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**OPERATION WESENERÜBUNG: VALUABLE LESSONS IN  
JOINT WARFARE**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## ABSTRACT of OPERATION WESERUEBUNG: VALUABLE LESSONS IN JOINT WARFARE

The German invasion of Norway and Denmark in April of 1940, was code named Operation WESERUEBUNG. Although this campaign is not as well known as other campaigns of World War II, it does hold a special significance for students of modern military operations. It was during this campaign that the first joint operations to involve significant land, sea, and air forces, fighting under a unified command, were conducted. The purpose of this paper is to conduct a historical review of how the Germans orchestrated Operation WESERUEBUNG. This operation is studied in the context of an isolated military campaign. Highlighted are the challenges the Germans faced in planning and executing joint operations and how they were able to cope with serious organizational and doctrinal deficiencies and still be successful. The success of Operation WESERUEBUNG brings out important issues concerning the need for joint doctrine, the significance of individual service expertise and the importance of military planners and leaders understanding and ably applying operational art. This study also surfaces the commonalities between the German military of 1940 and the U.S. military today. We should study the successes and pitfalls of Operation WESERUEBUNG and learn from the Germans experiences. These experiences are still valuable today and can contribute to our effective use of modern joint warfare.

# OPERATION WESERUEBUNG: VALUABLE LESSONS IN JOINT WARFARE

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Operation WESERUEBUNG was a very ambitious and dangerous campaign. To implement it the German military was required to do something it had not done before, use land, sea, and air forces to fight as a joint team.

In employing joint operations the Germans faced many of the same challenges in 1940, that are facing the U.S. military today. They had to deploy rapidly over long distances and be able to fight and win against forces often superior in number to their own. Additionally, the Germans had little joint training and no joint doctrine to assist them in planning, organizing and executing this campaign. They were able to cope with these deficiencies however, and Operation WESERUEBUNG was an outstanding military success.

Today, the U.S. military is emphasizing jointness and increasing our use of joint operations. Although we have developed some joint doctrine and joint training requirements, we still face many challenges in the joint arena and have many questions to answer.

Exactly how much jointness should we have? In a joint environment, how important is individual service expertise and how are we affecting that expertise with our joint doctrine and

joint training requirements? How important is the operational art today? How well trained are our joint leaders and planners in the operational art?

These few questions demonstrate our need to continually study historical cases of joint operations and use these valuable lessons to help us as we continue to evolve our joint warfighting capabilities.

In conducting this historical study, I set the stage by looking at the background of the invasion. Next, in chapter III, I discuss the operational planning and execution followed by a discussion on the use of operational art in Chapter IV. Finally, I look at the contributions or lessons learned from Operation WESERUEBUNG in Chapter V and end with some concluding comments in Chapter VI.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVASION

At the beginning of World War II the "Nordic States" of Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland declared their intentions to remain neutral during the war. Initially this neutrality was accepted by both the Germans and the Allies.

For the Germans, the neutrality of Norway was particularly important and advantageous. It provided for the safe passage of a strategic resource and made it difficult for the British to blockade Germany. Of the approximately six million tons of magnetite iron ore which Germany imported annually, about half passed through the Norwegian ice-free port of Narvik. This iron ore was considered a strategic resource for Germany and vital to its military - industrial complex. Additionally, as long as Norway remained neutral, German ships could travel up the long Norwegian coast and break out above the Arctic Circle in waters that were difficult for the British to patrol. Since the British blockade of Germany during World War I, a debilitating blockade was a frightening concern of the Germans.

The British were not oblivious to the advantages the Germans gained from Norwegian neutrality. In September 1939, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed laying a mine field in Norwegian territorial waters and thus halting the

shipments of Swedish iron-ore from Narvik to Germany. This became a hot topic in Britain and arguments pro and con were openly debated in the British press.

The prospect of British action aroused German anxiety. Germany preferred to keep the "Nordic States" neutral, however the fear of Britain violating that neutrality and threatening the shipments of Swedish iron-ore provided an impetus for developing counter measures.

As early as October 1939, Hitler's Commander and Chief of the Navy, Admiral Raeder, briefed Hitler on the possibility that the British might try to gain use of Norwegian ports and the strategic disadvantage that would be for Germany. Admiral Raeder also suggested that the control of certain Norwegian bases would be ideal for launching the German submarine campaign against the British. Initially, Hitler was cool to developing any invasion plans for Norway. He was planning a major offensive in the west, Operation GELB, and wanted to concentrate all efforts and resources there.

