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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

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with specific example of training and
planning for a combat amphibious land-
ing by an infantry regiment.

41-84

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PLANNING AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

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A succinct report of amphibious operation planning cannot cover all details and steps for launching a successful landing. This monograph will endeavor to give an outline of the main points and the difficulties usually encountered in joint operations for assault landings.

First, the recommendations listed and explained in FM 31-5, Landing Operations on Hostile Shores, will be briefly covered. Second, the training given to an infantry regiment in World War II. Third, planning of a combat landing will be given based on an after action report.

A soldier of fortune once wrote to a prospective employer a letter seeking employment, part of which is quoted as follows:

Having, most illustrious Lord, seen and considered the experiments of all those who pose as masters in the art of inventing instruments of war, and finding that their inventions differ in no way from those in common use, I am emboldened, without prejudice to anyone, to solicit an appointment of acquainting your Excellency with certain of my secrets.

1. I can construct bridges which are very light and strong and very portable, with which to pursue

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and defeat the enemy; and others more solid, which resist fire or assault, yet are easily removed and placed in position; and I can also burn and destroy those of the enemy.

2. In case of a seige I can cut off water from the trenches and make pontoons and scaling ladders and other similar contrivances.

3. If by reason of the elevation or the strength of its position a place cannot be bombarded, I can demolish every fortress if its foundations have not been set on stone.

4. I can make a kind of cannon which is light and easy of transport, with which to hurl small stones like hail, and of which the smoke causes great terror to the enemy, so that they suffer heavy loss and confusion.

5. I can noiselessly construct to any prescribed point subterranean passages either straight or winding, passing if necessary underneath trenches or a river.

6. I can make armoured wagons carrying artillery, which shall break through the most serried ranks of the enemy, and so open a safe passage for your infantry.

7. If occasion should arise, I can construct cannon and mortars and light ordnance in shape both ornamental and useful and different from those in common use.

9. And if the fight should take place upon the sea I can construct many engines most suitable either for attack or defense and ships which can resist the fire of

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the heaviest cannon, and powders or weapons.

10. In short, as the occasion requires I can supply infinite means of attack and defense.*

This letter, written by Leonardo da Vinci, was successful in obtaining a job for this genius. Until the Armed Forces are composed of many individuals as talented as da Vinci we are compelled to study and examine past specialized operations for any of us to be proficient. After studying this monograph it is hoped you will understand how to conduct and plan an amphibious landing.

*A Treasury of The World's Great Letters, edited by
M. Lincoln Schuster.

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PART II

DEPARTMENT OF ARMY DOCTRINE

Joint amphibious operations usually involve participation of other elements in addition to military and naval forces. Most frequently these are civilian specialists, technicians, and civil government personnel essential to reestablish vital utilities and economic rehabilitation for local governmental control. Usually the persons for work of this type are not attached to units smaller than a corp, however, it is sometimes necessary to land vital underground units with the assault waves or during the time the underwater demolitions are functioning.

For proper coordination of planning one commander should be in control of the complete operation. Joint headquarters can and should be established in close proximity so communication and liaison is constantly maintained between all military, naval, supply, and intelligence quarters. One command expedites decisions, allocation of supplies and equipment, and controls any favoritism of services. Constant liaison between services at all levels keeps each one informed of the essential needs and problems of the others.

A good organization for planning is compelled to consider the most vital factor - the time element. It is absolutely essential to give the lower echelons adequate time for preparation, especially the elements making the assault landing.

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Any force which has to be transported may expect to suffer losses enroute. To adequately prepare for this eventuality, and any change which may develop at the target, alternate plans must be made for the initial landing. All details and signals to place such plans in operation must be thoroughly understood by each ship commander of troops before embarking. Frequently the forming of alternate plans is neglected until the last day or two before loading the assault troops. A hasty plan is formed, written, and distributed without any time for questions to be asked, maps to be made or requested, or proper briefing to be given to the ones who need it most.

Operational orders for regimental combat teams and battalion landing teams (designated hereafter as RCT and BLT) should be made and rehearsed in advance of the embarking. Land rehearsals of boat teams are essential for coordination of command within the team. When commands are split, due to the mode of transportation required, it is essential - to make a smooth working team - for the boat commanders to become familiar with all elements of their command.

