Operational Art in Operation Dragoon and the Relief of Bastogne

A Monograph

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On August 15th, 1944, the Allies initiated Operation Dragoon in southern France and within a day ad hoc formation known as Task Force (TF) Butler conducted a 300-mile pursuit of fleeing Nazi forces. Within three months, Allied forces once again reacted quickly to defeat the unexpected German Ardennes Offensive with the 4th Armored Division (AD) relieving the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne. Most historical studies of these operations focus on either the tactical or strategic decisions and actions made by the United States and the Allies. This study conducts a structured, focused comparison of Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne by asking eight research questions focused on testing three hypotheses concerning the military leadership's understanding of the strategic environment and its efforts to combine and arrange tactical actions by accounting for tempo, operational reach, culmination, and risk. The empirical evidence examined supports this monograph's thesis that 4th AD and TF Butler employed operational art to achieve the stated strategic objectives.

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Abstract

Operational Art in the Operation Dragoon and the Relief of Bastogne, by MAJ Stephen N. Doyle, US Army, 54 pages.

During WWII, the United States conducted large-scale combat operations in its fight against Nazi Germany. On August 15th, 1944, the Allies initiated Operation Dragoon in southern France and within a day ad hoc formation known as Task Force (TF) Butler conducted a 300-mile pursuit of fleeing Nazi forces. Within three months, Allied forces once again reacted quickly to defeat the unexpected German Ardennes Offensive with the 4th Armored Division (AD) relieving the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne. Most historical studies of these operations focus on either the tactical or strategic decisions and actions made by the United States and the Allies. This monograph contributes to the analysis of WWII by focusing on the operational level by exploring the actions through the lens of operational art.

This study conducts a structured, focused comparison of Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne by asking eight research questions related to operational art. These questions focus on testing three hypotheses concerning the military leadership's understanding of the strategic environment and its efforts to combine and arrange tactical actions by accounting for tempo, operational reach, culmination, and risk.

The empirical evidence examined supports this monograph's thesis that 4th AD and TF Butler employed operational art to achieve the stated strategic objectives during the planning and execution of the Relief of Bastogne and Operation Dragoon. The commanders and staffs ensured the plans were flexible, maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy, extended operational reach, prevented culmination, and mitigated operational risk.

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Acronyms

ABN	Airborne
AD	Armored Division
CC	Combat Command
CCA	Combat Command A
CCB	Combat Command B
CCR	Combat Command R
HQ	Headquarters
ID	Infantry Division
LST	Landing Ship, Tank
LOC	Lines of Communication
PD	Panzer Division
TF	Task Force

Illustrations

Introduction

During the conduct of World War II (WWII), the United States conducted large-scale combat operations in its fight against Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. In the summer of 1944, the Allies executed Operation Overlord as the primary invasion into France and eventually Germany. However, on August 15, 1944, the Allies initiated a second amphibious landing, known as Operation Dragoon, along a forty-five mile stretch of the Côte d'Azur in southern France.[1] The operation served to further disrupt the enemy as allied forces move up through the Rhone River Valley towards Germany.[2] Within two days of the landing, Hitler ordered German Army Group G to withdrawal back to Germany prompting the US commanders to shift focus from the seizure of ports to the pursuit of fleeing German forces. One day later, a newly formed Task Force (TF) Butler from US Army VI Corps along with two divisions initiated a three-hundred-mile pursuit over the course of seventeen days.[3]

Three months later in December 1944, Allied forces arrayed themselves along the German border in preparation for crossing into Germany. As an effort to stem Allied momentum and regain the initiative, Hitler planned the Ardennes Offensive to prevent Allied use of the Port of Antwerp. The German attack began on December 16, 1944 and within three days General Dwight D. Eisenhower met with his commanders in Verdun to explore options.[4] Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr. asserted he could have three divisions from Third Army meeting German attackers in three days.[5] By December 20, 1944, 4th Armored Division (AD) initiated its

[1] Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), 196.

[2] Ibid., 192.

[3] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 206; Gerald Astor, *The Greatest War: Americans in Combat, 1941-1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999), 643.

[4] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 445.

[5] Ibid., 446.

approach to Bastogne and within six days relieved the 101st Airborne (ABN) Division at Bastogne.[6]

This study explores how operational level commanders and staffs increased their flexibility and adaptability using operational art. The case studies present evidence 4th AD and TF Butler employed operational art to achieve the stated strategic objectives during the planning and execution of the relief of Bastogne and Operation Dragoon. Commanders and staffs ensured the plans maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy, extended operational reach, prevented culmination, and mitigated operational risk. By framing the discussion through the lens of operational art, a commander and his staff can leverage terms and concepts already captured in doctrine to make radical changes to a plan while still operating within the commander's intent. Both cases lend themselves to providing insight into how staffs can better plan and execute with shorter planning windows while providing options to the commander and presenting multiple dilemmas to the enemy commander.

The study uses three hypotheses to test the thesis and determine the validity of operational art concepts in planning and execution. The first hypothesis examines whether 4th AD and TF Butler maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy. The second hypothesis explores whether 4th AD and TF Butler were able to extend their operational reach without culminating. The third hypothesis focuses on whether 4th AD and TF Butler were able to mitigate operational risk. Evidence suggesting these conditions existed indicates the employment of operational art by commanders and their staffs. The study leveraged eight research questions to test these hypotheses.

1. What was the strategic and operational context of the operation?
2. What was the stated political and military objectives?

[6] Nat Frankel and Larry Smith, *Patton's Best: An Informal History of the 4th Armored Division* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1978), X.

3. What were the strategic and operational assumptions?
4. What military options were available to the commanders?
5. What was the operational approach taken by the commanders?
6. How did the commanders mitigate operational risk?
7. How did the commanders anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment?
8. How did the outcomes of the battles influence the military and political objectives of the war?

Access to primary sources serves as the greatest limitation for this study. Both the Relief of Bastogne and Operation Dragoon are the focal points numerous writings and analysis; however, the availability of primary sources remains limited to after action reviews, reports, and the recollections of those individuals who were present during the battles and later wrote about their experiences. Additionally, the breadth of material for both case studies suggests additional factors played a role in each respective outcome. To account for these conditions, the study limits its scope to four aspects of operational art: tempo, culmination, operational reach, and risk. Additionally, the study focuses its timeframe for Operation Dragoon beginning with planning for the amphibious landing in southern France and end with the culmination of operations along the Rhone River. The relief of Bastogne begins with the siege of Bastogne by 5th Panzer Army and ends on December 26, 1944 when lead elements from 4th AD reached Bastogne.

This study includes five sections for understanding the role of operational art in operational-level planning and execution. The first section consists of a literature review and explores the relevant information regarding the operational tempo, culmination, operational reach, and risk as they relate to flexibility and adaptability. The second section, methodology, discusses the selected case studies and the qualitative procedure for analysis. The third section consists of the analysis of the case studies, assessment of the hypotheses, and answers to the research questions. The final section is a review of the findings, applicability to the force today, recommendations for additional research, and final conclusions.

Literature Review

This review identifies the potential gaps in current literature for both the relief of Bastogne and Operation Dragoon. The section includes three subsections: theoretical, conceptual, and empirical. The theoretical section explores the varying definitions of operational art and their applicability to this study. The conceptual subsection provides the definitions of criteria found within each hypothesis. This subsection also includes how the study operationalized and measured the terms to facilitate the comparison of the case studies. Finally, the empirical section provides review of other authors' work on each operation and how the conclusions relate to each of the hypotheses found in this study.

In terms of the history of warfare, operational art is a relatively new term but it encompasses tenets familiar to commanders prior to WWII. The concept of operational art and its meaning to the operational artist gained attention by the Russians following World War I (WWI). Georgii Isserson, a Russian army brigade commander, identified the importance of recognizing the depth of the battlefield and the need to link multiple efforts rather than independent battles to achieve victory.[7] Isserson's focus on deep operations was a product of the technical advances made following WWI, which extended the range of the battlefield beyond what a commander could observe.[8] Armies could no longer win wars through a single decisive battle and required multiple echelons of attacks to affect the deep area of operations and achieve victory through annihilation.[9] The increased size of the battlefield also increased the importance of maneuver while decreasing the importance of decisive battle.[10] This began the discussion of operational art

[7] Georgii S. Isserson, *The Evolution of Military Art*, trans. Bruce Menning, 2nd ed. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2013), 48.

[8] Ibid., 50.

[9] Ibid., 59, 117.

[10] James J. Schneider, "Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art," *Fort Leavenworth Theoretical Paper*, no. 5 (1992): 20-21.

and with it initiated the realization that wars required extended time and space in which to synchronize operations to achieve victory.

Aleksandr Svechin published perspectives on operational art in 1924 and made attempts to delineate between tactics, operational art, and strategy. He described tactics as the alignment of equipment with conditions to solve problems.[11] Conversely, he viewed strategy as the pursuit of goals and remains long-term and forward-looking.[12] Operational art is the collective effort of deploying, maneuvering, and sustaining operations to enable tactical success along lines of operation, which collectively allow a commander to achieve strategic goals.[13] Simply stated for the Soviet theorist, operational art is the way military means achieve strategic ends.[14] Together, Svechin and Isserson described how understanding the depth of the battlefield and the relationship between all actions are requisites for success. Though this definition of operational art begins to separate tactics from strategy and identify the operational level, it does not include detailed tenets to use as criteria to evaluate case studies in large-scale combat operations.

Dr. James Schneider offered another definition of operational art focused primarily on the need to operate in depth reinforcing the concepts posed by Isserson. Schneider characterized operational art as the employment of forces in deep distributed operations to achieve a common aim. However, he further described how operational art includes distributed operations, distributed campaigns, continuous logistics, instantaneous command and control, operationally durable formations, operational vision, and distributed deployment. In this definition, operational

[11] Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, ed. Kent D Lee (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1994), 68.

[12] Ibid., 68, 73.

[13] Ibid., 68–69.

[14] Antulio Echevarria, "American Operational Art, 1917-2008," in *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138.

art becomes the concert of battles to achieve decisions against an enemy arrayed in depth.[15] Though Schneider's definition included several tenets of operational art by which to analyze a case study, it failed to highlight the role of risk and its impact on how commanders view the battlefield and execute operations making it unsuitable for this study.

The US military did not incorporate the term operational art into doctrine until 1986 in *FM 100-5, Operations*.[16] The definition evolved and is now defined in *FM 3-0, Operations* as "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."[17] *FM 3-0, Operations* further emphasizes the importance of adopting a systems thinking perspective to understand the enemy and the logic of the conflict in order to identify and exploit weaknesses.[18] Ultimately, the process of employing operational art serves to "facilitate the two-way conversation between tactics and strategy."[19] Though the term operational art did not exist in US doctrine during WWII, commanders and staffs employed facets of the theory, which can provide insight into the execution of large-scale combat operations today.

Operational art includes tenets from both Joint and Army doctrine. This study will focus primarily on the tenets of operational tempo, operational reach, culmination, and risk. Definitions in doctrine are similar but not exact. Thus, the definitions provided consist of the core ideas from *JP 3-0 Joint Operations, JP 5-0 Joint Planning* and *ADRP 3-0 Operations*.

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[15] Schneider, "Vulcan's Anvil," 28, 35-57.

[16] Shimon Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 11.

[17] US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 1-20.