In November 1939, the Russian army invaded Finland. The British saw this as an ideal opportunity. The British cabinet immediately authorized the Chiefs of Staff to plan an operation to aid the Finns. This plan called for a landing force at Narvik, which was the terminal point of the railway leading to the Gallivare ironfields in Sweden, and thence into Finland. While aid to Finland was the ostensible purpose of the operation,



the underlying and major purpose would be the control of the Swedish ironfields.<sup>2</sup> This would be a serious blow to Germany.

Hitler learned of these tentative steps in December 1939, but still hoped to avoid enlarging the theater of war. With some reluctance, he ordered his staff to prepare comprehensive plans for an invasion of Norway.

On February 16, 1940 an incident occurred that increased the urgency of preparations for the invasion. A German vessel, the tanker Altmark, with 300 captured British seamen aboard, was traveling through Norwegian waters on its way home to Germany. British warships were in hot pursuit. The Altmark took refuge in a Norwegian fjord. Disregarding protests from the Norwegian naval craft who were on the scene, the British boarded the Altmark and took off their countrymen.<sup>3</sup>

Hitler considered this action a breach of Norwegian neutrality and ordered a speed up in planning for Operation WESERUEBUNG. This move effectively sealed the fate of Norway and Denmark.

## CHAPTER III

### PLANNING AND EXECUTION

The planning efforts for Operation WESERUEBUNG were divided into two distinct phases, an initial planning phase and a final planning phase. The initial planning phase began on 14 December, 1939, when Hitler ordered the Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht or OKW) to begin preliminary planning for an invasion of Norway. The final planning phase started shortly after the Altmark incident in mid-February 1940, with the appointment of a Corps Commander.

#### INITIAL PLANNING PHASE

During the initial phase of planning, Hitler was not convinced an invasion would be necessary. However, due to the urging of admiral Raeder and Britain's reactions to the Russian invasion of Finland in November 1939, Hitler was compelled to order the initiation of preliminary planning efforts.

Within the OKW, Generalmajor Alfred Jodl, Chief of the Operations Staff, took charge of the preliminary planning efforts.<sup>4</sup> With direction from Hitler to keep the planning effort within a very limited circle, the operations staff went to work. Near the end of December 1939, they had completed a rough summary of the military and political issues relating to Norway. This

effort was titled Studie Nord. Studie Nord was based on the premise that Germany could not allow the British to control the Norwegian coastal areas and that the only way to prevent this was a German occupation of these areas. After Hitler had been briefed on the study he ordered it held until further notice.

Although Hitler's interest in Norway was slowly increasing, stimulated by rumors and newspaper talk of an Allied intervention in Finland, he still felt it was in Germany's best interest to keep Norway neutral. Hitler was not alone in this belief. Generaloberst Keitel, Chief OKW, and Generaloberst Halder, Chief of the Army General Staff, agreed it was best to keep Norway neutral and that any change in the German attitude would depend on whether or not Great Britain actually threatened the neutrality of Norway.<sup>5</sup>

On 10 January, nearly two weeks after he'd been briefed on Studie Nord, Hitler finally ordered the study released to the service high commands. Of all the service staffs, only the Navy staff showed much interest in the study. This seemed rather odd since the study directed that a special staff, headed by an Air Force general, be created to develop a plan of operations. The Navy was to supply the chief of staff and the Army the operations officer.<sup>6</sup> The reason for this lack of interest by the Army and Air Force may have been caused by their deep involvement in Operation GELB, the invasion of France and the Low Countries that was to take place later that same month.

