TASK FORCE BUTLER: A CASE STUDY IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF AN AD HOC UNIT IN COMBAT OPERATIONS, DURING OPERATION DRAGOON, 1-30 AUGUST 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
General Studies

by

MICHAEL J. VOLPE, MAJOR, USA
B.A., San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California, 1996

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2007

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	**2. REPORT TYPE**	**3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)*
14-12-2007	Master's Thesis	Feb 2007 - Dec 2007

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

Task Force Butler: A Case Study in the Employment of an Ad Hoc Unit in Combat Operations, During Operation Dragoon, 1-30 August 1944

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)

Volpe, Michael J., Major

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD
1 Reynolds Ave.
Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027-1352

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

On 15 August 1944, an Allied army launched a second amphibious landing against the coast of southern France. The Allies, having shattered German defenses around the beachhead, decided to exploit the chaos in the enemy camp. On 17 August 1944, Major General Lucian K. Truscott Jr., with no mobile organic strike force assigned to his VI Corps, ordered the assembly of and attack by an ad hoc collection of units roughly equivalent to an armored brigade. This provisional armored group (Task Force (TF) Butler) experienced remarkable success despite a dearth of planning, no rehearsals, and no history of working together in either training or combat. This case study examines the success of TF Butler from the perspectives of doctrinal development in the United States (US) Army, the unit's unique task organization, and the leadership's employment of the unit in combat. The use of ad hoc formations to meet unforeseen situations was not unique to World War II; American units currently serving in the Middle East are regularly assigned units they have no habitual relations with to conduct combat operations. This case study may prove useful in preparing contemporary military leaders for the types of challenges they will face conducting operations in the contemporary operational environment.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

Task Force Butler, BG Butler, MG Truscott, World War II, Southern France, Operation ANVIL, DRAGOON, Montelimar, Sisterone, Digne, Reiz, U.S. VI Corps, U.S. Seventh Army, Ad Hoc, German Nineteenth Army, Doctrine, Task Organization

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**	**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**	**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
a. REPORT	**b. ABSTRACT**	**c. THIS PAGE**			**19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(include area code)*
UU	UU	UU	UU	119	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: MAJ Michael J. Volpe

Thesis Title: Task Force Butler: A Case Study in the Employment of an Ad Hoc Unit in Combat Operations, During Operation Dragoon, 1-30 August 1944

Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Christopher R. Gabel, Ph.D.

_____, Member
Louis A. DiMarco, M.A.

_____, Member
Frederick A. Baillergeon, M.A.

Accepted this14th day of December 2007 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

CERTIFICATION FOR MMAS DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT

1. Certification Date: 14 December 2007

2. Thesis Author: MAJ Michael J. Volpe

3. Thesis Title: Task Force Butler: A Case Study in the Employment of an Ad Hoc Unit in Combat Operations, During Operation Dragoon, 1-30 August 1944

4. Thesis Committee Members: _____

Signatures: _____

_____

5. Distribution Statement: See distribution statements A-X in ST 20-10 2007, p. B-8, then circle appropriate distribution statement letter code below:

(A) B C D E F X

If your thesis does not fit into any of the above categories or is classified, you must coordinate with the classified section at CARL.

6. Justification: Justification is required for any distribution other than described in Distribution Statement A. All or part of a thesis may justify distribution limitation. See limitation justification statements 1-10 on reverse, then list, below, the statement(s) that applies (apply) to your thesis and corresponding chapters/sections and pages. Follow sample format shown below:

EXAMPLE

Limitation Justification Statement	/	Chapter/Section	/	Page(s)
Direct Military Support (10)	/	Chapter 3	/	12
Critical Technology (3)	/	Section 4	/	31
Administrative Operational Use (7)	/	Chapter 2	/	13-32

Fill in limitation justification for your thesis below:

Limitation Justification Statement	/	Chapter/Section	/	Page(s)
	/		/	
	/		/	
	/		/	
	/		/	
	/		/	

7. MMAS Thesis Author's Signature: _____

STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. (Documents with this statement may be made available or sold to the general public and foreign nationals).

STATEMENT B: Distribution authorized to US Government agencies only (insert reason and date ON REVERSE OF THIS FORM). Currently used reasons for imposing this statement include the following:

1. Foreign Government Information. Protection of foreign information.

2. Proprietary Information. Protection of proprietary information not owned by the US Government.

3. Critical Technology. Protection and control of critical technology including technical data with potential military application.

4. Test and Evaluation. Protection of test and evaluation of commercial production or military hardware.

5. Contractor Performance Evaluation. Protection of information involving contractor performance evaluation.

6. Premature Dissemination. Protection of information involving systems or hardware from premature dissemination.

7. Administrative/Operational Use. Protection of information restricted to official use or for administrative or operational purposes.

8. Software Documentation. Protection of software documentation - release only in accordance with the provisions of DoD Instruction 7930.2.

9. Specific Authority. Protection of information required by a specific authority.

10. Direct Military Support. To protect export-controlled technical data of such military significance that release for purposes other than direct support of DoD-approved activities may jeopardize a US military advantage.

STATEMENT C: Distribution authorized to US Government agencies and their contractors: (REASON AND DATE). Currently most used reasons are 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9 above.

STATEMENT D: Distribution authorized to DoD and US DoD contractors only; (REASON AND DATE). Currently most reasons are 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9 above.

STATEMENT E: Distribution authorized to DoD only; (REASON AND DATE). Currently most used reasons are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

STATEMENT F: Further dissemination only as directed by (controlling DoD office and date), or higher DoD authority. Used when the DoD originator determines that information is subject to special dissemination limitation specified by paragraph 4-505, DoD 5200.1-R.

STATEMENT X: Distribution authorized to US Government agencies and private individuals of enterprises eligible to obtain export-controlled technical data in accordance with DoD Directive 5230.25; (date). Controlling DoD office is (insert).

ABSTRACT

TASK FORCE BUTLER: A CASE STUDY IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF AN AD HOC UNIT IN COMBAT OPERATIONS, DURING OPERATION DRAGOON, 1-30 AUGUST 1944, by MAJ Michael J. Volpe, 119 pages.

On 15 August 1944, an Allied army launched a second amphibious landing against the coast of southern France. The Allies, having shattered German defenses around the beachhead, decided to exploit the chaos in the enemy camp. On 17 August 1944, Major General (MG) Lucian K. Truscott Jr., with no mobile organic strike force assigned to his VI Corps, ordered the assembly of and attack by an ad hoc collection of units roughly equivalent to an armored brigade. This provisional armored group (Task Force (TF) Butler) experienced remarkable success despite a dearth of planning, no rehearsals, and no history of working together in either training or combat. This case study examines the success of TF Butler from the perspectives of doctrinal development in the United States (US) Army, the unit's unique task organization, and the leadership's employment of the unit in combat. The use of ad hoc formations to meet unforeseen situations was not unique to World War II; American units currently serving in the Middle East are regularly assigned units they have no habitual relations with to conduct combat operations. This case study may prove useful in preparing contemporary military leaders for the types of challenges they will face conducting operations in the contemporary operational environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank my parents, without whom I would never have progressed as far as I have in life. Next, I wish to thank the members of my Committee without whose patience and assistance the project would not have been possible. Your ability to keep me on track and on focus was at times the only thing that kept me pressing forward.

I would like to thank the staff of the Texas Military Forces Museum, at Camp Mabry, in Austin, Texas. Special thanks go to Sergeant First Class (SFC) Diane Tominaga. The time and effort spent finding, photocopying, and sending both primary and secondary source material to me will not be forgotten.

Finally, I would like to extend one last note of thanks to staff of the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) for their assistance in locating primary sources and doctrinal publications. Without your assistance this thesis may not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

BCS	British Chiefs of Staff
BG	Brigadier General
CC	Combat Command
FM	Field Manuel
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LTG	Lieutenant General
MG	Major General
MTO	Mediterranean Theater of Operations
TF	Task Force
US	United States

ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

TABLES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Few persons will understand me, but I write for the connoisseurs, trusting that they will not be offended by the confidence of my opinions. They should correct them; that is the fruit I expect from my work.[1]
>
> Field Marshal Maurice Comte de Saxe, *My Reveries*, 1732, translated by Phillips, 1940

Prelude to the "Second D-Day"

In the early morning hours of 6 June 1944, Anglo-American Forces assaulted the beaches at Normandy. The attack, code-named Operation OVERLORD, created the long awaited third front against Nazi Germany. Despite initial success in establishing a shallow beachhead, Allied forces made little headway in the coming weeks. Almost every subsequent operation failed to achieve its initial mission objectives. During the seven weeks following the landings, offensive progress was more often measured in yards than in miles gained. Allied failures were brought upon by a combination of factors including the skill of the defenders, the inexperience of most Allied divisions, the difficulty of the terrain, and logistical limitations imposed by the existing port infrastructure. The rapid landing followed by swift exploitation inland that had characterized most Allied amphibious landings (Operations TORCH, HUSKY, and AVALANCHE) had eluded the Allies at Normandy.

