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OFFICE OF THE STRATEGIC SERVICES: OPERATIONAL GROUPS IN FRANCE
DURING WORLD WAR II, JULY-OCTOBER 1944

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

JOHN W. SHAVER III, MAJ, USA
B.A., Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, Tennessee, 1979

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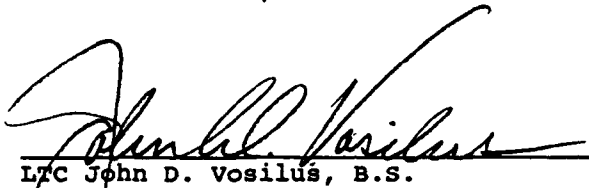
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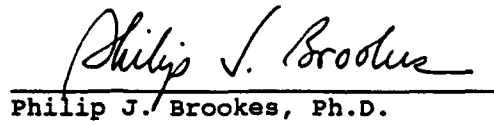
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ABSTRACT

OFFICE OF THE STRATEGIC SERVICES: OPERATIONAL GROUPS IN FRANCE DURING
WORLD WAR II, JULY-OCTOBER 1944 by MAJ John W. Shaver III, USA, 121
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This study evaluates six Operational Groups which supported Allied operations in France during the period 31 July to 10 October 1944. The groups were composed of two officers and 15 enlisted men. They were trained to work behind enemy lines conducting sabotage and guerrilla activities.

The conceptual developments of Operational Groups doctrine, recruitment, command and control, and training for these volunteers are first examined. The teams' missions are then examined.

The study concludes the concept for Operational Groups was sound, but they were not properly employed as strategic assets, thus not exploiting their capabilities to the fullest. Problems they experienced were mission orders, intelligence, command and control, and air delivery of special operations personnel.

Studying their history is useful to today's leaders and Special Forces as a means of evaluating special operations support to a theater.

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Finally, I want to thank my wife, Annis, for encouraging me to take on this enormous task during the "best year of my life" here at the Command and General Staff College. Her devotion to me, her countless hours typing this thesis and learning how to operate a computer were immeasurable. She sacrificed many Saturdays and trips to the mall to support me in accomplishing this great endeavor for which I will always be grateful. Ich liebe dich, Ace.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DOCTRINE	15
3. OPERATIONAL GROUP PERCY RED	27
4. OPERATIONAL GROUP DONALD	40
5. OPERATIONAL GROUP PERCY PINK	48
6. OPERATIONAL GROUP PATRICK	57
7. OPERATIONAL GROUP LINDSEY	67
8. OPERATIONAL GROUP CHRISTOPHER	78
9. CONCLUSIONS	88
APPENDIX	
A. GLOSSARY	99
B. FIGURES	103
C. OPERATIONAL GROUP EQUIPMENT	110
D. TRAINING	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY	116
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	120

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE	Page
1. Area of Operations for Group "Percy Red"	36
2. Area of Operations for Group "Donald"	45
3. Area of Operations for Group "Percy Pink"	54
4. Area of Operations for Group "Patrick"	64
5. Area of Operations for Group "Lindsey"	75
6. Area of Operations for Group "Christopher"	84
7. OG Headquarters Strategic Planning	104
8. OG Field Organization: Tactical Planning	105
9. Operational Group: The Basic Field Unit	106
10. Operational Group: The Basic Field Unit Revised June 1944 .	107
11. Training Areas	108
12. Operational Group "Patrick" Targets	109

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I consider the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and increasing strain placed on the German . . . internal security services throughout occupied Europe by the organized forces of resistance, played a very considerable part in our complete and final victory.¹

General Dwight D. Eisenhower
Supreme Allied Commander

Prior to World War II the United States had no established organization capable of conducting strategic intelligence operations during wartime. The President of the United States established such an organization called the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in a Military Order on 13 June 1942. Its duties were to "collect and analyze such strategic information as may be required by the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)" and "plan and operate such special services as may be directed by the JCS."² Along with these duties, OSS was directed in this directive to:

1. conduct sabotage in enemy and enemy-occupied countries,
2. organize and conduct guerrilla warfare,
3. support and supply resistance groups.³

This organization was to be headed by William J. Donovan.⁴

This study will focus on just one of the organizations under the OSS that contributed to the war's effort--Operational Groups (OGs). The focus will be on their creation, training, and missions conducted by six

teams in France from July to October 1944. It will conclude by analyzing their success and the implications and applicability they have on today's forces.⁵

Background

Concept

General Donovan made many trips abroad on behalf of the United States government to observe resistance movements, their organization, operations, and successes. He concluded it was imperative for the United States to create an organization similar to the British Special Operations Executive (SOE).⁶ More important, however, he recognized a need to organize and conduct guerrilla warfare behind enemy lines. In December 1941, Donovan sent a memorandum to the President recommending:

subversive activities and guerrilla units be considered in strategic planning . . . , and the relation between subversive action, resistance groups and guerrilla units was stressed. Specially, this memorandum recommended:

1. That as an essential part of any strategic plan, there be recognized the need of sowing the dragon's teeth in those territories from which we must withdraw and in which the enemy will place his army; for example, the Azores or North Africa. That the aid of native chiefs be obtained, the loyalty of the inhabitants be cultivated...and guerrilla bands of bold and daring men organized and installed.

2. That there be organized now, in the United States, a guerrilla corps, independent and separate from the Army and Navy, and imbued with a maximum of the offensive and imaginative spirit.⁷

Shortly after the establishment of OSS, the JCS approved the principle of forming guerrilla units. Operational Groups were authorized by a JCS directive of 23 December 1942, which required OSS to organize a force to be used in enemy and enemy-occupied territory.⁸

Special Order No. 21 established the OG branch on 4 May 1943. All personnel in the branch were military and their headquarters was established in Washington, DC, under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Alfred T. Cox (see figures 7 and 8, appendix B).⁹

Operational Groups were organized to provide the European theater commander with a strategic weapon capable of operating behind enemy lines against strategic targets.¹⁰ They could operate as a small reserve force because of their flexible organization and their ability to adapt easily to almost any mission. They were ideal for these operations because of their language qualifications, physical endurance, weapons and demolition expertise, para-military training, and their personal desire to engage in dangerous missions behind enemy lines.¹¹ They were highly trained volunteers, the majority of whom could speak the language of the country in which they were to operate. The missions, however, were not without hazards. The OGs were comprised of soldiers who operated exclusively in uniform even though their missions were conducted away from the main battlefield. They did not know if they would be treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention or not if captured by the Germans.¹²

Operational Groups were originally composed of four officers and 30 enlisted men (see figure 9, appendix B).¹³ However, prior to their deployment to France, it was determined that this makeup was too large because of lift capacity of the aircraft available; terrain and the local situation in France made employment of a large force impractical. In addition, there was a lack of personnel to completely fill OGs to strength. Therefore, in a memorandum dated 10 June 1944, the OGs were

reorganized with two officers and 15 enlisted men (see figure 10, appendix B).¹⁴

Two staffs supported the OGs: a field service headquarters and an area staff. The former consisted of five officers and 23 NCOs, to include six radio operators for two or more OGs. Most of these members would be combat personnel, who could be used as replacements or reinforcements for the OG as required. The latter consisted of three officers and five NCOs, responsible for all the OGs within the theater. These two staffs would later be incorporated into special forces (SF) detachments that were attached to the staff of each American army and army group headquarters.¹⁵

Recruitment

The initial recruiting began in April 1943 from US Army line units. OSS expected to find the most qualified men in the infantry and engineer units. Radio operators were obtained from the signal corps, while trained medical technicians came from the medical corps.¹⁶ Until the end of the war, the OG's table of organization was continually amended and enlarged, eventually numbering approximately 1,100, so that by August 1944, the OGs were renamed the 2671st Special Reconnaissance Battalion, Separate (Prov).¹⁷

The OSS interviewed prospective recruits who met two basic requirements, linguistic ability, physical strength and stamina. Additionally, if an individual showed interest, he received a personal interview. Operational plans were not divulged, yet enough information was provided so the potential recruit would know what was expected of

him. Only ten percent of those interviewed actually volunteered.

According to Anthony Cave Brown's The Last Hero:

Special attention was paid to character: "While the risks involved tend to make OG work appeal to young men, the success of OG assignments is not the result of daring and bravado alone. Accordingly, candidates were selected whose past records, civilian and military, gave evidence of stability and good judgment."¹⁸

Command and Control

When the OGs were formed, they came under the Special Operations (SO) Branch of the OSS.¹⁹ SO's counterpart in London was the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), which had been operating since mid-1940.²⁰ SO and SOE joined together to insure a coordinated effort against the Germans and to eliminate redundancy and to prevent friction. They controlled operations in northwestern Europe under the formal title of SOE/SO in September 1942 with headquarters in London.²¹ The main functions of the SOE/SO were:

1. promote resistance in occupied countries,
2. arm and equip resistance groups,
3. give direction to resistance groups,
4. plan actions to be taken by resistance groups, and
- 5) coordinate actions of resistance groups with Allied military plans.²²

SOE/SO participated in March 1943 in Exercise "Spartan," which simulated an Allied breakout from the initial invasion beachhead in northwestern Europe. They tested a concept of employing Jedburgh teams, whose mission was different from the OGs, behind enemy lines in support of the allies' main forces.²³ The importance of the exercise identified

lessons learned that would also assist the OGs later in their deployment into France.²⁴

In early 1943, the SO Branch of OSS London made plans for coordinating resistance activities with the operations of allied armies designated for the invasion of Western Europe. They determined that for these "special teams" to assist the Allies best, an organization from SO needed to be attached to the field army headquarters. These teams would coordinate closely with army and army group G3 and G2 staffs to maintain liaison between the armies and resistance groups behind enemy lines, through SOE/SO headquarters in London. SOE and SO submitted requests in April 1943 through their respective chains of command to obtain approval for this new organization.²⁵

The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) agreed in August 1943 with the need to control these "special teams" behind enemy lines. SHAEF consequently created a special forces (SF) detachment for each army and army group headquarters to coordinate such operations.²⁶ This was where the area staff worked while supporting deployed OG's.

SHAEF renamed SOE/SO Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ) on 1 May 1944, responsible to SHAEF's G3 Branch.²⁷ This change assisted in the integration of the SOE/SO's operations of several different types of "special teams" with the Allied invasion plans for France.²⁸

As mentioned earlier, resistance was considered a strategic weapon. Therefore General Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted to ensure SFHQ supported military operations planning for Operation "Overlord" (codeword for the invasion of Normandy, France). He thought it

necessary to delegate authority for planning to the 21st Army Group's SF detachment. In a directive on joint operations by resistance forces, Eisenhower's chief of staff, LTG W. B. Smith stated:

It is only rarely that it [resistance] can be used tactically. The cumulative effects of numerous acts of resistance over a wide area can, if adroitly handled, pay a tactical dividend in a required area. For this reason, control of resistance, through SFHQ, will remain vested in the Supreme Commander.²⁹

However, one more cosmetic change in the chain-of-command was to occur before the OGs were inserted into France.

General Charles de Gaulle's government in exile had unified the many diverse French resistance groups by March 1944 and formed them under the umbrella organization of the *Forces Francaises de l'Interieur* (FFI). This included the communist *Franco-Tireurs et Partisans* (FTP), the largest and most active resistance organization. After the invasion, the Americans and British realized the importance de Gaulle's FFI would have in coordinating all resistance activity in France. SHAEF directed a change of command in July 1944. The commander of the FFI, General Pierre Koenig, assumed command over SFHQ operations in France and the organization was renamed the *Etat-Major des Forces Francaises de l'Interieur* (EMFFI).³⁰ The Allies appointed two deputies, one each from OSS and SOE, to assist General Koenig who actually ran the Allies' operations in France.³¹

It took from the summer of 1943 to June 1944 to identify the roles OGs would perform behind enemy lines. Would their new doctrine support the operational plan for France? Were these brave volunteers

properly trained? The remainder of this paper will address these questions.

Endnotes

¹Stephen E. Ambrose, Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), p. 108.

²Roosevelt had placed it under the direction and supervision of the JCS, thereby fixing its military character and enabling it to support and be supported by military operations. Charles D. Armeringer, US Foreign Intelligence: The Secret Side of American History, (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1990), p. 159; OSS/London: Special Operations Branch and Secret Intelligence Branch War Diaries (Microfilm, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1985), Volume 12, Basic Documents, p. 1; and Bradley F. Smith, The Shadow Warriors: The OSS and the Origins of the CIA, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 117-121.

³OSS/London, Preamble, Office of Chief, Administration, p. i.

⁴Major General (Retired) "Wild Bill" Donovan was a U. S. lawyer before he headed the OSS, the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In 1940 Donovan was the unofficial observer for the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, in Great Britain. Knox was very pleased with his reports and he was sent on several missions by President Roosevelt to southeast Europe and the Middle East to observe resistance movements. On his return he was made coordinator of intelligence and became director of OSS in June 1942. The OSS had three branches--intelligence, operations and research. On 1 October 1945, the OSS was terminated by an executive order and its functions were distributed to the Department of State and War Department. John Keegan, Who Was Who in World War II, (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1978), p. 69.

⁵There were 22 teams or sections inserted into France. Fourteen sections stationed in Algiers, air dropped into France between 8 June and 2 September 1944. These sections worked with the Maquis to protect the flanks of Allied forces moving inland from the Normandy beaches, ambush German columns and obstruct their progress, destroy enemy supplies and lines of communications and force the Germans to divert forces for their protection. The remaining eight OG sections were stationed in England consisting of "Norwegian" and "French" OG personnel. They were inserted into France between 31 July and 9 September 1944. Their mission differed some from the earlier OGs. They were to reinforce the Maquis to harass and ambush withdrawing German units, prevent destruction by retreating enemy and protect two key hydro-electric plants, and protect lines of communication and transport for subsequent use by the Allies. In addition to these OGs, other OGs were also inserted into Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Norway. After Germany's defeat, OGs returned to the United States and began preparations to operate in the Far East. Kermit Roosevelt, The Overseas Targets War Report of the OSS, Volume 2, (New York: Walker and Company, 1979), p. 204-205, referred to hereafter as Roosevelt, The Overseas Targets. OG Pamphlet, titled "OG Operational Group Command,"

Washington, DC, December 1944, general orientation guide, unedited. Provided to the author by Mr. Albert Materazzi, 5 February 1993. Referred to hereafter as "OG Operational Group Command". Records of the London History Office and the Washington History Office, OSS, Record Group 226, entry 99, folder 49, box 12, National Archives, Washington, DC. Memorandum dated 29 September 1944, subject: OG Operations in Southern France, referred to hereafter as Record Group 226.

⁶The British counterpart to OSS was the SOE. It was created in 1940 as an offshoot of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), to assist guerrilla movements against Nazi Germany. R. Harris Smith, OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 28.

⁷Kermit Roosevelt, War Report of the OSS (Office of the Strategic Services), Volume 1, (New York: Walker and Company, 1977), p. 72, referred to hereafter as War Report of the OSS.

⁸OG was initially responsible to the Deputy Director Strategic Services Operations (SSO). On 27 November 1944, by Supplement 25 to General Order No. 9 (Rev.) the OG command (OGC) was activated as a separate military unit within OSS. Thereafter, the chain of command devolved from the director to the commanding officer of OGC. OGs were strictly a military unit, even though according to Kermit Roosevelt "the quasi-military administration of OSS caused some confusion." However, OSS maintained coordinated operational control over OG's throughout the war. Ibid., p. 223-224.

⁹Ibid.; Bruce H. Heimark, "Norwegian Special Operations in France, July, August, September, 1944." (privately published) Omaha, Nebraska, 1993, p. 4, referred to hereafter as Heimark, "Norwegian Special Operations"; and "OG Operational Group Command."

¹⁰OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, 6 June 1944, p. 139; and Record Group 226, entry 24-26 (3A), Memorandum dated 24 May 1944, subject: Directive on Joint Operations by Resistance Forces and SAS Troops.

¹¹OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, 6 June 1944, p. 139.

¹²OG's operated secretly away from main battlefields, but on tasks closely connected with the battlefield. Such was the nature of their work that a document known as the Hitler Commando Order was deemed by the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* to apply to OG's as it applied to all other Allied special forces, particularly those who arrived in enemy territory by air. Although the order was itself illegal under the Geneva Convention, it had originated in 1942, when British commando raids were proving so effective at sapping the nervous strength of

German troops on coastal duty along the French shores, that Hitler decided they must be deterred. A group of British commandos apparently executed a German prisoner whose hands they had bound with wire (so the Germans alleged) during an attack on the German garrison at Sark in the Channel Islands, and as a result, Hitler decreed: "In future, all terror and sabotage troops of the British and their accomplices who do not act like soldiers but rather like bandits, will be treated as such by the German troops and will be ruthlessly eliminated in battle, wherever they appear." Anthony Cave Brown, The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan, (New York: Times Books, 1982), p. 473-474, referred to hereafter as Brown, The Last Hero; and Edward Hymoff, The OSS in World War II, (New York: Richardson & Steuman, 1986), p. 234.

¹³"OG Operational Group Command."

¹⁴Record Group 226, Caserta SO OP 29-30. Reports Apr.-Jun. 44, entry 154, Folder 962, Box 58, Memorandum, Special Project, Operations Center, AFHQ, subject: Tactical Revision of Operational Group Planning, 10 June 1944. However, in an interview with Leif Eide, an original member of OG "Percy Red," he states the groups were comprised of nine enlisted men and one officer per squad for a total of 20 in the group. Eide, Lief, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁵Field Service Headquarters was responsible for: (1) supervising the specialized training scheduled for OGs prior to the target date for their assigned missions, (2) relieving OGs of all administrative work, (3) supplying communication and medical care of the OGs. Area staff was responsible for: (1) arranging for special training required by the OGs prior to the target dates for their assigned missions, (2) obtaining any additional special supplies and equipment which the OGs might need, (3) relieving the field services headquarters of the maximum amount of administrative work, (4) contacting the Intelligence Section and Country Sections for all necessary information regarding the target, (5) preparing the detailed operational plans, and (6) briefing personnel assigned for specific missions. OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, 6 June 1944, p. 139-140; OSS/London, Preamble, Army Staffs, p. i-xxiii; and Roosevelt, The Overseas Targets, p. 192.

¹⁶Roosevelt, War Report of the OSS, p. 223-224; The OSS recruiters were looking for "patriots, not mercenaries." Bruce Heimark, letter to the author dated 2 February 1993. The initial OGs were recruited at Camp Hale, Colorado from the 99th Infantry Battalion (Separate) (the only ski paratroop unit in the US Army) which was comprised of Norwegians. There were three requirements: 1) working knowledge of Norwegian, 2) skier, and 3) volunteer for airborne training. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁷Roosevelt, War Report of the OSS, p. 225.

¹⁸Brown, The Last Hero, p. 472. Possible recruits also had their background checked out to ensure there were no "blackmarks" or "skeletons in their closet" that would disqualify them from joining this special organization. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁹SO was responsible for the conduct of physical subversion in enemy and enemy-occupied or controlled territory. Such subversion included the following:

- I. to promote, organize and equip partisan groups,
 - II. to organize, train and employ operational nuclei for guerrilla warfare,
 - III. to instruct and use Allied agents in modern methods of sabotage,
 - IV. to furnish the implements and weapons of resistance.
- OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Documents, General Order # 9, p. 14.

²⁰After the fall of France in July 1940, one of the last acts performed by the Chamberlin Cabinet was the creation of the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Its mission was to nurture sabotage activity in the Axis-occupied countries. Since 1938, two departments in the War Office and one in the Foreign Office had been studying this topic and it was these departments which formed SOE. Although intelligence circuits were run by SOE, it was independent of other British intelligence services. S. J. Lewis, JEDBURGH Team Operations in Support of the 12th Army Group, August 1944, (U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth KS: U. S. General Printing Office, 1991), p. 1-2.

²¹M. R. D. Foot, SOE in France: An Account of the Work of the British Special Operations Executive in France, 1940-44, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), p. 31. Referred to hereafter as Foot, SOE in France.

²²OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Coordination of Activities of Resistance Groups Behind the Enemy Lines with Allied Military Operations in an Opposed Invasion of Northwest Europe, p. 54.

²³Jedburghs were usually three man teams made up of two officers and one NCO (radio operator). Each team fielded a native speaker of the country into which the team would be inserted (France in this case). The remainder of the team was comprised of either American or British personnel. Their primary missions were to organize resistance groups and act as liaison between the resistance groups and Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ). John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company), p. 3 (Vol. 4-A).

Exercise "Spartan" simulated the invasion of the European continent. The Allies had secured a bridgehead when eleven Jedburgh teams were inserted to assist in the operations. Jedburghs assisted by

simulated resistance groups successfully accomplished all of their assigned missions. Specifically, the primary missions consisted of blowing up five targets, preventing three demolitions, severing two enemy lines of communications, and conducting one attack on an enemy headquarters. Secondary missions included general guerrilla attacks against small enemy detachments, staff officers in cars and dispatch riders." Elliot J. Rosner, "The Jedburghs: Combat Operations Conducted in the Finistere Region of Brittany, France, From July-September 1944." MMAS thesis, U. S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1990, p. 4-5.

²⁴Jedburgh concept was validated and considered important for the invasion of France. However, the exercise also provided some lessons learned. To ensure the Germans could not detect the teams, it was critical that they be air dropped at least 40 miles behind enemy lines and at night. Since the exercise disclosed that the teams would have to operate against enemy lines of communications and conduct guerrilla warfare, it was necessary to insert agents, well in advance of Jedburghs, to work out the details with the resistance for reception of and future operations with Jedburghs to ensure the latter's success. Rosner, p. 5-6.

