihilate the enemy there and to divert the danger threatening Cherbourg. Only when this has been successfully accomplished can the enemy between the Orne and the Vire be attacked. Unfortunately, this operation can no longer be supported by our fighter formations, as there are no longer any airfields near the front at our disposal.<sup>132</sup>

(Ibid)

Field Marshal Rommel was careful to point out that his Army Group’s operations would be rendered “exceptionally difficult, and even partially impossible” by the following conditions:

- a. The extraordinarily strong, and in some respects overwhelming superiority of the enemy Air Forces.

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<sup>132</sup> Compare material equipment of the Anglo-Americans with numerous new weapons and war material is far superior to the equipment of our [German] divisions.

- .....
- b. The effect of heavy naval artillery.

- .....
- c. The material equipment of the Anglo-Americans with numerous new weapons and war material is far superior to the equipment of our [German] divisions.

(Ibid, p. 16)

Another condition lay in the possible further use by the Allies of large numbers of parachutists which might change the situation again.

572. Rommel had every reason to be apprehensive over the German build-up as compared with the Allies increasing strength in the bridgehead. As we have seen, by 12 Jun, enemy armoured divisions rushed to the Normandy front to hurl the Allies back into the sea not only failed in their mission but became inextricably engaged in the Normandy battle. During the first week of the assault, other German divisions and battle-groups were ordered to the Normandy front from their stations in Brittany and then from the south of France. On 12 Jun O.B. West was informed tha 2 SS Pz Corps would be brought from the Russian front and placed at his disposal. On the same day, 1 SS Pz Corps was promised 1 SS Pz Div, then stationed in Belgium, “in the near future” (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, paras 53 ff).

573. No attempting was made at this time, however, to employ any of the numerous infantry field or coastal static divisions north of the Seine defending the strongest section of the Atlantic Wall. The main reason for leaving Fifteenth Army’s dispositions relatively undisturbed

...was the conviction of the highest commanders that a major blow, if not the main blow was about to be delivered further north, most likely at the Belgian coast. This ... is fully revealed by many entries in the War Diary of Fifteenth Army. Only fleeting thought was given to transfers from AOK 15 to AOK 7.

(Ibid, para 54)

It is no exaggeration to say that the enemy’s build-up in Normandy was governed by the failure of his own Intelligence and the success of “FORTITUDE”, the Allied deception plan (Supra, paras 51-63). As we have seen, long before the Normandy assault had been launched, it had been planned to deceive the Germans into believing that “NEPTUNE” was a preliminary and diversionary operation, designed to draw German reserves away from the Pas de Calais and Belgium. Once this had been accomplished, so the ‘story’ went, the Allied would launch their main attack through the Pas de Calais. It was this

story, therefore, which the enemy had completely accepted -- to an extent far greater than the Allied commanders had imagined or hoped.

574. Rommel's need for infantry divisions to allow him to disengage his panzer divisions later drew the following comment from General Eisenhower:

Lack of infantry was the most important cause of the enemy's defeat in Normandy, and his failure to remedy this weakness was due primarily to the success of the Allies threat levelled against the Pas de Calais.

.....

(German Situation Reports in Normandy, op cit, "Estimation of the situation, 12/19 June, 1944).

575. The conviction that the Allies would attack the Pas de Calais is shown again in Rommel's "Estimation of the situation" for the week 12/19 Jun. In this appreciation Rommel noted that the Allies seemed to be concentrating in two particular areas preparatory to an attack into the French interior. These two areas were:

- a. between Tilly-sur-Seulles and Caumont; and
- b. on both sides of the main Bayeux-St. Lô Road to take possession of the St. Lô area.

A jump-off from either one of these bases, he believed, would come at the same time as the attack on Cherbourg. Rommel continued:

In front of the 15<sup>th</sup> Army sector the focal points of air attack appeared clearly again as the Channel front on both sides of Cap Gris Nez and on both sides of the Somme. According to enemy regrouping and strategic and technical opportunities, a large-scale enemy landing on the Channel front on both sides of Cap Gris Nez or between the Somme and Le Havre must be expected. The general offensive out of the Normandy bridgehead and a new large scale landing may be made simultaneously, both having the Paris area as objective.

(German Situation Reports in Normandy, op cit, "Estimation of the situation, 12/19 June 1944")

576. The Allied armoured thrust to Caumont and Villers-Bocage indicated to the enemy "Allied intentions to collapse the Caen front by means of encirclement" (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 91). Faced with this possibility, which might parallel a second invasion, Hitler "how realized the necessity of weakening in favour of Normandy all fronts but Fifteenth Army's" (Ibid). In a directive prepared on 14 Jun, and received two days later, O.B. West was informed:

- 88 Corps was to be moved in from First Army.
- Pz Divs now committed were to be relieved by infantry divisions.
- One division was to be made available by each of the following: Armd Forces Commander Netherlands, Fifteenth Army, Nineteenth Army.
- In exchange, Fifteenth Army was to receive 363 Inf Div from Denmark, and 87 Inf Div from Norway; Nineteenth Army was to receive 198 Inf Div and small units from the home area.

(Ibid)

Thus, incredible as it may seem, Fifteenth Army was to be reinforced with an additional infantry division, so creating a situation whereby there was almost double the number of enemy divisions deployed in the quiescent Fifteenth Army area as in the active Seventh Army area. This was indeed a triumph of Allied deception, and again serves to illustrate how the success of “FORTITUDE” played a decisive part in slowing the German build-up well beyond previous Allied estimates (Supra, para 173)

577. In the welter of post-war accusations and counter-accusations by the German field commanders in France, there occurs time and again a hard core of agreement concerning the destructive influence of Hitler’s constant interference in military tactics. Guided by his intuition, supremely confident of his own ability, and distrustful of his own military commanders, he insisted on keeping the tactical as well as the strategical reins in his own hands. This, quite naturally, placed his field commanders in the unenviable position of bearing the responsibility for a campaign without having the full control and management of their own forces. It restricted especially the field commander’s power to manoeuvre his forces as he saw fit, which in turn resulted in lessening both the defensive and offensive abilities of his command and so drained the strength of his divisions. This situation, existing during the battle of Normandy as it had in other theatres at other times, shows up clearly in the meeting between Hitler, von Rundstedt and Rommel on 17 Jun at Margival. Some of the highlights of this meeting have been summarized as follows:

...Hitler spoke bitterly of his displeasure at the success of the Allied landing, for which he tried to hold his field commanders responsible.

...Rommel frankly described the hopelessness of the struggle against such tremendous superiority in the air, at sea and on the land.

...Rommel declared the ‘fortresses’ to be a senseless waste of material and men; but he warned in vain.

...Rommel predicted Allied thrusts, one towards Paris, the other to cut off Brittany.

...Rommel demanded unrestricted freedom of action in the West, assignment of first class panzer forces, air cover and naval support. Field Marshal von Rundstedt supported his demand.

...Hitler could not see the truth of his estimate, he confined himself to a monologue on the decisive effects of the guided missiles then being taken into use.

...Jodl promised reinforcements; Hitler talked of 'masses of jet-fighters' to shatter Allied air supremacy.

...Rommel doubted whether the Russian front could be held. He concluded his critical examination of the situation with an urgent request that the war be brought to an end. Hitler cut Rommel off abruptly. The gulf between Hitler and Rommel had widened.

(Ibid, para 99)

The significance of this meeting manifests itself without need for further comment.

578. On 20 Jun, the boundary between the Seventh and Fifteenth Armies was moved eastward to the Seine when 86 Corps, ordered to come under command of Seventh Army on 16 Jun, assumed command of the area between the Seine and the Orne. 711 and 346 Inf Divs, already engaged in area, were placed under command of this corps. An additional two divisions -- 276 Inf Div from the southern Biscay coast and 16 G.A.F. Div from the Netherlands - had also been ordered to proceed to the corps area.

579. The enemy's rate of build-up, to which Allied commanders paid the closest attention, was well behind expectations. As early as 9 Jun there occurs in "21 Army Group Daily Intelligence Summary" the statement: "The enemy build-up is increasing but not at the breathless rate which had been anticipated..." ((HS) 215A21.023 (D7): Intelligence Summaries, 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group, 9 Jun 44). Two days later, the Intelligence summary noted that the enemy build-up was six divisions short of an expected 23 or 24 divisions. This, it was believed, was due to the enemy's fear of a second landing at the Pas de Calais, the damage done to the enemy's lines of communications, and the difficulty encountered by the enemy in moving his divisions to the "NEPTUNE" front. (Ibid, 11 Jun 44, Appx "A") Intelligence therefore made a new estimation which stated that "The more probable build-up by D plus 8 is now 6 Panzer - Panzer-Grandadier; 2 Para; 10 Infantry: 18 divisions" (Ibid). This estimate, however, was in fact greater than the number of divisions engaged in the Normandy battle or in close reserve on D plus 14. (See Seventh Army Situation Map-20 Jun 44) This was due not to the failure of the enemy to order divisions to reinforce Seventh Army, but to the inability of these divisions to reinforce Seventh Army, but to the battle area. The divisions not only experienced extreme difficulty in penetrating Leigh-Mallory's aerial "cordon sanitaire" (supra, paras 546-47) but were greatly hampered by the disruption to their lines of communication by the Allied Air Forces and the activities of the French Resistance. On 20 Jun 2 SS Pz Div was the

only one of the panzer - panzer-grenadier divisions in the battle area concentrated and positioned for an armoured counter-attack. The remainder, much to the chargin of their commanders, continued to be held down in an infantry role. Until they could be relieved by infantry divisions, the Allies had little to fear for the safety of their bridgehead.

580. By 20 Jun, the V-1 campaign had been under way for a week. This campaign, upon which Hitler pinned so much faith and his commanders so much hope, began on the night of 12/13 Jun when the first guided missiles were launched against England. As a result of the success of the "CROSSBOW" operations (supra, para 73) during the first months of 1944 against the known V-1 and rocket sites, the enemy began to construct a number of well-comouflaged, modified sites in March 1944 (Hill, op cit, p. 5590; see also C.M.H.Q. Report No. 137). "By the middle of May twenty such sites had been located, and by the 12<sup>th</sup> June the number had risen to 66. Forty-two were aligned on London and the rest on Bristol or south-coast ports" (Hill, op cit, p. 5590). Except for one or two experimental attacks on the modified sites prior to the end of May no further attacks were made on them after that date. Several reasons are advanced for this lack of aggressiveness. The new sites were small and well concealed thus making poor bomb targets. Consequently the results of the experimental bombing of the sites were poor. (Ibid) Also,

Unlike the 'ski-sites' they seemed to be intended as launching points and nothing more. The conclusion was that any stocks of pilotless aircraft held locally would not be kept on the sites themselves, but stored elsewhere or dispersed in the wooded country amongst which all the sites were placed.

(Ibid)

There was a further reason which Air Chief Marshal Sir Roderick Hill frankly admits:

I believe, however, that aligned with these causes was a psychological factor. It must be remembered that for many months past the chief threat had seemed to come from the 'ski sites'. The use of our bomber forces against the 'ski sites' had therefore been felt as a necessary, but still unwelcome, diversion of effort at a time when interest was focussed on the coming European operations. To the officers responsible for directing offensive operations the success of the attacks on the 'ski sites' must have come as a great relief. In the circumstances, they would have been harly human if they had not been more reluctant than perhaps they realized to recognize that the neutralization of the 'ski sites' had not averted the menace after all.

.....

I think, therefore, that at the end of May and in the first half of June the threat from the 'modified sites' was under-estimated, not in the sense of a failure to apprehend it intellectually, but in the sense that it was not felt as keenly as the original threat from the 'ski sites' six months earlier.

(Ibid, p. 5591)

581. We know now that the V-1 campaign had been ordered to commence on the afternoon of D Day. (Wilmot, op cit, p. 316) Furthermore, the Allied Air Commanders had been correct in their estimate that the pilotless aircraft were not stored near the modified sites, nor was certain material essential to the completion of the sites in the immediate area.

Most of the equipment and materials for completing the sites were still at depots well inland and so was much of the ammunition. Nearly 12,000 flying-bombs had been produced but, as a safeguard against air attacks, they were dispersed in dumps scattered throughout Northern France, Belgium and Germany. Between these dumps and the launching sites almost every railway line was out of action. Regardless of these difficulties, Wachtel [the commander of the Flak Regiment 155, which was to conduct the V-1 operations] was instructed that operations much commence on the night of June 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>.

(Ibid, p. 317)

The modest scale of attack which heralded the opening of the V-1 campaign quickly increased in intensity to an average of 100 “flying bombs” (as they came to be called) a day. (Hill, op cit, p. 5592) On 16 Jun Air Chief Marshal Hill gave orders which set in motion a plan, drawn up weeks beforehand, designed to counter the V-1 attacks. (Ibid; supra, para 77) A full story of the V-1 campaign against the United Kingdom is contained in Air Chief Marshal Hill’s Despatch.... and in General Pile’s Ack-Ack, Britain’s Defence Against Air Attack.... Insofar as the battle of Normandy during June is concerned, far more hindrance to the Allied build-up was caused by the 19-12 Jun storm than by the V-1 attacks.

582. In the Canadian sector of the bridgehead, one of the flying bombs was observed flying from north to south over 3 Cdn Inf Div’s area on 23 Jun and was forthwith engaged by gunners of 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt. “Two hits were scored which caused the engine to miss badly,” but the flying bomb continued its course into enemy territory (W.D., 4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, June 1944: Appx 7). For the effect of the V-1 campaign on Canadian troops still in the United Kingdom, see Hist Sec, C.M.H.Q., Report No. 137, Enemy Air Attack & The Canadian Army in the United Kingdom, 1943-1945: The V Weapons.

