

**General Subjects Section  
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia**

**ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE**

**THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> BATTALION, 116<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY (29<sup>TH</sup>  
INFANTRY DIVISION) ON OMAHA BEACH, NORMANDY, FRANCE, 6-10  
JUNE, 1944.**

**(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)**

**(Personal Experience of a Battalion Operations Officer)**

**ORIENTATION**

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE**

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3rd BATTALION, 116th INFANTRY  
(29th INFANTRY DIVISION) ON OMAHA BEACH, NORMANDY,  
FRANCE, 6-10 JUNE, 1944.  
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Operations Officer)

ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry, 29th U. S. Division, in the assault on OMAHA BEACH, NORMANDY FRANCE, 6-10 June, 1944, during Operation OVERLORD.

In order to give the reader a clear understanding of the necessity for, and magnitude of, this massive operation, it is necessary to briefly discuss some major events of the European War which had taken place up to that time.

As early as April, 1942, the British and American Governments were agreed that the knockout punch required to bring the powerful Nazi war machine to its knees would be a cross-channel assault against the vaunted Western Wall of Fortress Europe, driving deep into the heart of Germany. However, due to shortages of men and equipment, especially landing craft, at that time, it became evident that the only operation which could be mounted successfully that year was TORCH, the invasion of Africa. (1)

The successful completion of the North African Campaign, the liberation of Sicily and the subsequent invasion of Italy by the magnificent American Fifth and British Eighth Armies; plus Soviet successes on the Eastern Front at Stalingrad and the Volga, marked the turning point in Axis tactics, from lightning Blitzkrieg to stubborn defense. (2)

Although our troops in Italy were making splendid progress, they were faced with an almost impenetrable barrier, the ALPS. The only feasible avenue of approach to Germany, the RHONE RIVER VALLEY, was too narrow to permit the maneuver necessary to crush the German Armies in Western Europe.

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(1) A-1, p. 8  
(2) A-1, p. 9

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- A-7 V Corps History  
Historical Division, US War Dept. (TIS Library)
  
- A-8 After Action Report, 116th Infantry, June 1944 - December 1944  
(TIS Library)

So it was imperative that our main effort be diverted back to the channel coast line of France. (3)

At the Casablanca Conference in January, 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff appointed Lt. Gen. Sir E. E. Morgan to the post of Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate) and directed him to begin planning for a full-scale assault on the fortified coast of France. An organization called COSSAC was formed, which, with a combined British and American Staff, began work on preparation of this plan. By July, 1943, an Outline Plan called Operation OVERLORD had been completed and in August of the same year it was approved at the Quebec Conference. (4)

This plan had as target date for the operation, 1 May 1944, and envisioned the use of three Infantry and two Airborne Divisions in the initial assault, with two divisions following up immediately. (5)

Upon his appointment as Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower recommended certain changes to this plan. He increased the initial assault from three to five Infantry Divisions and extended the landing area from the OUISTREHAM BEACHES on the East to the VARREVILLE BEACHES on the West, a distance of approximately 50 miles. The Combined Chiefs of Staff approved these recommendations and moved the target date up to 5 June 1944. (6)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The 21st Army Group, commanded by Field Marshal Montgomery, was the tactical headquarters for the assaulting forces, composed of the British Second Army, supported by a brigade of the 6th British Airborne Division, on the East, and the First U. S. Army, under General Omar Bradley, on the

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(3) A-1, p. 13  
(4) A-2, p. 1  
(5) A-2, p. 1  
(6) A-2, p. 4-5

West. (See Map I) (7)

First Army, with VII Corps on UTAH and V Corps on OMAHA BEACHES, was to seize and secure a beachhead, drive South to cut off the CONTENTIN PENINSULA, capture CHERBOURG by D+15, and then attack South to the base of the BRITTANY PENINSULA. The 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions were to be dropped in rear of UTAH BEACH. (8)

The V Corps, under General Leonard T. Gerow, was to secure a beachhead in the area between PORT-EN-BESSIN and the VIRE RIVER, push southward to seize CAUMONT and ST. LO, and conform to the advance of the British Second Army on the left. (See Map I)

The Corps was organized into three main forces for this assault. Force O, the initial assault force, from which OMAHA BEACH got its name, consisted of the 1st Division, reinforced, less the 26th Infantry, plus the 116th and 115th Infantry R.C.T.'s from the 29th Division, and the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions. Force B, scheduled to follow up on the afternoon of D-Day, consisted of the remainder of the 29th Division, plus the 26th R.C.T. of the First Division. The build-up force, consisting largely of 2nd Division, was scheduled to arrive on D+1 and D+2. (9)

The initial assault would be made with the 16th R.C.T. and 116th R.C.T. abreast, followed by the 18th and 115th R.C.T.'s in support, all under General Huebner, Commanding General, 1st Division. This was to assure unity of command during the first and critical stages of the assault. Brig. Gen. Norman D. Cota, Assistant Division Commander of the 29th Division, would land with the 116th R.C.T. and assist Maj. Gen. Huebner in handling the 29th units until they reverted to command of Maj. Gen. Charles H. Gerhardt on Corps order. (10)

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(7) A-4, p. 5

(8) A-5, p. 5

(9) A-5, p. 8-9

(10) A-5, p. 10



The typical Normandy Coast is characterized by cliffs, reefs and very wide tidal ranges, running as high as 18 to 24 feet, with very few desirable landing beaches. The zone assigned to V Corps was true to form. Out of the approximately eighteen miles of frontage assigned, only 7000 yards was sufficiently accessible to be used for the assault landing. This stretch, running roughly from STE-HONORINE-DES-PORTES to POINTE DE LA PERCEE, consisted of a crescent-shaped beach, with an 18-foot tide and numerous tricky sandbars, runnals and two-knot-per-hour cross currents. At low tide this flat stretch of sand was approximately 500 to 600 yards from the water's edge to the base of an 8 to 10 foot mound of stone shingle used as a sea-wall. Behind this shingle was a narrow shelf of flat marsh backed up by a brush-covered bluff of 100 to 170 foot height which rose at roughly a 30 degree angle. The only exits from the beach ran up steep, narrow draws and ravines which were heavily blocked. (See Map II) (11)

From the top of the bluff the small hedgerow-enclosed fields gradually rose to an elevation of almost 200 feet in the Vierville-St. Laurent area and to approximately 250 feet in the Colleville area. Behind this first ridge line and inland approximately five miles was the meandering AURE RIVER. The Germans had cleverly used this river to inundate the entire valley from TREVIERES to ISIGNY, creating a water barrier, which at some points was over a mile wide. The same expedient had been used in the small valley between GRANDCAMP and POINT DU HOE, but on a smaller scale. (See Map II) (12)

Cliffs of 100 ft. height towered straight up from the water's edge from POINT DE LA PERCEE almost to GRANDCAMP. The estuary of the VIRE RIVER was entirely impracticable for landing, being full of reefs and shallow mud flats. (See Map II) (13)

Observation inland was very limited due to the heavy growth of trees along the numerous hedgerows. Only where the Germans had trimmed the

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(11) A-5, p. 11-12  
(12) A-5, p. 16  
(13) A-5, p. 11

lower branches for firing lanes could more than two hundred yards of good observation be had. The hedgerows themselves were a barrier to men, tanks and vehicles. They were of varying heights and thicknesses but averaged 4 to 6 feet in height and roughly 2 feet in width at the top; 4 feet at the bottom. Usually a drainage ditch ran along the hedgerow forming a natural fire trench. Fighting in this terrain would put a premium on initiative and aggressive leadership in small units. (14)

Making full use of the natural defenses in the area, the Germans had added a formidable system of fortifications, consisting of obstacles and mines on the beach and 12 fortified strong points so placed as to enfilade the beach with fire. Some of these concrete fortifications were so heavy that neither naval nor aerial bombardment was able to penetrate. They averaged 6½ feet and in some cases were 10 feet thick. Approaches to all strong points were heavily wired and mined with AT and AP mines. (15)

The underwater beach obstacles were an ominous assortment of 5½ foot, steel jack rocks called hedgehogs; 10-foot steel, gate-like structures on rollers; posts driven in the sand at 45-degree angles; and wooden ramps, all liberally festooned with teller mines.

Weather during May and June in this part of the world is generally fair with warm, sunny days and cool, brisk nights. However, on 4 June the weather was so rough that General Eisenhower postponed the scheduled date of landing from 5 to 6 June and would have postponed it further, except that a month would elapse before tide and moon conditions would be favorable again. Low tide would occur at 0525 and the next high water at 1100. Sunrise was at 0558 and sunset 2207. Consequently, in order to give the Air Force and the Navy a chance to bombard the fortifications prior to the assault, H Hour was set at 0630. (16)

The sector of main interest, OMAHA and the CONTENTIN PENINSULA, was

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(14) A-5, p. 19

(15) A-5, p. 20

(16) A-6, p. 36-37

defended by the LXXXIV Corps, part of German Seventh Army, with 7 Infantry and one Panzer Division. It was estimated that the Germans would be capable of reinforcing this area to a total of 18 or 20 divisions by D+3. (See Map I).

