

Operation Dragoon: Unified Land Operations and Elements of Operational Art in Southern France

A Monograph

by

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2017

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 04-04-2017		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUN 2016 – MAY 2017	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Operation Dragoon: Unified Land Operations and Elements of Operational Art in Southern France			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Justin Cuff			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship, Advanced Military Studies Program.			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France on August 15, 1944, is one of the least celebrated, yet highly successful operations conducted by the Allies on the Western front during World War II. Operation Dragoon was a supporting operation to the Allies' main effort in Normandy. The operation had two primary purposes: to force the German forces in France to fight in two directions and to give Allied forces access to the vital port facilities at Marseilles and Toulon. Operation Dragoon achieved far more success than anticipated. The Germans failed to anticipate the landings and form a viable defense, leaving them with only the option to withdraw. As the Germans began to retreat, American and French forces began an aggressive pursuit. In less than four weeks they caused the Germans to sustain a loss of over 150,000 casualties while liberating a large portion of Southern France. This monograph seeks to provide insight into various elements of today's concept of operational art and the US Army's operational doctrine expressed in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, <i>Unified Land Operations</i> (ULO). By identifying and analyzing similar methods employed in making Operation Dragoon a success, this monograph identifies ways in which the success of the operation can inform future operational planners.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Unified Land Operations, Operational Art, Southren France, Operation Dragoon,					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON MAJ Justin Cuff
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	42	

Monograph Approval Page

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Monograph Title: Operation Dragoon: Unified Land Operations and Elements of Operational Art in Southern France

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Abstract

Operation Dragoon: Unified Land Operations and Elements of Operational Art in Southern France, by MAJ Justin M. Cuff, US Army, 42 pages.

Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France on August 15, 1944, is one of the least celebrated, yet highly successful operations conducted by the Allies on the Western front during World War II. Allied planners initially proposed an amphibious invasion of Southern France in support of the cross-channel invasion during the Trident Conference in Washington, DC in May 1943. Allied planners revisited Operation Dragoon several times over the next twelve months, as it remained a divisive issue between the Americans and the British. Their divergent strategic goals and the limited resources to meet these goals resulted in frequent changes and cancellations, but ultimately the operation went forward.

Operation Dragoon was a supporting operation to the Allies' main effort in Normandy. The operation had two primary purposes: to force the German forces in France to fight in two directions and to give Allied forces access to the vital port facilities at Marseilles and Toulon. Operation Dragoon achieved far more success than anticipated. The Germans failed to anticipate the landings and form a viable defense, leaving them with only the option to withdraw. As the Germans began to retreat, American and French forces began an aggressive pursuit. In less than four weeks they caused the Germans to sustain a loss of over 150,000 casualties while liberating a large portion of Southern France. This monograph seeks to provide insight into various elements of today's concept of operational art and the US Army's operational doctrine expressed in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (ULO). By identifying and analyzing similar methods employed in making Operation Dragoon a success, this monograph identifies ways in which the success of the operation can inform future operational planners.

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Mark Calhoun for his knowledge, insight, constructive criticism, and guidance that supported me during this adventure in writing. I also want to acknowledge the Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library staff for all the research assistance provided, without their time and effort this monograph would be incomplete. Additionally, I would like to thank COL Philipp Leyde for the mentorship and guidance throughout the year. I would also like to recognize the men and women of the “greatest generation” for their sacrifice and determination during World War II. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Lisa, and our three children, Jenna, Scarlet, and Weston. Thank you for supporting me during this year and for your understanding and patience. I love you guys.

Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AFGH	Allied Force Ground Headquarters
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
AGF	Army Ground Force
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FM	Field Manual
ID	Infantry Division
IN	Infantry
LST	Landing Ship, Tank
MTO	Mediterranean Theater of Operations
PM	Prime Minister
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TAC	Tactical Air Command
TF	Task Force
ULO	Unified Land Operations
US	United States
WWII	World War II

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The Road to Operation Dragoon

Ike argued so long and patiently that he was practically limp when the PM departed and observed that although he had said no in every language, the Prime Minister, undoubtedly, would return to the subject in two or three days and simply regard the issue as unsettled.

—Captain Harry C. Butcher, *Diary*

Introduction

Upon the United States' abrupt entry as a combatant in World War II (WWII) on December 7, 1941, the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff debated the future direction of the war.¹ They provided advice to their political leaders—British Prime Minister (PM) Winston Churchill and United States' President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR)—weighing the strategic options from various and competing points of view. The generals and admirals agreed that defeating the Germans remained a higher priority than dealing with the newly-belligerent Japan, but they agreed on little else, with dividing lines drawn both within and between the national contingents. The American military leaders argued for a direct approach, attacking mainland Europe at the earliest opportunity, while the British advocated an indirect approach through the Mediterranean. In time, convinced in part because of delays in mobilization and a shortage of resources and transport ships, the Americans reluctantly agreed to follow the British approach of striking at the Germans through a series of campaigns in the Mediterranean Theater. They invaded North Africa (Operation Torch) in 1942, Sicily (Operation Husky) in the summer of 1943, and mainland Italy (Operation Avalanche) in the fall of 1943. The Allies finally began the liberation of France in June 1944, just two days after the fall of Rome marked the beginning of the end for the Axis in the Mediterranean.²

¹ Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington DC: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1950), 376.

² David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), 669-700; Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 434-545; J. F. C. Fuller, *The Second World War* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1954), 260-321; John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 344-369; Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at*

United States General Dwight D. Eisenhower, selected as commander, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF), planned Operation Overlord and Operation Dragoon to act as a one-two punch against the German defenders in France when Allied troops finally opened the second front in Western Europe. On June 6, 1944, Allied forces began Operation Overlord, assaulting the beaches of Normandy, France. Initially, the Allied forces achieved success, though at a high cost, establishing beachheads and securing lodgments in Normandy before the attack bogged down in the hedgerow country of Northern France. Various factors contributed to the slow Allied progress in the coming weeks. These factors included the skillful preparation and execution of the German defense, inexperience among the attacking Allied forces, the difficulty of the terrain, logistical limitations to include the lack of existing infrastructure, the failure of one of the two “mulberries” (artificial harbors), and delays in seizing ports from the Germans—particularly the port facilities at Cherbourg. The experience of quick transitions followed by relatively rapid exploitation from expanding lodgments that characterized previous Allied landings during Operations Torch and Husky eluded the Allies at Normandy.³

The second punch struck the Germans in Southern France. Operation Dragoon (originally named Operation Anvil) functioned as a supporting operation to the Allies’ main effort in Normandy.⁴ It was designed to achieve three primary purposes: to engage eleven German

Arms: A Global History of World War II, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 587-667; Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 374-411; Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff of Military History Department, 1959), 245-249; Mark W. Clark and Martin Blumenson, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Enigma Books, 2007), 267-292.

³ Antony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (New York: Viking, 2009), 74-100; Victor Brooks, *The Normandy Campaign* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002), 79-133; Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 92-144; Shawn Nutter, *Husky Allied Invasion of Sicily 1943* (Bennington, VT: Merriam Press, 2013), 51-60.

⁴ Planning began in late 1943. From that time, the allies postponed, canceled, and re-planned the operation several times. On August 1, 1944, it was renamed Operation Dragoon due to security concerns. For simplicity, the operation is referred to as Dragoon throughout this work. Paul Gaujac, *Dragoon: The Other Invasion of France* (Paris: *Histoire et Collections*, 2004), 15; Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., *Command Missions* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1990), 408; Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations: The Seventh United States Army in France and Germany 1944-45, Vol. I* (Nashville: The Battery Press, Inc., 1988), 56.

divisions deployed in Southern France and prevent their movement against the Allies; to give Allied forces access to the vital port facilities at Marseilles and Toulon; and to force the Germans to commit additional reserves from Northern France, drawing them away from Normandy. Planners also hoped the surprise landing might result in a double envelopment.⁵ Originally, the Allied planners intended this operation to occur soon after Overlord, but the timing of the operation remained undetermined due to the delays with landing craft availability and strategic disagreement among the Allies. In late March 1944, Allied leaders selected July 10, 1944, as the date for the operation in Southern France; but some external factors conspired to delay Operation Dragoon. Finally, on July 2, 1944, despite numerous delays and cancellations, the Allies selected August 15, 1944, as the date of the amphibious assault.⁶

The Allies' situation in Normandy through June and July remained somewhat grim. The Allies faced stiff German resistance for almost a month and had yet to achieve some of Overlord's operational objectives (Caen and St. Lo). The German Army confronted the slowly expanding Allied beachhead by reinforcing its forces in Normandy with units from Southern France and Germany. Operation Dragoon was six weeks away, and the German resistance in and around Normandy showed no signs of giving up. The Allies needed Operation Dragoon to fulfill its intended purpose.⁷

⁵ Jacob L. Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," *Military Affairs* 10, n. 2 (Summer 1946): 8; James S. Wheeler, *Jacob L. Devers, A General's Life* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 286-303.

⁶ Jeffrey J. Clarke and Robert Ross Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 14-63; Alan Wilt, *The French Riviera Campaign of August 1944* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press University, 1981), 10-45; Harry Yeide and Mark Stout, *First to the Rhine: The Sixth Army Group in World War II* (St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2007), 1-39; Robert H. Adleman, *The Champagne Campaign* (Toronto: Little, Brown & Company, 1969), 1-40; Stephen Sussna, *Defeat and Triumph: The Story of a Controversial Allied Invasion and French Rebirth* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2008), 1-25; William B. Breuer, *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of the South of France* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1987), 1-10; Steven J. Zaloga, *Operation Dragoon 1944: France's Other D-Day* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), 1-20; Anthony Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon: The Liberation of Southern France 1944* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2009), v-x.