## THE BRITISH-CANADIAN SECTOR, 12-30 JUN

### A. THE DEFENSIVE ROLE

583. The period now under review was for the most part one of static warfare for 1 Brit Corps. Caen remained in German hands. Commenting on the on the enemy's determination to hold the city, General Eisenhower has written:

By his anxiety to prevent the captures of Caen and the eastward extension of our beachhead, the enemy to some extent contributed to the accomplishment of our initial plan insofar as the capture of Cherbourg was concerned, and from D plus 6 or D plus 7 the battle developed in general as foreseen. This enemy anxiety in the east was manifested from D plus 1 onward, following the failure of our attempt to seize the city of Caen in our first rush inland. It was vital for the enemy to deny us the Sein Basin: partly as it afforded the last natural barrier defending the V-1 and V-2 sites; partly because he needed the river ferries to bring oversupplies and reinforcements to his divisions in Normandy; partly because he feared a thrust on Paris which would cut off al his forces to the West; partly because he foresaw a threat to Le Havre, which was an invaluable base foe his naval craft operating against the approaches to the assault; but perhaps most of all because he wished to avoid the possibility of a link-up between those Allied forces already ashore and those whih he expected to land in the Pas de Calais.

(Eisenhower, Report...., p. 30)

584. It was only when the western portion of the Allied line had begun to swing southwards like a huge door on its hinge near Caen was it necessary, or feasible, to resume offensive activity in the eastern sector. But if 1 Brit Corps undertook few operations and instead dedicated itself chiefly to a holding role, the initiative nevertheless did not pass to the enemy. This is not to say that offensive operations were not contemplated; in actual fact, as we shall see, intensive planning and preparation went on throughout the period. The atmosphere, so to speak, was decidedly aggressive, and this served to prevent any decline in the morale of the troops.

585. It will be appropriate here to examine the dispositions adopted by 3 Cdn Inf Div in preparation for what appeared to be static period of uncertain duration. On the right, in the salient where the bridgehead of 3 Cdn Inf Div reached its maximum depth, 7 Cdn Inf Bde held the area Putot-en-Bessin - Norrey-en-Bessin - Secqueville-en-Bessin. The left sector, Vieux Cairon - Les Buissons - Villons-les-Buissons, was still occupied by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. The Central sector along the wooded Mue Valley was now guarded by 8 Cdn Inf Bde. 154 Inf Bde of 51 (H) Div was at this time responsible for the area Basly-Anguerny, previously held by 8 Cnd Inf Bde; this assured the security of the right sector, which would otherwise have been too thinly held. A substantial armoured reserve was also in existence. On the right, behind 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 2 Cdn Armd Bde was concentrated in a central position based on Camilly. (W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 11 Jun 44)



Similarly, on the left, 4 Brit Armd Bde was concentrated around Colomby-sur-Thaon. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3Cnd Inf Div, 12 Jun 44, Serial 30)

586. The disposition of the armoured brigades was a result of the warning given the Army Commander by his Intelligence (Supra, para 507).

In particular, he [General Dempsey] told Crocker [commanding 1 Brit Corps] to concentrate his armour on the rising ground south of Douvres. ‘This bit of ground’, he said, ‘is the heart of the British Empire. Don’t move your armour from there!’

(Wilmot, op cit, p. 302)

The possibility of an attack from the enemy’s salient north and northwest of Caen, which offered the shortest route to the beaches, might lead to most serious consequences. It was over these beaches that the sector east of the Orne was supplied, and interference with these channels of maintenance would effectively cut off and render helpless both 6 Airborne Div and the elements of 51 (H) Div in that sector. For this reason the burden of defence rested mainly on 3 Brit. Inf Div and 9 Cdn Inf Bde. This fact was made clear by Maj-Gen Rennie, G.O.C.3 Brit Inf. Div, during a visit to the Canadian formation. It was the British General’s view that

...our [9 Cdn Inf Bde] position and that of 3 Br Div was vital as Rommel might try and over-run us with mass attack of tanks and try to capture the beachhead in our rear.

.....

Our role is to hold every German infantryman. If tanks get through they will be mauled by our A tk guns and armour but if no infantry gets through the tanks will have to come back and run the gauntlet again as they cannot stay without infantry. No infantry to pass is the order of the day.

(W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Jun 44)

Had attempted to penetrate this area, Rommel would have found that the “heart of the British Empire” was still an extremely healthy organ.

587. Previous to this time, plans for an armoured break-out from 7 Cdn Inf Bde’s sector had led to a stripping of supporting weapons from the left sector (a process described by the brigade diarist as “the rape of 9 Cdn Inf Bde”) (Ibid, 12 Jun 44). But the switch to a purely defensive role reversed the procedure, and efforts were soon being made to strengthen 9 Cdn Bde at the expense of the other two brigades. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn, 12 Jun 44, serial 38) Most important was the thickening of anti-tank defences: to this end the divisional anti-tank regiment was re-deployed so as to place two of its batteries at the disposal of 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.D., 3 Cdn A tk Regt, 12 Jun 44)

588. After several days, when no battle had manifested itself (supra, para 507), the situation was described by diarist:

The battle has, in the main, developed into a counter-battery one. Our reinforcements in personnel and equipment have brought in strength except for about 35 tanks. We are ready to re-assume the offensive. At present, however, our role is aholding one...

(W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 14 Jun 44)

In truth, it had become a counter-battery battle, in which the odds were certainly against the enemy. Seldom if ever did he produce a sustained or weighty artillery concentration, whereas his every observed movement brought down on him an instantaneous and heavy volume of shellfire. A typical instance is recorded of an enemy meal parade, "complete with mass-tins," being made the target of a regimental concentration (W.D., 14 Cdn Fd Regt, June 1994: Apx 6, 14 Cdn Fd Regt Int Summary No. 4, 25 Jun). One may conclude that the enemy's mode of life in forward areas was not of the most carefree sort. But if artillery concentrations on the grand scale were beyond his sphere, the enemy was able nonetheless to engage in a certain measure of counter-battery fire in an attempt to limit the effectiveness of our guns. The diaries of field regiments contain such entries as this: "At 1500 hrs our daily enemy CB shelling" (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 13 Jun 44). In addition, enemy harassing fire was directed against air landing strips, headquarters and similar targets; on 17 Jun Lt-Col J.R.W.T. Bessonette, C.R.A.S.C., was killed when rounds fell in his headquarters. (W.D., H.Q. R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 17 Jun 44) It is of interest to note that a proportion of the enemy's shells were "blinds", a possible indication of sabotage. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 17 Jun 44, Serial 56; and 25 Jun, Serial 40; W.Ds., Hist Offr, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 18 Jun 44; Q.O.R. of C 28 Jun 44; and 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 12 Jun 44) German fire power although inferior as regards artillery, was given added weight by the skilful use of mortars. To counteract the effectiveness of these weapons, arrangements were begun to add a counter-mortar staff to H.Q.R.C.A. (W.D., H.Q.R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44)

589. The arrival of the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division as part of 30 Corps introduced a new formation on the right flank of 3 Cdn Inf Div, when 146 Inf Bde relieved 69 Inf Bde on 13/14 Jun. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 13 Jun 44) At this time, 50 (N) Div was holding a line from point 103 (856703) to la Belle Epine, having withdrawn its forward elements from St. Pierre. A week later, after severe fighting, 50 (N) Div had pushed south to capture Tilly-sur-Seulles and was on the outskirts of the Hottot. (Clay, op cit, pp 258 ff) 49(WR) Div, meanwhile, began to make its presence felt on the Canadian right flank. On 16 Jun it made a successful attack on Cristot, while a simultaneous feint toward Bronay resulted in the occupation of that village as well. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Jun 44) The attack was given the support of three regiments of the Canadian divisional artillery (12 and 14 Fd Regt, R.C.A. and 79 Med Regt, R.A.), which fired concentrations in the area of Le Mesnil-Patry. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 16 Jun 44, Serial 25)

590. As a result of these advances on the right there seemed good reason to believe that the enemy was withdrawing from the Le Mesnil-Party. This appears first to have been suggested by the G.C.O. 49 (WR) Div, and was confirmed by information from other sources. (W.D. and Message Log, 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Jun 44) At about 1700 hrs, therefore, 1 C. Scot R. was ordered to send out a patrol south of the Caen-Bayeux railway in order to investigate the area. (Ibid) The patrol, consisting of platoon of infantry and three sections of carriers, entered the wood (9017) midway between Putot and Le Mesnil and found it empty. The carriers continued forward into the town and discovered that it too was clear of enemy. Much of it was in flames as a result of the artillery bombardment earlier in the day. At 2200 hrs, "C" Company proceeded to enter Le Mesnil. (Ibid; W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 16 Jun 44) As early as 1735 hrs, R. Wpg Rif had been warned to be ready to move forward at an hour's notice. When word came that the company of 1 C. Scot R. was in position, the order was given to advance through Putot-en-Bessin to Le Mesnil. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 16 Jun 44) The leading company moved at 2300 hrs and the whole battalion was in position by 0400 hrs, 17 Jun. R. Wpg Rif also remarked on the devastation caused by the shelling, and from the number of German dead concluded that the enemy had had to conduct his withdrawal under this fire. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif, 18 Jun 44; the date is clearly in error) The pioneer platoon at once set to work clearing away the booby-traps and mines with which the buildings had been liberally furnished. "C" Company of 1 C. Scot R. was withdrawn to Putot, and by virtue of these changes in disposition that battalion now became the reserve unit. (W.D., 1 C. Scot R., 17 Jun 44) In their new area in Le Maesnil-Patry, R. Wpg Rif were subjected once more to shelling and mortaring, and enemy attempts at infiltration were broken up by our artillery. (W.D., R. Wpg Rif 18 Jun 44) 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts had also moved, having been brought forward from Bray to positions near Putot and Bretteville respectively. Their proximity to the enemy can be judged from the fact that the first target engaged by the latter regiment was at a range of only 1800 yards. (W.Ds., 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts, 17 Jun 44)

591. Since a period of rest was plainly in order for 7 Cdn Inf Bde, arrangements were made for 7 and 8 Cdn Inf Bdes to exchange positions. Thus it occurred that 7 Cdn Inf Bde had no sooner adjusted its new brigade area (Le Mesnil-Patry - Bretteville - Putot-en-Bessin) than it was compelled to vacate it. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, 17 Jun 44) The changeover was carried out during the night 17/18 Jun, one of the shortest during the year. It was not merely a case of reserve brigade moving into a forward position, but was rather a transfer between two areas, both in the face of the enemy. The units of 8 Cdn Inf Bde were the first to move. As they arrived in their new areas, the battalions 7 Cdn Inf Bde departed to occupy the positions vacated by their reliefs. Thus Q.O.R. of C. relieved Regina Rif in Bretteville-l'Orgueilleuse and Norrey-en-Bessin, and the latter thereupon proceeded to Bray; when R. de Chaud had arrived in Putot-en-Bessin, 1 C. Scot R. moved to Rots and Le Hamel; and R. Wpg Rif, on being relieved by N. Shore R. in Le Mesnil-Patry, moved to Lasson and Rosel. By 0700 hrs, 18 Jun, these moves had been accomplished without incident despite the danger of enemy intervention, for during the night the battalion areas in the Mue valley had been occupied only by reconnaissance parties. Luckily the enemy had chosen to lie dormant. (W.Ds., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde and 8 Cdn Inf Bde, and battalions 17-11 Jun 44) "B" Squadron, 7 Cdn Recce Regt, was

placed under the command of 7 Cdn Inf Bde as an interim measure. It took up a position at the chateau (945713), 500 yards north of La Villeneuve. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde June 1944: Appx 4, Sitrep, 18 Jun 44) This regiment's history describes briefly the role of 7 Cdn Recce Regt during the remainder of the month:

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Jun, the ["B"] Squadron, fully acquainted with German artillery fire, sniping and night patrols, was relieved by "A" Squadron who had just arrived in France. "B" Squadron, needful of a rest, moved to a reserve area near Anguerny, under command of 2 Canadian Armoured Brigade, where it remained for two days. It then returned to 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and took over from the Highland Light Infantry at Villons-les-Buissons. This take-over was typical of many the Regiment was to do in the months to come; that is, a squadron taking over the position of an Infantry Battalion or the Regiment taking over from a Brigade. This, of course, was due to the great number of automatic weapons and fire-power carried by the Regiment. However, as our numbers were approximately the same as the Infantry it meant little, or, sometimes, no sleep for the troops.

(Pavey, op cit, p. 45)

#### B. PLANS FOR OPERATIONS

592. The details of a proposed attack by 8 Cdn Inf Bde were arranged on 18 Jun. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "G", 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 1) The operations of 30 Corps on the right flank had brought 50 (N) Div to a line north of Tilly-sur-Seulles. In order to improve the corps situation, and in line with General Montgomery's intentions (supra, para 530) a new attack by 49 (WR) Div, to the east of that town, was deigned to capture Fontenay-le-Pesnel (8767) and Rauray (8865). When Fontenay was secured, 8 Cdn Inf Bde was to make an advance in three bounds to capture the high ground north of Grainville-sur-Odon -- the same objective as that for the unsuccessful operation of 11 Jun. This move would cover the left flank of 49 (WR) Div in its capture of Rauray. Considering the limited nature of this venture, it is perhaps a little surprising to find that it was to be supported by the fire of the five field regiments, two cruisers and a battleship. (Ibid) But on 19 Jun it was announced that that attack was cancelled. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 19 Jun, Serial 39) This was occasioned by a change in plans for the employment of 8 Corps, with whom we must now deal.

