

Vol V LAUNCHING D-DAY 1944 June 6 – 9 Combat Forces In General Imn

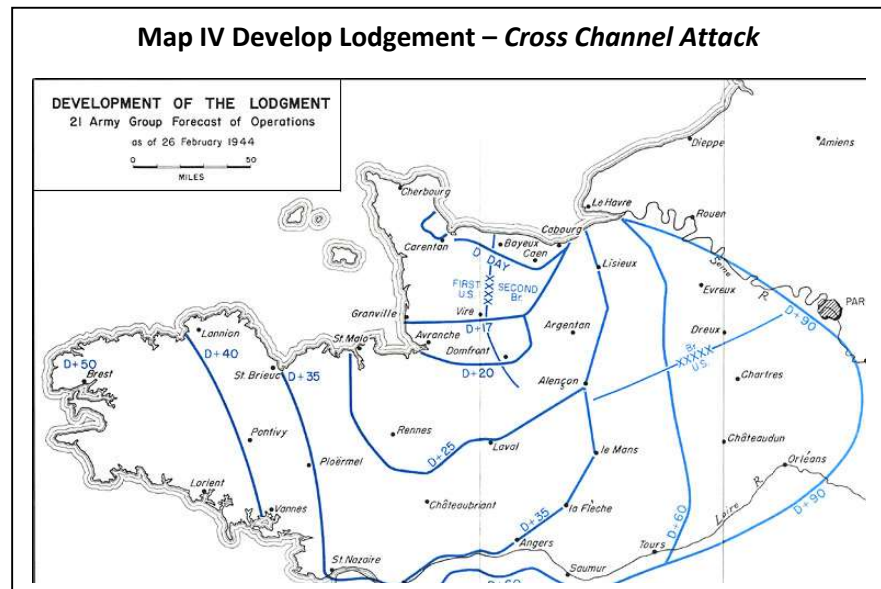
A. Chapter V: Landings in Normandy 6 June; Victory Campaign Canada, C.P. Stacey xyzad

(Comment: Montgomery's Strategic Plans. This author is not generous in treating Field Marshall Montgomery. The British had one army group but sought control combat. Montgomery saw Ike as the Supreme Commander of all forces and military. He argued Eisenhower could not take care of the "logistics," air forces and navies and the ground forces. To that end, Teddar was his deputy for air matters. Ramsey was his Admiral for both navies (primarily because the Royal Navy had much greater input than the U.S. Navy).

He sought to command the ground armies. The British had superiorities in navies, and near parity in air forces, but not in ground forces.

Map IV shows the intended "lodgement areas" as of D+90 days and the planned First U.S. and Second British Army boundary line as "XXXX" (the highest-level boundary) as north to south Bayeux-Domfront by D+20. Then the northeast line from Alencon, Dreux to west of

Paris from D+35 to D+90. British Empire forces had 1/4th of the troops and 1/4th of the territory (Caen to Domfront, to Alencon to Dreux). That Montgomery tried to run the entire show rankled!



Map IV is a key to judging Montgomery's claim the battle was fought as he planned. His British forces had much smaller areas to capture by D+20. They would have the Alencon-Argentan-Coleburg line by D+25 (1 July 1944). All forces would be on the Lisieux - le Mans - Angers line by 10 July! By D+60 northwest France would be occupied with the front lines on the Loire River east with another 30 days to capture the last 30 miles northeast to the Seine River by 6 September (D+90). Based upon Map IV, the Allied advance toward Paris and the Seine were "on track" with a 26 February 1944 projection. Map IV lends credence to the claim that the Normandy Campaign was fought as planned. Conversely, it does negate that charge by Americans that Montgomery was "dogging it!"

1. NEPTUNE Begins. British groups sailed from the Portsmouth at 0900 5 June with Forces "G", "J" and "O" to assembly areas known as Area "Z" ("PICADILLY CIRCUS") south-east of the Isle of Wight to then steam through pre-arranged channels. By dusk 5 June minesweepers were visible from the French shoreline, but not fired upon as they cut 10 channels to the beaches. **90** British paratroops landed 15 minutes past midnight with gliders five minutes to overpower German bridge defenders north of Caen. It was two months and 21 days later before Paris was liberated – 85 days later!

(Comment: The Development of the Lodgement Map, drawn by Montgomery's headquarters 26 Feb 1944. Looking at the picture right and the map above, it is difficult to then assert the British were laggard – not carrying their weight – as some U.S. histories state. While true Americans had the bulk of the effort on a geographical basis --- this map dashes the theory that post-D-Day battles did not go as planned – worse, yet, as Monty planned!)

Paris Liberated 26 August 1944



2. Bombardment by Air and Sea. RAF Bomber Command hit from 2330 hours June 5 to 5:15 a.m. rendered “the heaviest blow the Command had ever struck” with 5,268 tons, but results were “spotty”.

(Since) ... the Eighth U.S. Air Force ... **93** (hit) ... three miles inland" and "the beachlines ... were left untouched ... defences both on OMAHA and on the British and Canadian beaches remained almost intact ... it would have been ... unfortunate had the bombs ... (hit) our landing craft ... (but was more unfortunate they did not hit at all ...)

The ... fighter-bombers and light and medium bombers... contributed very considerably to ... demoralizing the defenders. It is questionable however whether they did much actual damage ... except possibly ... in the "UTAH" area ... **Precise assessment of the attacks' effectiveness seems impossible.**

American bombers flew perpendicular, British bombers flew parallel to the shore. Both missed. The Ninth Air Force bombers did an excellent job, but UTAH forces landed on a different beach!

Naval Counter-Battery Fire was “tremendous,” but many German batteries did not fire to avoid exposing their position. “Only two German ... (batteries used) pre-landing fire (and) voluminous naval reports ... contain no list of the batteries actually engaged before H Hour ...” **94** But naval did “hit something”. H.M.S. *Ajax* “actually put 6-inch shells through two embrasures at the Mont Fleury battery, Benouville and Holgate guns had some firing.

The conclusion caps the point: the “failure of the Germans to ... even to attempt, any effective blow against the tremendous target offered by our shipping on D Day appears extraordinary.” German E-Boats (150 left Le Havre) to sink **95** Norwegian destroyer *Sevener*. The U.S. destroyer *Corry* was mined at UTAH area; the two warships lost. A slight German naval response was expected, but the slight Luftwaffe response was not. Nothing until 3:00 p.m. and it was “weak.”

3. "Drenching" the Beach Defences. The U.S. Navy anchored 10 to 12 miles out; Royal Navy only 8 miles reducing the "uncomfortable time for assaulting forces". **96** But the approach was far from the orderly (plans) ... Without (air) bombing, "Beach Drenching Fire ... was of tremendous significance ... (and) efficiently carried out ... It was hoped ... (it would force) defenders ... to keep their heads down." Here is where the Royal Navy outshined the U.S. Navy on D-Day when: "11 destroyers fired on the (Canadian) beach defences ... (with) the 4.7-inch guns ... (and) closer inshore than destroyers The rocket craft--L.C.T.(R)--seem to have been ... amazingly effective ..." **97** The Army sent in four regiments of 24 self-propelled 105-mm. guns in six tank landing craft for "the best shoot that they ever did".

While it worked for the British; it did not for the U.S. The British had a control commander for each battery plus a forward fire control officer to "call the fall" – it kept enemy heads down. OMAHA lacked **98** accurate fire particularly concrete emplacements – maybe 14% of the 106 German guns ... (were) put out of action by direct hits through the embrasures ... "Any neutralisation ... (was) a morale effect ... All evidence shows ... defences were NOT destroyed ... (except) by infantry infiltration from the rear assisted by A.V.R.E.s and tanks." In two cases German guns were not silent as soldiers were told. The shock of landing on 300 yards of "no man's land" before concrete machine gun emplacements was unfathomable. The soldiers could not go forward or back – No Safe Place. Stacey concludes: **99** "... the effect of the drenching fire was moral rather than material ... (and) it seems likely that its effect ... considerably eased the task of the assaulting infantry ..." A conclusion neither proved nor disproved!

4. The Assault on the Beaches. British delays meant craft landed in the beach obstacles, not before which **100** took "a heavy toll of our craft." Yet boat crews ... Spirit and seamanship alike rose ... there was no faltering ... Craft were driven on until they foundered.'" *(Comment: Here is a difference between U.S., and British and Canadians Official Histories; the former lack patriotic adjectives and adverbs but, consequently, appear more objective.)*

German guns raked beaches with fire perpendicular to the shoreline, but "could not bear upon craft any distance offshore." British boats were fine until 3,000 yards (1.7 miles) offshore, and this was "desultory" fire until landing where intensity rose. British craft losses were worse withdrawing than landing. Force "J" lost 36 CA's (25%) . **101** British demolitions teams. AVRE's, bulldozer tanks and 95-mm mortar tanks dug a hull down trench to fire at the German emplacements. Sea conditions destroyed British plans as tanks were launched too late to arrive after their infantry.

5. The 7th Brigade's Beach Battle. **102** Delaying the tank launch meant drastic timing problems in adjusting launch times from craft. Then crosscurrents carried the craft and tanks away from their landings. Infantry landed before the tanks in confusion with high casualties. Many tanks made shore, dropped the cloth curtains and engines drowned in rising tides. **103**

Infantry experiences varied. The Royal Winnipeg Rifles far right had zero opposition with its target gun already destroyed by the Navy, but next door it was ineffective. These companies "had to storm their positions 'cold ...' "B' Company met heavy machine-gun, shell, and mortar ... still chest high in water" but captured their pillboxes. "Big guns ... (were) put out of by close range tank fire, and the machine gun and mortar positions gave up when surrounded by infantry." "Yet, 'B' Company was cut ... (up) 'D'

Company met less ... (and) 'A' pushed inland ... "C" advanced on Banville ... (held until) 6th Armoured Regiment... beat down the opposition ..."

At the other half of Courseulles, the "Regina Rifle Regiment's tanks hit the beach ... but 104 the naval bombardment was weak." Courseulles was barred by a 75-mm. position until a DD tank pierced its armor. "A" Company cleared it, but Germans returned to fire upon the reserves. "C" company moved without effort at 8:35 a.m., but a "D" company catastrophe left it with just 49 survivors on the beach. The Regina's could not advance before 5 pm. The 1st Battalion, The Canadian Scottish Regiment 105 was stopped at "MIKE" Beach about 8:30 A.M., but after Colombières-sur-Soulless had no opposition.

(Clearing) exits from the beach ... (were) AVREs and bulldozers ... and "Crabs" (mine flails) ... (On) the 7th Brigade front ... low sand-dunes, and ... a flooded area, were trouble. On "MIKE RED" Beach, one exit was opened ... (but) the causeway failed ... until noon or later ... "MIKE GREEN" ... was working 106 ... assault infantry had made good progress inland, but ... the beach was ... congested.

On "NAN GREEN" Beach (left) Crabs dealt with the mines, an anti-tank ditch was filled with fascines ... bulldozers improved the lanes, and ... exits ... were working by about 9:00 a.m.

(Comment: One must contrast this with the mayhem that occurred all day on OMAHA Beach.)

6. The 8th Brigade Beaches. The 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group hit the east Canadian front. D.D. tanks landed, with one 107 company near a resistance nest for 65 casualties. But the waves had "much less difficulty" exiting beaches after to get after the enemy. Afternoon Anguerny fell "after some resistance" as two 50-mm. anti-tank guns in Bernières fired parallel to the beach hitting engineers removing obstacle mines. St. Aubin was subdued by infantry and AVRE's after a 4-hour fight.

The North Shores companies had "casualties in booby-trapped houses" but made their objective. 108 Le Régiment de la Chaudière landed at 8:30 a.m., as its craft foundered. Men swam in; fought with their knives. *(A slight exaggeration).* They liberated Bernières thrilled locals that they also spoke French. Two self-propelled artillery regiments got inland. 109 On 7th and 8th Brigade beaches, high tide fouled Centaur tanks to afternoon. A high seawall in Bernières required exits blown as crabs flailed lanes through mines for two exits and a bridge over the seawall.

7. The Reserve Brigade Lands. Division HQ opened at 11:00 AM on NAN WHITE, but NAN RED "craft casualties were getting serious ..." "Beaches crowded, standing off waiting to land". 110 Congestion, not Germans, was the issue. Not unit 6:20 p.m. did forces move out. Three Highlanders' companies rode Sherbrooke's' tanks.

At Colombe-sur-Thaon, Co A was delayed at Villon's-les-Buissons so advance forces did not reach Carpiquet Airport before dark. **This "not serious" opposition kept the British from Carpiquet Airport and village for two more months. A major issue since German observers atop tall smokestacks pummeled invasion beaches with accurate artillery. Throughout British efforts lacked a sense of "urgency."** Later G.O.C. ordered "hold the ground on which they found themselves." The assessment:

.... The casualties suffered by the 3rd Canadian Division ... were fewer ... Canadian losses ... rose to 340 all ranks killed or died of wounds, 574 wounded and "battle injuries" and 47 taken prisoner. **112**

The Victory Campaign – C.P. Stacey

SKETCH 6

OPERATIONS
1st CANADIAN PARACHUTE
BATTALION
6 JUNE 1944

Map showing the area around Caen, France, with the Orne River and various locations like Caumont, St. Pierre, and St. Martin. The map illustrates the positions of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, the 1st Airborne Division, and the 1st Airborne Division. The map is labeled 'SKETCH 6' and includes a scale bar and a north arrow.

(But they captured) Ste. Mère-Eglise and ... a large area ... (toward) Carentan ... (and) contributed materially to disordering the enemy and confounding his countermeasures."

... "OMAHA" Beach ... had more difficulty than at any other point; losses were extremely heavy ... some of the reasons ... (were the quality of the 352nd German Division) was somewhat higher ... (and) the 21st Army Group's weekly intelligence review ... issued on June 4 described the evidence for it as "slender indeed". The terrain ... favoured the defenders ... defences ... were probably somewhat stronger ... (in) machine-guns ... (and) the assaulting infantry were less strongly **113** supported ... (Of 32) D.D. tanks ... only five reached the shore ... The Americans had no engineer assault vehicles Those who ... (know) the Canadian beaches will realize that without the D.D. tanks, AVREs and Crabs Canadian casualties would certainly have been higher ... (Footnote: **For a discussion of the Americans' refusal to avail themselves of the British "special armour", except the DD's, see Wilmot, The Struggle for Europe, 264-6, 291).*

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(Comment: There is nothing wrong with Stacey's comments, but they contain an aura of superiority that Americans found offensive. They say: "You should have been smarter, without saying 'smarter'").

The 50th British Infantry landing "landing was a success ... but ... objectives were not reached, but ... (it) was in striking distance of Bayeux ..." Undefended, it was occupied on 7 June.¹ They linked with the Canadians left, but not Americans on "OMAHA". The 3rd Canadian and 3rd British did not connect until 8 June. **The 3rd British Division fell short of Caen -- 114 a pre-requisite of all plans. But 3rd Division was hit by "some 40 tanks of the 21st Panzer Division came in on the western flank." It was acceptable ...**

orders given specifically recognized ... it might fail to take Caen on D Day. The-... outline plan as issued on 21 February ... (stated;) 1 Corps will assault ... and secure Caen ... (by) evening of D Day. The capture and retention of Caen is vital to the Army Plan ... Second Army's Operation Order No. 1, dated 21 April, was firm ... On D Day 1 Corps will ... (II) Capture Caen (But) operation instruction issued by the 1st British Corps, however, somewhat weakened this. It is true that it repeated the statement about ... being vital to the Army plan and defined the general role of the 3rd British Division as follows: "The task of 3 British Division is to capture Caen and secure a bridgehead over R Orne at that place." ... (It then) proceeded:

(c) ... 3 Brit Inf Div should ... before dark on D Day have captured or effectively masked Caen and be disposed in depth with both localities firmly established:

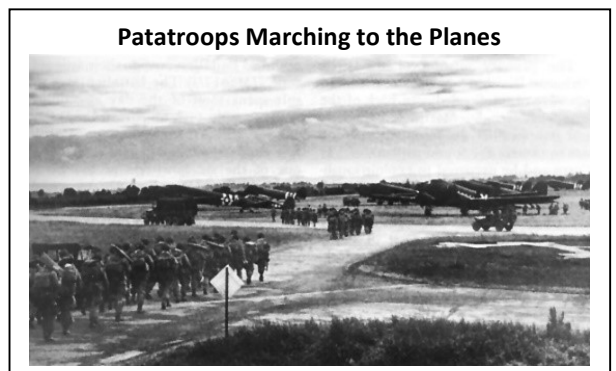
(i) Northwest of Benouville, in support of 6 Airborne Division operating East ...

(ii) Northwest of Caen, tied up with the ... 3 Cdn Inf Div.

(d) Should the enemy forestall us at Caen ... further direct frontal assaults ... will not be undertaken without reference to 1 Corps. In such an event 3 Brit Inf Div will contain the enemy in Caen ... (it) will be subjected to heavy air bombardment to limit its usefulness to the enemy ...

It is quite possible that ... Caen could not have been captured on D Day ... **115 By prescribing an easier alternative, however, this order rendered the capture of the city less likely.**

(Comment: Here Mr. Stacey blames the order for the failure to capture Caen before the Germans occupied and fortified it! As tensions increased between U.S. and British commanders, the Americans thought the British would do a task, but the British response became the "failure to gain the objective" was always planned. True or not; right or wrong – macht nichts – the perception existed).



¹ A good example of mixed language for "success," "objectives not reached," but were "in striking distance."

The Canadian 3rd Parachute Brigade had many items to blow. It was scattered (Sketch 6), but small groups collected and succeeded. **116** The Canadian battalion lost 113 men (84 taken as POW's). The bridgehead east of the Orne was secured. Of all the Allied divisions that day Gen Gale's 6th Airborne was the most successful (True). **117**

The D Day achievement was magnificent ... (Yet, 15) years after, one may be permitted to inquire whether ... we could have accomplished even more on the 6th of June ...

Was it impossible to reach the inland objectives? Could not a more sustained effort ... have produced deeper penetration ... which we later had to purchase by many weeks of bloody fighting? We shall see ... the British and Canadian forces--and ... probably ... the United States--were usually better at deceiving the enemy ... than they were at exploiting **118** surprise ...

... (No) aspect ... is more in need of study ... than ... maintaining the momentum of the attack ...

Much nonsense ... (recorded) the operation was easy and almost bloodless ... In spite of the Allies' superiority in numbers and material, the assaulting forces' casualties were heavy at every point ... except "UTAH" Beach. The enemy ... and most of the defences in it were held with determination. It could not have been broken by an attack less powerfully supported than ... D Day ... (the) attackers paid no small price ...