A second assault had also been planned for southern France. Operation ANVIL (later renamed DRAGOON) was planned as a supporting operation to the Allied's main effort in Normandy.[2] Its purpose was twofold: (1) to force the German forces in France to fight in two directions, and (2) to give Allied forces access to the vital port facilities at Marseilles and Toulon. Allied planners intended this operation to occur subsequent to OVERLORD; but the

timing of the operation in relation to OVERLORD remained undetermined.[3] In late March 1944, Allied leaders selected 10 July 1944, as the date for the assault on southern France; however, a number of external factors conspired to further delay ANVIL.[4] Finally, on 2 July 1944, despite numerous delays and cancellations, 15 August 1944 was pinpointed as date of the amphibious assault.[5]

The situation facing the Allies at this time was still somewhat grim. The Allies had been facing stiff German resistance for almost a month and had yet to achieve some of OVERLORD's initial operational objectives (Caen and St. Lo). The German Army confronted the slowly expanding Allied beachhead by reinforcing its forces in Normandy with units drawn from southern France and Germany.[6] Operation ANVIL was six weeks away, and German resistance in and around Normandy showed no signs of collapse. The Allies could not wait for ANVIL to fulfill its intended purpose to act.

Allied leaders needed to prevent the German Army from massing a large force against the Allied beachhead in Normandy. The Allies believed that it was necessary to keep continuous pressure on the German Army to both maintain the initiative and to prevent the massing of a force capable of driving the Allies back into the sea. Continuous offensive operations were planned to chew-up German units and force them to employ forces as they arrived in Normandy to replace divisions that had been eroded by Allied offensive operations. Allied leaders anticipated that unremitting attacks might eventually produce a weakness that could be exploited and allow a breakout from Normandy.

To achieve the desired breakout and restore mobility to the front the Allied Command planned several major offensives. A series of British attacks were conducted along the Allied eastern flank to draw German panzer divisions away from a selected breakout site in the west.

Second, a planned breakout would strike the weakened Germany western flank, penetrate their defenses, and launch an exploitation force to strike deep into German held territory. It was hoped that these operations would restore mobility to combat operations in northern France. The first of these offensives commenced in mid-June 1944.

Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery mounted several armor heavy offensives in the British and Canadian sectors designed to draw German Panzer Divisions east. The two most important offensives, Operation EPSOM (25 June to 1 July 1944) and Operation GOODWOOD (18 to 21 July 1944), were intended to be rapid eastern thrusts aimed at threatening the vital crossroads at Caen and Falaise respectively.[7] Though the British never achieved their tactical goals, their repeated armored thrusts did cause the German Army to shift enough combat power (namely tanks) to set the conditions for a successful American breakthrough in the west.

On 25 July 1944, the 1st American Army launched Operation COBRA.[8] Lieutenant General (LTG) Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group (which included LTG George Patton's 3rd Army) achieved such stunning success that it completely unhinged the German defenses, and forced the Germany army to begin retreating. Operation COBRA penetrated German defenses and restored mobility to Allied operations in northern France. More significantly, the offensive resulted in the transfer of several experienced German divisions (including one panzer division) from the south of France.[9] It was against this reduced defensive line that the invasion of southern France was launched twenty days later.

Operation ANVIL: Biography of an Operation that Almost Wasn't

Operation ANVIL, the invasion of southern France, was one of the most controversial and most successful operations of the war. It is also one of the least studied. This operation was initially proposed during the Trident Conference, in Washington, DC, May 1943.[10] This meeting

between the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the British Chiefs of Staff (BCS) tabled discussions on ANVIL in favor of the British proposed invasion of Italy. The British strategy, championed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was designed to knock the Italians out of the war and fix German forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO). The JCS yielded to the British strategy when it was determined that landing craft were not available in sufficient numbers to build and sustain the force level needed to guarantee a successful cross-channel invasion of western Europe. The Allies, rather than wait the year projected to amass the required landing craft, agreed to use available military forces to keep pressure on Axis forces.

The Trident conference had been extremely successful from the British point-of-view. Not only had the BCS secured American agreement on their Italian strategy, but also they believed that they had successfully set aside the invasion of southern France. Operation ANVIL, however, proved far more resilient than Churchill and the BCS had hoped.

Prior to the August 1943 Quadrant Conference, the JCS decided once again to formally support the invasion of southern France.[11] It was proposed as a smaller supporting effort to Operation OVERLORD. At the conference, the JCS was able to attain BCS agreement in theory to the American invasion of southern France.[12] The JCS wanted a firm agreement to their proposal and despite resistance the Americans succeeded in obtaining British agreement to the operation.

Operation ANVIL was frequently revisited over the next twelve months. Since its inception, Operation ANVIL proved a divisive issue between the Americans and their British allies. The Americans supported it. The British did not. Their divergent strategic goals and the limitation of resources available to meet these goals resulted in frequent changes of course for ANVIL. It was both ordered and cancelled on several occasions. It was planned as a three-

division assault, a two-division assault, a division sized demonstration, and a threat.[13] It was not until 2 July 1944, that General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater, was ordered to launch ANVIL as a three-division assault on 15 August.[14]

An Armor Task Force for Major General Truscott

On 15 August 1944, US and French Soldiers conducted an amphibious assault on the southern coast of France, now called Operation DRAGOON.[15] The assault force, composed primarily of the US VI Corps, landed with little resistance. All VI Corps units either met or exceeded their initial objectives in the first two days of the operation. German resistance crumbled. On 17 August 1944, ULTRA intercepts passed to Major General (MG) Lucian K. Truscott Jr. (VI Corps Commander) confirmed the German Nineteenth Army had received orders to retreat and establish a defensive line along more favorable terrain in the interior.[16] The situation was rapidly becoming fluid. To Truscott, a career cavalryman, this was an opportunity to exploit success and perhaps prevent withdrawal of an intact enemy Army.

On 17 August, the only force he had available with the mobility and firepower to rapidly exploit success was a provisional (ad hoc) task force under the command of Brigadier General (BG) Fred W. Butler, the Assistant VI Corps Commander. The provisional unit, called Task Force (TF) Butler, was not one of the modular units designed by MG Lesley J. McNair, head of Army Ground Forces and responsible for organization and doctrine of ground combat troops. It was the ad hoc organization cobbled together to meet a Corps commander's professed need for an armor force.

Truscott, the VI Corps Commander, requested the attachment of an armored combat command numerous times during planning. He believed this force would give his Corps the ability to provide responsive support to subordinate units, and if opportunity permitted, to exploit

success. It was quickly ascertained that no US armor units could be spared in the MTO, and that none would arrive in time to participate in the operation. Truscott asked LTC Alexander M. Patch, the Seventh Army Commander, to assign him French MG Aime M. Sudre's combat command (CC Sudre) currently training near Oran, Algeria.[17] Truscott was assured that he could use the French Combat Command during the initial landings; however, Seventh Army could not guarantee the attachment of the CC Sudre beyond D+3. This failure led Truscott to create an ad hoc armored task force from VI Corps units.

On 1 August 1944, Truscott called a staff meeting and instructed the VI Corps staff to form a provisional armored group, to be commanded by BG Butler.[18] This mobile, combined arms strike force was to be built around the corps cavalry squadron, from units within the corps.[19] The units designated to compose the provisional organization needed to be able to mass in vicinity of the town of Le Muy, any time after D-Day. On 16 August, Truscott ordered Butler to establish TF Butler effective 17 August and to commence offensive operations the following morning.

This case study aims to examine what factors were decisive in determining the success of TF Butler in exploiting the initial success of the amphibious landings in the French Riviera. In studying this campaign, three factors stand out: doctrine, task organization, and leadership. First, American doctrine employed at the time of the operation was mature and sufficiently well-developed to allow the task force's disparate elements to effectively integrate into a powerful combined-arms organization. Next, the Task Force's unique task organization effectively replicated an armor combat command--the unit Truscott sought to secure for VI Corps. Finally, despite its unique task organization, TF Butler's leadership employed the subordinate units in a doctrinally appropriate manner. This will provide a more detailed examination of the leadership

provided, and the relative impact on the overall performance of the unit in battle. Command of ad hoc units, especially those not composed of units with habitual working relationships, is extremely challenging. It was its leadership's understanding of the US Army's doctrine, and its ability to employ the assigned combat power in accordance with that doctrine that ensured TF Butler's success.