593. The advance party of 8 Corps Headquarters<sup>133</sup> landed in Normandy on 12 Jun. (Lt-Col G.S. Jackson, Operations of Eighth Corps (London, 1948), p. 17) The first two divisions of the corps to land in France -- 11 Armd Div and 15 (Scot) Div -- began arriving very shortly thereafter, but the corps' rate of build-up was slow owing to poor weather conditions. (Lt-Gen H.G. Martin, The History of the Fifteenth Scottish Division (Londn, 1948), pp 27 ff; "E.W.I.P.", A History of 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division (B.A.O.R.,

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<sup>133</sup> 8 Corps was commanded by Lt-Gen Sir Richard O'Connor, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

1945), p.12) The former division was centered near Cully, the latter in the St. Gabriel area. From 15 Jun onward, while the corps was building up in the bridgehead,

... some brief attention was paid to planning an operation entitled 'Dreadnought' which involved a breakout east of the River Orne, by 15 (Scottish) Division and 11 Armoured Division, through the eastern sector held by 51 (Highland) Division. In view of the confined area of the Orne bridgehead was not a feasible proposition, and finally the idea was abandoned on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 20)

594. On 18 Jun, General Montgomery issued the following directive to Second British Army:<sup>134</sup>

11. The immediate task of this Army will be to capture Caen, and provide a strong eastern flank for the Army Group.
12. The operations against Caen will be developed by means of a pincer movement from both flanks.

The object will be to establish the 8 Corps, strong in armour, to the S.E. of Caen in the area Bourguebus 0761 - Vimont 1561 - Bretteville-sur-Laize 0553.

13. From Vimont northwards the flank of the army will be established on the general line Troarn - thence along the R. Dives to the sea at Cabourg.
14. The right flank of the Army, forming the western half of the pincer movement against Caen, will swing south-eastwards through Aunay-sur-Odon 8351 and Evrecy 9259 towards the bridges over the R. Orne between incl Thury-Harcourt 9447 and Amaye-sur-Orne 9757.
15. While carrying out the operation outlined in para 14 it will be essential to ensure firm touch with the left of First US Army.
16. The above operations will be begun on 18 June, and will work up to a crescendo on 22 June - on which date 8 Corps will pass through the bridgehead east of the R. Orne on its side para 12.

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<sup>134</sup> Commenting later on this directive, which was addressed also to the First U.S. Army, General Montgomery stated: "With all the Allied forces facing south the enemy would be confronted with a very difficult problem, and it was to be expected that he would then make the threat in Normandy take precedence over other potential threats, including his fear of a thrust in the Pas de Calais. 'It was then that we might have a mighty chance to make the German Army come to our threat, and to defeat it between the Seine and the Loire'" (Montgomery, op cit, p. 61).

((HS) 215A21.016 (D9): Operations-21 Army Group; Directive from Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group, to Commanders, Second British Army and First US Army, 18 Jun 44)

595. The report from 8 Corps that the bridgehead east of the Orne was too confined an area from which to launch a corps attack, the desire to avoid wasting the time it would involve to undertake preliminary operations against the strongly entrenched enemy to widen and extend this bridgehead, and the hold-up (due to the weather) of “certain essential units and types of artillery ammunition” resulted in General Montgomery modifying his plan (Montgomery, *op cit*, p. 62). In a directive issued the following day he ordered:

It has ... been decided that the left wing of the pincer movement, from the bridgehead over the Orne, shall be scaled down and be only of such a nature as can be done by the troops of 1 Corps already there.

8 Corps will be switched to form part of the right, or western, wing of the pincer movement .... The final objective of 8 Corps will remain as given in para 12 of M 502 [i.e., as the directive of 18 Jun 44], but the corps will advance to this objective on the general thrust line:

St. Mauvieu 9269 - Esquay 9460 - Amaye sur Odon 9757.

(Directive from Commander-in-Chief.... op cit, 19 Jun 44)

In this same directive General Montgomery ordered the operation to begin “at or about dawn on 22 June. 8 Corps will be launched on its task on the morning of 23 June” (*Ibid*).

596. On receipt of this directive, General Dempsey called a conference at Creully.

At the Creully meeting, General Dempsey, on instructions from the Commander-in-Chief announced that he proposed as soon as possible to initiate a three corps attack (though not as a co-ordinated army operation), in which 1 and 30 Corps would conduct subsidiary operations, designed both to help the main effort, and to divert the enemy’s attention from it, whilst the major attack was to be carried out by 8 Corps with its fresh, if untried, troops. This would be known as Operation ‘Epsom’, and was to take as soon as possible, being provisionally fixed for 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

(Jackson, *op cit*, p. 22)

After General Dempsey had outlined his plan,

A series of staff conferences were then held with held with Second Army and subordinate formations, and at 1500 hours on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, the [8] Corps Commander explained the general situation and his plan to all officers in the

Corps of the rank of lieutenant-colonel and above, at Corps Headquarters at Lantheuil.<sup>135</sup>

The weather, which in general had been changeable since 'D' Day, had greatly hampered the unloading of stores and the disembarkation of troops. The result was, therefore, that some of 8 Corps' subordinate formations, notably 15 (Scottish) Division were not as yet at their full strength, whilst there had also been a temporary ammunition shortage.

.....

'Epsom' was therefore postponed, first for twenty-four hours, and then tentatively to 26<sup>th</sup> June, so that the deficiencies in manpower and material could be made good. Formations moved forward to their assembly areas and forming-up points, however, on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June, and at 2205 hours on 25<sup>th</sup> June, confirmation was received from Second Army Headquarters that the operation would take place at 0730 hours on the following morning, 26<sup>th</sup> June. A telephone call a short while afterwards depressed everyone somewhat with the information that in view of the steady deterioration in the weather in England, the full programme of air support, arranged between the R.A.F. and the Corps Headquarters, could not be carried out. This was a considerable disappointment, but it made no difference to the decision to launch 8 Corps in its first battle on the next day.

(Ibid)

.....

597. The main effort of Second Army, the attack by 8 Corps, was to be launched through 8 Cdn Inf Bde's sector west of the River Mue, and as mentioned, would have as its objective the establishment of a bridgehead over the Orne south of the Caen and the seizure of the high ground northwest of Bretteville-sur-Laize. The offensive by 30 Corps -- once, but no longer, the main effort of the army -- was to be continued; and 49 (WR) Div, in order to protect the right flank of 8 Corps, was to establish itself on the Rauray feature (its original objective in the previous plan), and thence to exploit southwards to Noyers and Aunay-sur-Odon. 1 Corps was charged with keeping active its bridgehead east of the Orne do so as to attract the enemy to that sector and also to provide a base for a left-flanking movement around Caen. This limited operation which was to be made by 51 (H) Div as a preliminary to "EPSOM", was named "PERTH", and was to be launched first. Later, when the effect of the operations of 8 Corps became apparent, 1 Corps was to eliminate the enemy's salient north of Caen and clear the city itself. ((HS) 225B1.016 (D7): 1 Corps op Instr No. 4, 19 Jun 44)

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<sup>135</sup> 8 Corps' plan of operations is dealt with in some detail in Jackson, op cit, pp 28-32.

598. For this latter task two separate operations were envisaged:
- a. Operation “ABERLOUR”, by 3 Brit Inf Div with 9 Cdn Inf Bde under command, was to clear the salient north of Caen.
  - b. Operation “OTTAWA”, by 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armd Bde, was to capture Carpiquet village.

The dates of “ABERLOUR” and “OTTAWA” were of course dependent on the progress achieved by 8 Corps in Operation “EPSOM”. (Ibid)

599. As must inevitably be the case when preparations are under way to set in motion a chain of interdependent operation, there now followed a period of readjustment and regrouping. The first event affecting 3 Cdn Inf Div was the move of 154 Inf Bde to rejoin 51 (H) Div in the sector east of the Orne. The news of this formation’s departure from Basly and Anguerny was not received cheerfully, for it was felt that 9 Cdn Inf Bde had been left “out on the limb” (W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 18 Jun 44). It was seen that the enemy was thus given access to two possible “tank runs” which were now left unguarded: one on the right between Vieux Cairon and Les Buisson and another on the left along the Caen-Basly road. To rectify this situation certain precautions were taken. The motor battalion of 4 Brit Armd Bde (2 K.R.R.C.) was disposed astride the road in question, and on the other flank one company of H.L.I. of C., with a troop of 17-pounders, was ordered to move from Les Buissons and take up a position in the wood northeast of Le Vey (984757). These alterations, which were completed by first light on 19 Jun, sealed off, if only lightly, the two dangerous avenues leading into the divisional area. (Ibid; W.D., H.L.I. of C., 18 Jun 44) One company of Nth N.S. Highrs was moved back into Villons-les-Buissons to fill the gap left in that position. (W.D., Nth N.S. Highrs, 18 Jun 44)

600. The next change in disposition affected the armoured reserve. Since 4 Brit Armd Bde formed part of 8 Corps it became necessary to shift it to the west into the sector from which the corps attack would eventually be mounted. Thus, on 19 Jun 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 4 Brit Armd Bde were ordered to exchange positions. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div. 19 Jun 44, Serial 60) The changeover began on the following day, with 27 Cdn Armd Regt proceeding to Colomby-sur-Thaon, a move which was greeted with delight by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. (W.Ds., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, and H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 20 Jun 44) The unit was joined in that area by the remainder of the brigade on 21 Jun. The departure of brigade headquarters from Le Fresne-Camilly was solemnly described by the diarist:

As the two ACVs moved out of the courtyard where they had stood for 10 days, the household of French woman and children came out to wave a friendly good-bye. The waving was in full swing both ways when the ACV clipped a stone wall, going out through the narrow gateway; the parting gesture was the slow, stately, and complete collapse of the wall....



(W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 21 Jun 44)

601. Meanwhile 9 Cdn Inf Bde proceeded to acquire greater depth in its defensive position. This was accomplished by moving H.L.I. of C. out of Villons-les-Buissons altogether and placing the battalion south of Colomby-sur-Thaon, astride the Caen-Basly road (9977-0077), for the withdrawal of 2 K.R.R.C. had left this troublesome avenue open once again. The move was begun on the evening of 20 Jun and was completed by 1000 hrs on the next day. The battalion was sooner in position, however, than orders were received to dispose the brigade as before, and H.L.I. of C. returned forthwith to Villons-les-Buissons, leaving one company northeast of Le Vey and one company guarding the Caen-Basly road. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 20-21 Jun 44) S.D. & G. Highrs and Nth N.S. Highrs remained in Vieux Cairon and Les Buissons respectively. This reversal of plans followed a visit by the corps commander, when it was decided it was decided that the new disposition in depth was not to be preferred to the more linear one previously employed. (*Ibid*; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 21 Jun 44) The net result of these goings and comings was that the enemy, evidently suspecting that an attack was forth coming, heavily shelled Villon-les-Buissons during the night 21/22 Jun with guns of large calibre. Although certain casualties were sustained, it was remarked that many of the projectiles had failed to detonate. (W.D., H.L.I. of C., 22 Jun 44)

602. Still another outcome of the decision to pass 8 Corps through 3 Cdn Inf Div was that the right boundary of 1 Corps would have to be shifted some distance to the east. Inasmuch as divisional headquarters was located at Camilly, a warning was issued that it must soon move to a new site so that it should not be on the “wrong side” of the new boundary. (Message Log, G.S. H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44, Serial 59) Two days later headquarters was opened at the Château de Thaon (9777). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 22 Jun 44)

603. After a long series of conferences and discussions, the operation orders for “ABERLOUR” were issued on 25 and 26 Jun. The operation itself was scheduled to commence not before 27 Jun, i.e., as soon as Operation “EPSOM” on the right flank should have made sufficient progress. The general intention, as outlined above (*supra*, para 598), was that 1 Corps was “to mop up the area north and northwest of Caen” ((HS) 235B3.016 (D2): 3 Brit Inf Div 0.0 No. 2. 25 Jun 44). This task was the responsibility of 3 Brit Inf Div with the following additional troops under command: 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Cdn Armd Regt, two squadrons of 5 Assault Regt R.E. (A.V.R.E), one squadron of 22 Dgns (Flails), and squadron of 141 R.A.C. (Crocodiles). The following units were placed in support: two field regiments of 51 (H) Inf Div, three field regiments of 3 Cdn Inf Div, 4 A.G.R.A. (two field, three medium and one heavy regiment), and units of R.N. Bombardment Squadron. Extra support was to be provided by Naval bombardment and air attack. (*Ibid*)

604. The intention of 3 Brit Inf Div was to capture the high ground in the area Authie-Cussy-St. Contest and to exploit forward to the Bayeux-Caen road. This was to be executed in four phase. In Phase 1, 9 Brit Inf Bde was to capture Galmanche (0073). During Phase II, while 9 Brit Inf Bde captured St. Contest, 9 Cdn Inf Bde was to move

forward in conjunction with it from Vieux Caen and Les Buissons to seize Gruchy and Buron. The objectives in Phase III were Authie for 9 Cdn Inf Bde and Bitot for Brit Inf Bde. Lastly, Phase IV was to see the capture of Cussy by 9 Brit Inf Bde while 9 Cdn Inf Bde pushed patrols forward to the Caen-Bayeux road. One feature of the plan requires explanation. It was planned that, as a preliminary, 8 Brit Inf Bde should first clear the area La Bijude-Epron (Operation "MITTEN"), so as to prevent enemy interference with the opening stages of the main attack. (*Ibid*; W.D., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 2, 9 Cdn Inf Bde O.O. No. 2, 26 Jun 44)

605. Here, although involving a violation of chronological sequence, it will also be useful to consider the plans subsequently drawn up for Operation "OTTAWA", which was to follow closely on the heels of "ABERLOUR." In order to appreciate its relation to the general situation it may be pointed out that "OTTAWA" presupposed not only the acquisition of a large area to the west of Carpiquet, extending through the Cheux feature across the Odon (Operation "EPSOM"), but also the removal of "the St. Contest salient", north and northwest of Caen (Operation "ABERLOUR"). These prior advances would assure both a firm base and a secure left flank for the assault on Carpiquet. Indeed, by the time the divisional operation order was issued (28 Jun), the first of these two premises -- the advance by 8 Corps -- had already been realized.