The best figures 15 years later suggest a "loss of the Allied armies on D Day--including fatal casualties, wounded, and prisoners--may have been somewhere about 9,000 men ... (The) Canadian Army's share was 1,074. These figures are conservative..." **119** Stacey put it best:

It is worth remembering that the men who stormed the Atlantic Wall surmounted ... a ... formidable moral hazard ... In Britain, for months ... no one doubted that an invasion ... was imminent ... It followed that every man had to face and overcome deep unspoken fears within himself before he faced the German defenders ... These private terrors were, perhaps, even more formidable antagonists than Hitler's infantrymen. The soldiers who defeated both made the liberation of Europe possible. Free men ... should remember them. **120**

B. Cross-Channel Attack, Harrison: CHAPTER 8 The Invasion is Launched, 1944 xyza

1. The Airborne Assault: 101st AID The first reports were of Allied paratroopers landing in Normandy. At 0130 Lt. Col. Hoffmann heard aircraft and at 0200 six airplanes released parachutists. In a few minutes Hoffmann's staff and security guards were heavily engaged with the 101 AID paratroops. At 0215 *Seventh Army* ordered the highest alarm for *LXXXIV Corps*. At 0220 *Naval Commander Normandy* reported

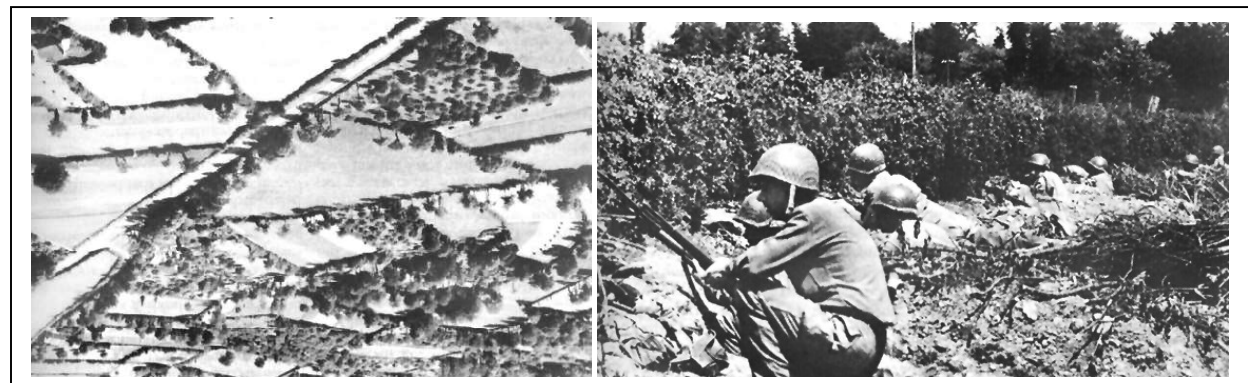
Troops on an LCI(L) D-Day Morning



paratroopers at Marcouf battery. By 3:00 it had its first prisoner. Gen Pesmen, *Seventh Army* chief of staff, concluded the invasion near Carentan and Caen. High-ranking officers (Rundstedt, Sperrle, Krancke and Speidel) believed it a diversion with the real invasion on the Channel Coast against *Fifteenth Army*. **278** Six parachute regiments, over 13,000 men on 822 transport planes dropped between 0115 and 0130 after pathfinders marked drop zones. Glider reinforcements came at dawn and dusk on new landing zones. **279**

The 501st AIR had south beach exits and flank to include Douve River locks and bridge to Carentan. The 502nd had to destroy the St. Martin-de-Varreville battery and get two north exits. The 506th AIR had two south exits. Four battalions of the 502nd were scattered and landed outside their zone. They had no part in D-Day fights. (**Map VIII**) The regiment's artillery missed; its men fought as infantry. The 3rd Battalion, 502^d's Col. Robert Cole, was east of Ste. Mère-Eglise. Cole gathered 75 men, including from the 82nd, heading to the east coast. Discovering the St. Martin battery guns gone, Cole got the west end of the causeway with a fight. **280** Two hours later, at 0930, they shot at 75 Germans retreating from UTAH. At 1300, the 8th IR of the 4th ID arrived. Cole's group had no casualties to end with his 250 men.

Col. Cassidy's 1st Battalion, 502nd AIR fought for its objectives. Landing near St. Germain-de-Varreville, he had crossroads west of St. Martin. Both of their north beach exits were clear. Cassidy ordered 45 men north to Foucarville. He kept a reserve and sent 15 men went to "clean out" Mésières. It was a "one-man" attack by S/Sgt. Harrison Summers who rushed buildings one by one, kicked in doors, and sprayed his Tommy gun. Only one other soldier helped. **By that afternoon, he killed or captured 150 Germans! The story was remarkable and tragic. Remarkable for what Summers did, tragic as a whole company just watched as these two repeatedly attacked barracks!** He was the Sgt. York of WWII!²



When LTC Michaelis arrived with 200 men, Cassidy finished his D-Day mission to cover the 82nd Airborne north border. His 1st Battalion at Foucarville trapped a four-vehicle convoy. **281** At night most Germans surrendered, as 50 more were shot running. Harrison notes a bit odd, that Germans, who had expected what happened, still felt surrounded and cut-off to surrender.

² World War II historian Stephen Ambrose described him this way: "Summers is a legend with American paratroopers ..., the Sergeant York of World War II. His story has too much John Wayne/Hollywood in it to be believed, except that more than 10 men saw and reported his exploits"

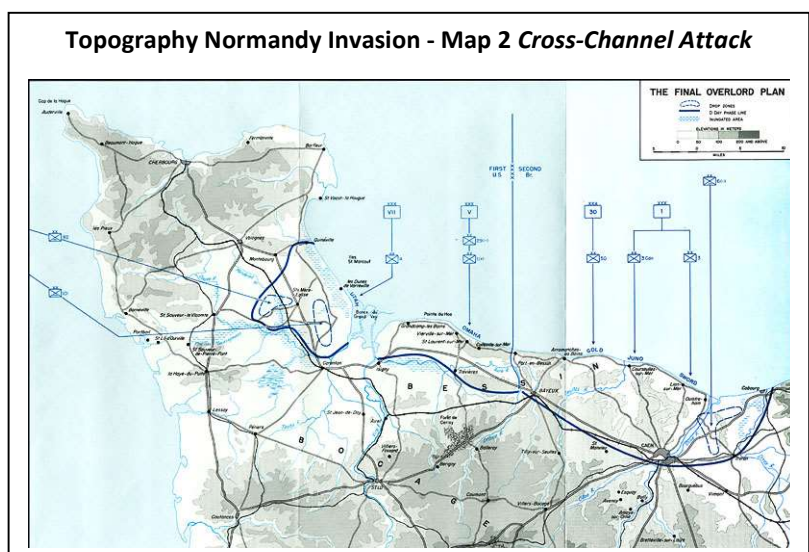
Two south beach exits were for Col. Sink's 506th AIR. Badly scattered, luck had 140 gathered in two hours and Col. Strayer arrived with 200 men. He took Beach Exits 1 and 2 but was stopped by German machine guns. **282** They had their causeway as 4th ID came inland from UTAH. Col Turner's 1st AIB ("Airborne Infantry Battalion") were at Pouppeville against light opposition but delayed his arrival. Gen Taylor Ewell 3rd AIB to cover the Hiesville glider zone with 300 men. Col Ewell's 40 men got Pouppeville. Ewell hit 70 Germans defending the causeway for 18 casualties, versus 25 enemy and 38 prisoners. Col Sink 506th AIR was isolated; lost contact and was next to the *2d Battalion of the 191st Artillery Regiment* with three German four-gun batteries. **283** A battery and headquarters were captured.

For the most part ... Colonel Sink had no men to spare ... He believed it necessary to keep together his handful of men to protect the rear of the units engaged in clearing the causeways and to provide a nucleus for concentration ... The group ... (fought) off enemy riflemen who twice ... closed in among the surrounding hedgerows. In the evening, with ... the 1st and 2d Battalions, Colonel Sink controlled about 650 men.

This seemed a criticism of Sink, but Harrison wrote.

The hedgerows, which bottled up Colonel Sink's men in apparent isolation ... were to become the most important single preoccupation of American fighting men ... their most vivid memory ... (They) boxed in fields and orchards ... Each ... a potential earthwork ... (of) foxholes, trenches ... (as) dense bushes atop ... provided ample concealment for rifle and machine gun positions ... (with) devastating hidden fire from three sides. Observation for artillery and mortar fire ... (was) a single field ... Each ... a separate battlefield ... taken by slow costly advances ... with rifle and grenade. **(The) country was ideal for static defense ... The chief burden ... (on) the individual soldier ... his own courage and resourcefulness ... willingness to move through ... fire ...**

The 101st Airborne Division had quickly secured the west edge of inundated UTAH on time. smaller cost.³⁴ The second **284-285** D-Day task was to seize the Douve River to protect the Army's south flank to drive south through Carentan. The 3rd AIB ("Airborne Infantry Battalion"), 506th AIR ("Airborne Infantry Regiment") had two Douve River bridges at le Port to make a south bank bridgehead. A bad drop, Capt. Shettle found two officers and 12 men for Brevands' bridge then 33 men, 20 and then 40 more. They held the north bank. Germans were reluctant to charge, plus the canal was the *709th* and *352d German Division's* border so the *352d* needed Corps permission to cross.

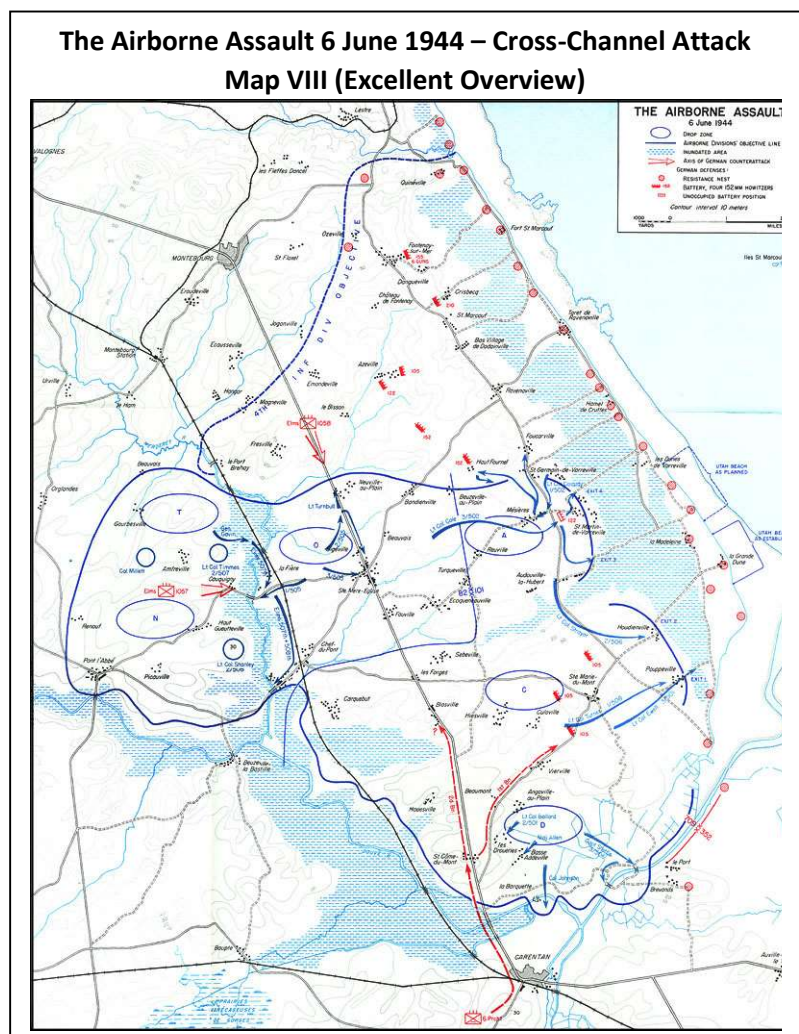


The 101st AID had the Douve River west to St. Côme-du-Mont with 501st AIR (Col Johnson) for the lock, blown up road bridges, capture St. Côme-du-Mont and a blown a rail bridge west – BUT THE LOCK was most important to **286** prohibit German lowland flooding. Johnson moved there with 150 men and captured Douve bridges west with 50 men. Maj Allen went northwest. After noon Johnson took 50 men to get la Barquette locks. German artillery was quieted by Quincy's 8-inch guns. Allen joined Johnson, but **287** the 1058th Regiment stuck inside St. Côme-du-Mont. Here and near Carentan they took stands. Col Ballard's 501stAIR fought near St. Côme-du-Mont; was not available for Barquette or Carentan highway. Johnson consolidated at la Barquette, pushed boundaries; his south flank was precarious.

D-Day ended with the 101st having 2,500 of the 6,600 men-who dropped in mixed units of varying size. Despite handicaps the "paratroopers had succeeded in clearing the way for the move of the seaborne forces inland. This was ... so vital ... as to warrant the extraordinary **288** risk of airborne landings in heavily defended enemy territory. (Paratroop weakness was) balanced by the enemy's failure to organize concerted counterattacks.

Map VIII is a simple summary. Histories explain the battles. Unsaid -- the 101st AID was always next door to assist the 82nd AID.

2. The 82nd AID. The 82nd had the west side; concerning since the 91st Division would be determined opposition. Poor drops had two regiments low on forces. Gen Ridgway had three tasks: 1) secure Ste. Mère-Eglise, 2) establish a bridge over the Merderet River at la Fièvre and Chef-du-Pont, and 3) build a defensive line north from Neuville-au-Plain to Beuzeville-au-Plain for the 502nd AIR (101st AID) coming west from UTAH. Two regiments (507th and 508th) west of the river were to outpost three miles west to Pont l'Abbé and Beauvais. The 507th AIR had the Douve River west of the 101st; both striking west to St. Sauveur-le Vicomte. Yet, the only planned **82nd mission was Ste. Mère-Eglise when, instead, several days were spent saving paratroopers isolated on the Douve River west bank. (Map X).**



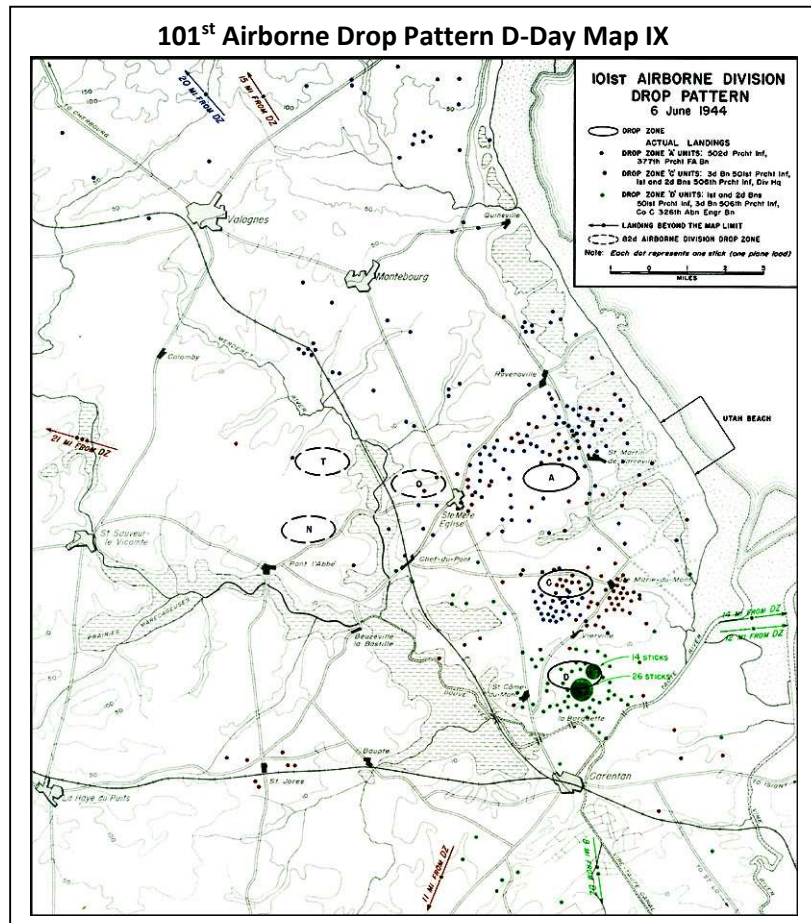
Success at Ste. Mère-Eglise itself came from an exceptionally good drop of the 505th AIR. (**Map IX**). Col Krause struck with knives, bayonets, and grenades. Gunfire meant Germans. Before dawn came the first city liberated in France with slight resistance and casualties: 10 dead; 30 POWs. **289** The 505th, 2nd AIB (Col Vandervoort) moved north for Neuville-au-Plain. At 0930 Germans hit Ste. Mère-Eglise so the battalion returned to Neuville.

The Germans the paratroop platoon in a 5-to-1 ratio, but it held for 8 hours costing – just 16 of 42 men survived! At 1000 hours the 2nd Battalion, 505th defended Ste. Mère-Eglise north and 3rd Battalion south.

The 507th and 508th AIR were to land on the opposite Douve River west bank, north of Ste. Mère-Eglise to capture vital Merderet River bridges heading west to then cut the Cotentin Peninsula. It took two-thirds of a battalion, but pathfinders could not illuminate the zone – Germans were too close. So, two-thirds of the 82nd AID landed in “unmarked areas” as delayed jumps were a catastrophe that “saved the day”.

First, this bizarre drop befuddled Germans; conversely, the men **290** landed in unknown swamps from German flooding -- many overburdened paratroops drowned. Mis-landed troops followed a raised railroad to la Fièvre, but then arrived on the wrong (east) side of the river. Mid-morning 600 men got to la Fièvre (one of two Merderet River crossings) for a narrow 500-yard causeway across the flood bursting river. A Co, 505th and 507th men of Lt. Wisner were stopped by machine guns. Gen Gavin came up to send 75 men to grab the Chef-du-Pont bridge. At la Fièvre forces stalled until Gen Ridgway ordered Col Lindquist’s 508th to “take the bridge”. On the west side, a stranded Col Timmes gathered strays who landed on the wrong side sending them toward **291** Amfreville to “dig in” and 10 to west causeway end. At noon Capt. Schwartzwalder’s company crossed the long causeway to meet the Timmes’ patrol --- ready to link up – NUT NO ONE FOLLOWED the first 75 men over the causeway as it became a “shooting gallery” and Schwartzwalder’s raced back to their 507th AIR on the east bank.

The Germans took the empty spaces halting the U.S. group of reinforcements: the bridge was lost. Col Timmes at Amfreville and Schwartzwalder’s men were then isolated, under fire, ineffective, trying to survive. The causeway was a stalemate. Late that day, Capt Creek’s small force on the Chef-du-Pont



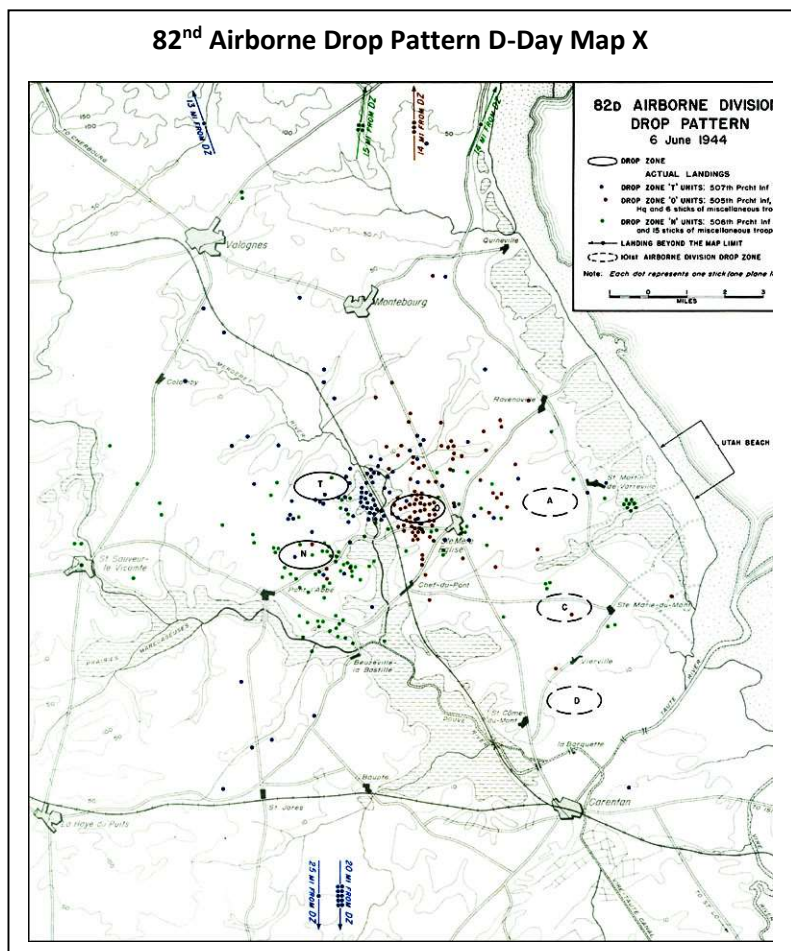
west bank was almost annihilated. Then a glider with an antitank gun landed, so 100 paratroops ran over the causeway to its **292** west bank for a new foothold. Two companies of stranded 508th AIR arrived with Col Shanley's 2nd Battalion. In time, four groups coagulated on the wrong (west) riverbank to make a reasonable defense against the Germans. Shanley's resistance "helped save the forces at la Fièrre and Chef-du-Pont." When Shanley gained Hill 30, three men alone held off Germans for two hours while men dug into Hill 30 to begin the stalemate at the la Fièrre bridge.