(17) The 726th Infantry Regiment, 716th Division, held the immediate sector of OMAHA, with the division reserve of 3 battalions in two hours' marching time of the assault area. The nearest reinforcing unit was the 352nd Infantry Division, supposedly located near ST. LO some 20 miles inland. The 30th Schnelle Brigade located near COUTANCES with 3 motorized battalions might also be expected in the assault area by the afternoon of D-Day. The combat efficiency of the 716th Infantry Division was estimated to be only fair since the non-German elements of the division were estimated as high as 50 per cent. These were mostly converted Poles and Russians and their morale was thought to be poor. On the other hand, the 352nd Infantry Division was a veteran of the Russian front and rated as an offensive division of good quality. It was at full strength with 3 Infantry regiments and normal Artillery support of 3 105-mm battalions and 1 150-mm battalion. (18)

On the American side of OMAHA, the 1st Division was a veteran of 2 invasions, Africa and Sicily, and 2 years combat experience. The 116th R.C.T., 29th Division had undergone intensive amphibious assault training in England. The morale of these 2 units was as high as any in the U.S. Army. It is estimated that the balance in combat efficiency was tilted slightly in our favor. In addition we had naval and air superiority. (19)

The logistical support for this operation was probably one of the biggest tasks ever undertaken by the U. S. Army. The process of stock-piling supplies in England had been going on since 1942. By June 1944, in addition to basic loads, over 2,500,000 tons of supplies had been stored in England, of which 144,000 tons were pre-loaded for D-Day. (20)

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(17) A-6, p. 5

(18) A-6, p. 26-27

(19) Personal knowledge

(20) A-6, p. 2

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 116th REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

The 116th R.C.T. had arrived in England with the 29th Division in October 1942 and since that time had conducted almost continuous amphibious assault training, beginning with battalion and combat team exercises and culminating in 3 full-scale division assaults on Slapton Sands, Southern England, known by the code names DUCK, FOX AND FABIAN I - the last of which was the final dry run for D-Day. The R.C.T., which had been stationed at Plymouth England since May 1943, moved to vicinity of Dorchester in May 1944 to join the 1st Division, and shortly afterwards moved to marshalling areas in vicinity of Weymouth, England, where they were scheduled to embark. (21)

For purposes of control and coordination, the main landing area on OMAHA had been divided into sectors and sub-sectors. Six of these sub-sectors were to be assaulted simultaneously at H+1 minute with the 116 R.C.T. on 4 and the 16th R.C.T. on 2, each on approximately a 3000 yd. front. (See Map II) In addition, the 2nd and 5th Ranger Bn's, attached to 116th R.C.T. would assist the operation by reducing coastal batteries at POINT DE HOE and POINTE DE LA PERCEE. (22)

The 116th R.C.T. planned to assault with the 1st and 2nd B.L.T.'s abreast, the 1st on the West (DOG GREEN). The 1st B.L.T. was to assault in column of companies or 6 assault boat teams abreast. The 2nd B.L.T. was to assault with 3 companies abreast or 18 assault teams. The 1st B.L.T. would reduce the beach defenses in its zone, capture the town of VIERVILLE, then, together with the Rangers, move West along the coastal highway, clearing out enemy defenses from VIERVILLE to the VIRE Estuary; be prepared to seize ISIGNY and the bridge over the VIRE RIVER; and establish contact with VII Corps to the West. The 2nd B.L.T. would reduce the beach defenses in its 3 sub-sectors (DOG WHITE, DOG RED, and EASY GREEN) then push inland to the Southwest to seize the high ground in vicinity of LOUVIERES. (See Map II) (23)

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(21) Personal knowledge

(22) A-6, p. 30

(23) A-6, p. 34

The 3rd B.L.T. would land in support at H+50 in the zone of the 2nd B.L.T. (See Maps II & III); push rapidly inland; seize LONQUEVILLE and the high ground 2500 yards to the West overlooking LA CAMBE; and be prepared to advance on ISIGNY.

Co.'s B and C, 743rd Tk. Bn. (attached) with 16 DD (\*) tanks each, were to be launched 6000 yards out, move into 2 right sub-sectors at H-5 and support the Infantry assault by direct fire from the water's edge.

Co. A, 743rd Tk. Bn. with standard tanks loaded in 8 L.C.T.'s would begin firing from 3000 yards out at H-15 minutes and land at H Hour in the two left sub-sectors to support the assault by direct fire.

The 58th F.A. Bn. (S.P.), loaded in 5 L.C.T.'s, would support the assault by fire beginning at H-30 from 8000 yards out and lifting at H-5, then land at H+90 on DOG WHITE in direct support. (24)

The 111th F.A. Bn. (Organic Combat Team Attachment) would land in DUKW's at H+110 on E GREEN in general support and coordinate with 58th FA Bn. (SP) as soon as possible.

Cannon Company would land in DUKW's at H+110 on DOG GREEN in direct support 1st B.L.T.

Anti-tank Company and 467 AAA Bn. were to land in LCT's at H+120, to give AT and AA protection in beachhead.

Companies B and D, 81st Chemical Weapons Bn. would land at H+40 and H+57 respectively, in general support.

The 146th Engineer Combat Team, part of the Engineer Special Brigade, was to land at H+03 behind the assaulting Infantry and clear 4 gaps in the beach obstacles.

The 121st Engineer Combat Bn. would land in groups from H+40 to H+70 to assist in reduction of obstacles and clear exits back of the beach. (25)

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(24) A-6, p. 30-31

(25) A-6, p. 30-31

\*Tank equipped with a giant lifebelt and a propeller and rudder attachment which enables it to float and navigate under its own power.

THE SITUATION OF THE 3rd BATTALION, 116th R.C.T.

For the past two years in England, this unit had actively participated in the amphibious assault training previously mentioned. It had been part of the alert force ready to rush across the channel on short notice in case the Germans should weaken or pull their forces out of France and the Low Countries (Operation Rankin). It had also participated in defense of England against invasion, taking part in numerous anti-invasion maneuvers with the British Forces around Plymouth, England. This being a Royal Navy town, arrangements were made for the use of British landing craft and thereby considerably more amphibious training was conducted than would have been otherwise possible. Early in May the Battalion moved as part of the 116th R.C.T. from Plymouth to Dorchester and thence to the Weymouth marshalling areas which were sealed for the last three weeks before D-Day. Here the men were briefed, with the aid of terrain models, until every man knew his job thoroughly. After studying the models, which had been carefully prepared from the very latest intelligence, everyone realized that the area was very similar to Slapton Sands, England, which the battalion had assaulted dozens of times, under almost all conditions. Consequently, it seemed like just another exercise. (26)

The battalion was at full strength, plus a 15 per cent overstrength which would serve in lieu of replacements until a system could be established on the beachhead. Morale was extremely high, every man feeling that at last he would be able to put his training to the test. (27)

The planned landing zone was directly behind the 2nd B.L.T. on DOG WHITE, DOG RED and EASY GREEN, astride the deep draw running up from LES MOULINS on the beach to ST. LAURENT. (See Map III). In this sector the beach was very deep, approximately 500 yards, but since this battalion would land at 0720 the tide would have risen enough to shorten that distance to 300 to 400 yards. In this area the shingle mound along the breakwater was

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(26) Personal knowledge  
(27) Personal knowledge

from 6 to 10 feet high, affording some cover from weapons directly to the front but also presenting a good target to weapons at the flanks of the beach. In the immediate vicinity of the exit draw was the small Summer resort, LES MOULINS, and houses lined the promenade to the right. To the left was the open marshy flat backed up all along by the sheer bluff running up to a hundred feet or more, covered with sparse shrubbery and grass. Behind this bluff, immediately, was a cultivated wheat field and behind that came the typical Normandy, hedge-enclosed fields of grass, cultivation or orchards.

(28) There were seven enemy strongpoints manned by elements of the 726th Infantry Regiment capable of bringing effective machine gun fire on the battalion sector, in addition to numerous 75-mm, 88-mm and smaller AT guns firing from pillboxes and casements at long ranges on the flanks. Most of these strong points consisted of a heavy pillbox surrounded by a series of open emplacements connected by deep trenches and tunnels to underground shelters and manned by approximately a platoon. These strong points, though some distance apart, were carefully situated to give mutual support to each other and to cover every yard of the beach with enfilade fire. Guns in pillboxes were screened from observation seaward by a thick wing wall protecting them from naval fire - at the same time forcing them to fire down the beach rather than straight out to sea. (29)

Mortar and rocket positions were sometimes included in these strong points but usually were found farther back with observers dug into the cliffs or in pillboxes. Each strong point was wired in with various types of field wire and heavily mined with anti-personnel mines. From these positions overlooking the battalion landing zone, the enemy had excellent observation, aided by the crescent shape of the beach. (30)

Weather forecasts for the week of 6 June were gloomy, predicting strong winds, low clouds and heavy seas. But formidable as the defenses seemed to be,

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(28) Personal knowledge

(29) A-5, p. 23, p. 25

(30) A-5, p. 23

and gloomy as were the weathermen, the spirit of the 3rd Battalion was un-  
daunted, and it was with a mixed feeling of determination and anticipation  
that they boarded the naval transports in Weymouth Harbor on 3 June 1944.  
And well they might feel that way for they had the advantage of the best  
training and equipment the U. S. Army could offer. (31)

THE PLAN OF THE 3rd BATTALION, 116th R.C.T.

The 3rd Battalion, initially in support, was scheduled to land in  
L.C.V.P.'s at H+50 behind the 2nd B.L.T. on DOG WHITE, DOG RED and EASY GREEN  
Beaches with I, K and L Companies abreast. (See Map III<sup>1</sup>). Each company was  
organized into 6 assault boat teams consisting of one officer and 30 men,  
plus one boat for the Co. Hdqs. group. Following by 7 minutes, would come  
the Battalion Headquarters and fire support liason officers, divided into  
a primary and alternate headquarters, in 3 boats, and M Company in 6 boats.

The battalion mission was initially to assist 2nd B.L.T. in clearing  
the beach defenses; then pass through the 2nd B.L.T. to seize LONGUEVILLE  
and the high ground 2500 yards West thereof, including LA CAMBE, by 2 hours  
prior to darkness D-Day; then be prepared to advance on ISIGNY, supported by  
1st B.L.T. on order of R.C.T. Commander. (See Map II) (32)

Since the boat team organization was designed to make each team an  
independent unit capable of operating alone, it was the most efficient  
organization for the assault landing but made centralized control more diffi-  
cult. Consequently, the battalion planned to rendezvous at an assembly area  
in rear of ST. LAURENT-SUR-MER, reorganize into conventional platoon formation  
and continue the attack from there. (See Map III) (33)

Co. "I" was to land at H+50 minutes on DOG RED Beach, destroy any re-  
maining enemy fortifications in its sector, push inland to battalion rendez-  
vous area, reorganize and be prepared to continue attack in right zone with  
two platoons abreast, to seize the high ground West of LA CAMBE. (Maps II & III)

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(31) Personal knowledge

(32) A-5, p. 34

(33) Personal knowledge



Co. L was to land at H+50 on EASY GREEN Beach; destroy any enemy fortifications in its sector; push into battalion rendezvous area; reorganize into platoon formation and be prepared to continue attack on the left of "I" Company to seize LONGUEVILLE; then continue attack on order to capture LA CAMBE and the high ground beyond in its zone. (Map II & III) (34)

Co. K was to land on DOG WHITE Beach at H+50; destroy any enemy fortifications in its zone; push into battalion rendezvous area; reorganize into platoon formation; and follow the advance of L Company by approximately 200 yards, protecting the left flank and rear. (See Map III)

Co. M was to land at H+57; support the battalion on the beach initially; push into battalion rendezvous area; protect reorganization of rifle companies; be prepared to support Companies "I" and "L" in the attack on the LONGUEVILLE-LACAMBE objective; and cover reorganization on the final objective. (See Map III) (35)

It was planned that the initial assault would be preceded by an elaborate fire support plan as follows. From H-40 to H-3 min., the Battleships TEXAS and ARKANSAS would fire 600 heavy rounds at POINTE-DU-HOE and at strong points defending Exit D-3, (LES MOULINS). (See Map III). Three cruisers and 8 destroyers would pound the OMAHA defenses with another 2950 rounds. In addition, numerous other craft were to assist in the fire support plan, including L.C.G.(L.)'s with 2 47-mm guns each, LCT's carrying tanks and self-propelled artillery, and 9 LCT (R.)'s, each to fire a thousand rockets when the leading assault waves were 300 yards from the beach.

