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THE OPERATIONS OF THE MILITARY POLICE PLATOON, (1ST INF. DIV.)
IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OMAHA BEACHHEAD, JUNE 6, 1944
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of the Platoon Executive Officer)

Type of operation described: OPERATIONS OF MILITARY POLICE PLATOON
IN THE ATTACK.

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THE OPERATION OF THE MILITARY POLICE PLATOON (1ST U.S. INF. DIV.)
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of the Military Police Platoon, 1st U. S. Infantry Division, in the establishment of the Omaha Beachhead, Normandy, France, on 6 June 1944.

In the preparation of this monograph it will be noted that a unit record or a history for the period concerned is non-existent, and despite all care used in a five-week research, and assembly of the materials, it is recognized that the information is not complete in all details, and undoubtedly involves minor errors of fact. Therefore before a final official history of this phase of the Normandy campaign is prepared, the gaps will have to be filled and the errors corrected.

Realizing that most members of the Army know so little of the composition and mission of an infantry ^dDivision, Military Police Platoon, I would like to inject a few words on the subject, at this point. If one were to look at this unit in 1942, he would find the following: Personnel included 72 men and 4 officers, with the following breakdown:

1. Platoon Headquarters...10 men..... 2 officers.
2. Police Section.....25 men..... 1 officer.
3. Traffic Section.....37 men..... 1 officer.

All personnel of this platoon are trained in both police and traffic duties, and are interchangeable for these duties as the situation demands. During combat operations the police section operates the prisoner of war cage and supplements the traffic section. By comparison one can readily see that this platoon is somewhat larger than a rifle platoon of an Infantry Rifle Company. This platoon is attached to Division Headquarters Company for mess and administration, and is commanded by the Division Provost Marshal, who is also a member of the special staff of the Division Commander.

He has the following responsibilities:

1. Interior guard of the Division command post.
2. Collection and custody of prisoners of war.
3. Enforcement of traffic control regulations.
4. Apprehension and disposition of stragglers and deserters.
5. Enforcement of police regulations among members of the military forces and areas occupied by the troops.
6. Cooperation with civil authorities on plans including those of police protection, black-outs, antisabotage activities and the like.
7. Control of the civil population, including circulation of individuals and mass movements of refugees, when circumstances dictate.
8. Criminal investigation activities, custody and disposition of offenders.
9. Coordination with the military police in adjacent and higher headquarters.
10. Recommendations as to location of the straggler line and collecting points for prisoners of war.
11. Close liaison with the division engineer unit, the General Staff.

In order to more fully appreciate the physical and mental conditioning which this rather unique element of an infantry division enjoyed at the time of the D-day assault on the "Omaha Beachhead", Normandy, France, I would like to take the reader back in the history of the division to November the 8th 1942. Here we find the Division as the "Central Task Force", attacking the seaport city of Oran, Algeria in North Africa. Upon closer analysis, we find the 26th R.C.T. striking the city from the west, and the 16th and 18th R.C.T.'s attacking from the vicinity of Arzew, to the east of the city. In the course of three days, hostilities ceased, and Oran fell to this double envelopment. (1)

Looking at this operation in view of the military police, we find the Division Provost Marshal, Lt Col Thomas F. Lancer, attached 25 men and one officer to the 26th R.C.T. The remaining members of the platoon, 45

men and 3 officers landed with elements of the 16th Combat Team, and Division Headquarters. This operation was our baptism of fire, and it was here that our amphibious training was first put to a practical test. The first prisoner of war cage, set up and manned by the "P.W." section of the military police platoon, was established in a French barracks, located approximately two miles east of Arzew. (2) Our interrogation team from II Corps Headquarters began operating in this cage on the 2nd day. The handling of these prisoners of war was, for the most part, uncoordinated and somewhat haphazard, as might be expected of a new unit. During this three-day engagement approximately 2,300 prisoners were processed, most of whom were French Colonial Troops plus a few French Foreign Legionnaires and uniformed public officials. (3)

The excellent road-net in and around the vicinity of Oran afforded adequate capacity for all organic and attached vehicles of the Division. Therefore traffic was not the obstacle it might have been.

The 19th of November 1942 found the Division being committed piecemeal into the battle of "Tunisia", with elements of the Division operating under both French and British commands. It wasn't until March the 17th 1943 that we find the Division reconstituted as a whole again, in preparation for the attack on Gafsa, Tunisia. In support of this impending attack, the military police were called on for various reconnaissance missions, working closely with the Division Engineer Reconnaissance Section, the G-3 and G-4. (4)

Following the capture of Gafsa on the 19th of March 1943, the Division attacked and captured the little Arab Village of El Guettar, extending to the high ground east of the village, thus threatening the highway to Gabes. This operation was completed on the 21st of March, and resulted in the capture of approximately 11,000 prisoners, most of whom were Italians. The "P.W." cage was located in El Guettar approximately 400 yards west of

(2, 3, 4) Eye Witness, Self.