Seventh Army Gen Dollmann moved to cutoff Americans west of the Merderet River with the 709th and 91st Divisions. The **293-294-295-296** Seventh Army Sturm Battalion Cherbourg was to hit Ste. Mère-Eglise as a 243rd Division regiment moved to Montebourg to "launch concentric counterattacks to cope with the Cotentin landings without ... additional forces ... (but) optimism waned, as the 91st Division reported that its counterattack was making terribly slow progress ... In fact, the attack had scarcely materialized ..." The 1058th Regiment could not get moving. The "sluggishness of German reaction" resulted partly from three division commanders then in Rennes for war games. The Germans lost their communications. Third, hedgerows interfered. Fourth, French resistance cut phones. Both sides were "blind," but Germans were unprepared and ill-informed. Also, "luck had a lot to do with it"!

The author details the German 6th Parachute Regiment and its commander von der Heydte who saw the invasion fleets from a church steeple to conclude no troops landed! **297**, It "was typical of the inability of the German forces concentrate against the landings, even when, as in the case of **298-299** the 82d Airborne Division, they were scattered and weak. Thanks to this failure, the 82d was able to maintain itself while it gradually built back its strength." D-Day night the 82nd AID was "ensconced" near Ste. Mère-Eglise but was precariously situated outside VII Corps' beachhead, 101st AID and 4th ID. It had a fraction of its men, surviving with 40% of its combat infantry, 10% of its artillery. First casualties were 4,000, but gladly it ended up with 1,259 including 156 known killed and 756 missing.

3. The 4th ID Hitting UTAH Beach. At OMAHA assault convoys, sailed to transport areas 22,000 yards off the French coast in the Bay of the Seine. The major problem was the Air Force, who" **"With**

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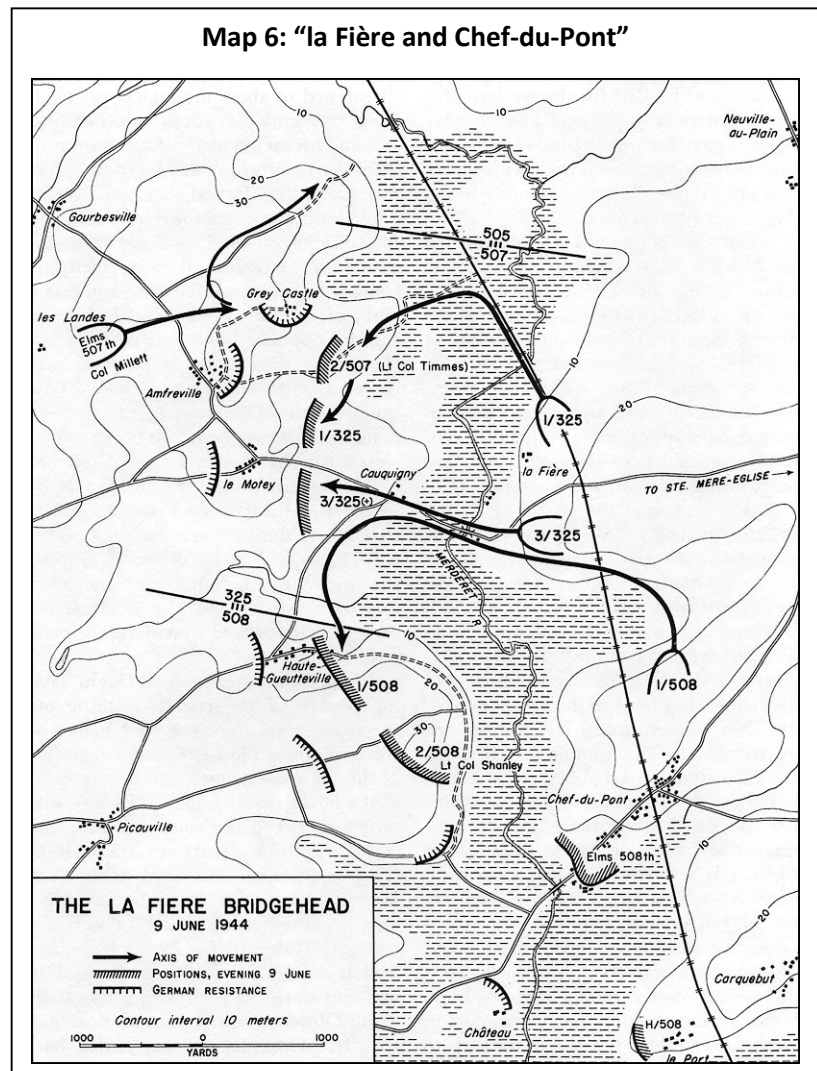


concurrence of General Eisenhower, the Eighth Air Force ordered a deliberate delay of several seconds in its release of bombs to ensure that they were not dropped among the assault craft. The result was that the 13,000 300 bombs dropped by 329 B-24 bombers totally missed their targets. Mediums bombed UTAH at lower altitudes, but one-third missed the beach. Of 360 bombers, 293 attacked UTAH Beach. “On the whole the bombing achieved little in neutralizing the coastal fortifications.”

At about 0230 hours the *Bayfield*, Task Force U (Adm Moon) and VII Corps (Gen. Collins), anchored off UTAH and then *Ancon*, flagship of Adm Hall and HQ Task Force O and V Corps, reached OMAHA Beach. No German reaction. Radar did not detect either air or sea approaches. Severe weather saw Adm Krancke with no patrol boats; then he dithered until 0300 hours when he heard of airborne landings and large ships. He ordered a patrol, alerted submarines so at 0430 two torpedo boats left Le Havre; attacked six warships at 0530; returned to reload. Two reconnoitered from Cherbourg but returned. “This virtually concluded German naval activity for the day.”

German batteries fired at 0535. The Allied fleet returned at 0550. The air pressure of a warships’ 1-ton shell left wakes in the water. Soldiers huddled in their LCPV’s chugging to shore hoping “nothing could survive” the pounding. Guide boats circled until H-Hour awaiting the massive artillery drenching. 301 The “volume of

fire ... was less at OMAHA than expected ... The beach drenching seems to have missed its targets; a large percentage ... overshot their marks. “Naval gunfire ... detonated large mine field areas ... knocked out many of the defending rocket pits. But it was supporting naval gunfire after H Hour which made the substantial contribution to the battle, in neutralizing key strong points, breaking up counterattacks, wearing down the defenders, and dominating the assault area.”



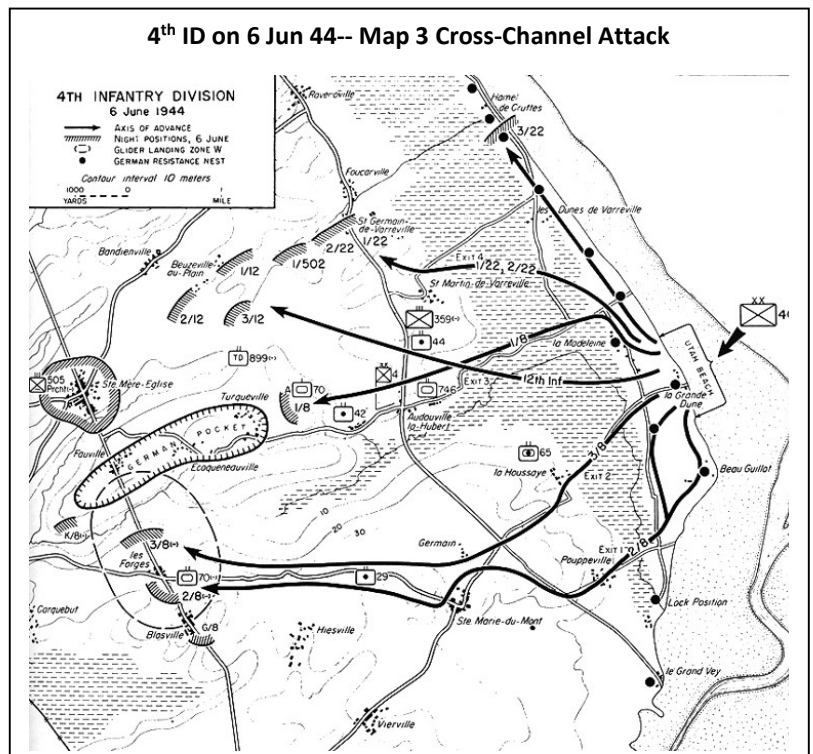
(Comment: This is an inaccurate conclusion. Low level medium bombers were effective at UTAH; high flying Eighth Air Force heavy bombers missed OMAHA beach. No one seems to know where these heavy bombs landed. At UTAH medium bombers flew low over parallel to the shore to guarantee hits. Omaha soldiers thought German defenders would be too stunned to fight, but since no bombs fell, the Germans were not stunned and were ready to fight!)

At UTAH. 4th ID landed on a broad front 2,200 yards wide. The 8th IR headed west to the Merderet River (St. Mere Eglise) to assist the 82nd AID. A second group went northeast to Quinéville batteries. The center 12th IR (Col Reeder) marched to Emondeville for a crossing over the Merderet River. **302-303** Paratroopers cleared UTAH exit causeways as 4th ID had little trouble as 32 DD tanks in the first wave had no targets. Timing was perfect as was landing 2,000 yards further than planned. The first force left for Audouville-la-Hubert; the 2d went south on Pouppeville road. (**Map 3**). Engineers removed barriers in only one hour. Before H+3 hours the beach was cleared; landings were routine! **304**

4. Hitting OMAHA Beach. OMAHA was everything commanders feared. Mr. Harrison wrote: “Early success and extraordinarily light casualties on UTAH Beach contrasted sharply with the difficulties experienced during those first critical three hours at OMAHA.”

(Comment: This ranks at the top of the list of “Gross Understatements.” To the men, OMAHA was a slaughterhouse; they were the cattle! A lopsided fight means one side incurs far greater casualties. Picket’s charge at Gettysburg was “lopsided.” At OMAHA casualties were immense, lopsided, and unnecessary. The Navy bombardment failed. Eighth Air Force bombing failed. Tactical air plans succeeded, but ignored the plight of the ground troops and, thus, failed. The joint army-navy beach clearance plan failed.

The army-navy gunfire support plan failed. The army selection of beach landing areas failed. Here, unlike Pickett’s assault at Gettysburg, the attackers won by pouring a vast supply of reinforcements into the battle. OMAHA was won by those who, expecting death, chose to “go down fighting.” It was a victory of the leaders who grasped that the only chance of living was to continue moving toward the fire. OMAHA was a victory because the soldiers attacked where the enemy was strongest, instead of where the enemy was strongest. That, in the end, was the greatest failure of the OMAHA plans – directly attacking the heavily defended draws, rather than the less defended areas between. The failure was attacking exactly where the enemy anticipated, instead of the opposite.)



The German *LXXXIV Corps* and *Seventh Army* commanders believed “through most of D Day that the OMAHA assault had been stopped at the water's edge. It was late in the morning before General Bradley aboard the *Augusta* could have contradicted that view and much longer before the Allied command could feel secure about the V Corps beachhead.”

Gerow's V Corps 1st ID (Gen Huebner) assaulted with the 29th ID's 116th IR on the **305-06-07** right, the 1st Divisions 16th IR on the left. Each landed two battalions abreast at H Hour with orders to “clear the beach defenses and ... secure that portion of the beachhead maintenance line in their respective zones.” The “beachhead maintenance” zone was two to three miles inland. The two regiments were to be reinforced by the 18th IR (1st Division) at H + 3 hours and then by the 26th IR landing later. The goal was a D-Day coastal “phase line” 5 to 6 miles deep; fantastically optimistic -- unrealistic. A normal pace is 4 miles/hour. Soldiers needed two hours just to walk to the D-Day evening front line!

Two Ranger Battalions would capture “the Pointe du Hoe coastal battery ... six partially casemated 155-mm. guns (that) would not have been destroyed by pre-D Day bombardment ...” Three Ranger companies, 2d Ranger Battalion, would scale cliffs with ropes and portable ladders to take the guns head on. Another Ranger company on the far right of Omaha would subdue Pointe et Raz de la Percée defenses, then march six miles across the face of German defenses to aid at Pointe du Hoe. D-Day would eliminate artillery threats to the fleet which kept out of range of smaller artillery.

The whole right flank of the V Corps assault ... would thus swing due west ... (hoping) to clear the coast as far as Isigny (13 miles) by the end of D-Day. It even seemed possible that Isigny itself might fall either to the 116th or 115th IR, (29th ID) because the 115th would quickly capture the high ground of Longueville (6 miles) east and overlooking the river...

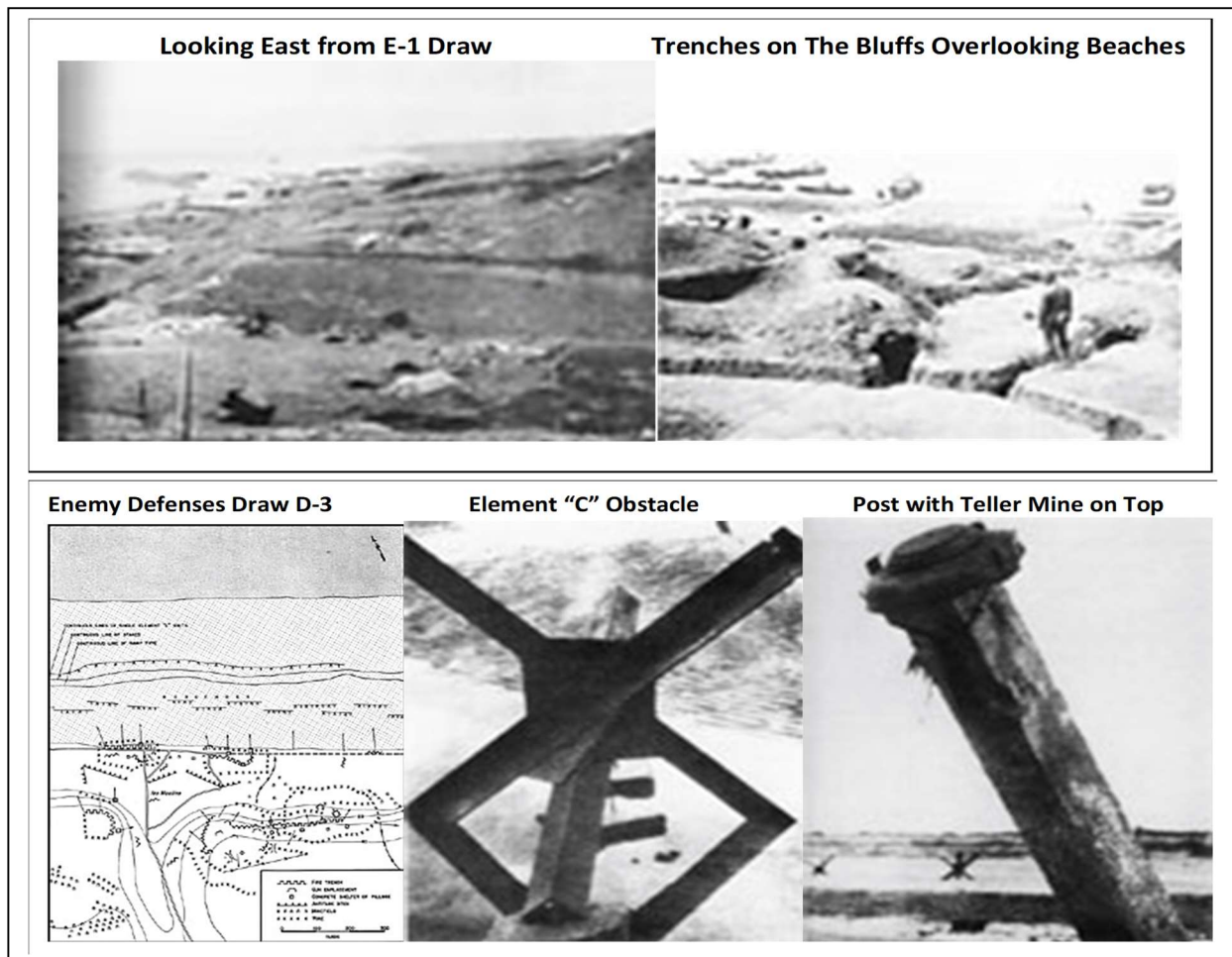
(The) most important job ... (was eliminating) enemy positions defending the roads leading from the beach inland. The gently sloping sand of OMAHA Beach was backed by an embankment of loose stones, or shingle, in places of as much as fifteen yards wide ... (and) **308**-shingle piled up against a ... sea wall ... (elsewhere) shingle lay against a sand embankment ... (Both) were impassable for vehicles.

Behind ... rose scrub-covered bluffs 100 to 170 feet high of varying steepness ... (to the) Pointe et Raz de la Percée (cliffs. Here and just) east of Colleville marked the (east) extremities of the 7,000-yard crescent (OMAHA) beach.

OMAHA bluffs had five draws to high table land. Four were unpaved roads from the coast highway down



at Vierville-sur-Mer, two at St. Laurent, and one at Colleville. The fifth draw northeast of Colleville was just a steep trail. **Plans had exits using traffic by H plus 2 hours, so heavy a vehicle flow landed then.** The German defense focused upon exits. Harrison wrote: “the 1st Division had precise information on the location of these defenses and every provision was made to give the assaulting infantry the heavy fire support needed to knock them out.” So, naval guns miles offshore would precisely demolish the



fixed, concrete gun placements the German designed to block the exits.³ It began 50 minutes before touch down as two DD tank companies drove down LCT ramps into the water 6,000 yards (3½ miles) offshore to “immediately began to founder (*i.e.*, sink)”. Only 5 of 32 made shore. The infantry loaded into LCV's 10 miles offshore but 10 of these swamped to include the FAB's (Field Artillery Battalions). The 58th Armored FAB guns in LCT's lost three to mines. Artillery fire support did reach the beach. Landing craft were lost when dust and smoke obscured beach identifier marks as both clouds and clouds of smoke shrouded the area.