Sufficient and necessary information can be disseminated by giving the subordinate commanders the essence of the information required for the landing without violating any security regulations. The screening of this information should not be so diligent that major items of importance to the initially landed waves are not given in time for rehearsal and for tactical planning.

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The troop commander on each ship should have all maps, terrain models, aerial photos, intelligence information, and landing plans. These are to be given to him in sufficient time for any questions to be answered. Once at sea it is extremely difficult to disseminate plans or changes in plans so all thoroughly understand. When landing on Okinawa the order was given to the BLT-1 commander to land on the north beach instead of the south beach. The Navy and the amphibious tractor battalion received their instructions over their radio nets and the BLT on the RCT net. The BLT commander 'Rogerred' for the message, but there was not adequate time for the company commanders to receive this message. As a result the left company moved into the other divisions sector. If proper prior planning had included a code signal for this change the information could have reached all concerned in ample time.

The major item of difference between amphibious planning and other types is the close coordination between all echelons and all branches. The division plan is based on the regimental plan and conversely the regimental plan is based on the division. The reason for this is the different tactical plans for various types of terrain confronting each landing team. This means constant liaison and understanding horizontally and vertically within a command as well as with the liaison between the land, sea, and air arms. It is evident the time allotted for one level of command must also be given to the lower levels of command.

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Following is a time schedule based on the schedule suggested in FM 31-5:

S-115 Initial directive given to Task Force Commander.

S-110 Joint headquarters established. Ground, naval, and air estimates started and joint conferences commenced.

S-105 Ground force commander completes estimate and starts army plans.

S-75 Ground force commander completes plans. Landing force commanders start estimates. Naval and air plans started.

S-50 Landing force commanders complete estimates start plans. Navy task force commander finishes force operation plan.

S-38 Landing force commanders' plans completed. Naval and air force commanders start plans. Unit transport quartermasters begin unit loading and stowage plans. (This does not begin prior to this time as the allotment of shipping cannot be made until the naval estimate is completed).

S-23 Ship loading plans completed. Naval transport commanders' plans completed. Ships made available for loading and billeting parties.

S-22 Preparation for loading supplies and ammunition begins. Final loading plans of transport quartermasters (hereafter called TQM) checked and passed by ship commanders.

S-20 Loading begins. Billeting plans completed and approved by ship commanders.

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S-17 Supply and ammunition loading finished.

Vehicles start loading.

S-15 Vehicles loaded. Troops embark on assigned ships.

S-14 Ships sail and rendezvous for first landing exercise.

S-13 First landing exercise.

S-11 Critique of landing exercise at joint conference of Army and Navy.

S-10 Critique of landing exercise by divisions and regiments.

S- 8 Second landing exercise including landing of top priority vehicles.

S- 6 Reloading of troops and vehicles completed.

S- 5 Joint Army-Navy critique.

S- 3 Completion of critiques by division and regiments.

S- 1 Completion of BLT's critiques and final briefing of troop commanders.

S Sailing date for target.

The schedule as given allows time for the final checks and final briefing. This was overlooked by most all task force commanders in the last war. The landing exercises are an excellent means of eliminating the mistakes made in the theoretical planning made by all staffs. Without trial landings the assault landing will not work as successfully as it should.

Suitable landing beaches should embrace the following characteristics:

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1. Large enough for a BLT.
2. On leaward side to eliminate as much surf as possible.
3. Have exits for track and wheeled vehicles. Slopes should not be able to be easily defended by the enemy.
4. Rendezvous area for ships and landing craft sufficient for dispersion against air attack.
5. Shore line to prevent emplacement of enemy artillery covering beaches.

The nature of the terrain is the deciding factor in deciding the extent of the beachhead. The size of the force decides the extent to be covered by that force, but even the line for the establishment of the beachhead is still based on the terrain where the landing is made. The mass to be invaded is the factor responsible for the size task force employed, and the combined beachheads of the landing teams will make the final beachhead line. The initial invasion of the Philippines had a line embracing the favorable terrain including the main communication lines. After the size of the beachhead was established, the decision was reached determining the forces necessary to make the initial landing to accomplish the mission. A corp, already at sea for another target, was loaned to the task force commander, charged with the Philippine invasion. so sufficient strength would be landed to establish the initial beachhead. After this mission was finished these troops were to return to the previous task force commanders' control. Common to any invasion, the initial beachhead was completely as planned, but reinforcements were

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landed which delayed the return of these forces until three months after the original ten days planned.