The Navy staff's review of Studie Nord was not favorable. They did not agree with the premise that a British invasion of Norway was imminent. They found the plan to be strategically and economically dangerous and argued strongly against such an operation. Eventually they convinced Admiral Raeder to accept the merit of their point of view. Even so, he ordered them to initiate additional planning on the study. He rationalized that the course of the war could not be predicted and it was necessary, on principle, to include the occupation of Norway in the Navy's preparations.<sup>7</sup>

Between 14 and 19 January 1940, the Navy staff developed an expanded version of Studie Nord, that came to two significant conclusions. First, surprise would be essential to the success of the operation. If surprise could be achieved they saw no tangible resistance from the Norwegian forces. The only serious threat would be from any British ships that happen to be on patrol off the Norwegian coast. Their intelligence told them this would probably be only one or two cruisers. Second, the staff concluded that the use of warships to transport a portion of the assault forces would be very advantageous. This would overcome the range limitations on air transport, and the speed of the warships would allow for the simultaneous occupation of numerous positions on the Norwegian coast, including Narvik.<sup>8</sup>

In mid-January weather conditions caused Hitler to consider postponing Operation GELB and on 20 January he announced that the operation would not begin before March. This delay caused Hitler

to relook the situation in Scandinavia. There was some concern that the delay in Operation GELB would give the Allies time to mount an operation in Norway. On 23 January, Hitler ordered Studie Nord recalled. The original plan to have a special staff headed by the Air Force was dropped. Hitler ordered the OKW to take charge of all planning for, what would now be called, Operation WESERUEBUNG.

In a letter to the Commanders in Chief, Army, Navy and Air Force, on 27 January, Generaloberst Keitel, Chief of the OKW, stated that all future planning would be under Hitler's personal guidance and in closest conjunction with the overall direction of the war.' This put the planning for an operation in Norway on firmer ground and Hitler's role as a unified commander was now in the making.

The joint planning staff for WESERUEBUNG assembled on 5 February and was incorporated as a special section of the operations staff in the OKW. The senior officer and principal planner was Captain Theodor Krancke, commanding officer of the cruiser Admiral Sheer. Although Captain Krancke would be assisted by a small number of Air Force and Army officers assigned to him, it is significant to point out that the operations staffs of the services were excluded from the planning process. For the first time direct control of operational planning was taken out of the hands of the service commands and vested in Hitler's personal staff, the OKW.

The Krancke staff had to do its work quickly and without an abundance of resources. Additionally, German military experience provided no precedence for the type of operation they were planning. The preliminary work done by the OKW and the Navy staff was helpful, but provided little more than starting points for the operational planning. Some intelligence information on the Norwegian military and military installations was available and later proved to be accurate, but it was not of critical importance. For maps and general background information it was often necessary to rely on hydrographic charts, travel guides, tourist brochures and other similar sources.<sup>10</sup> The need to preserve secrecy created another problem, it severely limited the number of personnel that could work on the staff. In spite of all these problems, in approximately three weeks, the Krancke staff was able to produce a workable operations plan.

The Krancke plan was significantly more detailed than Studie Nord. It focused on the technical and tactical aspects of WESERUEBUNG. One result was a significant increase in the number of forces required. Where Studie Nord called for only one division of army troops, Krancke's plan called for a corps of approximately six divisions. Key to Krancke's plan was the identification of six strategically important objectives in Norway. They were:

- (1) Oslo, the capital
- (2) Bergen, a major southern port
- (3) the populated southern coastal areas
- (4) Trondheim, a key to control of central Norway
- (5) Narvik, the crucial rail link to the Swedish iron-ore fields
- (6) Tromso and Finnmark, the northern most areas of Norway

These objectives contained most of Norway's population, industry and trade. The plan called for these six objectives to be captured simultaneously, thus crippling the country's military and political bodies. To achieve this, the plan called for transporting half the troops by sea, using fast warships, and the other half by air. A swift occupation of these objectives and a rapid build up of follow-on forces by air and sea lift was essential to the success of the plan. The German intent was to use speed and surprise to shock the Norwegians and Danes into surrendering quickly without a fight. A political settlement could then be reached. To ensure this, Hitler ordered the immediate capture of the Kings of Norway and Denmark.<sup>11</sup>

#### **FINAL PLANNING PHASE**

Hitler's appointment, on 21 February, of Generaloberst Nikolaus von Falkenhorst, Commanding General of the XXI Corps (later designated as Group XXI) to prepare forces for WESERUEBUNG, began the final planning phase. Falkenhorst was nominated for this task largely because of his background. He was a mountain warfare expert who had acquired some experience in Arctic operations during Germany's intervention in Finland in 1918.<sup>12</sup>

Falkenhorst was told to plan the operation with two objectives in mind: (1) forestall the British by occupying the most important ports and localities, in particular the ore port of Narvik; and (2) to take such firm control of the country that

Norwegian resistance or collaboration with Britain would be impossible.<sup>13</sup>

Falkenhorst's staff began tailoring the Krancke plan on 26 February. The first major question that arose concerned Denmark. The Krancke plan had called for Denmark to be politically pressured into allowing Germany use of key ports and airfields. Falkenhorst wanted to leave nothing to chance and on 28 February proposed adding the military occupation of Denmark to the plan.

