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Report date: 1947

Title: Operation "Husky" – The invasion of Sicily by United States and British Troops

Author: United States Ground General School, Fort Riley, Kansas

Abstract: This report on Operation "Husky" includes background leading to the decision; preparation for the operation – planning, intelligence, training and supply, disposition; operations - naval preparation, and air support; and assault – airborne, landings and securing the beaches. Include maps.

Number of pages: 37 p.

Notes: From the MCoE HQ Donovan Research Library, Fort Benning, GA. Documents collection. Call #: D769.2 .G9

Classification: Unclassified; Approved for public release

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THE GROUND GENERAL SCHOOL
FORT RILEY, KANSAS

OPERATION "HUSKY"—

THE INVASION OF SICILY
BY UNITED STATES AND
BRITISH TROOPS

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28 June 47

THE GROUND GENERAL SCHOOL

PORT RILEY, KANSAS

A STUDY OF

OPERATION "HUSKY" - THE SICILIAN INVASION

The American Effort

Until D + 4

Prepared By:

Colonel Harry L. Smith
Colonel Earle Aronson
Colonel Donald R. Bayers
Colonel Marshall M. Brice
Colonel Warren E. Cleveland
Lt Colonel Jesse B. Boyd
Lt Colonel Mont S. Johnston
Lt Colonel David G. Tyler
Major John L. Floto
Major Harold Horrocks
Major James R. Nichols

RESERVE OFFICERS REFRESHER & ORIENTATION COURSE #1

I

BACKGROUND LEADING TO DECISION

1. The decision as to where to next make a major commitment of our troops after the completion of the Tunisian Campaign was made at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, attended by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

2. There was urgent need to relieve the German pressure on the Russian front; moreover, it was desired to secure the lines of communication in the Mediterranean. Invasion of the continent through northern France would involve either transfer of shipping and experienced troops from North Africa or the development of a new striking force in England. Both would require considerable time, and time was of the essence.

3. Invasion by troops based on North Africa would utilize existent shipping presently engaged in supplying troops actually in combat with the enemy there, thus permitting the continued use of veteran troops and trained supply personnel at the earliest possible moment.

4. AFHQ was already engaged in laying plans for an attack on Sardinia. This was less heavily defended than Sicily, and required training of fewer Allied troops. Thus, the Sardinian campaign could be undertaken nearly two months earlier than the Sicilian. However, Sardinia would be of substantial value only by taking Corsica also and then attacking Italy from the flank. The major advantage of taking these islands would be to employ them as advanced air bases for strategic bombing. The occupation of Sardinia would result in less diversion of German troops and would have a negligible effect on improving our Mediterranean shipping situation, since the Sicilian-Pantellerian barrier would still be in enemy hands, thus allowing interdiction of the free use of our major Mediterranean axis of communication. On the other hand, occupation of Sicily would clear the Mediterranean and allow postponement of a decision as to whether to invade Italy. Sicily constituted an independent objective; Sardinia was merely a base for further operations.

5. On 19 January 1943 the decision was made by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to invade Sicily with the announced object of:

- a. Strengthening our lines of communication in the Mediterranean.
- b. Diverting German strength from the Russian front.
- c. Intensifying pressure on Italy.
- d. Creating through the preceding results, a situation that might induce Turkey to become an active ally.

II

PREPARATION FOR THE OPERATION

A - Planning

1. Three days after the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided upon the conquest of Sicily, that is on 22 January, they notified General Eisenhower. The tentative or provisional target date was set for the favorable period of the moon of July, 1943, which later proved to be the period 10 - 14 July. This date was based upon the hypothesis that General Rommel and his German Army would be cleared from Africa by 30 April; actually, that event did not culminate until 13 May. General Eisenhower was designated Supreme Commander for the Sicilian operation, with General Alexander named as Deputy Chief of Staff and in command of all ground troops.

2. On 10 February, General Eisenhower assembled the nucleus of the staff for the campaign at Bouzarea. Initially this staff was designated "Headquarters Force 141", later known as the 15th Army Group Headquarters. Admiral Cunningham was named Chief of Naval Operations, and Air Chief Marshal Tedder was placed in charge of all air operations.

3. In order that plans for Operation Husky be facilitated simultaneously with the concluding phases of the North African campaign, General Clark was notified on 21 January that the Northern Task Force would be released, as of 1 March, from its commitment to guard against a German surprise attack through Spain; thus, General Clark's forces were released from Algeria and French Morocco and diverted to support of the Sicilian assault. These forces had been maintained against a possible Axis attack from Spanish Morocco, as well as a possible German invasion through Spain and the Iberian Peninsula.

4. It was determined that Force 141 was to be composed of two separate Task Forces--Force 343, the Western Task Force, primarily made up of the U. S. Seventh Army, and Force 545, the Eastern Task Force, composed primarily of the British Eighth Army. On 18 March a preliminary discussion was held, with representatives of Forces 343 and 545 present. As a consequence of this conference, the outline plan of the landings and assaults was issued on 25 March.

5. This outline plan, as originally conceived, included three distinct phases:

a. British Eighth Army to effect landings on the east coast, from Syracuse south to Gela on D day.

b. One division of the U. S. Seventh Army to land on southwest coast, Sciacca - Mazziarino on D + 2.

c. The remainder of the American Seventh Army to land on the northwest coast, to the west of Palermo on D + 5.