Each BLT will have the mission of establishing their own beachhead and organizing it for their own tactical and logistical support. Initially the landing will be concerned with gaining the initial objective which is usually the dominating terrain in the immediate vicinity of the beach. This prevents small arms fire and mortars from interfering with successive waves bringing in the supplies and ammunition. Sufficient shore party personnel are attached to each BLT to land the essential vehicles and supplies. When the BLT advances to successive objectives the RCT takes control of the BLT beaches until the regimental objective is obtained. This objective usually eliminates the light artillery fire from the beach. The division is charged with the organization and landing of supplies, vehicles, and ammunition until their objective is obtained. This is most frequently the beachhead line where medium artillery cannot molest the logistical forces operating the beaches. The corp consolidates the division beaches with the Army following the corp. The lower echelons now conduct their resupply the same as in any land operation. The only difference, after the division has organized the beaches, is the establishing of corp distributing points which is extremely rare in normal land warfare.

The task force operation plan is general in nature, covering the mission; the principal landing areas; assigned tasks to subordinate land, sea, and air units; approximate

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landing date; plan of maneuver and supply in general; the assignment of ships and support units to the limit of the sea and air capabilities; assignment of troops.

The joint attack force operations plan is prepared by conferences between the land, sea, and air forces giving the landing forces the information of the plans of maneuver and supply; and the supporting elements to be present at the target before, during, and after the landing.

The landing attack plan is a combined detail plan of the landing forces, the naval forces, and the air forces for making the assault landing and establishing the beachhead. It includes all supporting plans.

The division operation order will prescribe the combat team missions; landing formations; the number of BLTs to be used in the assault landing; beaches are assigned; time of landing; regimental beachhead line; supporting elements available; attachments for the landing; and the number of landing craft and ships available or assigned.

The BLT order determines the organization of the assault waves, the landing time, plan of maneuver to initial objective, and accomplishment of establishing battalion beachhead. Flexibility is extremely important as delay or destruction of any part or parts of the landing team must not interfere with the achievement of the mission assigned.

A fire support plan for each of the combined landing teams is arranged with the commanders concerned with the assault phase of the landing, the softening of the enemy

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defenses prior to the invasion, and the support of the supply channels after the troops are finally ashore. Key personnel of all echelons of command should be acquainted with all aspects of the naval, air, and anti-craft plans so full advantage and efficient use can be made of the support available. Alternate arrangements for supporting fires have to be made in case one or more of the original plans is disrupted by enemy action. The initial landing in the Philippines was an excellent example of the loss of support due to enemy action. The Japanese navy attacked our landing force ships shortly after the troops were landed, resulting in the loss of naval gunfire and air support while our naval forces, originally assigned to protecting and supporting the landed troops, was fighting to destroy the attack. Fortunately, the ground forces had landed sufficient artillery to supplement and take the place of the naval gunfire and air support which they had planned to receive from the Navy.

The administrative plan provides the loading plans and the logistical support on shore. Loading for combat landing cannot be as efficient as normal commercial loading as the prime consideration is the landing of the vehicles, ammunition, and supplies needed, at once, for the troops ashore. Any carrier of supplies loaded for speedy priority unloading cannot take advantage of all the space available. Extreme care and careful plans must be made to be certain the correct supplies are ashore in time to take care of any type of enemy action. This means intelligent arranging of the priority by the landing team commander, especially the BLT commander when

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loading his ship to protect against any contingency. Remember the first item on board is the last unloaded.

We have covered a brief analysis of the main requirements for making an amphibious landing as described in FM 31-5.

