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THE U.S. COAST GUARD AND ARMY AMPHIBIOUS DEVELOPMENT

BY

COMMANDER GARY J. E. THORNTON

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**USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER**

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**THE U.S. COAST GUARD AND ARMY AMPHIBIOUS DEVELOPMENT**

**An Individual Study Project**

**by**

**Commander Gary J.E. Thornton, USCG**

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**U.S. Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
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## ABSTRACT

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 1915 Congress passed the Act creating the Coast Guard through merger of the Revenue Cutter Service and the Life-Saving Service. This Act also provided for the Coast Guard to operate as a part of the Navy in time of war. It is doubtful that the drafters of that legislation could have envisioned all of the forms that this total augmentation would take in World War II; the first and only time the Act was ever implemented. Coast Guard people and others familiar with that service's military history are generally aware of Coast Guard amphibious operations involvement in that war. Far less known are the circumstances and events leading to that involvement.

Since the Coast Guard is fundamentally a humanitarian service, military readiness has rarely been, before the 1980's, a primary Coast Guard peacetime mission. Nevertheless, military readiness training has always been an important activity serving to sharpen individual and team skills and generate esprit de corps. It also brings Coast Guard people into regular professional contact with personnel of other services. This helps develop the competitive pride and cooperative spirit which

have become Coast Guard hallmarks. Military readiness training really provides the Coast Guard with the continuity and cohesion linking its many diverse missions. Significantly, it has also made the other services more aware of the Coast Guard and its capabilities. This awareness has often had more effect on Coast Guard wartime utilization than its carefully prepared war plans.

The Coast Guard maintains continuous preparedness for a variety of defense related duties. In the actual wars, however, many of the duties performed have been unanticipated. Sometimes it appears as if the Coast Guard gets rediscovered near the beginning of each war and its capabilities applied ad hoc. This was certainly true regarding much of its World War II growth; particularly the amphibious experiences. The tradition of meritorious wartime service under these types of circumstances certainly adds credence to the Coast Guard's motto of Semper Paratus (Always Ready).

The purpose of this paper is to describe the emergence of the Coast Guard's World War II amphibious roles with particular focus on the little known support provided to the Army's Engineer Amphibian Command. It is the story of a small service called upon to support explosive growth in an unfamiliar mission. It is the story of a can-do service responding with a spirit of full cooperation undiminished by Army/Navy disagreement and rivalry. This treatise intentionally stops short of describing the actual amphibious invasions which ultimately turned the tides of victory in World War II.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE FLEX YEARS

Since the turn of the century the U.S. Marines have shown a growing interest in amphibious warfare. They developed equipment and techniques until in 1914 they had progressed to a point where they had advance-base brigades nominally trained to make amphibious landings. There was no need for this type of work during the first World War thus development was delayed for a decade. In 1924 the Marine Expeditionary Force moved to Cuba from Quantico and engaged in landing exercises while the Fifth Marine Regiment exercised concurrently in Panama. In 1925 the Army and Navy held a small joint landing exercise in Hawaii. In 1927 the Marine Corps was assigned amphibious warfare as its primary mission; yet preoccupation with police actions in China and the Caribbean, plus reluctance by many senior officers to shift emphasis from trench warfare, delayed real development until 1933.<sup>1</sup>

The development of modern amphibious landing concepts actually began then with the establishment of the Fleet Marine Force in 1933. The purpose of the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) was to prepare units for the execution of the amphibious mission. The Marine Corps developed a progressive system beginning with basic individual training, followed by training of units from the

squad through the brigade and culminating in joint annual amphibious training in conjunction with the fleet.<sup>2</sup>

Since the FNF was organized as a component of the fleet, its training was a matter of direct concern to the Navy. It was first formed with the Seventh Regiment of Marines deployed aboard the USS WYOMING for possible operations in Cuban waters. After several months in the Caribbean this force landed in Florida and continued its amphibious training. In July of 1934 the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet approved a plan of training for the Fleet Marine Force which was to begin in the Caribbean in 1935. It called for annual fleet landing exercises, known as FLEX's, to develop coordination and teamwork while simulating the conditions of war.<sup>3</sup>

Also in 1934, the Marine Corps published the manual that would form the basis of all future amphibious doctrine. Defining the duties of the Fleet Marine Force in landing operations, it emphasized that ship-to-shore movement of small craft was a major tactical maneuver, not a simple ferrying job.<sup>4</sup>

Fleet Landing Exercise Number One was held in 1935. The Marine force consisting of 91 officers and 1476 enlisted men embarked on three Navy transports. They conducted landings on Puerto Rico beaches with conventional ships' boats ranging from 26 to 50 feet in length. This exercise indicated the joint potential for the Navy's Special Service Squadron with the Fleet Marine Force.<sup>5</sup>

From 1936 through 1941, with the exception of 1937, the Fleet Marine held its annual exercises on the Caribbean Islands

of Puerto Rico and Culebra. The 1937 exercises were conducted on San Clemente Island off Southern California. Conventional motor launches were the only ship-to-shore conveyance until three experimental landing boats appeared in the 1937 exercises. Boat development progressed slowly until the 1939 exercises when the Navy tested eighteen different experimental landing boats.<sup>6</sup>