[18] US Army, *FM 3-0,* (2017), 1-20.

[19] Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 56 (January 2010): 113.

The US Army describes tempo as commanders operating faster than the enemy to create favorable conditions.[20] Robert Leonhard described tempo as the "frequency in the number of significant military events per unit time."[21] Commanders at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war are able to control tempo by synchronizing action through simultaneous and sequential operations to degrade enemy capabilities.[22] By increasing tempo, a commander can present multiple dilemmas to the enemy and potentially overcome the enemy's ability to react.[23] However, high tempo is not always appropriate and can result in culmination. Commanders need to account for balancing speed, momentum, and resources to achieve maximum operational reach.[24] Measuring tempo in each of the case studies is the product of assessing the number of operations, resources, and speed of US forces relative to the German forces.

A unit reaches culmination when it is no longer able to continue its momentum.[25] If conducting offensive operations, culmination results in a commander taking an operational pause or revert to the defense; conversely, reaching culmination in the defense means the defender can no longer counter-attack or defend.[26] Culmination is not necessarily the product of enemy action and can be a planned event allowing a commander to set the conditions for subsequent or concurrent operations.[27] Commanders who can overcome culmination quickly, are able to maintain higher operational tempo and overcome an enemy force. Assessing whether a

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[20] US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2-7.

[21] Robert R. Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 69.

[22] Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes*, 73; US Army, *ADRP 3-0,* (2017), 2-7.

[23] US Army, *ADRP 3-0,* (2017), 2-7.

[24] Ibid.

[25] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), XXIII.

[26] Ibid., IV-36.

[27] US Army, *ADRP 3-0,* (2017), 2-8.

commander failed to meet operational objectives due to exhausted resources and loss of military capability determine whether a unit culminated early.

Operational reach and culmination are closely related concepts given in that extended operational reach. Failure to account for the remaining tenets of operational art can result in early culmination. *JP 3-0, Joint Operations* defines operational reach as the distance and duration a force is able to project military capabilities.[28] *ADRP 3-0, Operations* further describes operational reach as a "tether" whose length is the function of intelligence, protection, sustainment, endurance, and relative combat power.[29] A commander seeks to extend operational reach to ensure forces and resources are available throughout an operation to include a potential pursuit or counterattack when conducting either offensive or defensive operations. Measuring how far a commander can affect an enemy on the battlefield without reaching culmination determines operational reach.

Army doctrine defines risk as the relationship between hazards verses their probability and severity.[30] While *JP 3-0, Joint Operations* does not include a definition of risk, it defines risk management which is the practice of balancing risk with mission benefits.[31] Accepting risk provides commanders with "opportunities to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative."[32] Operational risk allows commanders to create opportunities to achieve decisive results against the enemy.[33] By accepting risk, commanders not only expose enemy weaknesses, but they also can surprise unexpecting enemy forces.[34] Failure to assume risk to protect the force prevents the

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[28] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), GL 13.

[29] US Army, *ADRP 3-0,* (2017)*,* 2-8.

[30] Ibid.*,* 2-10.

[31] US Joint Staff, *JP 3-0,* (2017), GL 14.

[32] US Army, *ADRP 3-0,* (2017)*,* 2-10.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

commander from maintaining tempo further creating advantages over the enemy. Determining whether commanders assume risk requires evidence of accepting risk to create an opportunity.

The first hypothesis stated if 4th AD and TF Butler maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy and the enemy could not address all the threats posed to them, then there was evidence they employed operational art. Patton's Third Army is well-known for shifting forces quickly to react to the German Ardennes Offensive. However, Charles MacDonald suggested the tempo of 4th AD was less than ideal due to equipment issues and the constant bridging efforts.[35] Even with these shortcomings, 4th AD's pace led to the unpreparedness of the Germans and their inability to meet the attack indicating the operational tempo of US forces exceeded that of the Germans.[36] John Toland reinforced the argument that 4th AD operated slower than anticipated becoming desynchronized with the 26th Division but ultimately completed the assault into Bastogne by December 26, 1944.[37] Both authors contend the high operational tempo of 4th AD prevented the enemy from effectively defending resulting in mission success.

As compared to the relief of Bastogne, Operation Dragoon has considerably less literature suggesting a potential gap in analysis of tempo during the operation. William Breuer focused his study on the soldier's perspective during the amphibious landings and provided only cursory overviews of the operational and strategic considerations leading up to the operation.[38] In Rick Atkinson's *The Guns of Last Light*, he did not specifically discuss tempo as it relates to the enemy's ability to react or the employment of operational art by commanders. However, his observations and conclusions described how Major General Lucian K. Truscott, commander of

[35] Charles B. MacDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge* (London: Weidenfels and Nicolson, 1984), 519.

[36] Ibid., 517.

[37] John Toland, *Battle: The Story of the Bulge* (New York: Random House, 1959), 219.

[38] William B. Breuer, *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of the South of France* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1987), 13-15.

VI Corps, placed constant pressure on Brigadier General Frederic Bates Butler, commander of TF Butler, to continue the aggressive drive into France while supplies ran dangerously low.[39] This is reminiscent of Shimon Naveh's assertion that the German *Blitzkrieg* was devoid of operational art because it failed to balance mass, tempo, and risk by focusing solely on tempo and pushing it to its extreme limits.[40] When commander's and staffs fail to achieve this balance, they threaten early culmination and therefore a lack of operational art.

The second hypothesis stated if 4th AD and TF Butler were able to extend their operational reach without culminating, then there was evidence they employed operational art. The term operational reach is not common amongst authors when describing the 4th AD and its relief of Bastogne; however, several authors described events enabling operational reach as defined in this study. Frankel and Smith discussed the incremental seizure of towns leading up to Bastogne while MacDonald cited the recurring pauses by the division to establish bridges.[41] The 4th AD understood the need for operational reach and ensured lines of communication (LOC) to Bastogne existed beyond that of a single road. Thus, the division maneuvered two of its subordinate commands, Combat Command B (CCB) and Combat Command R (CCR), towards Bastogne to expand the breadth of access ensuring operational reach extended beyond the relief of the 101st ABN.[42]

For Operation Dragoon, operational reach and culmination was likely a factor considered by commanders but Robert Miller did not specifically use those terms in his book, *August 1944*.

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[39] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 207.

[40] Naveh, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, xvii.

[41] Frankel and Smith, *Patton's Best*, 104; MacDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge*, 519.

[42] MacDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge*, 516; John J. McGrath, *The Brigade: A History, Its Organization and Employment in the US Army* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 48-49. The 4th AD organized its maneuver forces into brigade size elements referred to as Combat Commands. The task organization of each Combat Command changed depending on mission requirements; however, each Combat Command typically retained tank, armored infantry, fires, and engineer elements.

Miller described the circumstances in which Truscott ordered Butler to block on Montélimar, a critical defile that could enable German withdrawal back to Germany.[43] While Miller did not describe TF Butler as having culminated prior to Montélimar, he described how resource and capability shortfalls prevented the task force from effectively blocking the German withdrawal.[44] Gerald Astor offered a different narrative by commending VI Corps for its ability to cover extended distances in a short period demonstrating operational reach even with resource shortfalls.[45] While Astor's focus on the tactical fight lacks the insight into whether staffs and commanders employed operational art, Miller offered evidence to suggest a failure in planning to increase operational reach and prevent early culmination.

The third hypothesis stated if 4th AD and TF Butler were able to mitigate operational risk then there was evidence they employed operational art. In their study of the relief of Bastogne, MacDonald and Toland focused the majority of their discussion on risk as it related to Patton's decision to increase tempo and commit three divisions to the Battle of the Bulge within three days as a means of risk mitigation.[46] The literature reviewed did not focus on the operational risk assessed by the division commander, Major General Hugh Gaffey, and his staff except for a small excerpt by Toland which described the willingness of the command to allow the 37th Tank Battalion to break through to Bastogne with limited tanks and personnel to relieve the 101st ABN.[47] However, the actions described by both authors suggest commanders and staffs assessed and mitigated risk in an effort to take advantage of opportunities indicating a gap in the current literature.

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[43] Robert A. Miller, *August 1944: The Campaign for France* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1988), 173.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Astor, *The Greatest War*, 643.

[46] MacDonald, *The Battle of the Bulge*, 172; Toland, *Battle*, 285.

[47] Toland, *Battle*, 285.

For Operation Dragoon, Atkinson only alluded to the risk incurred by Truscott when he continued to order the advance of TF Butler to Montélimar while supply lines became exceedingly long and inefficient.[48] However, Miller offered that Truscott understood operational risk and accounted for it during planning and execution. In fact, Truscott knew TF Butler did not have the requisite strength to block the German withdrawal, but risked pushing the task force to Montélimar to delay until reinforced by the 36th Division. By assuming this risk, Truscott created the opportunity to annihilate the remaining German forces in southern France.[49] Both authors supported the hypothesis that commanders assumed operational risk, but Miller went on to describe the opportunity it created.

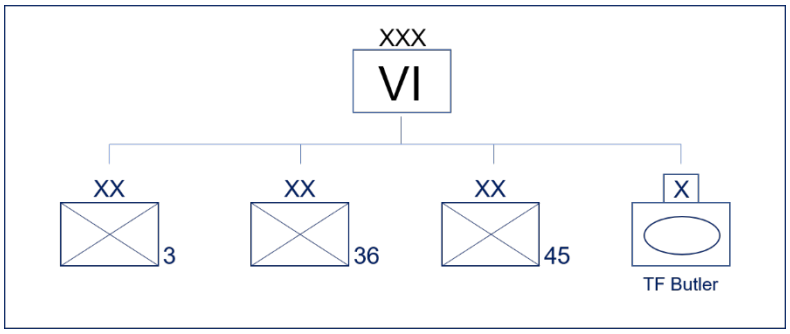

Figure 1. VI Corps Task Organization of divisions during the pursuit by TF Butler through the Rhone Valley. *Source:* The Author.

This literature review provided refined definitions and details of the terms used throughout the study to include operational art, operational reach, culmination, tempo, and operational risk. The review of the theory of operational art provides the context in which Allied forces were operating during WWII while the refinement of the key definitions served to provide a common understanding of terms used today. The review of empirical evidence suggested 4th AD and TF Butler employed operational art in the execution of the relief of Bastogne and Operation Dragoon respectively; however, the literature tended to focus primarily on either the soldier, corps and army commanders, or strategic leaders such as Eisenhower and Churchill.

[48] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 201, 209.

[49] Miller, *August 1944,* 172-73.

Conducting a comparison between Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne provides additional insight into how different units potentially viewed and applied tenets of operational art during WWII.

Methodology

This study used George and Bennett's structured, focused comparison to analyze two case studies to determine the level of utility and application of operational art in large-scale combat operations. The structure of the study came from the general questions applied to each case study to enable a systematic comparison to meet the research objective.[50] The focused comparison is a result of researching only particular aspects of the case studies through the theoretical lens of operational art.[51] The study included eight research questions focused on a narrow set of concepts applied to each case to test the three hypotheses to produce the final conclusion.