---

[1]Peter G. Tsouras, ed., *The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004), 234.

[2]Lucian K. Truscott Jr., *Command Missions* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1990), 408; and Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations The Seventh United States Army in France and Germany 1944-1945 Volume I* (Nashville: The Battery Press, Inc., 1988), 56. Operation ANVIL had been renamed Operation DRAGOON on 1 August 1944, due to fears that an intelligence leak had compromised the mission name.

[3]Jeffrey J. Clarke and Robert Ross Smith, *Riviera to the Rhine: The European Theater of Operations* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 14. Originally, the sequencing of Operation ANVIL in support of Operation OVERLORD was in question. A small division landing in southern France would obviously complement OVERLORD, representing a secondary, southern prong of the Allied attack on German-occupied France. OVERLORD plans in July 1943 even called for such a diversionary effort against southern France at the time of the cross-Channel assault. But American planners now began to propose that the southern landing be more than a diversion and be upgraded to a larger effort--one that would provide continued assistance to OVERLORD, would make immediate use of the French Army, and incidentally, would preempt any British proposals to employ excess Allied strength in the Eastern Mediterranean. For these reasons the JCS decided in August 1943 formally to support an invasion of southern France, code-name ANVIL, which would be launched either before, during, or after OVERLORD as the situation permitted; they ultimately concluded that the operation would have to follow OVERLORD. American planners reasoned that a successful ANVIL would probably depend on OVERLORD to deplete German strength in southern FRANCE.

[4]Ibid., 16. The 10 July 1944, date was selected because it was determined that there would be sufficient amphibious lift available to support a two division amphibious landing in the Mediterranean.

[5]Ibid., 16-22. The external influences that caused the delay or cancellation of ANVIL included: political concerns (for example, allied disagreement over strategy), limitations on resources and amphibious lift, and the situation in Italy. The Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff (BCS) disagreed with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) over this point of strategy. The British view was it was more important to resource operations in Italy to continue the drive north to the Italo-French border. This would make the landings in southern France unnecessary,

allowing the Allies to shift divisions and amphibious assets to other projects--such as an attack on Rhodes or an amphibious landing on the shores of the Yugoslavia. The British believed that this strategy would stretch German resources thinner, assist the Soviets in the East, and set-up the western Allies in a stronger bargaining position versus the Soviets in the war's aftermath.

[6]Ibid., 62-63. The operations would later have the intended effect and would draw significant combat power north following Operation OVERLORD. "After the invasion of northern France, the strength of Army Group G [the German Headquarters for all forces in southern France] gradually deteriorated as unit after unit was ordered to the Normandy area. The 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division departed on 7 June, followed rapidly by the LXXXVI Corps Headquarters, an armored division, all four 1944-type infantry divisions, four artillery battalions and an assault gun battalion. The transfers were temporarily halted but resumed in late July. A number of smaller units also went north between June and August, including the antiaircraft units that had protected the bridges over the Rhone and the antitank companies of the four infantry divisions."

[7]Michael Reynolds, *Steel Inferno 1st SS Panzer Corps in Normandy* (New York: Dell Books, 1997), 144-176. It describes the British execution of Operation GOODWOOD; and Reynolds, 207-234 for a description of British execution of Operation EPSOM.

[8]William R. Breuer, *Hoodwinking Hitler: The Normandy Deception* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 230.

[9]Clarke and Smith, 62-63. "The transfers . . . resumed in late July with the departure of the LVIII Panzer Corps Headquarters, another armored division, one of the static infantry divisions, another assault gun battalion, four assault gun training battalions . . . and five infantry training battalions. Transfers from southern to northern France continued during the first half of August. Major losses were the Headquarters of the First Army, the LXVI and the LXXX Corps, a regimental combat team of the 338th Infantry Division, two more artillery battalions, another infantry replacement battalion, and one of the 11th Panzer Division's two tank battalions."

[10]Ibid., 5.

[11]Ibid., 8.

[12]Ibid., 9.

[13]Ibid., 35.

[14]Ibid, 21.

[15]Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations*, 56. Operation ANVIL had been renamed Operation DRAGOON on 1 August 1944, due to fears that an intelligence leak had compromised the mission name.

[16]Arthur Layton Funk, *Hidden Ally, the French Resistance, Special Operations, and the Landing in Southern France, 1944* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 110-114.

[17]Ibid., 71. A Combat Command was an established unit within an Armored Division. It is roughly equivalent to a small combined arms brigade, containing: one armor battalion, one infantry battalion, and one field artillery battalion. See Chapter 3 of this thesis for a more complete description.

[18]Truscott, 71.

[19]Truscott, 407; and Funk, 71.

CHAPTER 2

DOCTRINE

> A Doctrine of war consists first in a common way of objectively approaching the subject; second, in a common way of handling it, by adapting without reserve the means to the goal aimed at, to the object.[1]
>
> Marshal of France Ferdinand Foch,
> Precepts and Judgements, 1919

Introduction

At 0600 on 18 August 1944, BG Frederic B. Butler's Task Force commenced operations on what would become one of the most successful, though least known, operational pursuits in military history. By the time of its dissolution, on 30 August 1944, TF Butler had advanced over 235 miles, cleared thousands of miles of roads, captured large quantities of enemy personnel and equipment, and seized and held key terrain astride the German Nineteenth Army's line of withdrawal. Even more remarkable, this feat of arms was accomplished by an ad hoc formation cobbled together from units with few or no previous working relationships.

TF Butler's organization did not officially exist prior to the 17 August 1944, when its separate elements converged at an assembly area near Le Muy, France. As such, the task force faced numerous disadvantages not faced by an existing formation. Preparations prior to VI Corps' embarkation for the upcoming amphibious landing were limited; the task force planned, distributed combat orders, and issued a short concept briefing to unit commanders. These few measures constituted the entirety of Butler's preparations. Additionally, standing operating procedures did not exist above battalion or company level, nor were attempts made to build or train standing operating procedures for use during the upcoming mission. No time had been allotted to rehearse the mission as a unit.[2] No training was conducted to prepare soldiers

accustomed to the walking pace of combat for highly mobile combat operations. In short, they had nothing a good, efficiently run unit was expected to have in place. So how did it perform so well when it conducting a complex mobile attack, along extended supply lines, often against unfavorable odds? How did it perform at all?

TF Butler's accomplishments cannot be explained away as luck or a fluke. Nor can it be completely explained away by noting that the preponderance of units were veteran organizations with combat experience in Italy and Sicily, though this did help. The accomplishments of TF Butler were possible because the US Army had a well-developed combined arms doctrine providing the framework for combat operations conducted by TF Butler. This unified and mature doctrine enabled these dissimilar commands to successfully integrate to pursue common goals.

Combined Arms Warfare 101

Doctrine is defined today as "fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application"[3] During World War II, most major armies had developed doctrines guided by the principles of combined arms warfare. The theory of combined arms warfare asserts that merging the various combat arms mitigates the weaknesses of each branch while multiplying the combat effects and the capabilities of a unit. Combined arms warfare was not new; it had been practiced at the army level for millennia, and had become commonplace at corps and division level since the Napoleonic Wars. However, it was not until World War I that armies started to combine the arms at lower levels. The trench deadlock on the Western Front resulted in increasing political pressure for a decisive breakthrough and served as the impetus for innovation. During the Great War, two successful methods of breaching the western trench networks were developed.

The British sought technological solutions, one of which resulted in the development of the tank. The British cultivated methods integrating the newly developed tank with the more traditional arms. The British (and later their allies) attempted to restore mobility to the battlefield by integrating tanks in with the infantry at the battalion or company level to support the assault across “no man’s land.” Follow-on forces would then exploit the resultant penetration of the enemy’s trenches. One of the most notable successes of this new trench busting technique occurred at the Battle of Cambrai (20 November to 3 December 1917).[4]

The German approach to the problem was significantly different. They pioneered a method integrating newly developed tactical infantry techniques with indirect fire and close air support. It required centralized indirect fire planning and decentralized offensive operations executed at the lowest possible levels. The German soldiers closely followed the artillery barrage; bypassed enemy strong points for follow-on forces to reduce; and infiltrated enemy defenses to attack command posts, artillery batteries, and other key positions forcing the collapse of enemy defenses in sector. This technique demonstrated its effectiveness with the dramatic advances achieved by German arms during the 1918 Spring Offensive.[5]

Both methods showed promise, but neither proved to be a war winner. The war ended due more to exhaustion than to a decisive military breakthrough on the western front. Though neither method proved decisive both encouraged military thought and experimentation.