From H-30 to H-5, 480 B-24 bombers were to attack 11 largest strong-points with over 1200 tons of bombs. Battery positions at POINTE DU HOE would receive a final strike by 18 medium bombers of the Ninth Air Force between H-20 and H-5. (See Map II) (36)

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(34) Personal knowledge

(35) Personal knowledge

(36) A-5, p. 29

#### FINAL PREPARATIONS AND EMBARKATION

Sealed in its marshalling area, the battalion spent the last few days of May making final briefings and issuing last minute items of equipment.

The standard assault team had the following personnel and equipment. First to land would be the team leader and 5 riflemen armed with M-1's and carrying 96 rounds of ammunition, plus 2 additional bandoleers. Next came a wire-cutting team of 4 men, armed with M-1 rifles, 2 carrying large "search nose" cutters, 2 a smaller type, and each carrying a section of bangalore torpedo and 4 smoke grenades. Behind these came 2 BAR teams of 2 men each, carrying 900 rounds per gun, 2 Bazooka teams of 2 men each, a 60-mm mortar crew of 4 men with 20 rounds of ammunition, a flamethrower crew of 2 men and 5 demolition men, each armed with M-1's plus 40 pounds of TNT made up into pole and pack charges. A medical aid man and the assistant team leader sat in the stern. Everyone wore special assault jackets made for this operation, which contained 4 large pockets in front and 2 built-in packs on the back. (36a)

In addition to the above special equipment, each man carried 5 fragmentation grenades, a half-pound block of TNT with primacord and fuse, 6 1/3 rations (3 K's and 3 D's), a gas mask (assault type) and overall, a life belt. Under the assault jacket was worn gas-impregnated, wool OD Shirt and trousers. A raincoat, change of socks and underwear, and toilet articles would have to suffice for personal comfort until such time as the bedrolls could be brought over from England.

These last few hours prior to embarkation were devoted to final waterproofing of weapons, demolitions and radios, and to lashing heavy equipment such as mortars, machine guns, bazookas and bangalore torpedoes to lifebelts in anticipation of a "wet" landing.

During this stay in the marshalling area, all administrative and supply problems were handled by the Services of Supply, including the movement of assault troops to the embarkation points.

On 3 June 1944 the 3rd Battalion, along with advance C.P. of 116th R.C.T., was moved by truck to Weymouth Harbor and embarked on the U.S.S. CHARLES CARROLL, a naval transport of the APA type, capable of carrying most of its LCVP's in davits.

After 2 days of relative quiet, disturbed only by a few unsuccessful bombing attacks on the numerous ships in the harbor, anchors were raised in the late afternoon of 4 June and the long column of ships of every description began moving out to the Northeast. However, this move had hardly begun when word was received that Gen. Eisenhower had decided to postpone the assault 24 hours due to rough weather and a heavy overcast predicted for 5 June. On the afternoon of 5 June, the weather was windy and the sea became very rough, but further postponement was impractical, so the transports again steamed out into the channel, escorted by minesweepers, destroyers, cruisers, and the veteran battleships, TEXAS and ARKANSAS, headed Northeast towards the PAS DE CALAIS area, then turned South. Shortly after midnight, the CHARLES CARROLL dropped anchor in the transport area approximately 10 miles off the NORMANDY Coast, just in time to get a preview of the firepower of Hitler's Western Wall as the 82nd and 101st Airborne "hit the silk" back of UTAH Beach. (See Map I) At last that long-awaited day was here. (37)

After an excellent Navy breakfast at 0400 hours, the 3rd Battalion went over the side into their little LCVPs, which bounced around like nutshells in the heavy waves, shipping water on every bounce. By the time the craft reached the rendezvous point and lined up for the final run in, every man was soaked to the skin with the chilling spray and many were terribly seasick.

The responsibility of landing assault troops in their planned zones lay with the Navy, but due to the rough seas, heavy mists and smoke and dust caused by naval bombardment, the coxswains were having extreme difficulty recognizing landmarks to guide upon. Consequently, most of them had to rely on the compasses on their small craft and, as was later learned,

failed to consider the two knots per hour cross current to the East.

When still about 500 yards out the operations officer took a last look over the front ramp and, though the bluffs were obscured by the mist and smoke, was shocked by the fact that the beach seemed to be crawling with men. Obviously something had gone wrong with the assault plans of the first wave. Enemy artillery and mortar fire could be seen landing on the beach and well out in the water, and the rapid staccato firing of German machine guns could be plainly heard.

#### NARRATION

##### THE 3RD BATTALION ASSAULT

Companies I, K and L landed on the boundary between 116th and 16th RCT's in an area roughly half a mile wide but at least 1,200 yards East of their planned landing zones. (See Map III) M Company, still farther East, landed just to the right of Exit E-1. Company teams were fairly well grouped except for those of L Company which were scattered over EASY GREEN and RED Beaches. (See Map III) (38)

Fortunately for those companies, the mislanding had placed them on a stretch of beach, which, although not touched by the leading assault waves, was not so heavily defended as the area in which they had planned to land. Consequently, casualties on the beach in these companies were moderate, compared to companies of the 1st and 2nd B.L.T.'s leading the assault. These 2 B.L.T.'s had experienced serious difficulties. In addition to being landed East of their assault zones, they had run into devastating fires of all types. "A" Company was practically annihilated in the water. Its boats were sunk by direct fire of AT guns and many men were killed instantly by machine gun and mortar fire in the water. Many wounded, being so heavily loaded, were drowned before they could get ashore. It is estimated that this company suffered 85 per cent casualties, including all its officers. (39)

(38) Personal knowledge

(39) A-5, p. 47

B Company, following closely behind, had lost its Company Commander and approximately half of the company at the water's edge. In the 2nd B.L.T., of the 3 companies planned to land abreast, F and G landed scattered in the 116th zone, while most of E Company was landed in the middle of the 16th zone. Casualties are not available by battalion, but for the morning of D-Day, the 116th Regiment as a whole suffered approximately 800 casualties not including attachments. (40)

The 3rd Battalion Headquarters approached the beach a few minutes behind its companies in the area between M and L. By this time the tide had risen enough to cover the first band of mined, underwater obstacles. Just as the ramp went down, there was a terrific explosion which blew in the bottom of the boat, sinking it in 3 feet of water. The Operations Officer in front and the Battalion Commander in rear escaped injury, but the Artillery Liaison Officer, the Naval Shore Fire Control Officer and the Commander of the supporting company of 4.2 mortars were killed. In addition, Sgt. Van DeMullen, Battalion Operations Sergeant, and 3 radio operators were seriously wounded and only one SCR 300 out of four radios on the boat was still in working condition. The alternate headquarters boat had similar trouble getting through the obstacles and suffered some casualties from machine gun and mortar fire. One of these was the Battalion Chaplain who was struck in the heel by a machine gun bullet as he tried to run across the open beach. That was a long run, across about 400 yards of flat sand, but most of those wounded on the beach were the ones who paused to rest on the open sand or crouched behind the steel obstacles which caused wicked ricochets and very nasty wounds. (41)

Notwithstanding the fact that the battalion boat teams had landed on strange territory, they knew their mission was to clear the beach in their zone and push inland to the battalion assembly area in rear of ST. LAURENT before reorganizing into conventional platoons. So each section blew or

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(40) A-5, p. 47

(41) Personal knowledge

cut its way through the barbed wire entanglements along the shingle and fought its way up the steep slopes of the bluff against fairly light opposition, consisting of several machine gun positions near the top of the bluff, a few individual riflemen in camouflaged positions in the face of the bluff, plus long range machine gun fire from Exits E-1 and D-3. (42)

M Company, being too close to Exit E-1 to move across the open flat exposed to machine gun fire, covered that strong point with 4 machine guns and 2 81-mm mortars which assisted the rest of the battalion materially in crossing the open flat and moving up the bluff. (43)

The Operations Officer, taking along the Battalion S-2 Sergeant, started up the bluff with a boat team of L Company to make a brief reconnaissance and see what could be done towards coordinating the efforts of the teams in the attack on ST. LAURENT. However, as they came up on a shelf about half-way up the bluff, a gun suddenly fired from the left so close that the blast was deafening. After careful examination, the muzzle of what appeared to be an 88-mm was discovered protruding from a small niche in the bluff, so mounted that it could fire only straight up the beach to the West. The amazing thing about this was the excellent camouflage. A whole boat team of approximately 30 men had just crawled up this bluff only about 50 yards to the right of this emplacement and didn't see it. (44)

Looking in the direction of fire, it was obvious this gunner had waited for a remunerative target, as an L.C.I. which was just touching down burst into flames on the forward deck. Later it was discovered that the burning ship was L.C.I. 91 carrying the alternate headquarters of the 116th R.C.T. and part of the 121st Engineer Battalion with their demolitions stacked on the forward deck. Of the 25 men trapped in the forward hold it was estimated that not one escaped. (45)

Realizing that something had to be done about this gun quick, the S-2 sergeant, who by the way was an exiled German of the Jewish faith and

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(42) Personal knowledge

(43) Statement of M Co. Comm., Capt. Charles H. Kidd

(44) Personal knowledge

(45) A-5, P. 55-56

particularly anxious to defeat the Nazis, was sent back to direct the fire of an immobilized tank of the 743rd Tk Bn on the gun emplacement. The sergeant had hardly uttered the words, "Yes Sir", and raised up enough to turn around, when he was shot by a burst of machine gun fire apparently coming from within the embrasure of the emplacement. After placing a couple of quick shots in the embrasure with his carbine, the Operations Officer crawled back down the bluff to the tank, got the attention of the crew by pounding on the turret with a rifle butt and directed a dozen tank rounds at the emplacement. However, the 75-mm tank fire made no impression on the concrete and realizing it had been discovered, the enemy crew continued to fire up the beach at a rapid rate. (46)