Division Headquarters, which had been set up in a large date grove, the only concealment for miles around. (5) Problems of feeding and evacuating this large number of prisoners were soon mastered; however, a later critique of the functioning of the "P.W." section in this operation, disclosed the fact that due to so many prisoners coming into the cage at one time, sufficient time was not allowed for a thorough search of the prisoners, resulting in a number of hand grenades, knives, etc., being found dug into the sand within the cage. Rest assured, from that point on, all prisoners, regardless of their number, were thoroughly searched before entrance into the cage. (6)

With the capture of El Guettar the Division was in a position to drive to the east, and secure the seacoast city of Gabes. Had this taken place, Tunisia and Libya would have been split in half. Realizing this possibility, the German commander, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel (better known as the "Desert Rat") decided to launch a tremendous offensive with the entire elite Tenth Panzer Division of the Africa Corps to ward off this threat. This offensive started on the 23rd of March, and had such momentum that it was not completely stopped until two of the field artillery battalions of the Division, the 5th, and 32nd were run over. (7) As a direct result of this action the military police traffic section, with traffic control stations located along the El Guettar-Gabes road, operated as a straggler line. These stragglers were stopped as they drifted back, fed, and returned to their respective units.

Following the British 8th Army's successful campaign in Libya, a meeting of the American and British forces was affected along the El Guettar-Gabes road on the 14th of April 1943. (8)

The 19th of April found the Division attacking in the north of Tunisia, toward the town of Mature. In order to accomplish this, the Division was completely motorized, and a 340-mile movement was controlled by the M.P.

(5, 6) Eye Witness, Self; (7, 8) A-3, p. 2.

traffic section. This proved to be one of the most effective tactical moves of the 1st Division in the Tunisian Campaign. In this area the Division became engaged in some of the bloodiest battles in Tunisia, including assaults on hills 523, 350, and 409. Finally on May 7th 1943, the day which the Division had looked forward to for so long, the city of Tunis fell, and the Division was relieved. (9)

Following the relief by the 3rd U. S. Infantry Division, we find the Division moving back toward Oran. These moves were by combat teams, and the major towns along the route of march were patrolled by M.P. details which were sent ahead of these columns. Establishing itself in the vicinity of Oran, the Division immediately began training and planning for its third campaign and second invasion, the island of Sicily. Following completion of the planning stage, the Division moved to the vicinity of Staouli Algeria, approximately 17 miles west of Algiers. Here, after completion of small scale landing maneuvers, the Division loaded into transports, L.S.T.'s, and L.C.I.'s, for the impending assault on Sicily. The 9th of July 1943 found the Division moving toward the southern shores of Sicily, and at 0245 on the 10th, (10) the 26th and 18th R.C.T.'s were assaulting the fortified coastline of the island in the vicinity of "Gila". On the 1st day of this operation the Provost Marshal sent 15 men into Gila as a security detail. As evening closed in, the Germans sent a number of tanks into the town, apparently to reconnoiter and test the defense of the established beachhead. The Rangers, who had actually secured the town, were able to render two of these tanks useless with bazooka fire; however, the rest of the tanks moved back into the interior, unmolested. In a later critique of this operation it was pointed out that had this group of M.P.'s had some antitank grenades they may have neutralized a few of those tanks. (11) The rest of the Sicilian campaign added very little of interest to ~~the maturity value of the military police with the exception of the usual~~ traffic hazards, and routine security details in towns within the Division

(9, 10) A-3, p. 2; (11) Eye Witness, Self.

zone of action.

Following the 37 day Sicilian campaign the Division moved into an area west of Licata, on the south coast, with Division headquarters being set up approximately 1 mile north of the odorous village of Palma di Montichiaro. Here the M.P. Platoon began training for the "big show to come, and on October 23rd, the entire division boarded British transports in the Agusta harbor, and sailed for England. (12)

PRELUDE TO D-DAY

Immediately upon our arrival in England the division headquarters was set up in the small village of Blandford, approximately 40 miles northwest of Bournemouth, and within a very few days this headquarters became a bee-hive of activity, indicating that something big was in the offing. The three regiments, billeted in private homes and hotels in the south of England, immediately inaugurated an intensive training program. The M.P. Platoon was billeted in the vicinity of the division command post, and not to be outdone by the other elements of the division, they too, started an intensive training program including: rifle marksmanship, schooling in chemical warfare, waterproofing of vehicles, command post exercises, and the like. (13)

Policing the division zone of responsibility, and maintaining this rather elaborate training program, presented a number of problems, the most of which were solved by rotating the men from sub-station duty, to duty at the division command post. In this manner the provost marshal was able to carry out his mission of policing the area, and training his men at the same time. (14)

In addition to the necessary traffic patrols, town policing, and interior guard missions, the M.P.'s were called on for a 24-hour guard on a rather elaborate and highly secret planning room, set up initially for