Our discussion has shown you the numerous headquarters involved, the need for constant vertical and horizontal liaison and cooperation, the flexibility of the landing teams, and time required in excess of the usual time figured for an ordinary land attack. Details have not been covered, nor has the plans for the arms and services of all echelons been outlined. The training given to an amphibious unit - rather a unit trained for amphibious duty - during the last war will illustrate to you the careful planning made for a successful operation on a hostile shore.

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PART III

TRAINING AMPHIBIOUS TROOPS

This division had received training in the waters of Swamp Adair, the rain forests of Washington state, and the blistery deserts of the Oregon High Desert. It was no surprise when it was notified to report for amphibious training. Past experience had been maneuvering on foot from one objective to another, which made it rather apparent it would head for the Pacific Theatre, as the division had had no training at all driving down a highway ninety miles an hour belching hot lead from a cannon.

With the orders to report to the Navy's West Coast Amphibious Training Center a detachment of the amphibious technicians of the Armed Forces - The United States Marines - was received. They laid out a work program to train the commanders and staffs. The staff noses were kept to the grindstone assimilating information on unit, personnel, and tonnage tables, landing diagrams, operation orders, boat assignment tables, and loading diagrams. This background prepared leaders as instructors during the training of the troops, and assisted the staffs in planning the loading, embarking, and debarking of troops and supplies when the unit arrived at the training center.

Before reporting to the new post for amphibious work the regiment was organized into tentative boat teams. The purpose of this was to have the members of each boat used to functioning as a team. This regiment had had sufficient work together as tactical units and wished to acquire the same

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proficiency in the boat teams as the boat team organization is retained until the first objective is taken ashore.

Upon arrival the Transport Quartermasters (called TQM) commenced the plans for loading each ship assigned. Their job is the most difficult of all. The TQM is charged with loading the supplies and vehicles essential to the assault troops for the first three to ten days of combat. These items have to be loaded in such a manner that the first vehicle or lot of ammunition needed ashore will be unloaded and ashore in time to meet the need. Further difficulty is encountered due to the individual characteristics of each ship. All the ships may be made from the same set of blueprints, but improvements are made constantly, coupled with the idiosyncrasy of each ship's captain as to how he wants supplies stored and holds designed, by the time the ship actually arrived for the TQM to load, any resemblance between the original plans and the ship itself is only coincidental. A good TQM has to have initiative, common sense, diplomacy, and optimism.

The operations officers immediately planned the landing diagrams, the final boat assignments, and prepared the operation order along with the schedules necessary to train the troops.

The supply officers arranged for the receiving of the supplies for the operation, the waterproofing of vehicles, the palletizing of the supplies to be embarked as well as the normal resupply problems.

Intelligence officers received all the enemy inform-

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ation available from higher headquarters. Nevertheless, it was a gigantic task to disseminate the pertinent information to the people concerned and to procure, and interpret, the aerial photographs and maps.

Adjutants, in addition to the routine administrative duties, had to prepare loading lists and billeting plans for each ship assigned to the unit. Close coordination with the S-3 was necessary while preparing billeting plans so the boat teams would be loaded correctly for efficient debarking.

Battalion and regimental executive officers coordinated the efficacy of the staff. The numerous administrative details developed with the packing and loading of the vehicles and supplies was an additional task usually assigned to them.

BLT commanders had to arrange priorities for unloading of the vehicles and supplies, decide on the plan of maneuver, assign duties to the attached units, and supervise the training.

Company commanders, as usual, had to be everywhere at once. The supply and maintenance sections were working with the S-4, packing, waterproofing, and palletizing the company supplies; the boat teams were being trained in knot tying, dry-run landing exercises, debarkation drill, boat and shipboard discipline, communication procedures, and the numerous details not common to ordinary land warfare.

Landing exercises on dry land were conducted the first week. The boat teams would walk in column of three - the same as they would be in the boat - to the shore line,

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then attacking the initial objective. Concurrently every man in the regiment was compelled to jump from a pier into the ocean, approximately twenty-five feet below, with his life perserver on to establish confidence in his life-saving equipment.

The second week launched the first truly amphibious training. A set of debarking nets installed on a quay enabled the troops to debark by boat teams into the boats below. After the boats were loaded they would form into waves for the landing on the shore where the assault troops would debouch over the beach. A week to ten days of these exercises were sufficient to train the boat teams proficiently in climbing down nets with complete equipment and how to behave in small boats. The men also learned how easy it was for the salt-water to quickly incapacitate any piece of equipment not sufficiently waterproofed.