Finally, to make a long story short, the position was neutralized by placing demolition charges around the embrasure and blasting it in. It was later discovered that the only entrance to this position was through a tunnel over two hundred yards to the rear. (47)

Locating the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Meeks, who by this time had collected the remnants of the headquarters group at the base of the bluff, the Operations Officer reported the results of his meager reconnaissance and recommended moving up on top of the bluff where some observation could be obtained and action to coordinate the efforts of the many boat teams could be instigated. The Colonel, who had been desperately trying to contact regiment by the one surviving radio with no success, agreed, and by 0900 he and the Operations Officer with the Radio Operator and Sergeant Belew, the third Operations Sergeant for the day, had reached a hedgerow some 200 yards from the top of the bluff and on the outskirts of ST. LAURENT. (Map III) (48)

Here it was discovered that most of the rifle company boat teams had reached this point with light losses by crawling through the waist-high wheat fields covering the area between ST. LAURENT and the bluff. These

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(46) Personal knowledge  
(47) Personal knowledge  
(48) Personal knowledge

wheat fields offered excellent concealment but practically no cover and it was rather an exciting experience to see the wheat rippling along with a head occasionally popping up, sometimes in a German - sometimes an American helmet. Sporadic machine gun fire was coming from the town and from the high ground to the Southwest across the draw running back from LES MOULINS at D-3 exit. (See Map III) (49)

M Company was still occupied by the fire from E-1 draw, (Map III), with the exception of one section of 81-mm mortars and one section of heavy machine guns that had managed to crawl up to the hedgerow. Getting these weapons in position, the Battalion Commander was able to direct the first heavy weapons fire support the battalion had received, on the positions across the D-3 draw. The first mortar shell either set off or caused the Germans to fire a battery of huge rockets, later discovered to be 32-CM, which were so large they could be seen going through the air in their flight out towards the transport area. Fortunately, they fell harmlessly in the channel. (50)

X It became evident that to effect any coordination at least a partial reorganization must first be made. After considerable difficulty due to lack of cover and increasing machine gun and mortar fire, this was partially accomplished in I and L Companies.

X By noon, the remainder of M Company had arrived, after assisting elements of the 16th R.C.T. in the reduction of the E-1 strong point. (Map III) With the addition of this fire support the Battalion Commander decided to attack to the Southwest across the D-3 draw with Companies I and L abreast to capture the high ground West of ST. LAURENT and attempt to push on to the previously designated battalion assembly area. (Map III)

With the supporting fires of the 81-mm mortars and heavy machine guns, thickened up by the rifle company weapons, this attack was partially successful. The leading platoons of I and L Companies took the positions along the

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(49) Personal knowledge  
(50) Personal knowledge



X  
bluff by assaulting close behind the mortar preparation, killing an estimated 25 and capturing 10. In attempting to continue the attack, however, the leading elements of both companies came under intense automatic weapons fire from the high-ground. After repeated attempts to assault the position, causing considerable casualties, the Battalion Commander decided to leave I Company to contain the enemy position and to flank to the left through the village with L Company. Up to this time, only light, sporadic fire of snipers had been received from the village. However, when L Company with a section of machine guns and 81-mm mortars attempted to move around to the East into the town, heavy automatic fire was received from 3 directions. (See Map III)

X  
Nevertheless, L Company had fought its way up to the center of the town by 1800 hours when naval fire opened up on the village church steeple, firing straight up the D-3 draw over the heads of most of the 3rd Battalion but right into the middle of L Company. In the absence of radio communication, the operations officer improvised a white flag and running up on top of the bluff, succeeded in signaling "cease fire" after much wig-wagging but not before L Company had received at least a dozen more casualties, in addition to those already received in the afternoon's fighting. Casualties here had been heavier than on the beach for this battalion. L Company was ordered to pull back to the edge of ST. LAURENT.

At approximately 2000 hours, 3 self-propelled 105-mm howitzers from the 116th Cannon Company, which had come in through Exit E-1, worked their way up to the 3rd Battalion where they were more than welcome. (51)

With this new reinforcement it was decided to make one more effort to flank this position around the left, this time with K Company followed in close support by the 3 assault guns.

At dusk the leading platoon was on the crossroad, preparing to cross under supporting fire from the lead S.P., when the sound of tanks could be heard to the East. The Operations Officer, who was trying to coordinate the supporting fire for the attack across the road, was at the right corner of

the intersection from which point the tanks could be seen when they came in sight several hundred yards away. However, in the gathering darkness it was difficult to determine whether they were friendly or hostile until suddenly they opened fire on the crossroad, knocking out one S.P. A bazooka team was quickly dispatched to flank them, but they withdrew, probably due to enemy fire across the road. It was later discovered that they were four tanks from the 741st Tank Battalion supporting the 115th Infantry in an unsuccessful attempt to enter ST. LAURENT from the East. (52)

By 2300, 6 June 1944, it had gotten so dark that the Battalion Commander decided to hold up for the night in present positions. Companies were ordered to consolidate positions and resume attack at daylight.

Meanwhile, the Battalion Commander and staff attempted to coordinate with elements of other units which had come into its area, including Major Bingham, C.O. of the 2nd B.L.T., who had a few sections of G and H Companies, and 2 anti-tank guns from the 116th Anti-Tank Company. These were placed to cover the approach from the South in anticipation of a counter-attack at dawn. (53)

This had been a very demoralizing day. In addition to landing wet and miserable on that chilly June morning, seeing all the death and destruction on the beach, getting shot up by friendly Naval and Tank fire, the battalion was still far short of its D-Day objective.

The Battalion S-2 had found from interrogation of the few prisoners captured - the accent was on "destroy" not "capture" that day - that the beach was held by elements of the 716th Division, as Intelligence estimates had stated, but those in ST. LAURENT were from the veteran 352nd Division which was supposed to be in ST. LO. Unfortunately for us, they had arrived 24 hours earlier for anti-invasion maneuvers. (54)

Further attempts were made to contact the 116th R.C.T. Hdgs. by radio

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(52) A-5, p. 104  
(53) Personal knowledge  
(54) Personal knowledge

and messenger without success. However, about midnight, the Regimental Communications Officer, who wandered into the 3rd Battalion by accident while looking for 116th R.C.T., brought the sad news that the R.C.T. Artillery Battalion (111th F.A.) had lost 11 of its 12 guns due to DUKW's sinking from rough seas and overloading. (55)

#### D-1 CHANGE IN PLANS

At daylight on 7 June, the 3rd Battalion was alert and ready for the expected counter-attack to come along the TREVIERES-ST. LAURENT Road which seemed to be the logical avenue of approach. However, this counter-attack struck in the VIERVILLE area approximately a mile to the West, driving in the meager outposts and capturing part of Co. C, 121st Engineers, who were dug in around the CHATEAU DE VAUMICEL. (See Map IV) The remainder of the company was forced back into VIERVILLE. (56)

The 3rd Battalion Commander was preparing to continue the attack previously planned when Col. Canham, Commander of the 116th R.C.T., arrived by way of D-3 exit with the information that General Gerhardt had landed, making certain changes in plan.

The 115th Infantry would take over the mission of the 3rd Battalion; 116th, complete the clearing of ST. LAURENT and drive towards LONGUEVILLE. (Map IV) The 116th Infantry would direct its attack towards the West and Southwest. The 1st Battalion, with a strength of approximately 250 men, plus the 5th Ranger Battalion and Companies A, B and C of the 2nd Rangers, supported by 10 tanks of B Company, 743rd Tank Battalion, would drive West on the highway towards POINT DU HOE to relieve the remaining 3 companies of 2nd Rangers, known to be isolated there in bad condition due to heavy casualties sustained in landing and shortage of ammunition. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions would move West towards VIERVILLE, cleaning out remaining pockets of resistance on the bluff, and then advance towards LOUVIERES. This attack

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(55) Personal knowledge

(56) A-5, p. 123

would be supported by 2 Artillery Battalions, the 111th F.A. with only one gun left and the 58th F.A. Battalion (S.P.) with less than half its guns in action. (57)

The 3rd Battalion, with I and L Companies abreast, leaving the 2nd Battalion to complete the clearance of D-3 exit and LES MOULINS, moved West along the bluffs, destroying a number of machine gun positions, numerous snipers and capturing a considerable number of prisoners from the concrete emplacements and dugouts. (See Map IV) (58)

Upon reaching VIERVILLE, which also was still infested with snipers, the 3rd Battalion turned South towards LOUVIERES, followed later by the 2nd Battalion. With the same formation, I and L Companies abreast, the battalion fought its way against increasing resistance to the outskirts of LOUVIERES by 1700 hours, at which time orders were received to pull back to VIERVILLE for the night, in anticipation of another counter-attack. Both the 116th Infantry and 29th Division Headquarters were in vicinity of that village. (See Map IV) (59)

At 2000 hours, the Battalion Commander had assigned tentative defense areas to the companies and with the Operations Officer, had met the Regimental S-3, Major Tom Howie (later known as the Major of St. Lo) at the crossroad in the center of VIERVILLE to receive orders. This conference was interrupted by the heaviest artillery concentration so far experienced. Being of medium caliber, it lasted for 30 minutes and inflicted heavy casualties in men and material. Three anti-aircraft guns (40-mm) were destroyed and a half dozen ammunition trucks were set on fire, causing shells to explode for several hours afterwards. Numerous fires were started in the village, one being a warehouse of German rubber goods which burned all night.