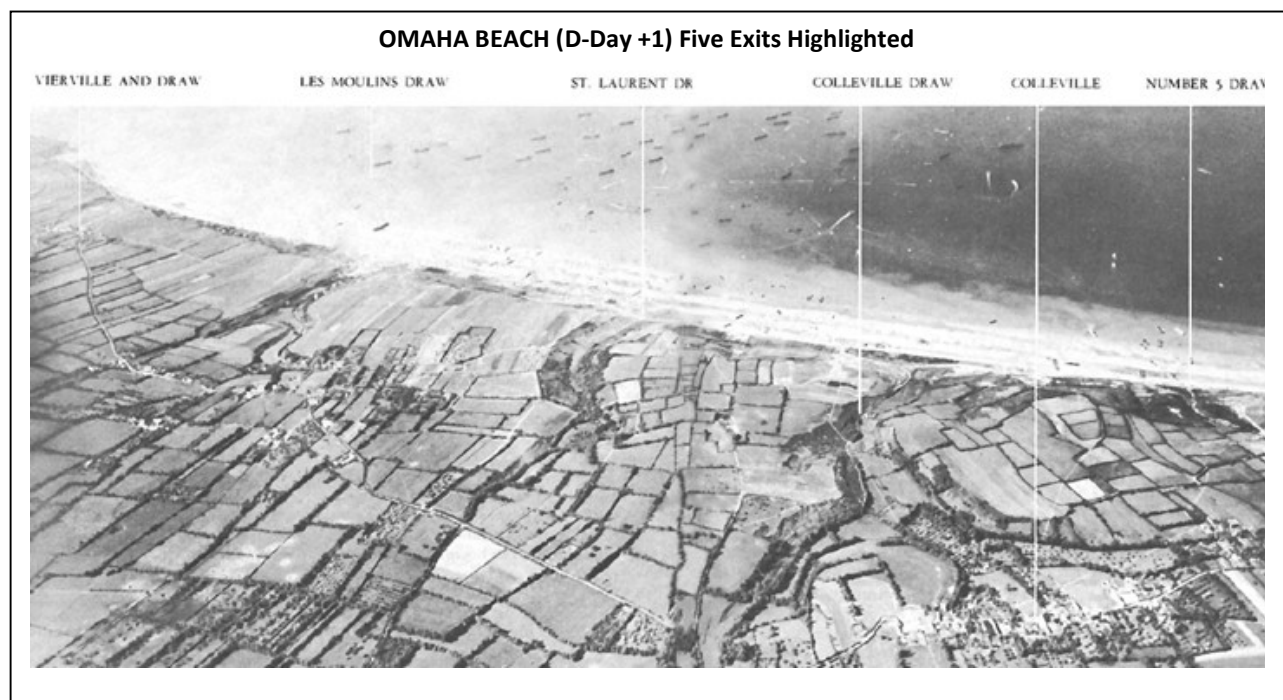
³ Today with GPS such accuracy was totally dependable. A few cruisers much further offshore and stealth bombers would have eliminated these “bunkers” in the first 15 minutes. Such accuracy was absent in WWII. Plus, the ordnance lacked the penetrating characteristics required to impact the interiors of the structures.

Vision was far better at UTAH Beach, but forces still mis-landed. Plans for assaulting set defenses were worthless, but Utah defenses were also “worthless.” The assault used basic tactics. Germans guns the landing craft final assembly areas breaking up final assault maneuvers. The Navy only “neutralized” a few guns as Germans defended with rifles and machine guns. Soldiers had an extra 50 to 75 pounds to carry. Control was often lost as men waded. Wounded men on the beach drowned.

The top left photo shows steep beech slopes, but these are areas that were not assaulted at OMAHA. The left side of the top photo shows gentler, pasture-like slope versus cliffs. Americans confronted the pasture slopes represented below. Soldiers assaulted steep hills, but not cliffs. Second, the hills were not universally 100 feet or higher, but more in the 50 to 75 feet range. This does not detract from the heroism - courage. Just stand on OMAHA Beach to recognize this fact. *Otherwise, the inuendo of “insurmountable heights,” if believed, drastically detracts from the saneness of the planners.* **312**

The first wave was to evenly land nine companies. In withering enemy fire, the right wing fell apart; two companies crunched at les Moulins, and another four companies by Colleville. One company was so far east, it landed 1.5 hours late. Right, 2nd Ranger Battalion, Co., C and 116th IR (29th ID) landed before Vierville draw. One craft sank, another took four mortars. All struggled in with A Co. losing two-thirds of its men, Rangers lost 50% before gaining sea wall shelter. **313-314** Eight of 16 DD tanks reached shore because they ordered Navy LCTs to beach them. They had seen 8 sunk while “swimming”. East, the 116th IR split into two forces ½ mile out. Just two of three 116th IR, 2nd IB companies hit their target. One lost 25% before the shingle. Demoralized, confused the units were “out of action.”

The Omaha problems arose from “compartmentalized” training. Each regiment (and their companies) studied their small area and tasks. Confident, maybe “cocky,” officers planned in detail defeating their Germans. They, thereby, assumed everyone would fight only in assigned areas. Instead, the “vast



majority of assaulting troops also landed on a foreign beach area.” It went bad as landing craft ramps dropped with 300 yards of open beaches to cross to gain cover of the rock walls as only “runnels” and metal stakes gave cover. This made demolishing the obstacles impossible, which made landing closer to the shingle rock impossible. The horror for commanders was high tide might wipe out the entire invasion force! The 16th IR on the division’s left had “scattered landings and heavy casualties” that invalidated assault missions. But a “soft spot” lay between the St. Laurent and Colleville with just two casualties to get to the shingle. There were three resistance nests, but the bluff-top was vacant, yet troops did not see the advantage to be caught in intense fire that “decimated the 116th Infantry.” “Many (29th ID) ... hard hit and exhausted ... flopped on the sand and crawled in ahead of the tide; nearly half of them did not survive.” Only one-third of the DD-tanks survived to fire. “The heavy losses and disorganization impacted each succeeding wave on D-Day.”

The foiled the 6th Engineer Brigade and navy parties from exploding gaps in beach obstacles ...” **315-316** Of 16 bulldozers, three worked. Boats with supplies, buoys and poles sunk. Only **six gaps through mines were marked as engineers had 40% casualties.** The tide rose 4’ vertical feet or 100 yards of beach each hour. Engineers had 15 men given Distinguished Service Crosses for heroism. The second assault wave engineers piled in at H plus 1 hour. Yet, the right flank suffered. Headquarters and beachmasters men were pinned all day. **317** Following the 116th IR was the 5th Ranger Battalion with two 2nd Ranger Battalion companies. The 2nd Battalion was dispirited. They were to land at the Pointe if they received affirmative words – which they did not receive. They landed in a “hot zone” on Omaha, so about 65 of the 130 men were casualties – the vastitudes of Omaha Beach. The second wave brought heavy weapons, but first waves losses were already too heavy with gear; “it was of little help.” At the les Moulins, Maj Bingham, Jr. organized F Co to hit the draw. A large group bunched up, disorganized but not receiving terrible fire. Then at 0730 Col Canham and Gen. Cota came ashore as confusion increased. **318** Lack of command from casualties, mis-landing, mixed units, and unworkable radios were a few of the problems. Many

simply went into ‘shock’ incapable of action. It was ... impossible for any commander to exercise control ... OVERLORD ... faced its gravest crisis. Deprived of ... air support ... and ... generally ineffective beach drenching, the 1st Division ... (hit) the one sector of the Normandy coast ... (with a) cordon defense which Field Marshal Rommel counted on ... Instead of attacking ... “one regiment of an overextended static division ... Huebner’s **troops hit on the front of a full attack infantry division, the 352d, whose presence ... (was) missed by Allied intelligence even though it had been in place for almost three months.**

To the German officer ... (who) noted that the Americans were lying on the shore seeking cover ... **319** his own positions ... (were) excellent, causing heavy losses. He could see the wounded and dead lying on the sand.

From a DUKW ... offshore, Col. ... Talley ... radioed ... (but) refrained from reporting mere pessimism ... (at 0930). He could see that the beaches were jammed ... enemy artillery and machine gun fire was still effective ... reinforcing waves were being held up ... (and) LCT’s were milling ... around like “a stampeded herd of cattle...”

This was the first news for Gen Gerow and Bradley – after three hours. There was no Plan B. Retreat was not possible ... no one would sacrifice so many divisions and men. When in the human psyche does “going down without a fight” become unacceptable? Commanders knew they had a force they could not “abandon” to the Germans. We will never know when Bradley, Montgomery and/or Eisenhower might have “thrown in the towel.” Who would give the order to “high tail (or sail) and run?” it was more than the lives being lost – more than another invasion. Instead, it was the “supreme effort” of WWII. The U.K. and U.S. had over 2 million men landing, two of the largest navies and two of the largest air forces in history. **No event compared using any scales to measure in WWII – or history.**

A Col George A. Taylor who landed on the beach at about 0800 hours was a no-nonsense leader who led by example. After crawling some distance under fire, he reached the relative safety of the shingle bank to begin organizing the panicked, disorganized and “defeated” soldiers. He famously strutting up and down the beach stating “There are only two types of men on the beach; those who are dead and those who are going to die. Now let’s get the hell out of here.” Besides its bravado, his message simply stated the obvious ... the men could die there or further up the beach. It had a “What the hell ...” simplicity of logic: “Since I am probably going to die, I don’t want it to be here soaking wet and sand-covered whimpering and cowering. Up ahead is a better place for it to happen ...” In that instant, fear of death was stifled and replaced by rage. Anger saw many follow the few in anger, revenge and accepting they would die --- akin to Pickett’s charge at Gettysburg, except Pickett’s men were halted at the stone wall and retreated back a long mile. At OMAHA there was nowhere to retreat. The stone wall offered one option which was metaphorically to push beyond and over their “Cemetery Ridge.” At 0930 hours, the crisis slowly turned. **This was three hours after the first landings – 180 minutes of hell on earth.**

Among the groups of scared ... huddled along the beach were a few intrepid leaders-officers, noncoms, and privates ... (who with) example and exhortation ... prodded the men to ... walk or crawl across the beach flat

and up the hills where the enemy was dug in with rifles, mortars, and machine guns. (In truth,)

Top: Vierville Draw (far west) Point du Hoc in distance.

Mid: *Hamel u Prêtre* between Vierville and Les Moulin.

Bottom: Les Moulins from the east.



the combined weight of Allied arms was gradually wearing down the defenders. The *916th Regiment* in the center of the *352d Division* sector ... added that its own casualties were mounting ... from the heavy Allied naval fire ... reinforcements were needed ... (that) could not immediately be spared since they were much more urgently needed elsewhere.

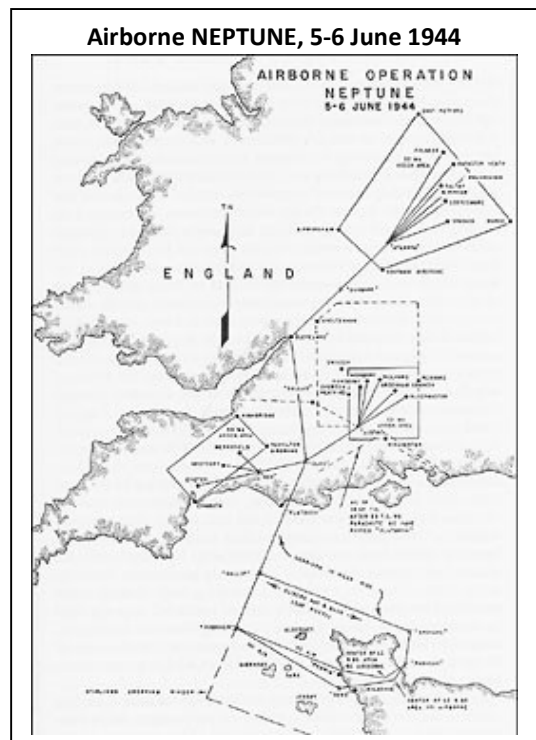
The German's gravest problem that morning was

... where the British assault cracked through ... Second Army attacked with three divisions abreast under control of I and 30 Corps ... (On the U.S. left flank two brigades of) the British 50th Division landed ... the 8th Armoured Brigade ... the 79th Armoured Division and the 47th Royal Marine Commando ... on time at 0725. Opposition was much less 320 than at OMAHA ... 50th Division to the east hit a soft spot ... German defenders at la Rivière fell apart by 1000 hours when its 441st Ost Battalion ... pulled out leaving the Bayeux Road open (Two) brigades of the 50th Division landed two hours late. Then their assembly area was held by the 352d Division (Part of the force at Omaha American intelligence missed).

... (The) *441st Ost Battalion* (retreat) was immediately critical ... The *915th Regiment* ... Bayeux ... had often practiced ... (the remedy of) a counterthrust ... (but) the *915th* was ordered Carentan-Isigny area against airborne landings ... Gen Kraiss (reversed the order but then the 915th) was 20 miles away from OMAHA. Four hours passed before a portion of the unit could attack. That delay was crucial, because in those hours much changed on OMAHA.

First Army landed on the beach in installments. To gain “assembly” areas, all had to climb bluffs or up blocked exit roads. 321 After 60 - 90 minutes some crossed “no-man’s land” from the water to the high-tide shingle rock piles along the open beach to the base of steep hills. This second death zone was two blocks wide of open areas to reach hills with gullies -- some protection. Two avenues opened in two zones. West (right) the 116th IR and 5th Rangers each worked up both sides of the les Moulins draw. West (left) C Co. led by Col Canham and Gen Cota blew a gap in beach road concertina wire, crossed 150 yards of flats to the bluff base. There slopes and smoke concealed upward moves as “small folds” (gullies) gave protection. The climb was slow but finding no enemy on top men went hundreds of feet inland before again fighting. Gen Cota had a command group on top at 0830 to organize action on the top. The 3rd IB, 116th IR (29th ID) in 20+ men straggle columns ascended east of les Moulins draw going southwest toward assembly areas.

The same for 16th IR zone between St. Laurent and Colleville exits as two 2nd IB companies (G and E) made separate attacks. They blew wire gaps, crossed sand flats



to the bluff base to separately climb. G emerged with light resistance to ding inland. E Co. (23 men under 2d Lt. Spalding) turned right on the hilltop to clear enemy defenders. The German *916th Regiment* garrison, surprised and demoralized by naval fire, fought a confused battle before an officer ordered his 20 men to surrender. Lt. Spalding lacked men to mop up the area! Much of 2nd and 1st Battalions followed G Co. per of Col 324 Taylor. Its 3rd IB opened a third path at the draw northeast of Colleville by attacking the Germans at the base with tank and naval fire to subdue it by 0900.

There was no one pivotal point at OMAHA, but the pivotal time was 0900 hours when Germans began to worry more about defending themselves more than the beaches. Improvisation, courage, and leadership got U.S. men off the beach, but with only a few heavy weapons, artillery, tanks, and reinforcements. Beaches remained under heavy fire with almost no gaps in obstacles then being submerged by tides. Not blowing lanes kept landing craft offshore. By 1000 as the 18th IR began landed in the 16th IR zone little progress was made.

Troops watch activity on Omaha Beach as their landing craft approaches on D-Day, June 6, 1944, during the Allied invasion of German-occupied France. (Photo: U.S. Army Signal Corps/National Archives/UPI/Newscom)



The enemy still had control of the high ground ... troops still seemed pinned behind the shingle embankment and vehicles... piled up along the narrow strip of beach.

In breaking this deadlock during the next hour, naval intervention played an important part. At about 1030 ... LCT 30 and LCI(L) 44, steamed full ahead through the obstacles off the Colleville beaches, firing all weapons at enemy strong points ... (and) continued to fire after beaching ... (They proved) the obstacles could be breached by ramming, but their fire ... had at least a heartening effect ... (Then) two destroyers approached to within 1,000 yards ... (to shell) enemy positions from les Moulins eastward. Under cover of this fire, engineers ... bulldozed two gaps through the dune line on either side of the St. Laurent exit, filled the antitank ditch, and cleared the mine fields. The resistance east ... had already been neutralized by the 16th Infantry ... (The) heavy weapons of ... the 116th IR contained another enemy ... A pillbox west of the draw was reduced by ... destroyer fire at about 1130. The Germans ... at the St. Laurent draw surrendered ... (In) an hour, concerted bold action had wrought the most substantial improvement ... Reinforcements were coming ashore ... **325** a road was at last open ...

... The troops who gained the top ... were scattered groups ... Their objectives at first were simply to reach ... battalion assembly areas ... small numbers and ... the hedgerow country ... (caused fragmented) actions ... (that were), checked by small enemy prepared positions ...

... (It was) a considerable obstacle ... splintering the attacking forces so that only weak, disorganized elements ... (made) the hinterland. ... (stymied) reorganization ... (German) coastal defense seemed justified ... (That it failed was) due, first, to the Germans' lack of reserves ... to counterattack ... and ...vast supporting naval and air power was practically unopposed. By dominating the battlefield ... (they stopped counterattacks giving) infantry a chance to recover, rebuild, and again become a ground army superior in numbers and equipment ...

D-Day saw three general battle areas at: 1) Vierville-sur-Mer, 2) St. Laurent and 3) Colleville.

a. West Vierville-sur-Mer. About 600 men, 1st and 2nd IB, 116th IR (29th ID) and 5th Rangers, reorganized on the bluff to go inland between 1000 and 1100. Rangers bypassed the town to attack from the south. The 116th IR came east up the exit road. At the inland north-south coastal highway the Rangers were stopped by machine guns in hedgerows. Yet, they made Vierville early afternoon. The 116th IR cleared it at 1100 hours. Col Canham sent his Rangers west to aid Pointe du Hoe who met continuous defenses without tanks to subdue. **326**

Col. Canham defended Vierville – a good decision. As Navy guns quelled Germans, Army engineers were horribly scattered without 75% of their equipment. East of les Moulins draw, the 3rd IB, 116th IR with the 2nd IB fought toward St. Laurent – the 3rd IB assembly area. It was inconclusive amongst small groups in studded brush hard to find on maps. The 116th IR was short of St. Laurent; the 115th IR gave up joining.

b. Center St. Laurent. The 115th IR landed east – center; not left -west! After noon it was ordered to take St. Laurent. The 2nd IB was halted by a German company until dusk when it joined the 1st IB. The 3rd IB remained stuck **327** north of the St. Laurent-Colleville Road that night.

c. **East Colleville.** Between St. Laurent and Colleville were confused, uncoordinated fights as two 16th IR battalions tried to work southward. G Co rapidly went inland to be counterattacked at Colleville and defend the rest of D-Day. The 1st IB “cleaned out” positions. The 18th IR sent battalions to assist 16th IR. The 2nd IB remained in the area. The 3rd IB was so delayed it was sent south instead. Thus, both the St. Laurent-Colleville sectors were weakly held when the 26th ID landed with 17 tanks that night.

5. **Rangers at Pointe du Hoe.** After a major course change, Rangers from Omaha reached their mates at Pointe du Hoe. These proud soldiers were embarrassed by missing their landing area so terribly – It was **“the tallest most prominent feature on the entire northern coast of Normandy!”** “It was the least of their problems their small craft armada had the attention of Germans all along the tall shore hills. The embarrassed, tiny flotilla finally landed at Point du Hoc. Pictures show high cliffs, but not “skyscrapers.” Three 2nd Ranger Battalion companies under Col Rudder landed with U.S. destroyer *Satterlee* and British destroyer *Talybont*. By evening, *Satterlee* shot 70% of its ammunition, relieved by *Barton* and *Thompson*. Its fire forced Germans off cliff tops as Rangers scaled. German fire slackened as Rangers topped the cliff to go inland to fight small, confused actions. The “official” history does not mention their shock upon finding the huge battery casements empty!