(12) A-3, B-3: (13) M.P. Platoon Self

the division staff. A secret security "Bigot" card was issued to specific personnel within the division by the G-2 section of the division general staff. Entrance into this planning room was permitted only to those persons properly classified under this system, and during the early planning stages only a limited number of personnel were briefed in the operation; however, as D-day approached additional personnel were briefed as necessary. (15)

In March of 1944 we found ourselves busily preparing for a full scale landing maneuver. This first dress rehearsal, called exercise "Fox", displayed all phases normal to an amphibious landing, including: waterproofing of vehicles, movement to the marshalling areas, movement from the marshalling area to the ship, a sea voyage to the landing area, an assault landing on the beach, and the follow-up. This exercise and the one to follow were held at Slapton Sands, which had been set aside as an assault training area for the American forces. The choice of this area was due largely to the fact that the conditions prevailing at Slapton Sands were similar to what was expected on the planned landing area on the French coast, including the tide, the beach, the terrain, the road-net, the hedge-rows, and the like. (16)

The 2nd and last exercise "Fabius", which took place on May 3rd to the 6th, was identical with the first; however, on a somewhat larger scale. In this exercise the traffic section was put to an extreme test trying to keep the division transportation moving along the high-banked, one-way English roads. As a result of this factor traffic became one of the major problems in the planning of the actual invasion. (17)

Looking momentarily at the "big" picture we find the ground forces with General Sir Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group planning to assault the Normandy beach at 3 main points, utilizing 6 reinforced infantry divisions, and 3 Airborne divisions. 21st Army Group fielded two Armies, the 1st U. S. Army and the British 2nd Army. The 1st U. S. Army, under command

(15, 16, 17) Eye Witness, Self.

~~of Lt General Omar N. Bradley, planned to hit the beach at two points~~
with two Corps, the 7th Corps on the right and the 5th Corps on the left. The 7th Corps would land one division north of the Vire Estuary on "Utah" beach, and assisting this assault were the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, landing during the early hours of June 6th at Ste-Mere-Eglise and northwest of Carentan respectively. (18) On the "Omaha" beach, to the east of the Vire Estuary, 5th Corps, under command of Major General Gerow, was to assault with the 1st U. S. Infantry Division reinforced. The Corps' mission was to push straight south establishing a beachhead, and forming a continuous front with the British on their left flank. The boundary between these two Armies ran from a point west of Port-en-Bessin^R generally south through Formigny. (19)

The British 2nd Army planned to attack with the 50th Infantry Division on the right, the 3rd Canadian Division in the center, and the 3rd British Division on the left flank. To protect the British left flank against attack from the east a brigade of the 6th British Airborne Division was to be dropped across the Orne River. (20)

General Montgomery's intention after seizure of the initial beachhead, was to hold in the area south of Caen while the U. S. 1st Army maneuvered to cut off the Cotentin Peninsula and capture Cherbourg. (21)

In the 5th Corps sector, the initial assault unit, (Force "O") consisted of the 1st Division, reinforced to include four infantry regiments with strong attachments of artillery, armor, and engineers. This reinforced Division included the 16th and 18th R.C.T.'s of the 1st Division, the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions, and the 115th and 116th R.C.T.'s of the 29th Infantry Division. The remaining R.C.T. of the 1st Division was attached to the 29th Division which became a part of the follow-up force (Force "B"). (22)

(18, 19, 20, 21) A-1, p. 5; (22) A-1, p. 8.

PLANNING PHASE

The Omaha Beach was divided into six sectors, from right to left:

Dog Green, Dog White, Dog Red, Easy Green, Easy Red, and Fox Green.

The general plan of the 1st Division was to have two regiments attack abreast on this beach. On the two eastern sectors (Easy Red and Fox Green) the 16th R.C.T. would attack with two battalion landing teams abreast, the 2nd Battalion on the right, and the 3rd Battalion on the left. The 1st Battalion, in support during the beach assault, would move through the 2nd Battalion to capture the village of Formigny. The 116th Regimental Combat Team on the right would likewise attack with two battalion landing teams, the 3rd Battalion on the left, the 2nd Battalion on the right. The 1st Battalion was to land on Dog Green, proceed along the high ground to the west, and capture the high ground in the vicinity of Maisy.