⁷ Brooks, *The Normandy Campaign* 114-186; William G. F. Jackson, *Overlord: Normandy 1944* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1979), 80-120; Cornelius Ryan, *The Longest Day* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 103-250.

General Jacob Devers, who commanded the Sixth Army Group during its execution of Operation Dragoon, described it as one of the least celebrated, yet highly successful operations conducted by the Allies on the Western Front during WWII.⁸ Allied planners initially proposed an amphibious invasion of Southern France in support of the cross-channel invasion during the Trident Conference in Washington, DC in May 1943.⁹ At this meeting between the Combined (American and British) Joint Chiefs of Staff, decision makers tabled discussions on Dragoon, focusing instead on the British-proposed invasion of Italy. British planners argued that by invading Italy, the Allies could both force the Italians out of the war and fix German troops in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO). The Joint Chiefs agreed to delay Operation Dragoon due to the lack of landing craft. Instead of waiting a year for equipment, the Allies decided to keep the pressure on the German forces. To maintain the initiative, the British and Americans agreed to another major operation in the Mediterranean.¹⁰

The British left the conference quite pleased with the outcome, mostly because they believed it ended any further discussion of an invasion of Southern France. Despite this, the invasion came up again as an agenda item for the August 1943 Quadrant Conference. This time, the Americans made a convincing argument for the benefits and supportability of the operation, leading the Combined Chiefs of Staff to approve the invasion of Southern France as a supporting effort to Operation Overlord.¹¹

Allied planners revisited Operation Dragoon several times over the next twelve months, as it remained a divisive issue between the Americans and the British. Their divergent strategic goals and the limited resources to meet these objectives resulted in frequent changes and

⁸ Devers, "Operation Dragoon," 4-6.

⁹ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 5.

¹⁰ Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*, 211-225.

¹¹ Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Quadrant Conference, August 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings (World War II Inter-Allied Conferences)* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 2001), 405-415.

cancellations, but ultimately the operation went forward. It was both ordered and canceled on numerous occasions and planned for different-sized elements, to include a three-division assault, a two-division assault, a division demonstration, and a feint.¹² On July 2, 1944, with these various issues finally resolved, Eisenhower ordered General Henry Maitland Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean Theater, to execute Operation Dragoon as a three-division assault beginning on August 15, 1944.¹³

Operation Dragoon achieved far more success than the British and Americans anticipated. The Germans failed to predict the landings and form a viable defense, leaving them with withdrawal as the only option. As the Germans retreated, American and French forces aggressively pursued. In less than four weeks they inflicted more than 150,000 German casualties while liberating a large portion of Southern France. Combat of this scale exceeds the experience of today's US Army officer, who typically has experienced limited warfare such as counterinsurgency and stability operations. Also, American wars since the Vietnam War have not involved casualties anywhere close to the scale of a WWII campaign. It is hard for today's Army officers to imagine large-scale offensive operations against another major power.¹⁴

In addition to Operation Dragoon's extraordinary success, it also offers insights for those in the profession of arms on topics ranging from global strategy to joint combined operations. Analyzing Operation Dragoon reveals similarities between the principles that guided the planning and execution used and the modern US Army's doctrine of Unified Land Operations (ULO) and

¹² Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 35; Yeide and Stout, *First to the Rhine*, 1-39; Adleman, *The Champagne Campaign*, 1-40; Sussna, *Defeat and Triumph*, 1-25; Breuer, *Operation Dragoon*, 1-30.

¹³ Clarke and Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine*, 21.

¹⁴ Ricky Smith, Deputy Chief of Staff, Training and Doctrine Command stated, "The Army has a tremendous amount of experience right now. It has depth but needs more breadth. We're good at counterinsurgency and operations employing wide area security. Now, we may have to focus on 'Mounted Maneuver' operations over larger distances, and the Army needs to prepare themselves across the entire range of military operations. One includes 'near peer' operations, which is what we have not been fighting in recent years." Kris Osborn, "U.S. Army's Return to Mechanized Warfare," *nationalinterest.org* (May 21, 2016): accessed November 23, 2016, <http://www.Nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/us-armys-return-mechanized-warfare-16289>; ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, 1-14.

concept of operational art. Thus, historical study yields a greater understanding of today's concept of operational art and the US Army's operational doctrine by identifying and analyzing similar methods employed during Operation Dragoon. Identification of the historical continuities between planning and execution of the campaign and the methods described in modern operational doctrine provides insight to operational planners who seek to apply operational art doctrine in future wars. The elements of operational art and tenets of ULO highlighted in this case study analysis show the reader the importance of each principle. Historical analysis of Operation Dragoon offers useful insights into modern US Army operational art doctrine with relevance for current and future operational planners.

Methodology

This monograph explores how the US Army planned, trained, and executed an effective operation during WWII. Clausewitz wrote, "a single thoroughly detailed event is more instructive than ten that are only touched on."¹⁵ The analysis that follows rests on a single case study to allow for a detailed explanation and application of the elements of operational art and the tenets of ULO.

Analysis of Operation Dragoon through these lenses illustrates the validity of timeless principles, while establishing a standard definition of operational art using the current Army doctrine, but placed within the context of US Army operations and doctrine during WWII. Use of terms and definitions enables one to describe how forces employed operational art in the 1940s, but this analysis of modern doctrinal concepts at a time when their definitions did not yet exist requires that common WWII terms mean the same things in their time and place as their analogues in modern doctrine. This study demonstrates that these tenets have not changed. E. H.

¹⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 173.

Carr wrote, "History is progress through the transmission of acquired skills from one generation to another."¹⁶ Analysis of this event teaches that these military skills of planning pass from generation to generation. John Gaddis wrote, "continuities are patterns that extend across time, they are simple phenomena that recur with sufficient regularity to make themselves apparent to us."¹⁷ This study allows planners to review historical events and look for larger patterns to predict future outcomes.

The 2016 edition of Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, describes "how commanders apply land power as part of unified action to defeat the enemy on land and establish conditions that achieve the joint force commander's end state."¹⁸ To achieve the commander's end state, the Army uses operational art to link tactical actions to the strategic objectives of the commander. In ADRP 3-0, the definition of operational art is "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."¹⁹ Using the definitions stated, the core analysis of Operation Dragoon was that it accomplished Allied theater objectives using elements of operational art. US Army operations doctrine during WWII made only a single reference to strategy. As written in the 1941 edition of Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Field Service Regulations, Operations*, "the ultimate objective of all military operations is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces in battle."²⁰ Notwithstanding this, the WWII doctrine contains many concepts that are similar to today's tenets of ULO and elements of operational art. The principles of Unified Land Operations (ULO), per ADRP 3-0, are simultaneity, flexibility, depth, and synchronization. These tenets describe the

¹⁶ E. H. Carr, *What is History?* 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1987), 114.

¹⁷ John L. Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30.

¹⁸ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), v.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-1.

²⁰ FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 22.

Army's approach to generating and applying combat power in major operations.²¹ The elements of operational art, as defined by ADRP 3-0, are end state and conditions, the center of gravity, decisive points, lines of operations and lines of effort, operational reach, basing, tempo, phasing and transitions, culmination, and risk.²² These tenets and elements, although defined in modern US doctrine, have much in common with the US Army's operational doctrine of 1941.

Analysis of Operation Dragoon provides evidence of the elements of flexibility and synchronization from the tenets of ULO. Flexibility is the ability to employ a mixture of capabilities, formations, and equipment for conducting operations. Flexibility and innovation are essential to creative and adaptive leaders.²³ The term flexibility used in WWII doctrine requires units to provide maximum flexibility.²⁴ Synchronization is the arrangement of military actions in time, space, and purpose of producing action at a decisive place and time. It is the ability to execute many tasks at different times in different locations.²⁵ While the terms synchronization and flexibility are not in WWII doctrine, the concepts are there.

The three elements of operational art most frequently seen in Operation Dragoon are operational reach, tempo, and risk. Operational reach is "the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities."²⁶ FM 100-15, informs that the plan of campaign must have supply arrangements and routes of communications. The Army can extend operational reach through tempo, but the limit of the operation is the culminating point.²⁷ Although operational reach is not defined in WWII doctrine, the concept of tempo is.

²¹ ADRP 3-0, 3-14.

²² Ibid., 4-3.

²³ Ibid., 3-16.

²⁴ FM 100-5, 73.

²⁵ ADRP 3-0, 3-15-3-16.

²⁶ ADRP 3-0, 2-9.

²⁷ FM 100-15, Field Service Regulations, *Larger Units* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942), 12.

In ADRP 3-0, tempo is "the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy."²⁸ Tempo supports the commander in keeping the initiative during operations, which allows friendly forces the ability to overwhelm the enemy. In the 1941 FM 100-5, the doctrine discusses tempo but in different terms. It reads, "Through offensive action, a commander exercises his initiative, preserves his freedom of action, and imposes his will on the enemy." It later reads, "the attack is rapid, deep, and sustained until the decision is won."²⁹ This reveals parallels between modern operational doctrine and concepts used during WWII.