It was a plan involving wide dispersion of forces and consequently pregnant with danger, but it grew from the nature of the problem and objectives. Obviously, the ultimate objective of this entire campaign was the capture

and securing of Messina; equally obvious, it was realized that this goal could not be attained until the large ports of Palermo and Syracuse were secured.

6. There were equally grave dangers from other sources. The Axis powers could move troops into Sicily with greater facility and rapidity than could our forces. It was estimated that 52,000 enemy troops could be ferried across the Straits of Messina daily. There were known to be eight enemy divisions in Sicily, two of them German, as well as several static battalions, and there was an abundance of reserves in southern Italy. There was the additional disadvantage that none of the major ports would be held by our forces after the initial landing. The beaches were all of gentle gradient and soft sand, particularly inimical to successful landing. Moreover, these beaches led to hilly, rugged terrain, readily defended by the enemy.

7. There were immediate objections to General Eisenhower's plan. The British Joint Chiefs requested of the Combined Chiefs of Staff that one American division, the 3d, be diverted to operate with them in the east. Inasmuch as theirs was the primary attacking force, with the Western Task Force serving more or less as an auxiliary force to their northern movement toward Messina, and inasmuch as their force was subjected potentially to more serious danger, they felt that they would not be sufficiently strong. There was the further fact that the British could not proceed north until the strong enemy airfields at Comiso, Ponte Olivo and Biscari were in our hands. These fields were so far removed from the British sector that their capture could not be held the responsibility of the British Eighth Army.

8. Consequently, several compromises had to be made to the initial plans, and finally, complete revision of the plan. It was on 13 April that

the exact date of 10 July was settled upon for the invasion. This was the period when the moon would be in its second quarter, permitting airborne troops to land by moonlight before midnight and boats to move in darkness to the beaches after midnight. On 3 May all tentative planning was discontinued. The entire original plan was recast. The idea of the attack by the Seventh Army on the west and southwest was abandoned, as were the proposed subsequent landings on D / 2 and D / 5. Instead, the entire Western Task Force was transferred to the southeast assault, and the idea of the early assault upon Palermo was dropped. On 4 May the Combined Chiefs of Staff were advised of these new plans, and coincident with the capture of Tunisia and the concomitant collapse of German resistance in Africa, final approval was given of the plans for the invasion of Sicily.

9. There was wide variation of estimates as to the length of time to be involved in the conquest of Sicily. Some of the British predicted a campaign lasting into September. General Eisenhower believed it would take a month or more. None were sanguine enough to anticipate the early fall of Palermo. As a prelude to Operation Husky it was determined on 11 May that the island of Pantelleria, between Sicily and North Africa, must be taken from the Germans in order to deny them a base on our flank and in order to afford us an additional forward base. This brief campaign was begun 10 June and was inexpensive except that it reduced our bomb reserve.

10. As the plan took shape it was to consist of simultaneous seaborne assaults on the east and southeast Sicilian coast, around Cap Passero peninsula, with the immediate objectives of establishing a beach head 100 miles long, seizing the ports of Syracuse and Sicata, and capturing all airfields within striking distance of the southeast coastline. The British Eighth Army was assigned the eastern sector. The U. S. Seventh Army, on

the southern coast, was to establish its beach head, and push on to capture airfields at Comiso, Gela and Ponte Olivo immediately. Its composition was as follows:

II Corps
1st Infantry Division
45th Infantry Division
Special Force
3d Infantry Division
Armored Combat Command from 2d Armored Division

In addition, the 9th Infantry Division was to move as follow-up force. Originally, it was intended that airborne troops would aid in the capture of beach heads. This, however, was altered. The British airborne troops were to capture an important bridge at Syracuse and to secure the suburbs of that city; the Americans were to capture and hold critical points in the vicinity of the airfield objectives. Airborne troops, by glider and parachute, were to begin dropping a few hours before the assault and were to continue dropping until D + 2. This was the first campaign in which the Allies were to use airborne troops to any significant degree. A brigade from the British and the 505th Regimental Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division, with the 51st and 52d Wings, respectively, of the Troop Carrier Command, were employed in the operation.

11. Plans had to be formulated to contain the Italian Navy. Intricate details had to be worked out for mounting the troops in the most gigantic armada in the world's history. Two thousand ships were used in the initial assault; in all, 3,200 ships and boats were employed in the campaign. All the British troops were mounted in Middle Eastern ports, with minor exceptions. The U. S. troops were mounted in North Africa, except the 45th, which was mounted in the United States. Provisions, of course, had to be made for mounting follow-up troops. Strategic bombers began operations

against Sicilian and Italian airfields on 12 June. Tactical bombing was to accompany the assault. Prior to the initial assault, 350 aircraft and 130 gliders were to transport 5,000 men to the dropping zone. For more than a month prior to D-day, efforts were made to mislead the enemy toward anticipation of a false D day and a false destination. As events subsequently proved, these efforts were highly successful.

B - Intelligence

1. Higher headquarters operated a Preliminary Cover Plan designed to:
 - a. Retard the reinforcement of Sicily by German troops.
 - b. Reduce air and naval attacks of Husky shipping from D - 7.
 - c. Keep the Italian fleet to the east of the Straits of Messina.
2. The Navy conducted intense air patrols by day and night along the convoy routes and bombed known submarine bases. The Italian fleet was watched closely. Not for some time was its disposition known, but when found it was harried and bombed. An effort was made to drive it up the Adriatic. Prior to and during the operation, the Army carried out an air offensive against Germany, north Italy and other parts of Europe from the United Kingdom, with the object of containing as many Axis aircraft as possible in areas away from the Mediterranean. With the same intention, a limited air offensive was developed against Crete, the Dodecanese and in the Aegean area. During the preparatory period before the assault, heavy bombers attacked important industrial, civil, and military targets in southern Italy. A proportion of the effort was directed against the main ports and towns with the object of breaking Italian morale and of interfering with the movement of shipping and supplies. All this was augmented by heavy attacks against northern and central Italy. In short, so many feints

and so many bona fide attacks were made on the whole periphery of enemy territory that it was impossible for him to guess which of some eight to ten places we were about to attack.