By using two cases, the study worked to broaden the scope of how divisions can employ operational art when faced with varying enemy dispositions and compositions. This underlying impact required the study to identify cases in which commanders needed to make rapid decisions and units to execute quickly. By selecting cases from the same period, the study minimized the variables associated with changes in doctrine, technology, strategic leadership, and societal influence. In reviewing operations in WWII, TF Butler in Operation Dragoon stood out because it involved an ad hoc unit coming together quickly to execute an offensive action with minimal resources against a numerically superior who was familiar with the terrain. Whether this operation resulted in success or failure, examples of operational art were evident and worth further research. The relief of Bastogne took place within five months of Operation Dragoon and involved different operational leadership, enemy, terrain, and weather. However, the doctrine,

[50] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

[51] Ibid.

technology, and societal influence remained relatively constant creating consistency when conducting the comparison. Like TF Butler, 4th AD had the task of conducting an offensive action over a relatively short period but against an enemy operating in a hasty defense. By using a second case, the study explored how different commanders and staffs viewed similar problems and employed the tenets of operational art as they understood them at the time.

Data collection for this study included primary sources to include personal accounts of the commanders as well as the planning documents and after-action reviews for each operation. Secondary sources and doctrine supplemented this data and provided the current terms and definitions applied in each of the hypotheses and thesis. Together, these sources served to answer the eight research questions used to guide the comparison of the case studies.

The first question asked what was the strategic and operational context of the operation. The answer to this question focused on the military and political conditions affecting the operational environment for both sides of the conflict. This included the composition and disposition of forces, alliances, and how leaders viewed the status of the war. The second question asked what was the stated political and military objectives and its answer included an analysis of what each belligerent attempted to achieve. The third question involved the strategic and operational levels and asked what were the strategic and operational assumptions. The answer included information showing where the belligerents lacked information but needed to make decisions to continue operations.

The next set of questions focused on the options and operational approach taken by the commanders. The fourth question asked what military options were available to the commanders. Answering this question required the determination of whether the staffs and commanders identified additional courses of action, branch plans, or sequels to operations or if the commander indicated the selected course of action was the only option. The fifth question asked what was the operational approach taken by the commanders. By collecting information about the task organization, task and purpose for each unit, and linkage to the military objective and end state,

the study answered this question while also demonstrating the level of flexibility of each organization.

The final set of questions centered on operational risk, adaptability, and the outcome of the battles. Question six asked how did the commanders mitigate operational risk and the answer included whether the commanders and staffs identified risk and developed mitigation measures. Branch plans, sequencing of events, integration of a combat enablers, and change in tempo were potential mitigation measures for the risks. The seventh question asked how did the commanders anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment. Evidence of the commanders making a change to the plan after receiving new information about the enemy and the operational environment drove the answer to this question. The final question asked how did the outcomes of the battles influence the military and political objectives of the war. The answer involved the identification of any impacts on the military or political leaders regarding the prosecution of the war because of each battle.

This methodology provided the framework for how this study utilized George and Bennett's structured, focused comparison to analyze case studies through the lens of operational art. Answers to the questions required data collection from secondary and primary sources to include after action reviews and doctrine to provide the necessary information for a complete and valid comparison.

Case Studies

The review of the relevant terms as well as the current literature available for Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne establishes the baseline for the review of the case studies. The intent of the case studies is not to account for all factors driving the outcome of the battles. Rather, it is to explore how commanders and staffs considered concepts that are today termed operational art. This section consists of a sub-section for each case study with each sub-section beginning with a historic overview of the case followed by the answers to the research questions.

Operation Dragoon Overview

Originally named Operation Anvil, Operation Dragoon served as the opening to the second front in the European theater and was to serve as a diversion for Operation Overlord, but due to shortages and delays in Italy, it failed to meet the execution timeline.[52] The operation began during the period of darkness between August 14 and 15, 1944 with the purpose of seizing objectives Astoris and Cyril, which were the key ports at Marseille and Toulon respectively.[53] On the morning of August 15, US Army VI Corps executed its assault with 66,000 soldiers allowing for the unimpeded flow of the main effort.[54] The follow-on French force, led by General Jean Joseph Marie Gabriel de Lattre de Tassigny, was a conglomerate of forces consisting of nearly 250,000 soldiers and served as the main effort in the seizure of Marseille and Toulon.[55]

Two days following the amphibious landing, the German Army Group G received orders to withdrawal back to Germany except for forces to defend the ports.[56] The German force, commanded by General Johannes Blaskowitz, was short twenty-five percent of its infantry divisions and two-thirds of its armor divisions due to the requirements of defending along the Normandy coast.[57] Blaskowitz's mobile reserve was the 11th Panzer Division (PD), which was initially stuck west of the Rhone River after Allied bombers destroyed bridges.[58] Once reoriented, 11th PD executed a feint to the coast while serving as the rear guard to allow the remaining four

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[52] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 192; Astor, *The Greatest War*, 633. The name change occurred to assuage Churchill's fear for operational security.

[53] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 201.

[54] Ibid., 196, 199.

[55] Ibid., 201.

[56] US Navy Armed Forces Staff College, *The Invasion of Southern France: Operation Dragoon* (Norfolk, VA: Publications and Printing Office, 1949), 15.

[57] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 199.

[58] Ibid., 200.

divisions to withdraw.[59] Truscott fell for the feint and ordered 3rd Infantry Division (ID), commanded by Major General John W. O'Daniel, to prepare for a counterattack by 11th PD effectively leaving 3rd Division to remain in place while the Germans continued to escape north up the Rhone.[60]

Regardless of the feint, the disorganized withdrawals presented the Allies with an opportunity to seize the initiative and conduct a pursuit of the Germans. Unfortunately for Truscott, the French armored brigade that took part in the beachhead seizure returned to French control following the landings forcing Truscott to build an ad hoc pursuit force known as TF Butler.[61] Download priorities along the coast shifted to vehicles and food to allow TF Butler and 36th ID to conduct a pursuit.[62] By August 18, TF Butler initiated movement travelling 135 miles with limited communications and logistical support.[63] In the absence of orders, Butler continued to pressure the German rear guard moving generally northeast towards Grenoble, France. However, on August 21, orders from Truscott reached TF Butler which shifted movement toward Montélimar, requiring another ninety-mile march in a single day.[64]

Throughout this operation, supplies and the growing line of communication (LOC) between TF Butler and the coast continued to lengthen. The extended LOC was only further exacerbated by the fact that ammunition inside the ships had to be moved to reach the fuel and food buried in the hulls.[65] On August 22, Butler wanted to launch a full-scale attack on retreating

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[59] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 207, 209.

[60] Ibid., 209.

[61] Frederic R. Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," *Armored Cavalry Journal* (January-February, 1948): 12.

[62] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 206.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Frederic R. Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part II," *Armored Cavalry Journal* (March-April, 1948): 34; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 207.

[65] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 207.

German forces in Montélimar but was unable to because of a lack of reinforcements, resupply, and artillery.[66] Instead, TF Butler, consisting of thirty Sherman tanks, twelve tank destroyers, twelve self-propelled artillery guns, and an infantry battalion struggled to control Montélimar as it faced two German corps.[67]

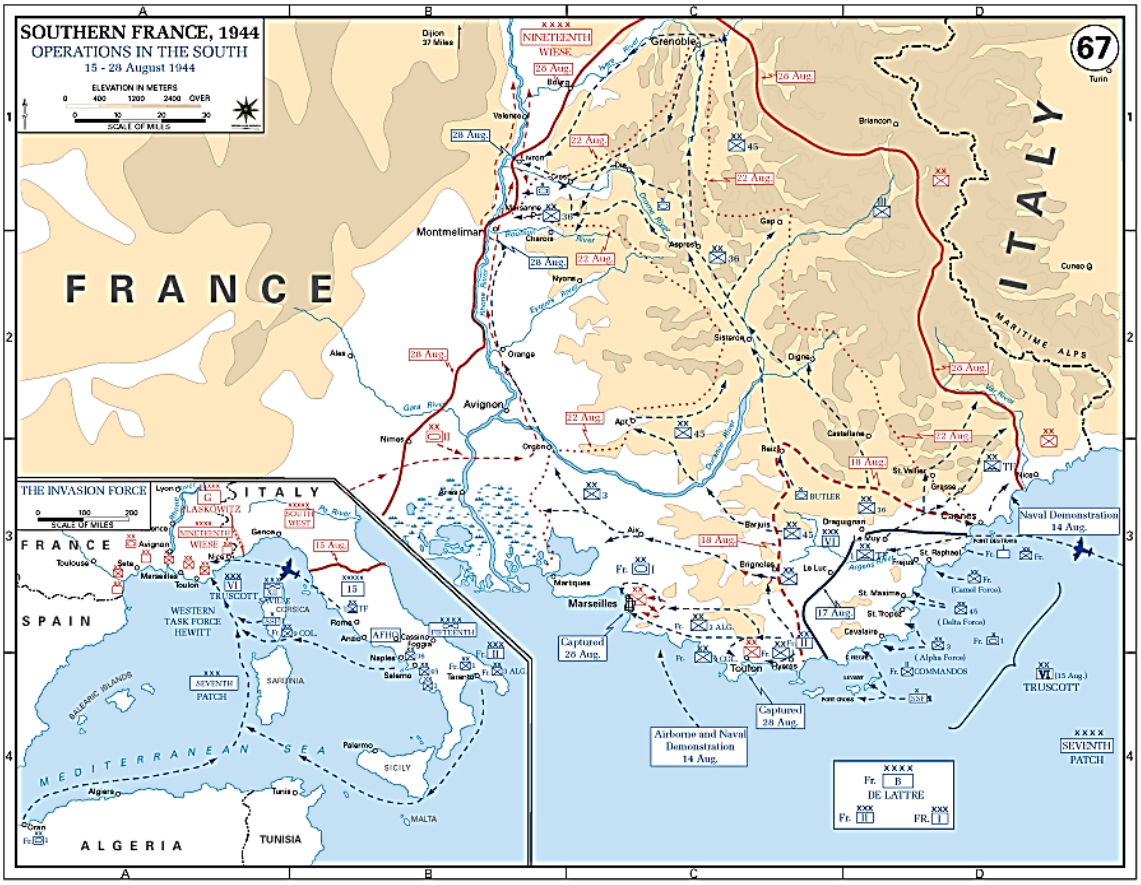

Figure 2. Operation Dragoon. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, United States Military Academy, "Southern France, 1944," *United States Military Academy Atlases*, accessed November 15, 2018, https://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World%20War%20II%20Europe/WWIIEurope67.gif.

On August 24, TF Butler managed to block the German escape route, Highway 7. With heavy rains flooding fords, the German withdrawal slowed and the Allied attack continued.[68] By

[66] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part II," 33.

[67] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 209.

[68] Ibid., 211.

the morning of August 28, TF Butler, reduced to nearly a battalion, fought to limit the German escape until 36th ID arrived.[69] Once at Montélimar, 36th ID assumed control and on the afternoon of August 28, the Allied pursuit culminated without the annihilation of enemy forces.[70]

Operation Dragoon: Focused Research Questions

Conferences between November 22 and December 6, 1943 took place in Cairo and Tehran between President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Marshal Stalin framing the strategic context of the operation. A notable point of discussion was the Soviet's insistence on the need for a second front in southern France in addition to Normandy.[71] Stalin received assurance from Roosevelt and Churchill that a second front in Europe would occur in the summer of 1944.[72] However, Churchill disagreed with the invasion of southern France believing a drive up the Rhone was not advantageous to the overall effort.[73] Instead he wanted to cross the Po Valley in northern Italy and drive through the Ljubljana gap to Austria and then onto the Danube Valley.[74] Americans believed Churchill's objective was to deny the Soviets entry into Europe by blocking in the Balkans.[75] Conversely, Eisenhower viewed France as the decisive theater and Operations Overlord and Anvil as being part of the same undertaking.[76] Ultimately, the

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[69] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 204, 211.