Stranger yet, was finding 155-mm guns in a grove unguarded after 8:00 am. Why they were not firing is not explained, but they were quickly destroyed with thermite grenades which welded the inside of the barrels. Suffering 34 casualties, the Rangers had had a light “reception”. That changed as the 1st Battalion, 914th Regiment began a two-day siege which most soldiers would not have endured. The Rangers ended with just 90 men still in fighting condition. **322-323-324-325-326-327-**

6. **Nightfall on UTAH.** VII Corps had poured ashore as fast as boats unloaded. The 8th IR moved inland against no significant opposition. The 3rd IB overran a German 191st Artillery Regiment battery to end at les Forges crossroads and Tocqueville. The 8th IR halted when Germans cut the north south road between Ste. Mère-Eglise and les Forges. A 505th AIR **328** counterattack forced a slight enemy retreat to high ground at Fauville separating the 8th IR from the 82nd AID. Then afternoon 82nd infantry with 325th Glider infantry and tanks followed the 8th IR to the les Forges position. Raff prepares landing zones for gliders that evening. It failed:

The enemy remained at full strength and ... concealed when ... at 2100, about sixty gliders came in low over the area and cut loose for landings. The Germans reacted with intense automatic fire. Many of the gliders crashed others came down within the enemy lines. Casualties



were heavy. Remnants of the glider force including the pilots were collected by Colonel Raff and formed into a makeshift defense for the night.

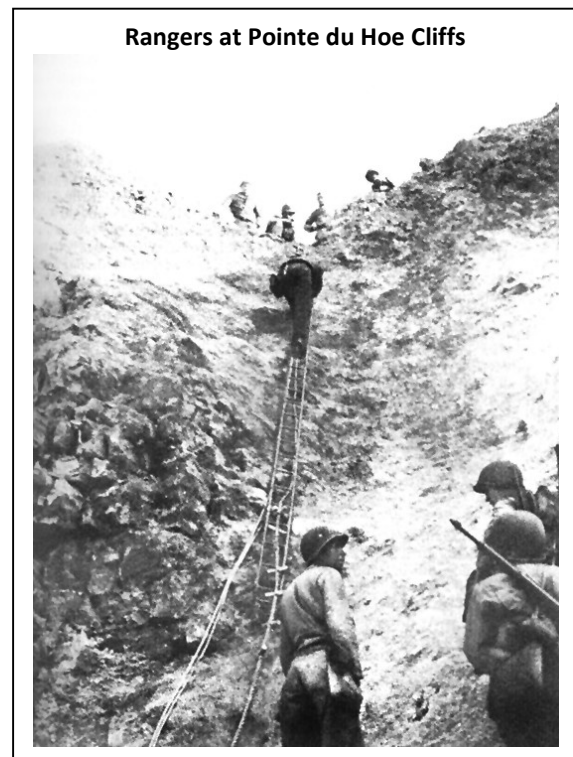
North neither the 4th ID 12th nor 22nd IR made their D-Day objectives. Delays arose: 1) in marshes; 2) the 22nd was stopped at St. Germain-de-Varreville; 3) 12th IR got left of the 502nd AIR on the 101st AID flank at Beuzeville-au-Plain while 4) the right (north) side was weak. Yet, the beach had little shelling and **4th ID casualties been under 200 – a stark difference UTAH vs OMAHA!** “If the position of the 82d Airborne Division caused some concern, the force was at hand to consolidate it.” How different than Omaha?

7. Nightfall at OMAHA. V Corps held a narrow strip from St. Laurent to Colleville --- **“a toehold on the enemy shore nowhere more than a mile and a half deep.”** The right (west) at Vierville-sur-Mer, was 116th IR and Rangers but who were isolated inland. All OMAHA units lacked vehicles, supplies, ammunition, artillery, and armor to go inland. Artillery had parts of five battalions, but with **329** no guns. Just one artillery mission fired. V Corps had 2,000 killed, wounded, missing.

The failure of the Germans to exploit the weakness of V Corps ... (was due to) their own greater weakness ... (The first) concern of the 352d Division was with its right ... the British penetration near Meuvaines ... (where) reserve ... 915th Regiment (attacked toward) Crepon. By 1100 ... (U.S. beaches were) more serious ... The 709th Division opposing U.S. VII Corps was reporting strong armored reinforcements ... (Then ships) off St. Laurent ... (caused) General Kraiss ... (to realize) the Allies were planning a two-pronged attack on Bayeux ... (He peeled off) 2d Battalion of the 915th Regiment ... (against the British, but Germans in the) Colleville area in the early afternoon ... reported that their counterattack had been stopped by firm American resistance ...

8. Nightfall British Beaches. The main body of *Kampfgruppe Meyer* left to attack Cr  pon, but at 1730 after the British had it. Germans withdrew **330** to St. Gabriel but hit British forces near Bazenville to be lost in small actions. Assault guns got four British tanks but lost four and only 90 men escaped. The 7 June plan was simple. Keep the British from a breakout to Bayeux. **331** Meantime the British 50th Division commander faced slight opposition but halted – unfortunate!

9. German OB WEST and Army Group B. British success made them the German High Command’s prime effort. The 3rd Canadian Division was near Courseulles, 3 – 6 miles inland and armor patrols were 10 miles in. **The 3rd British was but 2 miles from Caen.** East, 6th Airborne had both the B  nouville bridges and Merville battery. **“In German eyes (Caen) was ... key to their whole position in France.”** At 0500 Army Group B released the 21st

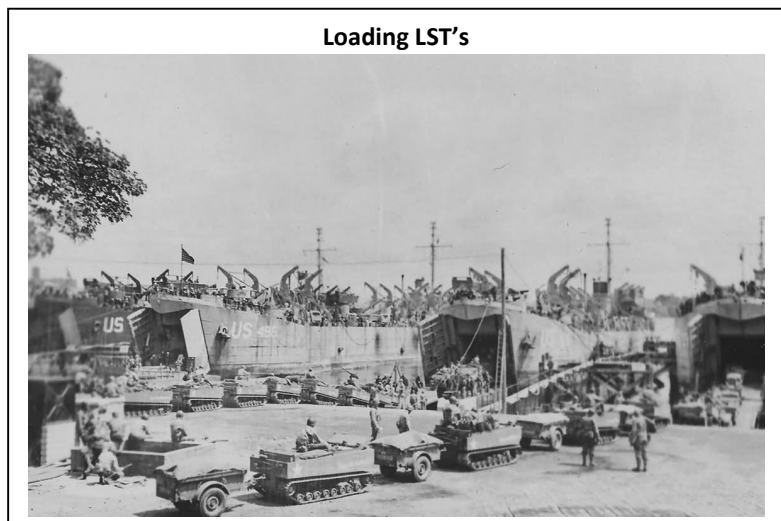


Panzer Division to hit British airborne. It lacked 50% of its infantry; did not attack British 3rd Division until 1600. West a German battalion fought to the coast to be mauled; their **332 only large attack due:**

... (with a) muddled German command system. Rundstedt had reacted ... (with) all operational reserves ... imperative to repel (all) at once ... (By) 0400 ... (before landings) he ordered the *12th SS Panzer Division* to ... Caen and the *Panzer Lehr Division* to prepare ... The only feasible area ... the beaches between the Vire and Orne Rivers ... (certain it) would take place at dawn ... (requiring an armored) counterattack the first hours ... no time to debate ... (He) was clear and his action decisive. But ... OKW did not approve ... (waited for orders) until 1600 when Hitler at last gave the word ... (With no) cloud cover Allied fighters and bombers ranged the skies ... (the move was delayed) until dark. **333**

Not until 8 June was the bulk was committed using *I SS Panzer Corps* with the *12th SS, Panzer Lehr, 21st Panzer* and *716th Infantry Divisions* to attack right of the *LXXXIV Corps* (*716th* and *352nd Divisions*). The second Corps relieved Gen Marcks' (*LXXXIV Corps*) from defending the west (OVERLORD) area. The *30th Mobile Brigade* rode bikes from Coutances, *XXV Corps* sent a *Kampfgruppen* of the *275th* and *265th Infantry Divisions* plus *266th Division* and *77th Division* to Normandy from Brittany. Gen Kraiss reported he might be hold 7 June but not longer. His casualties were 20% . Marcks replied no more reserves; Kraiss had to hold. "... (The) outlook ... (was worse as) reinforcements ... (were late with) late ... losses from Allied air attack ... (The delay factor) was not yet apparent ... ten days to reach the battle area.

Not a single German plane to contest U.S. planes. All 500 *II Air Corps* sorties on 6 June were against shipping or inland. These are contrasted against almost 3,000 sorties by the Ninth Air Force fighters and bombers alone, flying chiefly tactical missions in the U.S. zone. **335**



C. Operation OMAHA Beachhead (6 June--13 June 1944)⁴; American Forces in Action Series Historical Division War Department 1945-xyza

(Note: This is the "short" history of "OMAHA Beachhead," *American Forces in Action Series*, for the GIs in WWII to explain what they were doing. A bit of repetition is unavoidable).

1. Chapter 3: D-Day the Landings on Omaha Beach

⁴ The authors are the Army Historical Division, 1947 as part of the "American Forces in Action" series, 20 September 1945.

a. **The Selection of D-Day and Final Preparations.** From 7 to 11 V Corps May divisions moved to holding areas. Southern Base Section assembled 65,000 men and 7,600 vehicles. By 3 June all of Force "O" was loaded in Portland, Weymouth, and Poole. Adm Kirk would embark and land the First U. S. Army. **35** Rear Adm. Hall's Force "O" of 34,000 men and 3,300 vehicles with 7 transports, 8 LSI's, 24 LST's, 33 LCI (L)'s, 36 LCM (3)'s, 147 LCT's, and 33 other craft plus escort, gunfire support, and naval "bombardment"⁵ missions that had 2 battleships, 3 cruisers, 12 destroyers, and 105 other ships. Force "O" included 33 minesweepers: 585 service vessels. The 16th RCT attached for movement to the beach had 9,828 personnel, 919 vehicles, and 48 tanks. Just this unit had 2 transports, 6 LST's, 53 LCT's, and 5 LCI (L)'s; with small craft of 81 LCVP's, 18 LCA's (British), 13 other landing craft, and about 64 DUKW's.

Weather was the issue. **36** Eisenhower decided at 0415, 5 June to "Go" at Omaha landing at 0630 hours with a 0558 sunrise and 2207 hours sunset. Force "O" left Portland Harbor the afternoon of 5 June to cross one hundred miles of channel. **37** The (Gen Bradley's) *Ancon* anchored at 0251 hours 23,000 yards off Omaha Beach. Weather was not ideal -- partial overcast hampered bombing, wind was a strong at 10 to 18 knots, waves were 3 feet up to 6 feet. Beach breakers were 3 to 4 feet.

b. **Approach to the Beach.** Moving to shore required "the nicest timing." Loading infantry in small LCVP's and LCA's began 4 hours before in choppy seas. The best, *Thomas Jefferson*, unloaded in 66 minutes. Rough seas drenched LCVP's and LCA's. With all pumps running, troops bailed with helmets. A few had difficulties. Of the 180 to 200 craft ten swamped. Soldiers were drenched, chilled, got cramps and seasickness -- "not in the best condition for strenuous action on **38** landing."⁶ As they approached, they came upon men floating on rafts from foundered DD tanks. Companies B and C of the 741st TB launched at H-50 minutes, 6,000 yards out, but their DD tanks broke their canvas shields as water flooded engines. Two of 32 tanks swam to the beach: 3 rode in on LCT's. The rest sunk! (Note: here everyone had to succeed in interdependent tasks -- everyone was a "weak link." This was the first.) **39**

Landing Craft Passing Bradley's Augusta



Naval gun smoke, dust, and mist, plus a 3-knot sideways current, put amphibians on wrong beaches too far east, but they refused to move. Soldiers hit beaches they did not recognize as bewilderment and befuddlement ensued. A miss wrecked assignments for 40 strong-point or exit targets. Units could not ... identify the terrain ... separation of sections ... (in boats hurt) unit formations ... (as) separation of craft by as little as 200 yards could ... (mean) complete isolation ... (loss of) the advantages of combining ... to improvise their assault ...

⁵ "Bombardment" is from Navy ships and "bombing" is from airplanes.

⁶ "... many ... were keyed up ... chatting about "What a shambles the beach would be from the bombs and ships' guns." An officer thought: "It looked like another big tactical scheme off Slapton Sands, and I ... (felt) it was going to be another miserable two-day job with a hot shower at the end."

The landing craft came in under the comforting thunder of naval guns ... (Then they received) fire from automatic weapons and artillery ... the enemy fortifications had not been knocked out.

Actually, accurate fire from battleships 10 miles offshore was not likely as the normal ocean horizon is 12 miles. Ships could not adjust fire since the Germans did not return fire. Tanks and artillery in landing "craft" lacked stability, tanks sunk. "The rockets ... made a heartening display but failed to hit defensive positions – counter to naval reports." "The total bombardment ... may have been more (effective) ... than the infantry could realize." Of "200 craft carrying the assault infantry to shore ... only about 10 are known to have been hit by artillery..."⁷ (Comment: *This Navy defense is a response to Army criticism*).

The assault troops experienced their worst disappointment ... (was finding) the beach unscarred by air bombardment ... (which) had had little effect on the beach defenses. Overcast ... forced the use of Pathfinder instruments ... (and the) possible error ... (endangered) landing craft. A bombing plan (delayed) bomb release ... (too long so) drop patterns (were) well inland, **41** ... (It was) as much as 30 seconds ... (but) was approved by Supreme Headquarters ... (The) impact of the bomb weight fell from a few hundred yards to three miles inland ... Of 446 Liberators dispatched, 329 attacked, dropping over 13,000 bombs ... between 0555 and 0614.

(The claim is suspect. It was so bad that AAF investigators found no evidence of bomb craters.)

c. The Initial Assault Wave.⁸ Some 96 tanks, Special Engineer Task Force, and eight assault companies (1,450 men) landed at 0630. On the right, the 743rd TB landed its tanks directly off LCT's. Company B at Vierville mightily suffered. The commander's LCT sunk. Four officers were killed leaving just one lieutenant. Eight of 16 tanks landed to fire from the water. Company C and A tanks were east, well-spaced to avoid losses. Yet, the 16th RCT only had 5 of 32 DD tanks make the shore. Company A had one-third survive between E-1 and E-3.

Engineers had 30 minutes to gap the obstacles – too little. Their chance of success was lost in accidents, loading delays, beach landing errors -- 50% landed late going too far east on currents. Dog Beach (116th RCT, 29th ID) lacked forces. Only 6 of 16 dozers worked -- then 3 were hit. Lane marking equipment for boats was lost. A Navy Team 11 explosive rubber boat load was hit – one of eight men lived. Team 14's' navy crew was gone. Team 15 rubber boat blew up with 3 KIA and 4 WIA. Support Team F at 0700 lost 18 of its 23-man crew. Survivors worked **42** fast as obstacles were flooded. Charges could not be blown because soldiers hid behind obstacles. Team 7 was set to fire when an LCVP crash set off 7 mines, ruined the rest and cost a seaman his fingers that were on the plunger. Team 12 had a mortar set off primacord killing and wounding 19 engineers. Yet, the teams blew six complete and three partial gaps in German obstacles. Two were on the 116th IR beach and four on Easy Red – an event that may have influenced later landings. But only one gap was marked, which lessened their value. Then demolition teams joined others at the shingle or sea wall to wait. Task Force casualties were 41% in 30 minutes!

Infantry rode in boat sections (6 per company) and 32 soldiers in each LCVP. The 116th IR (29th ID) section leader boat had five M-1 riflemen with ninety-six rounds each, a 4-man wire-cutting team with

⁷ The author gives credit to Navy claims naval gun fire was more effective than the soldiers saw.

⁸ A cryptic synopsis here seems inappropriate. We must never forget what these soldiers faced and sacrificed.

rifles (2 with large and 2 with small cutters). Then 2-man BAR teams with nine hundred rounds; 2 bazooka teams (4 total) with carbines; a 4-man 60-mm mortar team with 20 rounds; a flame-thrower crew of 2; and 5 TNT "pole and pack" men. A medic and section leader in the stern. All wore assault jackets, with large pockets and built-in packs. Besides weapons and special equipment, each had a gas mask, 5 grenades (riflemen also had wire-cutters with 4 smoke grenades), a half-pound block of TNT with primacord, and 6 rations (3 K's and 3 D's). Clothing was impregnated against gas. Then came life preservers with equipment and weapons fastened to them to be floated in.

Few LCVP's and LCA's had dry feet landings. Most stopped 50-100 yards out - neck deep water. **43** Under fire in water infantry suffered from small-arms, mortars, and artillery, but worst was converging automatic fire. Men heard bullets pelting ramps before they were lowered -- a hail of bullets in the surf ahead. Some dove under water, some went over the side. Stiff, seasick, and overloaded they could not move much as sand runnels (tidal ditches) made footing hard. Most were exhausted when making the beach with another 200 more open yards to safety. Resting prolonged misery. **44** But west of les Moulins grass fire smoke impeded enemy fire on Dog Beach. Plus, "blind spots" allowed unloading with few losses. The first wave was hardest hit.

The worst Beach was at Dog Green the Vierville draw strongpoints and guns west at Pointe de la Percée. Company A, 116th IR had one boat founder offshore -- all drowned under their weights. At H+6 minutes another craft grounded in 5 feet and 30 yards out. The men ran off in three files, hard left, center, and hard right. All were hit with intense machine gun fire. Four mortar hits and the LCA broke apart; a few survived. **45 46** One boat team set up a sand firing line -- fighting back. Soon all officers and sergeants were killed or wounded. Leaderless men quit. Some crawled for three hours slowly in with the tide. In 15 minutes. A Co. was done with 67% casualties. The smaller Ranger company (64 men) in two LCA's landed at H+15 right of Vierville draw. An antitank gun killed twelve and machine gun hit 15 Rangers on the ramp. Survivors crossed 250 yards of sand to the cliff base. They lost 35 men.

The 116th RCT's Co A landed well east of Dog Red where grass fire smoke gave cover across the beach. In 15 minutes, this company was in the best shape. But officers hesitated, forfeiting a quick attack that might have succeeded. East on Easy Green, Co G had very heavy fire, one boat lost 14 men before they reached shale. Co F landed right, but before fortified les Moulins draw (D-3). They took 45 minutes of murderous fire in the sand losing half; the rest were unfit. Some were better off but lost their officers before the shingle to be disorganized.

These were first assault waves for just one-half of Omaha. The 116th Company (E) veered a mile east of Easy Green. The other three were too shot up for missions. By 0700 Company A was cut to pieces at the waterline, Company F was disorganized by heavy losses. Company G prepared to move west to their sector. To the east, the picture was similar. Easy Red Beach was one-mile wide at the E-1 draw where the 2d BLT Companies E and F. **47** landed too far east. Infantry on Easy Red were two lost Company E sections plus one from Companies E and F, 16th RCT all

between E-1 and E-3 draws. Men from two craft leaped into waist-deep water, fell into a runnel, swam through surf and tidal current pulling them east. Weapons were dropped, but they lost just two men suggesting Easy Red was not strongly defended. A little left, Company F hit heavy fire east to the E-3

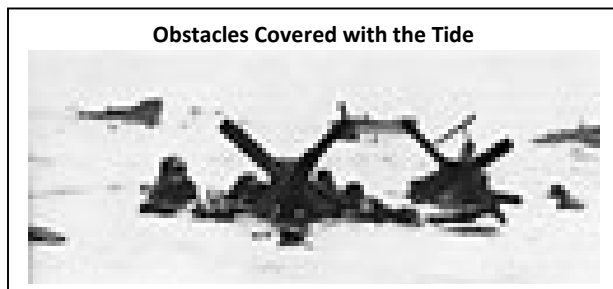
0730 Hours, Grounded Off Beach 16th RCT



draw. Of 31 men in neck-deep water, only 14 made it. Only four sections (one hundred men) and four DD tanks hit Easy Red Beach.