606. That the capture of Carpiquet would be the responsibility of 3 Cdn Inf Div had been recognized for some time, even before plans had actually become firm. The chief point of discussion seems to have been the direction the attack should follow. The corps instruction of 19 Jun (at which time arrangements were still in a fluid state) had specified that the axis of advance was to be from the northwest (1 Corps Op Instr No. 1, 19 Jun 44, *op cit*; on the following day a message from B.G.S., 1 Corps, had informed 3 Cdn Inf Div that the corps commander considered an attack on Carpiquet from the west to be "too complicated". (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 20 Jun 44, Serial 59) Apparently the division's General Staff began the actual planning for "OTTAWA" on 24 Jun. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 24 Jun 44) The operation order, which was produced four days later, shows that in effect "OTTAWA" was to be a continuation of "ABERLOUR", in that the attack was to be based on Authie, following the prior capture of that village by 9 Cdn Inf Bde. It was thus to come from almost due north. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx "L", 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 2, 28 Jun 44). The operation was to be carried out by 8 Cdn Inf Bde, supported by a considerable force of armour and guns. The brigade was to advance in three bounds across the Caen-Bayeux road establish itself in Carpiquet with its forward troops along the southern perimeter of the airfield. 9 Cdn Inf Bde was at the same time to extend its position south of Authie by occupying the village of Franqueville, just north off the highway. (*Ibid*) But in time the course of events was to render it necessary to revert to the more 'complicated' method of attack from the west.

C. THE OPENING OF THE OFFENSIVE IN THE CAEN SECTOR, (OPERATION "EPSOM")<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> A map illustrating 8 Corps advance during Operation "EPSOM" is attached as Appendix "P".

607. Before these final arrangements had been completed, the stage was set for the opening of the series of operations described above. The first of these, the limited advance by 51 (H) Div (Operation "PERTH"), commenced early on the morning of 23 Jun, after one day's postponement. 152 Inf Bde successfully attacked and captured Ste. Honorine-La Chardonnerette (0970). The enemy's reaction, as expected, was vigorous and sharp; and a determined counter-attack by infantry and tanks created for a time a critical situation. But by nightfall the town was still firmly held by the Highlanders after many hours of fluctuating fighting. All three brigades of 51 (H) Div planned active patrols so as to induce the enemy to believe that future attacks were impending. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 23 Jun 44, Serials 53 and 108; 24 Jun, Serial 6)

608. Meanwhile, within 8 Cdn Inf Bde's area there had been a continual influx of troops of 8 Corps who were making ready for Operation "EPSOM". As early as 20 Jun, officers of 15 (S) Div were visiting battalion localities to conduct preliminary reconnaissance. (W.Ds., Q.O.R. of C., 20-21 Jun 44; and N. Shore R., 21 Jun 44; see also Martin, op cit, pp 31 ff) In preparation for the advanced of this division through their areas, the Canadian troops commenced lifting their protective minefields. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 22 Jun 44) The great concentration of troops, vehicles and guns,<sup>137</sup> which soon spread even into forward areas, caused the brigade commander to order that "enemy infiltration be countered by most vigorous means" (Ibid, June 1944: Appx 2, Patrol Instructions, 22 Jun 44). Special fighting patrols of platoon strength were despatched by N. shore R. and Q.O.R. of C. on their respective battalion fronts. These were charged with the task of capturing prisoners for purposes of indentification, of killing enemy sentries, and of pinpointing enemy mortar, machine-gun and rifle positions so that these could be subsequently engaged by heavy weapons. (W.D., Q.O.R. of C. June 1944: Appx 84, Patrol Instructions, 23 Jun 44) Satisfaction was expressed over the results obtained by these patrols which were said to have "kept the enemy on the jump" (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 2, Daily Int Summary, 24 Jun 44). On 25 Jun, General Keller received from the commander of 8 Corps a letter of appreciation for the work done by these special fighting patrols:

My Dear General,

Thank you so much for all the help you are giving my Crops and in particular the 15<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division who can't say enough in gratitude.

I know these reconnaissances must have been the devil for your troops and I can only say how so sorry I am that they should have caused casualties.

I hope, and believe, all will go well in our operation provided the German has not brought up a number of formations which we know nothing about.

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<sup>137</sup> 15 (S) Div, attacking on a two brigade front, had under command the 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Brigade, two squadrons of "Flails" and a squadron of A.V.R.Es. "The attack was to be supported by close on 900 guns, which included the guns of three cruisers and a monitor. In the barrage alone 344 field and medium guns were to be employed" (Martin, op cit, p. 32)

Yours ever

R.A. O'Connor

(W.D., N. Shore R., June 1944; Appx 2)

On the eastern sector of the divisional front, patrolling likewise continued to be the most important task undertaken by the battalions of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, until such time as preparations should be complete for the mounting of Operation "ABERLOUR". It is easy to underestimate the importance of what was described merely as "normal patrol activity". Of all the enemy-held positions facing the division, Gruchy and Duron were given most attention; each night brought fresh information about the enemy in and around these two shattered villages. (See W.D., H. Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944; Appx 4, Patrol Reports) The knowledge of the enemy thus laboriously pieced together did much to build up the Intelligence appreciation of his strength and dispositions.

609. The attack by 49 (WR) Div, which was the second in the series of operations and as such the immediate prelude to "EPSOM", began at 0415 hrs, 25 Jun. The first objective of 49 (WR) Div, it will be remembered, was the capture of Rauray, a small village on a spur overlooking Cheux. The following day it was to seize Noyers, thus protecting the flank of 8 Corps. "Concentrations and a barrage from nine field and four medium regiments supported the attack, plus two companies of 4.2" mortars, who neutralized enemy pockets on the flanks" ((HS) 215A21.013 (D11): 21 Army Group, Immediate Reports - "Immediate Report No. 9; Capture of Fontenay-le-Pesnel by 49 Inf Div 25/26 June 1944") Three Canadian field regiments provided a smoke screen for the attack. (W.D., H.Q.R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44 and Appx 5) Heavy mist condition, supplemented by smoke, restricted visibility to a minimum. However,

The enemy too was finding conditions difficult. The Lincolns came upon about eight armoured cars and half-tracks which were trying to break harbour and encountered a German officer in the leading vehicle who was trying to rally his men by blowing a bugle. A 36 grenade put an end to this musical interlude....

("Capture of Fontenay-le-Pesnel by 49 Inf Div....")

610. The attacking forces met with severe enemy resistance in Fontenay, and by evening confused tank and infantry fighting was still going on in the town making it impossible for the moment to advance against Rauray. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44, Serial 199) Fontenay was finally cleared by the morning of 26 Jun and tanks of 8 Armd Bde, supporting 49 (WR) Div, pushed on to Rauray. That evening, after a day of heavy fighting, tanks and infantry reached the outskirts of Rauray. It was not until 28 Jun, however, that Rauray was firmly consolidated, too late to be of great use to 8 Corps' attack. Sufficient progress had been made by 49 (WR) Div by the evening of 25 Jun however, to allow Operation "EPSOM" to commence the following day.

611. For the opening phase of operation “EPSOM” 8 Corps numbered upwards of 60,000 strong and was composed of the following formations:

- Headquarters 8 Corps and Corps troops
- 11 Armoured Division
- 15 (Scottish) Infantry Division
- 43 (Wessex) Infantry Division
- 4 Armoured Brigade
- 31 Tank Brigade
- 8 A.G.R.A.

(Jackson, op cit, p.27)

The 43<sup>rd</sup> (Wessex) Infantry Division was really part of 12 Corps, and was the first formation of that corps to arrive in France. It was placed under command of 8 Corps since the second armoured division of 8 Corps (the Guards Armoured Division) had not yet received their tanks. 4 Armd Bde and 31 Tk Bde, however, placed under command 8 Corps for the operation, more than made up for the missing armour of Gds Armd Div.

612. The intention of 8 Corps was to

... break out of the existing bridgehead on the front of 3 Canadian Division with a view to the Corps forcing crossings over:

- a. The River Odon
- b. The River Orne.

so that at a subsequent date the Corps can be positioned on the high ground north-east of Bretteville-sur-Laize, thereby dominating the exits from Caen to the south.

(Ibid, p. 28)

The operation was to take place in successive phases:

- a. Phase I  
The capture of the area Evrecy-Esquay and the seizure or construction of crossings over the River Orne.
- b. Phase II  
Positioning 8 Corps on the high ground north-east of Bretteville-sur-Iaize, from which area it was in a position to exploit towards Falaise if called upon to do so.

(Ibid)

613. The opening attack was to be launched by 15 (S) Div, which was to secure the crossings over the River Odon between Gavrus and Verson. The first objectives of the division were the villages of St. Mauvieu and Cheux. When these had been gained, 11 Armd Div was to attempt to rush the crossings over the River Odon and establish itself east of the river. If this was impossible for the armour, 15 (S) Div would undertake the task. If for any reason the crossings over the river were destroyed or unusable, units under command of the division were responsible for constructing sufficient crossings for the passage of the armour. After crossings the Odon, 11 Armd Div was to be prepared first to dominate the area Evrecy-Esquay and then to force a passage over the River Orne. 43 (W) Div “provided the firm base for the Crops, so necessary in an operation of this nature, and was later to relieve 15 (Scottish) Division in the area of Cheux and St. Mauvieu” (*Ibid*, p. 30).

614. 8 Corps was given strong artillery support. Within the corps, “a total of 240 field guns, 16 medium guns, 16 heavy guns and 24 A.A guns” would support the operation (*Ibid*). Giving additional weight to this fire-power would be nine field, two medium and one heavy regiments from 1 Corps and four field, four medium and one heavy regiments from 30 Corps. (*Ibid*, pp 30-31). All field regiments of 3 Cdn Inf Div were involved in either the opening barrage or in counter battery tasks of Operation “EPSOM”. (W.Ds., 12, 13, 14, and 19 Cdn Fd Regt, 25 Jun 44). Three cruisers and a monitor were also to fire in support of “EPSOM”. Supplementing the artillery, a heavy programme of air attacks by heavy, medium and fighter bombers had been planned. As we have seen (*supra*, para 596), because of weather conditions in England immediately prior to the attack, it was impossible for the Air Force to carry out all its commitments. The fighters and fighter-bombers of 83 Group, R.A.F., however, operating from the airstrips and landing grounds<sup>138</sup> on the beachhead in Normandy, were fortunately unaffected by adverse weather conditions. (Jackson, *op cit*, p. 31)

615. At 0730 hrs, preceded by an intense artillery barrage, 15 (S) Div commenced to advance on a narrow front Le Mesnil-Patry to Norrey-en-Bessin with 46 (Highland) Bde on the right and 44 (Lowland) Bde on the left. (This account of Operation “EPSOM” is taken from Jackson, *op cit*, pp 32 ff; Martin, *op cit*, pp 29 ff; and *A History of 11 Armoured Division*, *op cit*, pp 14 ff). Although its supporting armour was delayed, the infantry made steady progress against enemy opposition which stiffened as built-up areas were reached. By midday, the two leading battalions of 46 (H) Bde were engaged in clearing Cheux and Le Haut du Bosq. At about the same time, the leading units of 44 (L) Bde were engaged in similar tasks in St. Mauvieu and La Gaule, but it was evening before St. Mauvieu was cleared.

616. With 15 (S) Div thus on its objective, 29 Armd Bde (of 11 Armd Div), which had followed up the Scottish advance, attempted to advance through the Cheux area to Gavrus and Tourmauville -- two small villages a few miles southeast of Cheux on the south side of the Odon River. Stiff opposition from enemy tanks and infantry south of Cheux prevented the armour from rushing the Odon crossings. At 1800 hrs, therefore,

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<sup>138</sup> By 27 Jun, there were ten airfields in the British sector of the Normandy front. (*Royal Engineers Battlefield Tour, Normandy To The Seine*, *op cit*, p. 48)

the reserve brigade of 15 (S) Div (i.e., 227 (Highland) Bde) set out to secure Grainville-sur-odon Colleville in an armour-supported attack. Colleville was reached, although not occupied, that evening, but a combination of enemy resistance, rainy weather and approaching darkness resulted in the main weight of the operation being postponed until the following morning.

617. Canadian field artillery had maintained its supporting fire throughout the day, engaging targets of opportunity after the initial timed programme had been completed. 13 Cdn Fd Regt answered 35 calls for fire, and at one period during the day the detachments served their guns for four hours without “Stand Easy” once being ordered. (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 26 Jun 44) Their labours went on unabated the next day, commencing with a fire plan of 100 rounds per gun on Carpiquet<sup>139</sup> from 12, 13 and 14 Fd Regts, R.C.A., and 6 Fd Regt, R.A. (W.Ds., 12, 13 and 14 Cdn Fd Regts, 27 Jun 44) According to C.R.A., 15 (S) Div,<sup>140</sup> the Canadian gunners did some “damn fine shooting” (W.D., 13 Cdn Fd Regt, 26 Jun 44).

618. 8 Corps’ intention for 27 Jun remained the development of the original plan.

At first light 15 (Scottish) Division supported by 29 Armoured Brigade and two battalions of 31 Tank Brigade was to resume the advance and establish a bridgehead over the River Odon. As soon as crossings had been secured, 11 Armoured Division would pass through the Scots ... first dominate the general area of Evrecy and Esquay and subsequently force a passage over the River Orne four miles to the south.

(Jackson, op cit, p. 37)

The left assaulting battalion of 227 (H) Bde (leading the Scottish offensive) ran into stiff enemy opposition south and west of Cheux immediately after leaving its start line and was unable to advance. The armour supporting the infantry drove back small enemy armoured attacks. “During the morning a number of reports had come in of ‘Tiger’ tanks operating a various parts of the front, and as these tanks were always organized in corps tank battalions it was clear that the enemy was concerned to do everything possible to halt the advance” (Ibid, p. 38), British tanks, however, reached the outskirts of Grainville that afternoon and held on there for several hours until the infantry arrived. On the left, the brigade met with less resistance, and shortly after noon, Scottish infantry were in Tourville, thus cutting the main Caen-Villers-Bocage highway. That afternoon a bridge over the Odon was seized and a small bridgehead established by 2 Argylls. The bridgehead was immediately reinforced by tanks from 11 Armd Div’s infantry brigade

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<sup>139</sup> The Canadian shoot on Carpiquet was ordered to compensate for the failure of R.A.F. medium bombers to attack Carpiquet that morning as planned. Weather once again grounded the aircraft. (Jackson, op cit, p. 37)

<sup>140</sup> The C.R.A. of 15 (S) Div was badly wounded on 27 Jun when he “manned a 17-pounder A tk gun which he had found in the offing and had taken on ... [a] tank” (Martin, op cit, p. 42)

(159 Inf Bde) moved into the bridgehead along with additional armour from 29 Armd Bde.