In the war’s aftermath, European and American military leaders examined the war to pinpoint the causes behind their battlefield failures and to recommend improvements to the organizational structure and training of their respective armies. The two combined-arms techniques produced by the British and the Germans were examined to provide potential solutions to perceived shortcomings in contemporary offensive doctrine. Both techniques

influenced the development of doctrine in European and North American armies. It was during the twenty-year period between the two world wars that modern theories of combined arms warfare were developed and tested.[6]

In the US, the theory that emerged incorporated both battlefield experience and the technological innovations from World War I. These influences coupled with the prewar military maneuvers and field exercises fashioned the American prewar combined arms doctrine, forever changing the way America's army would fight. This well-developed doctrine provided TF Butler with the common language it needed to plan and coordinate offensive operations, and later to integrate the various arms into effective combat formations.

The Doctrinal Pyramid

At the beginning of World War II, combined arms warfare had permeated US Army doctrinal manuals. It had filtered down from the army's premier doctrinal manual, Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Field Service Regulations, Operations*, to platoon-level manuals in each of the arms. Its structure was almost pyramidal. When Butler's task force commenced offensive operations, the June 1944 edition of FM 100-5 was at its apex.[7]

FM 100-5 was developed around a clearly articulated purpose "the destruction of the enemy's armed forces in battle."[8] Though offensive in nature, it acknowledged that a combat unit could not remain in an offensive posture forever. It classified different combat operations that might also be conducted by units. It included chapters on the conduct of reconnaissance, security, movement, offensive operations, and defensive operations. In each of these chapters, it methodically broke down each major combat operation into the various types of subordinate missions that could be conducted within the framework of the higher operation. FM 100-5 provided the basic framework for all other American doctrinal texts.

The linkages between subordinate doctrinal texts and FM 100-5 are clear. Figure 1 lists the primary or top doctrinal text of each of the major arms represented in TF Butler. A simple comparison between these texts yields distinct linkage between the missions outline in FM 100-5 and the doctrinal texts of each of the arms. All subordinate texts have chapters or sections within chapters devoted to the primary combat operations defined by FM 100-5. A more detailed comparison produces even greater linkage when comparing the subordinate missions defined in FM 100-5 and those missions the various arms required their subordinate units to conduct. This will be examined briefly later in this section. The nesting of each arm's chief doctrinal manual with FM 100-5 was only the beginning. Vertical nesting influenced doctrine down to the lowest levels.

The doctrinal pyramid is a construct that demonstrates how FM 100-5 was able to influence the doctrine at lower levels. As demonstrated in figure 1, the higher manual provides a framework for the doctrinal manuals written the next level below it. The importance of these vertical linkages cannot be overstated as it insured that doctrine was nested between higher and subordinate units at all levels. In figure 2, one can trace the path of the doctrinal pyramid to its base, the company or troop manual, though some arms had doctrinal manuals at the platoon level. Combined arms warfare was thus introduced to manuals down to company or platoon level, the manuals introducing young American officers and non-commissioned officers to combined arms warfare.

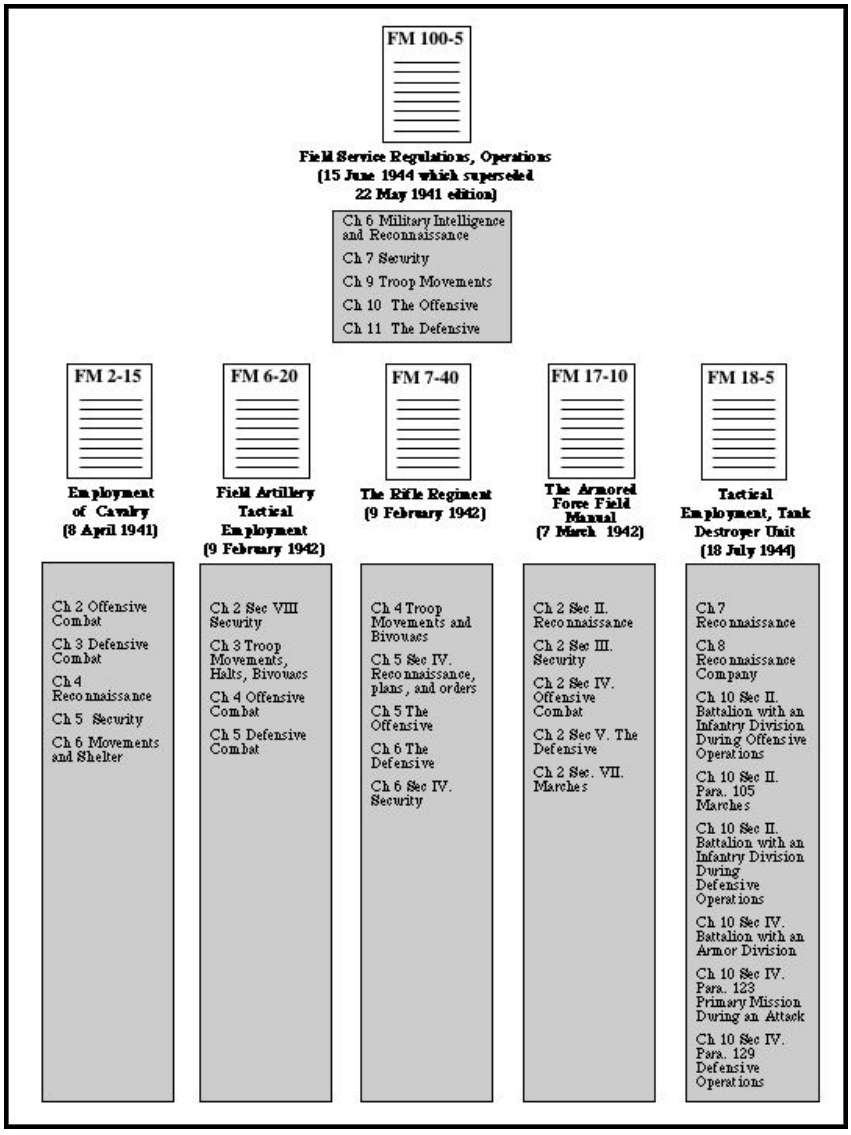

Figure 1. Vertical Linkage Between Field Manual 100-5 and Doctrinal Texts of Various Arms