²⁵Lewis, p. 6; and OSS/London, Volume 5, Preamble, p. i.

²⁶The organization for these special forces detachments consisted of 52 personnel (33 SO/SOE and 19 signal) for each field army and 38 (21 SO/SOE and 17 signal) for the army group staff. OSS/London, Volume 5, Preamble p. vii-xxi.

²⁷This was a convenient cover name, to make relations between the directing body and the more regular formations engaged in the coming invasion of France more secure. Foot, SOE in France, p. 32.

²⁸SOE was involved with several organizations operating in France: RF (the Gaullists), F (the independents), and AMF (who worked from Algiers). Each organization sent in over 400 agents. The Jedburgh teams, added nearly 300 more personnel. EU/P (the Poles) sent in twenty-eight agents. DF (the escape section) sent perhaps a dozen men. M. R. D. Foot, SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940-46, (Frederick MD: University Publications of America, 1986), p. 214, referred to hereafter as Foot, SOE; and Lewis, p. 6-7.

²⁹OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, p. 139; and Record Group 226, entry 24-26 (3A), Memorandum 24 May 1944, subject: Directive on Joint Operations by Resistance Forces and SAS Troops.

³⁰EMFFI was created to integrate Koenig's BCRA (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action) staff and SFHQ. Smith, R. Harris, p. 188.

³⁰EMFFI was created to integrate Koenig's BCRA (Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action) staff and SFHQ. Smith, R. Harris, p. 188.

³¹General Koenig's control was exercised entirely through SFHQ. No change was made in SFHQ and the general implemented his control by directives from SFHQ. The following sections were placed under his direct control: 1) French F and RF sections, 2) Special Force Detachment with army group and armies, 3) relevant elements of the Forward Planning Section, 4) Special Air Service Brigade Liaison Section. These four sections represent the units actually responsible for directing operations of French Resistance Groups from SFHQ. Record Group 226, entry 99 folder 117, box #93, p. 7-8, subject: European Theater of Operations Report, July 1944, French Assume Control Over Resistance; OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, Memorandum, 13 July 1944, subject: Command and Control of French Forces of the Interior, (Northern Zone), p. 146 - 147; Ambrose, p. 107-108; Brown, Arthur, p. 12; and Lewis, p. 7.

CHAPTER TWO

DOCTRINE

Missions

OSS created Operational Group's as counterparts to the British Special Air Service (SAS),¹ to execute three tactical objectives behind enemy lines: (1) *coup-de-main* (surprise attacks in force, e.g., ambushes) operations; (2) provide assistance to resistance groups; and (3) carry out "counter-scorching" raids (the preservation of targets, e.g., fuel dumps, bridges, railroads, etc., the Germans might be expected to destroy during their withdrawal).² The OGs were most suitable for providing military support for difficult *coup-de-main* operations of strategic significance, because of their linguistic capabilities, specialized training and organization. They could conduct such attacks as amphibious operations against coastal targets or air insertions against targets behind enemy lines. OGs could extract themselves from coastal operations. However, air operations required resupply and a planned withdrawal.³ The teams would make their way back to friendly lines, where they could either report to the nearest special forces detachment or obtain travel orders to return by air to London.⁴

In France the OGs would parachute in to carry out specific missions (irregular warfare and harassment behind enemy lines) either alone or in conjunction with the Maquis.⁵ They would destroy bridges and rail lines, ambush German convoys, block mountain

passes, harass retreating German units, and provide reconnaissance and intelligence.⁶

Most of the OGs had to cooperate closely with the local Maquis to ensure their mission was carried out. This could range from coordinating activities of the Maquis in their resistance work to destroying retreating enemy units. Additionally, the OGs could reconnoiter targets, a large enemy fuel dump for example. If strategic considerations required the destruction of the fuel dump, then the OGs were ideally suited for this kind of mission. They could support Jedburghs and local resistance groups for missions against similar targets.⁷

The counter-scorching raid would be the most difficult to accomplish. It required close coordination between OGs and Allied reinforcements. If the Germans were withdrawing and planned to demolish key bridges or hydro-electric plants, the OGs would prevent such demolition. This, however, required that the Allied reinforcements arrive rapidly to relieve the OGs. If Allied reinforcements failed to arrive, OGs would not be strong enough to repel a counterattack. Or, if the OGs were late in their attack, the Germans might successfully carry out the demolition.⁸

Training

The OG teams were formed along national lines in the U. S. They received six additional weeks of intensive advanced instruction in special schools, in addition to their basic army training, prior to their departure for one of the major theaters of operations.⁹ Training

emphasized teamwork at the squad, section and group levels.

Additionally, if a team received a specific mission, then they developed a special course which allowed them to train on an identical model to familiarize them with the details of the task.¹⁰

The first OGS to arrive in the United Kingdom, consisted of one field service headquarters and two OGS commanded by Major Harold P. Larson.¹¹ These OGS, as well as other OGS working in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky and received training under the supervision of the Director for Training, Major John Tyson.¹² The OGS were temporarily lodged at Forest Lodge near Aviemore, Scotland in December 1943. The OGS moved later in January 1944 to a permanent site located in an isolated mountainous section of Scotland at Stronelairig (see figure 11, appendix B) and Killin, Inverness-shire.¹³

Training emphasized physical conditioning to toughen the men for whatever they might encounter, and para-military operations. The para-military instruction covered demolitions, weapons, map reading, orienteering, morse code, etc. The OGS practiced patrolling, reconnaissance, scouting and security operations at night as well as learning hand-to-hand combat. The men rehearsed hitting a target with coordinated fire power and swiftly getting out of the area to meet at a designated rallying point several miles away from the target. They learned how to set demolitions to blow railways, bridges, power lines, tele-communications towers, and/or cut telephone lines.¹⁴ Many of the training aids and facilities had to be built from scratch by the OGS. They built a six target rifle

range, a blitz course to prepare the students to think under battlefield conditions, and a mock village. The OGs also built various replicas (bridges, radio towers, ammunition depots, etc.) to rehearse demolition methods.¹⁵ Near their new base in the mountains they also practiced skiing. All radio operators received communications instruction to ensure they could copy 20 words a minute.¹⁶

On 13 May, the OGs moved again to an operational site called Brockhall near Weedon, Northhamptonshire, England (Area E). They were only 25 miles from Harrington Airfield, which made practicing parachute operations more convenient. Additionally, the hall was big enough to accommodate all the OG teams.¹⁷

MAJ Tyson made arrangements with the Harrington Airfield commander to allow the OGs to practice night jumping at Farvesley Park, five miles from Brockhall. The OGs even obtained permission to attend the British parachute school at Ringway for additional training. This allowed the air crews of the B-24's (Liberators) and the OGs to gain familiarity with each other. The OGs would have five men, a stick, per airplane that would sit on the floor of the plane and jump (actually drop through a hole behind the bomb bay doors) at the position of attention from the Liberators. Because the exit from the plane was a small hole in the floor, the men could only carry a small bag, containing underclothes, cigarettes, French money, along with a side arm (.45 caliber pistol) and a knife. Their equipment and weapons would be dropped separately in containers.¹⁸

Between 1 June and the latter part of July, before the first OG mission deployed from England to France, the OGs received additional specialized training. They received training in foreign weapons, reception committees, booby-traps, mines and wireless communications. While at Brockhall, the OGs conducted many night operations to work out problems.¹⁹

One of the most realistic and beneficial exercises was the OGs' assignment to protect Harrington Airfield from enemy parachutists on D-Day. This experience came in handy when the OGs later had to protect important facilities in France from destruction by the Germans during their withdrawal.²⁰

By mid-July, Major Tyson reported that the OGs had completed their preparation and training, and they were ready to perform any mission asked of them. From this time until their first deployment on 31 July, the men kept busy by practicing their basic skills.²¹

Deployment

Army commanders or the SOE/SO wishing to use the services of the OGs had to submit a request to Major Tyson, who formerly supervised training, and had since become the head of the OG section responsible for planning and acquiring equipment for field operations. Lieutenant Colonel Obolensky selected the teams that would conduct the missions in France. Major Tyson would notify the commander of the team to assemble his men and prepare them for employment.²² Meanwhile, Major Tyson would obtain intelligence information on the target area from the appropriate country section

at SFHQ.²³ This information would be on terrain, weather, Allied personnel already in the area, resistance elements, any other activities and enemy formations in the area. Detailed maps and aerial photographs would also be provided to the OG team for review of the target area.²⁴

The OG director would prepare an operation order containing the location of the target, purpose of the attack, number of OG personnel involved, method of employment, supplies, ammunition and weapons to be carried, communication, escape routes or other arrangements for extraction to include time and method. After writing the operations order, he would notify the country section of the planned time and place of departure for the OG team and secure the required aircraft through the same section.²⁵

The director would order the assembly of parachutes, packages, containers and the requisition of any special supplies needed for the mission that were not already on hand. The team would also receive briefings on the communications to be used and information needed. The OSS finance officer would provide the necessary foreign currency for the mission.²⁶

Major Tyson would arrange for transportation to the airfield and would personally brief the team and a member of his staff would stay with the team until they departed. The staff officer would remain at the airfield to ensure the OGs had been dropped and, if for some reason the mission was averted, he would ensure the team was transported back to Brockhall.²⁷

During August 1944, 87 OGs were dispatched to France, along with 86 more in early September, to play an important role in helping the French Resistance.²⁸ Six of these teams and their missions will be discussed in the following chapters.

Endnotes

¹There were several major differences between OGs and the SAS. OGs were operationally controlled by SFHQ. The SAS, though controlled by SHAEF, received their orders from 21 Army Group through the Headquarters Airborne Forces. The majority of the OGs spoke the language of the country in which they would operate, where as only a small portion of the SAS had a language qualification. OGs had a high percentage of radio operators, one per squad and a reserve of six in the field service headquarters. SAS troops were allotted signals personnel and equipment according to its availability and the mission requirements. OGs were supplied by SFHQ while SAS was supplied by their own headquarters. OSS/London: Special Operations Branch and Secret Intelligence Branch War Diaries (Microfilm, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1985), Volume 12, Basic Documents, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, p. 143; and John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company), (Vol. 4-A), p. 2.

²OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Documents, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, p. 142.

³Ibid.

⁴Actions the OG's were to take when they were overrun by Allied ground forces, was to report to the nearest allied headquarters and ask for the intelligence officer. The group would request then to be put in touch with the nearest SF detachment. The latter would confirm the identity of the group and assist their passage back to SFHQ. Actions to take if the group or its members, individually, were captured were to conduct themselves as soldiers since they were in uniform performing regular military duties. The rules of warfare would apply to them, that is provide name, rank and serial number only. Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Jul.-Sep. 44, OG's, p. 25; according to Mr. Eide, the soldiers were provided the names/locations of two safe houses if they got in trouble; or, if the situation was really bad, to try and make their way to Spain. He does not remember the instructions that were cited by Mendelsohn. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

⁵Resistance groups conducting operations in the mountainous or wooded areas of France were referred to as "Maquis." It was there resistance groups could be organized for operations and training along military lines. A second type of resistance group was clandestine organizations whose members formed part of sabotage cells or small para-military units while leading apparently inoffensive and normal lives. Both types of groups were relatively immobile. OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Coordination of Activities of Resistance Groups Behind the Enemy Lines with Allied Military Operations in an

Opposed Invasion of Northwest Europe, p. 55. The British SOE history records show that SHAEF assigned the Maquis to conduct sabotage operations initially concentrating on fighter aircraft, morale, attacks on headquarters, destruction of roads and telephone lines and the removal of German demolitions from mined bridges likely to be used by the Allies. They were further instructed to increase their tempo of sabotage as the air battle reached its climax, and then, simultaneously with the invasion, initiate an all-out attack on railways, roads and communications and harrassment of any occupation troops by any means available. Stephen E. Ambrose, Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), p. 103.

⁶Charles M. Simpson, Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years: A History of the US Army Special Forces, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), p. 12.

⁷OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, p. 142.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Originally, OSS organized OGs according to nationality of the country in which operations would be conducted, e.g. Norwegian, Greek, Italian and French. At least one man in each squad could speak the language of the target country. However, circumstances did not allow OGs to work exclusively in the country for which they were training, e.g. Norwegian OGs operated in France. Heimark, "Norwegian Special Operations, in France, July, August, September, 1944," p. 5. Norwegians, who had joined the US Army, were sent to Camp Hale, Colorado to train in skiing (downhill and cross-country), mountain climbing, forging rivers and canyons, and the burdensome task of carrying supplies and weapons. This training would prove helpful later for those Norwegians recruited by OSS. Bruce H. Heimark, "O.S.S. Operation RYPE: Cutting the Nordland Rail Line in Occupied Norway at Two Points in the North Trondelag Area, April, 1945." (Thesis, Department of History and the Faculty of the Graduate College University of Nebraska, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI, 1991), p. 93-94; OGs recruited in the States were sent to Area "F" (the Congressional Country Club), Bethesda, Maryland where the soldiers slept in tents, the officers slept in the main building and meals were taken in the dining room. Heimark, "Norwegian Special Operations," p. 4.; Tactical training at Area "F" "was of commando type with emphasis on raids, ambushes, cross-country movement, compass runs, sentry elimination, and the simulated destruction of various targets: bridges, culverts, railroads (trestles and tracks), canal locks, electric transformer stations, and high-tension wire pylons. Night operations were stressed." Aaron Banks, From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986), p. 5. Additionally, the training at Area "F" emphasized physical training to build up (or tear down) the men and eliminate the weak ones from the program. Demolition and hand-to-hand

combat training were conducted at an area known today as Camp David. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993; and OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, p. 140. Six weeks preliminary training was given in the United States on the following subjects: map reading, scouting and patrolling, close combat--armed and unarmed, physical conditioning, fieldcraft and equipment protection, hygiene and first aid, military tactics, demolition, weapons--allied and axis, operation and repair of enemy vehicles, enemy espionage organizations, organization and training of civilians for guerrilla warfare, identification of aircraft and vehicles, security, and logistics. "OG Operational Group Command."

¹⁰OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, p. 140. While stationed at Area "F," the OGs comprised of Norwegians conducted one tactical exercise at Martha's Vineyard where they attacked a simulated "radar" site. The group attacked from the ocean in rubber rafts and "took out" the marine guards. The site consisted of barracks, mess hall and a radar tower surrounded by a fence. The group commandeered a truck, drove into the compound and crashed through the fence and marked the radar tower with white chalk, signifying the radar site had been destroyed (and the mission was completed). Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹¹MAJ H. P. Larson was from Madison, Wisconsin and is believed to be the only OG to have remained on active duty after the war, serving in the Medical Corps and retiring as a Colonel. OSS/London, Volume 9, Jan.-Nov. 44, Training, p. 17; and Leif Eide, letter to author, 20 March 1993.

¹²LTC Serge Obolensky began his military career with the Chevalier Guards, First Cavalry Regiment of the Czar during World War I. After the Russian armistice, he fought against the Bolsheviks for two years in the Crimea as a guerilla, before fleeing to England. He became a naturalized US citizen in 1932. When World War II started, he joined the New York State Guard as a private in the 17th Regiment. When the guard was federalized, he was inducted into the US Army as a major, and recruited by Colonel Donovan to join the OSS with the specific mission of advising the OSS in guerilla tactics. At this time, Major Obolensky translated the Russian guerrilla manual into English and adapted its tactics for Anglo-American military use. At the age of 50, he attended jump training and ranger training at Fort Benning, Georgia before taking over the training of OGs at Area "F." Bruce Heimark, obituary notice re: Colonel Serge Obolensky provided to author 12 March 1993; Anthony Cave Brown, The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan, (New York: Times Books, 1982), p. 46, referred to hereafter as Brown, The Last Hero; and Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, Jan.-Jun. 44, p. 11-12. MAJ Tyson was born 4 January 1904 in Pennsylvania and joined OSS 29 December 1941, OSS/London, Vol. 11, Biographies, p. 19. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹³OSS/London, Volume 9, Jan.-Nov. 44, Training, p. 18; and photographs provided by Mr. Eide during interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁴Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Jan.-Jun. 1944, OG's, p. 4-5; and Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁵OSS/London, Volume 9, Jan.-Nov. 44, Training, p. 18.

¹⁶OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, p. 141. Some operators received instructions from the British and learned the British code. The British would tape (record) the operator's hand (sending of morse code) because each man had a distinct "style." Additionally, the British instructed each operator to "fault" on a letter (send the incorrect morse code for a designated letter that each man was assigned). These were two methods the British could use to determine if an operator had been captured and was sending messages under duress or if a German was using the OG radio to send false reports. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁷OSS/London, Volume 9, Jan.-Nov. 44, Training, p. 19.

¹⁸Ibid. The paratroopers would be dropped at 400 feet and the containers at about 1000 feet, Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁹OSS/London, Vol. 9, Jan.-Nov. 44, Training, p. 20.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Jan.-Jun. 44, OGs, p. 17.

²²Ibid., p. 16. As mentioned earlier, there were eight OG teams inserted into France from England. These teams comprised 37 officers and 186 men for a total of 173. Ibid., p. 22, 36, 51, 58, 69-70, 92, 115-117 and 137-138.

²³SFHQ created a country section for each country in Axis occupied Europe. They organized and supplied resistance groups, in order to disrupt the German military and to prepare the resistance to support the Allies in their military objectives. To assist in the accomplishment of these objectives, the country section was responsible for infiltrating into their respective territory trained organizers and W/T operators. The OGs were briefed on their missions, background of area to include resistance groups, current situation, etc. Additionally, the country section had to ensure the groups were regularly supplied, mainly by air drops. OSS/London, Volume 3, Jan.-Mar. 44, Western Europe, p. 4.

²⁴Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Jan.-Jun. 44, p. 17; and OSS/London, Volume 12, Employment of OG, Basic Documents, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, p. 144.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶OSS/London, Volume 12, Basic Document, subject: Employment of Operational Groups in the European Theater of Operations and Procedures for their Dispatch, p. 144.

²⁷Ibid., p. 145.

²⁸Records of the London History Office and the Washington History Office, OSS, Record Group 226, August 44, Entry 99, Folder 118, Box #93, National Archives, Washington, DC.

CHAPTER THREE

OPERATIONAL GROUP--PERCY RED

Background

Operational Group "Percy Red," led by Captain William F. Larson and comprised of 18 men, was the first OG inserted by air drops into France on 31 July and 1 and 5 August 1944 in the Haute Vienne area in central France (see figure 1).¹ Its mission was to act as a highly-trained military cadre for the Maquis and assist them in the following tasks:

- a. repelling enemy attacks,
- b. organizing and carrying out attacks--especially on the Montaubau/Brive/Limoges/Vierzon railway lines,
- c. organizing and carrying out attacks on the wolfram mines located at Puy-les-Vignes, near St. Leonard-de-Noblat and Vaulry near Cieux, and
- d. providing additional wire/telephone (W/T) communications between EMFFI and the Maquis.²

The Maquis in the areas was lead by "Hamlet," an organizer sent by SFHQ.³ There were approximately 5,000 Frenchmen under the control of the Maquis, some with military experience and some with many months of experience employing guerrilla tactics against the Germans. The Maquis were well-armed as a result of a large amount of weapons and ammunition dropped by the Allies since D-day.⁴

Prior to "Percy Red's" arrival, the Maquis had carried out successful attacks against railroads, roads, telecommunications and had

destroyed two bridges in the area. This prompted the Germans to seek out and attack the Maquis.⁵

The area was under the control of "Ellipse," the code name for the French military delegate of the region. "Hamlet" was believed to be in contact with an SAS group in the vicinity, as well as two Jedburgh teams, "Hugh" and "Hamish."⁶ The Jedburghs were assisting the Maquis in organizing their resistance and it was probable that the OGs would make contact with them.⁷

The OGs had one W/T set for each deploying section. They were instructed to use the W/T set from "Hamlet," while in the Maquis area. If the group was on the move, then they would use their own W/T set and if they broke up, they were to use both W/T's to contact SFHQ.⁸

Mission

Four planes took off for the Haute Vienne area in France on a beautiful moonlit night 31 July 1944. Only one plane found the drop zone, while the remaining planes had to drop their personnel later (two planes the next night and one plane on 5 August). First Lieutenant Reider J. Grunseth was in the first plane to drop its load and his group was met on the ground by a reception committee organized by "Hamlet."⁹

The air drop did not go very smoothly, with five personnel scattered 500 yards or further away from the drop zone. It took the group four hours to assemble, because of the precautions they took in answering signals. There was a garrison of 200 Germans about ten miles away and they were not sure whether or not the Germans were aware of the drop.¹⁰

The Maquis took the OGs to a farm for rest and to plan for their first mission. The terrain was rolling and wooded, ideal conditions for Maquis operations. The Maquis was very helpful to the group by supplying intelligence, transportation and assisting them in executing their missions.¹¹

The group was sent to block a national highway and railways and to destroy a wolfram mine near St. Leonard de Noblat. They were to harass the Germans at every opportunity, and with assistance from the Maquis, hinder the enemy's advance with demolition or sabotage.¹²

Lieutenant Grunseth's group remained at the farm house over the next several days and conducted reconnaissance of the area, while awaiting the arrival of the remaining plane loads. When the entire group of 18 men assembled, they moved to a new location between Sussac and La Crousillet.¹³

At Sussac they established their headquarters. The Maquis conducted many of their activities in this area. While here, Captain Larson received word that the Germans were going to attempt to open the railway with an armored train. The Maquis had kept it closed most of the time, south of Limoges.¹⁴