Risk is another element of operational art with particular relevance to Operation Dragoon, and it has the same meaning in both current and WWII doctrine. ADRP states, "risk, uncertainty, and chance are inherent in all military operations. Risk creates opportunities to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative and achieve results."³⁰ Commanders accept risk and seek opportunities to create and maintain conditions to achieve results. The 1941 edition of FM 100-5 reads "to delay action in an emergency because of insufficient information shows lack of energetic leadership, and may result in lost opportunities. The commander must take calculated risks."³¹

Strategic Planning

When the North African campaign ended in May 1943, the Allies focused on the next phase of the war. In June, FDR and Churchill met in Washington, DC during the Trident Conference. The Allies expected to conduct numerous operations in the next eighteen months,

²⁸ ADRP 3-0, 2-7-2-8.

²⁹ FM 100-5, 22, 271.

³⁰ ADRP 3-0, 2-10.

³¹ FM 100-5, 26.

including a possible landing in Southern France. The Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) directed that future operations receive further analysis.³²

The summer of 1943 was a reflective time for the Allies, having just completed their first successful campaign in Northern Africa. The Allies invaded Sicily (Operation Husky) in July 1943.³³ In the words of Alan F. Wilt,

Sicily had been invaded, and success assured. The Soviets had blunted the long awaited German operation at Kursk. The long American trek across the Pacific toward Japan was underway. In the air, the Combined Bomber Offensive was starting to show results. Even more importantly, the battle of the Atlantic had been won, thus assuring that the invasion of Western Europe would become a reality.³⁴

The next target for the Allies was the European mainland, specifically Italy. It was also time to consider long-term strategy. The Allied planning conference in August 1943 focused on the liberation of France, expected in the immediate aftermath of the Italian campaign. The conference also examined the future of the Italian and Normandy campaigns. The planning there showed the initiative and flexibility of the Allies. They agreed to invade the Italian mainland and considered the possible invasion of Southern France.³⁵

During November, the Allied heads of state met at a conference in Tehran, Iran. The conference, code-named Eureka, brought together the "Big Three": Churchill, Roosevelt, and Soviet Premier Josef Stalin. The Tehran Conference dealt with the most crucial strategic issues of

³² Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Trident Conference, May 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meeting (World War II Inter-Allied Conferences)* (Washington DC: Joint History Office, 2001), 107-119; Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944*, 211-225; Michael Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1968), 1-30; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 3-5.

³³ Robert M. Citino, *The Wehrmacht Retreats: Fighting A Lost War, 1943* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 104-109; Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944*, 211-225; Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1968), 13-21.

³⁴ Wilt, *The French Riviera Campaign of August 1944*, 4.

³⁵ Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Quadrant Conference, August 1943*, 405-415; Howard, *The Mediterranean Strategy in the Second World War*, 1-30.

the war. President Roosevelt laid out an overview of possible operations during the upcoming year. He mentioned several potential operations in the Mediterranean, along with a landing in Southern France, but Operation Overlord was still the priority. Roosevelt finished his overview by asking Stalin how the Western Allies could best support the Soviet armed forces.³⁶ Stalin stated that the operations in Italy were not of great value to the Soviets and that he believed the most suitable sector to conduct operations in would be France. Churchill tried to advocate to increase support to the Yugoslav partisans, but Stalin let the Allies know that they needed to concentrate their efforts in France to finally open the long-promised second front in Europe, and that Overlord and an invasion of Southern France were the best options. Churchill was not happy with this as he favored a different option than Southern France. This discussion illustrated the differences in opinion between all three leaders in an approach to wartime strategy. The debate became more heated as other political concerns in the Soviet Union and France came into play. Each leader knew their desired end state and the line of operation to achieve it.³⁷

Churchill wanted to stop Operation Dragoon. He was fearful of the prospect of postwar Communist domination in Central and Eastern Europe. He saw a great opportunity to get into the Balkans with the success the Allies were having in Italy. Churchill wanted to beat the Soviets to that terrain and therefore attempted to stop Operation Dragoon all the way up to a week before the operation.³⁸ FDR was opposed to the Balkan plan. He was up for reelection in November as President of the United States and did not want to be bogged down in the Balkans supporting British interests. Stalin strongly advocated the operation in Southern France rather than the

³⁶ Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 257-271.

³⁷ Kent Roberts Greenfield, *Command Decisions* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1960), 383; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 3-13.

³⁸ Breuer, *Operation Dragoon*, 14.

Balkans, at least in part because he wanted the Balkan region to himself.³⁹ Each held different ideas of what was important for their country. The several-day discussion between civil and military leaders ended with a Southern France operation now on the schedule. For the next several months the allies conducted many planning sessions amidst various attempts to stop the operation.⁴⁰

From the beginning the planners struggled to determine how to procure the necessary resources to start the operation. Chief of the British Naval Staff, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham, noted that there were only enough naval vessels to support two major amphibious operations simultaneously. The lack of vessels was a major concern for the Allies; they did not want to culminate too early in the operations without having enough equipment and wanted to avoid risk to the soldiers involved. They proposed operations Overlord and Dragoon but had already started planning Operation Buccaneer, the intended invasion of the Andaman Islands in Southeast Asia.⁴¹ FDR summed up the discussions with the following points: “nothing should be done to hinder Overlord, nothing should be done to hinder Dragoon, by hook or by crook we should scrape up sufficient landing craft to operate in the Eastern Mediterranean,” and Admiral Mountbatten should be told to go ahead and do his best with what was already allocated to him.⁴² It was important that the Navy look at basing to see where all the ships were located and place them in the right ports to be most effective. On December 6, 1943, FDR informed Churchill that

³⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁰ Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 33-55; Winston S. Churchill, *Closing the Ring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 302-361; Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 39-57.

⁴¹ Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Sextant and Eureka Conferences (World War II Inter-Allied Conferences)* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 2001), 389-396; Andrew Stewart, *Operation Dragoon, the Invasion of the South of France, 15 August 1944* (West Midlands: Helion & Company, 2015), 1-15.

⁴² Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Sextant and Eureka Conferences*, 408-411.

Eisenhower was appointed to command Overlord, making Overlord and Dragoon the priority in the European Theater during 1944.⁴³

In December 1943, Eisenhower envisioned the 7th United States Army to carry out the landing in Southern France. Either General Mark W. Clark or General Jacob Devers would be the commander of the operation. Eisenhower preferred Clark, “because of his particular skill in that sort of work.”⁴⁴ Eisenhower required a quick decision. The operation would involve an Army corps headquarters and three to four divisions, in addition to a self-sufficient French corps.⁴⁵ Because of this force allocation, any other operation in the Mediterranean might interfere with the current plans for Dragoon.

Over the next several months, events and plans did get in the way of Operation Dragoon. The first was the launch of the Allied landing at Anzio, Operation Shingle. This operation diverted fifty-six Landing ship tanks (LST) designated for Overlord and Dragoon, delaying both. This loss of equipment prompted President Roosevelt to write, "I cannot agree without Stalin's approval to any use of forces or equipment elsewhere that might delay or hazard the success of Overlord or Dragoon."⁴⁶ Soon Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) created Task Force (TF) 163 under General Benjamin Caffey, Jr. to plan exclusively for Operation Dragoon. It would become the combined planning headquarters with representatives from the US joint forces and the French headquarters.⁴⁷ At first, TF 163 had several issues. The first challenge was that there was no set

⁴³ Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 14.

⁴⁴ Eisenhower to Marshall, 17 Dec 1943, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years: III*, ed. Alfred D. Chandler Jr. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 1604-1605.

⁴⁵ Eisenhower to Brehon Somervell, 17 Dec 1943, *Papers of Dwight Eisenhower*, III, 1607-1608.

⁴⁶ Winston S. Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence: Alliance Forged, November 1942 –February 1944* ed. Warren F. Kimball. Vol. 11. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 636.

⁴⁷ Clarke and Smith, *Rivera to the Rhine*, 30-35; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 13-15.

plan, only a series of sketches and ideas from Eisenhower. The planners needed to plan for more variations in the logistical, tactical and organizational fields than they would normally do. With Operation Shingle approved, this caused a two-fold effect on the operations Overlord and Dragoon. First, it delayed Overlord by a month because the LSTs had to stay in the Mediterranean. Second, it left Allied planners in limbo about Dragoon. This limbo would spark a debate over Dragoon between two camps in the United States. One camp of Americans favored Dragoon because it fulfilled one of the promises made to Stalin at Tehran, it supplemented Operation Overlord, and the logistical factors were better than if Dragoon did not go forward. The opposing camp wanted to maintain flexibility to strike the Germans in the most favorable location, and others wanted to make sure the landing craft were available for Shingle.⁴⁸

The shortage of landing craft and troops forced a new look at the possibility of Dragoon. Eisenhower felt that French forces would compensate for the lack of Allied troops, and in January 1944, the Mediterranean lost all shipping for Overlord except for a two-division assault for Dragoon. These two factors forced the decision to abandon plans for a simultaneous invasion with Overlord.⁴⁹

The discussion continued on the American side to invade Southern France and the British side to make the push to Italy. The American concerns were made clear by Chief Army Planner, Brigadier General Frank N. Roberts:

“If we cancel Dragoon completely, the following will be true:

- a. We get into political difficulties with the French.

⁴⁸ Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 10-16; Combat Studies Institute, *CSI Battlebook: Operation Dragoon* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 11-14, 37-38; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 14-15, 40-44.

