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**Title:** Pathfinder teams of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in Operation "Market"

**Author:** Headquarters, European Theater of Operations (ETO), United States Army, War Department Observers Board

**Abstract:** AGF Report No. 449 – Pathfinder Teams of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Operation "Market". Submitted by COL Harvey J. Jablonsky, Infantry, with comments from CPT Frank L. Brown, XVIII Corps Pathfinder Officer, as it pertains to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division.

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12 December 1944

SUBJECT: AGF Report No. 449 - Pathfinder Teams 101st Airborne  
Division Operation "MARKET".

SUBMITTED BY: COLONEL HARVEY J. JABLONSKY, INFANTRY.

1. Pathfinder teams are trained at a special pathfinder school in the United Kingdom. The school is a part of the 1st Allied Airborne Army. The IX T.C.C. of the 1st Allied Airborne Army has established a provisional pathfinder group which specializes in pathfinder work. The XVIII Airborne Corps has a pathfinder officer on duty with the IX T.C.C. provisional pathfinder group, who has the responsibility of training pathfinder volunteers from the airborne divisions. Prior to an operation, each division participating sends approximately 10 officers and 90 enlisted men to the school for a minimum training period of 1 month.

2. The following comments are those of Captain Frank L. Brown, XVIII Corps Pathfinder Officer. They cover the operation "MARKET" as pertains to the 101st Airborne Division:

"1. Decision of Commanders.

a. Both airborne and air corps commanders felt that pathfinders should be employed, but due to the fact that the operation was to take place during daylight hours it was decided that a minimum number of personnel would be committed with only enough time to set the equipment into operation prior to the arrival of main serials.

b. The final decision was that two (2) teams, each consisting of one (1) officer and nine (9) enlisted men, would be committed to each DZ twenty (20) minutes prior to arrival of the main serials.

2. Personnel and Briefing.

a. All officers and men, with the exception of one (1) enlisted man, had participated in a combat pathfinder operation in Normandy on 6 June 1944 and had volunteered for a second pathfinder mission.

b. Preparation and briefing was very smooth due to past experience.

c. Rations, ammunition, smoke, panels, etc., had been predrawn and were stored in the area occupied by the group several weeks prior to the assignment of the mission.

d. Pilot-Jumpmaster conferences were held as soon as DZ's were assigned. Pin-points were selected by jumpmasters and pilot-navigator teams.

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e. Copies of the division and regimental field orders were furnished to jumpmasters for study in conjunction with maps for the operation. Enlisted men were briefed twenty-four (24) hours prior to the time of take-off.

f. All personnel were restricted to the base from the receipt of first orders until the return of the aircraft from the mission.

g. Each officer and NCO was issued a 1/25,000 scale map of the DZ area.

h. All personnel carried copies of 1/100,000 maps of area of operations. No maps were marked.

i. Air corps-airborne teams had been working together as such for approximately six (6) months. Utmost confidence and coordination had been established.

### 3. Equipment.

a. Thompson submachine guns and M-1 rifles were carried, with a ratio of 6-4 in favor of the TSMG. All men carried pistols, cal. 45, automatic, in addition to their primary weapons.

b. Each man carried five (5) D-ration bars. K-rations were not taken due to weight and bulk.

c. Riflemen carried two hundred (200) rounds of ball ammunition.

d. Ammunition for TSMG varied according to desires of individual from two hundred (200) to three hundred (300) rounds per weapon.

e. All men carried trench knives and entrenching tools.

f. Each officer and NCO carried a watch and compass. (Four (4) per team).

g. Two (2) grenades, fragmentation and two (2) grenades, smoke were carried by each man.

h. First aid equipment carried by each man included:

6 each, packets, sulfanilimide  
2 each, packets, parachute first aid  
2 each, dressing, carlilse

i. All personnel carried halizone tablets for purifying water.

j. Due to bulk on CRN-4 and Eureka some men requested permission to jump without reserve parachutes. Such permission was granted but serves were carried in the aircraft for each man.

### 4. Uniform.

a. Suits, two (2) piece, combat, as outer garment with W.O.D. shirt and trousers underneath.

b. Men, in most cases, wore woolen undershirts or sweaters. (Woolen drawers were not worn due to the fact that they have a tendency to chafe on long marches.) Extra socks were carried in pockets.

c. Caps, wool knit, with visor removed, were worn under helmets.