This concentration was immediately followed by a counter-attack from the South which again carried past the CHATEAU DE VAUMICEL before being

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(57) A-5, p. 122-123

(58) Personal knowledge

(59) Personal knowledge

stopped by the mortar and small arms fire of the 3rd Battalion. The attacking force estimated as a reinforced company withdrew with heavy losses. (60)

By 2330 the battalion had organized part of a perimeter defense around VIERVILLE, with the 2nd Battalion on the right and 4 companies of the 5th Rangers on the left. (See Map IV) (61)

During the afternoon, the 175th, formerly in V Corps Reserve, had landed, moved through VIERVILLE to vicinity of GRUCHY, and was released to 29th Division. (Map IV) General Gerhardt officially assumed command of the entire 29th at 1700 hours and issued 29th Division Field Order No. 3 at 2330. The 115th Infantry was given the mission of protecting the division's left flank, by seizing and holding the high ground from LONGUEVILLE to NORMANVILLE. The 116th Infantry, with Rangers attached, would continue westward as planned, clearing out enemy resistance from GRANDCAMP to ISIGNY. The 175th Infantry with 2 companies of the 747th Tank Battalion attached, would make a night attack from GRUCHY via ENGLESVILLE-LACAMBE and capture ISIGNY. Enemy forces in the 29th Division zone at this time had been identified as elements of the 914th, 916th and 726th Infantry Regiments, supported by artillery positions in the GRANDCAMP-MAISY area which were still very active despite a great volume of Naval fire that had been placed in that area. (62)

#### D 2. RESCUE OF THE RANGERS AND CAPTURE OF GRANDCAMP

At 0600, 8 June 1944, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, the 4 companies of 5th Rangers, and A & C Companies of the 743rd Tank Battalion moved out from VIERVILLE on the coastal highway in the direction of GRANDCAMP with the 3rd Battalion leading in advance guard formation. (63)

The move to ST. PIERRE-DU-MONT was uneventful except for occasional artillery and sniper fire. By this time a system had been devised for dealing with snipers. Instead of letting a few snipers hold up the advance

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(60) A-5, p.123

(61) Personal knowledge

(62) A-5, p.127

(63) A-5, p. 128

of a whole unit, it was found that a tank and a squad or less of Infantry could be dropped off to deal with them while the main body kept moving. The tank would spray the suspected area with machine gun fire while the Infantrymen moved in close enough to locate the sniper. Quite often, this was a difficult task since most of them wore camouflage suits and strapped themselves high up in a tree of very thick foliage. However, once located, it was like shooting squirrels to bring them down. (64)

Contact was made with the 1st Battalion and 5th Ranger Battalion (-) just West of ST. PIERRE-DU-MONT. They had been unsuccessful in establishing contact with the 2nd Rangers on POINTE-DUE-HOE the day before, but a patrol had infiltrated through during the night which brought back the message that the situation there was desperate. Consequently, Col. Canham ordered that a coordinated attack be made to rescue the Rangers on the POINTE. (65)

At 1000 hours, the 1st Battalion and 5th Rangers attacked Northwest from ST. PIERRE DU MONT to strike the East flank of the position, while the 3rd Battalion with the tanks of A and C Companies, 743rd Tank Battalion, now along the highway some 120 yards West of ST. PIERRE-DU-MONT, would attack due North to hit the enemy rear. At first the tank companies refused to go unless the area was first checked for mines, but since time did not permit the Colonel ordered them to go anyway.

The 3rd Battalion attacked with Companies I and L abreast, followed closely by one platoon of 5 tanks, while K Company and the remainder of the tanks stayed in mobile reserve near the highway. M Company, supported the attack with 81-mm mortars. This area was under observation from GRANDCAMP and during the attack the 3rd Battalion received heavy concentrations of artillery and mortars from that vicinity, thereby receiving considerable casualties. Three of the tanks lost tracks due to mine explosions but the remaining 2 gave good direct fire support. When the leading companies came

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(64) Personal knowledge

(65) Personal knowledge

within 500 yards of the POINTE, they came under intense German machine gun and anti-aircraft weapons fire from a point several hundred yards West of the POINTE and from a concrete bunker directly South of the POINTE. (Map V) One of the tanks was concentrating on this bunker when the German machine gun suddenly ceased firing and the Rangers who had been firing it raised an American Flag. Several casualties were received by both sides due to this confusing situation. The battalion effort was then concentrated on the Western position and the remaining enemy resistance was annihilated by 1200 hours. (66)

In the woods Southwest of POINTE-DUE-HOE, the battalion captured 6 150-mm guns which had been moved there prior to the aerial and Naval bombardment of their concrete emplacements on the POINTE. (67)

The 116th was quickly reorganized and Col. Canham issued a brief oral order as follows: 5th Rangers would cross the inundated area South of the bridge and destroy enemy strong points which were covering the bridge with automatic weapons fire; the 3rd Battalion with tanks would then cross the bridge and capture the town of GRANDCAMP, assisted by the 2nd Battalion; (Map VI) the 1st Battalion with 10 tanks of B Company, 743rd Tank Battalion, would move South to JUCOVILLE and then continue on to capture MAISY; (Map II) the 2nd Rangers would follow the 2nd Battalion. (68)

After several attempts, Col. Rudder sent back a message to the effect that mortar and machine gun fire was so heavy the crossing could not be made in daylight. Turning to the Operations Officer of the 3rd Battalion, Colonel Canham issued a fragmentary order consisting of: "Smith, tell Meeks to get his battalion moving and cross that damn bridge". After getting permission to shell the strong points across the river with Naval fire, the Operations Officer reported back to Col. Meeks with the orders. Col. Meeks was not very happy about it but heartily agreed to the Naval fire recommendation. Not a single Naval Shore Fire Control Officer had survived but the 2nd

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(66) A-5, p. 129

(67) Personal knowledge

(68) Personal knowledge

Battalion still had a NSFC radio and operator. Borrowing these, the Operations Officer moved up on the hill overlooking GRANDCAMP and by use of the coordinate method was able to direct 113 rounds from the heavy British cruiser GLASCOW and the U. S. Battleship TEXAS on the strongpoints covering the bridge and entrance to the town. (69)

At 1630 the 3rd Battalion attacked in column of companies in order K, L, I with the few remaining tanks of Co. C., 743rd Tank Battalion, in close support of K Company. Company M went into position on the high ground to support the attack with machine guns and 81-mm mortars, firing white phosphorous. As soon as the bridge was crossed, the formation would change to 2 companies abreast with L on the left, each to clear half of the town in its zone. (Map VI)

Several attempts were made by K Company before they finally got a foothold on the other side. The bridge was swept with machine gun fire and intense mortar fire rained down on both approaches. One tank succeeded in getting across but was knocked out by a mine; the other two moved up to the bridge and covered the crossing of the remainder of K Company by direct cannon and machine gun fire.

Although across the bridge, K Company was pinned to the ditch on both sides of the road by a veritable screen of machine gun fire coming from pillboxes to the right and left of the road. This stalemate was finally broken, however, by the heroic efforts of one man, a platoon sergeant named Peregory. Peregory crawled up the ditch alone and into a trench which led into the rear of one of the strong points. Armed only with his bayonet and hand grenades, Peregory killed 7 and captured one officer and 16 men whom he proceeded to bring back by crawling along the same route. L Company had crossed by this time and moved along the river to the left to outflank the Southern strongpoint. Since K Company had received heavy casualties including the

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(69) Personal knowledge



Company Commander and 2 platoon leaders in this action, I Company was ordered to pass through K and move through GRANDCAMP abreast of L, clearing the area between the highway and the coast. (Map VI) Sgt. Peregory's action had so inspired all those who saw it that they rose up as a man and using marching fire, moved rapidly into the town where considerable close-in street fighting ensued. Peregory was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for this action. (70)

I Company pushed along the coast forcing the surrender of a number of pillboxes until they had advanced well ahead of L Company and were pinned down temporarily by fire from 3 sides, suffering heavy casualties.

The Battalion Commander sent the Operations Officer to hold I Company until L could overtake them. While giving this message to Captain Clowe, I Company Commander, a heavy mortar concentration landed on the company, wounding a number of men, completely shattering Captain Clowe's left arm and leg and wounding the Operations Officer in a spot which made it very difficult for him to sit during the next few days. Meanwhile, the Regimental Commander had arrived on the scene and ordered the 2nd Battalion to assist L Company, without any coordination with the 3rd Battalion Commander, thereby resulting in a great deal of confusion. (Map VI) Finally, however, a junction of L and I Company forces was made at the western end of town and it was considered cleared by midnight. Improvised litter-bearing parties were organized to evacuate the many wounded along the waterfront. The 3rd Battalion then moved South to the high ground back of GRANDCAMP and spent the night dug in along hedgerows in that area. (Map VI) (71)

During the night the Germans pounded the town with artillery and mortars and a force of about 12 or 15 2-engined bombers made a strike but missed the troops and the town. The bombs landed harmlessly in the open halfway between GRANDCAMP and MAISY. (Map VI).

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(70) Personal knowledge

(71) Personal knowledge

Ration and ammunition trucks arrived during the night for the first time since D-Day and for once the men welcomed a "C" ration.

D 3 AND 4 - MOPPING UP AND DEFENSE OF THE BEACHHEAD

During the night of 8-9 June, 1944, the 29th Division issued Field Order No. 4, which assigned the following mission: 115th Infantry would cross the AURE RIVER, seize BRICQUEVILLE, COLOMBIERES and the CALETTE WOOD and be prepared to continue the attack towards ST. LO; 116th Infantry would complete its mopping up mission between GRANDCAMP and ISIGNY, then revert to Division Reserve and move to the highground in vicinity of LONGUEVILLE-LA CAMBE to defend the beachhead against counter-attack; the 175th Infantry, after securing ISIGNY and establishing contact with VII Corps, would move South toward LISON, protecting right flank of V Corps. (72)

At dawn the 3rd Battalion began its day by capturing a company of Germans which had bivouacked in an adjacent field during the confusing night fighting. Apparently the Blue and Gray Division had gained some sort of reputation, at least with the Germans, because one young lieutenant cried and begged to be allowed to write home to his mother before he was shot. He was very pleasantly surprised when the Battalion Intelligence Officer offered him some "C" Rations instead, and gratefully told all he knew about the defense of GRANDCAMP, which assisted greatly in the final mopping up in that town. (73)

At 0830, 9 June 1944 a reinforced company was sent back into GRANDCAMP to complete the mopping up. They met very little resistance except at one large concrete bunker which refused to surrender. They were forced to seal the die-hards in their concrete tomb with explosives. (74)

The 1st Battalion had continued its attack to GEFOSSE-FONTENAY and there captured the last coastal battery in this area. (75)

At about noon on 9 June, the 3rd Battalion leading the regiment in advance guard formation moved out from GRANDCAMP along the MAISY-JUCOVILLE

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(72) A-5, p. 144-146

(73) Personal knowledge

(74) Statement of Company Commander to self

(75) A-5, p. 145

route to its defensive position near LONQUEVILLE. (Maps II and VI)

The rest of the day was spent in organizing defensive positions and anticipating the first good night's rest since D-Day.

The night was relatively quiet, disturbed only once by a German air raid which hit an ammunition dump in L Company's area, causing a few casualties in that company and in the supporting troops of M Company.

10 June 1944 was spent in reorganization. The regiment was down to approximately 50 per cent of its original fighting strength and the 1st Battalion was badly in need of officers. Consequently, officers and key non-commissioned officers were transferred from 2nd and 3rd Battalions to the 1st Battalion. (76)

Late in the evening, orders were received to prepare to move South on 11 June, 1944, towards ST. LO, but that is another story.