619. The other two brigades of 15 (S) Div had been relieved by 43 (W) Div early on the morning of 27 Jun. Against one of the 43 (W) Div's battalions there

... came at 0930 hours the sharpest and heaviest armoured counter attack yet experienced, delivered by a full company of the 2 Panzer Division 'Panthers'. Striking from the west, this attack penetrated Cheux itself, knocking out several 6 and 17-pr anti-tank guns and inflicting some personnel casualties ... before it was beaten off ... Smaller enemy thrusts were also repulsed from the east.

(Ibid, p.40)

4 Armd Bde was given the responsibility of protecting the western flank of the salient against similar attacks. 29 Armd Bde, meanwhile, protected the southeastern flank. 46 (H) Bde, after reorganizing north of Cheux, moved up in the wake of 227 (H) Bde to 'thicken up' the Colleville-Grainville area. Summing up the day's fighting, the corps' historian writes:

The increasingly spirited German counter attacks, the continued presence of the enemy in various bitterly defended localities west of the river, the fact that no bridges had been destroyed and, most significant of all, the stream of traffic towards the Odon battlefield, revealed by last light Tac R, showed clearly that the enemy proposed to make a still bigger effort to halt 8 Corps.

(Ibid, p. 40)

620. Early on 29 Jun, an armoured force from 29 Armd Bde left the Odon bridgehead and established itself on the crest of Hill 112 (9562) (a flat topped feature dominating the Odon valley and the country to the north) about a mile southeast of the bridgehead. Although additional armour and the infantry were sent to the feature during the day, it was impossible to drive the enemy from its southern slopes or from Esquay, a small town between Hill 112 and Hill 113 (a somewhat similar though higher feature over a mile to the southwest).

621. While this engagement south of the Odon was in progress, the Corps Commander, apprehensive over the possibility of an attack from the west, determined to improve his position north of the Odon before ordering 29 Armd Bde to advance to the Orne. This task was undertaken by 15 (S) Div and 43 (W) Div, the latter with 32 (Guards) Bde now under command. At the same time, 2 Argylls extended the Odon bridgehead westward by seizing Gavrus, thus securing another crossing over the Odon. Contact was made with troops north of the river that evening, but the Gavrus-Cheux route was still not clear. In the evening an enemy counter-attack with a battalion of tanks against 29 Armd Bde beaten back, but by last light neither side had full possession of Hill 112. During the day, strong resistance was met (from 2 SS Pz Div) as attempts were made to improve and



extend the western flank of the corps. The eastern flank was somewhat less active. The enemy had pulled back to a line running approximately from Carpiquet airfield to the Odon, but enemy armour prevented 8 Corps from extending its boundary east of the Mouen-Marcelet line.

622. The fighting on 28 Jun had improved 8 Corps position. The flanks of the narrow corps salient had been widened and strengthened. On the left rear 8 Cdn Inf Bde took over the Marcelet area (*infra*, para 628), while on the right rear 49 (WR) Div was secure on the Rauray feature. The Odon bridgehead had also been improved, and many pockets of resistance north of the river had been eliminated. 12 SS Pz Div had suffered severely, but it was quite apparent also that Operation “EPSOM” was achieving one of its most important objectives -- “that of attracting enemy armoured strength to the British sector” (*Ibid*, p. 44).

623. The inability of 30 Corps to advance to Noyers and so give stronger protection to 8 Corps’ western flank left the corps salient in an exposed position at a time when the possibility of a major enemy counter-attack loomed increasingly larger. On 29 Jun, therefore, 8 Corps went on the defensive. A general consolidation of the area was ordered with particular stress being laid on anti-tank defence and the positioning of the armour. At this point, it would be pertinent to review the situation in the rear of 8 Corps, i.e., the operations of 3 Cdn and 3 Brit Inf Divs.

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624. The entry of 8 Corps into the battle for Caen had at once reduced the front of 3 Cdn Inf Div by half its length and deprived 8 Corps and 1 Corps now ran south along the Chiromme Rivolet and thence southeast through Marcelet (9468) and Verson (9665). (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44, Serial 101). The relief of 8 Cdn Inf Bde by 130 Inf Bde of 43 (W) Div, as previously arranged, was carried out on 27 Jun, the day following the opening of the attack by 8 Corps. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 26 Jun 44 and H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 27 Jun 44) The new brigade area selected for the former lay around Bouanville (9776), at some distance from the enemy. The move of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, which began in the early afternoon, was completed by 1830 hrs, by which time Q.O.R. of C. were in Cairon, R. de Chaud in Le Vey and N. Shore R. and brigade headquarters in Bouanville. (*Ibid*; W.Ds. of battalions, 27 Jun 44) 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts were likewise withdrawn east of the new corps boundary. (W.Ds. 12 and 13 Cdn Fd Regts 27 Jun 44) It was understood that the brigade was to remain in this area until the time came for the attack on Carpiquet. To the infantry the new location seemed like a rest area, and bath parades were soon organized. But the enemy, still on the alert, shelled the vicinity of Carion and some casualties were sustained. (W.Ds. Q.O.R. of C. and R. de Chaud, 28 Jun 44).

625. In preparation for its role in “ABERLOUR”, arrangements were made for H.L.I. of C. to move forward into Les Buissons near the proposed start line. This move was made after dark on 27 Jun. (W.D., H.L.I. of C. 27 Jun 44) Once again there arose the question of guarding the vulnerable entries into the rear areas, for the removal of the

battalion from its position astride the road (9977) left “nothing between Caen and Southampton except some LCTs, the Cdn Army HQ, a refugee camp and a mobile bath unit” (W.D. H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde, 26 Jun 44) It should be noted however that the area Anguerny - Colomby-sur-Thaon - Basly was at this time being occupied by 71 Inf Bde of 53 Inf Div. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 25 Jun 44, Serial 108; W.D., H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde, 27 Jun 44) The position vacated by H.L.I. of C. was, moreover, now taken up by “B” Squadron, 7 Cdn Recce Regt. (Ibid)

626. At 1530 hrs on 27 Jun, 8 Brit Inf Bde commenced Operation “MITTEN”, the preliminary attack to clear La Bijude and Epron. It was soon discovered that enemy opposition was too formidable, especially in the area of the Château de la Londe (032737). No substantial progress was made during the night or the following morning, the enemy bitterly resisting every effort of the British brigade with its armoured support to penetrate their defences. As a result, the Corps Commander decided to cancel Operation “ABERLOUR” during the afternoon of 28 Jun. (Messages Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 28 Jun 44: Serial 6; “G Ops Log - 3 Brit Inf Div”, 27-28 Jun 44) 9 Cdn Inf Bde once more returned to its old defensive positions in Villons-les-Buissons and Vieux Cairon. Despite their very natural disappointment at thus seeing plans for offensive action evaporating, the troops were aware that the decision not to continue with the operation under the circumstances was a wise one. (W.Ds., H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde and Nth N.S Highrs, 28 Jun 44) 9 Cdn Inf Bde, which had been under command of 3 Brit Inf Div since 1800 hrs, 27 Jun, reverted to its parent formation. (Messages Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 27 Jun 44, Serial 63 and 28 Jun 44, Serial 125).

627. With the cancellation of “ABERLOUR”, the entire Corps plan to clear the enemy from his positions around Caen underwent through revision. In the evening of 28 Jun word was received at H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde to suspend further preparations for the attack on Carpiquet, which was now clearly an impossibility from the north. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 28 Jun 44) The revised plan, which was issued soon after, specified that the corps’ intention was to be achieved by three divisional attacks:

- (1) the capture of Carpiquet by 3 Cdn Inf Div (Operation “WINDSOR”);
- (2) the capture of Lebisey and the high ground northeast of Caen by 3 Brit Inf Div (Operation “SHERWOOD”); and
- (3) an attack by 51 (H) Div from its bridgehead east of the River Orne to clear Colombelles (0870) and the factory area (0769).

((HS) 235B3.016 (D2): 3 Brit Inf Div O.O. No. 3, 20 Jun 44. The date should read 29 Jun) The attack on Carpiquet was now visualized as being mounted by 8 Cdn Inf Bde from the west, i.e., from Marcelet (which had been occupied by 43 (W) Div), so that in effect the brigade should ‘stand on the shoulders’ of 8 Corps. D Day was to be 1 Jul. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, June 1944: Appx “M”, 3 Cdn Inf Div Op Instr No. 3, 29 Jun 44) The date of “SHERWOOD” was then set at 2 Jul. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Jun, Serial 49)

628. After the necessary conferences, the units of 8 Cdn Inf Bde commenced to move to the assembly area near Marcelet from which the attack had been mounted. (W.D. H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jun 44) Even while these moves were in progress, however, the first confused reports were being received of a powerful enemy counter-attack against the advanced units of 8 Corps near Grainville-sur-Odon. By evening it was reported that German tanks had broken through to Le Haut du Bosq. (Message Log, G.S. H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 29 Jun, Serial 109) Brigadier Blackader was hurriedly summoned to divisional headquarters where orders were issued for the regrouping of his brigade in a defensive position. Because the battalions were on the move the brigade commander took personal charge of the matter and at once proceeded to allocate areas of responsibility. By 2330 hrs, 8 Cdn Inf Bde had established its new dispositions without confusion. (W.D., 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 29 Jun 44) Each battalion prepared a “tank-proof locality” to await possible further enemy penetration: N. Shore R. in La Villeneuve, R. de Chaud in St. Mauvieu and Q.O.R. of C. in Marcelet (W.Ds. of battalions named, 29 Jul 44) 10 Cdn Armed Regt, which was to have supported the attack on Carpiquet, took up a position near Bretteville-l’Orgueilleuse. (W.D., 10 Cdn Armed Regt, 29 Jun 44)

629. By the time these preparations had been completed, the expected German counter-attack had been launched, met and defeated. At this point therefore, it would be appropriate to review the effect of Operation “EPSOM” on the enemy and his reaction to it.

630. As we have seen (supra, paras 572 ff), the build-up of the enemy during June was restricted (by the operations of the Allied Air Forces) to a far greater extent than that of the Allies, whose build-up was restricted by weather. One major result of this was that Rommel was forced to commit his panzer divisions into battle piecemeal to contain the aggressive Allied corps in the bridgehead. Moreover, apprehensive over the possibility of a link-up between a second landing in the Pas de Calais and a breakout in the Caen sector, the great majority of German armour was concentrated on the British front. The tactical and strategical mismanagement of the German forces, and more especially of their panzer divisions, was due partly to Allied deceptive measures, partly to the burdensome German chain of command, and partly to General Montgomery who retained the initiative in his own hands. It should not be forgotten that the prime task of the Second Army was to protect the eastern flank of the American First Army. A major method of providing this protection was to draw German armour to the British front<sup>141</sup> and so permit the American forces to operate with much greater freedom. This policy was stated by General Montgomery on 14 Jun in his letter to the Chief of the Imperial Staff (supra, para 530):

My general policy remains unchanged. It is as follows:

a. To increase and improve our own build-up through the beaches.

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<sup>141</sup> Writing on the same theme, General Eisenhower states: “Our strategy ... ws to hit hard in the east in order to contain the enemy main strength there while consolidating our position in the west. The resulting struggle around Caen, which seemed to cost so much blood for such small territorial gains, was thus an essential factor in insuring our ultimate success” (Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 30).

- b. To do everything possible to hamper and delay the enemy build-up, by air action and other means.
- c. To pull the Germans on to the Second British Army, and fight them there, so that First US Army can carry out its task the easier.

(Liberation Campaign North West Europe, Ch III, Book 1, p. 42; see also “Operations-21 Army Group”, Directive from C-in-C, 21 Army Group to Commanders, Second British Army and First US Army, 30 Jun 44 and (in same folio) “Notes on Conference given by C-in-C 21 Army Group on 22 Jun 44”)

631. Operation “EPSOM” had somewhat the same effect of attracting and holding enemy armour on the British front as had previous operations by 1 and 30 Corps. A week prior to “EPSOM”, Field Marshal Rommel sent to Panzer Group West (then almost recovered from its 10 Jun disaster) two map studies, each indicating a possible method of attacking the Allied bridgehead. One dealt with an attack in the event of the Calvados front remaining more or less stable, while the second dealt with an attack to be considered in the event of an Allied push in the direction of Falaise-Paris. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 102) The attack considered for a stable front would be launched in two phases:

In the first phase 47 Pz Corps and 2 SS Pz Corps<sup>142</sup> were to break through across the road Caen-Balleroy whilst the enemy north of Caen was being kept pinned down.

In the second phase the combined armoured forces were to launch an attack with Bayeux as the focal point. This to drive a wedge into Montgomery’s forces at the boundary between Second British Army and First American Army. Subsequently the main forces were to move westwards, 1 SS Pz Corps eastwards.

(Ibid)

On the following day, 20 Jun,

... O.B. West informed the Panzer Group of the receipt of an OKW Order ... according to which the Fuehrer desired an attack with the combined forces of 1, 2, 9, 10 SS Pz, 2 Pz and Pz Lehr Div to destroy the Third American Corps in the Balleroy area. Prior to the attack it would be necessary to relieve 2 Pz Div and Pz Lehr Div with the first infantry divisions to reach the area. In addition the

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<sup>142</sup> At this time 47 Pz Corps had but one armoured formation under command - the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer Division. Its other panzer division had been placed in Seventh Army reserve on 17 Jun. (German Seventh Army Situation Map, 20 Jun 44; Report of the Commander, Panzar Group West, *op cit*, (Mid 43-5 Jul 44) p. 39) 2 SS Pz Corps, now nearing the battle area en route from the Eastern Front, consisted of 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs.

enemy east of the Orne was to be destroyed in order to free the G.H.Q. troops concerned for the main attack.