The group found the train the next morning and followed it, waiting for the proper time and place to attack. They planted demolitions ahead of it when it stopped at St. Germaine. The train traveled at about four or five miles an hour with 50 German soldiers on board and one of these positioned in front as a lookout to prevent sabotage. The lookout spotted some electric wires lying across the tracks where the demolitions had been planted and the train halted.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the OGs, who had about 40 men comprised of Maquis and several SAS men who had just joined the group, established an ambush along a wooded area adjacent to the tracks and spent the whole night waiting for the train. It was around 8:00 a.m. when the train stopped. The Germans placed sentries around the area. One sentry had the misfortune to discover one of the SAS men. A Maquis man stopped the SAS man from shooting the German, because the group agreed not to initiate the ambush until the demolitions exploded. This allowed the German to warn his comrades. The group returned fire after the Germans began firing their machine guns. The German fire was inaccurate because they could not get a fix on the ambush locations. All at once the Germans were startled when four OG personnel stood up and fired their Bren guns, thus distracting the Germans.¹⁶

The group blew up the track as they withdrew, yet the train was about ten meters away from the explosion and was not damaged. The group lost two SAS men captured and their leader, Captain Larson, killed by rifle fire. The Germans returned to Limoges.¹⁷

The captured SAS men when questioned by the Germans, informed them there were American and French troops in the area. According to First Lieutenant Grunseth, the group received information after the ambush that approximately 2000 Germans were retreating from Limoges.¹⁸

The Maquis were not equipped sufficiently to stop the German withdrawal. The OGs went to St. Leonard to blow a bridge the Germans would have to cross. En route, the group spotted about 200 Germans guarding a wolfram mine just outside of St. Leonard. Fortunately, the

bridge was located inside the city and was guarded by French civilians.¹⁹

The OGS and Jedburgh team "Lee," which had joined the group, arranged for the French guards and their families to depart the town.²⁰ Since there were no Germans in the town, the group moved in and began placing demolitions on the bridge.²¹

The bridge was constructed with railway ties, which made it extremely difficult to place the demolitions on it. The job took about an hour and a half and they were not disturbed by any German patrols from the garrison located about a mile away. The bridge was blown on 13 August with no casualties to the French occupants. The Maquis delayed the withdrawal of the 2000 Germans blocking the road out of Limoges, when they received word about the bridge in St. Leonard.²²

The group departed St. Leonard after the demolition. Then a group of 200 Germans from the garrison near St. Leonard moved into the town and warned the civilians they would burn the whole town if the bridge were blown again.²³

The OGS began to plan how they would take the German garrison at Limoges. They coordinated for, and received confirmation they would receive air support for their attack against the garrison. Twenty-four hours prior to the attack, the German general at Limoges wanted to discuss terms of a surrender for his forces. While the Allies were discussing terms, the German garrison received orders to withdraw. When the general returned to the garrison, he was arrested by the Gestapo and fighting broke out among the German defenders. Later, when the firing had stopped, the resistance group entered the town and met with German

Captain Stoll, who explained what happened inside the garrison. The general had issued orders to surrender when he was arrested and taken away by the Gestapo in a large convoy. Captain Stoll stated he remained to carry out the general's orders.²⁴

The German convoy had escaped by a road left unguarded. The OGS feared that the remaining Germans in Limoges might attempt another breakout, so they destroyed the national highway about 35 kilometers south of the city. The group, with assistance from the local population, spent the next three days building an anti-tank ditch across the highway. They mined the surrounding terrain, cut down its trees and booby-trapped them with mines. The side roads were booby-trapped and a railroad bridge on a separate road was destroyed to block passage. This also prevented reinforcements coming from the south to assist the Germans at Limoges.²⁵

After completion of this work, "Hamlet" and the OGS arrived at Limoges and arrived in time to celebrate the town's liberation. The Germans had departed north for LeBlanc. Upon learning this, the OGS determined they should go west to Chazelle and hinder the Germans trying to escape northeast from Bordeaux. During this action, the Germans recaptured Chateauroux, east of LeBlanc, from the Maquis.²⁶

The OGS found the Maquis at Chazelle bitter, yet they were still welcomed on their arrival. The Maquis had never received any supplies, which accounted for why they felt the way they did. What supplies they had were obtained through containers dropped erroneously in their area. The group stayed there for two days attempting to locate the Germans.

The intelligence from the Maquis was inaccurate, and every lead led to a dead end.²⁷

On 27 August the group moved west to a new area, La Rochefoucauld, where the Maquis provided better intelligence. It appeared the Germans were holding Angouleme, southwest of La Rochefoucauld, as the key pivot for all troops leaving the Bordeaux area and southwest France in general. Once the information was confirmed, team "Lee," SAS and OG "Percy Red" decided to set their own ambushes along national highway 10. Additionally, the group requested bombardment along this road from Angouleme to Ruffec. The group observed a large number of Germans, including horse-drawn artillery. However, the surrounding terrain was too flat to allow an attack on the Germans. Therefore, the group went further south and found better terrain along the highway to conduct operations. While waiting, many trucks passed by marked with the "Red Cross."²⁸

On 31 August the group split in two with the OGs and Captain Charles E. Brown III, leader of team "Lee" establishing their own ambush at 2100 hours along national highway 10 below the first crossroads south of La Chignolle. The group waited patiently until a ten-truck troop convoy with troops packed like sardines in the back came along. They fired upon the entire convoy. In the confusion, unknown to the OGs, a group of Germans, about 500 meters away with machine guns, opened fire on the ambush site. The group had to withdraw immediately, but surprisingly they took no casualties.²⁹

The group decided to pursue the Germans toward LeBlanc, arriving 3 September. The Germans were strong in the area and a small group

occupied a nearby chateau. The OGs attacked the chateau and found eight Germans with a machine gun. They killed two and captured the other six, all wounded (two later died). The Germans had not posted any guards, making it fairly easy for them to be captured.³⁰

After this incident, the OGs received information that 300 German trucks would be moving on the national highway. They decided to try another ambush. They conducted reconnaissance of the area and found a good site in the woods and awaited the arrival of the convoy. However, the group was forced to withdraw from their positions, when about two companies of Germans searched through the woods on both sides of the road prior to the convoy passing. The group returned to LeBlanc and began preparations for their next mission.³¹

The next day the men located a small German garrison in a nearby town. They attempted to coordinate an attack with the local Maquis. Prior to the attack, an American plane flew overhead, and the group signaled him to strafe the Germans. The Germans returned fire, knocking out the right engine, and the plane crashed. The group was between the plane crash and the Germans. A small group of Germans crossed an open field in the direction of the crash. The OGs set up firing positions with a Bren gun and small arms. All the Germans were killed or wounded; however, there were more Germans in the vicinity and they were much closer to the crash site. The Germans could move under cover, while the OGs and their party had to approach across a relatively open field. Reluctantly, the group withdrew to the east about five miles.³²

On 6 September, the group left LeBlanc where the OG "Percy Red" team linked up with OG "Patrick," commanded by Lieutenant Colonel

Obolensky at the Chateau de Verneuil in the Foret de Lancosne, twelve kilometers southeast of Mezieres. OG "Patrick" was working on the highway, so OG "Percy Red" joined them and worked alternate (ambush) shifts. OG "Percy Red" received orders from London to continue working with LTC Obolensky, so "Hamlet" departed for London.³³

During the entire operation, both OG teams had lost a lot of weight and their food was not enough to sustain them. The group was exhausted and LTC Obolensky told them to rest when "Percy Red" received orders to return to England. The group went to LeBlanc where they caught a C-47 back to London on the morning of 10 September.³⁴

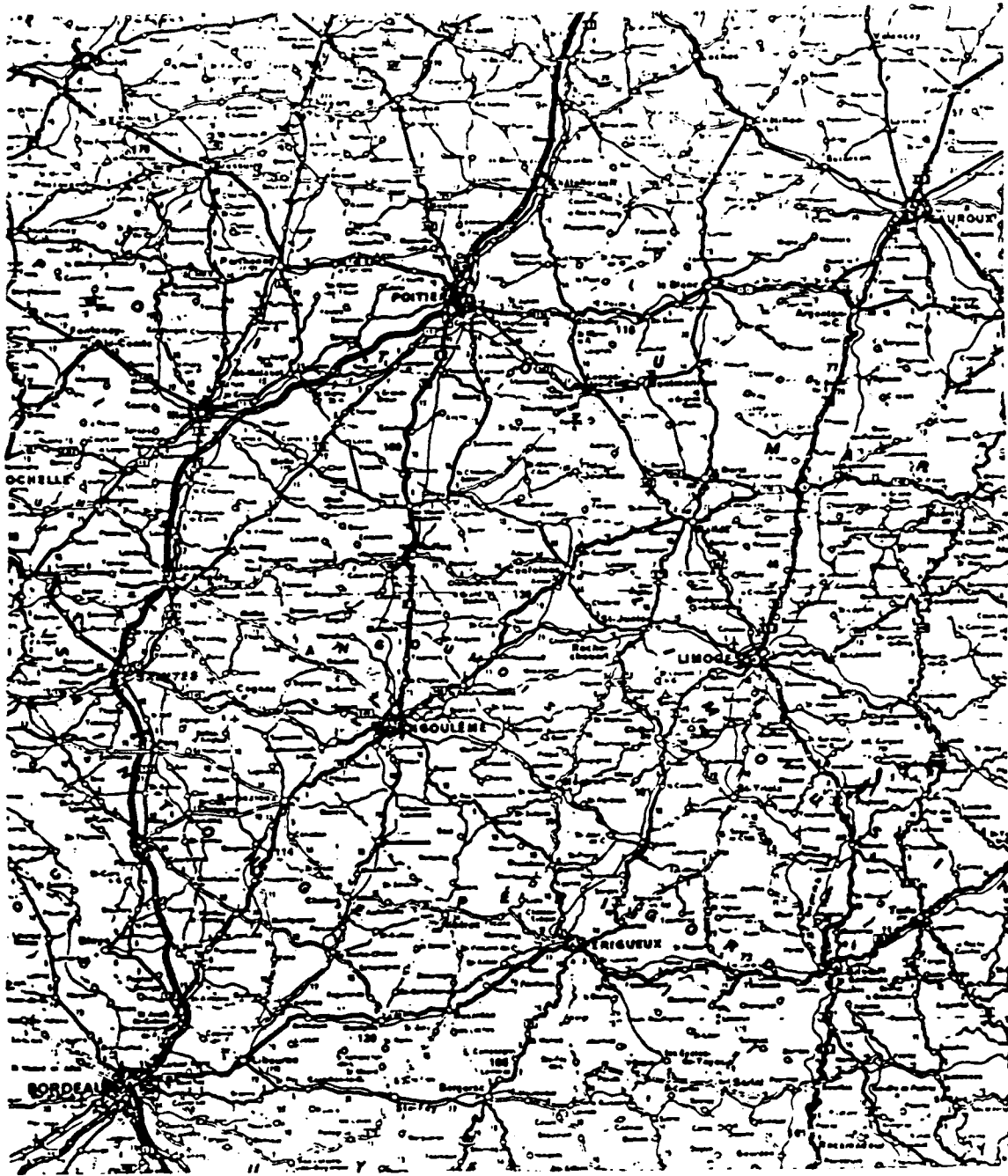


Figure 1. Area of Operations for Team "Percy Red." Map excerpted from Hallwag Euro Guide (map) of France, Switzerland.

Endnotes

¹The members of Group Percy Red were as follows: Captain William F. Larson, Inf., code name "Leander," (the leader, killed in action 11 August 1944 by a grenade), Captain (then 1st Lieutenant) Reider J. Grunseth, Inf., code name "Gerbert" (2nd in command, slightly injured in action on 1 September 1944 suffering a dislocated left shoulder during a withdrawal from German forces), S/Sgt John Halvorsen, S/Sgt Knut Joa, T/3 Fred Johnson, Cpl Olaf Aanonsen, Cpl Kai O. C. Johanson (slightly injured in action on 2 August 1944 during parachute drop, when he suffered a severe knee sprain in his right leg, incapacitated for three days and limped for about a week and a half), Cpl Karl Larsen, T/5 Sverre Aanonsen, T/5 Olav Eide, T/5 Arne Herstad, T/5 Louis D. Brie, T/5 Marinus D. Myrland, second W/T operator, code name "Mateo," T/5 Alk Paulson, T/5 Oddberg Stiansen, T/5 Otto Twingley, Pfc Delphis Bonin (slightly injured in action on 7 August 1944 suffering a broken left shoulder when a car in which he was traveling turned over; and a broken right wrist on 14 August when he jumped from a truck because of a German ambush; he received aid only from the medical sergeant of the group), PVT Leif Eide, first W/T operator, code name "Edgar." John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Volume 4-A), Jan.-Jun. 44, p. 22; OSS/London: Special Operations Branch and Secret Intelligence Branch War Diaries (Microfilm, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1985), Volume 13, Jan.-Dec. 44, Casualties, p. 3, 17-19.

²Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Jan.-Jun. 44, p. 23-24.

³Hamlet was the code name for an SOE agent and organizer of the "Salesman" circuit (operation). Hamlet's targets were the following:

Railways:

- Lines at Vierzon
- Bourges - St. Florentin
- St. Florentin - Issoudun
- Limoges - Le Palais
- Saillat Chassenon - Rochechouart
- Perigueux - Thivier
- Perigueux - Mussidan
- Lines converging on Bergerac
- Pierre Vuffiere - Uzerche

Roads:

- Perigueux: Route N 21 Perigueux - Beynac
- Route N 139 Perigueux - Angouleme - Limoges
- Limoges: Route N 141 Angouleme - Limoges - /Aubusson
- Route N 20 Chateauroux - Limoges - Uzerche

Telephones: Lines converging on Limoges and Chateauroux

Power lines at Eguzon

OSS/London, Volume 3, Apr.-Jun. 1944, Western Europe, p. 249-250.

⁴Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Jan.-Jun. 44, p. 23.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Team "Hugh" was the first Jedburgh team dispatched to France from England. Its primary mission was to assist SAS in the establishment of their base, which would be reinforced by additional SAS troops from which raids were to be carried out on the German lines of communications. Mendelsohn, Volume 4, Apr.-Jun. 44, Jedburghs, p. 17-18. Jedburgh team "Hamish" was the fifth team dispatched to France. Its primary mission was to assist team "Hugh" in the organization of new resistance elements and the establishment of an SAS base. The team was to focus on forming separate groups of about 100-200 men. Mendelsohn, Volume 4, p. 46-47.

⁷Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 24.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 27.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 27-28.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 28-29.

¹⁷Ibid. Official records state Captain Larson was killed by a grenade explosion. Captain Grunseth reported this as the cause of death. However, Leif Eide was with Captain Larson in the ambush site and saw him killed by rifle fire. OSS/London, Volume 13 Jan.-Dec. 44, Casualties, p. 3; Record Group 226, G3 Reports 10-111 and 11A, Entry 99, Folder 56, Box #13, G-3 Periodic Report No. 72; and Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

¹⁸Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 29; and Vol. 4, Jedburghs, p. 692.

¹⁹Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 29.

²⁰Jedburgh team "Lee" was the 23rd team dispatched along with an SAS group to France. Its mission was to work with "Salesman" in the Haute Vienne region. Mendelsohn, Volume 4, Jedburghs, p. 683.

²¹Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 30 and Volume 4, p. 692-693.

²²Ibid, and Record Group 226, G3 Reports 10-111, G-3 Periodic report No. 74.

²³Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 30-31.

²⁴Ibid., p. 31; The total number of Germans under Captain Stoll taken as prisoners was 341 (12 officers, 65 German soldiers and 264 Russians in German uniforms). Mendelsohn, Volume 4, Jedburghs, p. 693-696; and Hilary Footlit, France 1943-45, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988), p. 101.

²⁵Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 31 and Vol. 4, Jedburghs, p. 696-697.

²⁶Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 32 and Volume 4, Jedburghs, p. 699.

²⁷Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 32.

²⁸Ibid., and Volume 4, p. 700.

²⁹Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 32-33. The group learned the following day that Angouleme had been liberated and they had apparently attacked the last convoy to leave the city. Mendelsohn, Vol. 4, p. 700-702.

³⁰The captured prisoners were a misfit group: one marine, one anti-aircraft man, and some infantry men. The group had observed that the Germans' retreat was very well organized up front, but the rear guard was not organized at all. According to First Lieutenant Grunseth, the "prisoners had good stocks of cognac, cigarettes and other supplies. It seemed to be every man for himself." Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 33 and Volume 4, p. 702-703.

³¹Ibid., p. 34 and p. 703-704.

³²The plane was destroyed by fire and there was no information of survivors. Ibid., p. 34 and p. 704.

³³OG "Patrick" was the fifth group dropped in France, comprised of 25 men. Its mission will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this paper. Ibid., p. 34-35 and p. 704-705.

³⁴Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 35.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPERATIONAL GROUP--DONALD

Background

The second group to be dispatched to France was OG "Donald," led by 1st Lieutenant H. R. Kern, Jr. and comprised of 11 men, on the night of 5 August 1944 to an area east of Landiviseau on the Brittany peninsula (see figure 2).¹ Their primary mission was to prevent the destruction of the railway viaduct east of Guimiliau. They were directed to preserve the bridges, railroads and highways in the Landiviseau area. Finally, they were to assist the Jedburgh team "Hilary" in the area, supporting the local resistance groups.²

At this time, the Brittany peninsula was close to being cut off at its base by an advancing American column and a second column moving along the coast from St. Malo toward Brest. All resistance groups in the area were instructed to preserve the bridges, railways and highways along the Americans' advance to ensure quick passage. Additionally, the groups were to maximize their guerrilla activities.³

OG "Donald" was dropped and met by a Maquis committee organized by Jedburgh "Hilary." They were to coordinate all actions with "Hilary" and take no independent action, unless directed by SFHQ. They had no communications equipment with them, so they relied on Jedburgh team "Hilary" to talk with SFHQ.⁴

Mission

The original team was comprised of five officers and 25 enlisted men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Obolensky. However, due to one aircraft failing to take off because of a defective wheel, and a second plane failing to see the reception committee's signal and returning to England, only one plane was able to drop its load of two officers and 16 enlisted men. This group landed safely and was taken to a safe house by the resistance.⁵

The OGs sent T/4 L. P. Tetreault with some Maquis men to scout and report on the railway viaduct. The group returned and reported the bridge was secure. The bridge was constructed of seven brick and stone pillars stretched over the small Pense stream, which ran in a deep gorge. It was about a ten-minute walk from the group's safe house.⁶

The Maquis informed the group that the Germans had patrols in the vicinity. So, the next morning Lieutenant Kern decided they would establish a defense to protect the bridge. He established three posts consisting of two groups of four men and one group of three, with each position containing at least one Bren gun. "Donald" initially manned these positions until they could train the Maquis men to take over.⁷

The group learned that knowledge of their presence in the area had spread quickly among the Maquis. They also heard that the Germans had seen their parachute drop. However, the Germans mistook the container parachutes for men and apparently decided the Americans were too strong to attack.⁸

The containers dropped were opened on Monday and the weapons distributed to the Maquis at the bridge. The group discovered that none of the W/T sets were in the containers. "Donald" spent the next days attempting to transmit messages to London via resistance communications with no success. The supplies in the remaining containers were put in a storehouse in the vicinity of Maquis headquarters.⁹

The following Wednesday morning, the leader of the local FFI, Captain "Cadalen," and one of his lieutenants visited OG "Donald."¹⁰ He had under his command about 250 men who would prove very helpful to the OGs. He wanted group "Donald" to go with him to Landiviseau, where the Germans had just departed and advanced elements of an American unit had arrived under the command of Brigadier General Herbert L. Earnest.¹¹

Upon arrival in Landiviseau, Lieutenant R. D. Hirtz borrowed a radio transmitter from the American unit but unsuccessfully attempted to communicate with SFBHQ in London. Meanwhile, the town held a celebration for the Americans. The OGs established their base of operations in the town and began to assist the local resistance.¹²

Later group "Donald" went to Lesneven, 20 miles from Landiviseau, where they encountered advance forces of American Task Force. General Earnest informed 1LT Hirtz that Task Force A was moving east to west in the northern portion of Brittany north of Brest. A second Task Force, Bravo, was moving in the same direction south of Brest, forming a pincer movement. The general was concerned that as his troops passed through a town, the Germans might return to harass the inhabitants. General Earnest requested that the OGs return to Landiviseau to prevent the Germans from harassing the locals and to

continue their organization of the resistance forces. The general stated he would provide supplies and keep in contact with them.¹³

On Friday the OGS and some Maquis traveled to Guielan, about five miles from Landiviseau, where they captured 22 Germans. The group acquired three American soldiers, who were lost and riding around in a jeep with a mounted 50-caliber machine gun. The entire group left for Roscoff, where they believed a large garrison of Germans were stationed.¹⁴

After arriving in Roscoff, a coastal town, they located the Germans entrenched in a fortified position on the peninsula, surrounded by water with one easily defended approach. The Germans were actually in a block house, which could not be taken without heavy artillery support. The OGS had no such support and decided to bluff the Germans into surrendering.¹⁵

The group established positions at a curve in the road, leading to the block house, which provided a natural fortification. Later, a German soldier came down the road on a bicycle and was captured by the group. The German was returned to the garrison with instructions to arrange for a surrender. He returned shortly to state they would not surrender except to genuine Americans. Lieutenant Kern had to break the stalemate by showing the German his identification card with the words Washington, DC. printed on it to eliminate any doubts the German might still have.¹⁶