Fox Beach, which held the 16th RCT, had four companies incur every handicap, delay, and opposition. Crossing bands of machine guns hit as ramps lowered. Losses were heavy. Men made the sand were exhausted gaining 300 yards of sand to the shingle crawling slowly in with the tide as 105 were lost. Company E had the same. From 3 boat sections only 60 made the shingle. Their captain died valiantly, but sections were separated, out of contact with much time before contact was made. Five F sections (16th RCT) made Fox Green scattered from the E-3 draw to 1,000 yards east. Two sections landed together, but in front of E3 strongpoints. Mortars and machineguns felled one -third before they gained the shingle. East the other three badly fared. Seven men from one craft made the shingle. Two Fox Green units (16th RCT I and L) drifted east to Port-en-Bessin. Company L was 30 minutes late and on the wrong beach, not **48** E-3, but Fox Green. German artillery caused some casualties. Machine guns caused heavier losses in the 200 yards of beach. But the 3rd Boat Section was well spread out with no losses as others had 34 casualties. At Fox Green, the tide reach onto and into the bluffs -- no beach. The defilade afforded cover and pushed men together, so they assaulted the bluff. Company L, down to 125 men, was the only one (of 8 total) able to operate as a unit.

First wave “misfortunes” ruined landing schedules and obstacle clearance. Tank support was less on east beaches. Mis-landings left big gaps in the line at the sea wall and shingle -- **Dog White and Easy Red were almost bare of troops.** Resistance, disorganization, and heavy casualties prevented the **“infantry units in this wave from carrying out their mission of immediate assault. All the more credit is due ... (when they) surmounted the shock of the worst period on the beach and shared in the first advances inland.”**

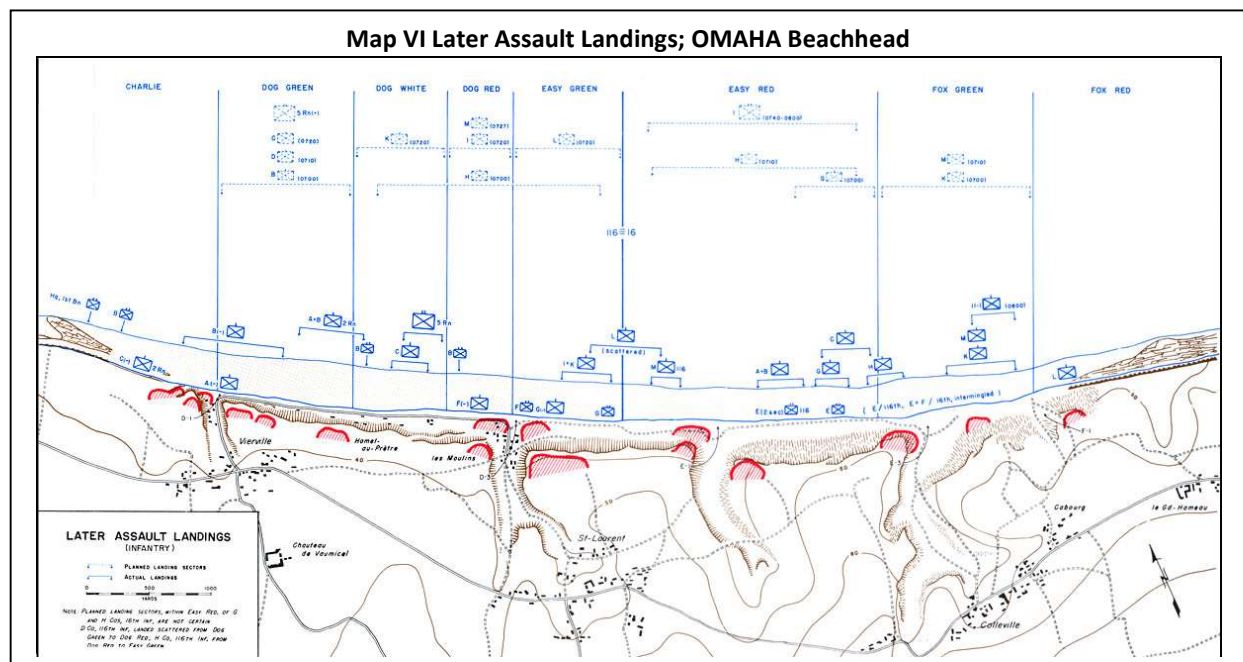


(Of these histories, OMAHA Beachhead best explains the chaos, exhaustion and frustrations overcome!).

d. The Later Assault Waves: 116th RCT. At 0700, second waves arrived over 40 minutes. Conditions were not as planned. The tide was beyond the obstacle belt which had few gaps due to gapping team problems. German fire was not neutralized. No one was beyond the shingle to give covering fire as the second wave repeated the mistakes -- the story much the same. Wrong landings and scattered units interfered with engineers to impede reorganization. The follow-ons were standard rifle infantry **49** ordered inland behind the bluffs to their “assembly areas”. It was “wistful” planning. In the 116th (29th ID) area, the 1st BLT had to reinforce A Co at the Dog Green Vierville exit, but only two “A” boat sections made it with B Co scattered over two miles. It was useless. Craft near Dog Green met the same destructive fire that wrecked Co A as the newcomers mixed with them in **“an effort to survive at the water's edge.”** Company C was a thousand yards east of the Vierville exit, on Dog White -- a fortunate mistake. One craft hit a mined obstacle to be delayed 20 minutes, but the others came in together having lost flamethrowers, demolitions, bangalore explosive pipes, and mortars. German fire was light, due to grass fire smoke with just six casualties to the shingle. **There were no other troops -- only four or five tanks in sight.** Company C took shelter at a sea wall in better shape.

D Co suffered as three boats shipped water, one sunk. The men did not land until after noon. Another craft sunk at 400 yards as men swam in through mortars and machine-guns. A third section debarked 150 yards out hiding behind obstacles for two hours. Another also had two machine guns, a mortar -- no ammunition. They first got a machine gun and mortar on shore without a heavy weapons battalion. Three craft with the HQ and Beachmaster's for Dog Green landed hundreds of yards west under cliffs. HQ Co lost **50** many officers, noncoms. The command group was scattered; pinned there that day.

Company H was no help. Dog Red and Easy Green saw heavy losses -- one boat had just six survive, Battalion and Company HQ made Dog Red at 0700 to hide behind tanks that were favored artillery targets. Maj. Bingham made the shingle with a leaderless Co. F. Only 2nd BLT made their Dog White assault, but they had to move sideways and then lost cohesion. **51** Bingham's les Moulins assault failed. He got 50 (Co F) men to a three-story house at the draw and famously led 10 men to the bluff but could not kill the German machine gunner and returned.



The 3rd BLT, 116th IR landed on Dog White, Dog Red, and Easy Green all east of les Moulins. Co. E did not assault, but this 1,000-yard beach was crowded as K and I Co's came in on the right wing. K had no losses, but no movement due to intermingled teams. L Co L, between draws, had light enemy fire, but troops lingered – tired, cramped. Men hesitated, hid behind submerged obstacles until the tide forced them out. One said: "The company learned with surprise how much small arms fire a man can run through without getting hit."

Eighteen LCA's of the 5th Ranger Battalion and Companies A and B 2nd Rangers waited for Pointe du Hoe offshore. Finally, deciding it failed, they motored to Dog Green and inland at Vierville. **52** LTC Schneider saw Dog Green and ordered the flotilla east. Companies A and B, 2nd Rangers, on the right hit the edge of Dog Green. One hit a mine; 34 men swam in. Small-arms and mortar fire hit the others at touch down. Ranger companies only had 65 officers and men each; some 35 in Co A and 27 in Co B made the sea wall. East, on favored Dog White, 13 of 14 craft with the 5th IB landed. LCI 91 was set afire but none

of their craft were hit. These 450 were beyond the seawall only 5 men short, but the wall was fully occupied by the 116th IR, 29th ID. Later waves fared better. Five of the eight 116th RCT companies landed together and light losses. The volume overwhelmed defenders with too many targets. By 0730, U.S. forces were on the entire beach front. The 116th IR command, with Col. Canham and Gen Cota, landed having lost one officer. For “influencing further operations, they could not have hit a better point in the 116th zone.” To their right and left, Company C and some 2nd IB men were crowded at the embankment a few hundred yards with Ranger force landing. The leaders were “well located to play a major role in the next phase of action.”

The first waves had veered east so Easy Red only had a handful of infantry at 0700. In 45-minutes landings between E-1 and E-3 brought most of the 741st tanks. Co G arrived at 0700 with no casualties, but 53 from ramps to the shingle were most of its 63 casualties. “The loss was unavoidable.” At the shingle weapons engaged the enemy who were found as they fired on later landings! Co H lost a good deal of equipment, including radios, at the E-3 draw where enemy fire was heavy. H was immobilized for hours. The 1st BLT to reinforce the first assault units were on time between 0740 to 0800 and between E-1 and E-3 draws, with Co A and B. Co D with machine guns, riflemen, mortars and headquarters. Casualties were lighter. Fox Green Beach held parts of 5 companies. K Co came at 0700 to incur most of its 53 casualties that day then. Co. M's craft was scattered. Co. I went east, lost two boats, and returned to Fox Green about 0800. The command craft hit a mine; two others had artillery hits. The fourth fowled. Casualties were heavy. Capt Richmond was the senior officer!



e. Conditions on the Beach: 0730-0800. Many supporting services landed by 0800 (*i.e.*, combat engineers, naval shore fire control, artillery antiaircraft). Engineers to 54 mark exits and beaches were separated and lacked equipment. Landing on the right beaches was nigh impossible as obstacles were then just under the surface. Men left in deep water drowned when they stepped in runnel trenches and holes. Some exploded mines on underwater obstacles. Crippling damage hit craft both coming in and going out. “Regardless of the actual damage, the impression of ‘carnage’ was real.” A terrible disaster was LCI 91 at Dog White at 0740 with the 116th RCT alternate headquarters. 55 It was hit by artillery at the obstacles, backed out and tried again with no luck. Ramps dropped in 6 feet of water as a shell sent the crowded deck up in flames. On fire, men jumped into the sea as 25 men in the forward compartment drowned. LCI 92 had the same. They burned all day. Guns at Pointe de la Percée made the hits. LCI 85 had a Medical Battalion to be stuck on Element "C" and hit. The crew backed. No. 3 hold was burning, the craft listed. A few got off before the ramps were shot away. It was struck twice more to become a “hospital ship for medical personnel.” It did not sink.

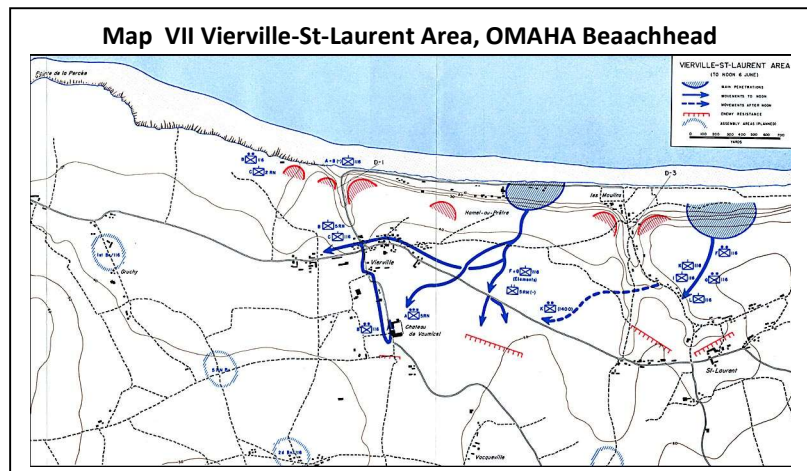
It was the worst time for vehicles to arrive, but they did. They either drowned or “were then caught in a hopeless traffic jam ... (were) easy targets. Vast sums of equipment and weapons were lost. Radios were slim curtailing operations into darkness. **56** By 0800 the beaches were in hopeless confusion, so intermixed no one functioned, the shingle was overcrowded so men had nowhere to hide for protection.

Disorganization was inevitable, and dealing with it was rendered difficult ... a command party could only influence a narrow sector ... It was a situation which put it up to small units ... to solve their own problems of organization and morale.

There was, definitely, a problem of morale. The survivors ...(saw) heavy losses ... the tide was drowning wounded men ... carrying bodies ashore ... Stunned and shaken ... men could ... (find) the sea wall and shingle bank all too welcome a cover. It was not much protection ... Ahead of them ... (were) wire and minefields ... fully exposed to enemy fire ... That the enemy fire was probably weakening ... (was) hard for the troops ... to appreciate ... (They) had suffered already and what they had to cross to get at the German emplacements ... (They) could count on little ... (Ships were ordered) not to fire, unless ... definite targets offered ... (so) destroyers did not dare bring fire on the strongpoints through which infantry might be advancing ...

At 0800 ... (the enemy seeing) the grim picture ... (could) well have felt that the invasion was stopped ... (but) at three or four places on the four-mile beachfront, U. S. troops were already breaking through the shallow crust of enemy defenses. **57**

f. Assault of the Bluffs. THE OUTSTANDING FACT was assault troops did not stay pinned. At half-a-dozen points they found the drive to move off the open beach to the bluffs. They improvised and most attempts succeeded. Some were companies, some intermingled and some were just “groups” where no one knew much in their “isolation”. Numerous factors aided, such as facing weak defenses, smoke for hiding or strongpoints overpowered. At a few destroyers came close and tanks gave support as engineers blew gaps in wire, crossed minefields, and fought. “Decisive was leadership.”



The few who inspired, encouraged, or bullied ... On Easy Red a lieutenant and a wounded sergeant ... (inspected) wire obstacles. The lieutenant looked down disgustedly: “Are you going to lay there and get killed, or get up and do something about it?” Nobody stirred, so the ... (two) blew the wire ... (Where) a group advancing ... was held up by a marshy area ... a lieutenant ... crawled ahead ... probing for mines with a hunting knife ... Co B, 116th IR, 29th ID ... stopped by fire from a well-concealed emplacement, the lieutenant ... went **58** after it single-handed ... (He) was hit by three rifle bullets and eight grenade fragments ... He turned his map and compass over to a sergeant and ordered his group to press on

One characteristic ... (was) these early penetrations ... were made not at the draws but in areas between them ... (Forces before) D-1, D3, and E-3, had suffered crippling losses and were unable to press the assault. The first advances were ... between strongpoints ... **The routes planned as exits for movement of tanks and vehicles from the beach were not cleared.**

g. The Advance from Dog White. The most important penetration (Map VII) was by Company C, 116th IR and 5th Ranger Battalion. Both had minor losses but were crowded at the shingle. **59** Gen Cota and the 116th commanders spurred them on at 0730. Exposed to fire, they walked behind the crowded sea wall urging officers and noncoms to move. Nearest enemy strongpoints were hundreds of yards to either flank. Front was grass fire smoke over 150 yards of ground. The hills had small folds and depressions for protection. **60** C Co. led as Pvt. Lambert crossed the road to set a bangalore which failed; Lambert was killed. But 2nd Lt. Schwartz blew a gap. The first man was shot; but others went up the bluff in minor concealment. Defilade and smoke gave protection. Progress was slow. **61** No enemy were on the crest as they made a few hundred yards into the fields with just six casualties. The 5th Ranger Battalion and Co C joined. Four gaps were blown as men gained a hillside covered by smoke. At the crest platoons were disorganized by minefield signs. Still A and E Co platoons moved inland. Co D erased a German trench on the bluff losing eight men. In a 300-yard-wide path by 0830 the last left the seawall. Mortar shells killed two, knocked Gen Cota down. but his party made the top. Groups intermingled unsure but moved on per original orders. **62**

h. The Advance Between D-3 and E-1 Draws. The 3rd BLT, 116th IR, 29th ID landed east 1,200 yards too far, with small losses. K and I Co. hit Easy Green; L and M Co. were scattered. Their assembly was a mile inland. They moved in small groups beyond the wire to the flats. An I Co officer moved through a gap, just 10

followed. **63-64** The beach had no cover, but German fire was low. Off-beach movement was dribs and drabs -- a slow half hour trek to the top. Sections hid behind hedgerows 200 yards back from the edge. Co K was slower finding mines. Men joined units who just "wanted company". K's sections were a hundreds of yards inland, but open fields were barred by German fire.

Teams made high ground against ineffective enemy fire. Sections worked southwest (right) hitting enemy positions. Co. M near E-1 strongpoints had heavy fire on the beach. In a gully, they had four machine guns and two heavy mortars near E-1. Six men were hit seeking a route up until reinforcements at E-1 broke this stalemate.

MAP NO. 3 The Advance between D-3 & E-1 Draws



i. **The Advance from Easy Red.** Parts of three companies hit bluffs between E-1 and E-3 draws. The beach shelf was above the shingle embankment but with a swamp. The bluff was 130 feet high on a **65-66** bushy slope with a small, protected draw. Co E, 16th IR and two sections of Co E, 116th IR came in the first wave. The 16th, led by 2d Lt. Spalding, blew a wire gap above the shingle, passed a house, were held up by minefields and small arms, but found a way past the mines to the slope. Using a defilade in a small draw two 116th sections cut wire and dashed over the flat halted by mines. The soldier who cleared a path with a bangalore was killed. Co G, 16th RCT made the embankment in good order. LCVP's of the 1st IB drew German fire from 8 or 10 emplacements up the bluff. Mn blew gaps in the wire beyond the shingle with **67** four Bangalore's. Engineers marked lanes. Co. G met Lt Spalding's E group to advance. Mined areas slowed all, but G Co went through using two dead bodies there. Capt. Dawson and another found a machine gun halfway up the hill. Dawson got behind the nest to grenade the crew to open the draw to the top **68** using cover in the draw. G made the crest by 0830. Enemy fire died as they gained the upland fields. Mines then became the concern.

Spalding's E Company (16th RCT) patrol had had just three men left. **69**. On the crest Spalding went west through hedgerow fields to the rear of Germans defending the E-1 draw catching them by surprise. In two hours, Spalding penetrated the strongpoint outworks using **70** close-in work of grenades and rifles. Naval fire demoralized the Germans with 21 POWs. Spalding's small force cleared the draw. About 1100 Spalding found Co E east with orders to Colleville. Here Spalding created an "end around" gateway for U.S. troops to gain the bluffs to hit the German's from behind. Without reinforcements, beach defenses were "defeated" before 1100 hours. The Germans did not know they could be attacked from behind. Elation was short lived as *Bocage* hedgerows were next obstacles—that lasted for weeks. Company G's area was the "funnel for movement off the beach during the rest of the morning."

The 16th RCT Col Taylor arrived at 0815 to disorganization. **He tersely said: "Two kinds of people are staying on this beach, the dead and those who are going to die—now let's get the hell out of her."** Groups were collected *ad hoc* with the senior sergeant in charge and sent through the wire, across the flat and up the slopes. Confusion reigned to the bluff top. A traffic jam clogged the trail as leaderless men rested below the protected crest. Colonel Taylor's **71-72** post was below the crest; his officers got men forward. Troops came up both flanks and sent inland. Scattered sections E, F, and H moved west on the beach to take the new route.