The Navy landing craft inventory in February, 1940, consisted of only 35 personnel landing boats, five tank lighters and six artillery lighters. That month a memorandum from the Chief of Naval Operations predicted that by October, 1941, there would be 30 large personnel transports requiring 816 landing craft and 11 cargo transports needing 80 landing boats.<sup>7</sup>

Conditions across the Atlantic were deteriorating, and it appeared likely that the Coast Guard would soon be operating as a part of the Navy in accordance with the 1915 Act. The associated demands for joint readiness planning brought about establishment of a Joint Coast Guard-Navy Board in July 1940. As a preliminary step toward full transfer, the Coast Guard shifted five Secretary Class Coast Guard cutters to Navy control.<sup>8</sup>

On 27, September, 1940, the Chief of Naval Operations directed the fleet inauguration of large-scale training programs for landing craft crews to be provided to transports and cargo ships. The Navy recognized that a valuable pool of skilled Coast Guard small-boat operators existed. In November the Navy started a limited joint landing craft training program. The Coast Guard

assigned groups of its warrant officers and enlisted personnel to Navy transports for two to three months of training with emphasis on surf landings.<sup>9</sup>

Marine participation in the first six FLEX's was relatively small, ranging from 1567 men in 1935 to 2200 men in 1940. Their size was primarily limited by transport capacity. Army amphibious interest was sporadic during the FLEX years. During FLEX Two in 1936, the Army had just twenty observers present from the Army General Staff, schools and units. FLEX Three in 1937 had 61 officers and 731 enlisted men from the Army's First Expeditionary Brigade participating. In 1938 FLEX Four included 42 officers and 547 enlisted men from the Army's Second Provisional Brigade. The first appearance of the Coast Guard on the amphibious exercise scene was in the 1938 fleet exercises with the cutters Bibb and Marion participating.<sup>10</sup>

The last of the numbered fleet exercises, FLEX-7, was held in the Culebra area in early 1941. This exercise was by far the largest of this series both in numbers and in types of forces represented. The First Marine Division contingent of 7445 men was more than twice as large as the prior year's manning. The Navy made a large contribution with three battleships, nine cruisers, five destroyers, two aircraft carriers and a three ship destroyer transport group. Assault transports came into use for the first time. The five participating Navy assault transports carried the temporary details of Coast Guard landing craft trainees. The Army, participating in its first FLEX since 1938,

contributed two battalion combat teams from the First Infantry Division out of Camp Edwards, Massachusetts.<sup>11</sup>

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## CHAPTER III

### THE COAST GUARD AND THE JOINT TRAINING FORCE

During early 1941 the threat of American involvement in the European war was becoming more acute and pressure for intensive and widespread amphibious training became proportionately more urgent. On June 3, 1941, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8767 which directed that a yet to be determined number of Coast Guard personnel required to man certain Navy vessels operate as part of the Navy. Fifteen days later the Secretary of the Navy urgently requested that the Coast Guard make preparations for assigning men with small boat qualifications to new amphibious duties with the Navy.<sup>1</sup>

On June 6, 1941, the Fleet Marine Force established the First Joint Training Force consisting of the First Marine Division and the First Army Division under the command of Major General Holland M. Smith, U.S. Marine Corps. The Joint Force shipping came from the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia, under command of Rear Admiral Henry K. Hewitt<sup>2</sup>

Since the Caribbean island of Culebra was now too exposed to the German submarine threat, the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet relocated its first exercise scheduled for August. The site chosen was the future Camp Lejeune, a New River, North Carolina base, acquired three months earlier by the Marine Corps. The Coast Guard played a prominent new role during this exercise

by providing both beachmasters. Lieutenant Commander Walter C. Capron was main beachmaster for the First Marine Division and Lieutenant Commander Dwight H. Dexter, later the main beachmaster at Guadalcanal, served as beachmaster, the officer responsible for the transit of all men and supplies from the line-of-departure to the water's edge, for the Army's First Division.

During these exercises a situation developed which eventually led to a major new amphibious role for the Coast Guard. The First Marine Division embarked on Navy transports and the First Infantry Division embarked on civilian manned Army transports. Complications arose when the civilian crews operating the Army transports refused to run without lights to simulate night combat conditions. Then, during the launching and recovery of landing craft, the civilians refused to man the hoisting gear after regular working hours unless guaranteed double wages for overtime. At this time, the ships' civilian cooks refused to prepare meals for soldiers returning late from exercises.<sup>3</sup> The situation was intolerable and soon thereafter the Army asked the Navy to take over the three problem ships, the Hunter Liggett, the Leonard Wood and the Joseph T. Dickman. The Navy, lacking sufficient personnel to man them, turned to the Coast Guard. Negotiations between the Commandant of the Coast Guard and the Chief of Naval Operations resulted in a formal agreement on September 5, 1941, to provide approximately 2100 Coast Guard officers and men to operate as a part of the Navy. Fifteen hundred were to man, except for medical and supply

departments, the transports Leonard Wood, Wakefield, Joseph T. Dickman and Hunter Liggett. Operators of the landing craft on these four transports came from this allocation of personnel. The Navy assigned six-hundred Coast Guard men to duty in landing craft attached to twenty-two other transports and some supply ships operating with the transports.<sup>4</sup> Since the Coast Guard had just transferred ten of its Lake Class cutters to Great Britain under the Lend-Lease Program so several hundred officers and men were immediately available for this assignment.<sup>5</sup> With the new Coast Guard/Navy agreement establishing full time Coast Guard amphibious responsibilities, the temporary detailing of Coast Guard personnel to landing craft training aboard transports was ended. The Coast Guard manning of transports created a need for a liaison officer on the staff of Commander, Transports Atlantic Fleet in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The first such officer was Lieutenant Commander Walter C. Capron who would later play key amphibious development roles with both the Army and the Navy. During this period the Coast Guard manned transport Leonard Wood became the Transports Atlantic Fleet flagship. Every transport in this fleet now had between thirty and fifty Coast Guard enlisted men aboard.<sup>6</sup>