The Germans came out to surrender, but made the mistake in carrying their weapons. The Maquis men fired on the Germans, who fell back to their position. The Americans had to talk the Germans out by

threatening to "shell" their block house if they did not come out in the next 20 minutes.¹⁷

The OGs were relieved when about 30 unarmed Germans came out. The Germans were comprised mostly of customs officials and coast guard officers. Lieutenant Kern left an engineer to disarm the mine fields and booby-traps, and a detail to collect the enemy's weapons. The OGs took the German prisoners to a prison in Landiviseau.¹⁸

Lieutenant Kern sent out a patrol to Morlaix on 13 August, where they met Lieutenant Philip H. Chadbourne, Jr. of Jedburgh team "Hilary." This was the first contact with the Jedburgh team. "Donald's" W/T operator used the Jedburghs' radio to make their first contact with SFHQ to request additional arms for the Maquis.¹⁹

While at Morlaix, Lieutenant Kern received information that there were Germans at Brasport. The Maquis in the area had attempted to halt the Germans by firing Sten guns at the few German tanks. The Maquis suffered several casualties in the encounter, while, according to official reports, the Germans rescued about 100 of their own men from the Maquis.²⁰

Before the OGs could deal with the Germans at Brasport, an American civil affairs team arrived in the area on 17 August. The civil affairs team was capable of conducting intelligence operations and working administratively in the area, so Lieutenant Kern determined they had completed their mission and decided the group would return to England via Cherbourg. They returned to England after operating in France for two weeks.²¹

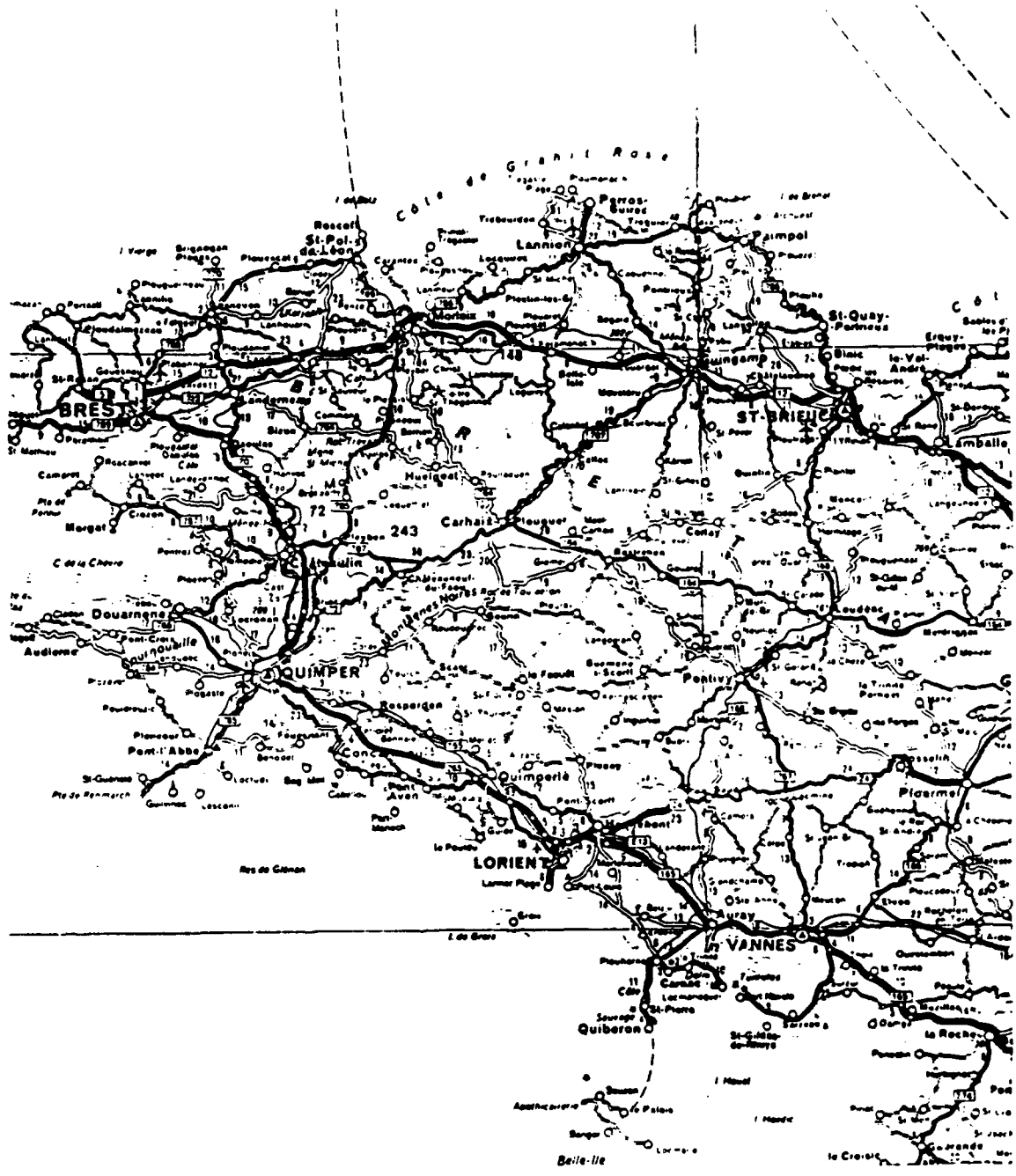


Figure 2. Area of Operations for Team "Donald." Map excerpted from Hallwag Euro Guide (map) of France, Switzerland.

Endnotes

¹The members of Group Donald were as follows: 1st Lieutenant H. R. Kern, Jr., leader of the group, 1st Lieutenant R. D. Hirtz, S/Sgt. P. C. Bolen, S/Sgt. S. A. Davis, S/Sgt. H. Rody, T/4 L. P. Tetreault, T/Sgt. W. Cabe, Sgt. M. L. Burke, T/5 R. Reppenhagen, Pfc J. E. Riley, Pvt E. M. Chaput. John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Volume 4-A), Jul.-Sep. 44, Operational Groups, p. 36; and Records of the London History Office and the Washington History Office, OSS, Record Group 226, National Archives, Washington, D.C., OP 23, Entry 99, Folder 4, Box #2, Memorandum, Subject: Semi-monthly Progress Reports, dated 18 August 1944.

²Jedburgh team Hillary was the 16th team dispatched to France. Their mission was to organize and arm the resistance. Mendelsohn, Vol. 4. Jedburghs, p. 547, and Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 37.

³Ibid., p. 36-37.

⁴The group took four W/T sets with them, but the aircraft carrying the containers with these radios were unable to deliver their loads. Ibid., p. 38-43.

⁵Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 40-42.

⁶Ibid., p. 42.

⁷Ibid., p. 43.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰FFI (French Forces of the Interior) were the organized resistance movement. Edward Hymoff, The OSS in World War II, (New York: Richardson & Steuman, 1986), p. 386.

¹¹Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 44.

¹²Ibid., p. 44-45.

¹³Ibid., p. 45-46.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 46-47.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁸According to Lieutenant Kern, "the German sergeant who acted as intermediary in the surrender negotiations had shown concern about the treatment" his men would receive since several of them were Russians. Apparently, the Russians had committed many of the atrocities against the French people. Ibid., p. 47-48.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 48.

²⁰The Maquis were notorious for over-estimating the losses they allegedly inflicted on the Germans. Such numbers should be doubted, or at least seriously questioned. Ibid., p. 48-49.

²¹According to Lieutenant Kern, "a British captain in Normandy headquarters telephoned OSS London for authority to issue the men written travel orders." Ibid., p. 49.

CHAPTER FIVE

OPERATIONAL GROUP--PERCY PINK

Background

On 11 and 12 August 1944, the fourth OG, "Percy Pink," led by 2nd Lieutenant Thomas A. Legare and comprised of 13 men, dropped in the Dordogne Department of France (see Figure 3).¹ Their mission was to link up with the local Maquis and execute the following tasks:

- a. act as a highly trained military cadre for the Maquis and assist them in repulsing enemy attacks, harassing enemy columns moving through the territory,
- b. organize and assist in carrying out attacks on all railroads within striking distance of the Maquis area, especially that part of the Bordeaux/Limoges railway passing near their territory,
- c. establish additional W/T communication with Headquarters EMFFI, and
- d. assist in organizing and training new recruits brought into the Maquis.²

The Maquis in the region consisted of about 800 men who had been using guerrilla warfare against the Germans for several months. They were well-equipped with arms and ammunition supplied by SFHQ. They were led by an agent known as "Nestor," a British officer who had a radio operator with him. They were able to maintain contact with EMFFI headquarters.³

"Percy Pink" took their own radios, but were instructed to route their messages through "Nestor" if he desired. When the group was on

the move or operating away from their base of operations, they could use their own equipment.⁴

Mission

The OGS took off in four planes, with three dropping their loads comprised of one officer and twelve enlisted men. The fourth plane returned to England, failing to identify the reception committee's signal. The radio transmitter smashed on landing and Lieutenant Legare was unable to talk directly with SFBQ during the entire time his group was in France.⁵

The reception committee was so excited at the arrival of "Percy Pink," they failed to realize a fourth plane was coming, therefore failing to signal it. The Maquis were confused because the OGS had not been expected, since a separate resistance group was waiting for them approximately 50 miles further north. The Maquis who received them were actually waiting for a drop of containers.⁶

Immediately on landing, Lieutenant Legare contacted a British captain known in the field as "Jean Pierre." The latter took the group to a Captain "Pistolet," one of the Maquis leaders, at the headquarters of the Maquis. The group was provided temporary quarters. They had to wait about six days while establishing their permanent quarters. During this wait, the group kept busy by cleaning their equipment, collecting containers and staging parades, at the request of the Maquis, in the surrounding towns to bolster the morale of the local population.⁷

On 19 August, Captain "Jean Pierre" informed Lieutenant Legare he believed there was a German garrison of approximately 15,000 men

located at Agen. It was expected these forces were going to deploy to join the German forces to the south to repel a possible Allied invasion. The Germans had a gasoline dump in Agen which they had left behind and planned to move at a later date. Group "Percy Pink" planned to raid this gasoline dump and steal whatever they could for their own use and destroy the rest.⁸

The group arrived in Agen the next day and found almost two million liters of gasoline in storage tanks with no German guards. The local officials did not want the OGS to destroy the gasoline. They believed the local population could use it and they did not expect the Germans to return. It took Lieutenant Legare and the Maquis leader about two hours to convince the officials they had to turn over control of this gasoline. The group took all the gasoline they could use and provided the rest to local Maquis before destroying the remaining gasoline.⁹

The following day, 21 August, after returning to their headquarters, Captain "Jean Pierre" informed Lieutenant Legare that there was a German petrol train located in Marmande. Captain "Jean Pierre" had received information that the German garrison in this town had departed for Bordeaux and left a small force of Germans and Milice to guard the petrol train.¹⁰

"Percy Pink" left immediately to destroy this train. Prior to their arrival, the advance reconnaissance reported that the train was guarded only by Milice. Upon the group's arrival, the local town folk rose up, and, without orders, attacked the Milice, shooting several, and scattering the rest into the surrounding countryside. Lieutenant Legare

estimated, on what he observed at Marmande, that the Germans would not be back, so he did not destroy the train. Instead, he had his men move it into a nearby marshaling yard and destroy 50 meters of track on each end of it, so the train could not be moved.¹¹

At this point, the OGs learned from Captain "Jean Pierre," through a BBC broadcast that a large American force had landed just south of Bordeaux. The OGs decided to return to their headquarters and confirm this report before taking further action.¹²

On returning to headquarters, Lieutenant Legare received a new report from Captain "Jean Pierre" of heavy fighting between the German garrison and the Maquis at Sauveterre. The group departed quickly for this region to assist the Maquis. They arrived in the town the next day to discover that the Germans had left, and that no fighting had actually occurred.¹³

Lieutenant Legare learned of a new conflict at St. Emilion, where it was believed the German garrison was surrounded, but would not surrender to the FFI. Lieutenant Legare advised the Germans to surrender. When the Maquis messenger returned, however, he reported the Germans would not surrender and were already withdrawing from the garrison towards Angouleme. This was when the OGs discovered that the garrison was not completely surrounded, as they were originally told. "Percy Pink" made numerous attempts to stop the retreating Germans, but to no avail.¹⁴

The group departed on 27 August for Portets, the Maquis headquarters, to wait for a new mission. Lieutenant Legare was put in touch with Captain "Zede," who was planning night ambushes, and invited

the OGs to join him. The group went to Captain "Zede's" headquarters in Sauve, where they developed their plan of attack. After dinner, the group departed for St. Loubes, north of Bordeaux, where they established an ambush site along the road south of the Dordogne River. They executed a weak ambush by firing briefly on a German convoy and throwing a few grenades. They withdrew quickly because their position was weak, with their back against a river. They returned to St. Loubes and then moved on to Sauve. For the next several days the OGs traveled from town to town with the Maquis looking for Germans, when they heard there were Germans in Angouleme.¹⁵

On 1 September the group arrived on the outskirts of Angouleme amid the din of gunfire. They took up defensive positions at intersections on the edge of town and waited for the Germans, who were supposed to return to town. The Germans, however, never appeared. "Percy Pink" and the Maquis went to St. Cyprien where they were invited to join in a victory parade at Bergerac. After the parade they returned to St. Cyprien and waited for four days. On 7 September Lieutenant Legare heard from Captain "Jean Pierre," who advised them to move towards Saintes. Before moving out, the group was informed there was activity in the Oleron region.¹⁶

En route to this region the OGs learned there was a German garrison at Oleron who wanted to surrender to either British or American troops. When the group arrived, they discovered the Germans had no intention of surrendering. "Percy Pink" fired on isolated pockets of Germans, but there were not enough resistance forces to attack the garrison, which was well-defended. Lieutenant Legare reported this

action to Captain "Jacques," a Maquis leader, who advised there was no action planned against the Germans.¹⁷

Captain Benton McDonald (Mac) Austin of the Jedburgh team "Diamond" contacted "Percy Pink" on 9 September and informed Lieutenant Legare that orders had been received from London requesting "Percy Pink" to return to England via Toulouse. The OGs returned to London on 10 September by air via Marseilles, to Casablanca, to Naples, and then to England.¹⁸

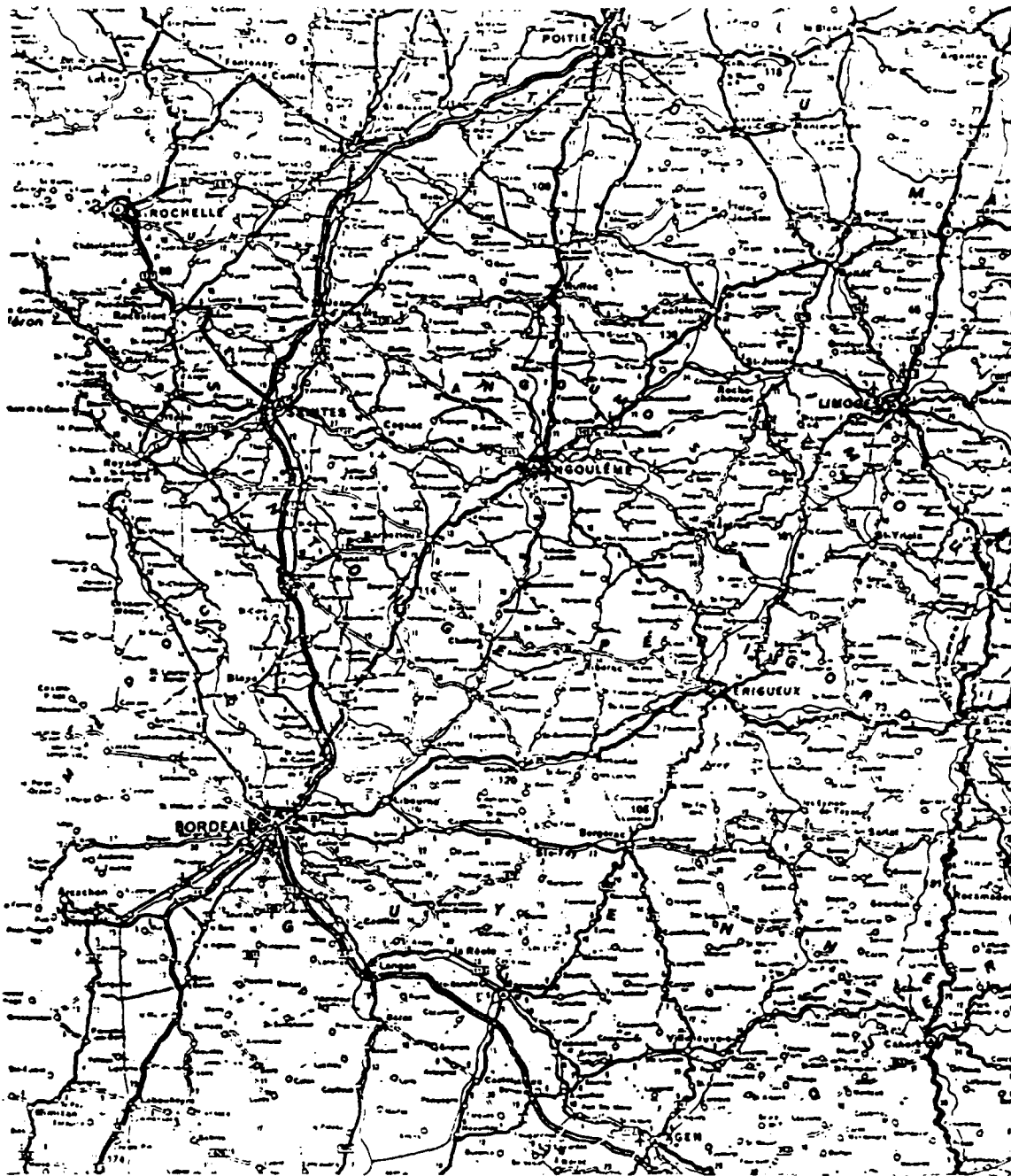


Figure 3. Area of Operations for team "Percy Pink." Map excerpted from Hallwag Euro Guide (map) of France, Switzerland.

Endnotes

¹The third OG team, "Antagonist" was made up of one man, Captain Fred B. Agee, M.D. who was sent in on 14 August 1944 to work with "Percy Red." Additionally, according to the official report, Captain Agee was to also "(1) provide medical service to the Maquis, (2) assist in organizing such other medical services as were available for the purpose of serving the members of the Maquis, (3) cooperate as far as possible with any doctors located in nearby villages who were in any way serving the Maquis." The members of Group Percy Pink were as follows: 1st Lieutenant (then 2nd Lieutenant) Thomas A. Legare, FA, code name "Sack," S/Sgt Edward E. Kjeltness, S/Sgt Erling M. Olsen (slightly injured in action on 12 August when he suffered a badly sprained ankle as result of the parachute drop), T/3 Roy N. Osthus, Cpl Vernon L. Austreng, T/5 Harry Flater, T/5 Eddie M. Hovland, T/5 Bernard N. Iverson, W/T operator, code name "Cost," T/5 Leif Neland, T/5 Johnasses S. Porvick, T/5 Eddie O. Sondeno, T/5 Alvin Toso, Pvt Rene E. Audet. John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Volume 4-A), p. 51 and p. 58.

²Ibid., p. 58-61.

³Ibid., p. 58-59.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁵Ibid., p. 61-62.

⁶Ibid. All resistance groups were supposed to use a standard signal to aircraft. The signal was bonfires set at a 100 yards apart in a triangle. There was also a device on the ground and in the airplane that acted as a homing device and could operate at about 50 miles distance. When the reception committee heard the aircraft, they would light the fires, because the drop zones for all OGs were supposed to be safe areas, not hot drop zones. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

⁷Mendelsohn, Vol. 4A, p. 62.

⁸Ibid., p. 62-63.

⁹The local official opposed to destroying the gasoline was very upset to see the OGs destroy it. Lieutenant Legare suspected, but had no proof that the official was in league with the Germans. Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁰Ibid. Milice was detested by the French people. They operated as a counterinsurgency force for the French Vichy government. They were everyday people who lived and worked in their home towns or villages and used their knowledge to help the Nazis. This is why they were so dangerous to agents or resistance groups who might come in contact with

them. M. R. D. Foot, SOE in France: An Account of the Work of the British Special Operations Executive in France, 1940-44, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966), p. 120 and Michael R. King, "Jedburgh Operations: Support to the French Resistance in Central France from June through September 1944." MMAS thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1977, p. 141.

¹¹Ibid., p. 64.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 65-66.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 67-68.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 68.