⁴⁹ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1946), 2, B1; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 10-12; Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross Channel Attack* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1989), 60-64;

- b. Overlord will lose at least ten fighting divisions.
- c. Our service forces continue to support the western Mediterranean.
- d. Our divisions and the French divisions committed to a costly, remunerative, inching advance in Italy. The people of both the United States and France may or may not take this indefinitely.
- e. Once committed to Italy, we have our forces pointed towards southeastern Europe and will have the greatest difficulty in preventing their use for occupation forces in Austria, Hungary, and southern Germany.”⁵⁰

The execution of Operation Shingle drained Allied resources. What had looked like an easy campaign dragged on for months. The operation consumed supplies and men, and because the assault failed, the Allies had to commit forces far beyond the original plan. In March, the British proposed a postponement of Dragoon, even though the stalemate in Italy was the biggest problem to operational flexibility. The back and forth continued into the summer. FDR and Churchill exchanged correspondence trying to persuade the other to change their position. Roosevelt sent a message on July 2, 1944, asking Churchill to direct General Wilson to "set the wheels in motion for an early Dragoon."⁵¹ Churchill relented and agreed to the issuance of the directive on July 2 saying "Dragoon would be launched with a target date of 15 August on a three-division assault basis and an airborne lift to be decided later."⁵²

The operation went forward. The last minute attempts by the British to cancel the operation failed. Churchill made one final appeal to Eisenhower in August. Churchill tried to talk Eisenhower out of it; "the Prime Minister unloose[d] on IKE all his art of persuasion." Driven to tears, Churchill threatened to "lay down the mantle of my high office."⁵³ Eisenhower listened to the Prime Minister but said no to him in every way. Eisenhower's position "that sound strategy

⁵⁰ Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*, 425.

⁵¹ Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, 394.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 394.

⁵³ Harry Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 638-639.

called for making the Germans fight on as many fronts as possible" was followed by even more objections from Churchill.⁵⁴ The only way Churchill could have stopped the operation is if he approached President Roosevelt with political reasons why Dragoon should alter its course. But even then only orders from the President to Eisenhower could change the operation. Doing that would cause serious doubt in the mechanisms and organization of the strategic team set up by the Allies.⁵⁵ So, frustrated, Churchill traveled to Southern France himself to witness the beginning of Operation Dragoon. Three days later, Churchill sent Eisenhower "a glowing message after watching the landing in Southern France on August 15, 1944."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 4.

⁵⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years*, ed. Alfred D. Chandler Jr. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1970), 2056-2066.

⁵⁶ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 3; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 56-65.



Figure 1. France 1944. Center of Military History (CMH 72-31), *Southern France* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 5.

Operational Planning

The plan for Operation Dragoon serves as an excellent tool with which to analyze and discuss the Allies' operational art, because it communicates the thinking from August 1944 in written documents. It contains the approach to the operation, the keys to victory, and how the operational environment changed into the desired end state. The planners learned the importance of flexibility and synchronization in building their plan. During the operation, due to the actions of the German forces, they had to balance their tempo so that they could extend their operational reach. Due to the multiple changes in the plan and the actions of the German forces the planners remained flexible and always accounted for risk.

The initial plan for Operation Dragoon started in the winter of 1943. The original planning guidance received was that the operation should occur around May 1, 1944. It was to be a major operation. The Allies would maintain pressure in Italy during that time, but no other operations would occur in the Mediterranean. The planners needed to coordinate their plan with Operation Overlord. Last planning guidance was no amphibious assault could be launched before D-Day of Overlord, that forces should exploit northward towards Lyon and Vichy (a distance of about 225 miles), and one or more allied divisions should form the assault group.⁵⁷ With this guidance, the planning team prepared an outline of the operation by December 22, 1943, and presented it to the CCS. Synchronization of resources would be key during the planning process with several major operations happening to allow all of them to occur simultaneously across different locations.

The planning team, with Eisenhower, decided to use a minimum of two divisions for the assault, with a potential buildup of ten divisions. The first thing the planners had to find was a major port. Two considerations drove the need for a major port. First, securing a major port would speed the buildup in France. Additionally, a major port in Southern France would be necessary to support forces in their advance into Germany. The scale of the planned operation necessitated the development of a base at an existing and adequate port in Southern France.⁵⁸ The planners worked with their naval counterparts to synchronize their input. The only three ports large enough to support Operation Dragoon were Sete, Marseilles, and Toulon. Further analysis eliminated Sete because of its limited capacity and easily blocked avenues of approach. Toulon, although capable, had poor clearance facilities. Marseilles was examined and found to have extensive facilities, a road, and a railroad.

⁵⁷ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1946), Appendix B; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 12-16

⁵⁸ Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Operation Anvil (Southern France)* (London: Unpublished planning document, 1944), 3.

Next, the planners turned to the landing sites. By finding a beachhead as close as possible to Marseilles, the Rhone Valley, and Toulon, they could maximize the efficiency of the operation. The planners' study of France's Mediterranean coastline, predominantly rocky, and with limited beach facilities, determined that "the only beaches suitable for a large force are west of Sete or east of Toulon."⁵⁹ The three areas of the beach suitable for a large-scale landing were, Rade d' Hyeres, Cavalaire, and Cannes. After further analysis, planners selected Rade d' Hyeres as their first choice for a landing site because it was within twenty miles of Toulon, had an airfield, and had protection from the offshore islands that would provide safe anchorages and were defensible from enemy sea attack. Next, the planners estimated that the enemy ground forces would be at five divisions by D+10, supported by naval forces consisting solely of U-boats and minimal air power.⁶⁰ For Operation Dragoon, basing would be key; without a good lodgment, Allied forces would not be able to achieve their objectives.

Next, the planners evaluated the terrain and weather in Southern France. Three major terrain features—the Massif Central, the Alps, and the Mediterranean lowland—dominate Southern France. The Massif Central is difficult terrain composed of rolling uplands of crystalline rock in the north, numerous volcanic cones and lava flow in the center, and a limestone plateau in the south. Once in the Massif, cross-country movement is possible in the plateau areas and severely restricted in other portions. The western edge of the Alps starts on the east side of the Rhone valley, and most rivers drain into the Rhone. The Mediterranean lowland extends from the Spanish frontier to the Provincial Alps.

The planners were interested in the eastern area where the lowlands terminate in the marshy Rhone delta. The Rhone Valley leads north from Marseilles and forms the main

⁵⁹ Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Operation Anvil (Southern France)*, 7.

⁶⁰ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, Appendix B; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 87-90.

operational avenue of approach into Western Germany. The Rhone River runs through the valley and is one of the swiftest in Europe. There are two roads and railroads that parallel the river, one on each side. The valley itself is flat with separate undulating plains, creating barriers for cross-country movement.⁶¹ The summer weather provides the year's best conditions for combat operations—dry, with temperatures averaging around seventy-two degrees. Visibility is good with only fog during the afternoon. Inland, the Alpine Zone is both cooler and wetter. Weather does not appear to have played a significant role during the campaign. On the day of the invasion the weather was calm, with low visibility.⁶² During the month of August, the weather remained good with rain only on August 21 and 22. The moderate weather served as a mild advantage for the Allies. The planners needed to understand the terrain and weather to anticipate the extent of combat forces' operational reach, avoid culmination, identify decisive points, and analyze the effect on tempo during the operation.

The enemy situation changed frequently during the planning process. The enemy forces in Southern France continued to deteriorate, dropping from fifteen divisions at the beginning of the planning effort to about nine divisions in August 1944. Intelligence estimated, "The enemy is now incapable of mounting an attack by surface ships against an allied task force. The greatest threat is from the air, from enemy controlled bombs and missiles."⁶³

The enemy situation at the time of the operation saw a Wehrmacht in disarray. The German Army took a beating throughout most of 1944. It fought on two fronts with little success. France, since 1942, had served as a depot and training area for the Army. New formations formed, trained, and moved to active units. After the Allied invasion of Normandy on June 6,

⁶¹ Combat Studies Institute, *CSI Battlebook Operation Dragoon*, 18-20.

⁶² Combined Operations Headquarters, *Bulletin Y/42: Operation Dragoon* (London, 1944), para 15-25.

⁶³ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 13.

1944 the training stopped, and every spare man went to France to fill understrength units. The units involved in Operation Dragoon faced the German 19th Army, responsible for defending the coast of Southern France from Spain to the Italian border, a front of about 400 miles. It was made up of rebuilt units from the Italian theater and had a mixture of senior and junior age soldiers. The unit was considered disciplined but it had been stripped of its best personnel and equipment for units involved in the fighting in Normandy. The 19th Division's commander, General von Sodenstern, was highly competent but lacked political prestige and influence.⁶⁴ His mission in Southern France was to defend the French Mediterranean Coast and a small sector of the Pyrenees front, hold the coast as long as possible in the event of an Allied landing, and throw the enemy back into the sea if he could manage it. The 19th Division benefited from old French and Italian defensive installations and positions in the Alps that would prove useful in the event of battles in upper Italy.⁶⁵ Overall, the terrain in France favored the defense but lacked the building materials necessary to fortify over 400 miles of front.

When the Operation Dragoon began, the division's most significant shortage was troops, not supplies. Due to Operation Overlord, three infantry divisions and one armor division were transferred to support the German forces in the north. In exchange, the 19th got used-up divisions from Normandy. The Germans did, however, anticipate the location of the invasion, having just completed a map exercise. Time, however, did not allow for adjustments to the German defense, and annihilation of the 19th Army hung in the balance.⁶⁶ The Germans were not prepared for the Allies' tempo as they retreated towards Germany.