In October, 1941, as the international situation continued to deteriorate it was apparent that a more complete transfer of Coast Guard resources to the Navy was needed. After some debate over whether to retain some elements of the Coast Guard in the Treasury Department, the President signed Executive Order Number



8929 on November 1, 1941, directing it to operate entirely as part of the Navy.<sup>7</sup>

The First Marine Division and the Army's First Division were scheduled for a final amphibious exercise in January 1942. This exercise was to be held off New River, North Carolina. Lieutenant Commander Capron, assistant operations officer for the exercise, expressed strong disagreement with this location because of its exposure to the worsening German submarine threat. He argued successfully for a more protected location, Lynnhaven Roads in Southern Chesapeake Bay. Prophetically, during the four day landing exercise the first tanker to succumb to a German submarine went down within fifty miles of the originally planned exercise site.<sup>8</sup>

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE ARMY BREAKS AMPHIBIOUS RANKS

The strategic plans taking shape in early 1942 for both the Atlantic and Pacific war zones were increasingly dependent upon effective employment of amphibious techniques. The successful Japanese island conquests across the Pacific drove home the value of amphibious moves. The offensive in Europe had highest priority and seemed likely to include eventual invasions across the English Channel and into Africa where the Germans were already firmly ensconced.<sup>1</sup>

The special requirements for a large-scale cross-Channel invasion were divergent from Pacific amphibious force concepts coming out of the Joint U.S. Strategic Committee. The Army sought a geographical division of labor with an Army amphibious corps for the Atlantic and a smaller Marine amphibious force for the Pacific. The Navy agreed with this split but wanted to make it permanent as a way of assuring Navy control of Army amphibious forces for later offensive actions in the Southwest Pacific.<sup>2</sup>

In recognition of the inevitability of amphibious offensive moves, the Navy formed the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Force with headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia in March, 1942. A month later the Navy formed the Pacific Fleet Amphibious Force.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the Army had become disenchanted with the Navy's conduct of joint exercises. The two services were in competition

in the areas of amphibious craft, cargo ships and transports. Since the Navy was still resisting expansion, it appeared that the Army would not only have to provide the amphibious transports for journeys to foreign shores, but also the boats and boat crews needed to make the actual landings during European amphibious operations. The Army gave stock to a study it was preparing and decided to establish its own amphibious training centers.<sup>4</sup>

Preliminary plans called for training four divisions of ground forces at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, for shore-to-shore landings. The Army also planned for camps to train six divisions at Carrabelle, Florida, and two divisions at Fort Lewis, Washington. The Army Services of Supply had the assignment of training boat crews, maintenance crews and supply units to support an eight division lift across the English Channel. The Corps of Engineers, operating within the Services of Supply, had the job of providing and training the landing craft crews.<sup>5</sup>

In March, 1942, Admiral Ernest J. King, the Chief of Naval Operations; General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff and Major General Brehon B. Somervell, Commanding General, Services of Supply, traveled to London for preliminary discussions of a cross-Channel offensive against the Germans. Since Russia was in danger of falling to Germany in the east, they considered a mainland invasion known as SLEDGEHAMMER as an option which would draw German strength into France, thus ease the pressure on the Russians. The situation's urgency called for the invasion to take place as early as November, 1942. The U.S. Navy, concentrating on restoration of its decimated fleet while

committed to convoy protection and ship-to-shore amphibious development, was unable to take on this new shore-to-shore plan so soon. The British, fearing allied strength was inadequate for a decisive blow, were reluctant. General Somervell had personal experience with landing type vessels on the Mississippi River and was intrigued by the idea. He told the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the U.S. Army could take it on. The operation was approved by the Combined Chiefs for emergency contingency planning.<sup>6</sup>

On May 9, 1942, the War Department directed the Chief of Engineers to establish a boat training center at Camp Edwards and prepare to initiate combined training with an infantry division by July 15. The new organization entitled the Engineer Amphibian Command was to train 48,000 men, organized into eighteen boat operator regiments and seven boat maintenance battalions. Immediate vigorous action by innovative Army Engineers was the order of the day.<sup>7</sup>

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## CHAPTER V

### THE COAST GUARD ROAD TO CAMP EDWARDS

With only a short time available to organize and identify resources for the new Engineer Amphibian Command, Colonel Arthur G. Trudeau, the first chief of staff, turned to the Coast Guard for assistance. During informal discussions at Coast Guard headquarters he was delighted to learn that, with top level Coast Guard and Navy concurrence, a cadre of experienced boatmen could be provided almost immediately. On May 29, 1942, Colonel Trudeau met with Vice Admiral Russell R. Waesche, the Coast Guard Commandant. He expressed his need for a detail of men to establish the nucleus of a lifesaving service, supervise boatswain and machinist mate instruction and take charge of fifty 36-foot landing boats already enroute to Cape Cod from Higgins Boat Works in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Waesche expressed surprise that the Army was getting into the amphibious training business but was very cooperative. He indicated "we'll get you something right away" and tentatively identified Lieutenant Commander Capron to supervise the Coast Guard team.<sup>2</sup> That same day the Assistant Chief of Engineers, Brigadier General C.L. Sturdevant, asked the Commanding General, Services of Supply, to request formally the Coast Guard personnel from the Chief of Naval Operations.<sup>3</sup>