[70] Ibid., 211.

[71] Stationery Office, ed., *Invasion of the South of France: Operation "Dragoon" 15 August, 1944*, *Battle Summary* (London: HMSO Publication Centre, 1994), viii.

[72] US Navy Armed Forces Staff College, *The Invasion of Southern France*, 1.

[73] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 192.

[74] US Navy Armed Forces Staff College, *The Invasion of Southern France*, 1; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 194. Churchill later admitted this maneuver was intended to forestall the Soviet movement into Europe and to support his peripheral strategy against Germany

[75] Astor, *The Greatest War*, 633.

[76] Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, United States Army in WWII (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, 1959), 413; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 192.

Americans saw the agreement with the Soviets as paramount and proceeded with planning for Operation Dragoon.[77]

The operational context of Dragoon centered on the progress of Allied forces in the Italian campaign given the requirement for troops and landing craft. With the stall of Italian campaign at Anzio, Allied forces became limited in their ability to continue to move resources into theater to prepare for a second front in France.[78] The invasion of southern France required Allied forces to reach Rome to establish a defensive line to allow for the redistribution of forces and resources.[79] Dragoon required an additional 100 to 200 Landing Ship, Tanks (LST), which had to come from the European theater given the ongoing requirements in the Pacific theater.[80] Upon reaching these conditions in Italy, resources shifted to southern France and Operation Dragoon became a reality.

The Allied military objectives were the exploitation of Operation Overlord, securing of Italy, establishment of a second front southern France, and drive west by the Soviet Union to achieve the strategic objective of unconditional surrender by Germany.[81] Operation Dragoon sought to support these objectives by opening additional ports in the European theater, drawing German troops away from Operation Overlord, and employing French troops.[82] Army planners believed the cancellation of Dragoon would weaken the war effort for several reasons including negatively impacting the domestic politics in France, potentially causing the loss of an additional

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[77] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 420.

[78] Astor, *The Greatest War*, 633.

[79] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 416.

[80] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare,* 421, 426; Jacob L. Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," *Military Affairs* 10, no. 2 (1946): 17. During the same period, Eisenhower's forces from Cherbourg began movement while Patton's armor broke through to seal off Nantes, Brest, and several other smaller ports

[81] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 479.

[82] Ibid., 469.

eight to ten divisions during Operation Overlord, and preventing the occupation of Austria, Hungary, and southern Germany.[83]

As determined by the British and US chiefs of staffs in Quebec in August 1943, the invasion of southern France would accomplish the military objective of engaging an estimated eleven German divisions preventing their movement towards allied forces in Cherbourg.[84] Additionally, the operation would draw German reserves from northern and central France away from Operational Overlord and allow for a double envelopment of enemy forces east of the Rhine.[85] Operationally, Allied forces would seize Marseille and Toulon to augment the ports in Normandy and conduct an assault north into France within sixty to ninety days following the amphibious landing resulting in the disruption of German forces as they moved up through the Rhone.[86]

Assumptions at the strategic level differed between the US and Britain resulting in radically different courses of action for the opening of a second front. In deciding where to invade, the United States considered its already heavy investment into the French forces and assumed an invasion somewhere other than France would prove wasteful as French forces in the Mediterranean would not commit themselves anywhere else other than to the homeland.[87] Conversely, Churchill advocated the campaign through the Balkans assuming the populations would rise up against the Germans and the satellites would quickly submit to Allied advances.[88] This idea conflicted with the grand strategy of pursuing courses of action that led to the early

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[83] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 425.

[84] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 8.

[85] Ibid. Churchill and Roosevelt approved these objectives in Cairo in November 1943 and later by Stalin during the Tehran Conference.

[86] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 192.

[87] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 413.

[88] Ibid., 471.

defeat of Germany since the drive up the Ljubjana gap would take time and remained logistically infeasible.[89] Ultimately, the assumptions drove the Allies to agree on an invasion into southern France with a final execution date of August 15, 1944.

Operationally, planners continued planning under the assumption the amphibious assault and follow-on attack would have the necessary resources to gain a foothold. However, the indecision on the number of assault forces and who would provide the landing craft delayed planning. The final choice to make Dragoon a three-division assault required additional landing craft be sent from America.[90] Though the LST proved to be the critical shortage, the Allies scrambled to assemble nearly 1,370 support ships to support the assault force of eighteen battalions.[91] In a letter to Eisenhower on June 12, 1944, Devers described his hope for the availability of landing craft indicating how all plans and rehearsals within sixty days of D-Day still centered on one critical assumption: LST availability.[92]

Regardless, planning continued and extended beyond the amphibious assault. Based on the templated German strength and the challenges faced in northern France, planners assumed fifteen days for the seizure of Toulon, forty days to seize Marseille, and approximately sixty days before beginning the advance north from the Durance River.[93] These assumptions affected how the Allies task organized their forces as well as how they prioritized the loading of fuel, water, ammunition, and equipment. Planners prioritized ammunition for the amphibious landing while food and fuel remained onboard the ships.[94] The next focus for sustainment was the movement of

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[89] Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare*, 472–73.

[90] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France,* 2.

[91] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 27–28.

[92] Jacob L. Devers to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, letter, June 12, 1944, file Devers, Jacob L. (2), box 34, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[93] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 30.

[94] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 207.

drinking water over the beaches to support the overland assault.[95] Collectively, these assumptions set the conditions for Truscott to develop an ad hoc force to conduct an immediate pursuit with limited resources.

Following the amphibious landing along the Côte d'Azur, Truscott observed the reaction by the enemy and developed options to address the German force withdrawing in poor order. He could adhere to the prescribed invasion timeline, which would allow for the successful withdrawal of German Army Group G, or conduct a pursuit. Once Truscott decided to pursue, he had the option of waiting for either the 36th ID or 45th ID to complete their consolidation and reorganization following the amphibious assault or to mobilize TF Butler. Before the landings, Truscott anticipated he would lose control of the French armored force once the landings were complete and thought about how he would assemble a provisional pursuit force under the control of Butler.[96] This forethought provided him additional options but did not address the logistical shortcomings TF Butler would later face.

Within TF Butler, options presented themselves at the tactical level. While in route to Esiteron, the TF HQs did not have maps of the area or communications with Corps except through the occasional liaison plane.[97] All information from Corps proved sporadic and served only to inform Butler of the progress of the 36th ID coming from behind. With a lack of information, Butler had the option to remain in place or to continue to extend his logistics tail and pursue towards Aspres and Gap.[98] Though pursuing towards Aspres and Gap did not support the intent of the Corps Commander, it demonstrated how the Butler weighed possible options based

[95] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France*, 6. Operations required twenty-six LST to transport approximately three-hundred and fifty thousand gallons within the first five days.

[96] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," 13.

[97] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part II," 31.

[98] Ibid., 33.

on the enemy situation as he knew it, his own combat power, and the state of his sustainment capabilities. Truscott ordered TF Butler to change its generally northern movement and maneuver west towards Montélimar further lengthening his LOC by ninety miles.[99] The flexibility of the TF Butler afforded Truscott the option of conducting a rapid shift west to focus forces on the new objective.

The original operational approach for Operation Dragoon had VI Corps serve as the assault element followed by the French who would pass through to capture Toulon and Marseilles.[100] The VI Corps would then continue movement west and north to establish blocking positions near the Durance River to support the seizure of the ports.[101] Truscott executed the assault with the 36th ID, 45th ID, 3rd ID and one French armored brigade landing at Agay, Saint Rapheil, Saint Maxime, and Bays Pampelonne and Cavalaire.[102] All forces sailed from Naples for the assault while additional divisions, escort carriers, and bombarding forces staged near the coast of southern Italy.[103] Airborne forces were dropped near LeMuy to block German reinforcements necessitating the quick movement of assault forces inland conduct link-up. The following day, French Army Group B was to pass to the left of the US forces to seize Toulon and Marseilles.[104]

The successful landings led to the 3rd ID isolating Toulon and Marseille for the French force, the movement of 36th ID to the Italian border, and the 45th ID moving north to link up with the airborne forces. The terrain proved challenging to the offload as the selected coasts were

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[99] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part II," 33–34.

[100] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 30.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France*, 4.

[103] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France,* 4; US Navy Armed Forces Staff College, *The Invasion of Southern France*, 6. Landings by French and American commandos to capture key coastal batteries precipitated the attack enabling the landing craft to approach the coast unimpeded.

[104] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France*, 1.

separated by cliffs that hindered communications.[105] Inland, the terrain consisted of low mountains with ravines stretching from the Alps to the coast.[106] Adequate roads existed through the area of operations linking critical allowing for rapid linkup with commandos and airborne forces; however, only one road existed running directly inland limiting options for movement.[107] French forces landed on D+1 and began the assault on Toulon and Marseilles. US forces continued to seize terrain with 3rd ID taking Grimaud, 45th ID taking Plan de la Tour and Taradeau, and 36th ID taking the high ground overlooking Theoule and Frejus and then Draguignan (see Figure 3). By 16 August, VI Corps reached its limit of advance.[108]

Following the landings, Truscott learned through his reconnaissance elements that the Germans were withdrawing up the Rhone Valley.[109] The original timetable called for upwards of sixty days before beginning the advance north, but in actuality the French captured Toulon and Marseille in ten days and the pursuit north occurred within three days of the landing.[110] The initial success of Allied forces drove Truscott to stand up TF Butler using corps armored units to fill the ranks.[111] On August 18, TF Butler initiated movement northwest from the Le Muy area to spearhead the advance towards Grenoble and reached Riez while the 36th ID followed in support.[112] Meanwhile, the Germans continued up the Rhone Valley not knowing the situation given the lack of command direction and communications.[113] As forces from the 36th ID came

[105] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France*, 12.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 38–39.

[109] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 34.

[110] Ibid., 30, 34.

[111] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," 12.

[112] Mary H. Williams, *Chronology: 1941-1945*, United States Army in WWII (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, 1965), 251.

[113] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 36.

available, they followed TF Butler an eventually took control of the block in Montélimar.[114] The result was the escape of 80 percent of Blaskowtiz's forces but only after losing ten thousand soldiers, half the armor, and one quarter of the artillery from 11th PD.[115]

The initial operational risk for VI Corps during Operation Dragoon was conducting an assault with only three divisions. As the commander of the Mediterranean, Eisenhower believed the operation assumed significant risk given the limited resourcing, as he assumed it would take a minimum of ten divisions.[116] Mitigating this risk involved a robust deception plan along with large-scale rehearsals by each of the divisions along Salerno beaches.[117] With the Germans defending the coast with two divisions, one mobile division a day away, and three divisions within striking distance of VI Corps, Truscott needed the German focus drawn away from the Côte d'Azur.[118] The plan began with the staging of a diversionary force at Nice and Cannes and the use of deception devices to skew enemy radar and indicate an offensive double-winged attack against Nice-Cannes and Marseilles-Toulon on the morning of D-Day.[119] Additionally, an aerial bombardment targeting Sete, Marseilles, Toulon, and Genoa coupled with dummy airborne drops using 500 troop-carrying transports drove the Germans into believing the primary focus of the attack would be Genoa.[120] The result was the Germans' inability to meet the landing force reducing the risk to the amphibious assault forces.[121]

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[114] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 36.