At about this same time an even more important change occurred. Hitler approved a proposal by Generalmajor Jodl to make WESERUEBUNG executable completely independent of Operation GELB. Prior to this point all planning had assumed that WESERUEBUNG would be conducted either before or after GELB. Since several of the units, in particular the 7th Air Division, were committed to both operations, some force changes had to be made quickly.

The JKW proposed to reduce the WESERUEBUNG commitment of parachute troops to four companies and to hold back one airborne regiment of infantry troops. These changes and that concerning Denmark were approved by Hitler on 29 February.

On 1 March 1940, Hitler issued the "Directive for Case WESERUEBUNG" which established general requirements for the operation and authorized the beginning of operational planning. The directive set forth three strategic objectives:

- (1) Forestall British intervention in Scandinavia and the Baltic,
- (2) provide security for the sources of Swedish iron-



ore, and (3) give the German Navy and Air Force advanced bases for attacks on the British Isles.<sup>14</sup>

Falkenhorst as Commanding General Group XXI, was to be in charge of the operation and directly subordinate to Hitler. The occupation of Denmark and Norway was to be simultaneous. The occupation of Denmark would be called WESERUEBUNG SÜD (south) and WESERUEBUNG NORD (north) would refer to the occupation of Norway.

The Fuhrer's directive brought immediate objections and protests from the service chiefs. The primary objections appear to have been parochial. The service's staffs, particularly the Army and Air Force, had not been very involved in the planning efforts and now their forces were going to be under a joint commander's control, who was subordinate only to Hitler. There was no precedence for this. Service protests threatened to slow down the planning progress.

Despite Hitler's status as Supreme Commander and the benefits a truly unified command would provide, Hitler compromised with his service chiefs on the issue of command and control. WESERUEBUNG would remain under Hitler's personal command (exercised through the OKW staff) but each service would maintain control of their own forces. Falkenhorst was designated as senior commander but would exercise no direct control over Air Force or Naval forces.<sup>15</sup>

Hitler finalized disposition of forces for WESERUEBUNG on 7 March and declared the matter was no longer subject to change.

With this matter solved Falkenhorst's staff continued finalizing their planning efforts. The final plan called for the 3rd Mountain Division and five infantry divisions to take Norway under command of the XXI Group. Two infantry divisions supported by the 11th Motorized Brigade, under the XXXI Corps, would conduct the assault on Denmark.