The high level importance of having both Coast Guard and Marine participation on the Engineer Amphibian Command staff was evident in the June 2, 1942, letter from Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, to the Secretary of the Navy. Stimson specifically requested assignment of Lieutenant Commander Capron and Lieutenant Colonel Arthur T. Mason, USMC to be part of the new command's operations section. He indicated the need for Lieutenant Commander Capron as an instructor for shore party and boat operator training and pointed out that his experience would "materially reduce the initial errors to be expected upon initiation of a problem of this nature. Further, the judgement of these officers in the use of small boats will be of marked assistance in reducing boat casualties resulting from faulty control and operation; this in consideration of the small number of boats available makes more imperative their detail to the Engineer Amphibian Command".<sup>4</sup> When Colonel Daniel Noce established his Engineer Amphibian Command at Camp Edwards on 10 June 1942 Lieutenant Commander Capron with his Coast Guard detail of two hundred officers, warrant officers and petty officers were on board. They were ready to commence a remarkable experience training Army landing craft operators on the waters and south beaches of Cape Cod.<sup>5</sup>

Capron played a significant role even before the command was established. Invited to accompany Colonel Trudeau's Cape Cod site selection team several weeks earlier, he made recommendations for locations of docks, repair facilities and

fuel storage tanks. They chose Washburn Island, approximately seven miles from Camp Edwards on Cotuit Sound, as the primary boat training area.

Capron was opposed to the idea of the Army running amphibious boats and was openly critical of the concept of using small landing craft for a cross English Channel invasion. Colonel Trudeau was aware of these feelings but believed that his critical candor and recent amphibious experience would serve the new training command well.<sup>6</sup>

The staff at Camp Edwards included Army officers of every branch plus Coast Guard, Marine, Coast and Geodetic Survey and British Army and Navy officers. The U.S. Army reviewed records of 200,000 officers and 3 million enlisted men to find personnel with the necessary experience and aptitude. It drafted civilian boat operators, both commercial and private, directly from civilian life. Between June 1 and August 15, 1942, recruiting through yacht clubs, boating organizations and maritime publications brought in four-hundred direct commission officers.<sup>7</sup>

Benjamin A. Lentz was one of the U.S. Power Squadron members offered a direct commission by the Army. Since he had prior commissioned service, plus civilian experience teaching smallboat handling and engine maintenance, he received a commission as captain. Most of the officers receiving direct commissions because of their maritime backgrounds were in their late twenties and received first lieutenancies. They loved this type of work but had elected not to enter the Navy or Coast Guard



because of inherent risks of being assigned to large vessels. The marine support people who volunteered were typically commercial marina operators. They received non-commissioned ranks up to master sergeant and a few were commissioned as warrant officers. Captain Lantz joined the Training and Operations staff and was charged with organizing the maritime related training programs for the incoming men. He relied a great deal on U.S. Power Squadron training material for initial course material.<sup>8</sup>

It was clear that large scale amphibious operations would require people with unusually wide fields of knowledge. The Engineer Amphibian Command added five special sections to its organization. Colonel Trudeau established a Piloting and Navigation Section under a senior officer of the Coast and Geodetic Survey; a Communications Section under a Signal Corps officer; a Shore Unit Section under a Marine Lieutenant Colonel, a Weapons Section headed by a Coast Artillery officer and a Boat Unit Section under Capron.<sup>9</sup>

The Engineer Amphibian Command took advantage of a wide range of specialist schools to supplement those established at Camp Edwards. Boat carpenters and mechanics were trained in civilian schools like Higgins Industries in Louisiana and the Wisconsin sites of Evinrude Motors and Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company. Services schools outside the Engineer Amphibian Command included the Coast Guard's school for boat engineers at its Connecticut training center and Army Ordnance Schools at Aberdeen, Maryland. The graduates of these schools became

instructors in the schools at Camp Edwards. Nearly five thousand enlisted men were ultimately trained at civilian and military schools outside the Engineer Amphibian Command while over thirty-three thousand amphibious specialists received their training at schools within the command.<sup>10</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE ENGINEER AMPHIBIAN BRIGADES

The landing organization that Colonel Daniel Noce and Colonel Trudeau designed for shore-to-shore maneuvers was the engineer amphibian brigade. Each brigade consisted of an engineer shore regiment and a boat regiment. The shore regiment was comprised of three battalions, each with two far-shore companies and a near-shore company. The boat regiment contained a lighter company, a second echelon maintenance company and nine boat companies, each capable of carrying the combat elements of a battalion landing team. Noce activated the 1st Engineer Amphibian Brigade on June 15, 1942, and the 2d Brigade five days later. Each had an organizational structure requiring 363 officers, 21 warrant officers and 6898 enlisted men.<sup>1</sup>

The objective of the Engineer Amphibian Command was to train eight engineer amphibian brigades by February 1943. This allowed each brigade just four weeks of specialty training with the Engineer Amphibian Command before joint training with the Army Ground Forces.<sup>2</sup>