[115] US Navy Armed Forces Staff College, *The Invasion of Southern France*, 16.

[116] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 8.

[117] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France*, 16.

[118] Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," 38.

[119] Ibid., 24–25.

[120] Ibid., 23, 26.

[121] Ibid., 38.

During the operation, the Corps assumed risk by committing an ad hoc force to pursue without adequate sustainment capabilities. Truscott understood the possibility that such a force would be necessary and that the French would retain control of their armored brigade following the landings leaving VI Corps.[122] The lack of advance planning forced TF Butler to assume significant risk as it maneuvered understrength and poorly resourced up the Rhone Valley. As TF Butler continued to travel away from the coast, the extended supply line became the primary risk to mission. The objective of the first day became Riez because of fuel limitations rather than enemy interference.[123] This issue continued as TF Butler paused again for fuel on the second day before it could continue to assault Sisteron.[124] While these operational pauses allowed TF Butler to receive supplies, the continuous movement put at the risk the extended LOC.

As scouts neared Grenoble, supply trucks numbering only sixty-two for Seventh Army travelled nearly three-hundred miles round trip from the coast for fuel and ammunition.[125] Meanwhile, the supporting 36th ID failed to provide any sort of support to TF Butler. With the division spread from St. Tropez to Grenoble and only half of transports unloaded, Major General John E. Dahlquist struggled to keep pace while operating with only 5,000 gallons of fuel and a requirement of 33,000 gallons per day.[126] Butler mitigated this risk by leveraging the French Marquis who served to reinforce the infantry and secure the LOC.[127] The task force also used the reconnaissance squadron to proof routes and establish the subsequent positions for the armored column before moving reducing the risk to force while preserving fuel.[128] Together, these

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[122] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," 13.

[123] Ibid., 16.

[124] Ibid., 18.

[125] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 208.

[126] Ibid., 208, 210.

[127] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part II," 15.

[128] Ibid., 30.

measures allowed the column to maintain momentum until reaching Montélimar where the lack of fuel, ammunition, and forces available became too great for TF Butler to overcome.

With limited guidance from higher command, no maps, an extended LOC, and facing a larger enemy force, Butler relied heavily on organic assets to enable him to anticipate, learn, and adapt to the operational environment. With the original objective being Sisteron, Butler initiated movement and almost immediately outpaced the P-47s flying from Corsica even after payloads were reduced to increase fuel capacity.[129] As situational awareness continued to diminish, Butler looked to his field artillery battalion to use their cub plane, originally intended to adjust fire, as a reconnaissance platform in an effort to determine the locations of downed bridges and the suitable bypass routes.[130] Butler also employed his cavalry squadron as intended by deploying them forward of the main body to determine both enemy locations and subsequent assembly areas. By collocating the TF headquarters with the reconnaissance squadron and running the communications around the latter's network, Butler increased his situational awareness while also ensuring uninterrupted communications with his subordinate commands.[131] Collectively, the reconnaissance effort provided the commander with the necessary information to learn and adapt to the environment in the absence of Corps intelligence reports.

As TF Butler progressed toward Montélimar, the rate of German surrender continued to increase. Butler soon learned the Germans would surrender in mass only to US forces because of fear of retaliation by the French Marquis. However, the increasing number of surrendering Germans began to bog down the TF until Butler made the decision to put a noncommissioned officer in command of the French detainee facilities.[132] This allowed Butler to tell the Germans

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[129] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," 13; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 209.

[130] Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 206.

[131] Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," 13.

[132] Ibid., 17.

they were surrendering to Americans even though it was the French who committed the resources. The effects of the quick thinking and adaptability by both junior and senior leaders allowed TF Butler to not only avoid prolonged direct fire engagements with the German rear guard, but also offloaded consolidation area requirements on the indigenous French forces.

The pursuit by TF Butler during Operation Dragoon influenced the military and political objectives of the war by ensuring German forces were unable to mount an effective counter-offensive and disrupt the seizure of the southern ports. This directly supported the military objective of seizing critical logistics nodes in southern France, as well as the political objective of opening a second front to expedite an end to the war. TF Butler faced major challenges in terms of combat power and logistics, but they were able to assemble an ad hoc element that effectively forced the Germans into a disorderly withdrawal along a single valley. Though 80 percent of Army Group G escaped, 11th PD became combat ineffective due to the heavy losses.[133] With the German defense forces in France in disarray, VI Corps was able to advance 400 miles over twenty-seven days to join forces with Eisenhower.[134] Even though much of the German force remained intact, meeting the operational objectives along the southern coast allowed for force build on two fronts in preparation for the attack into Germany. The success of TF Butler is not the sole reason for achieving the military objectives, but it is amongst the many critical smaller operations that played a role in setting the conditions for the Allies to seize key terrain and execute the final drive to defeat Germany.

Relief of Bastogne Overview

The Battle of the Bulge extended over two months from December 1944 through January 1945. This study examines the specific events related to 4th AD beginning with the initiation of the attack by the Germans on December 16 and ending on December 26, 1944 with the

[133] US Navy Armed Forces Staff College, *The Invasion of Southern France,* 16.

[134] Stationery Office, *Invasion of the South of France*, 56.

breakthrough to Bastogne by CCR. The German Ardennes offensive served as Hitler's last effort to stem the success of the Allies on the western front. Following Operations Overlord, Dragoon, and Cobra, Allied forces continued their drive across France in the summer and fall of 1944. This success resulted in Nazi Germany needing to conduct an offensive operation to reestablish the Third Reich's prestige, carry Germany through another winter, and establish a favorable bargaining position for peace.[135] By this point, the Germans were trading space for time but they no longer had space to give before Allied forces entered Germany.[136] Under these conditions, Hitler developed *Unternehmen Wacht am Rhein, "*Operation Watch on the Rhine."

The German plan sent two panzer armies down the same route used in 1940 to conduct a turning movement toward the Meuse River to capture Namur and Liege and later Antwerp and Brussels.[137] The operation advanced along a forty-five mile front between Echternach and Monchau using twenty-one divisions consisting of eight Panzer divisions, two Volksgrenadier divisions, two parachute divisions, and nine infantry divisions.[138] The 5th Panzer Army proceeded along the southern axis of advance with four Panzer divisions, two Volksgrenadier divisions, and four infantry divisions with objectives including Wiltz, Winseler, Bastogne, and Namur.[139] The German attack involved significant troop build-up and coordination until its initiation on December 16, 1944. However, reports from G-2 of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied

[135] Hugh Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, United States Army in WWII 8 (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History United States Army, 1965), 673.

[136] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 221.

[137] G-2 Section, 4th Armored Division, *G-2 Periodic Report Number 115 Appendix 1,* file G2 Periodic Report 22 December 1944, box 61, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[138] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 223.

[139] Ibid., 224.

Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) between the December 11 and December 17 gave no indication of a mounting German offensive.[140]

During the eight days prior to the Verdun conference, the 4th AD conducted maintenance on vehicles and weapons, completed reorganization, conducted training, and prepared for the upcoming drive west into Germany.[141] On December 17, 4th AD learned of the German offensive in First Army's zone and understood it to consist of eleven total divisions supported by bombing and strafing missions and upwards of five hundred tanks.[142] Meanwhile, the German advance failed to secure Bastogne creating a unforeseen obstacle in the middle of their LOC.[143] The 5th Panzer Army laid siege to the 101st ABN at Bastogne while simultaneously bypassing with remaining forces to continue its drive west.[144] Though Patton had yet to attend the meeting at Verdun, his staff issued new orders to the division commanders and by December 18, Gaffey directed 4th AD to begin movement to the northwest.[145] At 12:30 a.m. on December 19, 4th AD set out to travel 180 miles in twenty-two hours from Sarralbe to Arlon, Belgium to prepare for

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[140] G-2 Section, Supreme Headquarters of Allied Expeditionary Force, *Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 39,* file Weekly Intelligence Summaries December 3-31, 1944 (3), box 31, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[141] G-3 Section, 4th Armored Division, *G-3 Periodic Reports No. 117-124,* file G-3 Journal 11-18 December 1944, box 64, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, box 64, Abilene, KS.

[142] Robert Summers, Lem Kelly, Frederick Hawksworth, Ian Turner, Clovis Heard, Elliot Cutler Jr., James Kolb, and William Gist II, "Armor at Bastogne" (research report, The Armored School, 1949), 85.

[143] G-2 Section, Supreme Headquarters of Allied Expeditionary Force, *Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 40,* file Weekly Intelligence Summaries December 3-31, 1944 (4), box 31, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[144] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 230.

[145] 4th Armored Division, *Combat History of 4th Armored Division, 17 July 1944 - 9 May 1945,* file 4th Armored Division Combat History July-December 1944, box 61, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

offensive operations north.[146] By December 22, 4th AD concentrated around Arlon, sixteen miles from Bastogne, prepared to attack.[147]

The original intent for the operation was for all three Combat Commands (CC) to reach Bastogne on December 25, but German resistance was formidable.[148] CCB, led by Brigadier General Holmes E. Dager, was unable to break through the German defenses in zone and remained six miles from Bastogne.[149] Meanwhile, Combat Command A (CCA), commanded by Brigadier General Herbert L. Earnest, neared Warnach but could not break through to Bastogne.[150] Finally, on December 26, CCR, commanded by Colonel Wendell Blanchard, secured Remichampagne and moved to Clochimont Hill overlooking Sibret.[151] After making an on-the-ground assessment, the battalion commanders of 37th Tank Battalion and 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion decided to bypass Sibret and drive directly to Bastogne believing Sibret was strongly held.[152] The decision proved fortuitous as CCR successfully reached the 101st ABN and broke the siege of Bastogne at 4:45 p.m. on December 26, 1944.[153]

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[146] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 83; Craig, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1990), 35.

[147] Craig, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, 35.

[148] Ibid., 37.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid., 39.

[152] S.L.A. Marshall, *The Siege of Bastogne* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963), 240.

[153] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 246.