#### SUMMARY

The 10th of June 1944 finds the 3rd Battalion on the same objective it was supposed to reach on D-Day, a much sadder and wiser organization.

Difficulties encountered on the beach and the consequent loss of communications and fire support, plus the fact that this was its first taste of combat, made the rate of progress very slow for this battalion in the early stages of this operation.

However, as communications improved, fire support increased, and methods of dealing with the German tactics were devised, the rate of progress steadily increased.

Although nothing spectacular was achieved in this four days' action, the very fact that the enemy coastal batteries were reduced and a large number of smaller artillery pieces were captured, relieved conditions on the beach considerably and made a faster build up possible after the 10th.

Meanwhile, other elements of the division landing later, in much better condition, were able to make rapid advances inland, such as, a 12-mile night march made by the 175th Infantry to capture ISIGNY. (76a)

Casualties by battalion are not available. However, the 116th Infantry which landed with a strength of 3486, received exactly 33-1/3 per cent casualties during this period. The distribution was as follows:

Killed in Action	390
Wounded in Action	597
Missing in Action	<u>43</u>
Total	1,030

Of this total, over 80 were officers, more than half the officer strength of the regiment. (77)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

##### 1. TRAINING

For a special operation of this type, the importance of training cannot be overemphasized. It must be realistic and should be conducted on terrain similar to that upon which the assault is to be made. This was true of the training conducted in England, by the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry, with a few important exceptions. They had undergone numerous practice assaults at the Assault Training Center at Woolacombe and Slapton Sands, using live ammunition and actual Air and Naval fire support. Consequently, they were well trained in this aspect of the operation. However, none of these practice landings had been made under such adverse conditions as those existing D-Day. In the practice landings the Channel had been relatively smooth. Very few men had been affected by seasickness and practically all landings were more or less "dry" ones. Assault teams had landed right in front of their objectives, as planned, and therefore rehearsals in reduction of dummy fortifications progressed very rapidly and smoothly. Quite to the contrary, on D-Day, everything seemed to go wrong. First, the weather was very bad, the skies were heavily overcast, and the wind was so strong that the channel was very rough. As a result, the Air Force could not bomb the beaches, as planned, and all the beach defenses and underwater obstacles, which might have been destroyed by this bombardment were still active. Many assault

craft were swamped by the heavy seas and others became lost from their guide boat and drifted off, to land far to the East of their assigned objectives. The teams that managed to get through the beach obstacles safely were groggy from sea-sickness and shocked at the long stretch of open sands on which not a sign of a bomb crater was visible. The fortifications facing them were not the same ones on which they had rehearsed, which caused some hesitation, and hesitation on that beach caused casualties.

Although specialization is necessary for this type of operation, flexibility is also essential. Therefore, assault teams should have been trained to assault any point on the beach rather than one specific point.

## 2. FIRE SUPPORT PLAN

Planning for this operation had been very thorough and great care had been exercised in establishing a system for the control of the great volume of fire support available for it. With the exception of the air bombardment, everything went well until the landing and then the system broke down, mainly due to the facts that replacements were not available for the Naval Fire Control Officers; the system was too dependent on radio communications; and the 111th Field Artillery Battalion, attached to the 116th Combat Team, was completely disorganized when all of its guns except one went to the bottom of the channel in DUKW's.

Failure to anticipate such a calamity and the breakdown of radio communications meant that the 3rd Battalion was without Naval or Artillery fire support for the first 2 days of the operation. Had this fire support not been lost, much greater progress could have been made on D-Day and D+1, and, undoubtedly, casualties would have been lighter. It seems that at least 2 systems of fire control should have been established in each assault battalion and at Combat Team Headquarters.

## 3. COMMUNICATIONS

As high as 75 per cent of the radios in the regiment failed to function after the landing, many due to direct hits by artillery and small arms fire

and a large number due to improper waterproofing. Great care had been exercised in waterproofing radios but obviously it was not enough. It is possible that German defenders had been instructed to knock out radios first or they may have mistaken them for flamethrowers.

Regardless of the reason for the loss of communication, it contributed more to the disorganization and lack of coordination and fire support than any other single factor. Had communication been adequate, contact could have been made with the 115th Infantry at ST. LAURENT and by a coordinated attack, supported by Naval fire, the 3rd Battalion could have reached its D-Day Objective.

Looking back on the situation now, it seems that more effort should have been exerted towards establishing contact with adjacent units by foot messenger and patrols. However, at the time, after seeing all the death and destruction on the beaches, each unit got the impression that it was the only one left and its battle became more or less one for survival.

This is substantiated to some extent by the German LXXXIV Corps' report to Seventh Army as of noon, 6 June 1944, which stated in effect that attempted sea landings from the VIRE to BAYEUX had been completely smashed.(78)

#### 4. WEATHER

Contrary to the old belief that weather is a neutral factor in warfare, it was proven in this operation to be a particularly important influence on the outcome of an amphibious assault of a fortified coast.

Due to the overcast skies, bombs scheduled to be dropped on the beach to provide some cover on the 500 yards of flat sand had to be carried inland or back to England.

The super-secret DD tank which had weathered numerous swimming pool tests and actual landings at Slapton Sands, England, was no match for the heavy seas encountered D-Day. Of the 32 launched, only 6 reached the shore in operational condition. Nor were the DUKW's of the 111th F.A. Battalion

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(78) A-5, p. 113

which, similarly, had weathered all practice landings, able to cope with heavy seas. Consequently, much more valuable fire support went to the bottom of the English Channel. Loss of this additional support had a very damaging effect on the efficiency of the battalion as well as on the morale of the troops.

#### 5. LEADERSHIP

The success of this operation can be attributed largely to the initiative and aggressiveness of small unit leaders, who made the best of a bad situation. Landing in most cases far off their assigned objectives, with large losses of men and equipment in the water, they had to improvise in order to cope with the strange fortifications to their front. Those teams whose leaders were lost became confused and bewildered and made little effort to go further than the protection of the stone shingle. Consequently, casualties were heavier among these units, due to the volume of fire on the beach, than among those that drove on inland by assault or infiltration methods.

Considerable can be said for leadership on the enemy side as well. Apparently, the enemy troops were led by well-qualified German officers and non-commissioned officers because, although reputed to be of low morale, they fought with great determination, even when by-passed and cut off from the rear, and relatively few prisoners were taken.

#### 6. INTELLIGENCE

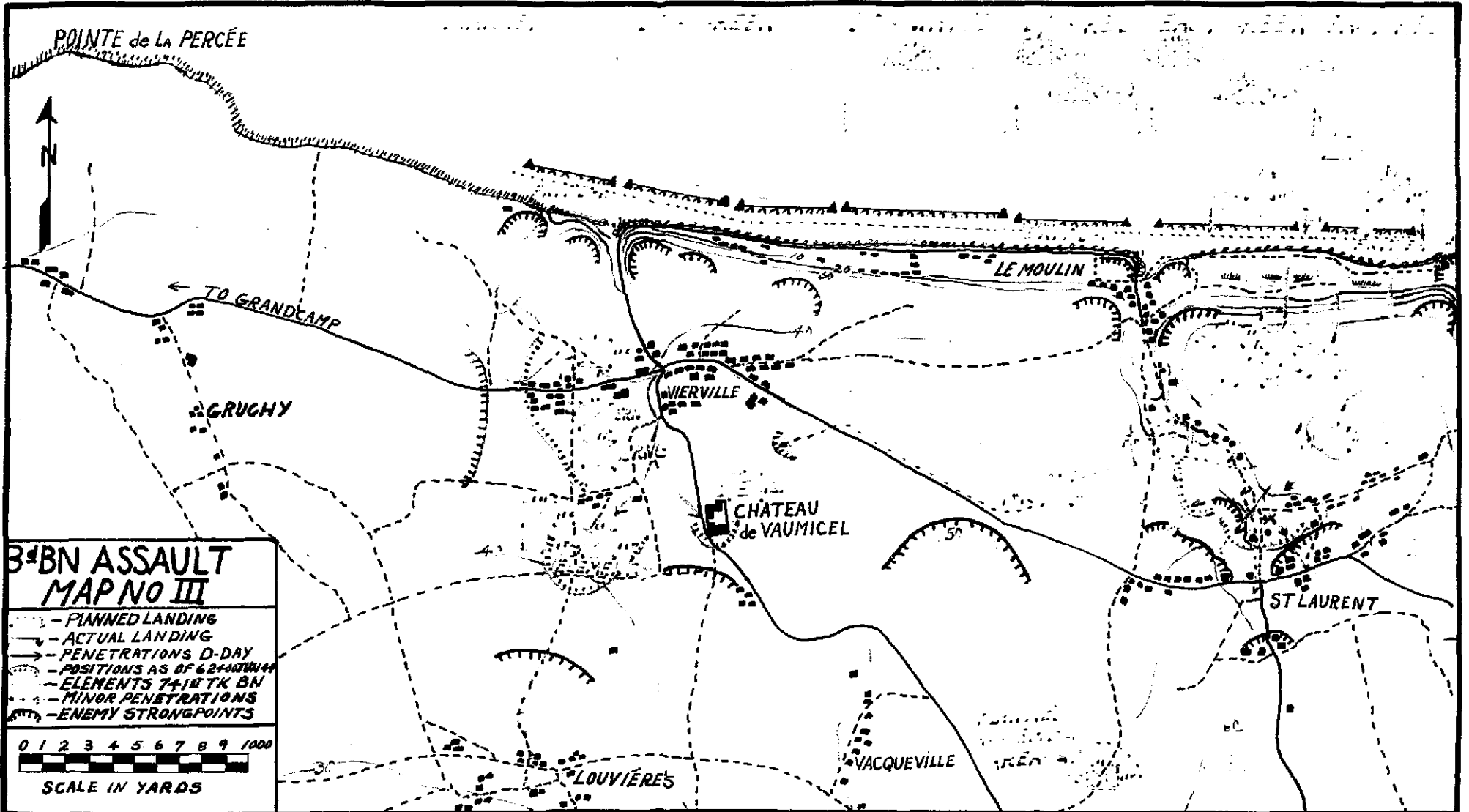
The intelligence coverage provided to the Battalion prior to this operation was excellent. Almost every minute detail of the enemy beach defenses was known and troops were briefed on models that contained very realistic and accurate enemy information. The only information which was not disseminated was the fact that the 352nd German Infantry Division had moved up to reinforce the beach defenses 25 hours in advance of the landing. At the time, this seemed to be a terrible oversight, but after analyzing the situation objectively, the success of the entire operation may depend on that accidental, or otherwise, premature commitment of that division.