MAP NO 4 Advance from East Red



j. ***The Advance from Fox Green and Others.*** Fox Green fronted two exit routes: the large valley (E-3) winding a mile inland toward Colleville and east (F1) where the bluff front was only slightly interrupted by a shallow and steep draw. Two enemy strongpoints were east of F-1 and near the Colleville draw above the narrowing beach. The east drift of the tides put seven companies on Fox Green by 0800. Here an assault begun by L Co had others join with coordination somehow forthcoming for a successful advance. Company L was at the west end where the bluff became a partial cliff at the shingle to give cover. Its commander dead, 1st Lt. Cutler took command as sections climbed to below the F-1 strongpoint with two tanks in support. Cutler sent three sections up the draw to get the top. The **73 74** second section went left after a strongpoint from behind, as 3rd and 5th Sections moved inland to set hasty defenses. Sections stayed connected as others climbed. An L Co. section with only 12 men under 1st Lt. Klenk moved up to find forces to assault the F-1 strongpoint. Capt. Richmond (Co I) then organized follow-up forces from K and I Co's who went straight up at the strongpoint. Guns and mortars of Co M, tanks, and naval guns all kept German fire light. Co L on the hill sprayed it with BAR fire to keep Germans pinned. A destroyer's fire forced a halt. So, L Co phoned the beach of its readiness to attack when naval fire lifted. It lifted, the strongpoint was stormed, resistance was broken; grenades and satchel charges cleaned out trenches with 31 prisoners. **It was 0900. Then L Co headed inland!**

Penetrations meant progress inland, but lesser groups fought on the top flats not knowing of others. Stray boat sections, **scratch parties all fought; few made the records.** Two, involving Ranger units, are examples. Co C, 2nd Ranger Battalion, was the first to reach the high ground (at Charlie) where cliffs border the west beach. About 30 survived the beach to shelter under a 90-foot cliff, impossible to climb, yet three men went west to look for a way. They tried a crevice using bayonets for hand holds, pulling each other along. 1st Lt. William Moody **75-76** had 4 toggle ropes that were attached to stakes in a minefield below the crest. Moody and a Ranger on top of the cliff shouted directions sending down ropes. **The men were up by 0730.**

Capt. Goranson saw an LCV landing (116th RCT, 29th ID) to send a guide to get them to the ropes. Goranson decided to hit a fortified house before Pointe de la Percee -- a German strongpoint of dugouts, trenches, machine-guns, and mortars. He put men in an abandoned trench just west to "feel out" enemy positions with small attacks over hours. The boat section of Co B, 116th RCT joined, but was too small. Three times parties got around German positions, then enemy reinforcements came via communication trenches. Yet, by the end of the afternoon, the Rangers B Co. suffered 2 casualties with 69 enemy dead. They had consumed a main German position at the Vierville draw.

The 2nd Rangers fought clear of Dog White after getting to the sea wall at 0740. Thinking they were alone (one-quarter mile left was the 5th Ranger Battalion with a crowd of infantry), A and B Co's dashed across the promenade road **77** to the sea wall for cover into the wrecked villas on the beach. About 18 Company B Rangers hugged the slope several hundred yards to the Vierville draw but fire turned them back while others worked through the villas to make the bluffs. A 116th machinegun and three DD tanks silenced Germans on flanks. A Co reached the top filled with German trenches with machineguns. They went toward empty trenches, but Germans came out to man their guns. The Rangers waited too long, but they still mopped up the area with only three casualties. Co B returned. The 5th Ranger Battalion were near the bluff top. The 2nd Battalion went inland so from 0800 to 0830 Dog White widened. **78**

k. ***The Beach: 0800-1200 and Reinforcements.*** F-1 was won – not per plans since it was too steep for vehicles. Only E-1 was useable. Second, men who got the top went on to assembly points thus **failing to wipe out strongpoints from the rear, especially at E-3 and D-3 for traffic.** On the beach,

landings were still dangerous. Engineers could not open traffic. At 0800, there were no shingle gaps for vehicles that crowded beaches. The 7th Naval Beach Battalion halted all vehicles at 0830. For hours DUKW's and rhino-ferries milled offshore carrying needed heavy weapons. **79** Artillery Col Mullins famously said, "To hell with our artillery mission. We've got to be infantrymen now."

But DUKW's with 105-mm guns, ammunition and crews foundered. One unit lost 7 of 8 howitzers. Plus, howitzers were used for direct, not indirect, fire. **"Tanks around the beach were only independent 5-man parties waiting to be knocked out."** Yet, tanks fired. **80** Commanders credited tanks for victories. One commander said it best: "Tanks saved the day. They shot the hell out of the Germans and got the hell shot of them." **Destroyer Carmick is often mentioned since the tanks watched Carmick's guns to fire at the same targets! 81**

LCT 30 and LCI(L) 544 both charged full speed through obstacles firing the way and proving obstacles could be rammed. Their exploits helped. Between 1000 and 1100 destroyers closed to one-half mile to dual with German guns. A morale booster and effective. At 1100 tanks were ordered to exits to clean out draws. E-1 was first. The east side was neutralized by the 16th IR, the other side covered. Tank dozers pushed through the dunes about 1000. In two hours, ditches were filled, mines cleared, and vehicles began landing. Enemy resistance waned.

I. Landing of Reinforcements on Easy Red. The 18th RCT was to land on Easy Red at 0930. **82** It was confusion. At 1000 hours the 18th saw no progress made: **"The beach shingle was full of tractors, tanks, vehicles, bulldozers, and troops-the high ground was still held by Germans who had all troops on the beach pinned down-the beach was still under heavy fire from enemy small arms, mortars and artillery."**

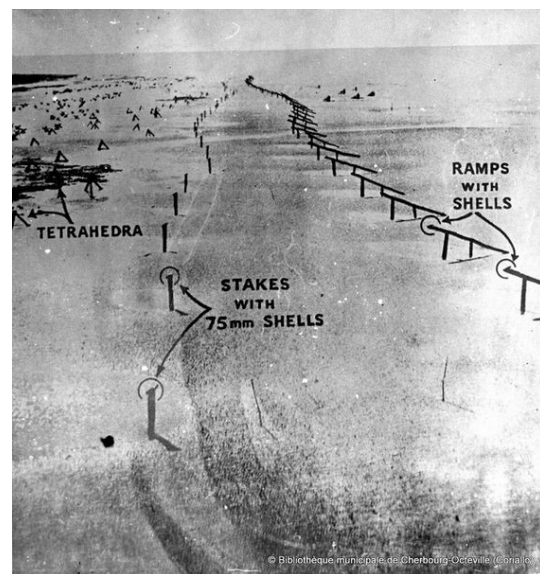
The Navy reported for the 18th RCT: 22 LCVP's, 2 LCI (L)'s and 4 LCT's as lost, personnel losses were light.

Right of E-1, the 2nd Battalion used navy fire to kill a pillbox on the fourth round. At 1130, E-1 draw was **83** opened to be the main exit and a "traffic jam" when the entire U.S. Army headed to one road.

84 Thankfully, the *Luftwaffe* did not appear. German mortar fire was ineffective. Artillery fire aimed at landing craft with few hits. Meanwhile, Gen Bradley on the *Ancon* waited impatiently with no information. Observers dispatched sent inaccurate and disheartening news. **85-86**

2. The Rangers at Pointe du Hoe. Heading west down the beaches, Lt. Col Rudder's Co's D, E, and F, 2nd Ranger Battalion's 200 men **87** landed late at Point du Hoe intent to destroy six 155-mm howitzers threatening landing craft and ships. The tiny beach was a 25-yard strip to cliffs 85 to 100 feet high. The Rangers had rocket guns for grapnels on a 3/4" rope, tubular and rope ladders, and even a firetruck extension ladder bolted in DUKW's. Companies E and F would hit the cliff base but landing craft grossly missed the cliffs by miles to require **an embarrassing 40-minute trip up the coast westward under enemy fire from the high shore.** Three craft foundered and one DUKW was sunk by artillery. Nine

Enhanced Beach Defense Photo



<https://ar.pinterest.com/pin/305963368412805588/>

surviving LCA's arrived; Germans well-ready to fight. Destroyer *Satterlee* swept the cliff top, but guins caused about fifteen casualties. Some rocket ropes worked as did tube ladders. The hook and ladder firetruck assembly did not reach the top. BAR men and destroyer *Satterlee* discouraged German fire.

But wet, mud-covered hands made climbing hard. **88** The first up found a no-man's land of destruction. Small parties **moved to the gun emplacements; that were empty ...** **89** **The guns they fought so hard to climb the cliffs to destroy were gone.** Rangers started inland to cut and defend the coastal highway between Vierville and Grandcamp and wait for the 116th IR from Omaha **90** **It was done by 0800.** Patrolling began. The big guns were found hidden with no Germans nearby. First two got incendiary (welding-type) grenades. Another spiked the others, blew up the powder – the guns were finished!

Germans counterattacked capturing many soldiers. Men fought from bomb craters one hundred yards apart. Rangers were sieged all day with two counterattacks stopped. Contact with the Rangers on the highway was lost. They had naval blinker lights to communicate with ships who relayed messages. The Destroyer *Satterlee* relayed **Col Rudder's one D-Day message: "Located Pointe du Hoe-mission accomplished-need ammunition and reinforcement-many casualties."** **91**

3. Chapter 3: D-Day - The Advance Inland. The remarkable success in penetrating the draws by 0900 was offset by limited success for the rest of D-Day. The forces were weak, scattered, and lacked heavy weapons, tanks, and artillery. Communications within units, between separate units and with the Navy was poor. **Vast numbers of Army were both mentally and physically "pinned down".** Reserve regiments did not arrive until mid-afternoon and German opposition took advantage of terrain. Well-placed resistance pockets complicated by hedgerows that began right behind the beaches. Germans in company strength and at Colleville halted V Corps far short of D-Day objectives. The villages of Colleville and St-Laurent were new main enemy resistance areas.**92**

E-1 STRONGPOINT on June 7th (Note: Bluffs are not too high!)



a. Vierville Area. From 0800-0900 found six hundred men on Dog White Beach gaining the top in small, intermingled groups that did not function. It took two hours regroup. The 5th Rangers under 1st Lt. Parker moved to their Vierville assembly area but were stopped by German hedgerow fire. It took the morning to by-pass. The 116th IR (29th ID) found units scattered with little information, no radios. Gen Cotta's strained to get men moving between 1000 and 1100 to Vierville. Rangers trying to bypass the village hit Germans but bypassed this block -- to be stopped by another. Outflanking hit another machine-gun. Enemy artillery was hidden by bluffs. Co C used a main road to Vierville thinking it was already cleared to **93** attack a German resistance nest but were then counterattacked.

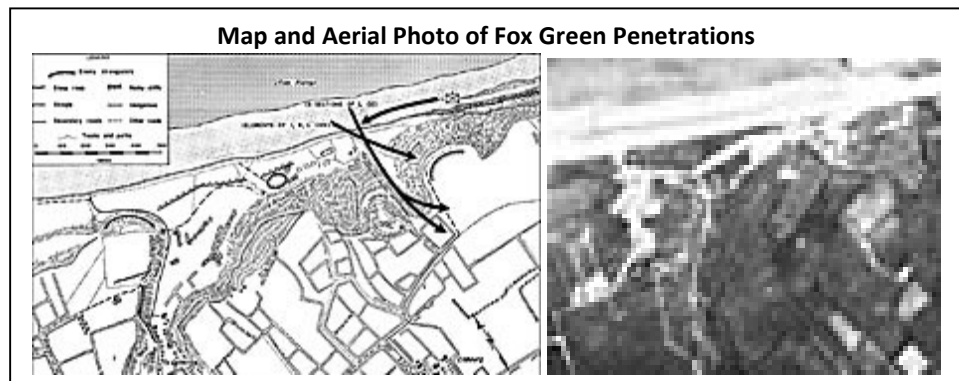
5th Rangers B and 116th IR were out of Vierville by noon west on the coastal highway to Pointe du Hoe, but in 500 yards lost two hours fighting defenders. By 1700 their efforts to get to the Pointe were defeated by local battles. **94** The 5th Rangers, having saved the 116th Commander at Vierville, were ordered to guard duty. The 2nd Battalion fought a thousand yards south not seeing U.S. forces. Col Canham only knew of the Vierville fighting at midnight when, his 2nd and 3rd IBs were near St-Laurent -- the weak spot. 5th Ranger and 116th IR remnants were west and southwest not near other forces in an

area that should have been cleared at 1300 when *Texas* guns forced a surrender (with 30 prisoners). Gen Cota made the top, then walked down the draw to the beach, yet traffic stalled. He opened the draw. Minefields were located by POW's. Cota pushed his 116th men and tanks; got engineers to remove obstacles. **95** Lt Parker led the 5th Ranger Co A toward Pointe du Hoe but was flanked and nearly surrounded. They fought on to meet the 2nd Battalion south at about 2100 hours. *(It was fractured, fractious and all "fowled up")* **96**

b. St-Laurent Area. The 3rd Battalion, 116th IR went south but hit Germans at St-Laurent – to be stalled that day. Confused. Hedgerows and Germans kept Companies L and I pinned. Germans stiffened near the St-Laurent crossroad. Co K climbed between draws to meet 5th Rangers at the Vierville road. The rest were held at the crossroads with heavy casualties. St-Laurent blocked the 115th IR who arrived at Exit E-1 at noon. Intermingling kept held them to just 1,000 yards inland. **97** The 2nd IB lost the afternoon at St-Laurent unable to locate Germans! Naval gunfire hit the village, but 2nd IB failed to take advantage. The 3rd IB failed to get the main road. Five battalions fought in one square mile due to lacks in communications, control, artillery, and armor.

c. Colleville Area. Co G had the bluff at 0900 into Colleville then fighting for two hours. G moved to the west end to meet two 116th IR sections left, but Germans filtered back to again close the E-3 draw. At 1500, the 18th IR was atop E-1 draw, but Co G never passed through Colleville. It was "isolated" – a common issue. **98-99** Commanders could not organize scattered forces, Hedgerows forbid bypass efforts. Germans retreating hit the rear of U.S. positions. E-1 to E-3 areas had confused, uncoordinated actions. Lt. Col Hicks, Jr., 2nd IB. 16th RCT fruitlessly searched Colleville for men to find small bands. A force reached the main road at noon, took rear fire and retreated to Colleville. The 1st IB reached the same road at 1300 to spend the day fighting snipers three hundred yards out. Co A lost the afternoon to one German machine-gun near E-1. The 18th IR landed at E-1 to capture Colleville (again) but was 500 yards short at dark. The 1st IB spent until midnight fighting at the St-Laurent-Colleville road.

Gen Huebner, 1st ID, hit Easy Red at 1900 to join Gen Wyman at the E-1 draw. Gen Gerow and V Corps left the *Ancon* at 2030. "Other than getting off the beach with horrendous losses, the advance inland stalled against inferior forces ... the Germans ... fought hard."



4. Afternoon on the Beach. Destroyers worked the beach for enemy guns. Vierville draw was silenced by 1300. Later Pointe de la Percee guns were blown off the cliff. It nowhere ended enemy opposition. Three exits were still blocked. Vierville, per Gen Cota's round up and down trip, was ready, but there were not enough men to "mop up." D-3 and E-3 resistance blocked them. Germans in trenches emerged from "knocked out" positions. Snipers reappeared. Inland artillery was harassing – their observers were not found. Hits were still made on landing craft, vehicles jammed exits. **101** German guns could not be located. Destroyer Carmick took on E-1 guns -- they were not found.

Engineers worked the threat to get beaches moving. With low tide engineers “felled” more obstacles -- **102** 35% were cleared by night. Yet, German shelling remained into D-Day night and D-Day+1. **103**

The primary job was moving vehicles inland after destroyers and infantry erased E-1 defenses. By 1300, bulldozers cut a new road to block enemy observation of Draw E-1. At 1500 progress saw a traffic jam at the village of St. St-Laurent. Parking lots were built on bluff tops, but **104-105** all exits were clogged until late evening and most stopped by Germans at Vierville and St Laurine. Thus, Co B, 745th TB hit Fox Green at 1630 to gain high ground at 2000 losing three tanks to mines. It was an “open”, but not “efficient”, beach.

Artillery was kept offshore with the Navy a good substitute -- especially destroyers off the beaches. Then inland observation reversed the artillery process. Artillery ashore meant little if not fired. From “1500 to 1830, six M-7 howitzers got ashore ... moved to firing positions 200 yards inland but fired no missions.” The “32nd Field Artillery Battalion landed in the evening ... (losing) 2 guns ... and 25 vehicles ... (with) 28 casualties. By night ... (they lost) 26 guns ... Except for the one mission ... they had played no part in the inland fighting ...” **106**



“Men dug in for the night wherever ... There were no ‘rear areas’ on the night of D Day.”

5. At the End of D Day. Omaha succeeded; but not well. Morning “lacked the force to carry far inland. Delay in reducing the strongpoints ... slowed ... reinforcements, artillery, and supplies.” Stubborn resistance **107** at strongpoints held the advance to only a mile-and-a-half at Colleville - less elsewhere! Infantry was adequate, all else was far short. The beach was not organized; jams occurred. Casualty records were a mess. **108** “Later returns had V Corps near 3,000 killed, wounded, and missing. The two regimental combat teams (16th and 116th) lost 1,000 men each. Highest were first waves: engineers, tankers, and artillery. Material loss was steep. The Navy lost 50 landing craft, 10 large vessels. **109** The “D-Day Surprise” was enemy strength, which we now know was **three regiments of the 352nd Division** that came north from St-Lô area so “all strongpoints were completely manned. It explains why Omaha opposition was so much greater. Plus, defenses were “stronger”. This led to speculating why no counterattacks? This led to a “wishful thought” that Allied air and naval bombardment was more effective than understood. This “thought” was banished!

... (Yet, Germans did not) attack in real strength ... Enemy power had been frittered away ... There is enough evidence to suggest that the 352^d units were committed piecemeal, ... and that companies and battalions of different regiments were intermingled ... Such ... would not lend itself to coordinated attack in sizable force.

... The next few days would show if the 352^d Division was wisely used ... It delayed the whole assault schedule ... 110 but unless enemy reserves were available ... delay might mean little ...

UTAH saw the U.S. six miles inland, but U.S. airborne goals were not obtained. East of OMAHA, British Second Army had impressive success as airborne seized the Orne north of Caen and shattered coast defenses. Yet, the 716th Division slowed advances, then 21st Panzer Division counterattacked Caen to “check” British success. Second Army did not capture Caen and Bayeux.

The absence of the *Luftwaffe* was a surprise. Air supremacy won before combat! The Eighth sent 1,264 heavy bombers to “choke points”, but this “is disputed.” Bomber Command bombed. Ninth AF flew 2,065 fighter-bomber and British tactical flew 2,489 sorties. 111



6. The German View. German High Command did expect the invasion northeast on the Pas-de-Calais coast, but reinforced Brittany and Cotentin in May, which the Allies did not know.⁹ The 91st Division was in the Cotentin, 2nd Paratroop Division on its way. Germans detected Allied port activity and Rommel’s *credo* was - reserves forward. “We must ... destroy... all enemy equipment while still afloat.” On 6 June Rommel went to German. The *Luftwaffe* kept fighters away to save them.

On 5 June intercepts suggested invasion. Gen. Jodl “did not bite”. At 0130, 6 June Seventh Army heard of air attacks and by 0230 knew an invasion to Caen and Ste-Mère-Eglise was on, but Army Group West (von Rundstedt) waited until 0250 hours to act. At 0400 Gen Marcks (LXXXIV Corps) knew of Caen and Ste-Mère-Eglise attacks sending 915th ID to Carentan 113 and the 21st Panzer to Caen. At 0515, Seventh Army affirmed sea landings; 21st Panzer was moving. At 0600 hours Corps reported heavy naval gunfire; at 0645 intentions unclear as German reconnaissance still had nothing. At 0900 Army heard of 0715 Caen landings and at 0925 of Allied armor there. The 352nd Division at Omaha was pierced; not in danger. At 1040 navy reported UTAH ships. At 1145, the Allies were on 16-miles wide; 3 miles inland; nothing from 352nd Division. At noon, Bayeux landings defeated – just Caen was critical. At 1620 the Cotentin was worrisome. At 1800 the Allies were at Colleville-Louvières-Asnieres. 114 At 2100 it was the Bayeux-Caen highway that 21st Panzer did not win. At 1700, von Rundstedt ordered bridgeheads

⁹ It speaks volumes on Allied intelligence lacks in Normandy due to the “aloofness” of the Normans!

erased. Seventh Army and Army Group planned a 7 June I SS Panzer Corps attack with: a) 716th Division, b) 21st Panzer, c) 12th SS Panzer and d) Panzer Lehr as a *Kampfgruppen* of the 266th and 77th Divisions were ready plus the 275th and 265th ID boarded trains in Brittany!