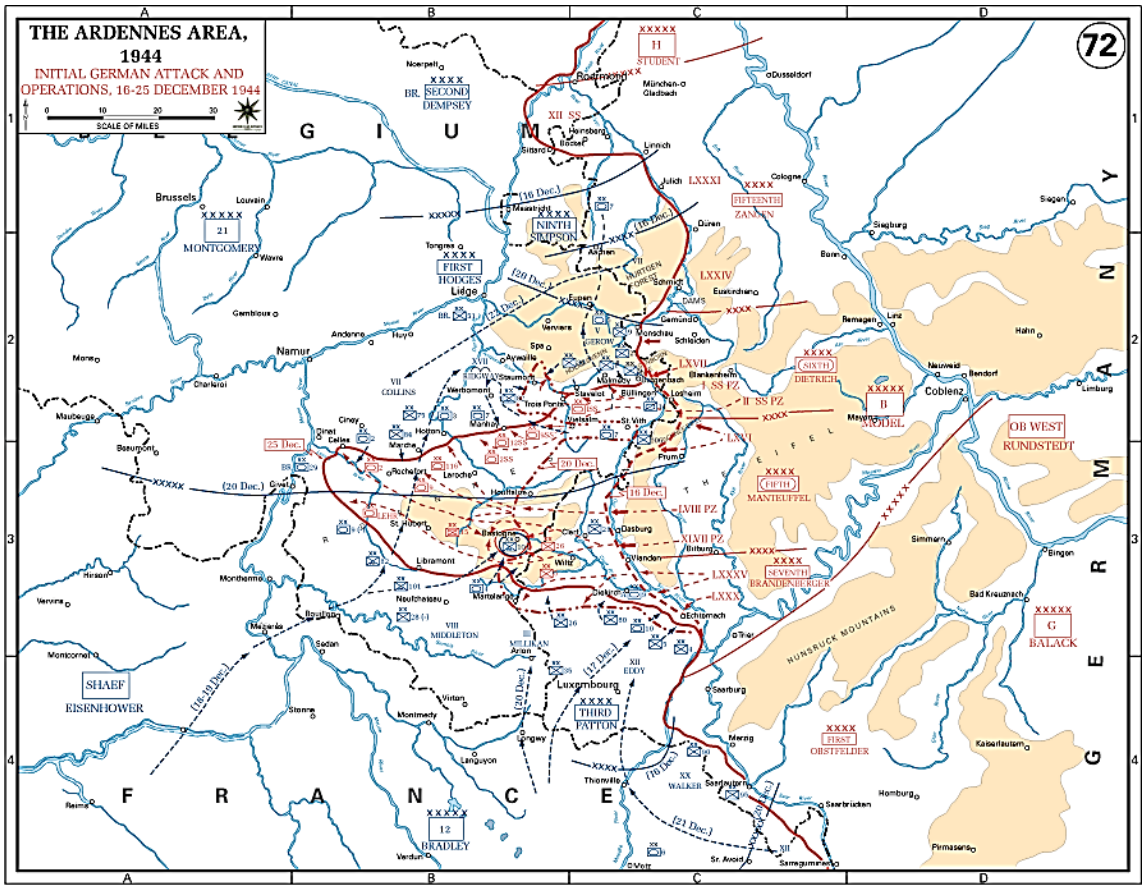

Figure 3. The Bulge, 1944. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, United States Military Academy, "The Ardennes Area, 1944," *United States Military Academy Atlases*, accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World%20War%20II%20Europe/WWIIEurope72.gif.

Relief of Bastogne: Focused Research Questions

The strategic and operational context of the relief of Bastogne centered on the impending Allied drive across the Rhine River coupled with Hitler's decision to use his last offensive capability. During this stage of WWII, the German high command understood its position was becoming tenuous and required action to set conditions for future peace talks.[154] War on both fronts strained German resources requiring more time for the manufacturing of weapons, development of new systems, and enlistment and training of new soldiers.[155] While strategic

[154] Cole, *The Ardennes*, 673.

[155] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 218.

decisions aligned with operational planning for the Ardennes offensive, the Germans continued to face petrol shortages at the national level as well as personnel shortages resulting in poorly trained infantry divisions.[156] Conversely, the Allies were preparing to continue the offensive and invade Germany to bring the war to an end. Third Army used the early weeks of December 1944 to prepare for an attack across the Siegfried Line beginning on December 21, 1944.[157] This included establishing its logistics hubs to stage resources forward while units rested, rehabilitated, trained, and conducted maintenance.[158] At the time of the German offensive, 4th AD was assigned to XII Corps and was set to move on line with the remaining divisions in the corps to begin its attack.[159]

In Tunisia, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Eisenhower met to codify political objectives in the Casablanca Policy, which included nothing less than unconditional surrender by Germany.[160] The resulting military objective focused on the defeat of the German military complex by securing objectives across Italy and France to Berlin to force capitulation. Once at the Siegfried line, the Allied armies prepared for their drive into Germany but the Ardennes offensive forced a change in operational priorities. Eisenhower shifted focus to destroying German forces west of the Rhine before continuing movement across the Rhine.[161] Accomplishing this required arranging forces in a manner that "prevented the stabilization of the enemy salient with infantry, permitting him the ability to use his Panzers."[162] The military objective remained unchanged

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[156] G-2 Section, Supreme Headquarters of Allied Expeditionary Force, *Weekly Intelligence Summary Number 40,* file Weekly Intelligence Summaries December 3-31, 1944 (4), box 31, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[157] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 83.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid., 84.

[160] Astor, *The Greatest War*, 304.

[161] General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Outline Plan of Operations, December 31, 1944*, file Montgomery, Bernard (11), box 83, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS (hereafter cited as Outline Plan of Operations).

[162] Eisenhower, *Outline Plan of Operations.*

throughout the Battle of the Bulge and Allied forces eventually continued their offensive into Germany.

Both strategic and operational leaders made several assumptions to drive operations before and during the execution of the Battle of the Bulge. Strategically, Eisenhower and Churchill agreed unconditional surrender was necessary for the completion of the war and together with Stalin formulated a plan to invade Germany on both fronts. This assumed the quickest way to win the war was to militarily defeat Germany rather than present multiple dilemmas as originally suggested by Churchill prior to Operation Dragoon.

Operationally, planners made significant assumptions on the ability to move troops and supplies from Third Army's front line on December 16 to the new front line on December 19, 1944. Poised to execute an attack into Germany, Third Army and its corps had all logistics nodes, materiel, classes of supply, and soldiers positioned forward in preparation to move east. For the counterattack by Third Army to occur, not only did the fighting units need to relocate, but it required enough supplies to support corps and army level attacks. The decision to move back east and then north assumed the feasibility in relocating the sustainment capacity and the movement of 133,178 vehicles over a total of 1,654,042 cumulative miles in six days while simultaneously rewiring of 19,928 miles of the communication network wire, establishing evacuation hospitals, and distributing plans, maps, and estimates of enemy disposition and strength.[163]

The plan also made assumptions about mobility. The majority of the movement from 4th AD's current position to its new attack position near Vaux-les-Rosieres took place at night in ice, snow, and mud, making the movements feats in expeditious travel.[164] Patton made the significant assumption prior to the Verdun Conference that his elements would be capable of overcoming these mobility challenges in order to meet the German offensive in a period of three days.[165]

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[163] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 233.

[164] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 87, 189.

[165] Brenton Wallace, *Patton and His Third Army* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1981), 150.

Even if the logistics were already in place for Third Army, the transition of forces in those conditions was a substantial assertion accepted by both Bradley and Eisenhower. These assumptions underlined the operational risk accepted during this operation.

In responding to the German drive through the Ardennes, the Third Army's options required consideration of both the threat at its current front coupled with the emerging threat to the north. The first option focused on how to address the current front with the change of mission. At 8:00 a.m. on December 19, Patton met with his staff to brief the German offensive and to change mission with XX Corps moving northeast and III Corps moving north while XII Corps maintained the current front.[166] However, considerable enemy activity began in XX Corps area of operations with enemy reinforcements flowing in daily in the vicinity of Kaiserslautern.[167] Consequently, the plan later had XX Corps maintaining the front and XII maneuvering northeast.[168] Patton's next decision was how to deploy his forces designated to move north. During his drive at Avranches, France, he sent his twelve divisions through an eight-mile wide gap creating depth with his forces.[169] The near opposite of this approach was committing all forces and deploying the corps abreast. Both options presented the same logistical challenges but differed in the frontage assigned to each corps and the flexibility for Patton to maneuver forces once engaged with the 5th Panzer Army.

Gaffey had limited options following the Third Army order to initiate movement. Patton ordered the commitment of all reserves reducing Gaffey's flexibility in employing CCR.[170] Regardless, Gaffey and his staff ensured options were available for the employment of each of the

[166] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 85.

[167] Wallace, *Patton and His Third Army*, 147.

[168] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 85.

[169] Wallace, *Patton and His Third Army*, 144.

[170] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 244.

combat commands ensuring neither his staff or subordinate commanders remained wedded to any course of action. In a message to Dager, Gaffey explained his intent for CCB to serve as the drive into Bastogne with or without the support of CCA. With support would require CCA to be able to cross the bridge at Martelange and attack southeast of Bastogne to support CCB's attack. Without support meant CCA was held up at Martelange and CCB would drive directly north to Bastogne.[171] Incidentally, the bridge was blown at Martelange and CCB initially maneuvered without the support of CCA.[172] Additionally, the 4th AD staff retained the option of moving CCR from one flank to another affording Gaffey the ability to meet the intent of Patton while also maintaining flexibility with his reserve force.[173] Though these decisions remained at the tactical level, they demonstrate how the 4th AD commander and staff sought to develop options within their zone to meet the overall intent of lifting the siege at Bastogne.

On December 18, 1944, Patton contacted his chief of staff, Brigadier General Hobart R. Gray, to direct a new operational approach that halted the attack east by 80th Infantry Division and 4th Armored Division.[174] The change in mission reassigned 4th AD to III Corps after it passed through VII Corps' zone.[175] III Corps attacked with its divisions abreast with 80th ID on the right, 26th ID in the center, and 4th AD on the left.[176] While Patton spread his forces over the width of

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[171] Major General Hugh Gaffey to Brigadier General Holmes Dager, letter, December 21, 1944, G-3 Journal, 4th Armored Division, found in Robert Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne" (research report, The Armored School, 1949), lvii.

[172] 4th Armored Division, *Combat History of 4th Armored Division, 17 July 1944 - 9 May 1945,* file 4th Armored Division Combat History July-December 1944*,* box 61, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[173] Kenneth A. Koyen, *The Fourth Armored Division from the Beach to Bavaria: The Story of the Fourth Armored Division in Combat* (Nashville: Battery Press, 2000), 68.

[174] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 85.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Headquarters Combat Command A, 4th Armored Division, *Field Order #1* (December 22, 1944) found in Robert Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne" (research report, The Armored School, 1949), lxi.