3. In preparation for the operation troops had been instructed in enemy order of battle and tactics. They had also received instruction in British intelligence activities and practices with particular reference to abbreviations, nomenclature, conventional signs and symbols, and map grid systems. Intelligence units assigned to the force included PWI teams, CIC teams, Photo Intelligence teams, Signal Intercept and Direction Finding teams. These units were available to lower command echelons.

4. Enemy troop dispositions.---Italian forces consisted of the Seventh Army in southern Italy, Sixth Army in Sicily, XIII Corps in Sardinia and VII Corps in Corsica. In Sicily there were also two German divisions, the Herman Goring and the 15th Panzer Division. The Seventh Italian Army in Southern Italy consisted of approximately 300,000 men making up the 21st, 104th, 152d, 47th and survivors of the 52d Infantry Divisions. There were also three coastal defense divisions. The infantry divisions were not high quality troops and the coastal defense divisions were very low quality. Because of the long, vulnerable coast of southern ITALY, these troops were barely adequate for defense. The mountainous terrain aided defense but the disposition of troops did not provide for a central reserve. Sardinia had three mobile divisions and two coastal defense divisions, or about 65,000 troops in all, and any defense was facilitated by a rough terrain. The Sicilian garrison formed the Sixth Army, which had four field divisions and five coastal defense divisions. Field Divisions included the 4th, 28th, 26th and 54th. Coastal defense divisions were the 202d, 206th, 207th, 208th and 213th. (See Chart No. 2) The field divisions were normal

infantry divisions with 12,500 men, 2,000 animals, 360 vehicles and 36 artillery pieces. The only notable exception was the 4th (LIVORNO) Division, which had received amphibious training and was allotted additional mortar and anti-tank weapons. The purpose of the field divisions was to support the beach defenses as a secondary defense and for counter-attack. The coastal divisions averaged about 12,000 men. They also controlled coastal defenses within their assigned areas. Their purpose, if possible, was to prevent an amphibious landing and if not, to contain landing troops by a holding action pending a counter-attack by mobile reserve units. The German forces in the island were high-category troops, well-equipped and thoroughly trained and experienced. They were to be used in conjunction with the Italian field divisions as a reserve rather than as a separate force. There were also 24,000 air force personnel, evacuated from Tunisia, at air force installations. The enemy air force available for defense of Italy included 800 fighters and 150 bombers. These planes were mostly German and first line combat ships. The bombers operated primarily from Foggia airfields and the fighters from strips on the coastal plane. (See Map) The Italian Navy was still largely intact, and while strength and location was unknown in detail, it could interfere effectively with landing operations. Especially strong attacks could be expected from submarines, both Italian and German.

5. Following were the known capabilities of the enemy:

a. Defend at the water's edge with three coastal divisions reinforced by heavy coastal defenses and small mobile units armed with light artillery and machine guns.

b. Defend on ridge lines running perpendicular to the coast, thus channelizing any advance.

c. Defend on ridge line Ragusi - Vizzini - Pavanusa - Campabello with three coastal divisions reinforced by four infantry divisions. It was believed that the enemy would most likely defend at the water edge because of the elaborate beach defenses and the important air fields in the immediate vicinity.

6. Terrain.--For terrain features see Annex II. The approaches to the beach were very shallow which might limit the approach of LST's, and a sand bar 25 to 50 yards off shore was known to exist in many places.

7. Weather.--Heavy storms are prevalent this time of year on the Mediterranean. This might slow the progress of the convoys and cause seasickness among the troops. The weather for the first week after D day was expected to be fair and the terrain at the coastal plain dry and compact.

C - Training

1. Any consideration of the pre-invasion training must be predicated on:

a. The general state of training of the troops involved in the campaign.

b. The general state of developed doctrine for the type operation at the time it was undertaken.

2. The general state of training of the troops involved in the invasion of Sicily varied so widely that it almost ran the gamut of possibilities which might be expected. The Seventh Army, as such, became operational with the start of the campaign. While it had combat experience in Africa as an Armored Corps, it was greatly expanded for the Sicilian operation as far as personnel was concerned, and of course assumed much greater responsibility as to the employment of the combined arms. The II Corps was combat

experienced. The 1st Infantry Division had served through the African campaign, and must be considered as one of the better trained units under conditions of actual combat. The 3d Infantry Division, while it had also served in the African campaign, was composed of a mixture of men in various states of training. Many replacements had only basic training in the States prior to this campaign. A considerable additional number were combat experienced men transferred from another division, but with comparatively low morale since they believed they had lost their rest period by reason of the transfer. The 45th Infantry Division had just arrived from the States a mere three weeks before the invasion, and while qualified according to training camp standards, must be considered as totally green troops. In fact, its total pre-invasion training consisted of a landing exercise which did not exceed five days. The 82d Airborne Division had also just arrived, and had no combat experience. In addition, it was to be the first American airborne division to engage in any action, and therefore did not have the benefit of the prior experience of similar units.