(23)

The two Ranger Battalions had a special mission to the west of the main landings. The 2nd Ranger Battalion would land in the vicinity of Point Du Hoe, scale the cliffs, and neutralize the known enemy fortified battery position there. If this assault proved successful the 5th Ranger Battalion was to land just west of Dog Green, and assault the enemy position at Point de la Percee, on the right of the 1st Division zone of action. (24)

In support of this assault on Omaha Beach the Division Provost Marshal decided to land two officers and 28 men on sector Easy Red at H + 80 minutes. Of this group ^{one} ~~one~~ officer and 14 men would proceed up the E-1 exit to the entrance of ^{St.} H.-Laurent; the remaining officer and 14 men were to proceed along the beach to the E-3 exit and establish control posts inland to the village of Colleville. In the ^event that either one of these groups were unable to accomplish their mission, one more officer and 14 men would land on Easy Red at H + 230 minutes, to move up to either E-1 or E-3 exit. If, by chance, all of these missions failed, the remaining

(23, 24) A-1, p. 30.

elements of the platoon would take over the assigned mission³, landing at H + 300 minutes. (25)

In a series of conferences with the Provost Marshal of the Engineer Special Brigade Group, it was decided that ^{the Engineers} they would initially control the beach as far back as the main exits from the beach, inland. The 1st Division M.P.'s would control the exits E-1, E-2³, and inland as far as the tactical situation dictated. In other words if the assault elements made favorable progress into St Laurent and Colleville the M.P.'s would follow closely. (26)

The 116th R.C.T.'s zone of action was to be covered by M.P.'s of the 29th Division, coming in at H +^{minutes}70 and following the assault elements as closely as possible; Their main mission being to initiate control of traffic (tactical), guide personnel and vehicles into vehicle transit areas, and to establish and operate collecting points for prisoners of war. (27)

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

In the zone allotted to Vth Corps for this impending large-scale landing operation, we find only one favorable landing area. A five-mile stretch of beach extends from Port-en-Bessin, in the east, to Pointe de la Percee, in the west. This stretch of beach is closed at both ends by rock ledges and cliffs averaging 100 feet in height. On this five-mile interval of favorable landing beach, Vth Corps planned its assault landings, designating the area as "Omaha" Beach. The beach slopes quite gently below high-water mark, and on a low tide approximately 300 yards of firm sand is exposed. On this tidal flat the Germans constructed numerous "underwater" obstacles including the Element "C", a gate-like structure of reinforced iron frames with iron supports; heavy logs^e driven into the sand at such an angle that the mine-tipped ends pointed seaward, and hedge-hogs made of steel rails and strongly set into the sand. (28)

At four points along Omaha Beach small wooded ravines slope back

(25, 26, 27) Eye Witness, Self; (28) A-3, p. 3.

inland and provide natural corridors for exit from the beach. These corridors were key areas both in the plan of attack and in the arrangement of defenses. The advance inland of assaulting units would depend on opening these exit roads for traffic and supply from the beach. (29)

Looking at the road-net south or inland from the beach, we find two main laterals: a 15-foot hard-surface road paralleling the coast from Vierville to St Laurent to Port-en-Bessin, and a still better road running laterally from Isigny to Formigny to Bayeux. (30) The north-south roads extending up from the beach were secondary in nature and characterized by steep shoulders, and in many places, by high embankments. As a result of this very poor north-south road-net, it would be necessary to do a great deal of engineering work in the development of suitable north-south axials.

Once up the steep slopes bordering the beach, we find a gently rolling plain divided into numerous patches of land by hedgerows, which are the universal substitute for fences in this country, and vary in character almost as much as do the shapes of the fields. Some are low bushes, some are thick walls of tough briary hedge, and still others are dikes of earth. (31)

MARSHALLING

With the completion of the planning and coordination phase we find the M.P. Platoon moving into the marshalling area on May 22, 1944. The platoon was split up according to the plan, and sent to "Blocks", within the marshalling area, corresponding to the ships which they would be on. The first section, two officers and 28 men, went to Area D-8, Block 4, for loading on L.S.T. #420. (32)

The 2nd group to land, 1 officer and 14 men, went to Area D-8, Block 6, for loading on L.C.T. #138.

The 3rd group to land, 1 officer and 42 men, went to Area D-6, Block 11, to load on L.C.T. #139.

(29) A-1, p. 16; (30) A-1, p. 17; (31) A-1, p. 16; (32) Personal Knowledge, Self.

~~The 4th and command group of 1 officer and 5 men moved into Area D-2,~~
Block 5, to load on L.S.H. (33)

On May 24 maps of the landing area were drawn, and all personnel were thoroughly briefed. At this time all men were given an overlay with the complete plan of traffic circulation, and each man was familiarized with his specific part in that plan. In addition, this overlay showed the position of the prisoner of war cage, and vehicle transit areas. They were further briefed in the location of the Division Command Post, and major supply dump areas, though this information was not included in the overlay for security reasons. (34)

THE VOYAGE

On the night of 2-3 June, all four of these elements of the M.P. Platoon moved out of the marshalling area to the Portland harbor where they boarded their respective craft. At approximately 1700, 2nd of June, the author with 28 men and 1 officer boarded L.S.T. #420, and moved out into the already crowded harbor, where we dropped anchor and waited for the "big" day. The 3rd of June, spent on board ship proved uneventful; however, the 4th of June presented another picture. By noon of the 4th the weather looked quite bad. The English Channel is well known for the unpredictable nature of its weather and, on this one occasion, during the period covered by this monograph, it lived up to its reputation. Rough weather, accompanied by strong winds and rough seas, made it necessary to postpone D-day for 24 hours. By this decision D-day was changed from June 5 to June 6. (35).