⁶⁴ This evaluation of 19th Army comes from the post-war essays of LTG Georg von Sodenstern and LTG Friedrich Weise, successive commanders of the 19th Army, and Colonel Fritz Schulz, 19th Army Operations Officer. See Colonel Fritz Schulz, *Nineteenth Army: 15 August-15 September 1944* (unpublished manuscript from the office of Chief military history MS-B-514, 1946) 1-47; LTG Friedrich Weise, *Southern France – Preparation for Invasion*, (OCMH MS-B-514, 1946) 1-47; LTG Friedrich Weise, *Nineteenth Army – 1 July-15 September 1944* (OCMH MS-B-787, no date), 1-39.

⁶⁵ Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, 383-386.

⁶⁶ Combat Studies Institute, *CSI Battlebook Operation Dragoon*, 23-30.

Allied Force Headquarters contacted 7th Army Headquarters on December 17, 1943, and asked for much-needed space to plan a major operation. The 7th Army planners that were idle for four months arrived at Algiers on January 12, 1944, designated as TF 163. Designation of TF 163 was part of the deception plan for Operation Dragoon, designed to obscure the identity of the headquarters that would lead the operation.

The 7th Army planners questioned several ideas in Eisenhower's outlined plan to include the location of the assault beaches and the main objectives. They recommended that the attack begin east of Cape Cavalaire, where there were several small towns available for use as small ports. After the back and forth of the operational outline, there was a period of uncertainty. The scale of the operation was not approved, so questions went unanswered regarding available forces, the influence of the Italian campaign, and confirming the objectives in Southern France. Planning at times was based on all different sizes. Supply requisitions and the initial steps were taken to provide tentative troop lists and then canceled. The reality was that priorities at that time focused on Operation Overlord.⁶⁷ During this time it was important for the planners to be flexible and provide many options for the commanders.

Lieutenant General George Patton was the commander of 7th Army until March 1944. Major General Alexander Patch then took charge. He previously led the United States' XIV Corps in their fight against the Japanese off Guadalcanal. In early spring 1944, the planners reviewed the initial plans for Operation Dragoon and started to make refinements. Reuben E. Jenkins described the situation, "Relatively few knew they were going to invade France, though many may have suspected it. Knowledge of the target area was limited to senior commanders, staff officers and key enlisted men whose duties required them to know the plan at the time. Secrecy

⁶⁷ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 11; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, B4; Command and General Staff School, *CSI Battlebook Operation Dragoon*, 32-33.

was vital."⁶⁸ The planners used several assumptions to support the planning of the operation. These were: first, the Italian campaign would be the only offensive operation that the Mediterranean Theater would be involved in; second, the internal security of Northern Africa would not limit the number of American and French divisions available; third, Operation Overlord would take place before any other amphibious landing.⁶⁹ It was important that they remained flexible in their planning. The priorities at the time focused on Operation Overlord, but for weeks the personnel in G-3 (operations) thought that the entire process was destined to become little more than an exercise.⁷⁰

After Patch assumed command, he received a brief on the planning of Operation Dragoon and several changes were made to the planning outline and many decisions needed to be made before any detailed planning could proceed. To facilitate, coordinate, and synchronize the details of the plan a small naval and air force planning group were brought in along with French staff officers to review landing areas with large beaches, suitable ports, the possibility of nearby airfields, and good terrain to deploy troops. Additionally, they were to convey the orders of the American commander to the French. They requested that their forces should be under French command, but agreed that the Americans could handle all the administration, logistics, and tactical planning.⁷¹ This synchronization between joint and coalition forces was key in planning and executing the operation.

⁶⁸ Reuben E. Jenkins, "Operation Dragoon – Planning and Landing Phase," *Military Review* 26, n. 5 (August 1946): 4.

⁶⁹ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 1; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report: Seventh Army in Southern France and Germany 1944-1945* (Hiedelgery Aloys Graf, 1946) A3-A4; James S. Wheeler, Jacob L. Devers, *A General's Life*, 303-310.

⁷⁰ Steve Weiss, "The Invasion of Southern France: Operation ANVIL-DRAGOON," August 1944, in Lovering, Lieutenant Commander T.T.A., RN (ed.), *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea, Amphibious Operations for the Last Century* (Woodbridge: Seafarer Books, 2007), 346.

⁷¹ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, B4.

The key objective that Patch was concerned with was the successful landing and securing of a beachhead that would support future operations as the mission directed. Planners re-evaluated each beach to verify which was more suitable for the operation. The joint planners looked now on Cape Cavalaire and found it to be the most desirable. However, there were also several disadvantages to this beach. The planners believed they could overcome those risks and limitations. Along with the beach planning, a beach control planning board was made to plan the beach operations. Under the supervision of TF163, the board worked on standard operating procedures (SOPs) for unloading supply ships, traffic control, maintenance, and the close coordination of all supply agencies. The beachhead that was originally designed to support a twenty-mile advance was destined to support a mad dash more than ten times as long.⁷² The beachhead is the decisive point and had the most risk involved. It was important that planners found ways to mitigate the risks involved.

In February 1944, the AFHQ planned that Operation Dragoon would consist of three US divisions. In March it changed to two divisions. There were insufficient watercraft and aircraft at the time to conduct the larger operation. In June 1944 AFHQ planned a definite target date of August 15 with three US divisions and two French divisions to follow up. The American divisions were the 3rd, 36th and 45th Infantry units and the US VI Corps as the assault headquarters. The US Army met with some difficulty working with the French Army. But after a meeting between General DeGaulle and General Wilson, the two reached an agreement, and a French Army headquarters again was part of the operation. Supply lines reopened, and critical items began rushing to the theater by fast cargo ships. The theater could now release forces and

⁷² Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 13; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, B4; Command and General Staff School, *CSI Battlebook Operation Dragoon*, 32-33; Wheeler, *Jacob L. Devers*, 303-310.

equipment from the front to meet the target date. An analysis determined that an absolute minimum of 38 days would be required to withdraw a division from the front, train, refit, and load out. Thus the time element became critical.⁷³ Correct timing would now allow planners to synchronize the operation and the phasing of it.

Throughout the planning process, planners struggled with uncertainty regarding the resources available due to the changes in dates, potential ports, and units available. A lack of guidance from higher command led to an overreliance on assumption-based planning. The driving factors behind all of this were the Italian Campaign and the logistical considerations. The planners were flexible, which allowed them to react to any changes.

From July 1 to August 10, 1944, VI Corps completed the final planning. The staff split in two ways: a planning staff and a training staff. The final plan consisted of three US divisions and the French Armored Combat Command Sudre to assault the beaches, capture Le Muy, and secure the airfield sites in the Argens Valley. After the reorganization, they could continue the attack to the north. The 1st Airborne Task Force was to land in Le Muy and prevent any enemy movement into the assault area from Le Muy and Le Luc. The 1st Special Forces were to assault the island of Port Cros and Levant to destroy the enemy coastal battery on the east end of Levant. The French forces were to land after D-day, capture Toulon and prepare to advance to the north and northwest. No Army reserve was set up for the invasion. The naval plan called for the establishment of the 7th Army ashore and to support its advance. Its gunfire support planned to begin a forty minute bombardment seventy minutes before H-hour, which would neutralize all enemy batteries and installations. It was also responsible for the army build-up and maintenance on the beaches until after the capture of the ports. The air plan consisted of four phases: Phase I –

⁷³ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*), 5-20; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, 1-5.

offensive operations before D-5, Phase II – D-5 to 0350 hours on D-day (Operation Nutmeg), Phase III – 0350 on D-day to H-hour (Operation Yokum), and phase IV the period after H-hour (Operation Ducrot).⁷⁴ The synchronization of joint and coalition forces was complex, executing multiple tasks over different locations at different times, which provided multiple dilemmas to the Germans.

Logistical considerations were important for the operation and ensuing campaign. The logistics planning for the operation was always plagued with the uncertainty of the operation and changing information on which to base requirements. The staff always found itself facing uncertainty, lack of time plagued the planners. The on again, off again status of the operation hindered supplies. But in July, all loading instructions for the operation were prepared. The troop list had now grown to over 500,000 soldiers and over 100,000 vehicles, all scheduled to land before D+60. This resulted in a 14% increase in shipments to maintain a twenty-day reserve and a ten-day operating level. Logistical support for all forces was not planned to come until D+20, so it was up to each divisions' beach group to make it happen. The 7th Army planners sent the Dragoon force munitions and artillery rather than fuel and vehicles. Since the Germans contested all other Allied assaults, the force prepared for a fight at the beachhead. Maintenance was another issue. Two large-scale operations taking place simultaneously in the same theater required the Allies to share almost everything, from communications to service troops. Both armies shared resources by necessity, but rarely in a way that was satisfactory to both.⁷⁵ With the logistical

⁷⁴ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 12-13; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, 80-83; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 47-50; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 87-100.

⁷⁵ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 12-13; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, 80-83; Headquarters, Service of Supply, *North African Theater of Operations Chronological Record* (No city, 1944), 5; Jenkins, *Operation Dragoon*, 3-4; Truscott, *Command Missions*, 36-37; Third Infantry Division, "Section II Operations," in *Report of Operations (16-30 August 1944)* (France, September 1944), 1-5.

challenges in theater, it was important that the planners look at operational reach and see how far military forces could be employed successfully, taking into consideration risk and culmination.

The training staff set the conditions for the units so that they would have the right resources to train before the operation. The time for training became limited due to the time it took the units to come off the front lines in Italy, but all units had prior combat experience. An invasion training center was set up at Salerno. It started training on June 27, 1944, with a focus on scope waterproofing, obstacle gapping, landing craft technique, and repeated exercises for units. Before any soldier arrived for training, the trainers conducted experiments to discover the best methods of breaching underwater obstacles and holding beach defenses. The 45th and 36th Divisions were each put through a twenty-day course at this training center. The 3rd Division conducted its training near Pozzuoli⁷⁶.