3. It is most important that we project ourselves back to the conditions existing at the time, in any appraisal of the actions taken and the results achieved. To mention some of the technique and equipment which had not yet been developed, we must remember that Air-Ground liaison officers were not yet furnished major units; the DUKW had never been employed in a combat operation; airborne troops were a curiosity in the American Army; extensive preparatory Naval gun fire in major calibers prior to the landing had not yet been employed; Joint Assault Signal Companies were unknown to any troop list; command ships were an innovation; dissemination of maps made from recent aerial photos down to and including squad leaders was still a startling concept; the handling of large numbers of prisoners was

unsolved. In other words, the whole development of ship-to-shore and shore-to-shore amphibious operation was in its infancy. Paths were being blazed--often unknowingly.

4. There was a general recognition of the value and importance of full dress rehearsals of any operation, and varying efforts were made to accomplish these. The Army operated an Invasion Training School, where each regimental combat team available prior to the campaign was given a two-weeks course in loading, waterproofing, use of rubber landing boats, duties of the transport quartermaster, assignment of beaches, and the advance inland, to include an actual landing opposed by a battalion of "enemy" troops. These exercises were not as complete as might have been desired: in some cases loading or unloading was merely a "token" demonstration. In other cases unloading was not undertaken because of the shortage of waterproofing materials, necessitating using the practice loading as the actual loading. In still other cases, practice was accomplished on type craft other than was used in the actual operation, due to shortage of shipping. Seventh Army also conducted an administrative school for the instruction of personnel in the rapid and accurate compiling of strength reports and casualty reports.

5. The most effective training appeared to have been conducted on the division level. The 3d Infantry Division, for example, conducted physical conditioning, requiring troops to march five miles in one hour. Attempts were made to effect air-ground liaison prior to the invasion, with indifferent success. No mention was found of instruction in aircraft recognition. Training was conducted on beaches similar to the ones expected in Sicily, as revealed by sixty-year old maps, augmented by aerial photos. Live ammunition was employed in training, against captured German pill boxes. Shore Fire Control parties were organized and coordinated with the Navy for supporting fires beginning at H hour. Training was also conducted in mines,

booby traps and mountain climbing. The division, however, was not assembled as a unit until three weeks prior to D day.

6. It must be remembered that some major units came under the command of Seventh Army anywhere from two months to three weeks prior to D day, and that headquarters were widely separated over a great area.

D - Supply

1. The supply problem presented by an amphibious operation was a tremendous one, and with practically no precedent from which to draw on for experience. Force 343 was to be initially equipped and supplied until D 14 from North Africa, and on D 14 the first convoy loaded in the United States was to put in at Sicily. Force 343 was to be responsible for the coordination with Headquarters, SOS, NATOUSA in the assembling of supplies at various ports of embarkation, and then transportation to the Theatre of Operations. Supplies would be obtained from NATOUSA and forwarded on an automatic basis or on special request. All units were to be brought up to T B/A strength and items unobtainable in North Africa were to be ordered from the United States. An overall requisition was submitted by the Quartermaster to SOS, NATOUSA for Class I, II, III and IV supplies for an average strength of 130,000 troops for a period to D 30. The 45th Infantry Division was to be provided with 21 days maintenance and 10 units of fire; those mounted from North Africa with 21 days maintenance and 7 units of fire.

2. The change in plan from the western end of the island to the beaches in the southeast made it necessary to revamp the plan of supply and presented many difficulties. The earlier plan, of course, included the early capture of Palermo and smaller ports in the west. But the new area did not include a single major port and plans had to provide for "over the beaches" landing

of supplies for a period of thirty days, if necessary, until a port could be captured. This meant the waterproofing of all supplies susceptible to damage by exposure to salt water, and also the breaking down, as far as practicable, of all supplies into combat size packages of 70 pounds. Sufficient time was not available for securing waterproofing materials from the States, and much improvisation was required. An almost impossible job was delegated to the services by SOS, NATOUSA, only ten days before D day. The almost impossible was accomplished, and the "over the beaches" landing of supplies met all requirements of Task Force 343. Records show that from 10 July to 31 July approximately 104,134 deadweight tons were moved over the beaches in southern Sicily with a daily average of 4,733 tons. The greatest tonnage unloaded in a single day was 6,638 tons on 18 July, and the lowest 2,090 tons on 28 July, at which time ships were being diverted to the northern ports of Sicily.

3. The handling of supplies over the beaches was accomplished by the 40th Engineer Shore Regiment, and this operation developed some defects. Supplies were badly mixed on the beaches and lack of transportation and trained personnel created a traffic tie-up at the water's edge. Much perishable equipment was lost because it was unloaded at low tide, with insufficient waterproofing to protect it when the tide came in.

III

DISPOSITIONS

1. In preparation for the invasion of Sicily, the participating troops were in training in North Africa, with the exception of the 45th Infantry Division, which trained in amphibious operation at Camp Picket, Va., before departing from the United States. After arriving at Oran on 22 June, they participated in controlled landing exercises with the 1st Infantry Division. The 3d Infantry Division trained in the vicinity of Bizerte. The 82d Airborne Division trained in the vicinity of Kairouan.