Completion of the land phase of training was accomplished in three weeks. The BLTs were now ready for embarking for sea duty as amphibious troops. The prior planning by the TQM, the adjutant, the operation officer, the supply officer, and the commanders made loading of the supplies, vehicles, and personnel an easy problem.

Staff officers and commanders now had additional duties of which the most important was constant liaison with their counterpart aboard ship. The adjutant and the ship's first lieutenant developed plans for the feeding, billeting, and the cleaning of the compartments, heads, and galleys.

The commander and the captain of the ship established policy

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and the conduct of the troops aboard. The operation officer and the debarkation officer worked out the debarkation plan assigning routes and nets for each boat team; also coordinated with the ship executive officer for training areas on board the ship. The executive officer and the ship's executive officer arranged for inspections. The TQM and the ship TQM had the unloading of the vehicles and supplies at the proper time and into the proper boat. The I&E officer made arrangements with the chaplain for the furnishing of the news to the troops.

After the initial debarkation plans are made drills are held during daylight and darkness so each boat team can find their way to the proper debarkation station at the correct time. When the plan is made the boat team commanders make a reconnaissance of the route to the net assigned to his team. Briefing of the target, the intelligence information, the mission of each team is done usually by the company commanders and the boat team commanders during the voyage.

A voyage of two weeks with four landings proved to be sufficient to successfully train the troops on board. Each landing corrected mistakes made previously with the men becoming so proficient the assault troops were able to debark completely in thirty minutes. The completion of the voyage resulted in troops ready for an amphibious operation.

We have examined the progressive training of basically trained troops for amphibious operations. Commencing with the orientation and indoctrination of the commanders and staffs before the unit even reports to the amphibious

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center for their initial training we have followed the steps of training of the troops, staffs, and commanders. First, the boat teams were organized concurrently with the planning of the loading and establishing of priorities for unloading. Second, the troops and the boat team commanders were given instruction on dry land while the supply personnel waterproofed, packed, and palletized the vehicles and supplies. Third, the boat teams had small boat training and became acclimated to making landings through the surf and debarking into the boats over nets with all their equipment. Fourth, the BLT's and the RCT were loaded on the ships with their vehicles and their supplies. Fifth, the boat teams were rehearsed on board ship in debarking and making landings from the ships to the shore and the vehicles and supplies were loaded into the boats for unloading on the beach.

Throughout we have seen the need for constant liaison between the Army and the Navy. Each commander and staff officer has a naval counterpart with whom he has to coordinate to successfully accomplish any task. An example of the need for liaison is shown by the excerpt from the After Action Report of the 383rd Infantry of the Leyte Campaign:

Entirely too much confusion during debarkation due to Navy Debarkation Officer ordering too many teams on deck at the same time.*

If the operation officer had maintained liaison with the debarkation officer during the unloading they could have

*After Action Report - Leyte Campaign - 383rd Infantry

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agreed to call only the teams needed on deck.

When units have received amphibious training they are ready for the test of how successful the training has been, which can only be proven by making an amphibious assault on a hostile shore. We will see how well this regiment was trained by reviewing their plans and the loading actually made for the landing on Okinawa.

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PART IV

PLANNING FOR ASSAULT LANDING OF A RCT

The 383rd Infantry had been loaded for an amphibious landing on the island of Yap, but the second day at sea their orders were changed to be one of the units to make the initial invasion of the Philippines. The landing was accomplished without any difficulty. This proves that units properly loaded can assault any enemy shore providing they have the equipment for overcoming any natural obstacles, such as reefs, which may be present.

At the completion of the Leyte campaign they were alerted for the Okinawa landing to be made the first of April 1945. The main attachments of the regimental combat team for this landing consisted of:

- 921st Field Artillery Battalion
- 174th Engineer Battalion (Shore Party)
- C Company 763rd Tank Battalion
- B Company 88th Chemical Battalion (4.2 Mortars)
- 780th Amphibious Tank Battalion
- 788th Amphibious Tractor Battalion
- C Company 321st Combat Engineer Battalion
- C Company 321st Medical Battalion

All units had worked together in the landing, and most of them throughout the entire campaign. They were fortunate to receive the same attachments for this operation too.