The Army Ground Forces activated the Amphibious Training Center on June 20 with a mission of training twelve divisions in shore-to-shore operations by February 1943. This organization also resided at Camp Edwards to permit close liaison with the

Engineer Amphibian Command and joint training with the amphibian brigades.<sup>3</sup>

The Coast Guard Boat Unit Detachment gave classroom and practical instruction to the Army boat companies. The month allotted to this specialty training was sufficient only for learning basic technical aspects of handling boats. The classroom training included basic seamanship and navigation. It was patterned after the Coast Guard Auxiliary's public boating courses. Coast Guard instructors then gave the trainees individual hands-on instruction aboard landing craft. The first step was to learn vessel handling characteristics. They progressed to surf landings, preventing broaching and retracting from the beach to bring in more troops and supplies. Finally the new boatmen practiced moving in simple formation, maintaining positions in a landing wave, following other boats at night and delivering a combat unit ashore.<sup>4</sup> Colonel Lentz recalls that many "experienced" operators of conventional type boats had surprising difficulty in making the transition to blunt-nosed landing craft. Training aids were scarce. One innovative Coast Guard petty officer found a discarded landing craft diesel engine and rebuilt it for classroom training. Ironically, its operational condition brought pressure from levels above the command to place it back in service. The command prevailed and it remained as a valuable classroom demonstration unit.<sup>4</sup>

The shortage of boats hampered training for the first two brigades. The Army had estimated that five-hundred of the 36-

foot personnel landing craft (LCVP's) and 125 of the 50-foot vehicle lighters (LCM's) would be needed at Camp Edwards by July. Current U.S. production capacity could not support that, plus the landing craft needs of the U.S. Navy and Great Britain.<sup>5</sup>

Considerable uncertainty existed over whether the Army or Navy would man the landing craft in a cross-Channel attack. This made the future of the Engineer Amphibian Command precarious right from its beginning. The original Army directives establishing the Engineer Amphibian Command and the Amphibious Training Center emphasized shore-to-shore activities but permitted ship-to-shore training if facilities were available. Yet, on June 25 the War Department ordered the Army Ground Forces to discontinue ship-to-shore instruction for the time being. On July 1 the Ground Forces reduced their training objectives from twelve to five amphibious infantry divisions. Two weeks later the Commanding General of the Services of Supply informed the Chief of Engineers that the Engineer Amphibian Command would train only three engineer amphibian brigades plus a two brigade reserve.<sup>6</sup>

An urgent need for amphibian troops had developed in England to provide amphibious training for combat forces and to be available for proposed cross-Channel operations. The 1st Brigade, commanded by Colonel Henry C. Wolfe, had just begun joint training with the ground forces in July when it received overseas movement orders. The brigade moved by train to Staten Island, New York and sailed for Europe August 6 aboard the

transports Wakefield and Barry. Training of the 1st Brigade resumed in Ireland and Great Britain using the British Navy for boats and beachmasters. During this training the Combined Chiefs of Staff postponed the cross-Channel invasion and the Navy was placed in charge of providing ship-to-shore crews for a North African invasion. This was a blow to the Engineer Amphibian Command since the 1st Brigade was organized and trained to use its integral boat regiment. Members of this boat regiment would instead perform shore operations and hatch unloading duties in the TORCH invasion of North Africa.<sup>7</sup>

The 2d Engineer Amphibian Brigade, organized in June, spent its first six weeks in basic and specialty training under the Engineer Amphibian Command. With training of the 2d Brigade well underway Colonel Trudeau decided to consolidate interim training directives with lessons learned during the Amphibian Command's limited experience. On July 21 Trudeau directed a joint four-man team from his staff, including Capron, to prepare a doctrine manual for engineer amphibian units. He indicated that "with the exception of such doctrine as has been tentatively issued in training memoranda from this office, supplemented by pertinent parts of existing manuals on landing operations, little or nothing exists in the way of a clearly defined doctrine covering the tactics, techniques and administration of amphibian units organized for shore-to-shore operations."<sup>8</sup> Trudeau clearly envisioned a major role for engineer amphibian brigades.

The 2d Brigade stepped up its training program as more landing craft became available. It began working with battalions

and regiments of the 45th Infantry Division landing infantry troops on the simulated enemy beaches of Martha's Vineyard.<sup>9</sup>

After two months of operation the Engineer Amphibian Command still had not received any Navy officer training support. Coast Guard, Marine, Army infantry and Army engineer officers had been full participants from the beginning. Even the British Army and Navy had each provided two officers with amphibious expertise. The only Navy appearance was a July 4 observation visit by Captain Daniel E. Barbey for the Chief of Naval Operations. Barbey reported to a surprised Admiral King that the Army was better prepared than the Navy to provide trained amphibious forces.<sup>10</sup>

The Engineer Amphibian Command's growing frustration with the Navy's non-support was evident in Brigadier General Noce's August 6, 1942, letter to Admiral Henry C. Hewitt, the new commander of the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Force. This letter expressed profound disappointment in the Navy's failure to provide advisors as requested by the Secretary of War. It also indicated frustration that Admiral Hewitt had twice cancelled observation trips to Camp Edwards. Noce reemphasized his desire for Navy cooperation in writing, "I am desirous of having you see what we have been able to develop in the past two months and obtaining your suggestions for improvements."<sup>11</sup>