The training was designed to be as realistic as possible and focused on preparing the units for challenges during the beach landing. It also allowed the soldiers to use and train on new equipment, coordinate between different services, and review doctrine. Another aspect of training was taking care of soldiers, during that time it also allowed as much rest as possible. During the training, infantry reviewed basic infantry warfare and focused on demolitions and amphibious assaults. It also enabled them to focus on close order drill, road marches, and exercises. The troops could train, and equipment could be recovered and brought up the standard. The Artillery concentrated on amphibious landings and loading and unloading the 105mm howitzer. They also trained their fire support elements, so they were prepared to call for fire. The engineers conducted very intense training because they were the crucial link in getting through the German defenses. All the units were able to rehearse assault landing on a division scale with naval and air support.

⁷⁶ CSI Battlebook, *Operation Anvil/Dragoon*, 41-44.

All efforts were made to simulate the conditions on the ground in the upcoming operation.⁷⁷ They made obstacles, used live ammo, and all units executed it as if it were D-day. This rehearsal went so well that there were practically no changes made in organization or procedure. They moved from previous combat experience to this with relative ease, which was remarkable. On August 8, 1944, the 7th Army returned from a final rehearsal and began loading out. In less than a week, the units would be involved in the operation they had been rehearsing.⁷⁸

Execution of Operation Dragoon

The pre-assault air preparation began August 10 and lasted until the morning of the 15th; over 5,000 sorties completed their mission with over 6,700 tons of bombs dropped. With the order set, naval staffs supervised the loading and departure from several ports and rendezvous off Corsica during the night of August 14 and 15. The total force comprised of 885 ships and landing vessels, over 150,000 troops, and over 21,000 assorted vehicles. The Air and Naval bombardment knocked out shore defenses and kept personnel losses down during the landing. The 7th Army landed as planned from St. Raphael to St. Tropez. All the landings and airborne operations were successful. After the landing, came the exploitation toward the Grenoble corridor and the Rhone.⁷⁹

The 1st Special Forces group assaulted the islands of Levant and Port Cros shortly after midnight on August 15, surprising the German forces and capturing the islands. The French

⁷⁷ CSI Battlebook, *Operation Anvil/Dragoon*, 41-44.

⁷⁸ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 8-10; Seventh US Army, *After Action*, A102-113; Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, 166-168; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 52-53; Third Infantry Division, "Section I Planning for Operation Dragoon," in *Report of Operations (16-30 August 1944)* (France, September 1944), 1-5; VI CORPS, *Notes on the conduct of VI CORPS Operational planning for Operation Dragoon* (APO 46, August 1944), 1-3.

⁷⁹ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, C 1-2; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 6-10; Command and General Staff School, CSI Battlebook, *Operation Anvil/Dragoon*, 46-50; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 56-57; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 104-110.

commanders moved along the coast, the southern group established blocking positions around Cape Negre, but the northern group suffered many casualties. The airborne operation began around 0030 on August 15, and by 0430, nearly 85% of the forces landed. They were met with little resistance and cut the coastal road and railroad, paralyzing all immediate German coordination of containment of the beachhead.⁸⁰ The forces presented multiple dilemmas to the German forces. The synchronization of operations allowed the Allies to increase tempo to overwhelm the Germans.

By 0600 Army Air Force bombers moved to soften up the German defense along the coast. Bombers focused their efforts along the invasion coast. The bombers departed around 0730, and then the Naval gunfire started; over 400 naval guns pounded the area, later joined by the Allies' rocket ships which unleashed over 30,000 rockets against the German positions. As the fog and friction continued, the Allies moved their minesweepers and landing crafts into position. Around 0800 the main assaults began, and all three divisions assaulted simultaneously. The US 3rd Infantry Division landed on the left of Alpha Beach near Cavalaire-Sur-Mer, the 45th Infantry Division in the center of Delta Beach around St. Tropez and the 36th Infantry Division on the right on Camel Beach around San Raphael.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 4-5; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 104-105; VI CORPS, *G-3 Report* (USS Catocin, 15 August, 1944), 1; Headquarters 1st Airborne Task Force, *Enemy – Annex No 1, Intelligence* (Lido di Roma, Italy, 1944), 1-2; Army Air Force, *Report on Airborne Operations in Dragoon* (Indianapolis, IN: 1944), 1-12; Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 151200B August 1944); Seventh US Army, *G-3 Report* (St Tropez, France, August, 1944).

⁸¹ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 6-8; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 56-57; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 104-110; VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, July and August 1944* (APO #46, October, 1944), 2-4.

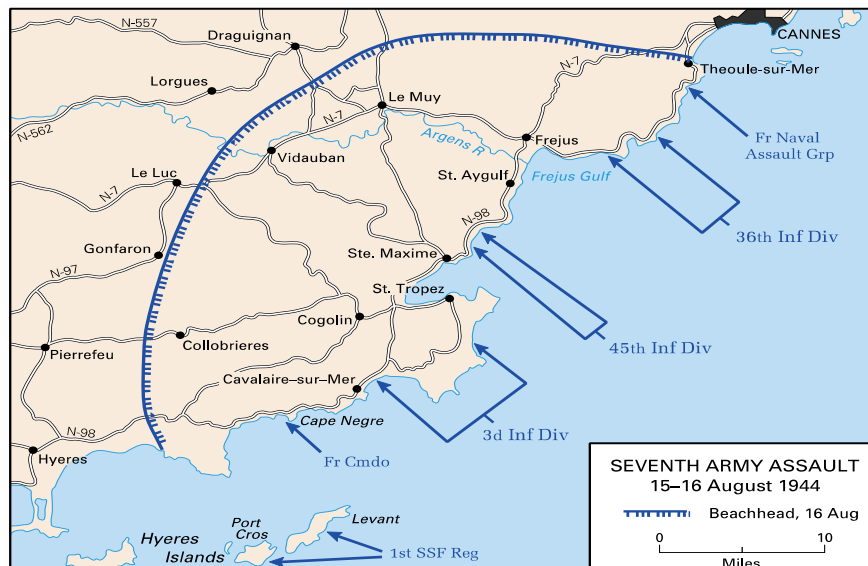


Figure 2. Seventh Army Assault. Center of Military History (CMH 72-31), *Southern France* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 12.

The 3rd Infantry Division (ID) landed two regiments abreast with one in reserve. The assault was carried out in nine waves. The movement was rapid; 3rd ID moved quickly inland and struck out in three directions. The 7th Infantry (IN) moved to capture Cavalaire, while the 15th IN moved into St. Tropez. By 2100, all objectives were met. The 36th Infantry Division sector consisted of four assault beaches, code-named red, yellow, green, and blue. None of the beaches were ideal for a landing point. Red beach was the small port of San Raphael. It was critical to the whole operation because it was near an airfield and was necessary for the resupply of units. Yellow was in front of the town of Agay. Green and blue were near Cape Drammont; both were considered too small for a landing party. All the landing sites were heavily defended. Around 0800, the 141st regiment began the assault on green beach, taking it by surprise; the resistance was light with few casualties. On blue beach, the Germans provided heavier resistance, but Allied forces overwhelmed them. On the right of the 36th IN, red beach had multiple obstacles and forces that could stop the unit from coming ashore. The German forces endured all the naval gunfire and bombing. The Naval commander ordered the alternate plan and

ordered the 142nd IN to go to green beach instead of red. All the forces landed and completed their objectives. By noon of the 16th, the 36th DIV cleared San Raphael and Frejus.⁸²

The 45th ID landed on its beaches ahead of schedule and encountered very little resistance. One of their IN regiments linked up with the 36th ID and the other secured St. Maxime, and by the morning of the 16th, they won Le Muy. The beach assaults proved successful with only ninety-five Allied soldiers killed and over 380 wounded, a big difference from the casualties suffered during Operation Overlord.⁸³ The landings illustrate the importance of basing and phasing in executing operations.

On August 16, most of the divisions' lead elements were twenty miles inland. The attacking forces advanced rapidly because of the weak German defense in the landing area. The Allies' tempo, and the lack of Wehrmacht resistance surprised the Allied forces. General Truscott had no desire to wait for a German counterattack. He ordered 3rd ID and 45th ID to move west, while the 36th ID was to secure the eastern flank. He also pushed for the French division to accelerate its arrival. By the 17th all the divisions made it from the blue line, and a total of 86,000 soldiers, 12,000 vehicles, and 46,000 tons of supplies landed. Between August 17 to 19, the two American divisions moved west. They planned to go north of Toulon and Marseille leading to Rhone and Avignon.

⁸² 36th Infantry Division, *Operations in France – August 1944 Narrative* (APO #36, September, 1944); 142 Infantry, *Operations in France, August 1944* (APO #36, September, 1944), 1-4; Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 151200B August 1944); Seventh US Army, *G-3 Report* (St Tropez, France, August, 1944).

⁸³ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, C 1-2; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, 6-10; Command and General Staff School, CSI Battlebook, *Operation Anvil/Dragoon*, 46-50; Stewart, *Operation Dragoon*, 56-60; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 104-110; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, A102-A113; Donald G. Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II* (Washington DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1947), 210-217; VI CORPS, *G-3 Report* (USS Catoctin, 15 August, 1944), 1; Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 171200B August 1944); Third Infantry Division, "Section II Operations," in *Report of Operations (16-30 August 1944)* (France, September 1944), 1-5; VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, July and August 1944* (APO #46, October, 1944), 2-10; Seventh US Army, *G-3 Report* (St Tropez, France, August, 1944).