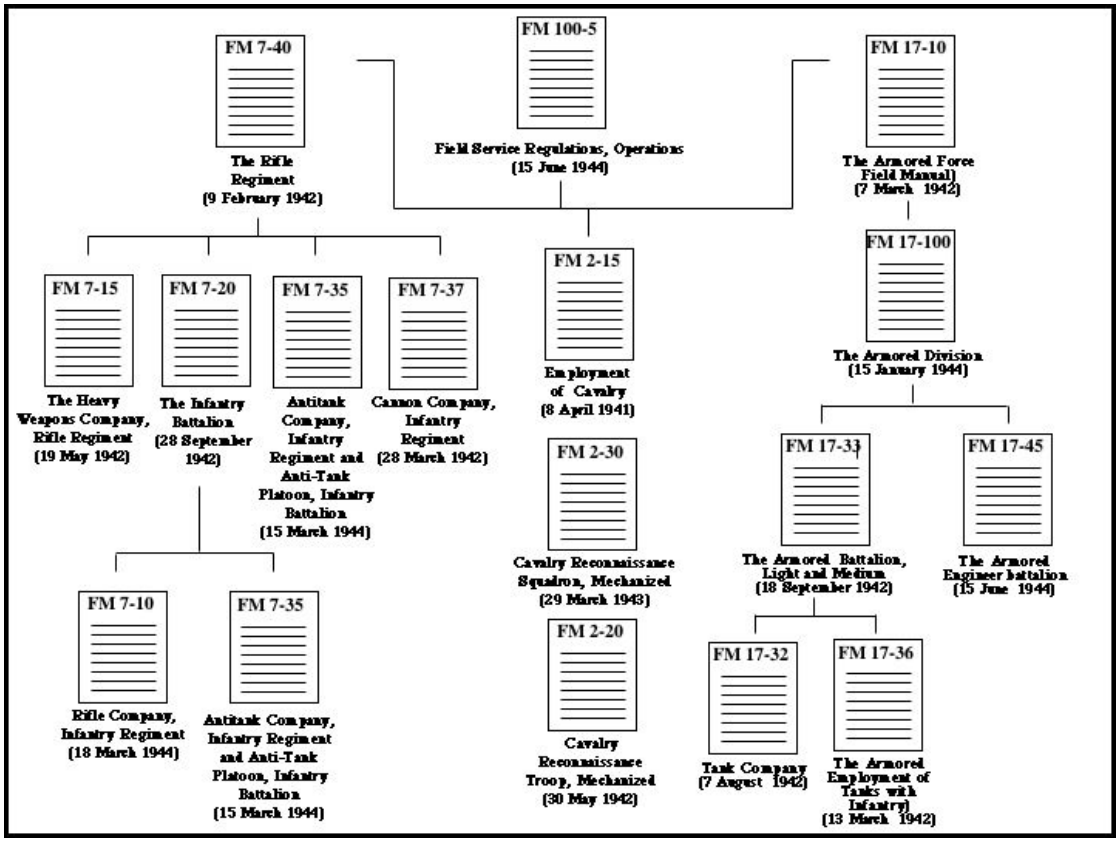

Figure 2. The Doctrinal Pyramid

Examining one mission and breaking it down to potential subordinate mission categories can better demonstrate the nesting of doctrine from the lowest levels to the highest levels. To facilitate this analysis one combat operation will be examined, the offense. The linkage can be demonstrated by reviewing the doctrinal texts, at different levels of command, for three of the arms that provided the majority of combat power for TF Butler: cavalry, armor, and infantry.

The degree to which combined arms doctrine permeated down the levels of command is revealed in figure 3. A cursory examination shows that the offensive missions doctrinally conducted by battalion and squadron-level units corresponded with the missions conducted their higher-level units, which were in turn linked to the offensive missions outlined in FM 100-5. The

mission names may have differed (for example, meeting engagement versus approach march) but the subordinate unit's missions were linked to its immediate higher headquarters.

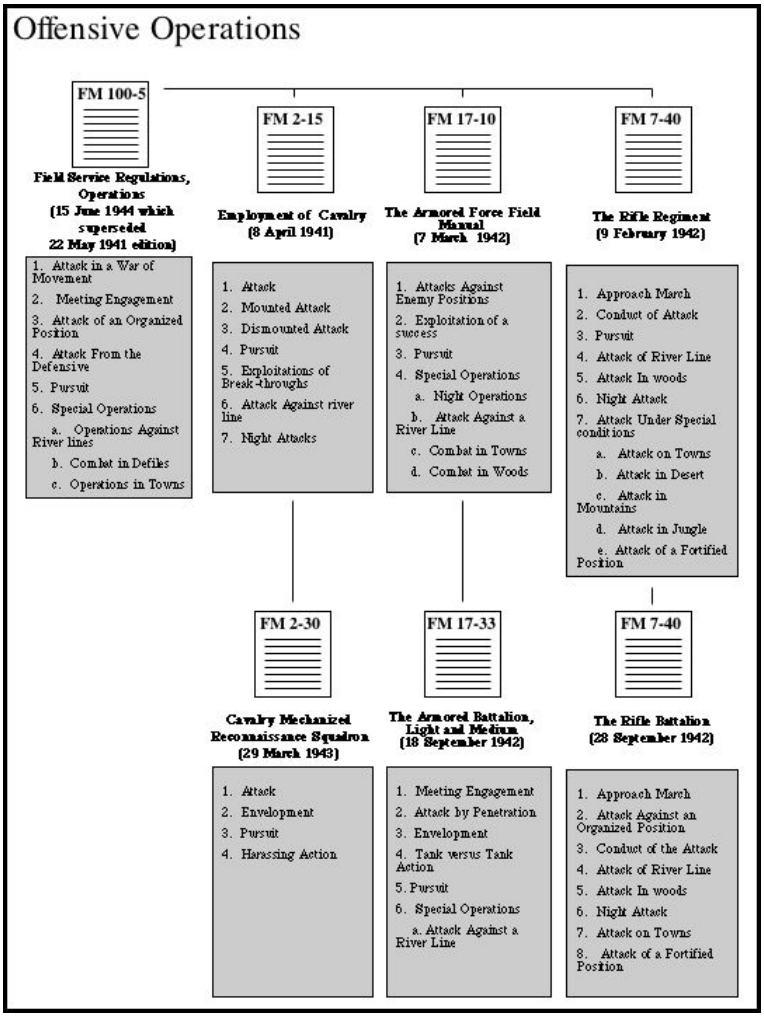

Figure 3. Vertical Nesting of United States Army Doctrinal Publications

According to theory, the same operations conducted by regiment or combat command (for example, attack on a prepared objective) could be tasked to a platoon. The difference was the scale of the objective and the assets the two units had available to them. The fundamentals of

the mission were the same; however, the complexity of the operation increased in direct correlation to the number and size of the subordinate units being controlled by a single headquarters. This nesting of doctrine from platoon level to Army level gave leaders a common language, and a basic understanding of how combat operations were supposed to be conducted.

The Blending of the Arms

The theory of combined arms warfare asserts that merging the various combat arms mitigates the weakness of individual branches while multiplying the combat effects and the capabilities of a unit. The 1944 edition of the US Army Field Service Regulation, the Army's premier doctrinal manual, acknowledged the importance of combined arms operations on the first page of the text, and continued to reinforce this stance throughout the entire document. It plainly states, "no one arm wins battles. The combined action of all arms and services is essential to success."[9]

The US Army divided the units that made up its field forces into either arms or services. Generally, units that participated in ground combat or directly supported combat units were defined as arms.[10] They can be thought of as traditional fighting units. Each arm was unique. Each had its own strengths and weaknesses that either enhanced or limited its effectiveness on certain terrain types. These strengths and weaknesses defined the role that each arm could play during combat operations.

The 1944 edition of FM 100-5 identified the capabilities of each arm in Chapter 2, "Arms and Services." By defining the function of each arm, FM 100-5 entrusts the higher commander to "coordinate and direct the actions of all [arms or services], exploiting their powers to attain the ends sought."[11] As stated earlier, each arm's doctrinal publication addressed the conduct of each type of combat operations. Each manual demonstrated a through understanding of its arm's

strengths and recommended ways that it could maximize its effectiveness. This was the heart of combined arms warfare.

In effect, success was in the grasp of the commander who best understood the principles of combined arms warfare, who comprehended how best to combine the arms and services to maximize his unit's combat power, and who took advantage of his enemy's weaknesses. Two factors contributed to the increased use of combined arms at lower and lower levels. First, the lower level doctrinal manuals, nested to FM 100-5's combined arms doctrine, were horizontally linked to the doctrinal texts of other arms. Second, units were no longer purely composed of one arm; instead battalions and squadrons had units representing several different arms as part of their assigned strength.

American doctrinal texts were fairly uniform in the material they covered; however, doctrinal linkages were not just vertical, they were also horizontal. All texts were linked vertically to the higher unit's doctrinal texts and horizontally to the other arms and services. Each arm's top doctrinal manual and their subordinate unit manuals detailed the conduct of missions that directly corresponded to those conducted by equivalent units of other arms. An example of shared missions, from FM 100-5, is the attack of an organized position (see figure 3). The top doctrinal manuals of cavalry, armor, and infantry refer to this mission in their manuals respectively as "the attack," "attacks against enemy positions," and "conduct of attack." Missions nested horizontally in the doctrinal manuals of several arms encouraged the use of combined arms by commanders.

Each arm was responsible for training its units to conduct the combat operations detailed in their doctrinal manuals. The conduct of combined arms operations figured prominently in these manuals. Each manual provided techniques for incorporating other arms into a unit's

combat operations. In most manuals, the employment of supporting arms was described by the inclusion of a paragraph or sentence about the use of combined arms in sections detailing each of the combat missions. FM 7-20, *Infantry Field Manual, Rifle Battalion*, dated 28 September 1942, was typical in this respect. It included paragraphs on the employment of artillery, anti-tank weapons, tanks, combat aviation, and other arms and services in support of combat operations.[12] This approach was typical of the doctrinal publications produced by all arms.