First, if the troops had known of its presence, there would certainly have been a demoralizing effect on them. Second, if that division had been free to counter-attack in force on D-Day or D+1 in the 3rd Battalion sector or any other sector on OMAHA, it is doubtful that they could have been stopped short of the beaches.





#### LESSONS

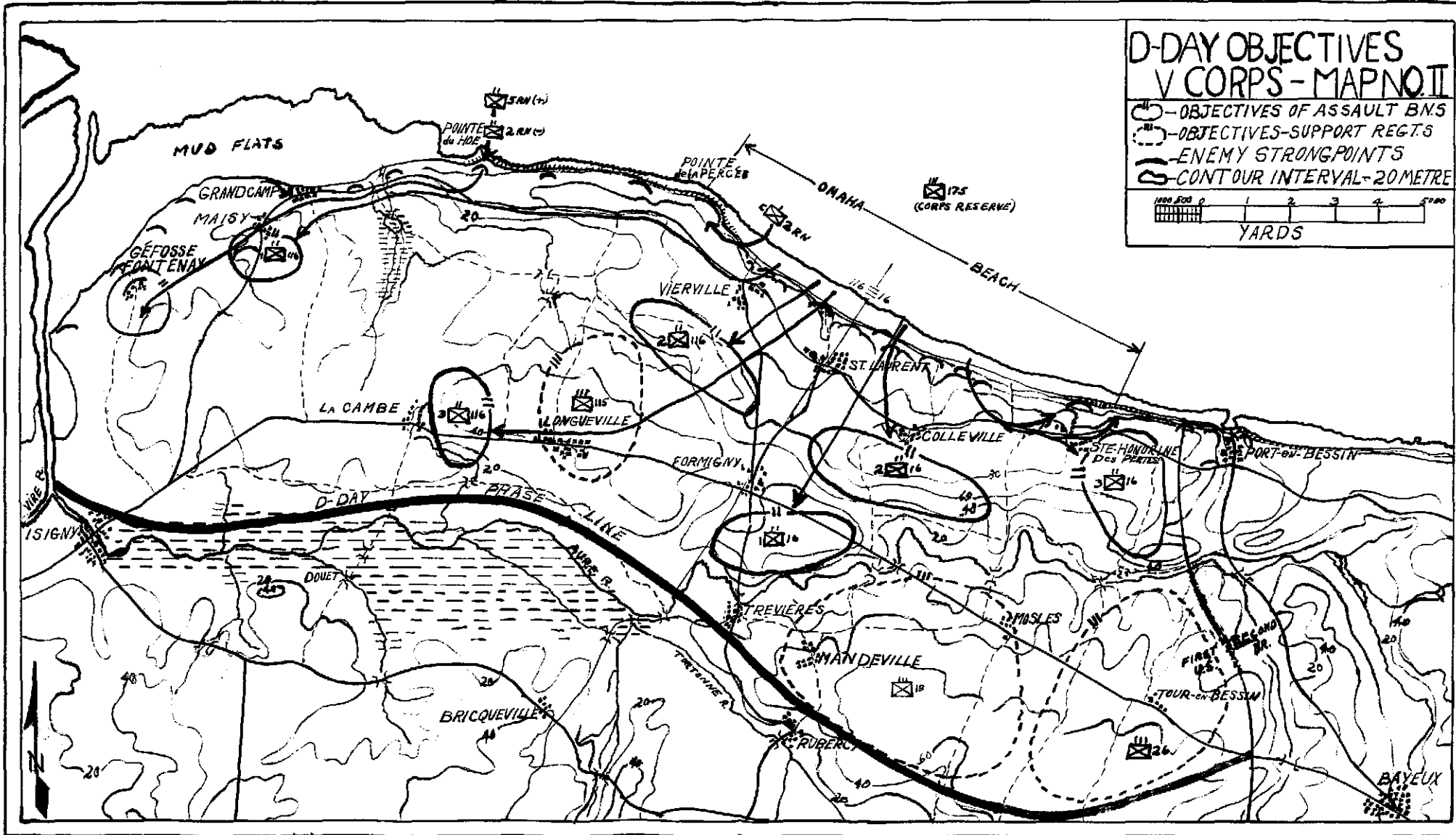
1. Training for an amphibious assault operation should be conducted under the most adverse conditions possible in order that all deficiencies may be detected and corrected.
2. Since Naval fire support is invaluable in amphibious assault, plans should provide for at least one alternate system of fire control and for the immediate replacement of naval shore fire control officers who may become casualties.
3. Extreme care must be exercised in the waterproofing of communication equipment to be used in an amphibious assault.
4. Weather is a particularly deciding factor in the success or failure of an amphibious assault.
5. Success of an amphibious assault is heavily dependent on the initiative and aggressive leadership of the small unit commander.
6. Accurate and timely intelligence is essential to the success of an amphibious assault of a fortified coast.





# D-DAY OBJECTIVES V CORPUS - MAP NO. II

-  OBJECTIVES OF ASSAULT BNS
-  OBJECTIVES-SUPPORT REGTS
-  ENEMY STRONGPOINTS
-  CONTOUR INTERVAL-20 METRE



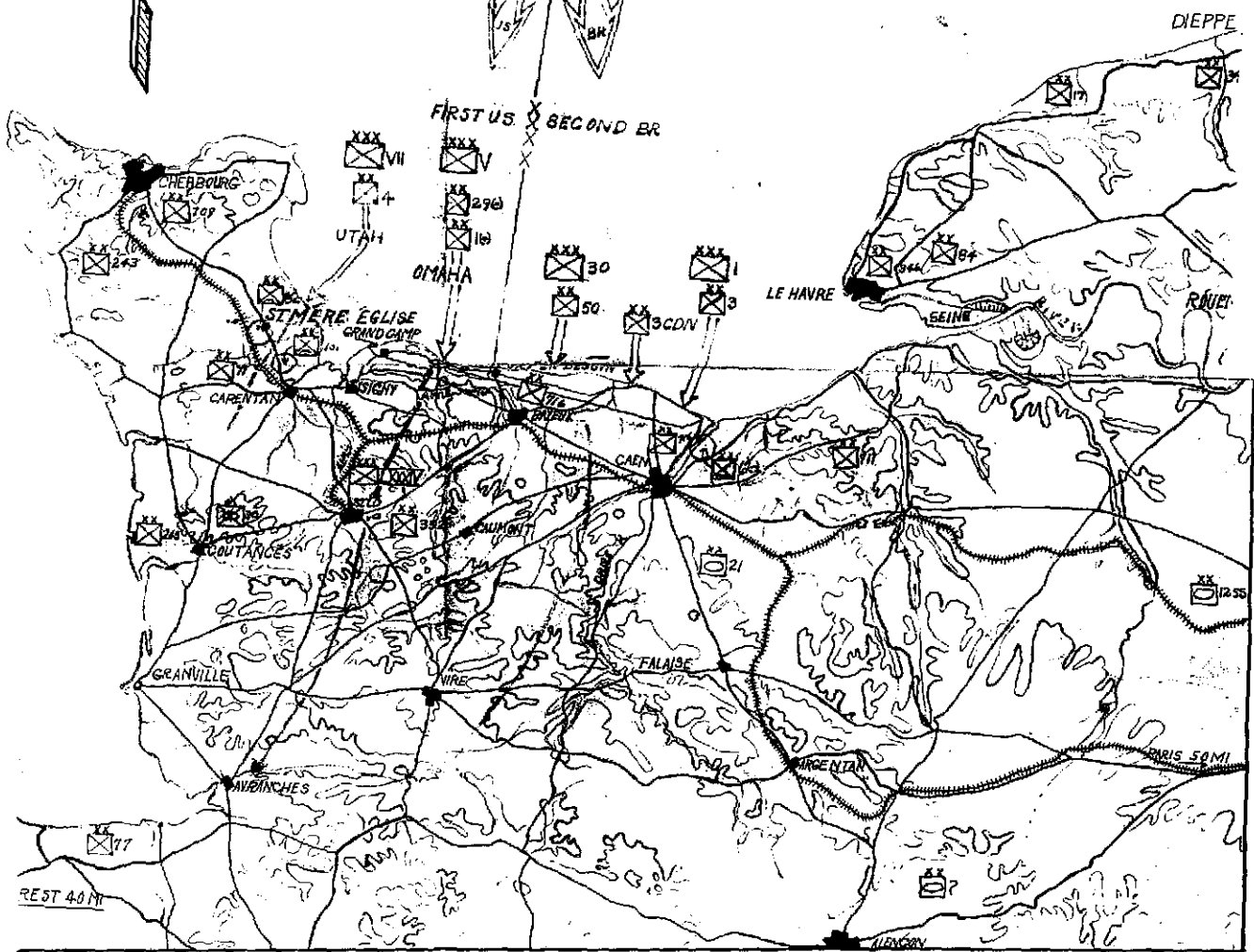
ENGLAND 25 MI

# WESTERN FRONT MAP NO 1

- MAIN ROADS
  - ELEVATION 40 METRES OR HIGHER
  - APPRX. ENEMY LOCATIONS
  - DIRECTION OF ALLIED ATTACK
  - AIRBORNE LANDING ZONES
- 0 5 10 15  
MILES