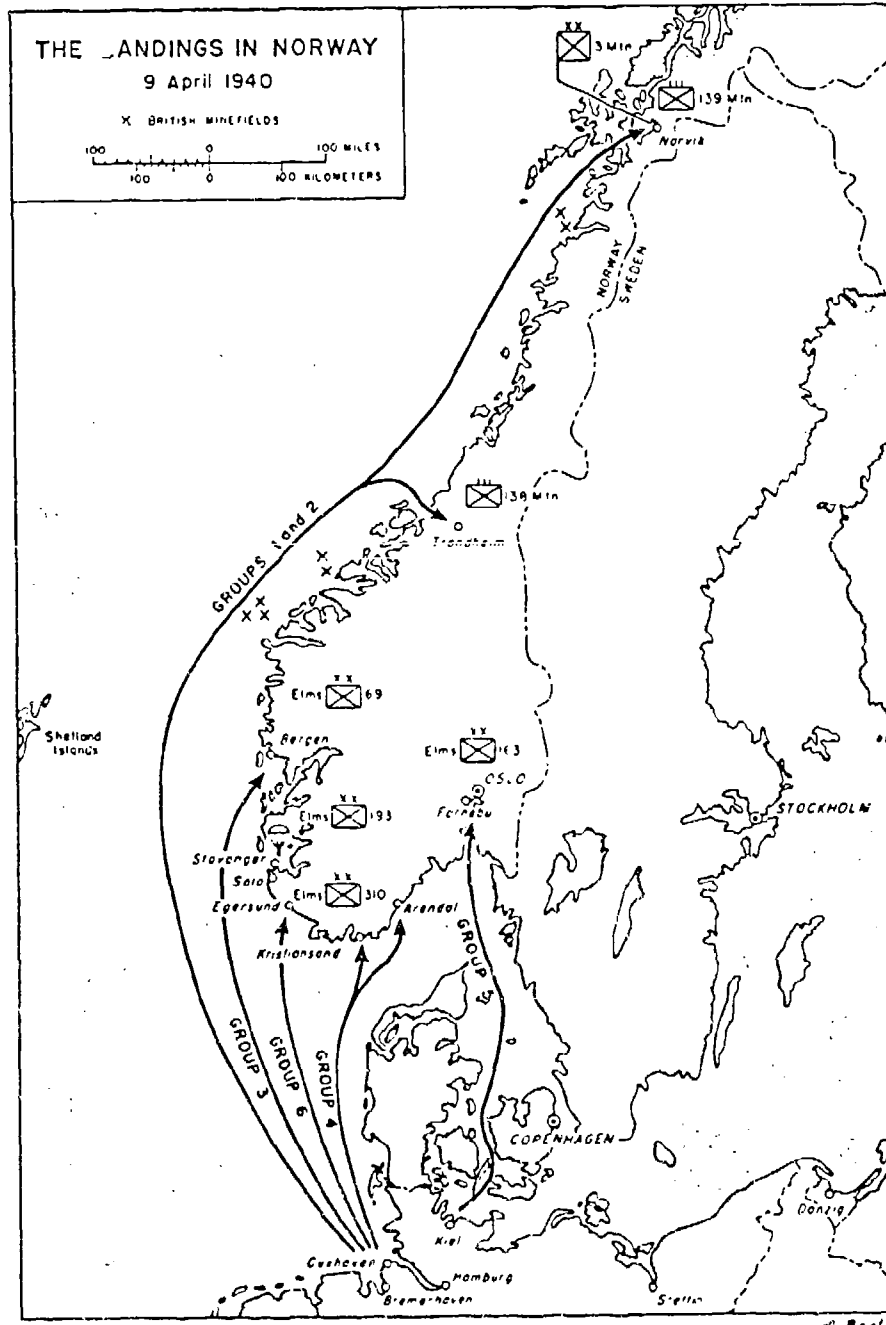
On 1 April Hitler approved the plans for WESERUEBUNG and the following day he designated 9 April as Weser Day and 0515 as Weser time.<sup>16</sup> The plan was now in place and the campaign was soon to start.

#### **EXECUTION**

Although it was not totally flawless, the execution of WESERUEBUNG was an outstanding success. The Germans were able to rapidly move massive amounts of troops and equipment over a vast distance and still achieve strategic surprise. This action paralyzed the military and political leadership in both Norway and Denmark and stunned the Allies as well.

The execution phase of WESERUEBUNG actually began on 2 April, with the dispatch of German supply ships disguised as merchant vessels. These ships sailed to designated Norwegian harbors and waited for the war ships to arrive. This form of prepositioning of supplies was required due to the speed with which the operation was to be conducted. This action presented some risks to the security of the operation but it was a risk the Germans were willing to take.

The main forces for the operation departed German harbors on the evening of 6 April. These forces were organized into eleven groups, five of which played decisive roles in the operation.<sup>17</sup>



MAP 1

The primary thrust of the operation was to begin on the morning of 9 April, with landings in Denmark and at strategic locations along the Norwegian coast. The Norwegian locations included: Oslo, Bergen, Kristian and Arenal, Trondheim and Narvik.

The occupation of Denmark was quick and went entirely as planned. The weak Danish forces were not capable of staging any serious resistance. The Danish railways, air fields and port facilities required to support the operations in Norway were under German control within hours of the invasion. The Danish Government capitulated at 0720 on 9 April and at 1000, negotiations regarding demobilization of the Danish armed forces began.<sup>18</sup>

The occupation of Norway was not as easy as Denmark but outside of the battle at Narvik, the Germans were never seriously threatened with defeat. The Norwegian coastal forces put up a good fight in Oslo Fjord and were able to sink the German's newest heavy cruiser, the Blucher. This delayed occupation of the city by half a day and provided time for the royal family, the cabinet and most members of parliament to leave the capital. This was, however, the only set back of the day for the Germans.