CHAPTER SIX

OPERATIONAL GROUP--PATRICK

Background

The fifth Operational Group, "Patrick," commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky and comprised of 25 men, was dropped into France on the nights of 14/15 and 15/16 August 1944 in the southern part of the Indre Department of France (see figure 4).¹ Their primary mission was to assist Jedburgh team "Hugh" in protecting a key hydroelectric plant in Eguzon from destruction by the Germans.² Additionally, the group was to attack targets consisting of railroads, roads and communications when they had indications the Germans were attempting to withdraw to the east.³

Team "Hugh" was operating in the area, organizing and training large groups of Maquis. "Hugh" was cooperating closely with "Ellipse," who was responsible for this region. The goal for all resistance groups was to safeguard all fixed facilities from destruction by withdrawing German forces.⁴

SFHQ instructed group "Patrick" to assess the situation of the Maquis in regards to ammunition, weapons and supplies. They were to coordinate with "Hugh" for adequate drop zones to receive supplies in order to build up the Maquis fighting capabilities.⁵

The OGs had their own communications and were to maintain separate communications with London. The group was to take its

direction from "Hugh" in carrying out its missions, while still remaining under direct command of EMFFI.⁶

Mission

It took five Liberators, departing from Harrington, England, to drop "Patrick" on two nights into the Indre region. All the men landed safely, but the radios were damaged and contact with England was made through the W/T operator of team "Hugh."⁷

On the second night, 16 August, the group traveled to the Mouhet area and stopped about ten miles from their objective and a quarter mile from the main road running between Paris and Limoges. After arriving in the area, they stored their equipment in a quarry and established camp in the woods about 150 meters from a farm.⁸

The Maquis of this region had successfully cut the main road, Paris/Limoges, forcing the Germans to use the smaller roads. This was ideal for the Maquis to conduct small ambushes. Group "Patrick" assisted in a few ambushes, which were conducted with as much destruction on the German forces as possible, followed by a quick withdrawal. All of the ambushes were conducted within 15 kilometers of their camp.⁹

On 17 August Lieutenant Colonel Obolensky determined it was time to attempt to secure the electric plant at Eguzon (see figure 12, appendix B). The Maquis arranged for a *Francs-Tireurs et Partisans* (FTP) agent, Commandant "LeThier" to contact a Captain Clavel, commander of the 1st Regiment of France, which had been sent by the Petain government to Eguzon to hold it in a joint effort with the Germans.¹⁰

"LeThier" was to arrange for a meeting between LTC Obolensky and Captain Clavel.¹¹

At the meeting, Captain Clavel advised LTC Obolensky he had orders to defend Eguzon against attack. LTC Obolensky responded that General Koenig of FFI had directed him to occupy and protect Eguzon for France. The leader of "Patrick" advised the French captain he had sufficient paratroopers to attack and capture Eguzon, leaving the latter to believe there was a large enough force to accomplish this mission. LTC Obolensky asked the captain pointblank, what he would do if the Germans were attacked. Clavel responded he would assist the allies. It was then that Clavel informed Obolensky that the German commander was a young and very determined man, who would not surrender without a fight. LTC Obolensky asked Captain Clavel to talk with the German commander and advise him he would not be attacked if his forces withdrew and left the facilities undamaged.¹²

After Clavel departed, team "Patrick," along with about 200 Maquis made plans to attack the Germans. They moved into positions about one mile from Eguzon. However, the attack was not necessary, since the Germans departed the next morning toward Chateauroux.¹³

Team "Patrick" made no attempt to attack the Germans. However, Captain John E. Cook, followed the German convoy with a group of men to block the road between Argenton and Eguzon to prevent the Germans from returning in case they were ambushed before they reached Chateauroux.¹⁴

LTC Obolensky, upon entering Eguzon, organized its defense using his own heavy weapons squad and heavy mortars to strengthen the defense and kept the rest of his OGS as a mobile reserve. He directed Captain

Cook to blow two bridges at Crozant, south of their position. This essentially isolated Eguzon, since the other roads were effectively blocked by felled trees. Captain Clavel's forces according to LTC Obolensky:

would continue to hold the near perimeter posts around the transformer, dam and turbine equipment, while the Maquis or FTP would hold the two outer perimeters, one a distance of about a mile and a half and the other on a ten mile radius.¹⁵

LTC Obolensky realized his force was still inadequate to cover the area. He requested the dispatch of more Maquis to this region. After blowing the bridges in the vicinity, the group was short of demolition material. As a result the group felled trees across all the roads for many miles around. It seemed the Germans avoided maneuvering around blocked roads, because it usually meant an ambush was nearby.¹⁶

Meanwhile, Chateauroux was liberated by the resistance and the OGS were asked to participate in the celebrations. It was here that LTC Obolensky learned that large convoys of Germans had left Bordeaux and moved through Chatellerault and were now halted in the vicinity west of Poitiers to Meziers. They supposedly were moving to the northeast. Team "Patrick" departed for LeBlanc hoping to find some action.¹⁷

Upon arriving at LeBlanc, Captain Cook took a patrol to scout the roads leading from Tournon to LeBlanc and Tournon to Lureuil. The patrol discovered the Germans were occupying Tournon and the area west of Poitiers. It was determined the Germans would not utilize the road from Tournon to LeBlanc. The group made preparations to ambush the Germans about two miles east of Tournon.¹⁸

Lieutenant Colonel Obolensky received information that a large German force (supposedly corps-sized) was going to use the road between Tournon and Lureuil. He further learned the German commander had given the population of Tournon an ultimatum that hostages would be shot if this road was not open by 2100 hours. As a result, LTC Obolensky sent the following message to the German commander via a priest:

29 August 1944

TO: Commander of German Troops, Tournon Area

SUBJECT: 1. Surrender of German Troops to U.S. Army,
LeBlanc Area Headquarters.

2. Reprisals against civil population.

Sir:

1. I offer you the possibility to surrender to U.S. Army troops as your position is hopeless.

2. I warn you that you are personally responsible for any reprisals or atrocities committed on civil population and so are officers of units under command who perpetrate same, and that you will be judged in accordance with the statements of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill and tried by local courts.

3. I request an answer within 12 hours.¹⁹

The OGS and a company of the Maquis established an ambush across the road about a mile west of Lureuil. The Germans began the attack at midnight and surprised the resistance, who believed there were only 100 Germans in the area. The unit attacking them was an infantry vanguard of two divisions. The Germans tried to encircle "Patrick" and the Maquis. The group disengaged and withdrew to a rendezvous point, where everyone was accounted for. The next morning, Captain Cook returned to the ambush site to retrieve some equipment and encountered no Germans.²⁰

The group returned to Eguzon, where a message from London terminated LTC Obolensky's role as commander of Eguzon. He was ordered to place "Patrick" at the disposal of the Maquis in the Indre area or of Captain J. H. Cox, British, of Jedburgh team "Ivor" of the south Cher region. LTC Obolensky decided to join forces with Major Franck, FFI commander in the Indre area, with present headquarters at LeBlanc. This would allow the OGs to be close to Eguzon if the need arose for them to come to its defense. Plus, by now the group was very familiar with the terrain and the LeBlanc area.²¹

"Patrick" was given the same road, on which they had their previous engagement with the Germans, to patrol about ten miles farther east near Vendoeuvre. The group left their supplies in a Chateau near Ruffec before proceeding to Vendoeuvre, where three Maquis companies came under their control. The OGs established a base headquarters on a farm and began to operate four miles from the road which the Germans were using.²²

The group began to patrol the area attempting to contact German patrols or convoys. It was during this time, about 5 September, that OG "Percy Red" joined up with "Patrick." During their patrolling, word was received that Germans were concentrated in Chateauroux. The group decided to head toward Vendomere where there also were Germans. As they neared the town, it was discovered the Germans had departed. "Patrick" found large quantities of rifle ammunition, mortar ammunition and equipment left along the highway by the Germans.²³

It was at this time that LTC Obolensky received word that intelligence believed all the Germans had departed the area. He was

further advised to take command of "Percy Red." This directive was followed shortly by an order to return to England. Both groups returned to England, "Percy Red" on 10 September and "Patrick" on 13 September via LeBlanc on C-47's.²⁴

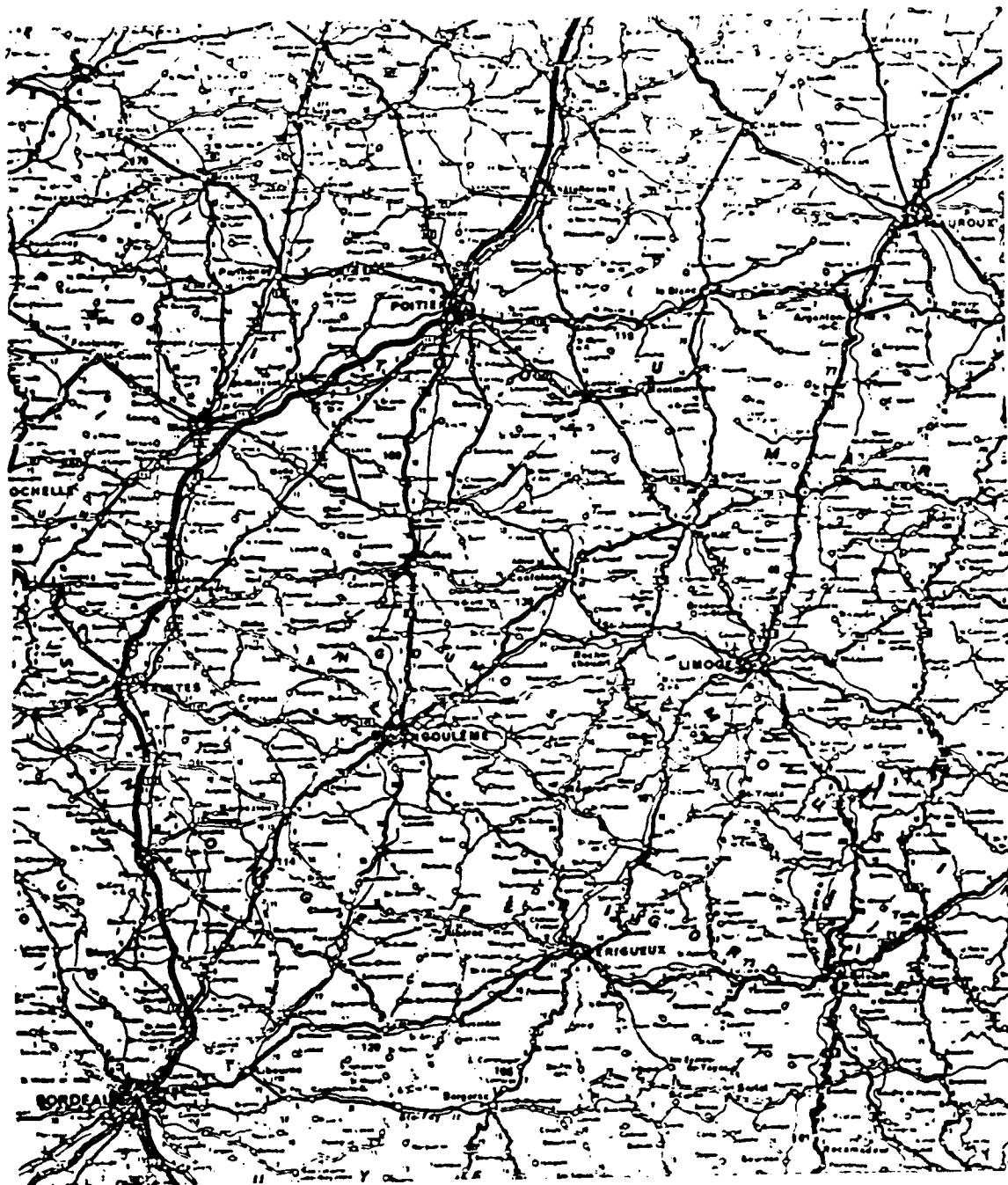


Figure 4. Area of Operations for team "Patrick." Map excerpted from Hallwag Euro Guide (map) of France, Switzerland.

Endnotes

¹The members of Group "Patrick" were as follows: Lieutenant Colonel Serge Obolensky, AUS, code name "Butch," Captain John E. Cook, Inf, code name "Mike," 1st Lieutenant Eugene Dumont, Inf, code name "Sam," 1st/Sgt Einar A. Eliassen, T/Sgt Julius Haas, S/Sgt Sidney A. DesRoberts, S/Sgt Rudolph Doleza, S/Sgt Arne N. Listeid, T/3 Robert Anderson, T/4 Einar M. Kristiansen (slightly injured in action, when the tailgate of the truck in which he was riding broke and he fell out and fractured his skull), T/4 Joseph Boudreau, Cpl Armand J. Benoit, T/5 Charles Couturiaux, No. 3 W/T operator, code name "Malta," T/5 John L. Dubois, T/5 Roy J. Gallant, T/5 James A. Gardner, No. 1 W/T operator, code name "Master," T/5 Rudolph A. Harnois, T/5 Torleif B. Johansen, T/5 Albert J. St. Michel, T/5 Roger G. Sayers, No. 2 W/T operator, code name "Makin," Pfc Grant B. Hill, Pfc Ellsworth Johnson, Pfc Thomas F. McGuire, Pfc Hasbrouck B. Miller, Pfc Daniel O. Richard (slightly injured by a member of the Maquis, who was inspecting his weapon at the time it discharged and wounded Richard in his left calf), John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Volume 4-A), Jan.-Jun. 44, p. 69-70.

²Team "Hugh" had obtained information that the Germans were going to destroy this power plant. The Maquis had surrounded the area but were not strong enough to displace the Germans, who were heavily armed and occupying the facility. Team "Hugh" needed more combat power, so they requested an airborne unit be sent to assist in pushing the Germans out and securing the electric plant. Michael R. King, "Jedburgh Operations: Support to the French Resistance in Central France from June through September, 1944." MMAS Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1977, p. 30; Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 70; and Mendelsohn, Vol. 4, p. 98.

³Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 70.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 71.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 73.

⁸Ibid., p. 74.

⁹Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁰FTP was the armed wing of the French Communist Party (FCP), M. R. D. Foot, SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940-46, (Frederick MD: University Publications of America,

1986), p. 216. After the fall of France in 1940, Marshall Petain took over on 10 July 1940 as head of State of the Vichy France. The 1st Regiment of France was subordinate to the Vichy government. Foot, SOE, p. 213, and Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 75-76.

¹¹Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 76.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 77, and Mendelsohn, Vol. 4, Jedburghs, p. 98-99.

¹⁴Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 77.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 78-79; and National Archives, G3 Reports 10-111 & 1-19, G3 Periodic Report 24-25 August.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 79-80.

¹⁷The Germans allegedly had shot the mayor and several other officials of Chatellerault for reasons unknown. Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 81-82.

¹⁹The Germans responded they would fight, but this was not received by "Patrick" until after the fighting had begun. Ibid., p. 82.

²⁰A Maquis company normally "consisted of 60 men and four officers armed with Sten guns, British rifles, three or four Bren guns and two or three bazookas," Ibid., p. 80 and 83-87.

²¹Ibid., p. 88. Jedburgh team "Ivor" was dispatched on the night of 6/7 August 1944 to the area of Cher south of Amand. Its primary mission was to organize and work with the Maquis around St. Amand, Mendelsohn, Volume 4, Jul.-Sep. 44, Jedburghs, p. 629.

²²Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 88.

²³Ibid., p. 35 and 89-91.

²⁴Ibid., p. 91.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OPERATIONAL GROUP--LINDSEY

Background

Operational Group "Lindsey," led by First Lieutenant Pierce Earle and made up of 19 men, was the sixth group sent to France.¹ It landed in the Cantal Department (see figure 5) of France on 16/17 and 17/18 August 1944. By this stage of Operation "Overlord," Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) wanted to save important fixed installations. One such installation was the hydro-electric plant located at La Truyere. "Lindsey's" primary mission was to protect this plant. Additional missions were for the group to attack rail, road and communication targets that the Germans might try to use when withdrawing from the region.²

Three officers and a W/T operator were already in the area trying to organize the Maquis and protect the hydro-electric plant. Group "Lindsey," would parachute in and link up with this small group referred to as Mission "Benjoin."³ The OGs were to cooperate with "Isotherme," who had the additional responsibility as the Regional Military Commander.⁴

Mission

The group was dropped over two nights into the region, flying from Harrington airfield. A French Lieutenant, named "Microscope,"

accompanied the group, which was also met by Captain Schwan, of the "Benjoin" Mission. The containers dropped with the group had fallen over the drop zone and in the surrounding woods.⁵

The group spent the following day collecting the containers and loaded them on trucks for transportation to Mauriac, headquarters of the "Benjoin" Mission. On Saturday, the next day, the group departed to reconnoiter the hydro plant installation. They observed the plant was situated on a knoll with gullies on three sides and completely surrounded by German soldiers.⁶

The Maquis forces were already at the plant and negotiating with the German commander to surrender. The Maquis emphasized that the Germans were surrounded by the French Regular Army, along with British and American troops. The Germans finally agreed to surrender without a fight. One of the terms of the surrender was that none of the facilities would be damaged.⁷

The following Sunday afternoon at 1600 hours, after destroying most of their own equipment, the Germans marched out to the Allied lines. There were 120 Germans. During interrogation, it was learned that some fighting had gone on inside the German camp the night before between a pro-surrender group and those not wanting to surrender. Fortunately, the former won out and prevented a bloody confrontation.⁸

The OG's mission, having been a success, they departed on Tuesday for St. Flour to assist the Maquis in their encirclement of the Germans in that town. Negotiations were going on here with the hope that the Germans would give up without a fight. However, a French officer, whose group was covering a separate part of town, sent a

message, without authorization from the FFI, demanding the Germans surrender immediately or they would be captured and put to death. As a result of this French officer's stupidity, the German soldiers' resolve stiffened to not surrender.⁹

Upon arrival in the area, the group spent the night at Viellespesse. Lieutenant Earle and Major (British) "Victeur," of "Benjoin" Mission, coordinated with the French officers in charge to obtain permission to set up their mortar and machine guns against the Germans, who were staying at a chateau on the edge of St. Flour.¹⁰

The next morning, 24 August, the French officer in charge of this district requested some demolition jobs be conducted. The OGs sent some of their men out in a truck which carried the demolition and extra mortar bombs. Their assignment was to blow a bridge and set up roadblocks on two roads from St. Flour to Clermont-Ferrand. This would ensure the Germans in St. Flour could not get out with their vehicles. Lieutenant Earle summarized from intelligence reports that this would also prevent a German column moving from Clermont-Ferrand toward St. Flour from helping the German garrison.¹¹

While the demolitions were being set, the rest of the group under Major "Victeur," moved out to their positions. News received from the French that the Germans were trying to break out of St. Flour interrupted the group's movement. Instead, the OGs went to a point north of St. Flour on National Highway No. 9 to assist the Maquis in stopping the Germans' escape.¹²

Major "Victeur" organized defense along both sides of this road. He sent Lieutenant Earle to retrieve the truck with the extra mortars.

The group dispersed themselves along the road with two 3-inch mortars, five Bren guns and one 30-caliber light machine gun on the extreme right flank, separated by several hundred yards from the main body.¹³

The defensive positions had just been set up, when the Germans decided to attack and penetrate the FFI lines. Heavy mortar and machine gun fire covered the Germans' attack. The FFI returned fire; however, their weapons were mostly short-range and ineffective in stopping the Germans, whose strength numbered 500. The Germans forced the Maquis to withdraw as their flanks were threatened.¹⁴

The group withdrew all along the line to new positions. Upon arrival at their new positions, a head count revealed that the machine gun crew of Sergeant Deith A. Page, Private Virgil C. Henson and Private Herbert N. Schnall, that had been on the group's extreme right flank, was missing. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Earle arrived with the demolition/mortar truck.¹⁵

"Lindsey" was informed that a German column, about 20 miles away, was coming from Clermont to relieve the besieged garrison at St. Flour. Major "Victor" dispatched Lieutenant James C. Larson and Sergeant Steve Picinich to demolish the road, which would block the Germans' advance about two to three miles to the rear of the group's present location.¹⁶

The Germans continued to attack and pressure the FFI. The French commander determined after about a half hour, that his forces were not strong enough to repel the Germans any longer. He consequently ordered the men to withdraw to a new position off the road they were astride. He believed it might be easier to attack the Germans in the

flank as they continued to move down this road. Unfortunately, the Germans were too strong and they forced all the Allied forces to withdraw from the fight.¹⁷

The allied forces of French and American personnel regrouped in the woods. They waited here a day while Major "Victeur" attended a meeting with the regional district command. When he returned on Saturday, 26 August, he informed the group that the Germans had departed the area of St. Flour. "Lindsey" received instructions to move north toward Clermont and another regional district command.¹⁸

En route, the OGs learned that the Germans had departed Clermont on Sunday. They continued on to Rion where Captain Schwan, who now had a Moroccan company of soldiers with him, met them. The OGs joined the Moroccans and together they traveled to the village of Brut, where it was believed a German column was camped north in the woods. The group established a skirmish line outside of the town and shortly made contact with the Germans.¹⁹

The fighting that followed was fierce, with the Germans initially attempting to penetrate the group's line. As the battle progressed, Captain Schwan ordered a withdrawal because the Germans outnumbered them and were trying to encircle Schwan's forces. The group left the area on a French bus and truck toward Gannat.²⁰

On 30 August the OGs and the Moroccans continued to travel through Vichy to St. Germain, where another German column was supposedly bivouacked. When the group arrived, they set up defensive positions outside of the town and waited for further instructions.²¹

The following morning French Lieutenant "Microscope" took some OG men to blow up a bridge which the Germans could use. However, when Lieutenant "Microscope's" group arrived, they found the bridge under the control of the Germans, so they withdrew. Before the group could take any action against the Germans, the Germans withdrew.²²

Captain Schwan received orders for the Moroccans and "Lindsey" to return to Clermont where they waited several days for instructions. Finally, the Allies received instructions to move north to the vicinity of LaPalisse, where more time was wasted awaiting orders from the local military district commander. While waiting, the group made contact with retreating Germans and proceeded to harass them. They followed the Germans into the village of Dompierre, where the group was on the edge of the military district. As a result the French commander ordered the group not to harass the Germans in another Maquis district.²³