2. All forces that were to take part in the invasion were grouped into three forces: Shark Force (II Corps), Joss Force, and the Reserve. Shark Force was subdivided into Dime Force and Cent Force, to land on D day, and Para Task Force, which was dropped on night of D / 1. The Reserve was divided into two parts, one a force afloat known as Kool Force and the second force composed of the 9th Infantry Division and the remainder of the 82d Airborne Division, to remain ashore in North Africa. Troops of the various forces loaded at North African ports 6-8 July. (Chart No. 1) The Infantry and Ranger units of Dime Force landed east of Gela at 0245-0247 on D day.

Units of the 45th Infantry Division landed west of Scoglitti at 0350-0434, the landing having been delayed one hour because the transports arrived in the area an hour late. Units of the 3d Infantry Division landed on the beaches both east and west of Licata at 0300-0400 (Chart No. 2, final disposition 2400, 24 July).

OPERATIONS

A - Naval Preparation

1. Throughout the development of the plan for the western task force, there was the closest cooperation between the Army and Navy staffs in spite of the wide separation of the various headquarters. The Western Naval Task Force, under command of Admiral Hewitt, was divided into four task forces, a train, and a reserve. The entire task force consisted of 601 ships and 1,124 shipborne landing craft. Of the 601 ships, 130 were warships, 324 transports and landing craft, and the remainder tugs, PT boats, mine layers, etc.

2. The naval forces for the assault were gathered in the ports of North Africa from Port Said to Gibraltar. From the United States fast and slow convoys steamed to their appointed rendezvous. In general, the larger ships were based on Oran and Algiers while the smaller craft gathered at Tunis, Bizerte and Sousse. Between 22 June and 4 July, ships were available for limited rehearsals and practice landings. On 5 July the various task forces making up the Western Task Force started to assemble. The Scoglietti

Convoy left Oran and was met the following day at Algiers by the Gela Convoy. The Licata convoy joined at Bizerte on 8 July. Detailed instructions were given at sea and special data were provided coxswains as to beach conditions. When the combined convoy reached a position off Gozo light about 1900, 9 July, it split up into the various attack forces.

3. Up until this time the passage had been comparatively uneventful except for one occasion on the 8th when the MURPHY attacked what it believed to be a submarine. However, throughout the 9th, the weather was particularly bad and there was considerable straggling among the heavily loaded LST's, LCI's and LCT's. As the ships approached the anchorage areas they saw searchlights and flares on the shore. There was the sound of artillery fire and the noise of machine guns and rifles. But the fire was not directed toward the ships although they were often caught in the beams of searchlights and seemed to be clear targets for the shore batteries. The firing was caused by the arrival of paratroopers who were dropped among the enemy at this time. The air cover supplied to the ships during their passage to Sicily was all that could be desired. However, the problem of providing continuous cover for the ships in the area of operations became more difficult. Confusion and loss of life resulted from the fact that our planes appeared intermittently and the ships did not know when to expect them.

4. The Scoglietti force consisted of 19 transports, 13 LST's, 5 LCI's and 8 LCT's carrying 25,817 troops of the 45th Infantry Division, reinforced. They were escorted by two cruisers and numerous destroyers and escort craft. Because the Army wished to achieve surprise there was no preliminary bombardment in the usual sense, but only close fire support by the destroyers as the boat waves went in. The cruisers were to afford deep fire support for the entire operation when needed. It was planned that as the destroyer

fire was lifted that LCS were to accompany the first wave of each transport toward shore and cover the beach with a rocket barrage. As it turned out, many LCS's were damaged in launching and considerably fewer participated than was planned. A heavy swell during the approach and the launching of the landing craft gave the transports a violent pitch which prevented the use of some of the craft. Therefore, most of the launching was accomplished after anchoring. But even after anchoring, the ships encountered difficulty in getting their boats into the water and some were lost. Due to this difficulty, H-hour was postponed one hour. Finally, after many difficulties the first boat from the transport LEONARD WOOD landed at 0345.

5. The area assigned to the Gela attack force lay between the Scoglietti and Licata forces and included beaches 67, 68, 69, 69A and 69B. The convoy was made up of cruisers, destroyers and 10 transports, 2 LSI's, 15 LST's and 19 LCI's carrying the 1st Infantry Division. Unlike the Scoglietti landings, which were all ship to shore, the Gela assaults were mixed, but this difference had little practical effect. Many of the landing craft suffered damage. The fire support plan in the Gela landing differed also. Whereas the destroyers at Scoglietti accompanied the first waves well inshore and fired on the beaches just before landing, at Gela the destroyers lay further from shore and were not to open fire until troops had landed. They were to fire on pre-arranged targets on the flanks of the area. The heaviest air and paratroop attack was aimed at this area since Ponte Olivio airfield lay beyond Gela. In general, the assault at Gela proceeded smoothly and close to schedule since the swell hampered the transports somewhat less. The first landing was made at Gela at approximately 0245.

6. On the morning of the 11th the Germans launched a vigorous counter-attack. Excellent fire support missions by cruisers and destroyers helped the ground troops withstand the attack.

7. The Licata landing differed again in that it was strictly a shore to shore operation in which no transports were involved. The convoy, consisting of 38 LST's, 54 LCI's, 80 LCT's, 2 Belgian LSI's, 9 British LCG's, 7 LCF's and 8 LCT's, carried 27,600 men of the 3d Infantry Division, reinforced. The approach of the Licata convoy was made smoothly and according to plan, except for the rough weather. The craft were pretty well strung out and the smaller craft were having a rough time. There were also sand bars in the harbor on which some of the LST's were grounded. Fire support was furnished by the cruisers BROOKLYN and BIRMINGHAM, destroyers, PT boats, and some British LCF's and LCG's. Fire support continued throughout the assault.