(Ibid, para 104)

632. Of the attacking forces mentioned by Hitler, however, 1 SS (Leibstandarte) Pz Div and 2 SS Pz Corps (supra, para 572) were just beginning to reach their assembly areas.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, infantry replacements were still on the approach-march and experiencing great difficulty while running the Allied air blockade of the battle area.

633. On 24 Jun a conference was held between Generals von Geyr and Gause<sup>144</sup> and the commanders of 47 Pz Corps, 1 SS Pz Corps and 2 SS Pz Corps, over the armoured attack ordered by the Fuëhrer. The plan which emerged was not very dissimilar from the map study of an attack against a stable front suggested by Rommel a few days beforehand. Although the attack aimed at eliminating the Allied beachhead, General von Geyr believed that the primary task was “a matter of defeating 1 USA Army first of all as the weaker element” (Ibid, Appx “H”, “Ops No. 111/44, dated 26 Jun 44-Panzer Group West to Army Group B”) Thus although the attack was to be lauched on a broad front from Caripiquet to St. Lô, with “the heights on either side of Bayeux” as the objective, presumably the armour would then swing west against the American forces north of Caumont (Ibid). (It should be mentioned also that at this conference, Von Geyr made it plain that the plan of attack originated primarily with Hitler. Moreover, not only was it felt the armour would bog down in the face of Allied naval fire, but further, it was felt probable that 21 Pz, 12 SS Pz and Pz Lehr Divs, at the current rate of wastage, would scarecely be fit for defensive, much less offensive, operations (Ibid, para 108)).

634. By 25 Jun, main body of 2 SS Pz Corps and about one half of 1 SS Pz Div had reached their concentration areas west of Paris. The infantry replacements were nearer the battle-field but still in no position to relieve the armoured formations around Caen. On the same day 49 (WR) Div lauched its attack against Fontency-le-Pesnel as a prelude to “EPSOM”. 1 SS Pz Corps reported to O.B West its inability to restore the situation with its own forces and requested the use of elements of 1 SS Pz Div. That evening permission was granted, and once more a familiar situation began to appear, that is, German assault formations were to be used piecemeal to plug gaps in the front caused by an enemy who retained the initiative (Ibid, para 110)

635. The first day of “EPSOM” led the enemy to estimate, correctly, that the British attack

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<sup>143</sup> The assembly area of 2 SS Pz Corps at this time was approximately just north of the Falaise-Vire line positioned roughly between the British-American army boundary. (German Seventh Army Situation Map, 20 Jun 44)

<sup>144</sup> Vpm Geyr’s Chief of Staff

... might be the opening phase of an operation in the east-south-easterly direction for a later push on Paris and with the immediate tactical goal of cutting off the Caen area.

(Ibid), para 111)

As the British drive gained momentum and the the area of penetration deepened, all available elements of 1 SS Pz Div and 2 SS Pz Corps were ordered to the threatened area. Meanwhile, stop-gap battalions from 2 Pz Div and 2 SS Pz Div were rushed to the area of the Odon bridgehead late in the evening of 27 Jun in order to aid the badly battered 12 SS Pz Div. Up to this time, the only infantry reaching the front were elements of 16 GAF Div which entered the line facing the southern portion of the Orne bridgehead. However, 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs were now close at hand, although it was becoming very apparent that there would be no time to marshal the troops and properly mount the attack suggested by General von Geyr.

636. It had been planned that Panzer Group West, commanded by von Geyr, would assume command of the German forces between the Rivers Seine and Drome on the afternoon of 28 Jun. This would place him in command of one of the most important sectors of the Seventh Army. Moreover, von Geyr was not to be responsible to the commander of the Seventh Army, but to Rommel, commanding Army Group "B". Before this plan could be made operative, however, the commander of the Seventh Army, Col-Gen Dollman, died of a heart attack. (Ibid, para 116) He was replaced, on Hitler's orders, by the commander of SS Pz Corps, General Hausser, whose corps was to be used in the attack against the Allied bridgehead the next day. This awkward situation was made more complicated by the departure of Field Marshals von Rundstedt and Rommel following a hurried summons to Berchtesgaden. Thus

General von Geyr had barely announced his assumption of command over 1 SS Pz Corps, 2 SS Pz Corps, 47 Pz Corps and 86 Corps<sup>145</sup> when he received word not only of General Hausser's appointment to the command of Seventh Army but also of the Panzer Group's temporary subordination [during the absence of the two Field Marshals] to Seventh Army.

(Ibid, para 117)

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<sup>145</sup> 1 SS Pz Corps: 1 SS Pz Div  
12 SS Pz Div  
2 SS Pz Corps: 9 SS Pz Div  
10 SS Pz Div  
47 Pz Corps: Pz Lehr Div  
2 Pz Div  
276 Inf Div [en route]  
277 Inf Div [en-route]  
86 Corps : 711 Inf Div  
346 Inf Div  
21 Pz Div  
16 GAF Div [en route] (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 117)

This, in effect, made Von Geyr responsible to one who, a day previously, was to have been one of his corps commanders. Meanwhile, 1 SS Pz Corps had informed the Panzer Group of its inability to cope with the British thrust even with the help of 1 SS Pz Div. It had been planned that

... during the night of 29-29 Jun, 9 and 10 SS Pz Divs and two projector brigades would assemble and, attacking across the Gavrus-Noyers line, recapture the Baron-Mouen-Cheux area, subsequently destroying the enemy on the near side of the Caen - Villers-Bocage road.

(Ibid, para 118)

But 1 SS Pz Corps was now informed that this attack could not now take place until the following day. This delay not only gave the British corps commander time to take the necessary steps to prepare for the armoured attack which his air reconnaissance warned was in the preparatory stage (supra, para 621), but moreover, clearing weather during 28-29 Jun gave the Royal Air Force an excellent opportunity to strike at the concentrations of enemy armoured vehicles which jammed the roads leading to the battlefield.

637. Despite these difficulties, the attack by 2 SS Pz Corps got underway early in the afternoon of 29 Jun. The attack is described by 8 Corps' historian as follows:

North of the River Odon, 9 SS Panzer Division made the best progress, for two companies of 8 Royal Scots were quickly over-run...and heavy fighting ensued, which involved, in addition to 44 (Lowland) Brigade, 31 Tank Brigade and 4 Armoured Brigade. The complementary attack south of the river by 10 SS Panzer Division was so disrupted by shelling that it never got going at all, though a number of small tank and infantry sorties were launched against 29 Armoured Brigade from the Esquay area, and there was some localized but heavy fighting there. However, the main attack was held, and by last light the enemy had been driven back and the situation restored. Some Panther tanks did nevertheless get through as far as Cheux where they were destroyed. A threat to the eastern flank failed to materialize at the same time, since a concentration of approximately forty tanks which had moved from the outskirts of Caen to Carpiquet was shot up by R.A.F. Typhoons and did not venture to make any further movement.

(Jackson, op cit, pp 50-51)

638. During the evening of 29 Jun, the new commander of 2 SS Pz Corps, General Bittrich, was instructed to pursue the attack during the night as long as his forces were able to do so. (A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 118) On the British side, meanwhile,

... General Dempsey, believing these attacks to be rehearsals for a more co-ordinate effort on the following day, confirmed the [8] Corps Commander's appreciation of the general situation and ordered 8 Corps to consolidate in its

present area. In addition, in view of the exposed position of 29 Armoured Brigade, he instructed that it was to be withdrawn north of the River Odon. The bridgehead was not, however, to be given up but indeed maintained at all costs by the infantry holding it, 159 and 129 Infantry Brigades.

(Jackson, op cit, p.51)

639. The fighting during 30 Jun did little to change the position of either side. O.B. West reported:

After several hours of fluctuating fighting the attack by 2 SS Pz Corps was smothered by superior enemy forces in the line north of Esquay-Gavrus-Grainville. Our forces suffered grievous losses. It is intended to continue the attack during the night 30 Jun/1 Jul.

(A.H.Q. Report No. 50, para 120)

Nevertheless, it was apparent to the German field commanders that the counter-attack was a failure, and during the day the commander of Panzer Group West sent in a report recommending “the evacuation of Caen North and the bridgehead” (Ibid). For further information regarding the results of this proposal and also of the outcome of the Berchtesgaden meeting, see A.H.Q. Report No. 50, paras 119 ff.

640. The day’s operations had also showed that “EPSOM” had now “achieved its maximum offensive usefulness...” (Jackson, op cit, p.53). Almost all of the German panzer formations ear-marked for the attack to split the British-American forces had been drawn to the British front and committed piecemeal. The mass of armour facing the Second Army, however, still presented a serious threat to the Army in general and 8 Corps in particular. 8 Corps, therefore, regrouped itself so as withstand further attacks. At the same time, the operations which had been planned for 1 Corps (“WINDSOR” and “SHERWOOD”) were postponed. (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44, Serial 11)

641. In the Canadian sector, defensive preparations were also underway. On the afternoon of 30 Jun, General Keller issued further instructions for the reorganization of 3 Cdn Inf Div against a renewal of enemy attacks from the east, south or southeast. 7 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes were directed to continue to hold their present areas, the former placing one battalion in La Villeneuve, on the Caen-Bayeux road. 8 Cdn Inf Bde was ordered to withdraw once more into divisional reserve in the Bouanville area, from which position it was to be prepared to restore any loss of ground in either of the two forward brigade areas. An additional reserve was to be furnished by 2 Cdn Armed Bde, which would be concentrated around Colomby-sur-Thaon. ((HS) 235C3.016 (D13): 3 Cdn Inf Div, Notes on O Gp held 1430 hrs, 30 Jun 44) In fulfillment of these directions, Regina Rif relieved N. Shore R. in La Villeneuve and the latter rejoined the remainder of 8 Cdn Inf Bde, now once more established near Bouanville. (W.D., H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, 30 Jun 44) These defensive arrangements led to extensive regroupings of 7 Cdn Inf Bde. R. Wpg Rif



moved to Bray, which had been vacated by Regina Rif, and 7 Cdn Recce Regt (now risen to three squadrons under brigade command) took over the former battalion's positions in Lasson and Rosel. (W.D., H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde, June 1944: Appx 6, Confirmatory Notes, Bde Comd's Conference, 30 Jun 44; W.Ds. of units named, 30 Jun 44)

642. The disposition of 3 Cdn Inf Div on this date is illustrated by the map at Appndix "P", which gives also and approximate indication of the front line held by flanking formations. It demonstrates moer effectively than lengthy description the gradual tightening of the Allied grip on the German salient around Caen.

643. At the same time, while anti-tank defences were further improved, a heavy blow was struck at the enemy forces still remaining in the area. The air attack of 30 Jun against a concentration of German armour at Villers-Bocage marks the first use of heavy bombers in direct support of the ground forces on a target situated in the immediate vicinity of the enemy's front line. (Bomber Command Quarterly Review, No. 9, Apr-Jun 44) Long after the attack, dense clouds of smoke drifted far over the country side, reducing visibility to few hundred yards and puzzling the forward troops, who reported the presence of "mist, fog or smoke" (Message Log, G.S., H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44, Serial 88: W.D., Hist Offr, 3 Cdn Inf Div, 30 Jun 44).

## FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

644. It will be recalled that the “OVERLOAD” plans respecting the employment of First Cdn Army were based on the principle that that formation would remain in the United Kingdom until the bridgehead should be firmly established (Supra, para 39). It was intended that Second Army, comprising eventually 1, 30, 8 and 12 Corps, should first reach a line extending from the sea along the River Dives through Argences, and thence to the high ground near Falaise. These objectives, provisionally estimated to require three weeks of operations, had not been reached by 30 Jun owing to factors which we have already examined. As yet only three corps (1, 30 and 8) were in action, and with 12 Corps still in the process of building up it became unlikely that First Cdn Army could assume an immediate operational role.

645. Earlier in the month it had appeared, however, that the concentration of First Cdn Army in Normandy would proceed as planned. On 14 Jun, Tactical H.Q. left Headley Court, Leatherhead, Surrey, for its marshalling area, arriving on 17 Jun in France to establish itself at Ambile (9480). (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, June 1944). On 18 Jun, Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C. -in-C., left Portsmouth with a small party aboard H.M.C.S. Algonquin. Later in the day he landed in Normandy on MIKE Sector, where less than two weeks before 7 Cdn Inf Bde had made its assault. During the days following his arrival, General Crerar found time to visit the troops of 3 Cdn Inf Div, 2 Cdn Armd Bde and 1 Cdn Para Bn. (W.D., Lt-Gen H.D.G. Crerar, G.O.C. -in-C., First Cdn Army, June 1944) At 2400 hrs on 19 Jun, Main and Rear H.Q. First Cdn Army were closed in the United Kingdom and at the same moment opened (theoretically) at Amblie. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, 19 Jun 44) But the actual moves of these headquarters to France were soon to be postponed, at first owing to the gale (which began on 19 Jun) and subsequently because it was decided that the operational situation did not yet permit the introduction of another army.

646. At a series of conferences at this headquarters, General Montgomery, C.-in-C., 21 Army Group, explained to General Crerar why it had become necessary to “phase back” the concentration of the Canadian Army in Normandy. Briefly, the reason for the postponement was that until Second Army had been fully brought up to strength and had completed its planned expansion of the bridgehead area there was simply not room in which to deploy another army with its vast complement of army troops. (W.D., Lt-Gen Crerar, June 1944: Appendices “H” and “I”) on 24 Jun, therefore, it was announced that further moves of H.Q. First Cdn Army from the United Kingdom were postponed indefinitely, but that Tactical H.Q. would remain in France. In consequence, Main and Rear H.Q. were closed on the continent at 0001 hrs, 26 Jun, and reopened simultaneously at Headley Court. (W.D., G.S., H.Q. First Cdn Army, 26 Jun) For the time being, 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Armed Bde would remain the only Canadian formations engaged in Normandy and would continue to function under British command. The grouping of Second Army at the end of June is outlined at Appendix “E”.