The weaknesses of the Norwegian military were numerous. Some of the major problems involved poor leadership, ineffective mobilization plans and a lack of training and equipment. The Germans had prior knowledge of many of these deficiencies and had factored them into their planning. Thus, they were able to pit

their strengths against the known weaknesses of the Norwegians. This made an already inferior opponent even less capable. All the Norwegian's could do was to withdraw to the interior of the country and hope the Allies would come to their aid.

The Allies did come to the aid of Norway. By 13 April the Allies had committed substantial forces in the north at Narvik and in central Norway at Namous and Andalsnes. The superiority of German air power and the Germans occupation of Norwegian coastal defenses prohibited any allied reprisals in the south.

The Allied efforts in central Norway seemed promising early on. By 23 April, a combined British, French and Norwegian force had positioned forces both north and south of Trondhiem. The German commander in Trondhiem was out numbered by more than six to one. Nevertheless, he responded aggressively and positioned his troops in critical areas to the north and south, to deny the Allies access to key roadways. Next, he called for reinforcements and coordinated air support. The German's aggressive counterattacks and air superiority, combined with the Allies slow and weak hearted assaults, soon turned the tide. The Allies withdrew on 3 May leaving central Norway to the Germans.

The key to much of Germany's success during WESERUEBUNG was its unprecedented use of air power. It had kept the allies from counter attacking in the south and helped drive them out of central Norway. However, in northern Norway the situation was somewhat different.

At Narvik weather and range limitations severely restricted the German Air Force's ability to support ground and naval forces. This allowed the Allies to move in quickly and take a costly toll. Of the ten German destroyers which had carried the landing force to Narvik, none managed to escape. These ten destroyers comprised half the total destroyer strength of the German Navy, however, most of the crews were saved and formed a valuable reinforcement for the small German force in Narvik.<sup>19</sup>

By mid-April the Allied troops had begun landing at Narvik and by 24 April, they had built up a strength of 24,500 troops. General Eduard Dietl, commander of the German 3rd Mountain Division, had a total of only 4,600 troops of which more than half were disembarked sailors who were untrained in land warfare. In mid-May Dietl received a small number of paratroopers as reinforcements but was still vastly outnumbered.

The loss of sea control had cut off any hopes of sizeable reinforcements from Germany. General Dietl was tasked to make due with what he had. Dietl's skillful use of his resources and the terrain allowed him to hold Narvik until the 27th of May. Dietl's forces then fell back to positions just outside of Narvik and maintained control of the railhead into Sweden. By early June, the German's offensive in the west had pushed deep into France and forced the Allies to consider pulling out of Narvik. On 8 June, the Allied forces evacuated Narvik. The King and Government left Norway at the same time.<sup>20</sup> On 9 June, the Norwegian Army surrendered.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE USE OF OPERATIONAL ART

One of the primary reasons the Germans were able to successfully execute WESERUEBUNG was their brilliant application of operational art. Their planners and their field commanders were well schooled in the principals of war and quickly learned how to adapt service operational concepts and methodologies to a joint warfare environment. This use of operational art to incorporate the capabilities of land, sea, and air forces into an effective warfighting machine was the cornerstone of their success.

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

At both the operational and strategic levels the objectives were clearly defined. Hitler defined the strategic objectives to be: (1) Keep the Allies out of Scandinavia, (2) provide security for the sources of Swedish iron-ore , and (3) give the German Navy and Air Force advanced bases for attacks on Great Britain. The operational objectives for WESERUEBUNG involved occupying Denmark (WESERUEBUNG SUD) and occupying key locations in Norway (WESERUEBUNG NORD). The accomplishment of the operational objectives would lead directly to the accomplishment of the strategic objectives.

Taking the offensive and the use of maneuver warfare were the German's forte. By taking the offensive they were able to seize the initiative from the Allies. The British had indications of the impending invasion on 7 April but failed to take any action.

The Germans daring use of maneuver warfare included lightning strikes that were designed to shock the enemy and knock them out quickly. They had no plans to fight a war of attrition. The German's also emphasized flexibility, speed and mobility. Their use of both aircraft and warships to transport troops for the invasion was both an innovative and effective use of maneuver warfare.