D. D-Day Chapter 7: Normandy; Craven and Cate Army Air Forces in WWII, Vol III xyza

1. Author's Comments. *Craven and Cates Chapter 7 provides a major disappointment in that it contains more "promotion" than "facts". It was apparently important for the Army Air Force to avoid saying: "the parachute drops for the 82nd AID were mostly off course; the 101st fared better."* So it seems that authors' Craven and Cate pandered a bit to the airmen for whom they worked, particularly Gen Eaker. An objective view of the parachute drops made by the 101st and 82nd AID early 6 June 1944 were horrendous errors. The drops were so bad and so uncoordinated they confused the enemy who presumed, rightfully it is hoped, that the Army Air Force enjoyed better proficiency.

*The first problem was night navigation by C-47 pilots when Bomber Command had the finest GEE nighttime navigators of any air force. Although Bomber Command only flew at night to be the "experts" nothing was done in this regard. In short, we are not told why Bomber Command could not have found the Meredet River or the Utah Beech shoreline after thousands of attacks in Germany at night. The technology clearly existed, but was not used. It perhaps seems trifling until one considers: 1) the great numbers of paratroops who drowned in flood waters; and 2) the horrendous causeway battles the *2nd AID had to thereafter fight to gain the west bank of the Meredet River.*

2. Invasion of Europe: D-Day Air Forces. Air operations 6 June 1944, were cumulative "...though providing an obvious climax to this preparatory work, seems almost an anticlimax."

There was the drama of loading thousands of paratroopers ... tense activity on airfields ... fighter sweeps ... the massive bombings of the beaches ... But for all the unprecedented activity ... (which) dispatched more than 8,000 planes ... **the day proved ... uneventful ... (because there) were no great air battles ... the Luftwaffe refused the challenge.** The record ... (is of) victory already won ... The record speaks too of adherence to sound principles of air warfare. **185** (Comment: These are "overt the top" – especially "adherence to sound principles"!)

Field Manual 100-20 stated air victory goals: (1) to control the air in the critical areas to eliminate enemy capacity to interfere; (2) to isolate the battlefield by stopping troops and supplies; and (3) to provide ground support to land forces on the battle front. The first task was done before D-day. To "toot their horn," the *Luftwaffe* interrupted few ground operations. Criticisms of the Combined Bomber Offensive post-war surveys overlook **there were no serious Luftwaffe effort on D-Day against: 1) navy fleets; 2) ground troops; 3) over battles; 4) as Allied armies had air protection; and 5) the Armies new close air support battle doctrine.** Per AWPD-1 success required air supremacy.

The greatest air armadas in history had 4,000 Eighth and 4,000 Ninth Air Force planes and 1,300 cargo planes, 8½ years since the shiny silver Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress flew. The night of June 5:

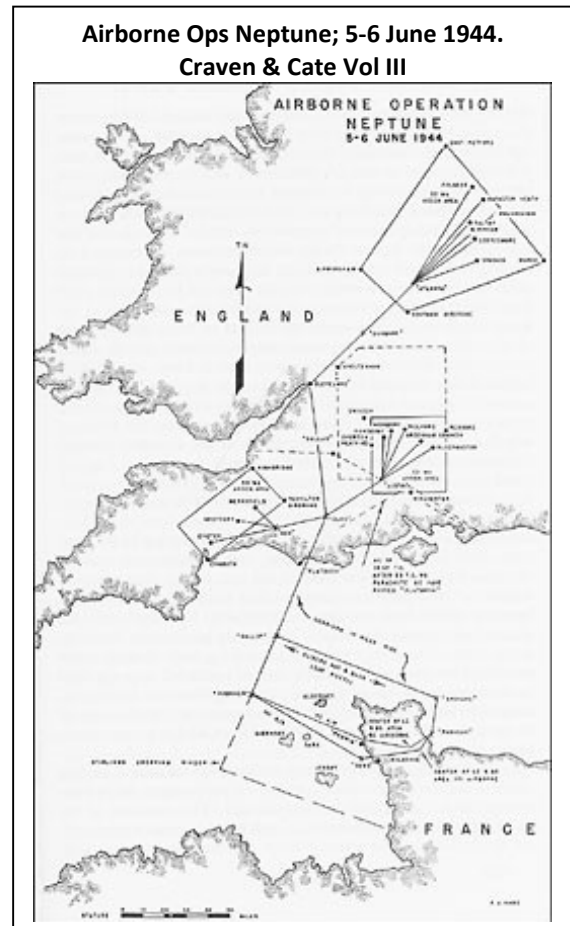
RAF Bomber Command ... (bombed) coastal batteries ... U.S. air forces staged the largest troop carrier operation yet ... (as) great sky trains ... took off from fields **186** ... for drops behind

UTAH beach (with) ... over 17,000 men ... Eisenhower and Brereton had visited units of the 101st during the evening and witnessed their take-offs.

It was a tribute to training that over 900 planes and 100 gliders ... assembled in darkness ... the outward flight ... executed according to plan ... RAF night fighters and intruders furnished escort ... while British Stirling's dropped Window to simulate ... airborne serials ... well south ... There were no encounters with enemy aircraft during the operation.

... (Then) difficulties swiftly multiplied ... only the leading planes ... escaped ... antiaircraft fire ... Fog and cloud ... (impacted) visual observation ... Formations tended to break up ... (Pathfinders) ... west of the Merderet could not mark (drop zones) ... and ... (when) zones were marked ... drops ... were generally scattered, ... (and most) unloaded too soon or overshot ... (with) gross errors. Yet ... gliders accomplished "little short of a miracle" (with) heavy enemy fire before making hazardous landings on small and obstructed fields.

(Comment: This is a revisionist view. The 82nd Airborne had no role in poor C-47 pilot training and plans. Troop Carrier failed both. Eighth AAF and RAF Bomber Command had OBOE and GEE night navigation not used to cause disastrous drops. Army intelligence tragically assumed miles of tall grass on the flooded rivers were not reeds in flood waters that drowned many paratroops. Then Gliders on D-Day afternoon and on the morning of D+1 landed "in an area where battle was already raging.") **187**

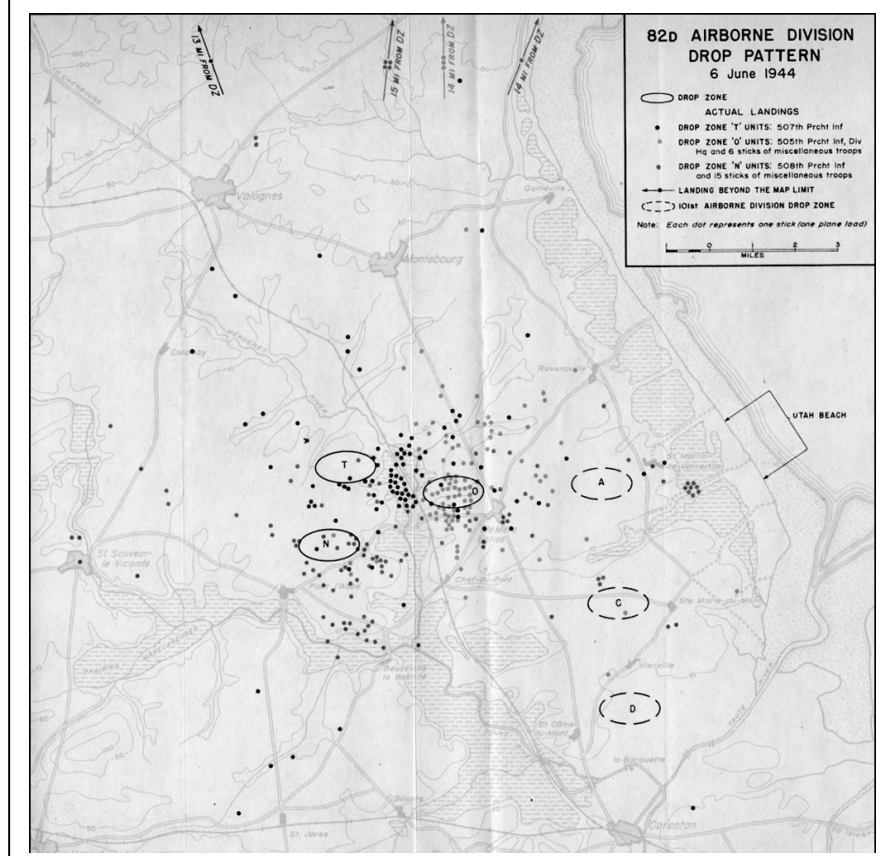


quick to admit the error ... Considered judgments agree that "the success of the UTAH assault could not have been achieved so conspicuously without the work of the airborne forces."

(Comment: Authors Craven & Cate provide a marvelous seven volume history, but here reverted to pithy, "official" verbiage foreign to their efforts. Missions were not flown because Eisenhower found them essential for UTAH. They were flown because army paratroop men and the airmen wanted to prove the value of paratroops. They were required to justify the effort of raising four paratroop divisions. It was no tough decision; forces were given missions for which they were created. Had Eisenhower not used the airborne objections would have been huge! He had options but to use airborne on D-Day. The airdrop "disaster" was the fault of Air Transport Command who did little to develop night techniques. As Mr. Warren's history relates problems arose from poor C-47 crew training!)

Gen Eisenhower knew the risks and Air Transportation Command did not train crews for such battles with 17 lives as cargo. The planes had huge "invasion stripes" painted on their wings. Continuous air cover of the armada was by the **189** clearly distinguishable P-38's twin engine fighters as RAF furnished low and Quesada's IX Fighter Command the high cover over beaches. The Germans were absent. "Three FW-190's were chased off -- the only enemy aircraft sighted ... during the day... (only) after nightfall ... (did) twenty-two enemy planes attacked shipping ..." "An early-morning offensive sweep (FULL HOUSE) beyond the periphery of the invasion ... encountered no opposition ... (The) the greatest amphibious operation of history would be staged without challenge from the enemy air force."

82nd Airborne Drop Pattern – Utah Beach to Cherbourg CMH Pub 100-12



Next came the D-Dawn mass bombing of the beaches -- the second most embarrassing moment for the AAF in the ETO. Craven and Cate again "try to make a silk purse out of a cow's ear."

A masterly pre-dawn assembly had set up the Eighth Air Force's ... for their planned strikes on coastal batteries and shore defenses ... on OMAHA and the British beaches ... (Their) role ... was

that of close support, and since their number was so great ... take-offs ranged from 0155 to 0529 hours. Weather ... (meant instrument) bombing ... ten minutes before the touchdowns and ... with Eisenhower's approval, pathfinder bombardiers were ordered to delay up to thirty seconds after the release point showed on their scopes before dropping. The danger of shorts was stressed ... A total of 1,083 of the 1,361 B-17's and B-24's ... (flying) six squadrons abreast with H₂S pathfinders in the lead ... dropped 2, 944 tons of bombs ... (with) instantaneous fuzes to avoid heavy cratering which might impede motorized movement ...

The Ninth Air Force could perform visual bombing and for a bit the Eighth might need to perform nonvisual bombing at UTAH also, but the Ninth **190-191**

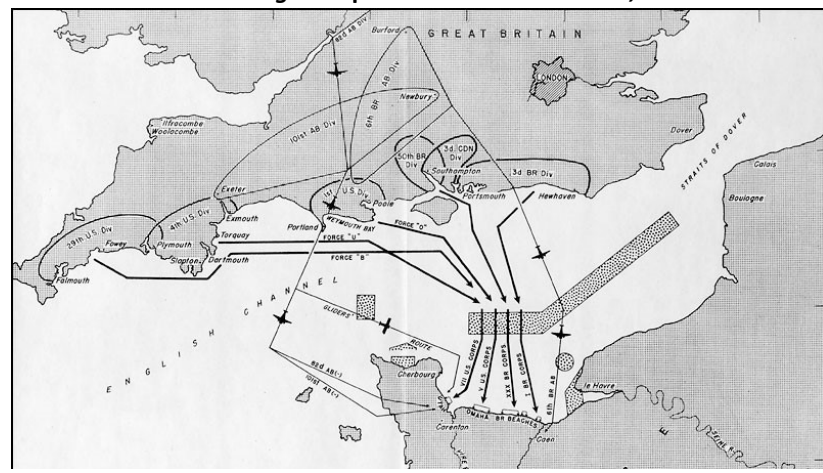
... received, authority to bomb visually under the 3,500-foot ceiling ... (so mediums flew) in boxes of eighteen planes each ... Attacks on outlying targets began at 0517 hours, but ... UTAH beach targets were ... between 0605 and 0624 hours. The 278 aircraft dropped about 550 tons ... (as) fighter-bombers of IX Fighter Command struck ... 33 coastal batteries while 129 others attacked transportation targets ...

Accurate assessment of the effectiveness of these (Omaha) attacks is impossible. Earlier bombardment ... artillery fire on D-day and after, clearing operations, and inconclusive strike photographs frustrated later investigators. Fighter-bombers ... hit and destroyed the road bridges at Étienneville, **but they did minor damage to the battery at Maisy, and ... the evidence is limited to the pilots' own inevitably indefinite claims.** Where the effects of part of the mediums' effort on UTAH beach could be later followed, 35 per cent of the bombs was reported to have fallen to seaward of high-water mark but 43 per cent were within 300 feet of their targets. **The deliberately cautious method of bomb release adopted by the American heavies ... caused their main concentrations to fall from a hundred yards up to three miles inland. An unexpected dividend was paid in the shape of detonated mine fields, but the beachlines from OMAHA east were left untouched.** It is now known that the enemy had been forced to **withdraw the threatening batteries at Morsalines, St.-Martin-de-Varreville, and Pointe du Hoc** because of previous air bombardment.

As for the batteries attacked on D-day, they offered no evidence of guns destroyed a result which had been predicted by air commanders earlier

... The cost of taking OMAHA made inevitable the keen disappointment of V Corps that the beach had not been

Utah Beach to Cherbourg – Map 2: Allied Assault Routes, CMH Pub 100-12



softened some of the resulting criticism was sharp.¹⁰ But ... 192 avoiding all risk of short bombing provides an obvious explanation ...

This is nonsense. If avoiding all risks means not hitting the intended target, then the mission should not be flown. Left out by Craven and Cate is the fact the Army requested that Air Force fly parallel to the shoreline, as the RAF did, for its bomb runs. The Eighth refused as being too dangerous by exposing its then low-flying bombers to ground fire. However, Craven and Cate go beyond the pale with:

"it seems fair to insist that the air forces had realized (they were to contribute demoralizing Germans and destroy 'communications' ... (which) sea and air bombardment (did, so the Air Force gave valuable assistance via the Navy as:) "German morale was shattered by the sustained bombardment, to which air made its signal contribution ..." "The moral effect was perhaps of greater value than [the] material results."

" ... (It) has become the fashion to give the infantryman more of the credit he so richly deserves and at times to deprecate the air arm, perhaps in revulsion against earlier extravagant claims. But by whatever standards the Normandy landings be judged, the simple fact remains: their success ... was possible only because of the absolute air domination won by the AAF and RAF in the months before D-day."

(Comment:) It is "dodging the issue." Soldiers were told bomb craters would provide protection while assaulting beaches; beach obstacles would be blown askew with mines exploded. Instead, the histories relate the shock when soldiers realized the "Air Force did not do its job." Within three days the Normandy landing area was taken, but no one reported locations of 1,000 bombers that dropped 2,900 tons of bombs. That record is missing. The histories report a narrow strip was carpet bombed, but nobody found their location. Obviously, that area was discovered, but not revealed! The soldiers expected an AAF "beach drenching," but the AAF failed to hit beach defenses or provide fox holes.)

(The above is a pithy attempt to "make amends" by making explanations! The Author found much greater substance in Air officers when he served from 1974 to 1979.)

*(The history states airmen had Eisenhower's permission for a 30-second bombing delay. At 200 miles/hour, it was a 1.7-mile delay and at a minute was 3.3 miles off target. The planes' GEE radar would have clearly shown the coastline ... the land and water radar reflection. It should have been a clear point. That this occurred was well-documented that no bomb craters were found from one to three miles inland --- **but the bombs landed somewhere, all 2,900 tons (145 semi-trailer loads)**. The location is never mentioned the histories or even on the Internet.)*

Otherwise, the AAF was responsive throughout D-day in an all-out effort. After dropping warning leaflets for the benefit of the French population, 528 of the Eighth's heavies were dispatched against towns such as Thury Harcourt, St.-Lô and Caen in the immediate vicinity of the assault area, but target-obscuring cloud ... caused all save three groups to return their bombs to base. A third mission saw fifty-six B-24's drop on Caen, where the destruction caused

¹⁰ The inference is paratroops failed to sufficiently object concerning Air Transport's inability to deliver paratroops in nighttime drops. As added evidence, D-Day Normandy was the first and last major night time parachute attack.

by this, and other attacks left only a single bridge over the Orne intact and thus delayed the attack of the German *21st Panzer Division* upon the British just west of that river.

The fourth and final mission of the Eighth again sought out transportation targets ... from Coutances in the west to Lisieux in the east, which over 550 aircraft bombed. IX Bomber Command operated feverishly, far exceeding its best previous rate ... Coastal batteries on both flanks of the invasion area and chokepoints in towns such as Falaise in the British and Valognes and Carentan in the American zone were hit by the mediums ... **193** four freight yards east ... (and) VIII Fighter Command followed FULL HOUSE by STUD and ROYAL FLUSH-operations ... (after) enemy ground movements and to smash any action by the GAF. Moving transport was hit, and claims showed twenty-four enemy planes destroyed in the air and four on the ground ...

*(This was fully quoted to relate the all-out effort, **with no results reported. How was that possible?**)*

3. Birth of the Ninth Air Force. D-Day was important for the new IX Fighter Command as it “began its long career of close support immediately after flying its planned missions on D-day.” As air support improved, commanders requested air support from the Uxbridge control center -- 13 on the first day. Five were refused, but eight led to missions against guns in Isigny, Carentan, and Maisy. It proved Uxbridge air control to be a bad idea. Work went to air controllers on the *Ancon*, headquarters ship that dispatched “armed reconnaissance” as “Hoover,” “Skylark,” “Whisky,” or “Killjoy” solely to support ground armies. It “was unprecedented ... (as) 8,722 aircraft were dispatched ... Losses for the day ... (were 71) planes. Claims for enemy ... a modest total of thirty-three ... emphasis **194** to the slight opposition put up by the German Air Force ...”

... German evidence discloses that the GAF ... was a negligible force ... They early learned of the invasion ... (via) weather data (planes) and the assembling of American heavies ... that the invasion was under way ... by 0800 hours on 6 June. But *Fliegerkorps XI* had no operational units. Planes from ... Germany were on their way, but became badly scattered ... because of their pilots' incompetence ... (No) reinforcements appeared until D plus 2 ... German statistics ... give *Jagdkorps II* on D-day as many as 121 and as few as 50 fighters ... pitifully low ...

The GAF was impotent. Inexperienced pilots were quickly shot down as **195** “the Allied strategic bombing offensives probably merit chief credit for the enfeebled condition of the GAF on D-day.” There “were no great air battles to be fought on D-day ... ‘Where is the *Luftwaffe*?’ as General Arnold with pardonable pride later declared ... (was) a question ... (for) the *Wehrmacht* from D-day on.”

(Unanswered Question: Where did the U.S. Eighth Air Force bomb on D-Day?)