Armor branch was a unique exception. The armor branch included the uses of supporting arms in its doctrinal texts, but also employed a more unusual approach. The armored branch produced and distributed FM 17-36 Supplement No. 1, *Employment of Tanks with Infantry Illustrated Problems*, dated 7 July 1944. It is unique among doctrinal publications in that it focuses exclusively on how a commander might successfully employ combined arms. This manual provided its readers with a series of tactical problems, including maps, and a recommended solution for each problem. This manual provided a solid foundation for the integration and more focused approach to the instruction of combined arms warfare.

American doctrinal manuals of World War II provided leaders with a well-integrated doctrine. Doctrine had well-established links, horizontal and vertical, to other doctrinal texts that created a doctrinal pyramid in which all doctrinal manuals supported each other. These manuals governed the employment of ground combat forces. This provided a solid foundation for officer and leader education, allowing American officers to more effectively employ combined arms from the assets now available to them at lower level organizations.

Units were no longer purely infantry or armor. The US Army blended the various arms and services into powerful combined arms formations. This mixing of arms was not temporary, but was fixed in tables of organizations and equipment. The concept of combined arms was built

into units and organizations. Infantry Regiments were now assigned a cannon company, mortars, anti-tank guns, and engineers. Infantry battalions also had organic anti-tank capabilities and mortars. Armor divisions were composed of a mix of tank battalions, armored infantry battalions, artillery battalions, plus other supporting arms and services. This combination of arms at lower and lower levels encouraged commanders to implement the Army's combined arms doctrine, if for no other reason than to maximize their units' capabilities with the assets on hand. Combined arms doctrine required that attention was also focused on developing the command structure necessary to integrate the various arms into a combined arms force.

The Doctrine of Command

The exercise of command, though referenced in all arm and service specific doctrinal texts, only found separate space in FM 100-5; specifically in Chapter 4, "Leadership," and Chapter 5, "The Exercise of Command," in the 1944 edition. That manual provided guidance and advice on the responsibilities of the commander, duties of the staff, various methods for analyzing the mission, establishment of command posts, production of combat orders, the establishment of signal communication, and reconnaissance. The manual asserted that these are all the necessary functions of command, the proper exercise of which was the responsibility of the commander.[13]

The commander's role in the exercise of command was well defined. Doctrine stated clearly that "the ability to select objectives whose attainment contributes most decisively and quickly to the defeat of the hostile armed forces is an essential attribute of an able commander."[14] Doctrine continued to define the role the commander played, and what he needed to do to successfully accomplish the mission. The commander had command authority, and was the only one authorized to make decisions. This meant that by necessity he was in charge of the

planning process. He provided guidance and decisions about mission execution and was the overall authority for the issuance of orders. The speed at which modern warfare commenced could easily overwhelm any one man, so a staff was provided to assist the commander in planning and controlling operations.

The staff structure used by the American Army during World War II has changed little in the past seventy years, and would be familiar to soldiers in today's army. It was divided into sections organized by specialized function. The staff included administrative (S-1), intelligence (S-2), operations (S-3), and logistics (S-4) sections. The commander also had specialty staff officers who provided technical or service-related expertise not supplied by his core staff.[15] The staff's role was to provide the commander with "information, data, and advice; and preparing detailed plans and orders in accordance with his directions."[16] The staff established and operated the unit command post, from where it supervised the execution of the commander's directives by subordinate units, and set up the command message center to manage the flow of information both internal and external to the command.

The management of information as it applied to a command included the issuance of orders and directives, requesting guidance and additional information, and reporting. Reporting was crucial to the smooth functioning of command during combat operations. The commander needed to be regularly updated with regards to unit statuses, friendly unit locations, enemy dispositions, and situation reports in order to effectively coordinate the efforts of his subordinate units. He required a steady and reliable means of communication to ensure the rapid flow of information into and out of his headquarters. All levels in the chain of command had responsibilities regarding information management, and the smooth flow of reports.

The higher headquarters was responsible for "the establishment and maintenance of signal communications between superior and subordinate units."[17] The command ran wire, established switchboards, and established wireless (AM and FM radio) networks to facilitate the flow of information. Subordinate units needed to be provided with their purpose (the role they were to play in the battle), updated information on enemy and friendly dispositions, and updated guidance as the situation changed. The command needed situation reports that included a unit status, location, and enemy contact at a minimum. Success in a highly fluid combat environment required that the command had the ability to rapidly coordinate the operations of units operating well out of the line of site. Communications networks allowed American commanders to do just that.

Subordinate units were responsible for setting up and maintaining communications systems within the framework of the higher unit's networks. Subordinate units also were required to establish their own command posts.[18] They filtered reports from their own subordinates and promptly reported updated locations, statuses, and enemy intelligence to higher headquarters. Subordinate units were required to ensure "that their immediate commander is promptly and fully informed of the situation"[19]

Unlike FM 100-5, most manuals did not include a separate chapter on the exercise of command but weaved elements of it into each chapter. The absence of separate chapters emphasizing command is surprising. Command, difficult under ideal combat conditions, grew in complexity with the addition of each new unit or unit type to an organization. Command issues were so important that BG Butler, upon receipt of his 1 August order, rapidly selected his staff, conducted initial mission analysis, called together commanders of selected units, and issued warning orders well in advance of the operation. Combined arms warfare required the

synchronization of the actions of dissimilar arms and services. Doctrine on the proper exercise of command provided commanders with techniques, procedures, and organization necessary to coordinate the actions of the arms and services to attain the objective.

Conclusion

Through TF Butler was created only two days prior to its commencement of offensive operations, it was effective. Prior experience alone does not adequately answer how this unit managed to accomplish so much, with subsequently little time to prepare. Experienced soldiers could never have accomplished an attack of this nature, or would have even attempted it, without a fundamental understanding of the principles of combined arms warfare. If they had, it is likely they would have marched by arm (for example; cavalry, infantry, armor, and others) and fought by arm, and would likely have been slaughtered by arm in the process. Combined arms doctrine prevented this dangerous and challenging situation from turning to disaster.

Doctrine provided TF Butler with a common framework for the command and control of its subordinate units. The doctrinal template was important because it was common and familiar to all units within that task force--it was familiar because they all used it. Regardless of unit type, each unit was guided by the same doctrine of command as outlined in FM 100-5. It enabled the task force to build a provisional headquarters without a SOP and with little equipment of its own to plan, issue orders and guidance, develop a communications network capable of communicating to both subordinate and higher units across great distances, collect and disseminate intelligence, and battle track the location of its subordinate units. These leaders were able to develop estimates that allowed them to tailor forces to meet the immediate mission requirements.

Leaders familiar with combined arms warfare doctrine were able to use it as a framework to effectively blend the separate arms into flexible and lethal combined arms teams. They understood the capabilities of each arm, the role each played on the modern battlefield, and their respective roles in both offensive and defensive operations. It gave leaders a vision of how to organize their forces for offensive and defense operations, and vision unified doctrine across the Army.

Combined arms doctrine was a truly unified doctrine, a vision. It was imbued into every officer and soldier. FM 100-5 was the foundation document to which every doctrinal manual in the army was tied. The linkages between it and the doctrinal manuals of the various arms and services were unmistakable. It was a doctrinal pyramid of sorts, with FM 100-5 at the apex; and each service branch's division, brigade, or group manual next; followed by brigade or regiment manuals, battalion or squadron manuals, company or troop manuals, and platoon manuals. This linkage ensured that the newest infantry, armor, cavalry, and engineer officers all understood fundamentally how to integrate the arms. These officers might differ in their approach to combined arms warfare, because of the special role that their arm played, but they were all armed with the knowledge on how to put together these arms to meet combat mission requirements, provided they understood the capabilities of the units they had at their disposal. This doctrine did not guarantee them victory, but it did give them a common playbook they used against the German Army to great effect. The effectiveness of TF Butler is due to the unified and mature combined arms warfare doctrine used by the US Army.

---

[1]Tsouras, 154.

[2]Truscott, 407. Truscott states that units did not have time to train together for the mission.

[3]Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 1-02, *Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 1-65.

[4]Jonathan M. House, *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 47.

[5]Ibid., 55.

[6]Ibid., 64-104. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the evolution of combined arms warfare during the interwar years.

[7]FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations, *Operations*, was the source document for US Army combined arms doctrine. All other arm or service specific field manuals (FMs) base their operating concepts on the doctrinal approach advocated by this manual. Though arm or service specific FMs provide more branch specific methods (now known as Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures or TTPs) one can easily see the linkage between the higher and subordinate manuals.