Surprise was regarded as absolutely essential to the success of the operation. The Germans used deception generously and took strenuous security measures to ensure the secrecy of the operation was not compromised. Navy ships were disguised and troop movements were made to look like maneuvers with details left behind in the empty billets to carry on all the standard routines.<sup>21</sup> To preserve secrecy, planning for the operation was restricted to a limited number on the OKW staff. Even the staffs of the services were not involved and participation of civilian offices was strictly prohibited.

Economy of force was most evident at the tactical level, however, some of the consequences also impacted on the operational level of war. Dietl's capability to effectively employ the combat power of his small and diverse group of



soldiers and sailors was very impressive and allowed the Germans to maintain control of the critical railhead at Narvik.

Massing of forces was not part of the German's plan for WESERUEBUNG and the operations execution was far from being simple. It was a bold and daring campaign. It employed a joint force against multiple objectives and involved amphibious and airborne forces in simultaneous assaults, all along the Norwegian coast.

#### **CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGIES**

The planning for WESERUEBUNG was centralized however the execution was decentralized. During the planning efforts of Studie Nord, the Krancke plan and Falkenhorst's staff, only a limited circle participated and Hitler the Supreme Commander was the approval authority. During the execution phase decentralization was key. It allowed the field commanders the freedom of action they needed to be successful. The ability of the land force commander at Trondhiem to directly coordinate air support during the allied attack, was critical to holding central Norway.

In planning and executing this campaign the German's took sizable risks and weighed the costs appropriately. In both areas they consistently proved capable of distinguishing between risk and foolhardiness. Additionally, the identification of objectives was thought out well and did a good job of exploiting the enemy's centers of gravity.

## CHAPTER V

### INFLUENCE ON MODERN JOINT WARFARE

The true value of any historical case study is measured by its influence on current or future events. To help in assessing this influence, the commonalities between the past and the present should be explored and the benefits or lessons learned should be addressed.

Operation WESERUEBUNG was conducted over fifty years ago. Since then technological advances in weapon systems, command and control systems and logistics support has vastly changed the way we fight. We are developing joint doctrine and are emphasizing joint training in all our services. We have even created unified commands and joint task forces to conduct theater level campaigns and major operations. So, what do we have in common with the German military of 1940 and what benefit can their experiences provide for us today? In what way can WESERUEBUNG influence modern joint warfare?

#### COMMONALITIES

This study shows that the U.S. military of today has a lot in common with the German military of 1940. True, there are many differences and it would be foolish to suggest comparisons of technologies, but there are many other areas that are comparable.

First and foremost, Germany's land, sea, and air forces fought together as a joint team. They were able to successfully integrate the strengths of each of their services. There were disputes now and then, but they cooperated when it counted and were able to get the job done. Fighting as a joint team, utilizing individual service's strengths and getting the job done are just as important today as they were fifty-four years ago.

Secondly, during WESERUEBUNG, the German military was geared to avoid a long, protracted and costly campaign of attrition. They did this by successfully pitting their strengths against their enemy's weaknesses. The U.S. military employs the same philosophy today.

Third, correctly determining the ends, ways, and means for conducting a campaign and evaluating the risks/costs to the forces involved, was critical to joint warfare in 1940 and is just as critical today. Fourth, the knowledgeable application of operational art was key to the Germans success in WESERUEBUNG and is key to ours today. Finally, the Germans were able to use joint forces to achieve an outstanding victory, a goal I think is common to us both.

#### **BENEFITS**

The German's experiences in planning and executing Operation WESERUEBUNG provides us with some valuable lessons. This is especially true in the areas of joint doctrine, training, and the application of operational art.

First, their experiences during WESERUEBUNG highlight the need to develop a comprehensive joint doctrine. The Germans had no joint doctrine in 1940 and were at a serious disadvantage in planning and executing a joint operation like WESERUEBUNG. This deficiency caused serious problems for both the operational planners and the field commanders. For example, command and control arrangements were grossly inadequate and often resulted in confusion and operational delays. The Germans were fortunate in being able to overcome these obstacles during WESERUEBUNG. Later in the war Germany would pay dearly for lacking organizational and doctrinal frameworks for the conduct of joint warfare.<sup>22</sup> Though we have made progress in this area we must continue to evolve and develop joint doctrine as our force structure, weapons systems and commitments change.