B - Air Support

1. In planning the Sicilian campaign, it was agreed among all the services that the primary mission of the Air Force was to neutralize the enemy forces and to provide maximum security for the convoys and for the beach assault, and only after that was accomplished could any support of operation be made. Since June the Air Forces had been committed in the operation against Pantelleria and as a result the AAF officers were unable to devote the necessary time to the detailed planning for this campaign. However, our air forces enjoyed air superiority over the enemy in the ratio, roughly, of 3700 to 1570, of which more than 800 were German. Although such a margin was sufficient to be decisive it nevertheless would require a struggle. In view of this the Navy recognized the fact that they would be required to face considerable bombing and torpedo attacks. All elements of the AAF in the Mediterranean theater were allotted their tasks. During the assembly period of the convoys fighter protection was provided by the Middle East Command and the Coastal Air Force. They also furnished

fighter aircraft for the assembled convoys during the approach.

2. During the preliminary phase the Strategic Air Force carried out a continuing mission against enemy air bases and communications. During the approach and assault phases the XII Air Support Command of the Tactical Air Force was charged with direct air support, although with emphasis on the qualification that such support must remain limited until the enemy air force had been neutralized and the beach heads secured.

3. During the entire period of the assault the AAF maintained constant air cover from bases in Malta, Gozo and Pantelleria. On D day alone, 1200 fighter sorties were flown. Heavy bombers continued to attack the few remaining serviceable enemy air bases, while both heavy and medium bombers ranged widely against enemy communication, transport and troop concentration. Air superiority had been quickly won and the damage to our shipping from enemy air attack was much less than had been expected.

C - Assault

AIRBORNE

1. The Airborne phase of operation Husky represented the first large Allied effort of landing combat forces by air in a combined operation. The 82d Airborne Division and the 52d Troop Carrier Wing were the units involved in the U. S. part of the operation. The British used the U. S. 51st Troop Carrier Wing with one group of British planes to carry the British 1st Airborne Division. The 82d Airborne Division was composed of the following main units:

- 325th Glider Infantry Regiment
- 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
- 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment
- 319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion
- 320th Glider Field Artillery Battalion
- 376th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
- 456th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
- 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion
- 80th Airborne AA Battalion

2. The plan for the invasion of Sicily in the American sector included the dropping of combat teams from the 82d Airborne Division prior to H hour on D day. This division was to drop inland in the vicinity of Gela to harass and delay a German Panzer Division known to be inland about 15 miles from Gela. A combat team composed mainly of the 505th Parachute Regiment was to land north and east of Gela, capture and secure high ground, disrupt communications and enemy troop movements. Then it was to attach itself to the 1st Infantry Division and help capture the air field at Ponte Olivo. A second force of this team was to drop south of Miscemi. The lift was to be made during the night of D -1 (9 July) at air fields near Kairovan, Tunisia. The 504th Combat Team was to land on the night of D day or D 1 in a vicinity to be determined later. This was to be the 2nd lift. The division commander and his party boarded the Seventh Army command ship 4 July to land on D day at Gela. Division Headquarters was to constitute a 3rd lift to be made on D 1 or thereafter. The 325th Combat Team and the 80th AA Battalion were to follow in that order. One battalion remained in Africa as reserve.

5. The 505th Combat Team spent the day of 9 July preparing for combat. At 1600, after supper, they moved to the air fields in and around Kairouan, from their nearby stations. They were loaded in (226) C-47 planes and cleared the field between 2010 and 2116, 9 July. The route, after the planes formed, was to the western coast of Malta and then north to Gela. During the afternoon a brisk gale came up, which diminished some by evening. It was, however, estimated at 35 m.p.h. during the over-water flight to Sicily. The rough air caused by this gale made a large portion of the men ill. It also caused the planes to be separated from formation as they had no running lights as guides during the darkness. As a result of this separation each plane had to search for its drop zone, which for the most part all missed.

The Combat Team when dropped was scattered from Gela to Modica, a distance of 50 to 60 miles. There was no AA fire on this formation except some tracers caused one plane to fall in flames. Eight planes failed to return although they had discharged their loads. Three planes returned with loads to base, and participated in a later lift.

4. On D-1 the 504th Combat Team received orders to load that evening. The lift was made with 144 C-47 planes and was scheduled to fly to Malta, then to Sicily to land at the Farello airport. They crossed the Sicily coast at 2230. The night was bright by quarter moon and the air fairly quiet. Indications were this would be a successful flight. A message had previously been sent to all land and naval units through their respective headquarters informing them of the operation. As the flight flew up the coast toward Gela at Lake Bivierre a .50 caliber gun opened fire. With this, guns from other friendly ground and naval units opened fire. The first nine planes of this first squadron were unharmed and proceeded to the drop zone. For the following squadrons the naval fire, particularly, became more intense. Twenty-three of the 144 planes were destroyed; six of these had not discharged their load. The dispersion of the flight was as great as the first, the men being dropped in nearly the same area.

5. The 505th Combat Team which landed during the night of D -1 were so scattered that they found themselves alone or in groups of two or three. Only one Company, less one plane load, was intact. The fighting resolved itself into guerrilla warfare until the following day when these men joined assault forces landed on the beaches. The 504th Combat Team landed on D / 1 and fought in much the same manner. Their general effect was to contact German and Italian forces and contain them until assistance could be procured from the beach-landed forces. After jumping, many men of this combat team

were killed while descending. Later it was discovered many of the ground units had not received information of the impending flight. It was further aggravated by the fact enemy bombers had attacked just as the airborne troops arrived overhead. These flights were made at an altitude of about 1000 feet. In one instance two men were killed after landing because the password had been changed.