By mid-August the Engineer Amphibian Command had only 252 of the LCVP's, fifty LCM's and forty-seven control boats; an assortment of undependable used craft purchased from private owners. The Navy finally began nominal participation with nine

crewed 105 foot tank lighters (LCT's). It was apparent that they had been hastily provided since there was no Navy support organization. The Engineer Amphibian Command assumed their complete responsibility. Besides operating their LCT's the Navy crews took advantage of the Coast Guard classroom instruction at Camp Edwards.<sup>12</sup>

Once again the War Department changed the Engineer Amphibian Command's training objective, this time to only three brigades. The 3rd Brigade, possibly the last, was just being activated at Camp Edwards. Maintaining morale was becoming a challenge for the Engineer Amphibian Command staff as it faced an even more uncertain future.<sup>13</sup>

Coast Guard Commander Harold C. Moore joined the Engineer Amphibian Command staff and became Technical Marine Advisor and Director of Training of Landing Craft Crews just in time to oversee the 3rd Brigade's specialty training phase.<sup>14</sup>

By early September the 2d Brigade had reached a state of full combat readiness and its members produced a unique parade. The brigade was reviewed on the Camp Edwards parade grounds by Brigadier General Noce and the brigade's commander Brigadier General William F. Heavey. Each member wore a heavy rubber parka, and carried a weapon, plus equipment such as anchor or tool kit to indicate his specialty. They paraded a few days later for an awed group of Army and Navy officers from Washington.

Late in September the 2d Brigade combined with Rangers and the 36th Infantry Division, conducted a highly realistic combat



landing exercise. With Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, Commanding General of Ground Forces, as senior observer and a large contingent of Navy and Marine Corps observers, the mock invasion of Martha's Vineyard was an unqualified success. General McNair was convinced that the Amphibian Engineers were the link the Army needed to carry the attack to the enemy.

Within days the 2d Brigade and the Army Ground Forces Amphibious Training Center were on trains and trucks enroute Carabelle, Florida for winter training.<sup>15</sup>

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## CHAPTER VII

### TORCH PREPARATIONS AT LITTLE CREEK

With only two months remaining before the North Africa invasion, the Navy with its expanded amphibious responsibilities faced a severe shortage of landing craft operators. Lieutenant Commander Capron was called upon by the Navy to establish still another accelerated training program. He was transferred from the Engineer Amphibian Command to the Atlantic Fleet Amphibious Force. Capron met Admiral Hewitt in Norfolk and was directed to set up a program to train Navy beach parties and Army shore parties for an upcoming invasion. The North Africa destination was a closely guarded secret. Capron's first task was to train the Navy beach parties who were responsible for moving the boats to the enemy shore. A beach party for one transport vessel at that time consisted of fifty-six enlisted men and four officers. The officers would perform the duties of beachmaster, assistant beachmaster, boat officer and medical doctor. When the Army engineer shore parties arrived in Norfolk, Capron would be responsible for combined training. Shore parties loaded and unloaded the supplies from the landing craft. <sup>1</sup>

Over 650 Navy enlisted men, twenty-seven doctors and about fifty Navy junior officers reported aboard for the first beach party training. The junior officers were all recent Harvard

graduates. A temporary camp was set up at Little Creek, Virginia and independent training for the shore parties continued for one month. The existing transports manned by the Coast Guard and the Navy already had beach parties attached. The freshly trained Navy beach parties would be assigned to new cargo ships undergoing shipyard conversion from commercial to combat transports.<sup>2</sup>

In early October 1942 an Army combat engineer regiment, the 36th Combat Engineers, arrived at Little Creek for combined training. This combined training had serious Army/Navy jurisdictional problems during exercises. Soon a second similarly configured group of Navy trainees checked into Little Creek and the first combined group shifted its base to nearby Camp Bradford. The new group repeated the same training cycle.<sup>3</sup>

Both groups completed their combined training with ground forces by October 25, 1942, and the newly trained beach and shore parties embarked on transports in Norfolk. Some embarked on the combat transports comprising one task force and conducted maneuvers off Solomons Island in Chesapeake Bay. The remainder were shipped directly to Great Britain to meet the combat transports which would comprise a second task force. Accompanying the group from the States was the Second Armored Division plus a regiment of the Ninth Infantry Division. All were destined for Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Capron was aboard one of the transports, the USS HARRIS, which was exercising in Chesapeake Bay. He learned of the Task Force's North Africa destination and that he had already been designated main beachmaster for Safi. Suddenly he and two Army and two Marine officers were summoned back to Norfolk. Admiral Ernest King had discovered that the entire amphibious training staff had embarked leaving nobody behind to sustain the new school.<sup>5</sup> The five returnees had to set up a permanent curriculum for training all of the elements which went into an amphibious operation. Capron wrote the Fleet Training Pamphlet for beach and shore parties.<sup>6</sup>

After the North Africa invasion in most of the beach party personnel returned to the training center at Little Creek. Debriefing revealed problems with the beach party organization, particularly the concept of its assignment to a ship as a division. The landings had suffered because some ship commanding officers had taken the best men out of beach parties for their own vessels and substituted untrained men for the amphibious work. Further, beach parties were likely to dissipate in the future from prolonged confinement aboard the transports.<sup>7</sup>

Admiral Hewitt decided to establish new organizations called beach battalions patterned after the Army amphibious organization. One beach battalion would support a division of troops. They would be independent units assigned to transports only for specific operations.