##### 5. Record of Events - Holland Jump.

a. The final pathfinder briefing for aircrews and paratroops was held at 0830, 17 September 1944 and immediately thereafter, all personnel proceeded to their assigned ships.

b. Mission of Teams "1" and "2".

(1) Team "1", composed of headquarters personnel from the 501st, 502nd Parachute Infantry and the 377th Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by Captain Frank L. Brown, 501st Parachute Infantry, was assigned to ship 964. (1st Lt Bob Centers, Pilot.)

(2) Team "2", 501st Parachute Infantry, commanded by 1st Lt Charles M. Faith, 501st Parachute Infantry, was assigned to ship 981. (2nd Lt Shauvin, Pilot.)

(3) The mission of these two (2) teams was to drop upon and mark DZ "A" for the main effort, preceding said group by twenty (20) minutes.

(4) Teams took off at 1040 from Chalgrove Airdrome, circled, and followed a course generally east to the coast. Somewhere over the channel a P-47 was contacted which escorted the flight to the coast of France. No escort was seen from the time our ships reached the coast until time of jump. At a point where the British spearhead was deepest into enemy territory, our ships bore north and continued at 1500 ft. Orange smoke was observed marking the front lines and the two (2) ships increased their speed to 180 MPH. Very heavy antiaircraft fire was received and at 1232, in the vicinity of Ratin, Belgium, ship 981 fell flaming into a steep dive, hit very badly in the left engine and wing tank. Four (4) chutes were seen to leave the door before the ship crashed, exploding in a sheet of flame.

(5) Ship 964 continued through very heavy flak belts, taking no evasive action, until the railroad running generally west to east into Vechel was observed. At this point the pilot swung to a course parallel to the tracks, slowed the ship to a stand-still over the DZ and jumped the pathfinder team on the exact spot desired. Time was 1244 plus 50 seconds.

(6) No immediate enemy resistance was encountered upon the DZ allowing the team to put all navigational aids into operation in very little time. Assembly was not necessary since dispersion was very slight, due to excellent drop speed.

(7) The Eureka was assembled and in operation in one (1) minute, the panel "T" and the panel letter "A" took no more than two and one half (2½) minutes.

(8) Some difficulty was encountered with the CRN-4 antenna, but this set was functioning within five (5) minutes. (CRN-4 antenna has been modified and faults eliminated since operation.) Red smoke was employed when the main serials came into view.

(9) The first serial, due at 1304, arrived on course three (3) minutes late at 1307 and dropped on the reserve side of the regimental objective, Vechel. The second and third serials, both three (3) minutes late, arrived at 1311 and 1315 respectively, dropping on the western half of the DZ.

(10) The Eureka and CRN-4 were left in operation twelve (12) minutes after the last serial arrived. No stray aircraft appeared.

(11) Since the mission of the pathfinder team was finished, (there being no glider landings or resupply drops scheduled on DZ "A"), the team made it's way to Vechel where it established a road block in the main square with two (2) men, cleaned a street of buildings with three (3) more and dispatched the remaining four (4) men to take a bridge. Friendly troops were contacted within a half-hour.

(12) Team "1", after the initial drive, was used at various times as local security group, prison guards and as combat patrols.

c. Teams "3" and "4".

(1) Team "3", 502nd Parachute Infantry, commanded by 2nd Lt Gordon DeRamus, was assigned to ship 885, (1st Lt Dobbins, Pilot).

(2) Team "4", 506th Parachute Infantry, commanded by 1st Lt. Gordon O. Rothwell, was assigned to ship 096, (1st Lt Gaudio, Pilot).

(3) The mission of these two (2) teams was to drop upon and mark DZ's "B" and "C" for the main effort and subsequent glider landings and resupply drops.

(4) Teams took off the Chalgrove Airdrome at 1040 with ship 096 in the lead. Ships accompanied 964 and 981 over the channel. Upon reaching the coast the flight circled twice to kill time and then flew a course identical to that of Teams "1" and "2".

(5) Upon crossing enemy lines very heavy flak was encountered until the jump. No evasive action was taken but the planes speeded to 180 miles per hour.