On the evening of the 4th it was pouring rain, the wind whipped spray over the decks of the smaller ships around us, and blotted out the faces of the men in the boats. On the afternoon of the 5th, the ship commander received orders to move out of the harbor, and within 3 hours we were all in convey moving slowly along the coast of England toward France. On 6th

(33) Personal Knowledge, Self; (34, 35) Eye Witness, Self.

sides of this convoy destroyers could be seen moving fast up and down these columns, and frequently a flight of fighter planes would cross overhead. (36)

"D" Day

After the evening meal last minute checks on equipment were made, and the men bedded down for the night. At approximately 0200, on the 6th, the ship slowed down to a stop, and upon inquiry, I found that we were about 9 miles from "Omaha" Beach. An early breakfast was served at 0300, and at 0400 the men were ordered to secure equipment for a call to their station which was on the port side of the ship. Looking out over the rough seas I could see salvo after salvo leave one of the battleships, followed by a red arc across the sky, a bright flash somewhere along the beach, and the return of the sound. Further inland the sky was aflame, apparently from the activity of the paratroopers. (37) At 0530 my two reinforced squads were loaded into an L.C.A., and lowered into the water. As we swung clear we joined other L.C.A.'s bobbing about among the big transports stretching out as far as one could see. A brisk northeast wind whipped up the waves and salt spray drenched us. Overhead we could hear bombers, and nearing the warships, broadsides from the heavy guns smacked our eardrums. Moving toward a large transport, we circled three times and added more L.C.A.'s to our wave. As we moved closer toward the shore the men began to get seasick, and soon many of them were vomiting on all sides. Nearing our line of departure our L.C.A. began shipping water from the heavy seas; however, the craft's pumps were turned on and they seemed to carry the load. (38) The men soon became drenched and chilled by the heavy spray, cramped by the immobility in the craft, and weakened by seasickness. It Suffices to state, they were not in the best of condition for the coming strenuous action on the beach. (39) Nearing the beach I could make out the E-1 exit, and within 400 yards of the shore we could see harmless fountains of spray from shells as they landed around us. Moving on in water

(36, 37, 38, 39) Eye Witness, Self.

~~obstacles came into view as they stuck out of the water close to shore.~~

We soon found ourselves among these obstacles, and the naval personnel operating the craft began to maneuver around the more prominent ones. All of a sudden we came to an abrupt halt! hung up on an obstacle! Our attention was focused on the L.C.A. on our immediate right as it had apparently hit a mine and began to sink. Realizing that we were a sitting duck I ordered the craft abandoned; however, before I had finished that order the right front part of the craft was hit by either an artillery shell or a mortar round, wounding 14 of my 28 men, making them ineffective for the rest of the operation. (40) This explosion blew the ramp off, so we proceeded to move out through it. As we hit the water we found it to be over our heads, so we had to swim approximately 20 yards to firm footing. ^{As we} ^{ed} Moving up the sand toward the beach, the enemy dropped three more of my men with machine gun fire, and I arrived at a little shelf on the beach with but 11 men and one officer capable of further action. While reorganizing this small group we could hear a machine gun firing off on our right front; in fact, we could see men on our right drop to the sand from its effect. Still we could not locate it; finally one of my men thought he spotted it at the base of the slope to our right front. It looked like a pill-box, but no aperture could be seen. In a few moments a half-track came up to the shore. I pointed the target out to the crew and they took it under effective fire. Firing from the pill-box ceased and the half-track moved on down the beach toward the D-3 draw; as it neared this draw it received a direct hit and began to burn. In the meantime the machine gun in the pill-box opened up again. Soon a tank came into view and someone apparently pointed the target out to the tank crew. With one round a camouflage net was blown from the pill-box exposing the aperture, and two more rounds neutralized it. (41)

(40, 41) Eye Witness, Self.

At this point I decided to send Lt Bradford and 7 men down the beach to the east, and up the E-3 draw to post the men along the beach, and up the draw as far as possible. At approximately 1110 I proceeded up the E-1 draw posting one slightly wounded man at the entrance to the draw, and moved forward with three men toward St Laurent. Another artillery round drove us to the ground, but not hitting it soon enough, the three men were wounded, one badly, the other two only slightly. (42)