The planning for the operation was started with an initial conference at the division command post on the 14th

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of February, one month and a day before the date for the embarkation to be completed. The meeting - attended by the regimental, battalion and attached staffs - read and discussed the orders of the Tenth Army, XXIV Corps and the Fifth Fleet.

Note that right from the start of the planning the orders of the land, air, and sea arms were present. The regiment followed this with a meeting the following day consisting of the staffs of the three BLTs and the commanders of the attached troops, discussing the listing of the combat equipment and administrative attachments along with the tactical plan.

From the personnel and the subjects covered in the first regimental conference one can readily see the close coordination between the members of the staff and the units attached for the operation.

The RCT had discovered in the last landing the confusion in the boat group commanders instructions with each BLT having individual landing diagrams. To rectify this the division held a meeting of all the BLT operation officers to standardize the Boat Assignment Tables of each BLT. A tentative plan was made and each S-3 returned to his commander for discussion. A week later the next conference was held with the various recommendations submitted and considered jointly. The outcome of this meeting was a standard Boat Assignment Table setting the number of landing craft per wave, assignment of the personnel for each LST, approximate personnel included in each wave, and the time interval between waves. This plan acted as a guide to all BLT commanders without prohibiting minor alterations to conform to special tactical or

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logistical considerations, but sufficient rigidity to make a simple standard Ship to Shore Movement plan.

On the 1st of March the final meeting for the BLT Ship to Shore Movement Plan was held. The first wave was the amphibious tanks, the second and third were the two assault companies, the fourth, fifth, and sixth waves landed the balance of the rifle battalions, the reconnaissance elements of the shore party, artillery, chemical mortars, and demolition teams of the engineers. The beaches had a six to eight foot sea wall at the edge of the reef. For the tanks, artillery, and chemical mortars to successfully breach this obstacle, the sixth wave had teams especially equipped to blast passages wide enough for the tanks and the DUKWs, which carried the chemical mortars and the artillery, to reach the shore road. The first six waves landed at five minute intervals, but between the sixth and seventh waves a twenty minute interval was decided to allow time for the wall to be blown. The tanks in LCMs from the LSD could land as the seventh wave, the chemical mortars in DUKWs carried in LCMs on board each BLTs transport, landed in the eighth wave, finally the artillery would land, on call, scheduled as the ninth wave. The reserve BLT would transfer to amphibious tractors landing in six waves as soon as the tractors returned from landing the assault battalions on the beach. This meeting took most all day, resulting in the final decisions made for landing and establishing a standard throughout the division. The naval liaison officers, who were present for all the conferences, were extremely helpful. Coordination between staffs and services, both vertically

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and horizontally, is a main factor to achieve a successful plan to land an assault division.

During this period the logistical problem was in the hands of the supply officers. Officers were selected, after the first group meeting, to attend a TQM school which started the following day. The completion of this school resulted in adequate personnel to load the ships assigned to the division by the Fifth Fleet order. During the school, the individual TQM for each ship made his preliminary Unit Personnel and Tonnage Tables for his assigned ship. These formed the basis for the division to make the ship assignment for the administrative personnel and supplies which always have to be superimposed on the assault shipping. The Navy organizes the transportation for landing a division only. Thus, when a large operation is made, the Corps and Army troops have to be attached to a division for the trip to the target. The XXIV Corps After Action Report for Leyte from 20 October to 25 December 1944 stated:

Considerable difficulty was experienced in loading out of Corp units for the assault due to shipping assignments. In loading out for the assault and unloading at the target our current amphibious doctrine does not take into account Corps troops, but is designed to handle divisions only. When a Corps goes out, the shipping assigned is merely a multiple of division groups. In the current operation we were forced to attach most of the Corps troops to the division for the loading and then scatter the rest of them into division Transdivs to get them to the target. Loading difficulties

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arose through overcrowding and destroyed the combat loading of the division units. We recommend that higher headquarters charged with amphibious operations set up separate transport divisions for troops of echelons higher than divisions, the number to be based on troop lift requirements for the specific operation.*

The final Unit Personnel and Tonnage Tables were completed 21 February. The assignment of unloading details was a prime concern. It is always difficult to obtain sufficient personnel to perform the unloading of the supplies loaded on each assault ship. If an assault battalion is on the ship all troops are needed ashore. The best remedy in the last war was to use the corps troops superimposed on board its ship to perform this detail.