Capron received command of the First Naval Beach Battalion which received partial training at Little Creek before shipping

to North Africa and final training in preparation for the June 1943 Sicily landings. He remained behind to form the Second Naval Beach Battalion which was shipped directly to Great Britain for training. The Fleet Amphibious Force finally formed the Third Naval Beach Battalion and shipped it to the Amphibious Training Center's southern base at Fort Pierce, Florida for training.<sup>8</sup>

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## CHAPTER VIII

### BRIGADES FOR MACARTHUR

On September 5, 1942,,the Joint Chiefs of Staff had issued JCS 81/1, an agreement which stated that amphibious operations were the Navy's responsibility. It acknowledged that Army units would have to be used until sufficient Marine Corps units could be trained. This document added to the confusion over the future of the Engineer Amphibian Command. It appeared to the Engineers that the Navy was now responsible for shore-to-shore as well as ship-to-shore operations. The Amphibian Command still had not obtained the advice requested from Admiral Hewitt of the Atlantic Amphibious Force on training areas and types of instruction desired. <sup>1</sup>

Colonel Trudeau took the issue to Admiral King, the Chief of Naval Operations in mid-October. He asked the Admiral for a clarification of JCS 81/1 as it pertained to shore-to-shore operations. The meeting concluded with no clearer direction for the Army Amphibians but Trudeau did receive enthusiastic response to a new Engineer Amphibian Command idea of prefabricating overseas bound landing craft.<sup>2</sup>

It was becoming apparent to Colonel Trudeau that the Army's amphibious mission needed new direction to survive. Since General Dwight D. Eisenhower was not going to use the 2d or 3d

Brigades in Europe, Trudeau began developing concepts for their use in the Pacific Theater. The Engineer Amphibian Command had developed a plan to prefabricate landing craft for transit to Australia, facilitating their early use by the amphibian brigades. Three-hundred disassembled craft would fit into the cargo holds of one Liberty ship while the Navy was only able to carry a few craft intact on deck. Colonel Trudeau and his staff worked out the details of this plan with Higgins Boat Works, the New Orleans manufacturer. He succeeded in obtaining an appointment with General Douglas MacArthur to promote the engineer amphibian brigades' capabilities for the Pacific theater. On November 8, the day of the Torch invasion, Trudeau began his flight to Port Moresby, New Guinea via Australia for this landmark meeting. For three days he explained his program to MacArthur and his staff. MacArthur was "terribly excited" and immediately sent word back to the United States that he wanted three amphibian brigades by the following June. He also endorsed the idea of having prefabricated boats shipped to Australia for reassembly. On Trudeau's triumphant return to the United States he stopped over in Australia where he selected Cairns as the landing craft assembly point.<sup>3</sup>

The 2d Brigade had barely settled at Carabelle, Florida and was preparing for its first exercise with the 38th Infantry Division when it received orders to move to Fort Ord, California. The 2d Brigade was to stage from there to Australia and would soon be the first engineer amphibians in the Pacific. Following



departure of the 2d Brigade from Florida, the 3d Brigade moved south from Camp Edwards to replace it. The move included a thirty LCM convoy through the Atlantic and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway system. The 3d Brigade participated in combined training with the 38th Infantry Division followed by the 28th Infantry Division into early March. To meet MacArthur's needs in the Pacific, the 3d Brigade moved from Camp Gordon Johnston to Fort Ord, California in April to stage for shipment to Australia.<sup>4</sup>

The Engineer Amphibian Command activated the 4th Engineer Amphibian Brigade at Fort Devens, Massachusetts on February 1, 1943. General Daniel Noce assumed duties as its first commander followed a short time later by the now Brigadier General Trudeau. Later that month the Navy agreed to perform all training of boat operating and maintenance personnel to meet future requirements. Concurrently, the Army agreed to discontinue all amphibious training activities in the United States except for the 3rd and 4th Brigades. The Army relieved the Ground Forces of all shore-to-shore amphibious training responsibilities on March 16 and finally disbanded the Amphibious Training Center in June.<sup>5</sup>

Following basic training the 4th Brigade moved to Camp Edwards in April for technical and specialist training including four weeks of training with the Coast Guard Boat Unit Detachment. During this period the Army assigned Trudeau to Washington to serve as amphibious advisor on the staff of General Somervell. He was also assigned to a Joint Strategic Amphibious

Subcommittee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Trudeau would continue to perform a vital role in overseeing the proper supply and utilization of the engineer amphibian brigades he was instrumental in forming.<sup>6</sup>

The training and doctrine manuals started the previous August were now complete and available for the 4th Brigade. Not only were they a valuable aid in brigade training, but they received wide distribution throughout the world by other agencies and other nations. The summer was spent refining doctrine and perfecting techniques on the waters between Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard. Commander Harold Moore remained with Engineer Amphibian Command at Camp Edwards until his transfer to a Coast Guard Cutter on July 5. In September the 4th Brigade moved to Camp Gordon Johnston, the renamed Carabelle, Florida training base. There it commenced joint training with the 4th Infantry Division under the direction of the Amphibious Training Command, Atlantic Fleet.