The second lesson is one of concern. Today the U.S. military is stressing jointness. Joint training requirements and joint assignments have become mandatory for most of the U.S. military. While this emphasis is mostly well deserved, the importance of the individual service's training efforts must not be forgotten. The need to maintain a proper balance between joint and service training is critical. We must be careful not to sacrifice our service expertise in order to create a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none.

The German military commanders were not joint qualified, but were masters of their respective fields. This tactical and operational expertise proved to be an essential element to their

success. It has been said that sea power alone cannot win a war, but it can lose it. The same statement holds true for service expertise. It may not guarantee victory, but a lack of it can guarantee defeat.

The final lesson deals with the importance of operational art. It is essential that we continue to stress the significance of operational art and train our military leaders in its use. With the advent of high technology force multipliers, we could be lured into a false sense of security that labels the concepts and methodologies of war as old fashion and less important in modern joint warfare than they were in the past. We cannot afford to let this happen.

Application of the operational art may change with the introduction of new technologies but its importance will not. The German's application of operational art proved to be the critical factor in the success of WESERUEBUNG and it could be the critical factor for our military in future campaigns.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

As an isolated campaign Weseruebung was an outstanding success. Germany was able to retain its access to Swedish iron-ore and establish military bases in Norway. Carried out in the teeth of a vastly superior British Navy, it was, as Hitler said, "not only bold but one of the sauciest undertakings in the history of modern warfare."<sup>23</sup>

The study of WESERUEBUNG brings out many commonalities between the German military that had to plan and execute WESERUEBUNG and the U.S. military of today. More importantly, it provides us with some valuable lessons.

Some of the commonalities we share include: distant deployment requirements, use of centralized planning and decentralized execution, pitting strengths against weaknesses to minimize casualties and shorten conflicts and, of course, the necessity of employing joint warfare.

As mentioned, WESERUEBUNG also provides us with some valuable lessons. First, to conduct joint operations you need to develop a comprehensive joint doctrine. The Germans were able to conduct WESERUEBUNG without having a joint doctrine but it made the feat much more difficult. This lack of a joint doctrine led to dissention between the services and the Armed Forces High

Command. Issues such as command and control threatened to delay planning efforts on several occasions.

Secondly, we must be able to properly balance our joint and service related training efforts. We must be careful not to sacrifice one for the other. They are both important. The need for joint training is obvious. You must train the way you plan to fight but without first having the service expertise, joint training would be ineffective. Indeed, the Germans were able to be successful, although only in the short term, without joint training. The service expertise of their leaders was the key to that success.

Finally, the importance of ably applying the operational art, particularly in the joint environment, cannot be underestimated. This capability played a major role in the German's success in Norway. In fact, it helped compensate for their deficiencies in other areas, such as joint doctrine and organization.

Some of the lessons from WESERUEBUNG serve to confirm or revalidate actions we have already undertaken, others address areas of concern where new actions may be required. All of them are significant and can contribute to our effective use of modern joint warfare.

## NOTES

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2. B.H. Liddell Hart, History of the Second World War (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), p. 54.
3. Ibid., p. 55
4. Earl F. Ziemke, The German Theater of Northern Operations (Washington: Department of the Army, 1959), p. 10
5. Ibid., p. 12.
6. Matthew Cooper, The German Army 1933-1945 (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1978), p. 191.
7. Ibid., p. 12
8. Richard D. Hooker Jr. and Christopher Colianese, "Operation WESERUEBUNG and the Origins of Joint Warfare," The Joint Force Quarterly, Summer 1993, p. 102.
9. Ziemke, Command Decisions, p. 59.
10. Ziemke, The German Theater of Northern Operations, p. 15
11. Francois Kersaudy, Norway 1940 (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1991), p. 49.
12. Ziemke, Command Decisions, p. 61
13. Ziemke, The German Theater of Northern Operations, p. 17.
14. Ibid., p. 17
15. Albert Seaton, The German Army 1933-1945 ( New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982) p. 132.
16. Ziemke, Command Decisions, p. 69.



17. T.K. Derry, The Campaign in Norway, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1951), p. 27.
18. Ziemke, The German Northern Theater of Operations, p. 62.
19. Ibid., p. 54
20. Hart, History of The Second World War, p. 63.
21. Ziemke, The German Theater of Northern Operations, p. 40.
22. Hooker and Colianese, The Joint Force Quarterly, p. 111.
23. Ziemke, The German Theater of Northern Operations, p. 109.

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