Third Army's zone, Bradley work to ensure the 12th Army Group's attack maintained depth by continuously bringing troops and supplies in from the rear to support the armies and corps. [177]

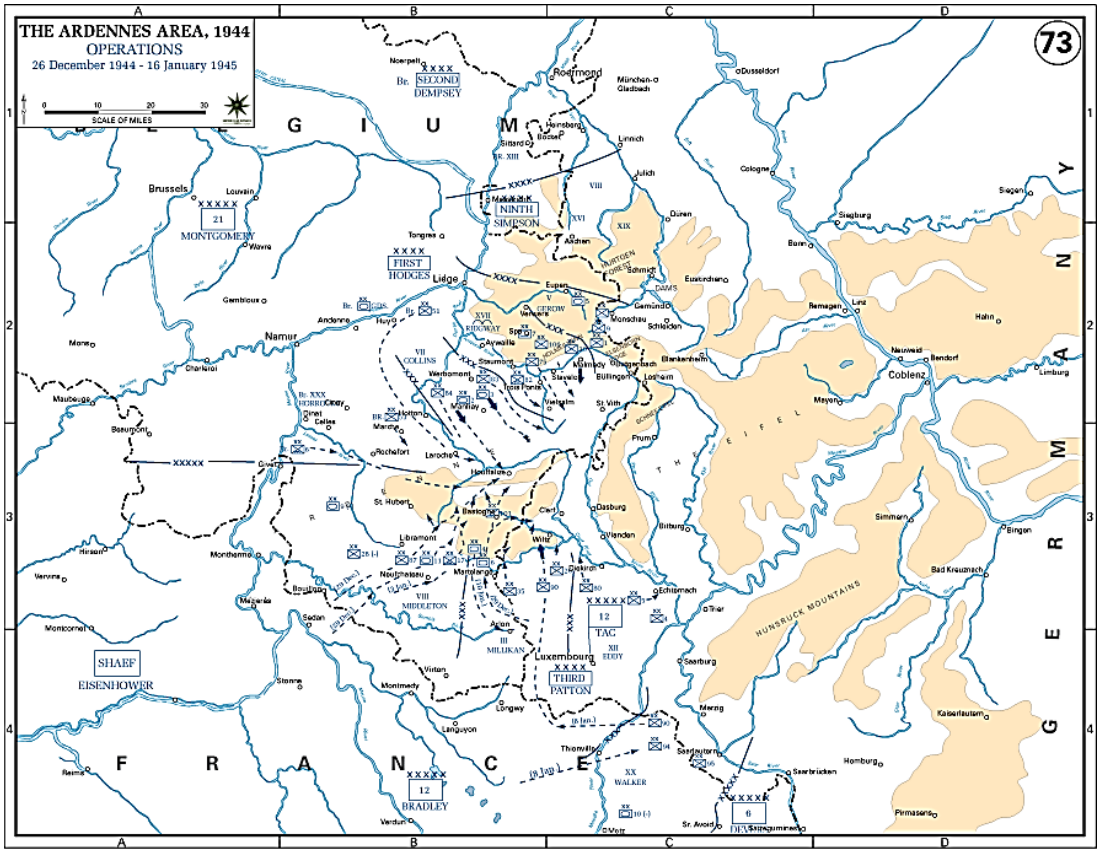

Figure 4. The Deployment of Third Army, 1944. Map courtesy of the Department of Military History, United States Military Academy, "The Ardennes Area, 1944," United States Military Academy Atlases, accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World%20War%20II%20Europe/WWIIEurope73.gif.

The mission of 4th AD was to overcome and destroy enemy in zone and protect left flank of III Corps. [178] As per the division field order, CCA attacked in zone north of Arlon while maintaining contacting with the 26th ID; CCB screened movement for CCA and moved artillery into attack position until receiving permission to attack in zone; CCR followed CCA prepared to

[177] General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower to General Omar Bradley, telephone conversation, December 21, 1944, file Additional Papers 1944-1948, box 2, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS (hereafter cited as Eisenhower telephone conversation with Bradley).

[178] Headquarters, 4th Armored Division, *Field Order #8* (December 21, 1944) found in Robert Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne" (research report, The Armored School, 1949), liii.

reinforce CCA, CCB, or counterattack on either flank; and 25th Cavalry Regiment protected the west flank of division throughout attack. Initially, the corps attacked in two columns with CCA on the right, CCB on the left and CCR trailing CCA.[179] This slowed the attack making it more like a frontal assault than a penetration.[180]

The drive to Bastogne began at 6:00 a.m. on December 22 with CCA and CCB abreast and CCR on the right.[181] CCA and CCB attack simultaneously and by December 23, CCA was eight miles from Bastogne.[182] CCR assigned to fight to the right of CCA seized Flatzbourhof on December 23 and Bigonville on the December 24.[183] On December 25, CCR received orders to shift to left side of division flank requiring a thirty-five mile movement at night to be in position at Bercheaux to attack by 7:00 a.m. the next morning.[184] By 3:00 p.m. on December 26, CCR overlooked Clochimont and prepared to attack Sibret. Deciding to bypass Sibret, CCR fought through Assenois and reached Bastogne at 4:45 p.m.[185]

Commanders at each level identified and worked to mitigate operational risk during the response to the Ardennes Offensive. Patton decided to leave XX Corps to secure the original front knowing the enemy activity in zone was increasing.[186] Additionally, by putting Third Army on line, Patton risked encirclement if the Germans were able to break through the XX Corps line.

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[179] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 99.

[180] Ibid.

[181] 4th Armored Division, *Combat History of 4th Armored Division, 17 July 1944 - 9 May 1945,* file 4th Armored Division Combat History July-December 1944, box 61, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS (hereafter cited as Combat History of 4th Armored Division, 17 July 1944 - 9 May 1945).

[182] Craig, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, 36.

[183] 4th Armored Division, *Combat History of 4th Armored Division, 17 July 1944 - 9 May 1945*.

[184] 4th Armored Division, *Combat History of 4th Armored Division, 17 July 1944 - 9 May 1945*; Craig, *The Legacy of the 4th Armored Division*, 3.

[185] Marshall, *The Siege of Bastogne*, 240.

[186] Wallace, *Patton and His Third Army*, 147.

The III Corps and 4th AD adopted the same concepts by attacking with their subordinate commands attacking abreast and risked stalling on all the fronts without a reserve to reinforce or counterattack. In a phone call with Eisenhower, Bradley explained Third Army's use of phase lines and dispersion to keep forces on line and attack simultaneously as a means of mitigating this risk.[187] Commanders relied on each unit to be able to move quickly to present multiple dilemmas to the enemy along each of the respective three fronts to throw the Germans off balance.

The shift in logistics proved another significant operational risk. Moving the logistics hubs, especially fuel stores, in such a short period risked the success of the overall operation.[188] The challenges in moving resources from Sarregvemines to Luxembourg in four days was accomplished by close coordination between Third Army and VII Corps for troop movement, traffic control, and transportation assets.[189] Extending operational reach required the use of every vehicle available to move gas, ammunition, rations, and other supplies forcing Patton to assume risk in not moving seven hundred tons of winter-warfare clothing until January.[190] Though these efforts did not alleviated the difficultly in resupplying, it did provide the necessary amount of materiel and supplies as evident by the final outcome of the battle.

The relief of Bastogne highlighted the ability of the commanders in 4th AD to anticipate, learn, and adapt to a fluid and dynamic environment. On December 19, 1944 Gaffey still did not know the destination of the division but initiated a taxing multi-day movement in deteriorating conditions.[191] Once the objective was clear, Gaffey embraced the concept of three combat

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[187] Eisenhower Telephone Conversation with Bradley.

[188] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 87.

[189] Headquarters, XII Corps, *Report of Operations 1-31 December 1944,* file XII Headquarters, XII Corps, Report of Operations December 1944 (1), box 8, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS, 6.

[190] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 238.

[191] Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne," 87.

commands fighting along three approaches to Bastogne to find the path of least resistance and push through. By December 22, each command had the same goal of reaching Bastogne indicating how Gaffey recognized the fluidity of the environment and the need to remain prepared to allow CCA or CCR to assume the decisive operation from CCB. Gaffey's shift of CCR on December 25 to left side of the division shows how he understood the changing conditions of the battlefield and willingness to adjust the scheme of maneuver to take advantage of opportunities allowing CCR to mount a surprise attack against the Germans.[192]

Gaffey also empowered his subordinates to make decisions and remain adaptable. In a letter to his commanders on December 25 concerning actions upon reaching Bastogne, Gaffey instructed that if a CC arrives at Bastogne well ahead of the division, then do what is necessary until the rest of the division arrives.[193] This open-ended guidance highlights the understanding of need to remain flexible in response to the constant shifting of German forces around Bastogne. The documented verbal orders and absence of written fragmentary orders from December 22 to December 25 indicate the expectation by both the combat commands and the subordinate battalion commands to remain capable of making rapid changes as the intelligence picture developed. These verbal orders included the commitment of CCR to Bigonville, the capture of Vaux-les-Rosieres, Cobreville, Nives, North Remoiville, Remichampagne, Clochimont, Assenois, and finally the breakthrough to Bastogne.[194] This expectation to remain flexible manifested itself

[192] Koyen, *The Fourth Armored Division from the Beach to Bavaria*, 68.

[193] Hugh Gaffey, *Disposition of Final Objective* (December 25, 1944) found in Robert Summers et al., "Armor at Bastogne" (research report, The Armored School, 1949), lxxii.

[194] Headquarters Reserve Command, 4th Armored Division, *After Action for the Period 15 December 1944 to 31 December 1944,* file 4th Armored Division Reserve Command After Action Report July 1944 - May 1945, box 65, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS, 2.

at the tactical level when the commander of the 37th Tank Battalion and 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion decided to bypass Sibret and drive directly to Bastogne.[195]

The success of CCR influence the military and political objectives of the war by setting the conditions for two hundred trucks and ambulances to arrive at Bastogne and fortify the defenses for the German counterattack.[196] The next day, CCB reached Bastogne to begin enlarging the corridor followed by CCA on December 29.[197] Meanwhile, the Germans remained under orders to restore all positions at any cost and to repel the enemy forces.[198] Operationally, the relief of Bastogne aided in reducing the Allied belief that Germany could still mount offensive.[199] Strategically, the battle aided in the destruction of Hitler's last offensive capability.[200] The failure of the Germans to achieve their initial objective of disrupting the Allied winter offensive led to the impending drive across the Rhine and eventual unconditional surrender of Germany.[201]

Findings and Analysis

This section analyzes the empirical evidence gathered for both Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne to conduct a focused comparison. The analysis focuses on the data collected for each case study by research question and then applies those findings to each of the three hypotheses. This focused comparison serves to demonstrate the application of operational art by US forces during WWII.

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[195] Marshall, *The Siege of Bastogne*, 240.

[196] Koyen, *The Fourth Armored Division from the Beach to Bavaria*, 76.

[197] Headquarters Combat Command B, 4th Armored Division, *After Action for the Period 20 January 1945,* file 4th Armored Division Combat Command "B" After Action Report August 1944 - May 1945, box 65, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[198] G-2 Section, 4th Armored Division, *G-2 Periodic Report Number 119,* file G2 Periodic Report, 26 December 1944, box 61, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

[199] Cole, *The Ardennes*, 675.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Allen, *Lucky Forward*, 218.

The first question asked what was the strategic and operational context of each operation with an expected answer focused on the military and political conditions influencing the operational environment. With both case studies occurring only four months apart during the same conflict and in the same theater, the contexts for each were similar. Both occurred in resource constrained environment in which major operations competed for logistics and combat support. Both the political and military leadership pressured subordinate commands to maintain the momentum following Operation Overlord and the breakout to prevent Germany from regaining the initiative.

The second question focused on the stated political and military objectives. During Operation Dragoon, the Germans sought to maintain the ability to defend with Army Group G both in northern France and the Siegfried Line. During the relief of Bastogne, Hitler wanted to set the conditions for a better position during peace negotiations while denying the Allies the use of the port of Antwerp. During both operations the Allies remained intent on Germany's unconditional surrender. The supporting military objective for Dragoon centered on the opening of southern France and prevention of German forces from affecting Eisenhower's drive across France. During the relief of Bastogne, the military objective remained the defeat of the German army but included the thwarting of Hitler's western offensive before orienting back on Berlin. Both the political and military objectives relied heavily on the role of the military to achieve operational victories and drive strategic success.

The third question highlighted the gaps in information that prompted strategic and operational assumptions. During Dragoon, the Allies assumed a second front in France was faster and more effective than through the Balkans. Operationally, information gaps about German troop strength along the coast prompted changes to beachheads while assumptions about ship availability and classes of supply onshore prompted commanders to focus on the amphibious assault and not a pursuit. Conversely, the Germans assumed Army Group G would be unable to defend the coast given the Allied success at Normandy. During the Battle of the Bulge, Hitler

mounted his final offensive assuming a drive west using untrained and under-resourced army groups would stem the Allied momentum and buy the Third Reich time. In response, the Allies initiated a major counteroffensive while operating under the assumption resources could shift across extended distances in minimal time. Each of the commanders acknowledged the gaps in information and made assumptions to make decisions that enabled planning efforts.