This ended the Engineer Amphibian Command's training responsibilities. The members of its various elements, including the Coast Guard Boat Unit Detachment were gradually released for reassignment. In December the Engineer Amphibian Command's volatile and highly productive eighteen month history was officially over.<sup>7</sup>

In 1987 Lieutenant General Arthur Trudeau recalled that the entire Engineer Amphibian Command "was first class because we were well organized, had a dynamic organization and we moved things. The Coast Guard fit right into that. It was great!"<sup>8</sup>

In his published memoirs, written twenty-four years after his Camp Edwards experience he corroborated that view; "...the Coast Guard was wonderful. We had a company of two hundred men from the Coast Guard, together with a chap--Harold Moore, a great guy and a good friend--and a number of very fine officers. We had a fine Coast Guard detachment."<sup>9</sup>

The 1st Brigade distinguished itself in North Africa Italy, Sicily. Normandy and Okinawa invasions. General Douglas MacArthur summed up the Pacific performance of the other three products of the Engineer Amphibian Command, now called Special Brigades, in his March 19, 1945, letter to the Chief of Staff of the War Department which read in part, "In the succession of amphibious operations up the coast of New Guinea to Morotai, thence to the Philippines, the performance of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Engineer Special Brigades has been outstanding. The soundness of the decision in 1942 to form organizations of this type has been borne out in all action in which they have participated. These units have contributed much to the Southwest Pacific Area. I recommend that careful consideration be given to the perpetuation and expansion of such units in the future Army set-up."<sup>10</sup>

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## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

With the war over, the Coast Guard transferred from the Navy Department back to the Treasury Department on January 1 1946. Elements in both services argued unsuccessfully that the demonstrated synergistic benefits justified keeping these services together. The most compelling argument for separation was the incompatibility of Navy military missions and Coast Guard regulatory functions.<sup>1</sup>

The Coast Guard had continued a long tradition of valuable wartime service. Although temporarily residing in the Navy Department, the Coast Guard had nevertheless maintained its unique identity in the eyes of the other services as well as the American public. Thousands of Coast Guard men had distinguished themselves in support of Navy, Marine and Army amphibious forces and had performed key amphibious development roles.

The Army remembered the two Coast Guard officers who had been keys to their amphibious success. In 1946 Captain Harold C. Moore was awarded the Army Commendation Ribbon by Major General Daniel Noce for meritorious service while serving on his Engineer Amphibian Command staff from August 1942 to July 1943. The citation stated that Moore was "particularly outstanding in directing this large training program and contributed materially to the success of the Engineer Amphibian Command in preparing units and individuals for the highly successful prosecution of a

new and effective type of amphibious warfare."<sup>2</sup> Commander Walter C. Capron was also awarded the Army Commendation Ribbon for his pioneering work in support of the Army's amphibious training program.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most significant and enduring recognition to come from the Coast Guard's wartime contributions was the elevation of its top leader to rank parity with the sister services. That milestone occurred on March 29, 1945, when President Roosevelt nominated the Commandant of the Coast Guard and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to four star rank. A New York Times editorial on March 30, 1945, marked the occasion and reflected the public's high regard for the wartime contributions of both services. The editorial entitled "Four-Star Promotions" stated: "To many a civilian the amount of gold braid worn on the sleeve or the stars on the shoulder of ranking officers of the Army, Navy and Marines means little. To a man in the service they mean a great deal. For many years the Marines have stuttered privately under the disadvantage of inferior rank accorded their regimental, division and corps officers, as compared with Army and Navy officers holding posts of comparable responsibility. It was not until this war that any Marine ever wore three stars. The same applies in somewhat lesser measure to the Coast Guard. In any inter-service conference the Marine or Coast Guard representative can expect to be out-ranked by his counterpart in the Army or Navy. The nomination of Lieutenant General A.A. Vandegrift Commandant of the Marine Corps to be a full General and of Vice Admiral Russel R. Waesche, Commandant of

the Coast Guard, to be a four-star Admiral, would seem to be a delayed recognition of the great wartime growth of both organizations and of the vital part the men of each have played in the Pacific war. It should help allay the feeling in both branches that they are looked upon by the Na. somewhat as step-children who should be seen but not heard. Although the Marines have been in existence since 1775 and General Vandegrift is their eighteenth Commandant, he will be the first to hold active four-star rank. His predecessor, General Thomas Holcomb, was not elevated to that rank until he retired as Commandant. General Holcomb had created a precedent in 1942 when he donned three stars, the first Marine officer to have that distinction.

"For the boss-man of the world's finest fighting corps, 470,000 Marines, and the greatest organization of landing-craft experts ever assembled, 169,000 Coast Guardsmen, the new ranks of General Vandegrift and Admiral Waesche would seem well deserved."<sup>4</sup>

An editorial the following day in the Baltimore Sun entitled "Deserved Recognition" stated in part; "There are 169,000 Coast Guardsmen contributing to the success of amphibious landings in remote corners of the world."<sup>5</sup>

The Coast Guard's amphibious contributions received unique recognition on November 10, 1945, when a commemorative three cent U.S. postage stamp was issued showing LCI landing craft in action with "U.S. COAST GUARD" in boldface lettering. The stamp's ceremonial first day sale was at the New York City location where Alexander Hamilton delivered his 1789 speech recommending

establishment of the Revenue Marine; the foundation of the Coast Guard.

Another proud chapter had been added to the Coast Guard's military legacy. Its role as a valuable defense component had been thoroughly demonstrated.<sup>6</sup> Strong and effective in war or in peace, the Coast Guard was still a versatile force for all seasons.

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