6. The Airborne Division is generally credited by all commanders with attaining its objectives and completing its mission. While it failed to accomplish these specifically as outlined in field orders, it did engage elements of five enemy divisions and was credited with advancing the beach progress by two days. One of the results of their effort obtained from enemy interrogation was the fact the enemy was completely fooled as to the strength of the airborne troops because they were scattered over such a wide area. They believed the strength to be far greater than that actually dropped.

LANDINGS

1. No serious opposition was encountered when the troops moved ashore. Shore batteries did not put up any vigorous resistance; some were not even manned at the time of the attack; those which caused trouble were for the most part quickly silenced; there was sporadic rifle and machine gun fire. The Seventh Army landings were faced everywhere with bad weather conditions, and encountered, on the whole, more serious resistance than the British on the right. At Scoglietti the landings under cover of supporting fire from destroyers were virtually unopposed, and the establishment of the beach head was actually achieved in a shorter time than had been anticipated. Near Gela the 1st Infantry Division encountered heavy initial opposition at some beaches and very little at others. In the Licata area the 3d Infantry

Division met enemy counter-fire on only a few of the beaches. Landings were mainly handicapped by the heavy cross swell and northwesterly winds which made it difficult to get the landing craft ashore. By 0600 of D day all landings (six waves) had been successfully accomplished.

2. By 1155 Licata was in our hands and tanks were pushing northward toward Canicatti. Gela was captured and by 1710 a battalion of the Livorno Division (Italian), the only organized resistance encountered during the day, was withdrawing toward Butera. To the southeast, Scogletti was occupied and our forces in that sector pushed on toward Vittoria. At 1800 the floating reserves (Kool Force) landed and moved into assembly areas, remaining in Army reserve. By the end of D day all beach heads were secure and the two general beach head areas (Licata and Gela-Scogletti) extended from two to four miles inland.

SECURING THE BEACHES

1. Following the successful landings by the Seventh Army at Gela beach head the situation developed rapidly. The enemy launched his major counter attack at 0800 on 11 July with the greatest effort directed against the 1st Infantry Division in the Gela beach head area. Twenty Mark VI tanks of the Herman Goering Division spearheaded the attack which moved south on the Ponte Olivo road. The line, held by a regiment of the 1st Infantry Division, was pierced and the enemy reached a point only 200 yards from Gela. All available naval and artillery fire was concentrated on the advancing tanks and they were stopped at 1200. Enemy infantry which followed the armored vehicles were driven off by small arms fire. Another regiment of the 1st Infantry Division was also attacked by the enemy and nine Mark IV tanks managed to enter Gela. This attack likewise was repulsed by 1200 by

American tanks, artillery, rocket guns and anti-tank grenades. At 1630 the third counter attack was launched with the Butera-Gela road as the axis. This time the Rangers supported by infantry and engineer shore groups called from their beach duties stalled the attack. This enemy offensive proved to be the final major effort made in this area.

2. On the right flank of the II Corps, the 45th Infantry Division seized the air field north of Comiso at about 1700 hours, 11 July. Strong enemy resistance was encountered; however, of the 125 planes captured, 20 were still in operating condition. By night fall, elements of the 45th occupied Ragusa and on 12 July made contact with the advancing units of the 1st Canadian Division. Because of the light enemy resistance encountered by the British force which landed at Pachino, verbal orders were received from Seventh Army on 14 July changing the zone of advance of the II Corps. The new right boundary was the Vizzini-Caltagirone-Enna Road inclusive to the XXX British Corps. This change in orders stopped the advance just short of the Corps objective and changed the direction of the advance approximately 45 degrees.

3. American casualties for 11 July totalled 127 killed, 410 wounded and 1794 missing. However, by this time there were 80,000 men, 7,000 vehicles, 300 tanks and 900 guns successfully landed despite vicious counter-attacks. The costly repulses to the enemy did not deter them from further effort to reduce the Seventh Army beach heads. On the morning of 12 July an infantry attack, tank supported, was launched against the 1st Infantry Division south of Niscemi. With elements of the 2d Armored Division, the attack was turned back by 1400 hours after the enemy had suffered the loss of four Mark VI tanks, 29 Mark III and IV tanks, 10 Italian tanks, and 4,206 prisoners.

4. By now the Seventh Army's foothold on Sicily was from 8 to 15 miles deep. Part of the Herman Goering Armored Division was moving out and was located five miles northeast of Niscemi. The most important operations of the Seventh Army during the 13th and 14th were the capture of the Biscari air field and the establishment of a continuous front. The loss of Biscari air field constituted a serious loss to Axis air power in Sicily. It was estimated that enemy air power had been whittled down to but 40% of pre-invasion strength. On the same day the 45th Infantry Division pushed on five miles south of Coltagirone while the 1st Infantry Division took Niscemi and Mazzarino. It was now evident that the critical phase of the invasion was past and that the Seventh and Eighth Armies had more than a firm foothold on Sicily.