Figure 3. Breakout from the Beachhead. Center of Military History (CMH 72-31), *Southern France* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 18.

During this time, General Lucian Truscott ordered the assembly of TF Butler. In July during the planning for the operation, Truscott decided to organize a small mobile strike force after the landings. It provided the army flexibility during the assault. It assembled on the night of August 17 and moved north heading toward Grenoble. By the 19th it was fifty miles north of the 45th Division conducting a reconnaissance-in-force. Its end state would be to move north and then cut west to block the narrow Rhone corridor. It was risky, but within three days, TF Butler drove over 100 miles and was in position at Gap and Aspres to cut off the German forces retreating. Receiving news that the Germans were retreating, Truscott split the campaign into three parts. The first was the conquest of Toulon and Marseille, the second continued to drive west, securing the west flank, and finally TF Butler moved to the north, to be directed behind the

German line and destroy the Nineteenth Army.⁸⁴ Task Force Butler showed the Allied forces the ability to be flexible in their planning and execution and how to accept risk to create opportunities.

On August 20, the 45th ID moved rapidly toward Barjols. It met German resistance and put up road blocks against the German forces. The 3rd ID moved up toward Brignoles, where it met German forces and defeated them. The French forces moved on Hyers, Toulon, and Marseilles, simultaneously. They met German resistance, but each time the French encircled, isolated, and then pressured from all sides, the Germans fought hard, but by the 23rd the French forces met all the objectives. By August 21, the tempo of the entire VI Corps attack caused the German Army to withdraw northward through the Rhone River corridor. The Allies plan called for 3rd ID to pursue the Germans northward along the east bank of the Rhone River, while TF Butler, followed by the 36th ID, made a full sweep to trap the German forces in the Rhone River Valley around Montelimar. TF Butler was positioned north of Montelimar on August 22. German forces owned most of the terrain at that time, and TF Butler did not have the forces to attack the town close to the route that the Germans were using. It held its position until the 24th when the 36th ID arrived. As the 36th ID assembled its forces, TF Butler became the division reserve. From August 24 to 27, German forces kept constant pressure on the 36th ID position. On August 25, the 3rd ID advanced northward to Avignon. The Germans now felt pressure from two sides, but continued to attack the American positions.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, C 1-2; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, D 8-10; Truscott, *Command Missions*, 382-395; Fredric B. Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," *Armored Cavalry Journal* (January-February, 1948): 12-18; VI CORPS, *G-3 Report* (France, 20 August 1944), 1; Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 201200B August 1944); VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, July and August 1944* (APO #46, October, 1944), 13.

⁸⁵ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, C 6-7; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, E1-7; Command and General Staff School, CSI Battlebook, *Operation Dragoon*, 50-55; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 118-125; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, B 229-294; Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 215-217; VI CORPS *G-3 Report* (France, 20 August, 1944), 1; Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 151200B August 1944); 36th Infantry Division, *Operations in France – August 1944*

Now that forces were in position, the fight for Montelimar commenced. The 36th ID repulsed attacks until August 26. In these daily attacks the Germans attempted to cut off the 36th ID's supply routes, encircle the division or its subordinate units, and spoil any attempt the 36th had for launching its offensive. On that day, the Germans broke through the defensive line of the 36th ID before receiving orders to move back to Lyon. Over the next few days, the Germans withdrew most of their defensive forces, keeping up rearguard attacks on the 36th ID. By the morning of the 28th, only a small German force remained in Montelimar.⁸⁶

The 3rd ID continued to move northwest to remove the enemy from their positions south of Montelimar. They encountered heavy enemy resistance which delayed their actions. They continued to fight, ruptured the enemy line, and captured several German convoys headed to Montelimar. The 3rd ID continued its attack and struck Montelimar from the north, south, and west, and by noon of the 29th, the 3rd ID occupied the city. Fierce fighting now developed to the northwest by the Rhone River crossing where the enemy continued to push traffic north. Operations along the river were the final phase of the Battle of Montelimar. The river was the last barrier in the German retreat northward to Lyon. The 36th moved into a position to narrow the German escape routes to one. Next the air support and artillery harassed Wehrmacht traffic and destroyed bridges, but still, some of the German forces escaped. It was the US artillery that counted most and turned the tide of the battle. During the fight, the 36th ID field artillery units fired over 37,000 rounds at confined and retreating troops. As the battle wound down on the 28th, Allied forces had suffered 1,575 casualties, compared to over 11,000 German casualties.

Narrative (APO #36, September, 1944), 5-10; Third Infantry Division, "Section II Operations," in *Report of Operations (16-30 August 1944)* (France, September 1944), 1-5; VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, July and August 1944* (APO #46, October, 1944), 14-27; Seventh US Army, *G-3 Report* (St Tropez, France, August, 1944).

⁸⁶ Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 261200B August 1944); VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, July and August 1944* (APO #46, October 1944), 23-28.

Similarly, the Allies captured over 42,000 prisoners, destroyed over 4,000 vehicles, and only a small part of the 19th Army escaped with their equipment or unit intact.⁸⁷

By the end of August, the Germans were retreating and made it past the Rhone River. The French Army had destroyed two enemy divisions and taken two large ports within fifteen days after D-day while moving over 152,000 soldiers, 34,000 vehicles, and 168,000 tons of equipment across the beaches. The next phase of the operation became a rapid pursuit of a retreating force without any chance of further envelopment, and increased tempo proved crucial. The Allies found most of the German forces south of Lyon, evacuating southwestern France and headed for the Belfort Gap (the gateway to Germany just north of the Swiss border). As the Germans retreated, they conducted various delaying actions. But the 31st ID and 45th ID pulled up by Lyon from the high Alps to the east and operated northeast of the city. The 3rd ID, after cleaning up the Montelimar battle area, became the reserve and the French Army pushed the enemy northward on the west bank of the Rhone. The 7th Army liberated Lyon on the September 3, and there were two days of celebrations in Lyon to honor the French and the Americans.

The challenge was now logistical; the Allies struggled to extend their operational reach. The 7th Army was operating on a day's worth of fuel, and the French were bringing supplies forward with borrowed farm transport. Every move northward stretched them further from their base of operations along the coast. By September 8, the divisions rolled through the last defenses along the Doubs River, and through mid-September, the Allied forces advanced northeast heading for the Belfort Gap. But the challenges of lack of fuel and supplies reduced the pace of their

⁸⁷ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, C 6-7; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, E7-8; Command and General Staff School, *CSI Battlebook Operation Dragoon*, 52-57; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 127-133; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, B 229-294; Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II*, 215-217; Headquarters 36th Infantry Division, *Operations in France, September 1944: Annex #9 36th Infantry Division Artillery* (APO #36, 1944), 1-4; Seventh US Army, *G2 Report* (In the Field, 291200B August 1944); Third Infantry Division, "Section II Operations," in *Report of Operations (16-30 August 1944)* (France, September 1944), 3-5; Seventh US Army, *G-3 Report* (St Tropez, France, August, 1944).

progress. The Allies slowed their tempo and tried not to culminate. On September 11, French forces north of Dijon linked up with elements of Patton's US 3rd Army, fulfilling 7th Army's final objective. Shortly after the link up Operation Dragoon ended, as Lieutenant General Jacob Devers took command of the forces involved under their new designation of the Sixth Army Group.⁸⁸

Analysis of Operational Art in Operation Dragoon

Today's potential operational environment for the US Army looks much like that faced by Allied forces during Operation Dragoon. Both environments contain near-peer competitor forces, the need to establish a forcible entry site, and to conduct decisive action. Current planners can benefit from understanding Operation Dragoon through the conceptual lens of operational art and ULO when planning operations in the current operational environment.

The tenets of ULO support planners in generating and applying combat power throughout all tasks of decisive action. Synchronization was key during Operation Dragoon. Throughout the planning and training phase, it was important to get all joint and coalition partners operating together to maximize their combat power during the operation. Once the operation started, synchronization gave the Allies the ability to execute multiple tasks in different locations at the same time to produce coordinated effects. At the start of the operation, 6th Corps needed to orchestrate the landing of three divisions on three different beaches, while at the same time having to deconflict the air coverage between the Navy and Airforce, along with airborne operations and special operations infiltrating France. As the maneuver forces were landing on the beach, the Navy coordinated its fires as the units landed. Once all the forces landed on the beach

⁸⁸ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, C 8-10; Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, E7-8; Command and General Staff School, *CSI Battlebook Operation Dragoon*, 52-58; Tucker-Jones, *Operation Dragoon*, 129-135; Seventh US Army, *After Action Report*, B 294-334; 36th Infantry Division, *Operations in France – September 1944 Narrative* (APO #36, September, 1944), 4-10; Third Infantry Division, “Section II Operations,” in *Report of Operations (16-30 August 1944)* (France, September 1944), 5; VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, July and August 1944* (APO #46, October, 1944), 29-32; VI CORPS, *Historical Record, Headquarters VI CORPS, September 1944* (APO #46, December, 1944), 1-12; Seventh US Army, *G-3 Report* (Brignoles, France, September, 1944).

and started to move from the beachhead, 6th Corps synchronized the movements of the three divisions as each moved up a different axis of advance while orchestrating their supply. This synchronization gave these units the flexibility they needed to achieve their objectives.