By this time the chest wound, which I had received on the craft, began giving me a little pain, so I administered the morphine surret, which we were all equipped with, into my arm. Within a very few moments I felt much better, and moved on up the draw toward St Laurent with my last two men. One of these men I posted on the bluff overlooking the beach, the other I posted in front of the designated Division Command Post. Returning to the beach I found that Brig. General Willard G. Wyman, assistant division commander of the 1st Division, had established a C.P. in a pill-box at the entrance to the E-1 draw. (43) It was now about 1400 hours and vehicles of all types were waiting to move up the draw toward St Laurent, so I moved down to the nearest vehicle, which happened to be a half-track, and sitting on the right front fender, led the column from the beach up the E-1 draw into a hastily picked vehicle transit area, about 300 yards from the Division Headquarters, which was ^{now} being set up a few hundred yards east of St Laurent. At this point I began to get a little tired, and felt perhaps I was just hungry, so I sat down in the vicinity of the Division Command Post, and opened a "K" ration. I didn't appear to be hungry at all, so I started to get up, but I felt so dead-tired that I just couldn't find the energy to do so. I guess I sat there for a few moments, ^{before} and finally I fell over on my side. A Medic gave me another shot of morphine and placed me in a fox-hole. (44)

(42, 43, 44) Eye Witness, Self.

D-DAY

The rest of this monograph will deal with the follow-up elements of the platoon, the 1st group of which, landed at approximately 1030 on Easy Green where they ran into artillery, mortar and small-arms fire. Lt Zaniewski and his 14 men tried to move to the east toward the E-1 draw; as they moved down the beach enemy fire forced them to the ground, and they sought protection of the shelf which ran laterally along the beach. At 1700 this group had made its way up to the E-1 draw and by 1740 they arrived at the Division Command Post, located in a little draw approximately 500 yards east of St Laurent Sur Mere. This group was more fortunate than the leading element in the landing, and were able to hang on to some of their equipment. (45)

The 3rd and largest group landed at approximately 1130 on Easy Red, along with most of the vehicles of the platoon including: 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton trucks and 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton trucks. These vehicles were combat-loaded and carried most of the platoon's equipment. This equipment was badly needed and included the Route markers, traffic lanterns, franco plates, flashlights, batons for night traffic, command post signs, etc.

The L.C.T. containing these vehicles was unable to come close to the shore due to the gradual slope of the sand. As a result, 5 of the $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton trucks did not make it to the shore, drowning out about half way in. Some of the men in this group tried to salvage these water-logged vehicles, and finally managed to retrieve two of them before further efforts were made impossible by the rising tide. Arriving on shore they received mortar and artillery fire which varied in intensity, but forced them to the near bank for protection. Captain Regan and his 47 men moved on up the E-1 draw to the Division Command Post arriving there at about 1800. (46)

In the meantime Lt Col Lancer had arrived on the beach with the platoon headquarters, and after a hasty reconnaissance of the beach area he

(45, 46) Personal Knowledge, Self.

proceeded up the E-1 draw to the Division Command Post. There he reorganized the Platoon, reposted the ^e Exits, set up his interior guard of the Command Post, initiated the posting of signs along the beach and up the draws, and organized the Prisoner of War squad for the establishment of a "P.W." cage the next day. Looking the tactical situation over, he laid plans for the employment of the platoon for the close follow-up of the assault elements of the Division beachhead.

As a short summary one could say that heavy seas, landing of elements on the wrong beaches, intense fire from well entrenched positions, the drowning out of the vehicles, tanks and artillery, abnormally high casualties among the officers and N.C.O.'s, failure to get the beach exits open, congestion on the beach, difficulties of making full use of naval gun fire because of fear of inflicting casualties on our own troops, lack of sufficient gaps in underwater obstacles, and beach obstacles, failure of aerial bombardment to dislodge or silence many beach fortifications, had inflicted many casualties and delayed the progress of our units.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing this operation I do so in the light of previous operations of this same sort, namely the amphibious landing in North Africa and in Sicily. Under those conditions I feel that I could write a great deal about the vast improvement in amphibious warfare, and therefore considerably less from a critical angle; however, a number of glaring mistakes were made. Some of them are:

1. The Air Corps in their pre-assault bombardment plans, designed to neutralize all known gun positions and demoralize enemy troops in the beach defenses, did not accomplish this mission.

2. I severely criticize the planning of the initial line-up on the assault waves with the 16th R.C.T. and the 116th R.C.T. side by side, and to make it still worse E Company of the 16th was scheduled to land beside E Company of the 116th. Confusion is normal on a beach and this line-up served only to magnify the confusion.

3. I criticize the Navy for not taking into account the strong current running laterally eastward along the beach in landing the Infantry elements. Practically all of the mislanded craft were east of their target points!

4. One criticism of the enemy. In preparing his defensive positions along this sector of the coast, he depended too heavily on a relatively thin line of fortification. In contrast to the teachings here at The Infantry School of establishing a defensive position in depth!!

5. The amphibious exercises held over a beach similar in nature to the Omaha Beach gave the men invaluable experience for this operation.