The group now traveled toward Decize, where they learned that a German column was bivouacked in the vicinity of a chateau. The group established positions and patrolled the area until contact was made with the Germans. The group had a mortar, which they fired on the Germans. It had good results in that it forced the Germans to withdraw, leaving behind trucks and other vehicles. The group also captured about 15 to 20 Germans.²⁴

Immediately after this engagement, the OGs moved to the highway from St. Pierre to Decize, where they expected another German column would be passing. Unaware of the direction the Germans were moving, all the roads were covered by various units of the FFI. The OGs set up their position in the town of Cossy, but no Germans showed that night

or the next day. The group departed the area, leaving one section to watch the road. Fortunately for this section, the Germans finally came the following night and the group engaged them with machine guns.²⁵

The German column withdrew to St. Pierre. The OGs contacted the Germans to discuss the latter's surrender. The German commander refused to surrender; however, he did want to turn over seven seriously wounded Germans and one Canadian prisoner. The FFI agreed and the lines of both sides withdrew in accordance with the terms of the armistice, until the Germans could bring their wounded to the top of a hill.²⁶

The group waited several hours and the Germans did not appear. The group feared that maybe the Germans were seeking a tactical advantage and that this incident was a ruse. Yet, later in the afternoon a German ambulance did show up at the top of the hill. When Captain Schwan, Lieutenant Earle and the French officer commanding the local district approached the ambulance containing what they believed would be wounded prisoners, they were surprised to find a stopped column of four or five ambulances as well as 12 trucks. When the German officer in charge was questioned as to where his wounded were, he replied there were none. Apparently, this was not the ambulance the group had awaited for, but a German field hospital moving back to Germany. There were also a German artillery captain and his men traveling with the convoy and all of them had no choice but to surrender. They were then taken to Moulins. Shortly after this happy occurrence, the ambulance which the group had expected actually showed up and turned over its seven wounded Germans and the Canadian prisoner.²⁷

The next day the Germans were still bivouacked at St. Germain, and the group wanted to fire some mortar rounds on their position to destroy an artillery piece and maybe persuade them to surrender. However, the distance was too great for the British 3-inch mortar, so the group decided to depart. As they moved out down the road, the Germans, who had infiltrated the area, ambushed the group, but the group escaped successfully back to their own lines. No sooner had the group made it to this new position, than the numerically superior Germans opened fire on this position and began to flank the group. The OGs and Moroccans had to make another withdrawal. At the new location, the French major was informed that the German general of these troops had just surrendered 20,000 of his command that morning. Apparently, the word had not reached these soldiers.²⁸

"Lindsey" remained at Cossye for several days to see through the planned surrender of these 20,000 Germans. Once the details of the surrender were finalized, the OGs had no missions to conduct. As a result Captain Schwan had no need for their services and released the group from its attachment to the "Benjoin" mission. At this time, 18 September, the group proceeded to Paris to report in to the SF detachment there. "Lindsey" returned to England on 20 September.²⁹

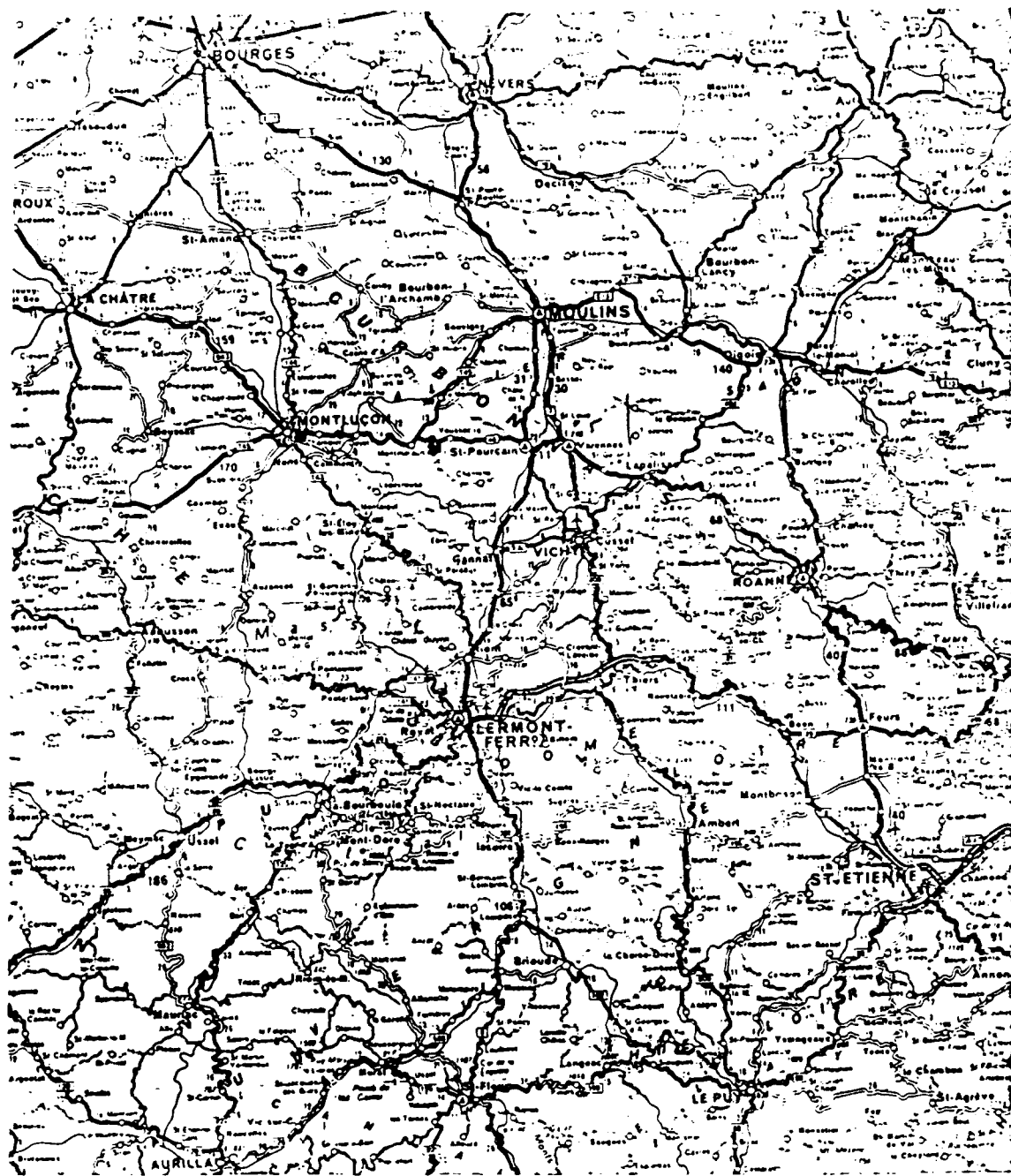


Figure 5. Area of Operations for team "Lindsey." Map excerpted from Hallwag Euro Guide (map) of France, Switzerland.

Endnotes

¹The members of Group Lindsey were as follows: 1st Lieutenant Pierce Earle, Inf, code name "Locker" (slightly injured on 17 August when he broke his right leg near the ankle on the parachute drop; a doctor with the Maquis set the leg and put a cast on it, allowing Earle to carry on his duties with the group), 1st Lieutenant (previously 2nd Lieutenant) James C. Larson, Inf, S/Sgt Henry A. DeMarey, S/Sgt Francis Van Timmeran, T/3 William B. Klingensmith (broke his shoulder on the parachute drop, 17 August; however, this was never confirmed until his return to England where X-rays confirmed that it had been broken and never detected by the Maquis doctor), T/3 Deith A. Page*, Sgt Steve Picinich, Pfc Robert L. Cotnoir, Pvt August O. Aubrey, Pvt Raymond J. Barriault, Pvt George F. Brule, Pvt Virgil C. Henson*, Pvt Leo L. Lachance, Pvt Emmett F. McNarara, Pvt Nicholas J. Muza, Pvt Emile G. Roy (wounded in action on 23 August when a bullet passed through his leg; he was absent from the group until shortly before their return to England), Pvt Herbert N. Schnall*, Pvt Rene Simard. *These three men comprised a machine gun crew reported missing in action 23 August when their ambush position was overrun by the Germans. Inquiries to the French indicated these men were taken prisoner, but this was never proven. John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Volume 4-A, Jul.-Aug. 44), p. 92 and 97; OSS/London: Special Operations Branch and Secret Intelligence Branch War Diaries (Microfilm, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1985), Volume 13, Jan.-Dec. 44, Casualties, p. 6-7, 9, 18.

²Mendelsohn, Vol. 4-A, p. 92-94.

³"Benjoin" mission was a special Maquis RF section inserted 7/8 May 1944 into France made up of a British SOE officer, a French officer from BRAL (*Bureau des Recherches et D'action a Londres*), an American SO officer and a BRAL W/T operator. Their mission was to organize and arm the Maquis; act as liaison between the military chief of the department in which they were operating and London; provide assistance and advice to the military chief in matters of security, organization, day-to-day sabotage and D-day plans; and reconnoitering and reporting coordinates of landing zones and drop zones suitable for future operations in support of D-day and thereafter. OSS/London, Volume 3, Western Europe, Apr.-Jun. 1944, p. 297-298.

⁴Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 93.

⁵Ibid., p. 97.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 97-98.

⁸Ibid., p. 98.

⁹Ibid., p. 98-99.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 99.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 99-100.

¹³Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 100-101.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 101-102.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 102-103.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 103-104.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 104-105.

²³Ibid., p. 105-107.

²⁴Ibid., p. 107. German prisoners captured by the OGs were turned over to the resistance since they had the personnel to guard and take care of them. The OGs were too small and did not have the means to take care of prisoners. Leif Eide, interview with the author 12 March 1993.

²⁵Mendelschn, Volume 4-A, p. 108.

²⁶Ibid., p. 108-109.

²⁷Ibid., p. 109-111.

²⁸Ibid., p. 111-112; General Botho Elster was the commander of this group of soldiers. This was the third and last group trying to escape to the east. The first two groups made it successfully to Germany. Wolf Keilig, Das Deutsche Heer: Die Generalitaet des Heeres im 2. Weltkrieg 1939 - 1945 (Bad Nauheim: Podzun Verlag, 1957f), p. 75.

²⁹Ibid., p. 112.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OPERATIONAL GROUP--CHRISTOPHER

Background

The seventh Operational Group dispatched to France from England was "Christopher," led by 1st Lieutenant Melvin J. Hjeltness with a complement of 55 soldiers, the largest group deployed.¹ Group "Christopher" and Jedburgh team "Desmond" parachuted into the Poitiers area of France on 3/4 September 1944. The mission of the OGs was to harass, delay and if possible stop the Germans' withdrawal northward out of the southwest region in France and the Bordeaux area towards Poitiers and Chateauroux (see Figure 6).²

The group was to link up with the Maquis. Jedburgh team "Desmond" was to contact the FFI and make arrangements for the distribution of supplies they took with them.³

Mission

It took ten Liberators to carry the group and one Liberator to deliver the supplies.⁴ All personnel, equipment and supplies landed on the correct drop zone. The four W/T sets were found in good working condition. The group spent their first night in France in the village Avot.⁵

The next day, Monday, the group took time to organize themselves and make plans for future actions. Captain William H. Pietsch,

"Desmond," contacted the Maquis leader to obtain an update on the situation in the area. Meanwhile, the group left Avot and established a defense on a nearby hill in case the village contained any Germans.⁶

The OGS waited several days for instructions. Captain Pietsch had left to get instructions for the group. He returned with orders to work with the Maquis and Third Army in taking Chatillon. These plans were incomplete, so Lieutenant Hjeltness went to a Maquis colonel and requested transportation to take the group to a Maquis camp at Dusme, which was located about three miles off the road from Chatillon to Dijon. The group made preparations to establish ambush positions along this road, since the Germans were known to be using it as they traveled through the area. The Maquis colonel informed Lieutenant Hjeltness that the Germans from Chatillon also had captured St. Mark, Baigoeux, St. Seine and Abbaye.⁷

Meanwhile, Captain Pietsch had gone to Chatillon and requested the entire group come to Chatillon. Due to shortage of transportation, the group traveled in sections. The first section under Lieutenant Apgar departed, followed two hours later by Lieutenant Bates' and Lieutenant Whitney's men.⁸

The Maquis wanted the OGS to celebrate the liberation of Chatillon. While celebrating, Captain Pietsch informed Lieutenant Hjeltness that he was planning to move south from Chatillon to Echalot, 50 miles distant, to reconnoiter the road in the area.⁹

Group "Christopher" was getting tired of chasing "ghosts" and not having transportation to move around, so Lieutenant Hjeltness decided the group would return to Dusme. Before they departed, a Maquis

officer came to the OGS for assistance in routing some Germans from a village five miles away. Lieutenant Hjeltness thought it a good idea to help the Maquis and finally see some action.¹⁰

As he asked the Maquis officer about the disposition and composition of the Germans, he learned the officer had no helpful information. Lieutenant Hjeltness concluded there must be only a few German soldiers in the village. The OGS used their mortars to shell the Germans.¹¹

On the outskirts of the village, the Maquis and Group "Christopher" decided to form up and search the woods, proceeding left and right around the village. After clearing the woods and finding no Germans, the group started down the main road.¹²

A local Frenchman advised the group they should follow a trail along, but below this road, since Germans were still in the area. A scout moving ahead of the group halted about 200 yards down the road. They heard German voices, so Lieutenant Larson scurried up the embankment to the road, where he surprised the Germans. The latter shot and killed him instantly with three or four rounds. The group withdrew immediately to the village of Maissy, where they and the Maquis established defensive positions in a semi-circle.¹³

Early the next morning, the OGS discovered that during the night the Maquis on Lieutenant Fletcher's right flank had withdrawn without permission, thus exposing their right flank. The group withdrew from the area because they were not protected on their flank. Later in the morning Captain Pietsch decided the group was wasting its time, so he withdrew them.¹⁴

Major Gerald W. Davis of SF Detachment No. 11 came from Chatillon and directed the group to work one of the roads south of Dijon. The group traveled back to Avot. At Avot the group met OG team "Adrian" commanded by Captain Orleans A. Pitrie. "Adrian" consisted of 31 soldiers who had parachuted in on 10 September to join Group "Christopher" for operations.¹⁵

Captain Pitrie (Group "Adrian") informed Lieutenant Hjeltness that Major Davis ordered him to join with "Christopher" and take over command of both groups. Lieutenant Hjeltness had received his orders from England and would not relinquish command until directed by SFHQ. Captain Pitrie decided to go ahead and work with his group as a separate OG team.¹⁶

On Tuesday, 12 September, Lieutenant Apgar led a group of OG men to join some SAS troops to establish an ambush along the Dijon road. Fortunately, this was not necessary, since the Allied army had already reached Dijon, so the group left and went to a village west of Langres.¹⁷

At this village, St. Geosmes, a Frenchman guided them to a hill overlooking St. Geosmes, and stated there were Germans in the village as well as in the adjacent woods. The group observed a German patrol go into the woods and Germans in the village. The group decided to harass the Germans and dropped 12 mortar rounds before pulling out.¹⁸

The French Army had pretty well occupied the area, to include St. Geosmes, and there was little for Group "Christopher" to do. However, some Germans were still hold up in a citadel nearby, and a French cavalry colonel sought the OG's assistance in getting them out of

their entrenchments. The colonel wanted the OGs to accompany his tanks and cover his demolition squad as they blew a gate leading to the citadel.¹⁹

The plan called for about an hour of artillery and mortar fire on the Germans. This was to be followed by tanks and the OGs advancing to the gate. The fire from the Germans was intense, forcing the tanks and Group "Christopher" back. Lieutenant Hjeltness decided the best course of action was to set up defensive positions on the right side of the road and wait for further developments.²⁰

The group received information around 1800 hours that the Germans in the town of Langres had surrendered. Lieutenant Hjeltness went to see the Maquis leader to find out if the surrender included the citadel. The colonel confirmed the surrender occurred at 1730 hours and included the citadel. The French captured about 1200-1300 Germans.²¹

The OGs now returned to Auberive on 14 September to get some rest. It was the following morning, 15 September, that the group realized their mission was complete. A French lieutenant from General Patton's headquarters came upon the group seeking the French Army. Lieutenant Hjeltness told the French officer that the French Army was at Langres. The group learned from the French lieutenant that they had been overrun because the nearest Germans were at Charemont.²²

Lieutenant Hjeltness sent a message to SFHQ advising them of their situation. They received instructions to contact Lieutenant Colonel Robert I. Powell, Cav, of Third U.S. Army to arrange for transportation back to England. By the time the OGs located Third Army Headquarters, it was at Verdun--too far to travel. Lieutenant Hjeltness

decided to go to Troyes, where he arranged for a civil affairs committee to arrange transportation to pick up his men at Auberive. They then proceeded to SF headquarters in Paris. Upon arrival in Paris, the group was billeted until they could return to England on 22 September 1944.²³

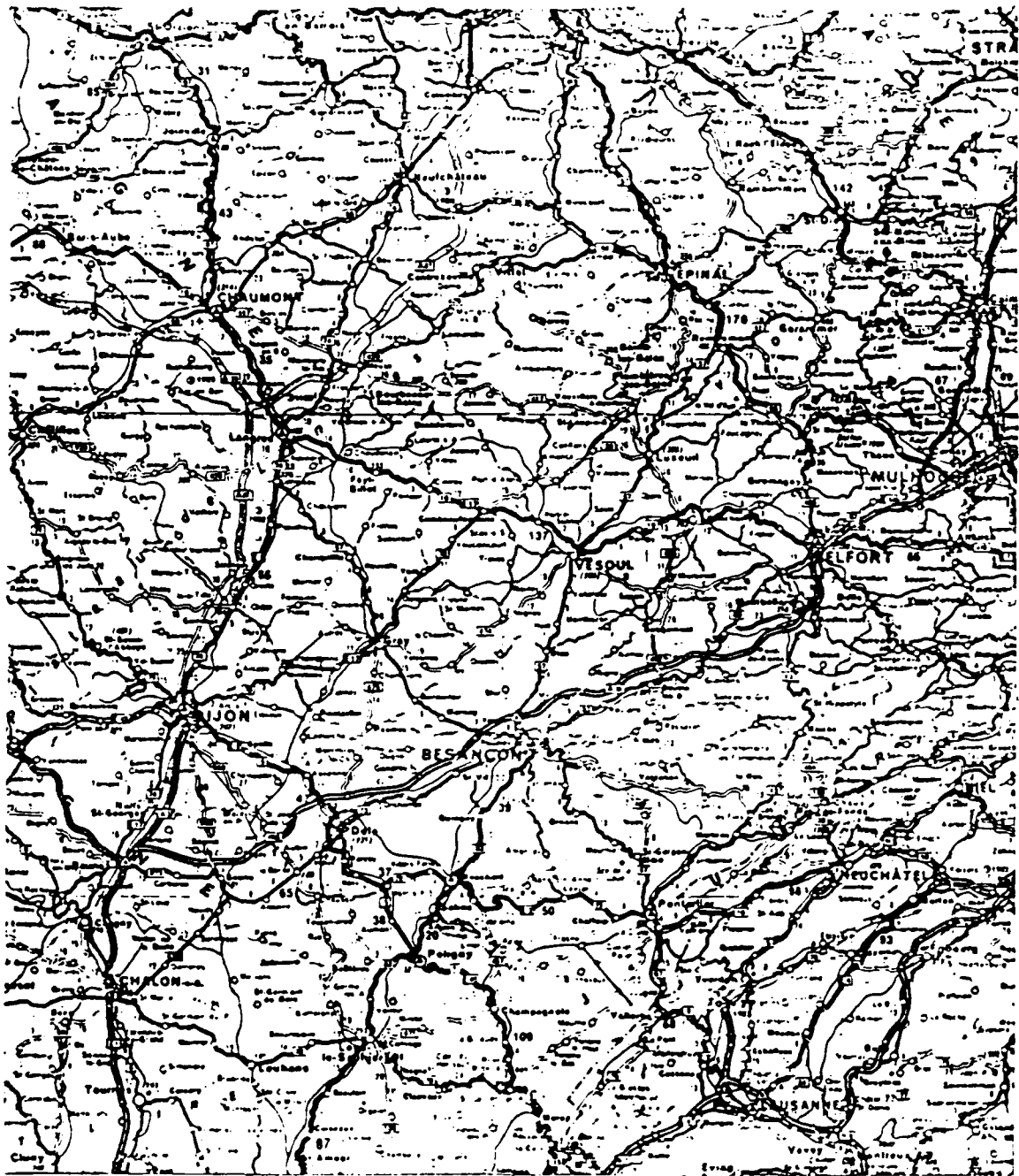


Figure 6. Area of Operations for team "Christopher." Map excerpted from Hallwag Euro Guide (map) of France, Switzerland.