Flexibility enables units to employ a mix of formations and techniques to conduct operations. The ability to organize on the move is critical to an effective combat organization. The enemy may act in ways unanticipated during planning. During Operation Dragoon TF Butler provided the necessary flexibility for 6th Corps. It acted as the reserve, participated in the pursuit, and exploited gains when necessary. TF Butler conducted an envelopment of the Nineteenth German Army and covered over 200 miles and took the high ground near Montelimar. It failed to block the German withdrawal, but it held key terrain. Another example of flexibility was the ability of the French forces to land on the beaches. Due to the early success of the divisions on the beaches and the desire to exploit them, the French needed to land one day sooner than planned to meet its objectives, relieve 3rd Division units, and prepare for the attack on Toulon. This flexibility allowed Patch to create multiple dilemmas for the Germans on the ground which eventually led to their withdrawal.

One of the most dominant concepts in Operation Dragoon is tempo, or the rate of military action. This factor is key to promoting surprise, keeping the enemy off balance, increasing the security and sustainability of the attacking force, and preventing the defender from taking effective countermeasures.⁸⁹ Robert Leonhard has argued that learning to operate with increased tempo can make units invulnerable to enemies operating with low-frequency doctrine.⁹⁰ The division's aggressiveness after landing on the beach became the key to success. As over 12,000 men stormed the beaches at 0800 on August 15, 1944, the Germans were unprepared, the Allied casualties were light, and the units kept moving inland. Exploitation commenced from the

⁸⁹ FM 100-5, *Operations*, 2-6.

⁹⁰ Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes* (London: Praeger Publisher, 1994), 70-75.

beachline by the end of D-day, with lead elements penetrating between five to fifteen miles inland. The division's goal was to reach D+2 objectives in one day. Truscott's relentless pursuit set the tone for the operational effort, which Patch and de Lattre managed to support and follow. This aggressive assault left the German defenders capable almost entirely of merely reacting to Allied moves. Within thirty days, the American and French forces accomplished objectives that planners thought would take three times as long.

Another element of operational art, operational reach, gave the Allies a marked advantage during Operation Dragoon. Operational reach must balance the forces' endurance, momentum, and protection. Due to their accelerated execution, some the operations were hampered by inadequate operational reach, such as the unplanned rapid movement to the north. Army Air Force P-47's operating out of Corsica began to meet range limitations by D+5, and bombers were unable to conduct operations near Grenoble. Compounding the problem, delays in securing ports meant that units received logistics support from the beaches until the end of August, when the Brittany ports were finally secured. As early as D+1 fuel shortages began to create problems, and by D+4 they became critical. Although plans provided plenty of gasoline to support the operation, logisticians were told to prioritize ammunition in the first days' convoys. Since the expected heavy combat did not materialize, this meant that within a few days, units at the front had more ammo than gasoline. Logistics personnel needed to double and triple handle ammunition to get it out of the way, as ammo was top-stowed. The attacking units' penetration created a supply line of 175 miles, one way. As the Allied operations continued to move north, the supply rate decreased due to the lack of trucks and the 600-mile round trip. Still, the Allies managed to keep enough fuel and ammunition pushed forward to enable continued offensive operations.⁹¹

⁹¹ Command and General Staff School, 1st Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, E-10; Devers, "Operation Dragoon," 10-4; Rueben E. Jenkins, "Operation Dragoon-The Breakthrough," *Military Review*, Vol. XXVI, No. 6 (1946), 10-16; James W. Boddie, *Ammunition Support for Operation Dragoon, the Invasion of Southern France-Could We Do it Today?* (US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, 1987), 5-10.

Risk is the final element of operational art used here to analyze Operation Dragoon. To achieve results, commanders must accept risk to create opportunities. It requires boldness and imagination to accept and mitigate it.⁹² Successful risk managers consider the likelihood and severity of the many hazards of battle to develop proactive and reactive measures to suppress realized risk.⁹³ This took place throughout Operation Dragoon; commanders knew they faced uncertainties and hazards, but took calculated risks to seize and exploit opportunities, thereby achieving results. Their willingness to incur risk was the key to exposing German weaknesses. During the planning process leading up to the execution of the operation, the uncertainty of the situation and complexity of the plan obscured the planners' ability to anticipate the conditions that commanders and their units would encounter. From the beginning, the operation included a hazardous landing of special operations forces on the French coastline to secure the flanks and knock out artillery positions. The operation used airborne operations and gliders to promote confusion during a nighttime jump. Patch accepted that risk to create opportunities for the landing force. The greatest risk existed during the landing operations, as Allied forces assaulted three different beaches at the same time against unknown enemy resistance. Even the Allies' tempo, while beneficial operationally, created risk for units operating at the end of a long line of operations that stretched logistics capability.

Similarly, Patch accepted risk in the use of TF Butler; a small unit made up of several tank companies, light cavalry, and some self-propelled artillery. Patch used it to take the high ground northeast of Montelimar to block Germans escaping up the Rhone River Valley. The task force got into position knowing that it might encounter a German division before the arrival of the 36th Division to augment TF Butler's combat power. The units joined up before encountering any sizable resistance, but Patch recognized the possibility and accepted the risk. Throughout the

⁹² ADRP 3-0, 2-10.

⁹³ Ron S. Dembo and Andrew Freeman, *Seeing Tomorrow: Rewriting the Rules of Risk* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1998), 18-22.

campaign the Allied commanders created opportunities and accepted the risk in a dynamic environment to exploit the German forces' withdrawal.

Conclusion

The Allies practiced operational art and applied the tenets of ULO during WWII—even if they did not use the same terminology in their doctrine as modern forces—as this analysis of Operation Dragoon illustrates. The operation was successful because it achieved the primary purpose of engaging the German forces in Southern France, preventing them from attacking units invading Normandy during Operation Overlord, and providing access to vital port facilities. Operation Dragoon confirmed the effectiveness of the Allies' planning and execution of an amphibious operation. This reveals a key insight for future planners: when sound principles are applied to a sound plan, and both are aggressively implemented, the results can far outreach those anticipated.⁹⁴

Operation Dragoon showcases the thoughtful use of some of the elements of operational art and tenets of ULO, including synchronization, flexibility, tempo, operational reach, and risk. The operation enabled Allied forces to defeat the German enemy in Southern France, enabling French forces to play a role in the liberation of their country, making a major port available to the advancing Allied forces, and providing a welcome boost in morale by successfully completing a major operation.

Future planners can gain many valuable insights from the study of Operation Dragoon. Perhaps first among these, the operation illustrates the importance of joint and coalition planning. Operation Dragoon was not an easy task for the planners, as after-action reports reveal. Air planners were not included in all joint planning activities. The first four of ten complaints in the 12th Tactical Air Command (TAC) after action report all relate to coordination between joint

⁹⁴ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, E1.

staffs during the planning phase of the operation, which fell short due to separation of headquarters and competing priorities of work.⁹⁵ In the beginning, the Allied planners lacked Navy, Army Air Force, and French planners to synchronize and coordinate operations, leading to shortfalls the combat troops had to overcome. Modern-day planners cannot plan in a bubble. In today's conflicts, the Army usually fights as a member of a joint or coalition team. This presents some language challenges, but linguist and liaison officers can aid in overcoming them. Also, planning agencies work well when located near each other, even with modern communications equipment. Nothing can fully replace the value of face-to-face planning.⁹⁶

Future planners can also see the value of retaining flexibility to provide options for the commander in the execution of Operation Dragoon. Often, during the planning process, the planners did not know how many forces to plan for, or the location of their lodgments. Future planners must remain flexible in their planning to enable mission command while preparing to execute branches and sequels. In Operation Dragoon, the planners did not plan for rapid success and advances beyond the beachhead; therefore, they could not fully capitalize on these successes. This also contributed to logistical challenges during the operation that slowed the tempo. With foresight, planners would have built more flexibility into the logistical support plan. The rapid advance north revealed limitations in support operations, such as the need for an operational pause to enable extension of lines of operations to enhance its operational reach. In all cases, operational planners should account for such possibilities, as the American experience of WWII illustrated time after time.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Headquarters 1 Tactical Air Command, *Report on Operation Dragoon, 27 September 1944*, Air Force Historical Research Agency, Reel 6108, 1.

⁹⁶ Devers, "Operation Dragoon," 11-14.

⁹⁷ Command and General Staff School, 2nd Command Class, *Operation Dragoon*, E1.

Finally, future planners can see in Operation Dragoon the importance of effective combined arms teams. The 36th ID gave strong praise to the interaction of their infantry and artillery, reporting:

It is paramount in that the infantry regiment and the field artillery battalion always work together. They are practically inseparable. Their procedures have fused the infantry and artillery personnel into a partnership based on mutual respect, pride, sympathy, and understanding. So effective is the fusion of units that each feels that the other can do no wrong. The result is a highly efficient combination of branches of the service.⁹⁸

As the combat scale of Operation Dragoon exceeds the experience of most of today's US Army officers, it provides a valuable reminder of the importance of combined arms in decisive operations against a near-peer competitor.

Today's US military planners have a great deal of experience in stability and counterinsurgency operations. However, future wars might require planning for decisive action operations against a near-peer competitor. This will include planning on a large scale with combined arms maneuver operations involving multiple corps and divisions, along with joint and coalition partners. Operation Dragoon offers a useful example of large-scale joint operations for today's Army planners to analyze, to see how to use elements of operational art and tenets of ULO in planning and execution to achieve strategic objectives through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. This historical analysis suggests that using these elements and tenets in planning and execution will provide opportunities for commanders to win in a complex world.

⁹⁸ AGF Board, Report A-217-3: Mediterranean Theater of Operations (Washington, DC, 1945).

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