LESSONS LEARNED

As might be expected, the operation of the military police platoon on the Omaha Beachhead uncovered numerous lessons in combat operations worthy of consideration. Outstanding among these are:

1. Amphibious exercises ^{on} a beach similar in nature to the beach on the enemy's shore ^{is} invaluable.

2. The use of a relatively smokeless, flashless powder aided the enemy considerably.

3. In an amphibious assault, if a craft becomes hung up on an obstacle, move out fast, before the enemy zeroes in on you.

4. Once on the beach, move aggressively inland, and get away from the curtain of fire placed on the beach.

5. If at all possible, do not plan to use units of similar designation side by side.

6. Thorough knowledge of map reading cannot be over-emphasized.

7. To be effective, a defensive position must be established in depth.

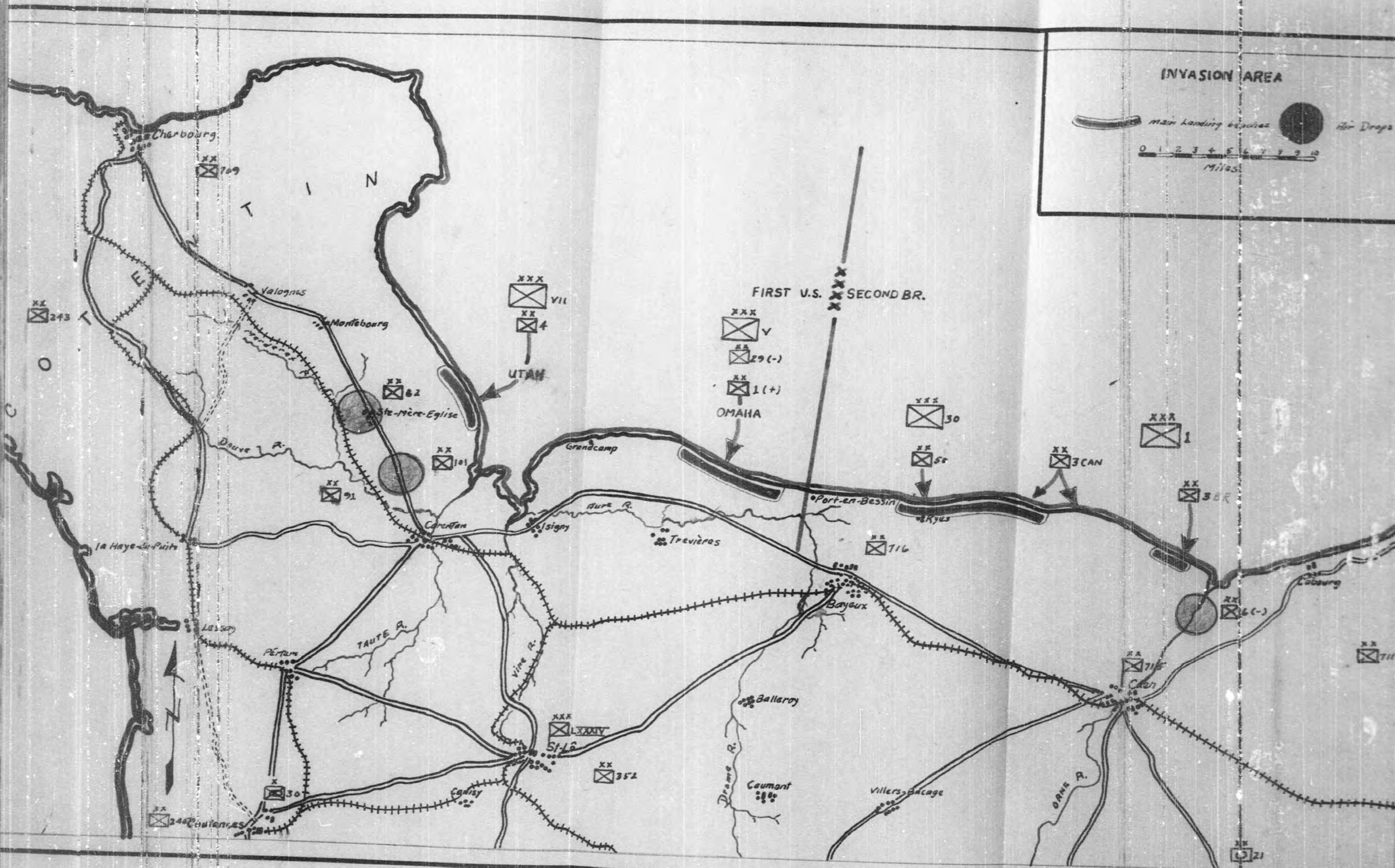
8. Replacements for key positions should be trained at least 2 deep.

It takes time to train officers and men for technical jobs.