[8]Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944), 32. Hereafter referred to as FM 100-5.

[9]Ibid., 6.

[10]Ibid. Chapter 2 includes among the arms: Infantry, Cavalry, Field Artillery, Coast Artillery Corps, Corps of Engineers, Signal Corps, and Chemical Warfare Service. The relatively newly created Armor and Tank Destroyer branches were absent from this listing because they were still lacked any statutory basis and were officially experimental organizations. However, it can reasonably be categorized as an arm based on its use for direct Ground Combat.

[11]Ibid., 6.

[12]Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 7-20, Infantry Field Manual, *Rifle Battalion* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942). An example of this can be found in the section on the conduct of the attack, pages 90 to 92, which details planning requirement for employing both organic and external supporting fires, and page 95 describes the launch of the attack both with and without tank support. Examples of this can be found throughout the manual.

[13]FM 100-5. This is not detailed mission analysis as conducted by modern forces. This chapter introduces two sections which are noteworthy for their likeness to modern mission analysis. The section titled “Estimate of the Situation**”** (35 to 36) discusses the need for the commander to consider mission requirements, enemy forces and their capabilities, friendly forces and their capabilities, and weather conditions. The ties to modern METT-TC (Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Time, Troops Available, and Civilian Consideration) are evident. The next section of note titled “Terrain” (36 to 37) discusses the requirement to evaluate all terrain based on five factors: observation, fields of fire, concealment and cover, obstacles, and routes of

communications. It also references the hold certain dominant ground. This type of detailed terrain analysis is what is done by modern military staffs who use OAKOC (Observation and fields of fire, Avenues of approach, Key Terrain, Obstacles, and Cover and Concealment) as the method of conducting terrain studies.

[14]Ibid., 32.

[15]The commander's specialty staff performed functions not covered by the primary staff, and usually consisted of officers trained in technical specialties. Included in the specialty staff were: the chaplain, Communications Officer, Gas (for example, Chemical) officer, Munitions Officer, Transport Officer, Maintenance Officer, Anti-tank Officer, and the Surgeon. Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 7-40, Infantry Field Manual, *Rifle Regiment* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Officer, 1942). Chapter 3 provides a good description of the duties and responsibilities of these officers in combat operations.

[16]FM 100-5, 39.

[17]Ibid, 43.

[18]Establishment of a command post was normally required for units battalion size or greater.

[19]FM 100-5, 56.

CHAPTER 3

TASK ORGANIZATION

> It is not so much the mode of formation as the proper combined use of the different arms which will ensure victory.[1]
>
> Lieutenant-General Antoine-Henri Baron de Jomini,
> *Summary of the Art of War*, 1838,
> translated by Mendell and Craighill, 1862.

Introduction

MG Truscott, fully engaged with the survival of his VI Corps at Anzio, and with the subsequent breakout from that confined perimeter, had not been well acquainted with the plan for Operation ANVIL until early June 1944.[2] Tentatively selected as the headquarters for the ANVIL assault force in December 1943, VI Corps was not confirmed as the assault force headquarters until it was withdrawn from the Italian campaign on 11 June 1944.[3] It was only then that Truscott and his staff were able to focus on planning and preparing to conduct the most complex operation executed by Allied commanders during the war--the amphibious assault. VI Corps had limited time to plan and prepare prior to ANVIL.

Truscott and his staff knew where the attack was to strike and that VI Corps was to provide the Headquarters for the assault force. Yet, only fifty-eight days later, they would storm the beaches of southern France. Truscott received little more than instructions to move his troops to staging and training areas until 16 June 1944, when he and five "key" staff officers flew to the Force 163 (Seventh Army) Headquarters, to be briefed on Operation DRAGOON, the new name for ANVIL.[4] Corps planning for the operation started upon their return to Corps headquarters on 18 June 1944.

Headquarters VI Corps developed a base plan for the initial assault that remained relatively intact, at least conceptually; though frequent modifications made planning difficult. The initial assault force was increased from two to three reinforced infantry divisions. The troop list endured frequent changes, being refined by both VI Corps staff and by the Force 163 planning group.[5] Most modifications required minor adjustments to the plan, but some caused significant shifts in the commanders' vision of the operation.

One such change occurred between 18 June and 4 July 1944. This adjustment was the planned attachment of Combat Command (CC) Sudre, a French unit, to VI Corps immediately following the seizure of the beachhead on D-day.[6] The CC Sudre promised to provide a powerful mobile strike force that would materially enhance VI Corps' offensive capabilities. These capabilities forever altered Truscott's concept on how the invasion should develop. No longer did Truscott see this operation unfolding as a successful beachhead followed by slow methodical progress inland; although he was prepared for it. Instead, he also prepared for riskier and more aggressive operations. The addition of this combat command offered the potential for rapid inland exploitation. Over time, Truscott developed the view that the need for armor "was vital and would become increasingly important as we expanded the beachhead."[7] It was this estimation that led Truscott to lobby so vigorously for the assignment of a combat command to his Corps. His staff followed his lead.

The VI Corps staff's analysis of terrain and intelligence reports supported Truscott's contention that the addition of a large armored force was essential to ensure the success of the landing. The separate armor battalions attached to each division were powerful mobile strike forces capable of defeating local enemy counter-attacks and assisting in the rapid reduction of enemy defenses. However, these separate battalions were of limited value to the VI Corps

commander. Intelligence reports estimated strong enemy forces, including large numbers of tanks, in vicinity of the selected landing zone.[8] One of Truscott's immediate concerns was the German Nineteenth Army's ability to mass forces rapidly before the assault force could build enough strength to secure the beachhead:

> We expected the enemy to counterattack locally with whatever forces were available, but we did not envision a major blow to fall until the enemy could concentrate a material superiority of force. Our aim was to prevent his ever attaining that degree of force.[9]

A combat command would give him the force he needed to prevent the massing of enemy forces and minimize the threat of a major enemy attack. Armor would allow Truscott to shape the battlefield and maintain the momentum of the assault.

Truscott urged MG Alexander Patch, US Seventh Army Commander, to permanently assign CC Sudre to his Corps. The CC Sudre would give VI Corps the means to reinforce subordinate divisions needing assistance. It would also give VI Corps the ability to exploit identified enemy weaknesses. This request, made in early July 1944, was eventually denied for political reasons.[10] Realizing that the assignment of the requested combat command was unlikely, and finding no other alternatives available in the theater, Truscott had his staff develop a substitute from units currently assigned to VI Corps.[11]

TF Butler was created on 1 August 1944. Truscott's intent, the guiding principle behind the task force's design, was to replicate the capabilities of an American combat command. His Corps staff led by BG Fredrick Butler met Truscott's intent quite well. This chapter will demonstrate this first by examining the task organization of a typical combat command. Second, the chapter will inspect the task organization of CC Sudre. It will third examine the task organization of the provisional armored group created by the VI Corps staff. Finally, it will compare the combat power and capabilities of all three organizations. Through a comparison of

the combat power and capabilities of each organization, this study will demonstrate that TF Butler's task organization adequately replicated the capabilities of an armored combat command.

The Combat Command

First introduced into the army in the Armor Division TO&E 17 (dated 1 March 1942), the combat command was "a small brigade-equivalent headquarters . . . to control the combat teams in which the division was supposed to operate."[12] The combat command's headquarters was organized along the lines of a standard brigade or regimental headquarters, only smaller. The major difference between the combat command and other headquarters is that the combat command had no organic combat units. It was purely a task force headquarters.

The combat command was designed as a tailor-able, combined-arms organization that would be task organized with the units it required to complete its assigned task or mission. Conceptually, once the mission was complete, its task organization could be changed to meet the needs of the next mission. The conduct of continuous combat operations made task organization by mission the exception rather than the rule. In practice, the task organizations of combat commands tended to become more fixed, even semi-permanent.

Most American armor divisions "retained the same organization for combat commands throughout the war." [13] A number of factors contributed to this trend. Despite armor doctrine's preference for using its tanks in massed combined arms formations, American wartime experience provided few opportunities to employ these formations. Until the breakout from Normandy, with the notable exception of the fighting in Morocco and Algiers, the terrain the US Army fought over was not conducive to the employment of large armor formations.[14] Notwithstanding, commanders at corps and army level were usually unwilling to let a significant portion of their combat power to go unused until the perfect conditions existed to employ the armor en masse. Thus,

commanders often employed armor divisions to conduct missions for which they were not intended (for example, area defense). More often combat commands were broken into smaller elements that were detached to infantry divisions to provide needed armor support. The need to employ combat commands separate from their parent divisions, forced commanders to fix the task organization of their subordinate combat commands to support independent action.