(6) Since DZ's "B" and "C" were, in reality, one (1) large series of fields, the teams dropped side by side at 1255, pin-pointed exactly the location desired. As in the case of Team "1", assembly of men was necessary since dispersion was slight. Pilots slowed ships almost to

(7) Slight enemy resistance was encountered, but it was overcome and did not slow the teams in their mission. The Eureka was in operation in less than one (1) minute and no difficulty was encountered in setting up panels and CRN-4, all of which were in readiness within four (4) minutes.

(8) The main serials all arrived on course three (3) minutes late at 1319, 1322, and 1325. Since the DZ's were adjacent and three (3) serials were due on each, it was difficult to distinguish between them; however, the main effort experienced an exceptionally good drop, all troops hitting the DZ and assembling without hesitation.

(9) Pathfinder personnel remained upon the DZ to guide in glider landings and resupply aircraft for six (6) days at which time they were relieved of these duties.

(10) On D/7 the entire group of pathfinders were again placed together under Captain Brown and performed various duties under division control.

d. Resupply for Pathfinders:

Due to the weight and bulk of navigational aids carried down by the pathfinders it was impossible for them to carry in enough smoke and batteries to provide continuous operation of all aids for subsequent landing of gliders. This problem was presented to CO, IX T.C.C. Pathfinder Group (Prov) who immediately ordered a resupply mission to be flown on D/1 to provide essential items. This resupply, consisting of a complete CRN-4, extra batteries for both Eureka and CRN-4 plus additional smoke, was dropped on D/1 by 1st Lt Burkhardt from O86. The equipment landed approximately twenty (20) yards from the Eureka on which the aircraft was homing.

6. Summary.

a. Pathfinder teams accomplished their mission efficiently due to excellent drops at slow speeds directly over previously selected pin-pointed positions.

b. Modification of antenna for CRN-4 was indicated. (This modification has been made by Major Cloyd H. Derey, Pathfinder Radar Officer.)

c. Men having previous combat experience should comprise at least a part of each team.

d. All men should be briefed on evasion and should carry maps covering route followed by aircraft. (1st Lt Charles M. Faith jumped from aircraft 981 after left wing tank was burning and plane out of control. He feels he was able to evade the enemy and escape due to intelligence briefing received from Group S-2 prior to take-off.)

e. Men should jump only such equipment as is absolutely necessary for combat. Extra food and clothing, etc., can always be obtained from the bodies of casualties during a parachute operation and excess weight and

bulk added to the equipment each pathfinder must jump may so impede the individual's progress as to cause death due to enemy action or failure of mission.

f. The Commanding General, 101st Airborne Division stated that the pathfinders did a 'beautiful job' of bringing the main serials into the DZ."

3. Captain Brown feels that the success of the airborne pathfinders was due entirely to the manner in which the air corps pilots and navigators pin-pointed each team from aircraft in excellent jump altitude at speeds of eighty-five (85) to ninety (90) MPH. A further example of the manner in which the air corps aided the airborne was evidenced on DZ "B" when Lt Gaudio, pilot of aircraft 096, returned to the DZ after dropping his team of pathfinders and 'buzzed' the farm houses on the center of the DZ in order to draw fire away from the men installing pathfinder aids on the ground.

HARVEY J. JABLONSKY,  
Colonel, Infantry,  
WD Observers Board.



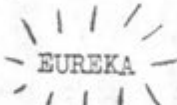
Diagram "A"

DAY MARKING FOR DZ

25 yards between  
all Radar Aids

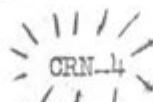


AN/UPN-1



EUREKA

Within 100 yds of head  
of "T" on highest avail-  
able terrain.



CRN-4

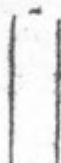
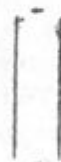
Radio Compass  
Beacon

Smoke

Wind Direction

Caution: Smoke must not  
obscure "T" or identifying  
code letter.

PANEL LENGTH  
APART



LINE OF FLIGHT

Five (5) fifteen (15) foot panels  
form code letter.

EUREKA TO BE CODED WITH IDENTIFYING LETTER OF DROP ZONE.  
FOLLOWING INFORMATION WILL BE GIVEN IN IX TCC FIELD ORDER:

COLOR OF SMOKE  
COLOR OF PANELS  
FREQUENCIES OF NAVAGATIONAL AIDS