## NORMANDY 30 JUN

647. A study of maps illustrating the British Advances up to 30 Jun (Appendices “K” to “P”) indicated the progress made by the British forces during the first 24 days of battle in France. From a review of the month’s operations one can observe a number of broad patterns or phases of the struggle and see in them the events which were to lead to the eventual success of “OVERLOAD”.

648. The plan of the invasion, in all of its aspects, had been generally sound. The long, hard months of training and experimentation in the United Kingdom produced and winning combination of fire power and assault technique on the beaches of Normandy which crumbled the ‘Atlantic Wall’ and gained the Allies a foothold in France. Most important was the strategical and tactical surprise achieved. The success of the sea and airborne assault was thus made even brighter by the comparatively small number of casualties incurred.

649. Once ashore the first problem of the troops was to connect the beachheads into one continuous bridgehead and to expand that bridgehead inland. This phase of the battle lasted approximately a week and was fought, in large measure, by the assault troops themselves. It was a critical period of hard and continuous fighting. Enemy armoured counter-attacks were beaten back, rear areas were cleared of enemy strongpoints and consolidated, and ground was wrested from the enemy. Allied troops pressed inland. By 11 Jun the bridgehead was secure. The build-up, although delayed, provided General Montgomery with sufficient means to retain the initiative. The enemy, by accepting the Allied deception scheme, was placed at a disadvantage which together with Allied air superiority, severely restricted his fighting efficiency and potentially.

650. The second phase of the operations was carried out mainly by the build-up formations. This period, which lasted throughout the remainder of the month, saw the bridgehead expanded and the defeat of a major enemy effort to split and defeat the Allied forces. During this phase the American forces met with greater success than the British. The Cherbourg peninsula was cut at its base on 18 Jun and First U.S. Army captured Cherbourg itself eight days later. British thrusts to Villers-Bocage and south of Caen, although they gained ground, were blunted by enemy armoured formations gathered around Caen. It was the concentration of German armour on the British front, however, which gave the Americans the opportunity to manoeuvre and the security on their front which allowed them to gain the successes they did.

651. If the territorial gains of the Allied forces by 30 Jun were not as extensive as the Allied commanders had hoped (and as the public expected), the German reaction to the assault and subsequent operations followed an anticipated pattern. The enemy has tried to throw the assault troops back into the sea on D Day, he had tried to prevent the link-up of the bridgeheads, he had tried to halt the expansion of the bridgeheads and the capture of the major port, and he had tried to interrupt and stop the stream of reinforcements and supplies to Normandy by his air, naval and rocket attacks. In all these attempts he had failed. Battered by the Allied Air Forces, bewildered by the Allied deception scheme,

and bedevilled by the chaotic orders of Hitler, the German forces in Normandy were committed piecemeal to a battleground where the enemy had the initiative and was able, in great part, to mold German tactics and strategy to serve his own purposes. With German armour concentrated on the British front, the stage was now set for the break-out by the First U.S. Army whose lines were to swing like a door with its hinge on Caen.

652. The three weeks' fighting in Normandy had made veterans out of the 'green' and untried Canadian troops who had landed on D Day. In that short time they had experienced a great deal -- the assault from the sea on the coastal fortifications, the armoured counter-attacks, and finally the days and nights of active patrolling and frequent skirmishes of a 'static' front. In all these activities Canadians had borne themselves well. Their success, both as individuals and as a formation, was second to none. This, however, was but the beginning. Nevertheless, it was a good beginning and foreshadowed a successful end.

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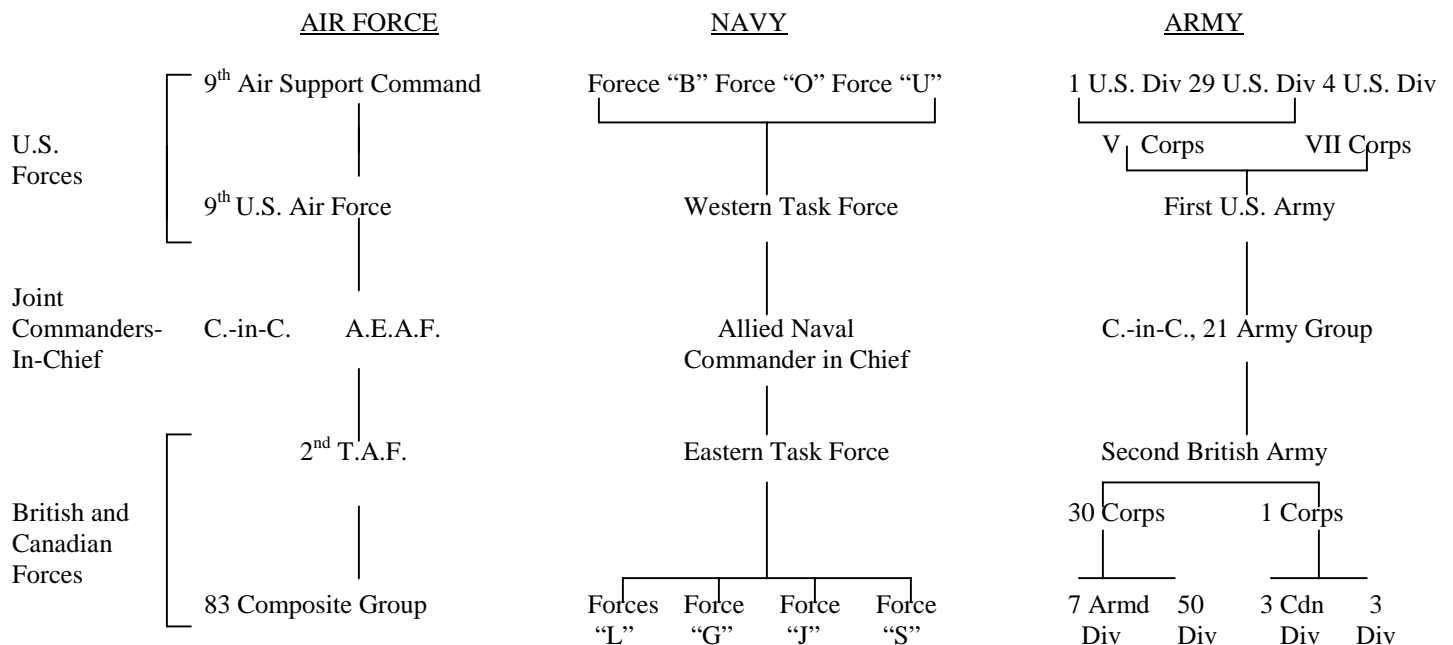
653. This report had been prepared by Lieutenant R.H. Roy. Considerable use has been made of C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147, written in 1945 by Major J.R. Martin, formerly Historical Officer, 3 Cdn Inf Div. In some cases certain sections of C.M.H.Q. Report No. 147 have been reproduced in this report in toto. This has occurred where further historical material has not come to light since Report No. 147 was written.

654. In order to meet the varying requirements of the text, which ranges from the strategic to the tactical level, maps of widely different scale have been used. In general, the following principle has been observed: where Allied operations as a whole were under discussion, small-scale maps (1:250,000) were found adequate; the 1:100,000 scale has served to cover the British assault area; and in the Canadian sector reference has been made to sheets both of 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 scale. The requisite sheets are listed below:

G.S.G.S 2738 1:250,000 France Sheets 3a and 8,  
G.S.G.S 4249 1:100,000 France Sheets 6E, 7E, 7F.  
G.S.G.S 4250 1:50,000 France Sheets 7E/5, 7E/6,  
7F/1, 7F/2.  
G.S.G.S. 4347 1:25,000 France Sheets 37/18 S.E.  
40/18 S.W.  
37/16 N.E.  
37/16 S.E.  
40/16 N.W.  
40/16 S.W.

for (C.P Stacey) Colonel  
Director Historical Section.

**CHAIN OF COMMAND IN THE ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE DURING OPENING PHASES OF OPERATION "OVERHEAD"**



The Allied Expeditionary Force as a whole under the Supreme Commander

APPENDIX B  
To Report No. 54

SHIPS AND CRAFT OF FORCE 'J'

(Compiled from Second Army O.O. No. 1,  
and 3 Cdn Inf Div O.O. No. 1.

Where discrepancies in totals occur, the  
divisional order has been accepted as final.)

Number	Short Title	Nomenclature	Function
1	L.S.H.	Landing Ship Headquarters	Ex-merchant ship converted to serve as Divisional Commander's and Force Commander's Headquarters Ship. Accommodates Force H.Q. Staff and large communications complement. Speed 15 knots.
2	A.G., H.Q. Ships	Assault Group Headquarters Ship	Frigates serving as Assault Group and Assault Brigade Headquarters
3	L.S.I. (L)	Landing Ships Infantry (Large)	Converted merchant ships ranging from 7,300 to 14,000 tons. Carry 18 L.C.A. and 1,100 troops. Speed 16 knots.
3	L.S.I. (M)	Landing Ships, Infantry (Medium)	Former passenger ships of between 3,500 and 4,000 tons which carry 8 craft and 400 to 440 troops in an assault. Speed 20 knots.
12	L.S.I. (H)	Landing Ships, Infantry (Hand Hoisting)	Former cross-channel ships of between 2,400 and 4,200 tons. Carry 6 craft and 360 troops in an assault. Speed 15 knots.
20	L.C.I. (L)	Landing Craft Infantry (Large)	Personnel-carrying craft which transport 200 fully equipped men (seated and can disembark all troops in under 5 minutes. Speed 12-1/2 knots. Length 160 ft. Fuel: Diesel.
8	L.C.I. (S)	Landing Craft Infantry (Small)	Carry 96 fully equipped men below deck and 18 bicycles on upper deck. Troops disembarked by ramps manhandled over bow sponsons. Length 104 ft 8 in. Speed 11-1/2 knots. Fuel: petrol.

Number	Short Title	Nomenclature	Function
142	L.C.A.	Landing Craft Assault	Carried in L.S.I. Land 30 fully equipped troops. Speed 6 knots. Fuel: petrol.
4	L.C.A. (O.C.)	Landing Craft Assault (Obstacle Clearance)	L.C.A. fitted with horizontal asdic and carrying Landing Craft Obstacle Clearance Units. Towed.
18	L.C.A. (H.R.)	Landing Craft Assault (Hedgerow)	Project "Hedgerows" (24 60-ib bombs), the blast from which clears a lane through wire and anti-personnel mines. Towed.
8	L.C.S. (M)	Landing Craft Support (Medium)	Provide close support by means of smoke cover. Can be hoisted fully loaded and can be beached. 7 knots. Fuel: petrol.
4	L.C.H.	Landing Craft Headquarters	A converted L.C.I. (L) functioning as a local Senior Officer's headquarters ship and battalion headquarters ship and battalion headquarters and suitably equipped as regards communications. Fuel: Diesel. Speed 12-1/2 knots. Can also lift 60 men.
22	L.S.T. (2)	Landing Ship Tank Mark II	Carry 300 troops and 60 tanks and vehicles and can beach. Displacement 1,490 tons light and 3,776 tons loaded. Speed 9 knots. Fuel: Diesel.
2 <sup>146</sup>	L.C.T. (3)	Landing Craft Tank, Mark III	Land an average of 55 men and 11 vehicles. Length 191 ft. 11 in. Speed 8 knots. Fuel: Diesel and petrol.
7 <sup>147</sup>	L.C.T. (4)	Landing Craft Tank, Mark IV	Carrying capacity 55 men and 11 vehicles. Length 187 ft. 3 in. Speed 6 knots. Fuel: Diesel.
2 <sup>148</sup>	L.C.T. (5 & 6)	Landing Craft Tank; Marks V and VI	Similar carrying capacity to L.C.T. (3) and (4). Speed 5-1/2 knots. Length of L.C.T. (5) 112 ft. 4 in. Fuel: Diesel.

<sup>146</sup> Flotillas of 10 craft each.

<sup>147</sup> Flotillas of 10 craft each.

<sup>148</sup> Flotillas of 10 craft each.

Number	Short Title	Nomenclature	Function
7	L.C.F.	Landing Craft Flak	Converted L.C.T. (3) or (4). Provide protection for assault forces against close-range air or E-boat attack. Secondary function, close support. Speed 7 knots. Fuel: Diesel.
7	L.C.G. (L)	Landing Craft Gun (Large)	Gun Support Craft. Converted L.C.T. (3) or (4) mounting two 4.7-in. guns on a false deck built over the hold. Provide close support fire during assault and subsequent advance. Speed 7 knots. Fuel: Diesel.
8	L.C.T. (A)	Landing Craft Tank (Armoured)	Converted L.C.T. (5), armoured -- carry 2 or 3 Centaur Tanks with 95-mm. guns, two of which provide close support for assault by direct aimed fire using H.E. shell. Fuel: Diesel.
8	L.C.T. (H.E.)	Landing Craft Tank (High Explosive)	As L.C.T. (A>) but unarmoured.
9	L.C.T. (R)	Landing Craft Tank (Rocket)	L.C.T. (3) fitted with 5-in. rocket projectors to provide drenching fire on an area target prior to touchdown. Length 160 ft. Speed 8 knots. Fuel: Diesel.
36	L.C.P. (L) Smoke	Landing Craft Personnel (Large) Smoke Layer	Personnel landing craft fitted out to lay smoke. Speed 7 to 10 knots. Fuel: petrol.
4	L.B.F.	Landing Barge Flak	Former Thames barges. Naval complement 5. Mount 40-mm. Guns which are manned by R.A. and controlled by Army. Supplement A.A. defence of assault beaches. Speed 5 knots. Fuel: petrol.
4	L.C.S. (L) (1)	Landing Craft Support (Large) Mark I	Support the assaulting forces by 2-pdr. Fire from close inshore. Length 104 ft. 8-in. Speed 11-1/2 knots. Fuel: petrol.
3	L.C.S. (L) (2)	Landing Craft Support (Large) Mark II	Similar, but mounting a 6-pdr. Gun instead of a 2-pdr.