Endnotes

¹The members of Group "Christopher" were as follows: Captain (then 1st Lieutenant) Melvin J. Hjeltness, Inf, 1st Lieutenant Harry F. Apgar, Inf, 1st Lieutenant Glenn J. Farnsworth, Inf, 1st Lieutenant Lon P. Fletcher, Inf, 1st Lieutenant Rafael D. Hirtz, SC, 1st Lieutenant Arthur Hughes, Cav, 1st Lieutenant Walter Larson, CE (killed in action during fighting with Germans on 10 September 1944), 1st Lieutenant Tom Sather, Inf (slightly injured on 4 September 1944 when he suffered a broken bone and chipped heel on the right foot during his parachute descent), 2nd Lieutenant William L. Coulehan, FA, 2nd Lieutenant Burke E. Whitney, CE, 2nd Lieutenant Chandler Bates, FA, 2nd Lieutenant Arthur N. Foster, FA, T/Sgt Sverre B. Aanonsen, T/Sgt Borge Langeland (slightly wounded on 13 September 1944 during fighting with Germans), T/Sgt Russell Saunders (slightly injured on 4 September, when he suffered a wrenched right knee and torn ligaments during his parachute descent), S/Sgt Sigurd M. Baro, S/Sgt Trygve Berge, S/Sgt Paul C. Bolen, S/Sgt Lief Olstad, S/Sgt Walter H. Peck, T/3 Harold G. Nelson, Sgt Maurice L. Burke, Sgt Howard C. Ducker, Sgt Emil L. Mihatov, T/4 Odd A. Andersen, T/4 Roland C. Delorme, T/4 Tom Gilbertson, T/4 Albert S. Kovalchik, T/4 Rosaire A. Lariviere, Cpl Lars S. Sarsen, Cpl Arthur Lubbers, Cpl Lars Motland, T/5 Jorgen F. Anderson, T/5 Knut Andreasen, T/5 Knut J. Falck, T/5 Adolph I. Hogfoss (suffered a fracture of the shin bone in his right leg during parachute drop of 4 September), T/5 Randolph M. Kristiansen, T/5 Elmer Kvasager, T/5 Rolf Lilleby, T/5 John W. Manners, T/5 Harold E. Ness, T/5 Halvor H. Nipe, T/5 Albert Nordang, T/5 Gjerulf Ottersland, T/5 Matti Raivio, T/5 Tom Rusdal, T/5 Erling K. Salversen, T/5 Morris A. Syrstad, T/5 Bernard W. Tallakson, T/5 Christopher Torper, T/5 Arthur J. Westgard, Pfc David G. Boak, Pfc John S. Buc, Jr., Pfc Joseph C. Goudet, Pfc Robert L. Vernon. John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes, (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Volume 4-A, Jul.-Sep. 44), p. 115-117; and OSS/London: Special Operations Branch and Secret Intelligence Branch War Diaries (Microfilm, Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1985), Volume 13, Jan.-Dec. 44, Casualties, p. 3, 13 and 18.

²The Germans were moving through a gap between the Allied armies through Dijon to the Belfort gap into Germany. Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 117; and Records of the London History Office and the Washington History Office, OSS, Record Group 226, OP 23, 1-15 Sep. 44, Entry 99, Folder #5, Box, #2, Memorandum subject: Semi-monthly Progress Report, 18 Sep. 44, National Archives, Washington, DC.

³Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, p. 119.

⁴The following supplies were dropped with "Christopher":

Containers: C-1	- 14	C-4	- 5	H-5	- 2	H-25	- 2
C-23	- 14	C-14	- 3	C-10	- 2	C-16	- 6
C-3	- 10	C-21	- 13	H-7F	- 1	C-6	- 9
C-22	- 6	C-12	- 1	H-21	- 2	H-1	- 2
C-5A	- 4	C-5B	- 20	C-11	- 2	H-4	- 1

	C-13 - 1	C-4 - 1	
	M-1 (special) - 1		
	Prepared Charges - 5		
	LMG - 2		
Packages:	56 rucksacks		1 LMG
	1 LMG spare parts kit		20 chests of LMG ammo
	500 prepared charges		170 grenades
	3 boxes .30 cal ammo (approx. 4,500 rounds)		4 radios
	3 boxes .45 cal ammo (approx. 9,000 rounds)		56 gas masks
	1 box Gammon grenades No. 82		
	20 cans gas (1 quart filled)		
	2 Verrey pistols, with ammo		
	14 TSRG pouches, filled		

Ibid., p. 117-120.

⁵Ibid., p. 120.

⁶Ibid., p. 121.

⁷Ibid., p. 122.

⁸Ibid., p. 122-123.

⁹Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 124-125.

¹¹Ibid., p. 125.

¹²Ibid., p. 126.

¹³Ibid., p. 126-127.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 128 and 137-138.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 128-129.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁸The Frenchman reported seven Germans were killed as a result of the mortar attack. Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 130.

²⁰Ibid., p. 131-132.

²¹Ibid., p. 132-133.

²²Ibid., p. 133.

²³Ibid., p. 133 and 136.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

World War II introduced large armies like those employed during the first world war. However, advances in technology changed how this war would be fought. The armies were far more mobile. Air forces could strike the enemy deep with strategic bombers and support armies with close air support. Large navies no longer fought sea battles between battleships, but between carrier groups. Special operations forces demonstrated their importance on the battlefield in support of operations.

Eight Operational Groups, the forerunners of today's Special Forces, were dispatched from England to France from July to October 1944. The exploits of six of these OGs provide historical insight into one of many allied organizations that operated behind enemy lines. These teams demonstrated they were very successful in executing the types of missions they were trained to conduct. However, their support to the success at the strategic or operational level remains very difficult to evaluate.

Based on the missions assigned the OGs, all six were successful. None failed in accomplishing any of their missions. They destroyed bridges and railroads and ambushed many convoys, thus disrupting the Germans and creating confusion. In an official report made by General Donovan to the JCS, he claimed that 19 OG teams killed or wounded 928

Germans, destroyed 33 German vehicles, 3 locomotives and 2 German trains, cut 32 strategic bridges (on key railway lines and highways), mined 17 roads, and cut 11 telecommunications or power lines. These teams lost only seven killed and six wounded.¹

Missions "Patrick," "Lindsey" and "Christopher"/"Adrian" contributed significantly to Allied success. OG "Patrick" captured intact and protected the dam and power plant at Eguzon, which was vital to providing the electricity to Paris and central France. OG "Lindsey" successfully negotiated the Germans departing the hydro-electric plant at La Truyere, leaving the facilities undamaged. OG's "Christopher" and "Adrian" worked with the local resistance, in the Dijon-Belfort gap harassing Germans withdrawing to the east ahead of the advancing American Seventh Army.² The remaining OGs accomplished their assigned missions of disrupting German movements by attacking railways, ambushing convoys, or preserving bridges, railroads and highways for Allied use.

However, the Operational Groups inserted into France encountered several problems, which hindered their degree of success. These problem areas were mission orders, intelligence, command and control and air delivery of special operations personnel.

Two OG teams, "Percy-Pink" and "Christopher" received vague mission statements. They were both essentially told to harass the Germans moving through their area of operations. This included attacks on railroads, ambushes of convoys on roads and working with the Maquis in their area.

The other OG teams initially had specific missions. "Percy-Red" was to organize and carry out attacks on specified railway lines and the

wolfram mines located at Puy-les-Vignes, near St. Leonard-de-Noblat and Vaulry near Cieux. "Donald's" primary mission was to prevent the destruction of the railway viaduct east of Guimiliau, while preserving bridges, railroads and highways in the Landiviseau area. "Patrick's" primary mission was protecting the key hydro-electric plant in Eguzon from destruction by the Germans. The last OG team to have a primary task was "Lindsey," which was to protect the hydro-electric plant at La Truyere.

After the primary missions were accomplished, there is no indication that the OGs received further instructions from SFHQ, or the SF detachments, to execute a mission in support of the tactical or operational plans. It appears they were to do the same type of missions as OGs "Percy-Pink" and "Christopher." This is why intelligence is considered a problem, if not an outright failure once the teams were in country.

Since the OGs received no further or updated intelligence from their higher headquarters, they initially relied on the Maquis to report on German dispositions and movement. Unfortunately, many of these reports were inaccurate or outdated. Therefore, the groups had to do their own reconnaissance before executing missions. The OGs actively sought out the Germans whenever and wherever they could. The lack of intelligence support from higher headquarters contributed to the groups not being more effective. Another contributing factor limiting the OGs' effectiveness was the lack of command and control over these groups.

Only one OG team, "Percy-Pink," had no communication capability to talk with SFHQ. The other teams communicated with SFHQ through

either their own radios or the radios of local agents or Jedburghs.³ The OG teams kept SFHQ, who relayed the information to the SF detachments, aware of their actions. But apparently no information or guidance was provided to the teams to assist them in executing future missions in support of the theater's operations. This lack of specific guidance did not deter the teams from continuing to conduct their "understood" mission of seeking out and harassing the Germans.⁴

Once on the ground in France, the groups would only take their orders from SFHQ. However, once in country, the groups did not take orders from anyone outside their chain-of-command. This made coordination difficult if not impossible, e.g., "Christopher" refusing to take orders from "Adrian."

The groups sometimes had to use diplomacy with the resistance forces to get them to do what they wanted. But, overall, the OGs usually had no problems in working with the Maquis. The FTP on the other hand had their own political agenda and made working together difficult. However, any differences the resistance forces might have had were put aside when the allies were winning, so they might join forces to fight the Germans as they withdrew.⁵

There is not enough information available to evaluate the special forces detachment at army and army group level. However, since the groups apparently did not report directly to them during or upon completion of their mission, it seems the SF detachments served no useful function. This could be attributed to the fact that the OGs could only communicate with SFHQ, which in turn provided reports to the SF detachments on what was going on with all the resistance elements.

The air delivery of OGs to France is not a success story. The planes were too small, ill-equipped for night operations, and when in the area of the drop zone, many of them never saw the signal from the resistance forces to guide them to the drop zone. Many of the planes had to return to England and drop their cargo and personnel another night.

When the planes did drop their loads, they normally scattered them over a wide area. Even though the drop zones were supposedly safe, such a wide drop could have possibly alerted German forces. One group of Germans did observe an air drop, but thought the containers were paratroopers, and too many at that to deal with.

The training received by the OGs prepared them well for their missions in France. Many of the soldiers expressed that the experiences they faced in the field were easier than the problems they continually had to work out during their practice missions. Two areas could have been stressed more in preparation: a more thorough briefing on French military nomenclature, and operation and maintenance of all types of foreign weapons and vehicles.

On the surface, it appears to the everyday soldier that the Operational Groups might have done very little in support of the overall operations. Their contributions, when added to the contributions made by all resistance forces, did indeed have an impact.⁶ General Eisenhower, commander of the Allied Forces, wrote in a personal letter of appreciation to SFHQ upon its disbandment after the war:

In no previous war, and in no other theater during this war, have resistance forces been so closely harnessed to the main military effort.⁷

At the operational level, General Patton "publicly commended the resistance forces for their 'invaluable aid' in freeing the [Brittany] peninsula."⁸

As cited earlier by General Donovan, there was a need for "subversive activities and guerrilla units [to] be considered in strategic planning."⁹ Yet there is no evidence to substantiate that the missions conducted by the OGs were related to strategic objectives. The major hurdle for Donovan was getting the military, specifically the Army, to accept his proposal for the formation of guerrilla units.

A big opponent to this concept was Major General George V. Strong, Army G-2. He wrote in a memorandum, after the approval to form guerrilla units, that the idea was "essentially unsound and unproductive." He believed such operations should be carried out by regular forces, further stating:

. . . to squander time, men, equipment and tonnage on special guerrilla organizations and at the same time to complicate the command and supply systems of the Army by such projects would be culpable mismanagement.¹⁰

Donovan, though he had approval to form the OGs, never received unequivocal support from the military. As such, the military, specifically the Army, never fully understood how to employ the OGs in support of operations. It appears that in France, particularly after the invasion and the breakout from the Normandy beaches, someone on the Allied staff, probably in SFHQ, realized the Allies were having success and had yet to employ these "special" teams. It seems then, that the teams were inserted as an after thought, in order to say they "did their thing," and contributed to the overall success of the operations.

The six Operational Groups studied in this paper were successful in executing the missions, which they were trained to accomplish. Their purpose was to conduct guerrilla operations behind the enemy's lines, thus disrupting his operations and reducing his combat effectiveness.

Was their new doctrine adequate to support the operational plan for France? As cited in FM 100-25 and the "OG Operational Group Command" Pamphlet, the mission of special operations has not really changed in over 45 years.¹¹ I believe today's leaders have learned from the OGs experience, that they were not properly employed as a strategic asset, as they were intended. But their training and missions were appropriate for them as a newly formed guerrilla unit. According to FM 100-25, Doctrine for Special Operations Forces (SOF):

At the operational level, SOF support the theater of operations commander . . . SO have a near-term effect on current theater operations. By attacking hostile operational follow-on forces, SOF disrupt their combined-arms operations and break their momentum, creating opportunities for friendly decisive action. SOF can identify high-value targets and collect other vital information beyond the sensing capabilities of tactical collection systems. They can attack some high-value targets and interdict priority target systems. SOF elements working with indigenous resistance organizations can synchronize their activities with those of a General Purpose force

At the tactical level, SOF support (and are supported by) conventional military forces whenever their operational areas converge or coincide . . . SOF usually lack the firepower, tactical mobility, real-time communications, and combat service support (CSS) capabilities to conduct sustained close combat operations. They gain mobility and protection advantages through stealth and the use of restrictive terrain. They overcome their lack of firepower through stealth, surprise, and superior training. SOF missions usually rely on detailed pre-mission preparation that is unsuitable for fluid, close operations.¹²

Special Operations Command understands the doctrine, and continues to apply it successfully, as was demonstrated in Southwest Asia's Desert Shield/Storm.

Technology today allows the commander to see the battlefield as combat happens, the close, deep and rear battles. Yet, the soldier is still the best source for intelligence. Because he has "seen" the enemy, he can best report and influence the battle. This makes special operations forces unique, in that they can perform their mission in the deep battle, just as the OGs influenced the battle during World War II.

As leaders and tacticians, we need to learn from OGs "Percy Red," "Donald," "Percy Pink," "Patrick," "Lindsey" and "Christopher," the significant roles they performed in the Allied success in France, as well as other theaters of the war. The OGs were special forces executing a new doctrine never attempted before by a conventional military. They were the forerunners to our Special Forces according to Paddock in his book, US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins:

In terms of organization, training, and job description, the OGs presaged the basic operational detachment adopted by the Army's 10th Special Forces Group upon its creation in 1952.¹³

The Operational Groups have seldom been the topic of scholarly research. Their missions were nonetheless important, and their study is vital to today's military. Their operations struck blows, both large and small, against the enemy. The methods they used are still applicable today. Their deficiencies teach us that no aspect of a mission is too trivial to ignore. Let us remember these brave

volunteers of the Operational Groups, who willingly participated in these
daring missions.

Endnotes

¹Charles M. Simpson, Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years: A History of the U.S. Army Special Forces, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1983), p. 12; and Record Group 226, OP 23, Entry 99, Folder 50, Box #12, App B, OSS OGs with French Resistance, Feb. 1945.

²Record Group 226, OP23, Entry 99, Folder 50, Box #12.

³In reports provided by the teams upon their return to England, they stressed that the radio operators needed more training in the maintenance and repair of radios. Roosevelt, The Overseas Targets, Volume 2, p. 207

⁴Leif Eide, a radio operator for "Percy Red," informed the author that the groups (at least the soldiers) did not know what their mission was, just that they were going to France. He did maintain daily communication with SFHQ; however, all instructions were sent to "Hamlet" who relayed instructions, if any, to "Percy Red." The soldiers did understand that they were to raise havoc with the Germans by ambushing their convoys, blowing bridges and railroads to delay their withdrawal and prevent them from being committed against Allied troops. Leif Eide, interview with the author, 12 March 1993.

⁵Leif Eide informed the author that the Maquis acted alot like the soldiers in the OG teams, wild, undisciplined, yet good fighters. The FTP, however, were communists and sometimes wanted to go their own way. Leif Eide, interview with the author 12 March 1993.

⁶Roosevelt, The Overseas Targets, Volume 2, p. 207. Leif Eide responded when asked whether the OG soldiers considered themselves successful, "I will have to say we were good, compared to anybody. We really had some excellent men in that operation...as a group we did our job, never faltered, never panicked and our retreats after an ambush, or whatever, were always orderly." Leif Eide, letter to the author dated 20 March 1993.

⁷Ambrose, p. 108.

⁸Record Group 226, July 44, Entry 99, Folder 117, Box #93.

⁹Kermit Roosevelt, War Report of the OSS (Office of the Strategic Services), Volume 1, (New York: Walker and Company, 1977), p. 72.

¹⁰Alfred H. Paddock, US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins, (Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D. C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), p. 26; Corey Ford, Donovan of OSS, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 129-130; and Bradley F. Smith, The Shadow Warriors: The OSS and the Origins of the C.I.A., (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 120.

¹¹Mission of the OGs as stated in their "OG Operational Group Command" Pamphlet was "to aid actual and planned Allied military operations by harassing the enemy behind his lines, by disrupting his lines of communication and supply, and by forcing him to divert troops to protect himself from guerrilla attacks and wide-scale uprisings." US Army "OG Operational Group Command" pamphlet, unofficial general orientation guide, unedited, December, 1944. Provided to author by Mr. Albert Materazzi, 5 February 1993.

¹²US Army, FM 100-25, Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces, (Washington D. C.: Department of the Army, 1991), p. 2-5 to 2-6.

¹³paddock, p. 34.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

- AFHQ - Allied Force Headquarters.
- BCRA - Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action, (Central Bureau of Information and Action). Central Intelligence and Operations Bureau of de Gaulle's National Committee in London, which cooperated with the special section of British SOE that supplied Gaullist resistance forces in France.
- BRAL - Bureau des recherches et d'actions a Londres, which cooperated with the special section of the British SOE that supplied Gaullist resistance forces in France.
- Bren - An automatic rifle uniquely identified by the magazine location above the receiver. It can fire a .303 caliber round at a cyclic rate of fire of 500 rounds per minute from a 30 round clip. Weight: 22 lbs., two ounces.
- EMFFI - Etat-Major des Forces Francaises de l'Interieur. EMFFI was created to integrate General Koenig's BCRA staff and SFHQ. It functioned as the General staff of the French Forces of the Interior.
- FFI - Forces Francaises de l'Interieur. The organized [resistance] French Forces of the Interior in France controlled by de Gaulle.
- FTP - Franco-Tireurs et Partisans. The military wing of the French Communist party. French paramilitary units named after the French guerilla heroes of 1870 - 71.
- French F sections - SOE independent French section (non-Gaullist). Operated agents in France without regard to the agents political background as compared to RF.
- French RF sections - Gaullist country section of SOE for France. Operated pro-Gaullist agents in France as compared to F. OGC - OG command.
- Jedburgh - Usually three man teams made up of two officers and one NCO (radio operator). Each team usually fielded a native speaker of the country into which the team would be inserted. The remainder of the team was comprised of either American or British personnel. Their primary missions were to organize resistance groups and act

as liaison between the resistance groups and Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ).

JCS - [United States] Joint Chiefs of Staff.

OSS - Office of the Strategic Services. American secret operations and intelligence organization organized in World War II. Forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Special Forces.

OG - Operational Groups. OSS teams consisting of originally 4 officers and 30 enlisted men inserted behind the enemy lines for specific missions.

Operation Overlord - codeword given for the invasion of Normandy, France, 6 June 1944 by the Western Allied armies.

SAS - [British] Special Air Service counterpart to OG's.

SF - Special Forces Detachment. SHAEF recognized a need to control "special teams" (OGs, Jedburghs, etc.) behind enemy lines and created the SF detachment for each army and army group headquarters to coordinate such operations.

SFHQ - Special Forces Headquarters, a joint SOE/OSS special forces headquarters in SHAEF responsible for coordinating resistance activities.

SIS - Secret (or Special) Intelligence Service.

SOE - Special Operations Executive. The British counterpart to OSS. It was created in 1940 as an offshoot of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), to assist guerrilla movements against the Axis.

SOE/SO - Joint headquarters of the British London branch of SOE and the American SO branch of the OSS. SO and SOE joined together to insure a coordinated effort against the Germans and to eliminate redundancy and to prevent confrontations. They controlled operations in northwestern Europe beginning in September 1942 with headquarters in London.

SO - Special Operations branch of the OSS. Primary duties involved sabotage and liaison with resistance movements.

SSO - [Deputy Director] Strategic Services Operations, which was initially responsible for Operational Groups.

SHAEF - Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces located in London.

Sten - British made submachine gun uniquely identified by its horizontal magazine mounted on the left side of the receiver. It fired a nine millimeter parabellum bullet from a 32 round clip. The weapon could

be disassembled into three (later models into two) parts and concealed in a suitcase.

UW - Unconventional Warfare.