On the 24th of February the unit S-1s submitted the preliminary shipping lists of the personnel to be embarked on each ship. The final lists properly corrected were distributed on the 10th of March.

The intelligence officers met with the other staff members at the first meeting on the 14th of February, this was followed the next day with a meeting of all regimental S-2s at the corps command post. The initial distribution of aerial photos, maps, and information from the combined Army-Navy intelligence agency - JANIS - was made. Units installed war rooms for the planning of the operation in their respective headquarters.

*After Action Report XXIV Corps - Leyte Campaign -
20 October to 25 December 1944.

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The 19th of February was the date the division operation order was issued followed by the regimental order on the 20th. Unfortunately the Alternate Plan for the operation was not discussed or announced until the 7th of March. This was a common failing in all operations in the last war. American forces were so confident the initial plan would be successful they neglected to give the necessary thought to any alternate landings which may be needed. Nevertheless, the division issued their order for the alternate landing the 7th of March with the RCT issuing their order to the units by the 9th.

The division had not been relieved from their front line positions until the 10th of February which curtailed training for the Okinawa landing. Each BLT was able to zero all new weapons, rezero old ones, reequip their men, and waterproof vehicles before embarking for the rehearsals on the 15th of March.

The first landing exercise (called LEX-1) was made by the assault BLTs the 17th. All the assigned shipping did not arrive before embarking, resulting in doubled loads on some ships. The tractors were all able to be aboard so the formation of the waves was made and landed to give the boat teams training in the assault phase. A joint Army-Navy critique was held immediately after the troops were re-embarked. The next day a meeting was held of the Army-Navy personnel on board the Trans Group Flag Ship to make the final adjustments of the Ship to Shore Movement Plan. LEX-2 followed on the 19th with the assault BLTs and the reserve BLT landed.

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While ashore the regimental commander met with the BLT commanders for a final word before sailing for the target. The final joint critique was held on the 20th of March.

Now all the planning was completed, ready for the final test, the landing on the enemy shore - the closest to the Japanese home islands United States troops had ever banded.

Throughout liaison has been stressed with all services; with all members of the staff; with your higher and lower staffs; and the close coordination with the logistical support supplied by the TQMs. Examples have been shown how essential it was during training and planning an actual landing. A report, paper, or monograph is not adequate to make any one an amphibious expert, but it does enable one to see the problems and gives a background which enables one to make a plan for an amphibious landing.

When the plan is completed and the ships plow through the waves to the target one hopes the plan is ready for action and will work successfully. The After Action Report narrative for the 383rd Infantry described the Okinawa landing thus:-

General Quarters rang out at 0400 on 1 April 1945. The long shadowy convoy ploughed on. Already the majority of RCT-383 were awake, tensely awaiting dawn. This was "L" Day - Easter Sunday, 1945. Slowly the ships moved into the assigned rendezvous areas, and preparations for debarkation were begun methodically, mechanically. We watched the boats go over the side and saw the sun rise over the low hills of Okinawa. Some prayed, all wondered. Soon the sea was filled with every type of landing craft churning about in great white circles.

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With dawn came the Naval bombardment. The dull pounding on the beaches increased gradually until the crack of shells passing overhead and the blast of detonation on the shore was a continuous and furious roar. Rocket boats added their shriek, and the dive bombers hurtled their cargos into the holocaust. The fury reached its peak in an unparalleled crescendo after a week of softening up. At 0800 the first white wakes made by lines of LVTs began moving slowly eastward toward the beaches. "H" hour for the Okinawa campaign was thirty minutes away.*

A romantic portrayal of what the Army, Navy and Air have been planning for months - placing troops on a hostile shore.

*After Action Report - Okinawa Campaign - 383rd Infantry.

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