Number	Short Title	Nomenclature	Function
1	L.S.D.	Landing Ship (Dock)	Provide emergency docking facilities for repairs to small craft. Function as a floating dock. Centre well is flooded and craft move out under their own power.
15		Rhino Ferry	Pontoon barges constructed of Naval Landing pontoons, designed for the carriage of vehicles. Are towed to assault area and used for discharging L.S.T. Can be beached. Capacity about 40 vehicles. Self-propelled to and from the beaches.

ORDER OF BATTLE - 3 CDN INF DIV ASSAULT GROUP

1. 3<sup>rd</sup> CANADIAN INFANTRY DIVISION

HEADQUARTERS UNITS

H.Q. 3 Cdn Inf Div

ARMOURED

7 Cdn Recce Regt (17 D.Y.R.C.H.)

ARTILLERY

H.Q. R.C.A., 3 Cdn Inf Div

12 Cdn Fd Regt S.P.

13 Cdn Fd Regt S.P.

14 Cdn Fd Regt S.P.

3 Cdn A. tk Regt

4 Cdn L.A.A. Regt

ENGINEERS

H.Q. R.C.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div

3 Cdn Fd Pk Coy

6 Cdn Fd Coy

16 Cdn Fd Coy

18 Cdn Fd Coy

SIGNALS

3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs (including 14 and 19 Beach Sig Secs)

INFANTRY

C.H. of O.(M.G.)

3 Cdn Inf Div Def & Emp Pl

H.Q. 7 Cdn Inf Bde

7 Cdn Inf Bde Ground Def Pl

R. Wpg Rif

Regina Rif

1 C. Scot R.

H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde

8 Cdn Inf Bde Ground Def Pl  
Q.O.R. of C.  
R. de Chaud  
N. Shore R.  
H.Q. 9 Cdn Inf Bde  
9 Cdn Inf Bde Ground Def Pl  
H.L.I. of C.  
S.D. & G. Highrs  
Nth N.S. Highrs

#### SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

H.Q. R.C.A.S.C., 3 Cdn Inf Div  
7 Cdn Inf Bde Coy  
8 Cdn Inf Bde Coy  
9 Cdn Inf Bde Coy  
3 Cdn Inf Div Tps Coy

#### MEDICAL

14 Cdn Fd Amb  
22 Cdn Fd Amb  
23 Cdn Fd Amb  
5 Cdn F.D.S.  
7 Cdn F.D.S.  
7 Cdn Fd Hyg Sec

#### ORDNANCE

3 Cdn Inf Div Ord Fd Pk

#### ELECTRICAL and MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

H.Q. R.C.E.M.E., 3 Cdn Inf Div  
7 Cdn Inf Bde Wksp  
8 Cdn Inf Bde Wksp  
9 Cdn Inf Bde Wksp  
4 Cdn L.A.A. Wksp (Type A)  
62 Cdn L.A.D. (Type A - 7 Cdn Recce Regt)  
36 Cdn L.A.D. (Type A - 7 Cdn Inf Bde)  
37 Cdn L.A.D. (Type A - 8 Cdn Inf Bde)  
38 Cdn L.A.D. (Type A - 9 Cdn Inf Bde)  
30 Cdn L.A.D. (Type B - 3 Cdn Inf Div Sigs)  
6 Cdn L.A.D. (Type B - C.H. of O. (M.G.))  
32 Cdn L.A.D. (Type D - 12 Cdn Fd Regt)  
33 Cdn L.A.D. (Type D - 13 Cdn Fd Regt)

34 Cdn L.A.D. (Type D - 14 Cdn Fd Regt)  
35 Cdn L.A.D. (Type D - 3 Cdn A tk Regt)

POSTAL

3 Cdn Inf Div Postal Unit

PROVOST

4 Cdn Pro Coy

INTELLIGENCE

3 Cdn F.S. Sec

MISCELLANEOUS

14 Cdn Met Sec  
Det 2 Cdn Fd hist Sec

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> CANADIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE

ARMOURED

H.Q. 2 Cdn Armd Bde  
6 Cdn Armd Regt (1 H.)  
10 Cdn Armd Regt (Fort Garry's)  
27 Cdn Armd Regt (Sher Rus R.)

SIGNALS

2 Cdn Armd Bde Sigs

SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

2 Cdn Armd Bde Coy

MEDICAL

17 Cdn Lt Fd Amb

ORDNANCE

2 Cdn Armd Bde Ord Fd Pk

## ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

2 Cdn Armd Bde Wksp  
54 Cdn L.A.D. (Type C - 6 Cdn Armd Regt)  
55 Cdn L.A.D. (Type C - 10 Cdn Armd Regt)  
85 Cdn L.A.D. (Type C - 27 Cdn Armd Regt)

## PROVOST

11 Cdn Pro Sec

### 3. G.H.Q., ARMY AND CORPS TROOPS UNDER COMMAND 3 CDN INF DIV

## ARMoured

“B” Sqn, 22 Dgns, (R.A.C.)

## ARTILLERY

19 Cdn Fd Regt S.P.

## ENGINEERS

5 Cdn Fd Coy  
H.Q. 5 Assault Regt, R.E. (det)  
26 Assault Sqn, R.E.  
80 Assault Sqn, R.E.  
9 Mech Eqpt Sec (det)  
21 Mech Eqpt Sec (det)

## SPECIAL SERVICE

H.Q. 4 S.S. Bde  
48 R.M. Commando

## SIGNALS

4 S.S. Bde Sigs Sec  
22 Dgns Sigs Tp  
5 Assault Regt, R.E., Sigs (det)  
3 H.Q. Ship Sigs Sec  
12 H.Q. Ship Sigs Sec (modified)  
17 H.Q. Ship Sigs Sec (modified)

SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

19 Cdn Fd Regt Pl

DENTAL

5 Cdn Dental Coy

ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

L.A.D. (Type C - 22 Dgns)  
12 Cdn L.A.D. (Type D - 19 Cdn Fd Regt)  
L.A.D. (Type B - 4 S.S. Bde)

PAY

3 Cdn Fd Cash Office

4. 102 BEACH SUB-AREA

7 BEACH GROUP

H.Q. 7 Beach Gp  
8 Kings  
Movement Control Pool  
Det (21 Army Gp)

8 BEACH GROUP

H.Q. 8 Beach Gp  
5 R. Berks  
Movements Control Pool  
det (21 Army Gp)

ENGINEERS

85 Fd Coy R.E.	184 Fd Coy R.E.
19 Stores Sec R.E.	20 Stores Sec R.E.
59 Mech Eqpt Sec (det)	59 Mech Eqpt Sec (det)
1033 Port Op coy	1034 Port Op Coy
1051 Port Maint Coy (det)	1051 Port Maint Coy (det)

SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

297 Coy R.A.S.C. (Gen Tpt) DUKW	199 Coy R.A.S.C. (Gen Tpt) DUKW
139 D.I.D. (Type B)	140 D.I.D. (Type B)
242 Pet Depot (Type C)	240 Pet Depot (Type C)

MEDICAL

1 F.D.S.	33 F.D.S.
2 F.D.S.	34 F.D.S.

33 F.S.U. & Surgical team  
34 F.S.U. & Surgical team  
13 F.T.U.  
4 Fd San Sec

45 F.S.U. & Surgical team  
46 F.S.U. & Surgical team  
14 F.T.U.  
3 Fd San Sec

ORDNANCE

14 Ord Beach Det

15 Ord Beach Det

ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

22 Beach Rec Sec

23 Beach Rec Sec

PROVOST

242 Pro Coy (HQ and 4 Secs)

244 Pro Coy (HQ and 4 Secs)

LABOUR

190 Pnr Coy  
225 Pnr Coy

170 Pnr Coy  
144 Pnr Coy

ROYAL AIR FORCE

103 Beach Sec R.A.F.  
51 Balloon Unit R.A.F.

104 Beach Sec R.A.F.  
52 Balloon Unit R.A.F.

HEADQUARTERS

HQ 102 Beach Sub Area

ENGINEERS

HQ 7 G.H.Q. Tps Engrs  
65 Fd Coy  
72 Fd Coy  
582 Fd Coy (det)  
297 Fd Pk Coy (det)  
670 Art Wks Coys  
710 Art Wks Coy  
204 Wks Sec  
61 Mech Eqpt Sec (det)  
176 Wksp and Pk Coy (Two adv Pk Secs only)  
48 B.D. Sec

## ENGINEERS TRANSPORTATION

H.Q. 2 Port Op Gp  
H.Q. 11 Port Op Gp  
996 Port Op Coy  
998 Port Op Coy  
1018 Port Op Coy  
1024 Port Op Coy  
1055 Port Op Coy (det)  
995 Port Maint Coy  
1051 Port Maint Coy (less dets)  
940 I.W.T. Op Coy  
961 I.W.T. Op Coy (less det)  
966 I.W.T. Op Coy  
927 I.W.T. Lt Aid Wksp (less det)

## SIGNALS

102 Beach Sub Area Sigs Sec

## SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

H.Q. C.R.A.S.C. 30 L. of C. Tpt Coln  
282 Coy R.A.S.C. (Gen Tpt)  
633 Coy R.A.S.C. (Gen Tpt) DUKW (one pl only)  
55 B.S.D.  
132 Pet Depot (Type B)

## MEDICAL

21 Port Det R.A.M.C.  
30 F.D.S. (portion forming 2 Casualty  
Evacuating Post only)

## ORDNANCE

45 Ord Amn Coy (17 B.A.D.)  
37 Port Amn Det

## ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

11 L. of C. Tps Wksp  
3 L. of C. Rec Coy (det)



LABOUR

58 Pnr Coy (for R.E.)  
66 Pnr Coy (for R.E.)  
115 Pnr Coy (for sector Stores Dump)  
243 Pnr Coy (for Tn) (det)  
257 Pnr Coy (for R.E.)  
267 Pnr Coy (for Tn)  
293 Pnr Coy (for stretcher bearing)

MISCELLANEOUS

59 Transit Camp

ROYAL AIR FORCE

H.Q. 2 Beach Sqn R.A.F.

APPENDIX D  
To Report No. 54

Unit	Killed	Died of wounds	Wounded	Missing	Total
R. Wpg Rif	15	43	66	5	129
Regina Rif	45	1	55	1	102
1 C. Scot R.	17	5	63	1	86
Q.O.R. of C.	55	1	78	-	138
R. de Chaud	17	1	48	38	104
N. Shore R.	28	6	90	-	124
H.L.I. of C.	-	-	-	-	NIL
S.D. & G. Highrs	1	-	13	-	14
Nth N.S. Highrs	3	1	6	-	10
C.H. of O. (M.G.)	1	-	3	-	4
7 Cdn Rece Regt	1	-	1	-	2
6 Cdn Armd Regt	22	-	17	4	43
10 Cdn Armd Regt	14	-	12	-	26
27 Cdn Armd Regt	-	1	2	-	3
12 Cdn Fd Regt	1	-	7	-	8
13 Cdn Fd Regt	5	1	4	2	12
14 Cdn Fd Regt	10	-	12	-	22
19 Cdn Fd Regt	3	-	17	-	20
R.C.E	17	2	42	-	61
R.C.C.S.	3	-	1	-	4

Unit	Killed	Died of wounds	Wounded	Missing	Total
R.C.A.M.C.	6	1	5	3	15
R.C.A.S.C.	4	-	7	-	11
R.C.E.M.E.	-	-	-	7	7
H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde	-	-	1	-	1
Others <sup>149</sup>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>Nil</u>
TOTALS	268	67	550	61	946

All men reckoned as ‘missing’ subsequently returned safely, the great majority having presumably been prisoners of war.

((HS) 133.01 (D1): “Operation Overload, Canadian D Day Casualties, Normandy - 6 Jun 44”.

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<sup>149</sup> All other Canadian units on Order of Battle of 3 Cdn Inf Div for 6 Jun 44.

I INITIAL GROUPING OF SECOND BRITISH ARMY

1 Corps

3 Brit Inf Div  
3 Cdn Inf Div  
51 (H) Inf Div  
6 Airborne Div  
27 Armd Bde  
4 Armd Bde  
4 S.S. Bde (less 46 and 47 R.M. Commandos)

30 Corps

50 (N) Inf Div  
7 Armd Div  
49 (WR) Inf Div  
8 Armd Bde  
33 Armd Bde  
47 R.M. Commando

8 Corps

Guards Armd Div  
11 Armd Div  
15 (S) Inf Div  
31 Tk Bde

12 Corps

43 Inf Div  
54 Inf Div  
59 Inf Div  
34 Tk Bde

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II GROUPING OF SECOND ARMY AS AT 29 JUN 44

1 Corps

3 Brit Inf Div  
3 Cdn Inf Div  
51 (H) Inf Div  
6 Airborne  
27 Armd Bde  
2 Cdn Armd Bde  
71 Inf Bde (ex 53 Inf Div)  
1 S.S. Bde  
4 S.S. Bde  
59 Inf Div (part)

30 Corps

50 (N) Inf Div  
7 Armd Div  
49 (WR) Inf Div  
8 Armd Bde

8 Corps

11 Armd Div  
15 (S) Inf Div  
43 Inf Div  
4 Armd Bde  
31 Tk Bde

12 Corps

53 Inf Div (less one bde)

32 Gds Inf Bde (ex Gds Armd Div)

(From General Note on Operations issued by A.C.I.G.S. (Operations), War Office, June 1944. (C.M.H.Q. file 4/Gen Apprec/3.); amended on basis of Order of Battle, War Office, 29 Jun 44.)