APPENDIX B

FIGURES

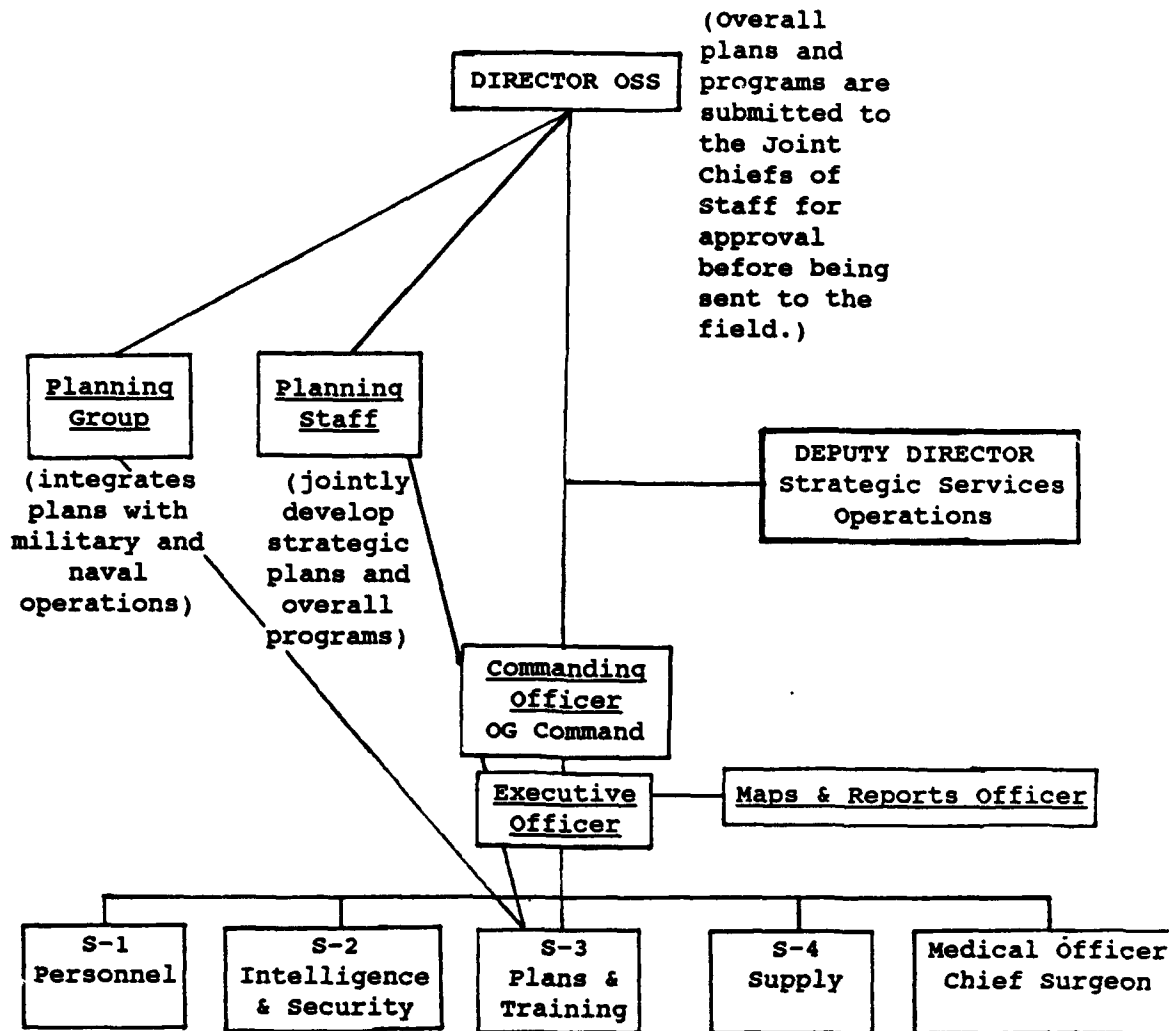


Figure 7. OG Headquarters: Strategic Planning. US Army "OG Operational Group Command" pamphlet, unofficial general orientation guide, unedited, December, 1944. Provided to author by Mr. Albert Materazzi, 5 February 1993.

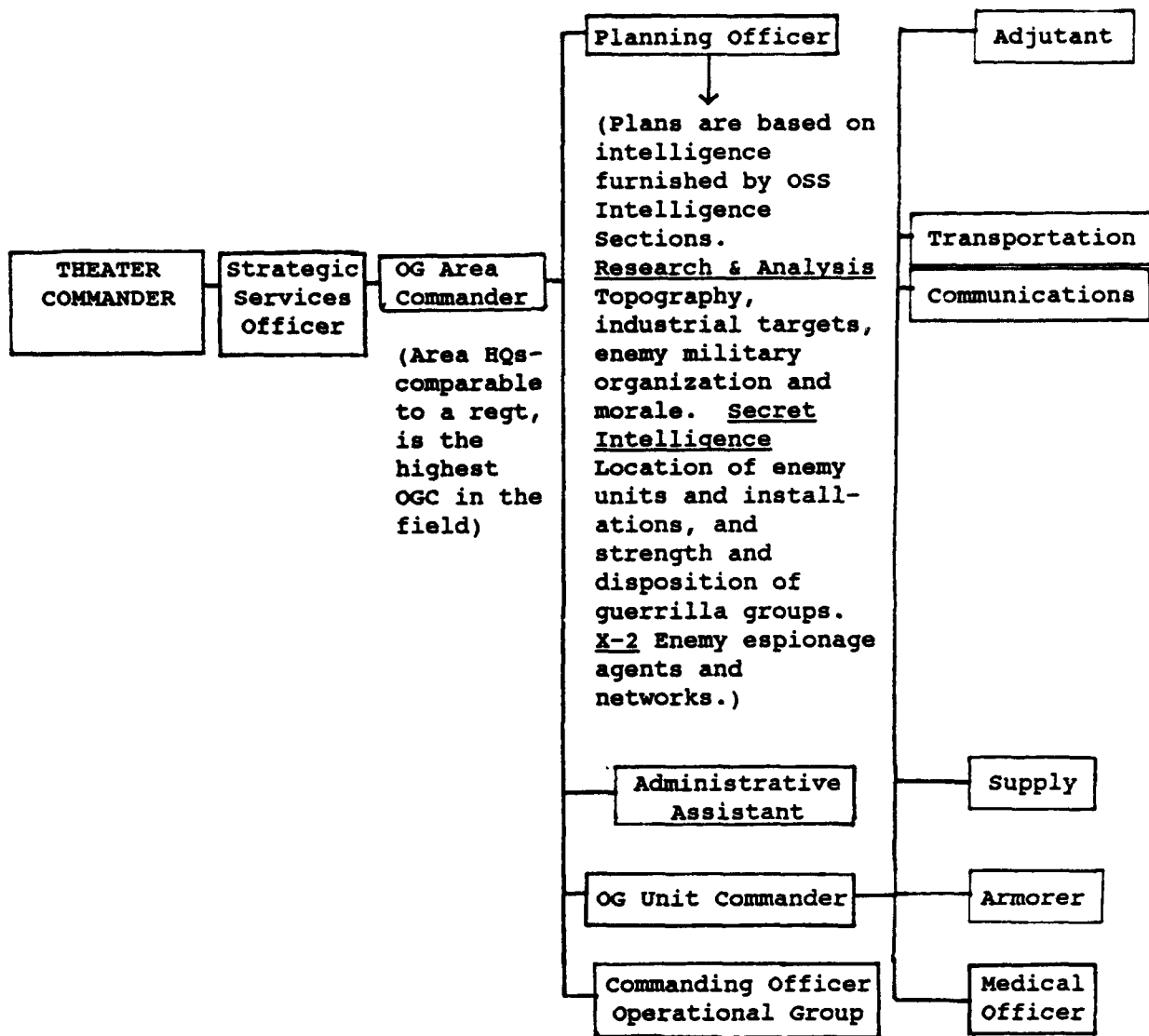
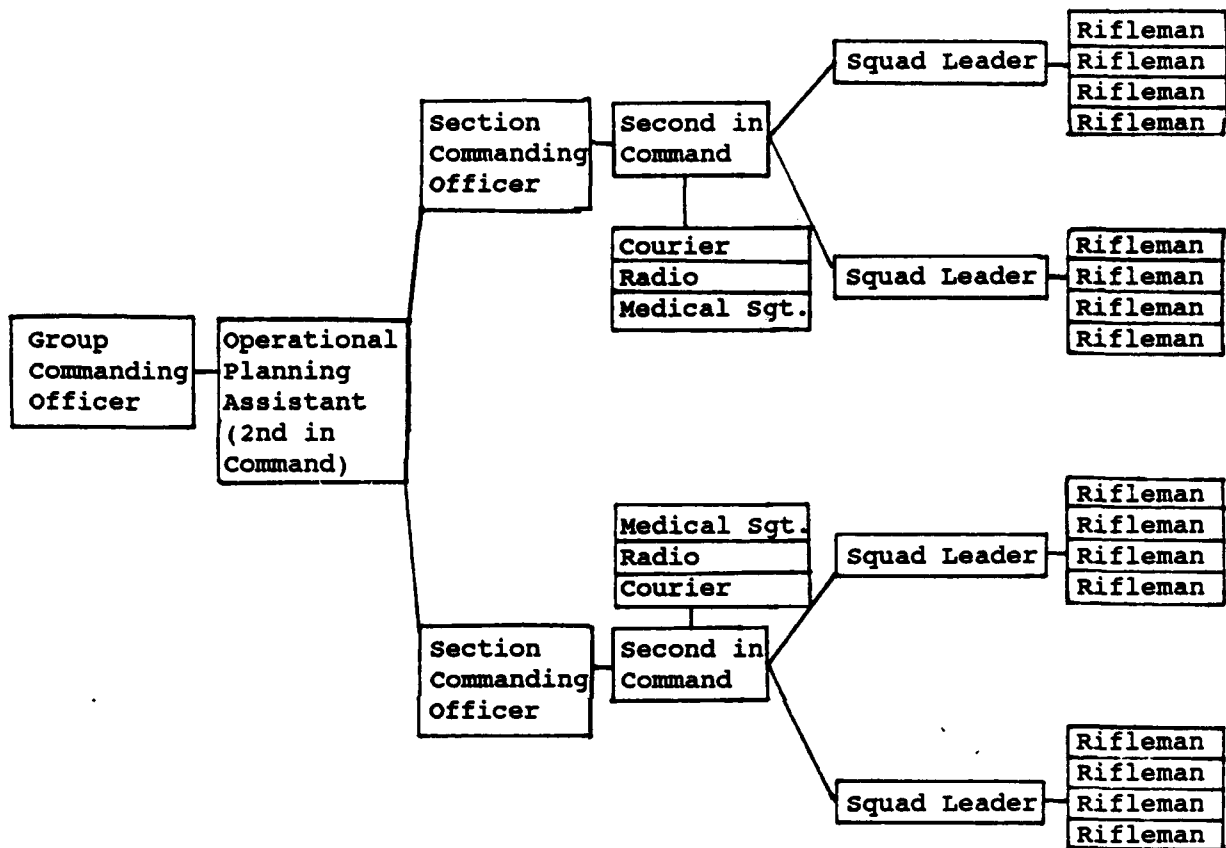


Fig. 8. OG Field Organization Planning. US Army "OG Operational Group Command" pamphlet, unofficial general orientation guide, unedited, December, 1944. Provided to author by Mr. Albert Materazzi, 5 February 1993.



Each group must be self-sufficient because operations are aimed at special isolated objectives. Further decentralization within the group command is also necessary because component parts may have to split from their group, to organize, train, or take command of a different native force.

Each section and each squad is capable of independent action. The smaller the unit, the more mobile and inconspicuous, two leading requirements in operations conducted behind enemy lines and in constant danger of separation from a base or supporting forces.

Figure 9. Operational Group: The Basic Field Unit. US Army "OG Operational Group Command" pamphlet, unofficial general orientation guide, unedited, December, 1944. Provided to author by Mr. Albert Materazzi, 5 February 1993.

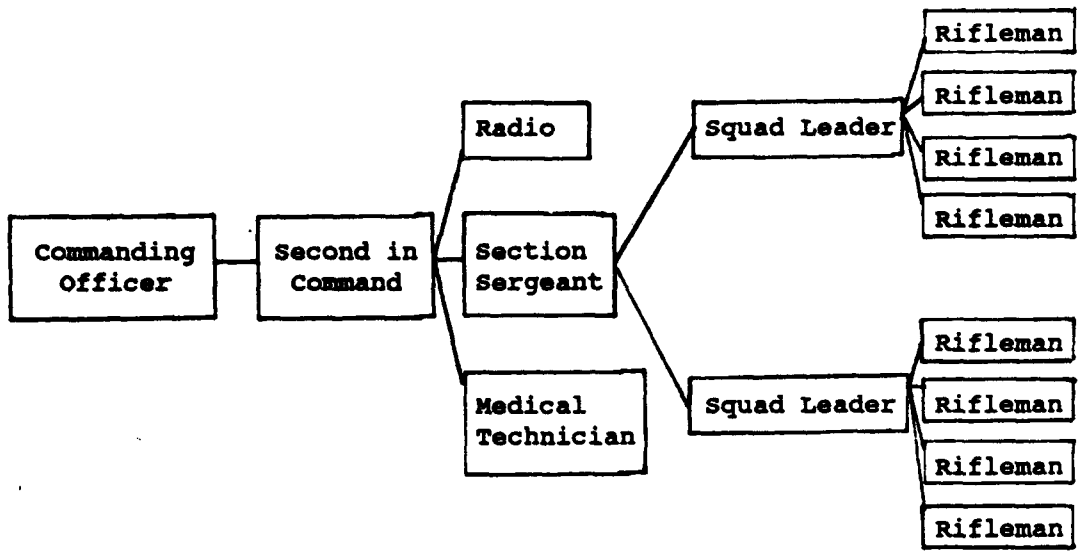


Figure 10. Operational Group: The Basic Field Unit (Revised June, 1944). Memorandum, Special Project, Operations Center, AFHQ, Subject: Tactical Revision of Operational Group Planning, 10 June 1944, Caserta SO OP 29-30. Reports Apr.-Jun. 44, entry 154, Folder 962, Box 58, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

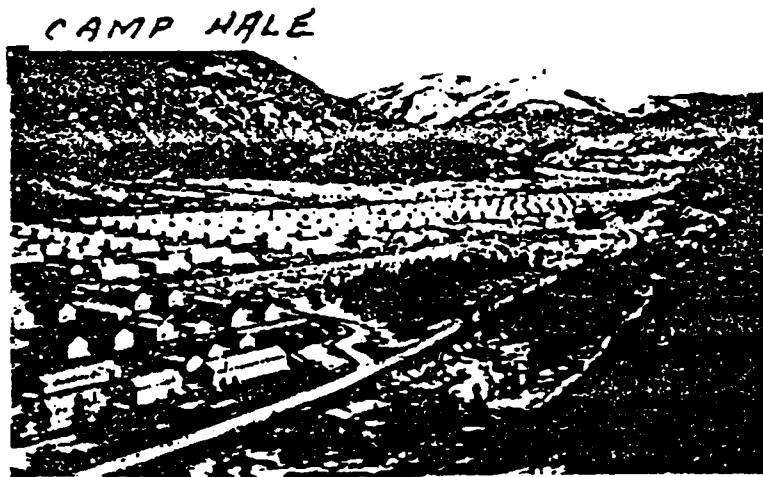
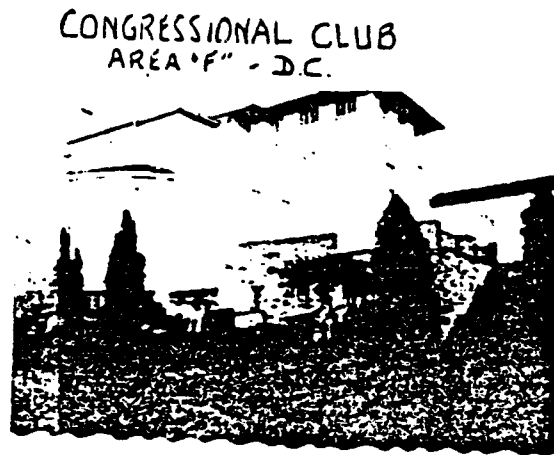
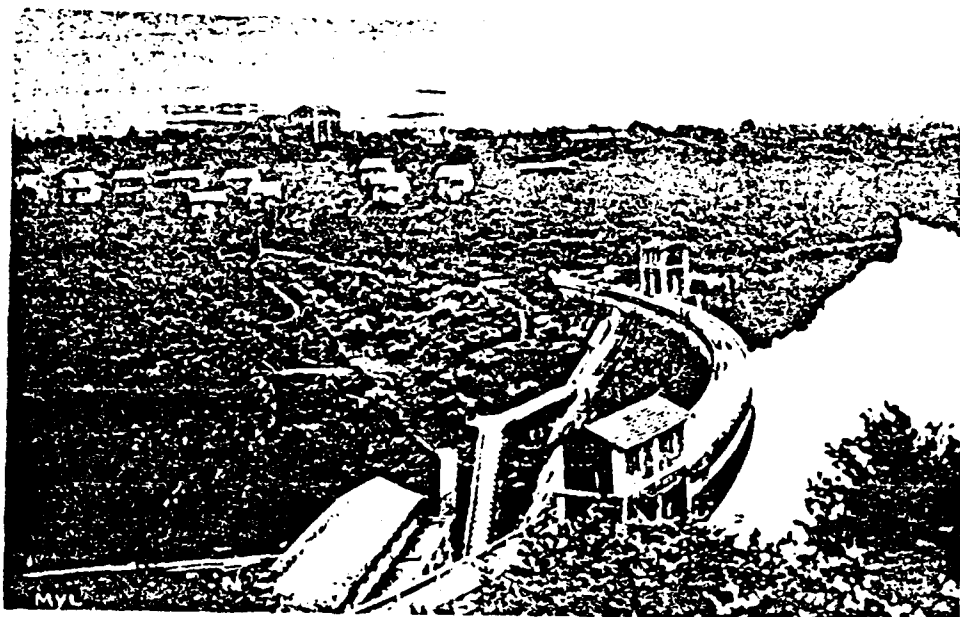


Figure 11. Training Areas. Photographs provided by Lief Eide to author 12 March 1993.



Transformer Station at Eguzon

Bridge one-half mile below the dam at Eguzon



Figure 12. Operational Group "Patrick" Targets.
Mendelsohn, Volume 4-A, Operational Groups, p. 70.

APPENDIX C

OPERATIONAL GROUP EQUIPMENT

OPERATIONAL GROUP EQUIPMENT FOR THE SOLDIER

Uniform worn--Jump Boots

Field Pants
Socks
Sweater
Underwear
M1943 Field Jacket
OD Shirt
Steel Helmet

Equipment carried by all men--

Web Belt
Identification Tags
Canteen, Water
Toilet Paper
Sewing Kit
Pistol, 45 w/pouch 21 rounds, 3 magazines
Packet of salt or salt pills
2 pair socks
Rubbers (12)
Pocket Knife
Matches (waterproof case)
Gloves (optional)
6 Grenades
Jungle Pack (medical)
First Aid Packet
Athletic Supporter
Notebook & eversharp pencil
Toilet Articles
razor, soap, towel,
toothbrush, toothpowder,
comb
Cigarettes
Sleeping Bag Cover
Entrenching Tool
Two rolls tape
9 lbs prepared charges
Gas Mask container
Grease Paint
Watches
Lensetic Compass
Rations D
Cough Drops
Field Cap

Flashlight(pin point)
Escape kit

Equipment Carried by Officers--

Carbine
Map Protractor and case
Smatchette
Binoculars
Whistle

Equipment Carried by Enlisted Men--

Sergeant--

Carbine
Binoculars
Whistle
Spare parts

T/5 TSMG Gunner and T/5 M-1 Gunner--
Wire cutter

T/5-- Carbine and Bren Gun

Equipment Carried by Radio Operator--

Carbine
Radios-packaged

John Mendelsohn, Covert Warfare: Other OSS Teams, Volume 5, 18 Volumes,
(New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1988), (Vol. 4-A), Jul.-Sep 44,
OGs, p. 20-21.

APPENDIX D

TRAINING

OPERATIONAL GROUP TRAINING

A. Members of Operational Groups received training in the following subjects:

1. Map study, including map sketching, map-and-compass problems, direction-finding by field expedients, study of aerial photos.
2. Scouting and patrolling, including instruction and practice in the use of physical cover, reconnaissance, signaling, infiltration.
3. Close combat (armed and unarmed), including knife-fighting.
4. Physical conditioning, including swimming, toughening exercises, and obstacle course runs.
5. Fieldcraft, including camouflage, living off the land, preparation of shelter and food.
6. Hygiene and camp sanitation.
7. Tactics, including basic maneuvers and tactical principles, discussion and practice in small-group operations and methods of guerrilla warfare, day and night problems, planning an execution of airborne raids, street and village fighting.
8. Demolitions, including explosives, incendiaries, booby traps, field expedients, delayed action charges, multiple charges, charges for special purposes.
9. Weapons, including function, stripping, cleaning, and firing of .30 cal. M1 rifle, .30 cal. carbine, .30 cal. air-cooled and water-cooled machine guns, .50 cal. machine gun, Browning Automatic Rifle, .45 cal. pistol, Sten gun, Bren gun, .45 cal. sub-machine gun, grenade launcher, bazooka, 9mm sub-machine gun, 60mm mortar, 81mm mortar, hand grenades, and the function and firing of enemy weapons with which the group might come into contact.
10. Principles and practice of first aid, especially under combat conditions.
11. Enemy motor transportation, including operation and repair of enemy motorcycles, trucks, automobiles, and other vehicles with which the group might come into contact.
12. Enemy organization, including lectures on enemy military and political structure, uniforms, insignia, procedure in interrogating prisoners, methods of espionage and counter-espionage.
13. Methods of organizing and training civilians in the techniques of guerrilla warfare; indoctrination as to correct general attitude and behavior toward the civilians.
14. Identification of enemy and Allied planes, tanks, and other vehicles.
15. Care of clothing and equipment.
16. Security, including precautions to be observed in the area of operations.

17. Problems of supply, including methods of packaging and the details regarding the dispatching and receipt of cargo into the zone of operations.

B. Basic preparation was supplemented in the Theater of Operations immediately prior to operations by a detailed briefing on topography, battle order, friendly and hostile groups that might be encountered, and other matters pertinent to the operation to be performed.

C. In addition to the training outlined in paragraph A above, radio operators for each OG received intensive practice in code, operational procedure, and repair of their equipment. Medical technicians received thorough training in advanced first aid from the unit medical officer.

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