CONCLUSIONS

1. PRE-INVASION TRAINING

a. Units to participate should be selected and assigned to the major unit involved as early as practicable prior to D day.

b. Adequate quantities of current maps should be distributed to all concerned.

c. The tactical use of new types of combat units, such as airborne, must be carefully explained to all concerned. For example, it appears that Regimental Commanders of the 45th Infantry Division were uninformed as to the plan for use of the 82d Airborne Division.

d. Complete dress rehearsals of the combined arms and services must be carefully worked out, using the equipment expected to be employed in the actual operation.

e. Liaison can hardly be over-done; it is easily underdone.

2. SUPPLY.

a. Perishable supplies should be made up in small, unit-packed containers and thoroughly waterproofed for amphibious operations.

b. Tables of Organization for Corps and Army did not provide sufficient personnel in G-4 section to carry out the supply mission in an amphibious operation.

c. A Base Area Group must be provided in the planning stages of any contemplated overseas operation and must operate directly under the task force commander.

d. Detachments or full units of various services should be included in the landing in order to handle their own supplies and to operate beach dumps.

e. A transportation section as an additional special staff section is essential to successful operation of the supply function in an amphibious force.

3. NAVAL OPERATIONS.

a. Naval gun fire played a large part in the success of the landings. Its effectiveness on shore batteries and strong points was particularly good.

b. Shore-to-shore operations were much more effective than ship-to-shore.

c. More training of coxswains was needed, particularly in the manipulation of small boats in the vicinity of Transports.

4. AIRBORNE OPERATIONS.

a. More and better training in navigation by air crews.

b. Lanes of approach should be selected over water not in the path of naval vessels.

c. Information to the combined arms as to flights should be more positive and faster.

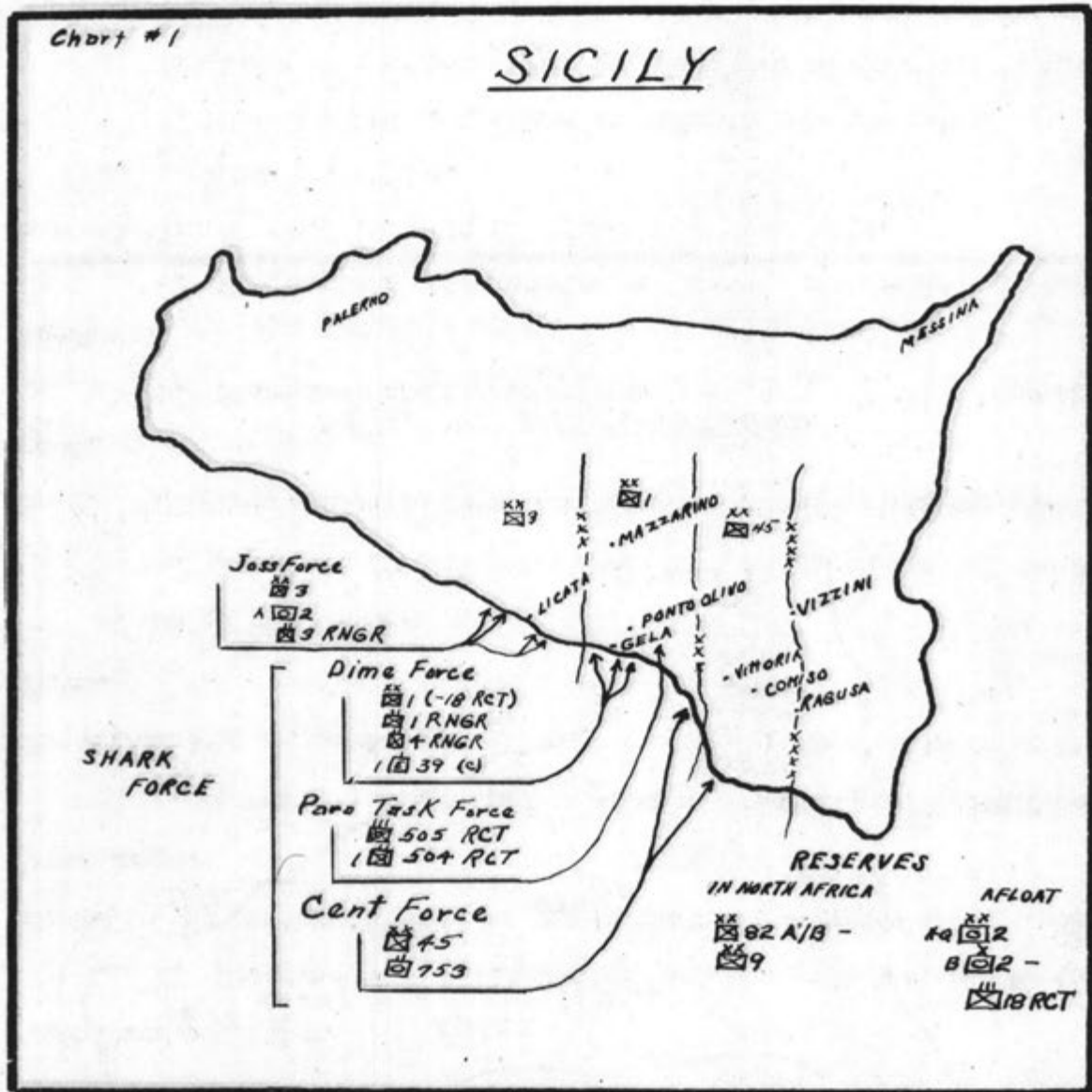
d. Pathfinder crews should be furnished to mark drop zones for following troops.

e. Fighter escort should accompany troops.

f. ~~Gliders should be used in the landing of supplies.~~

Chart #1

SICILY



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