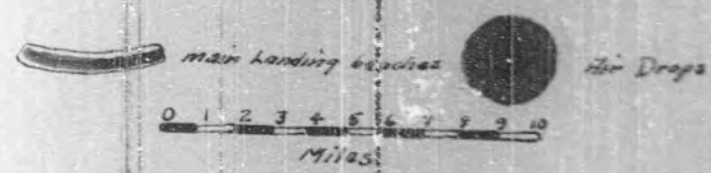
9. Where possible, men should be drawn from Rifle Companies for M.P.

~~Only~~ A knowledge of the personal hardship of the riflemen makes a better M.P.

10. All arms of the Service should have a basic knowledge and training in the Infantry.



INVASION AREA



FIRST U.S. SECOND BR.

XXXV
XX 29(-)
XX 1(+)
OMAHA

XXXVII
XX 4
UTAN

XXX 30
XX 5r

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XXX 1

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XXX LXXXIV
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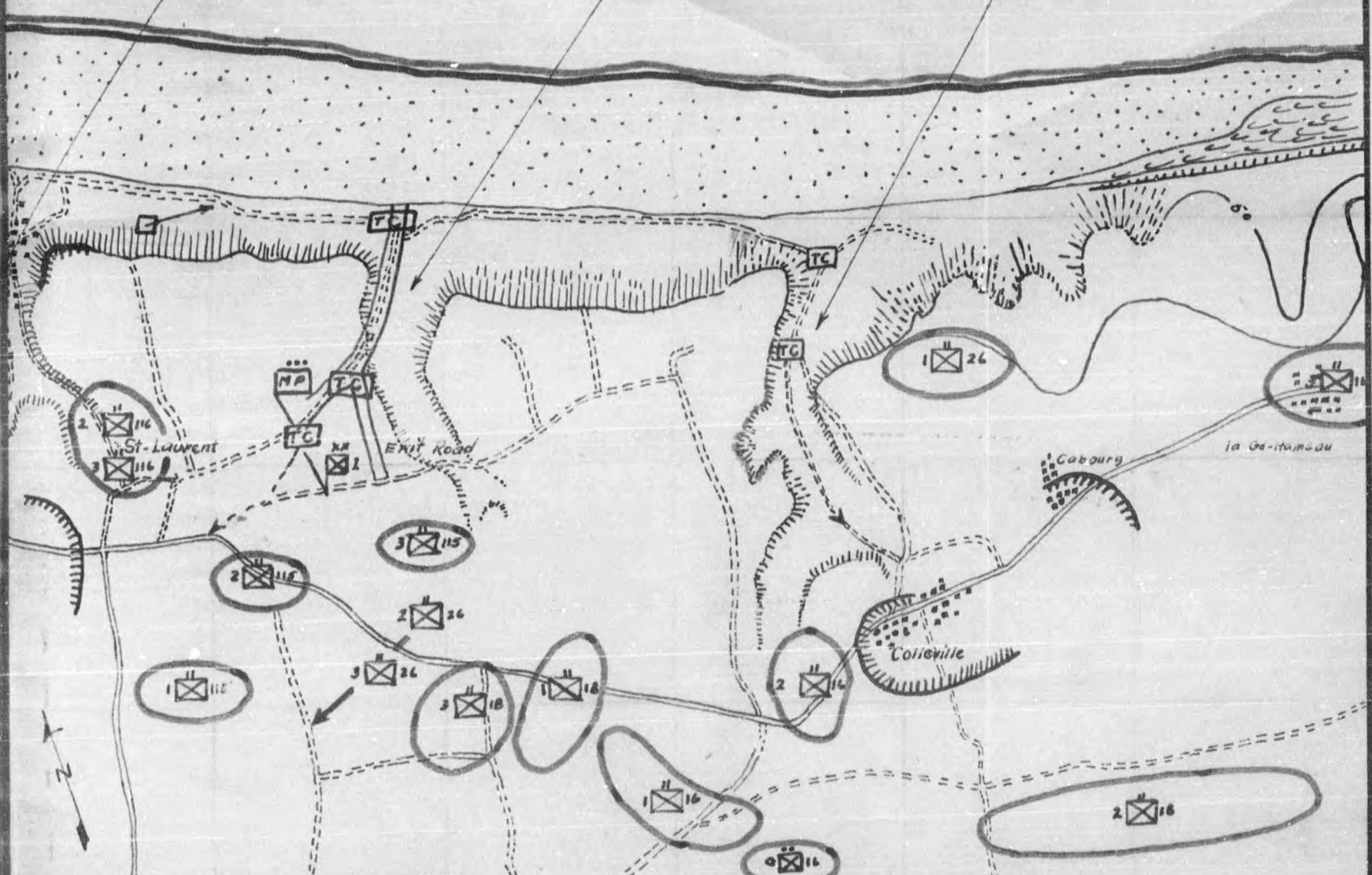
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D-3

E-1

E-3



Traffic Control Post

- TC EVENING OF D DAY
- Positions as of 2400
- enemy resistance areas
- Tidal Flat

0 500 yards