The fourth question asked what were the military options available to the commanders. While less information was available to determine the courses of actions considered by the Germans in response to Operation Dragoon, the options available appear to be either defend in place or conduct a withdrawal. Once the Germans demonstrated they were not going to defend, Truscott's options included remaining with the original timeline, pursue once a full division was complete with its coastal objective, or deploy TF Butler. Once deployed, Butler's options remained limited pursuing or pausing for logistical support. During the Battle of the Bulge, the German options with respect to Bastogne were to either bypass entirely or to leave a siege force to seize the key intersection. Options for the US commanders began with who would defend the current front along the Siegfried line followed closely by whether to array the divisions and combat commands in depth or abreast. Another critical option centered on retaining a reserve element or committing all forces forward to find the path of least resistance. Though each commander sought options to create flexibility, the German options served to restrict rather than enable action.

The fifth question was what was operational approach taken by each commander. Operation Dragoon involved the amphibious assault by three US divisions followed by a partially conceived pursuit by TF Butler while French divisions secured key ports along the coast. The approach focused primarily on the amphibious landing rather than an aggressive pursuit by the Allies. In response, the Germans opted to withdrawal under pressure through a single valley with 11th PD conducting a rear guard. The poor performance of the Germans appeared four months later during the Battle of the Bulge when the Germans chose to split their forces to lay siege to

Bastogne and continue a westerly attack. As the Germans established their hasty defense around Bastogne, Patton secured his current front while maneuvering his remaining divisions abreast towards the German offensive. Likewise, Gaffey expanded his frontage by lining up each of his combat commands while maintaining the option of shifting CCR to reinforce or flank. Operational approaches in both cases required changes as the understanding of the environment evolved.

The sixth question asked how did the commanders mitigate operational risk. Commanders understood the risk of conducting an amphibious assault with only three divisions during Operation Dragoon and developed a robust deception plan as a mitigation measure. Once TF Butler was in pursuit, Butler understood the risk of having an extended LOC and leveraged his reconnaissance assets to conduct methodical bounds towards the enemy to minimize unnecessary movement. Conversely, the Germans understood the risk of losing Army Group G, but failed to develop an organized and controlled withdrawal plan. Later in the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans seemed to acknowledge the risk of committing their sole offensive force consisting of poorly trained soldiers but the mitigation measure did not appear to be anything other than aggressive, violence of action. However, the German offensive forced Third Army to assume significant risk in shifting both combat forces and sustainment assets north in an abrupt and unanticipated move. Once in a position to attack, both Third Army and 4th AD risked stalling on all fronts without the ability to reinforce by attacking with all formations abreast. The Allies mitigated these risks by establishing clear command structures as units passed through one another during both the shift in logistics and the attack north, which enabled rapid movement, maneuver, and surprise.

The seventh question considered how the commanders anticipated, learned, and adapted to the operational environment. Once Truscott ordered Butler to stand up the ad hoc force, the mission remained the same throughout the operation: pursue and destroy the Germans. Butler had little information about the terrain and enemy as he maneuvered north indicating his willingness

to adapt to the situation; however, little suggests that Butler deviated from the original plan and the only changes made were those directed by Truscott. Likewise, once Blaskowitz received the withdrawal order, changes to the scheme of maneuver were not apparent aside from the German attempt to use 11th PD as a feint to provide time and space to Army Group G. The same adherence to the initial plan appeared again in the Battle of the Bulge when the Germans failed to adapt to the resistance of the 101st ABN. Conversely, the commanders of 4th AD demonstrated a significant propensity to adapt as demonstrated by Gaffey's willingness to shift the decisive operation from CCB to either CCA or CCR as the situation required. His subordinate commanders showed the same aptitude for anticipating and adapting to the environment as shown by the decision of 37th Tank Battalion and 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion to bypass Sibret and fight on to Bastogne. Throughout each operation, commanders on both sides received new information but differed in how they reacted to their new understanding of the environment.

The final question asked how did the outcome of the battles impact the influence the military and political objective of the war. Here the answer should indicate how the outcome of the battle impacted the prosecution of the war. The success of Operation Dragoon denied the Germans the use of two major ports as well as the expulsion of Army Group G from southern France. TF Butler's role in the operation aided in setting the conditions for the Allies to continue the drive through France by ensuring the Army Group G continued to withdrawal rather than consolidate and reorganize for a counter-attack along the coast. The defeat of 11th PD served as a preamble for the Battle of the Bulge. If successful, the Ardennes Offensive may have allowed Germany to continue fighting; however, the quick reaction by all Allied forces ensured Germany lost its capacity to attack. The drive by 4th AD to relieve the 101st ABN not only reduced the momentum of the Germans, but it also allowed for follow-on forces to continue to flow north and repel the Nazi attack. Though the Ardennes Offensive upset the planned Allied offensive on December 21, 1944, the Allies were able to seize the initiative after relieving Bastogne and

continue into Germany. Each case had differing degrees of success, but the contribution to the overall military objectives remains evident in both.

The first hypothesis states if 4th AD and TF Butler maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy, then there is evidence of operational art. The empirical evidence from the two cases studies supports this hypothesis. In the case of Operation Dragoon, the decision to pursue and the subsequent drive by TF Butler provided the Allies the opportunity to maintain a higher tempo with respect to the Germans. TF Butler presented continuous dilemmas to the Germans during its drive north limiting the capacity of 11th PD to effectively serve as a rear guard. Though Army Group G succeeded in withdrawing, the attrition of its force rendered 11th PD combat ineffective. Likewise, Patton's Third Army and 4th AD proved successful in maintaining a higher operational tempo. By rapidly synchronizing operations across divisions and combat commands and providing adequate sustainment capacity, the Allies were able to present multiple dilemmas to the enemy. The Germans were unable to match the actions of the Allies allowing for 4th AD to find a point of weakness and relieve the 101st ABN at Bastogne. Both case studies demonstrated the intent to maintain higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy.

The second hypothesis states if 4th AD and TF Butler were able to extend their operational reach without culminating, then there are indicators of the employment of operational art. The empirical evidence from the two case studies suggests a mixed outcome between the two. During Operation Dragoon, TF Butler initiated its pursuit with the understanding the Germans had canalized themselves in the Rhone Valley, but the task force was unable to continually project power from the coast given its limited strength and sustainment capacity. TF Butler culminated twice in route to Montélimar due to fuel and finally culminated at Montélimar before it could effectively block the German egress route. Conversely, 4th AD retained the flexibility needed to lengthen its "tether" to allow for the shift to Bastogne. Operational pauses occurred as the combat commanders consolidated forces following movements but were able to recover in such a manner as to maintain momentum. Though CCA and CCB slowed in the final drive to

Bastogne, collectively, the division maintained its capacity to maneuver towards Bastogne and achieved its objective. Each case demonstrates how commanders and staffs attempted to set the conditions to extend operational reach and prevent early culmination but with differing degrees of success.

The third hypothesis states there is evidence of operational art if 4th AD and TF Butler were able to mitigate operational risk. The empirical evidence discovered from the two studies supports this hypothesis. Truscott assumed risk in committing TF Butler to a pursuit without proper resources, but the action took advantage of the opportunity to exploit the German withdrawal and support the overall military objective. Butler assumed risk in continuing his pursuit of a superior force but understood the implications of disrupting an entire German Army Group. While Truscott attempted to mitigated risk by pushing 36th ID and 45th ID north to support, Butler mitigated risk by maximizing all forces forward and leveraging his reconnaissance capabilities. During the relief of Bastogne, Patton understood the implications of defeating the last German offensive; consequently, he risked culminating due to weather, terrain, sustainment, and enemy action so that he could take advantage of the opportunity presented. Within 4th AD, Gaffey recognized the implications of losing Bastogne to the Germans and risked arraying his forces abreast as a means of finding the opportunity to penetrate enemy lines and establish contact with the 101st ABN. The evidence suggests each of the commanders assumed risk to support the political and military objectives of the war and mitigated by increasing operational tempo and forcing the enemy into a series of dilemmas.

The analysis of the empirical evidence and hypotheses suggests the validity of the thesis that commanders employed operational art to achieve strategic objectives during Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne. While the cases did not support every facet of each hypotheses, much of the evidence suggests commanders used the concepts of operational art to maximize flexibility to respond to the enemy action while simultaneously acting decisively to throw the enemy off-balance.

Conclusion

This study focused on the application of the concepts of operational art during Operation Dragoon and the relief of Bastogne in 1944. Such analysis provides a heightened understanding of what enabled US commanders and staffs to achieve flexibility and adaptability against a competent and determined enemy. Much of the literature on both operations accounts for the conditions surrounding the decisions made by the tactical and strategic leaders. The empirical data of the study supports the thesis that 4th AD and TF Butler employed operational art to achieve the stated strategic objectives during the planning and execution of the relief of Bastogne and Operation Dragoon. The commanders and staffs ensured the plans were flexible, maintained a higher operational tempo in relation to the enemy, extended operational reach, prevented culmination, and mitigated operational risk.

Analyzing the two cases offers both commanders and planners insight into how to achieve organizational agility through the application of operational art. By understanding how tactical action can have significant impacts on strategy, operational-level leaders can act decisively in a way that will contribute to both the military and political objectives. In operation Dragoon, even though TF Butler did not achieve all the intended effects, the near-destruction of 11th PD was only possible given the ability of both Truscott and Butler to understand the current environment and the overall strategic picture. Patton's willingness to commit forces and Gaffey's ability synchronize operations in a seemingly chaotic frenzy demonstrates how an informed commander can accept prudent risk to take advantage of an opportunity to create a position of advantage. In these cases, the US commanders prompted audacity within their organizations and were successful because of their ability to account for the operational concepts defined by doctrine today.

Additional research could provide insights into how Allied commanders understood and deliberately employed the remaining tenets of operational art. A further study could explore the

perspectives of the British and French commanders as well as the Germans. Potential questions might include: how did the German understanding of their own political and military objectives effect their decision lay siege to Bastogne? Did the Germans unnecessarily limit their options during the withdrawal from southern France? Did any of the Allied operations executed in support of Churchill's peripheral strategy account for the principles of operational art? What were the impacts of multi-national operations on the employment of operational art?

Leveraging operational art requires more than a review of current doctrine and an attempt in application during a training scenario. By conducting detailed reviews of historical cases, a military planner can develop a heightened appreciation for how to integrate, synchronize, and arrange actions on the battlefield to enable tactical victory for the sake of strategic success. Simply making bold decisions will not suffice in the current operational environment, which means commanders and staffs must set the conditions to allow radical departures from the original plan as a means of accomplishing the overall military objective. The success of Gaffey and Butler did not rest on their tenacity and violence of action, but their ability to recognize how to arrange forces and create options to link the tactics to the strategy. They succeeded in employing operational art because they understood how to "facilitate the two-way conversation between tactics and strategy."[202]

[202] Kelly and Brennan, "The Leavenworth Heresy and the Perversion of Operational Art," 113.

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