## ENGLISH

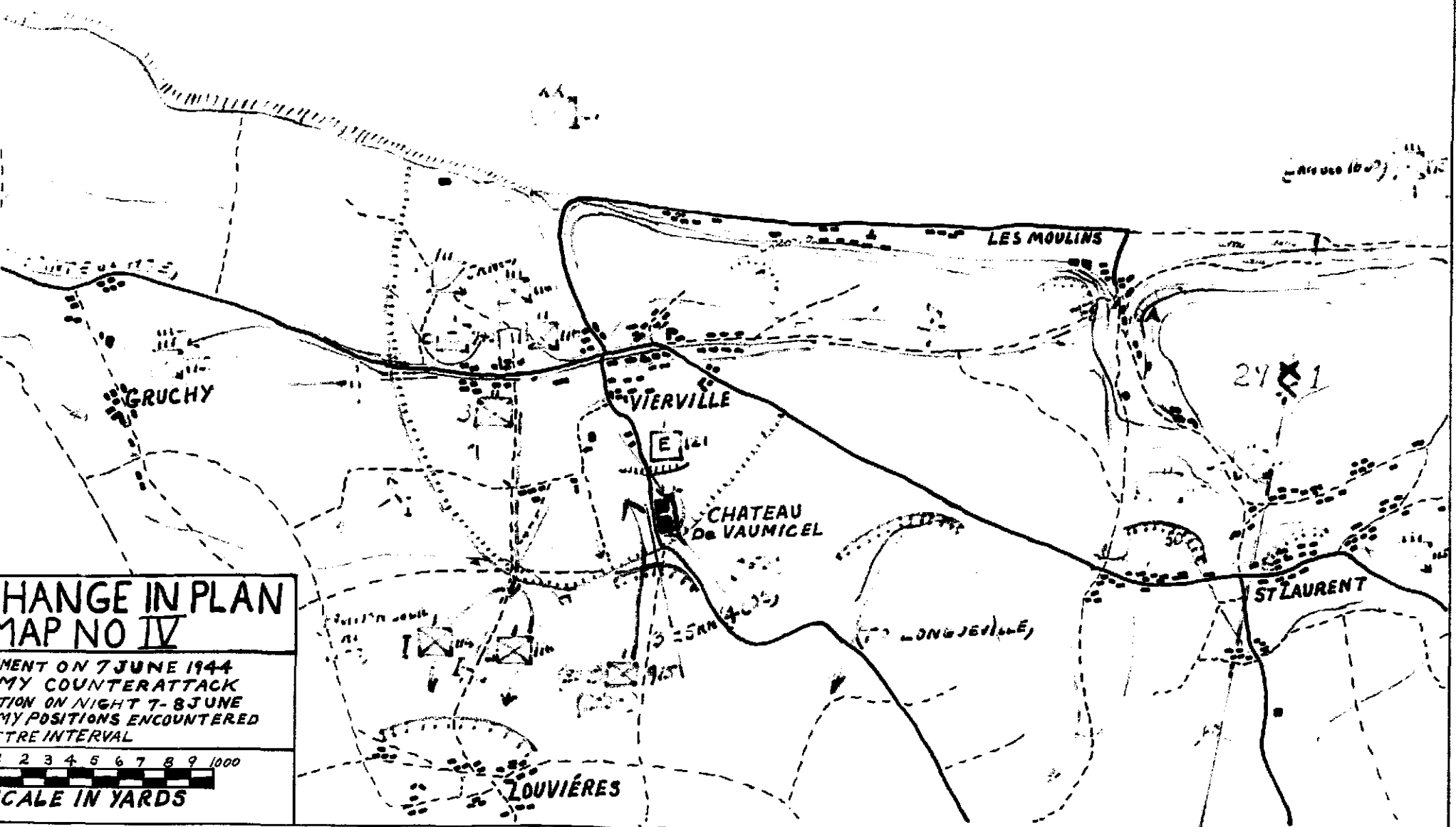
## CHANNEL

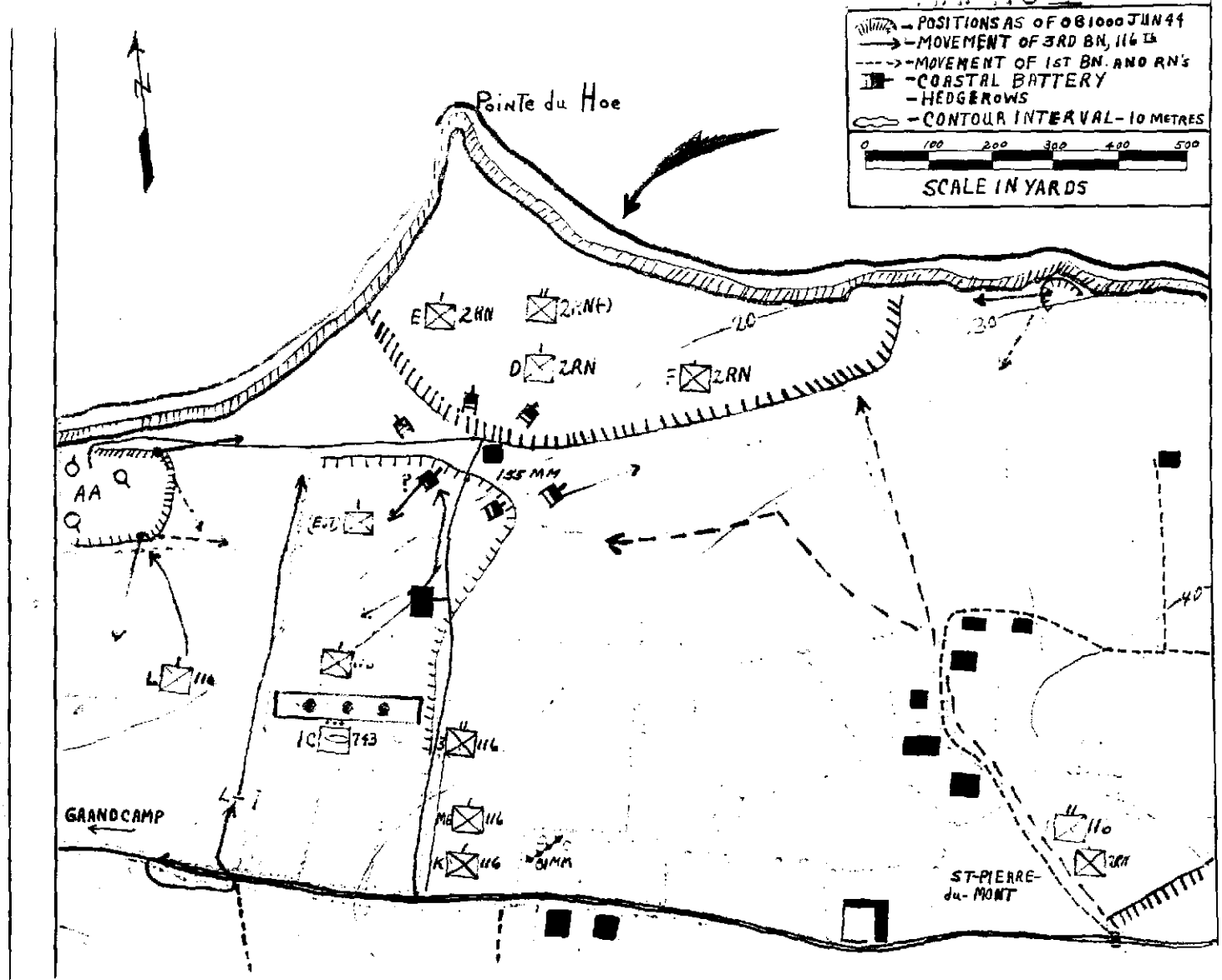


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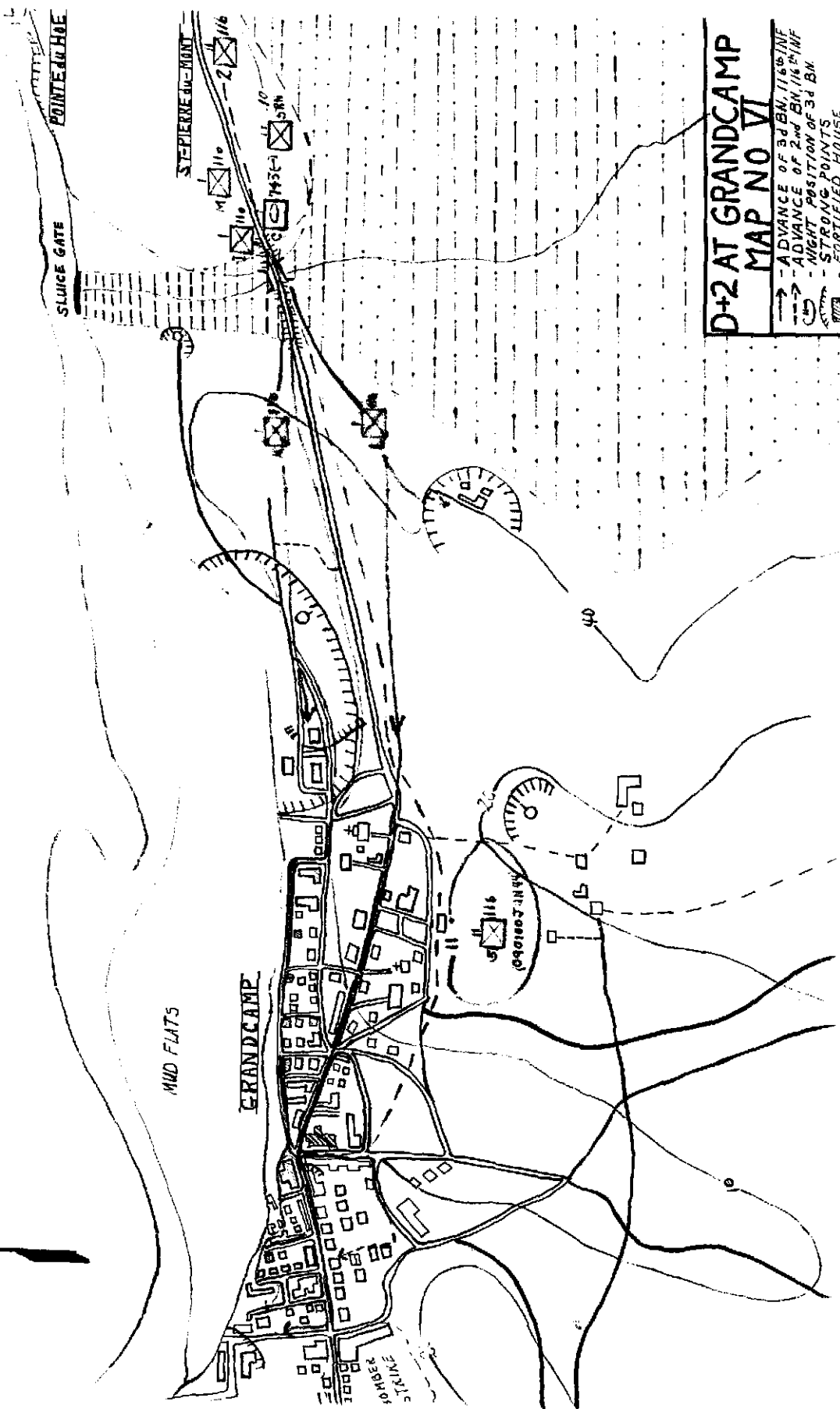
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WESTERN FRONT

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MAP V



# D+2 AT GRANDCAMP MAP NO VI

- ADVANCE OF 3d BN, 116 INF
- ADVANCE OF 2nd BN, 116 INF
- NIGHT POSITION OF 3d BN
- STRONG POINTS
- FORTIFIED HOUSE