Anatomy of a Combat Command

The combat command supplanted the armor regiment as the major subordinate command of an armor division in combat; yet beyond this simple statement it is relatively difficult to accurately describe it. This difficulty is due to the existence of two types of armor divisions in the American army.[15] Also contributing is that the combat command had only one unit, a headquarters company, assigned to it. The combat command owned no combat units. Both combat experience and combat expedience led to the development of an unofficial, but recognizable, combined-arms task organization, applied to combat commands throughout American armor divisions. This case study will examine the "task organization" of a combat command typically fielded by a "Light" Armor Division. Truscott was less familiar with this type Armor Division; however, it was the most common type in use by the US Army during this stage of the war.[16] It was also the only type of armor division fielded by the French Army; an army rebuilt and reequipped in accordance with American TO&E 17. Truscott had visited North Africa to inspect CC Sudre with key members of his Corps staff.[17] Truscott, after inspecting this unit with key corps staff officers, fought to keep it as part of US VI corps task organization. He thought that this force was sufficient for use as a corps reserve and for use as an exploitation force. This inspection would have provided both Truscott and his staff with a template from which to create TF Butler.

The typical combat command fielded by the US Army during the late stage of World War II varied in a number of small ways but had at its core a few constants. The habitual attachments include “a tank battalion, an armored infantry battalion and an armored filed artillery battalion.”[18] The variations between the various combat commands sometimes included the addition of armor or infantry units of up to battalion strength (but only rarely). More typical were attachments of company-sized units of anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), tank destroyers, mechanized cavalry, and combat engineers (see figure 4). The attachment of these types of units was more likely when the combat command was called upon to conduct operations independent of its parent division. The French army organization differed only slightly from the American practice.

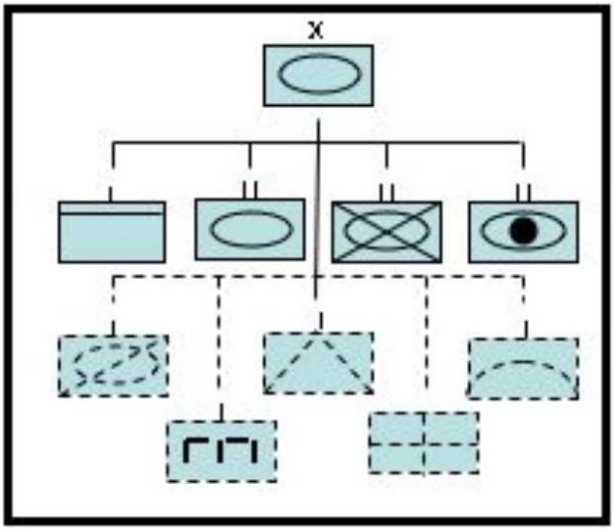

Figure 4. Typical Combat Command Task Organization

Combat Command Sudre--The Preferred Solution.

The CC Sudre, the unit Truscott spent almost two months campaigning with his higher headquarters to secure, can be roughly approximated based on primary source material available.

After the war, a French officer, referring to CC Sudre (see figure 5) just prior to the Riviera campaign, wrote that:

> A combat command is a tactical group comprising a reconnaissance squadron, a regiment of heavy tanks, a battalion of motorized infantry, a group of motorized artillery, a squadron of tank-destroyers, F.T.A, engineers, signals units, and elements of transport and service corps--a total of 4,000 to 4,500 men and 1,000 to 1,200 vehicles each armored division is divided into three CC.[19]

This reference infers the French task organized a slightly more robust combat command than was American practice. It also implies a more set and rigid organization than that used by the Americans. Typical French task organization of combat commands, a unit designed to be tailor-able, can only be guessed. The rigidity implied by the quote may in fact be a way for the author to convey to his readers a rough estimate of the size and capabilities of the French combat command. If their organization is truly as set as implied by the quote it may be explained in a number of ways.

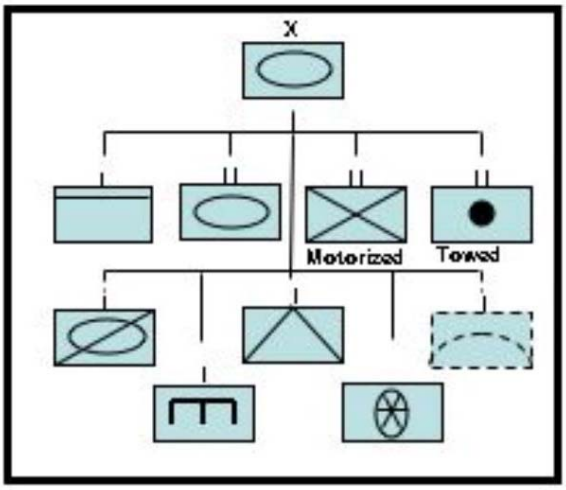

Figure 5. Combat Command Sudre Task Organization.

The most likely justification is that the French organized their combat commands to fight independently from their armor divisions, and in close coordination with their infantry divisions. Another good reason might be that French units were not as well equipped as their American counterparts. The infantry and artillery were both motorized rather than mechanized as in the US formations. This suggests less armor protection, reduced cross-country mobility, and smaller numbers of medium and heavy machine guns. Finally, it may have been a French attempt to make up for in equipment what they lacked in experience. Though well trained, organized, equipped, and motivated, the French Army was relatively new and had little actual combat experience. Increasing the combat power of the unit may have been an attempt to offset other perceived deficiencies. Regardless of the French reasoning for the task organization, it serves as another metric for evaluating the relative combat power of TF Butler.

Task Force Butler--Task Organization

Truscott's decision to build his own armor reserve from internal assets was atypical of what occurred in combat. Provisions for the establishment of a task force were addressed in US doctrine, and were utilized fairly regularly in combat; however, the task force was normally built from a preexisting formation whose subordinate units already had habitual relationships. Some unfamiliar units were attached to these organizations, but most units were accustomed to one another through regular training or by fighting alongside the other units within the task force.[20] TF Butler was one of the notable exceptions to the practice.

Truscott constructed his provisional armored group by first organizing its command and control element. The initial step was to select the task force commander. Truscott chose BG Butler, Assistant to the Corps Commander, to command. Butler was an experienced officer and combat leader trusted by Truscott.[21] Additionally, Truscott ordered that the staff and essential

communications were to be provided by the Corps headquarters.[22] The former proved easier to comply with than the later.

Butler selected the preponderance of his staff from the assistants of the Corps staff sections.[23] These were men with whom he had worked during combat operations in Anzio and during the subsequent offensive. The one notable exception was Major Harold J. Samsel, Operations Officer (S3), 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.), who doubled as the task force S3.

Communications equipment was harder to come by. TF Butler, unlike the combat command, did not have an assigned headquarters company. As such, it had no organic equipment. The staff had to locate vehicles or equipment needed to allow their ad hoc headquarters to control its subordinate units in combat. For the required communications equipment and personnel, Butler considered two options. He could either draw from the Corps signal unit or he could "superimpose my headquarters on the Reconnaissance Squadron and develop my communications around its nets."[24] Butler contended that the former option would have cut so deeply into corps assets that it became unfeasible. Instead he decided to collocate with and superimpose his headquarters with that of the attached squadron.[25] TF Butler's communications plan was the first of many challenges overcome by the nascent staff. More significant was the selection of units that would be assigned to the task force.

Truscott's initial guidance to Butler was to create a provisional armor group consisting of:

> the Corps Cavalry Squadron , the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, one armored field artillery battalion, one tank battalion less one company, one tank destroyer company, one infantry battalion in motors, an engineer battalion, and necessary service troops.[26]

The major difficulty in narrowing the unit list was that the load plan coordinated with the Navy had been finalized; some units had already loaded equipment onto their assigned transports.[27]

Load plans could not be changed without impacting the ordered assault date. Units selected needed to be easily accessible and available to mass when the order came to assemble. Over the next four days, the unit list was narrowed and finalized (see figure 6), with all assigned units and their parent divisions warned of the prospective mission. The approved unit list varied little from the initial guidance. The "tank battalion less one company" was actually short two tank companies (one light company and one medium company). One other notable change occurred on the day immediately prior to the assembly of TF Butler. The designated engineer company did not mass with the rest of TF Butler and did not take part in the exploitation. An interesting note about the approved troop list is the number of veteran units included in the task force.

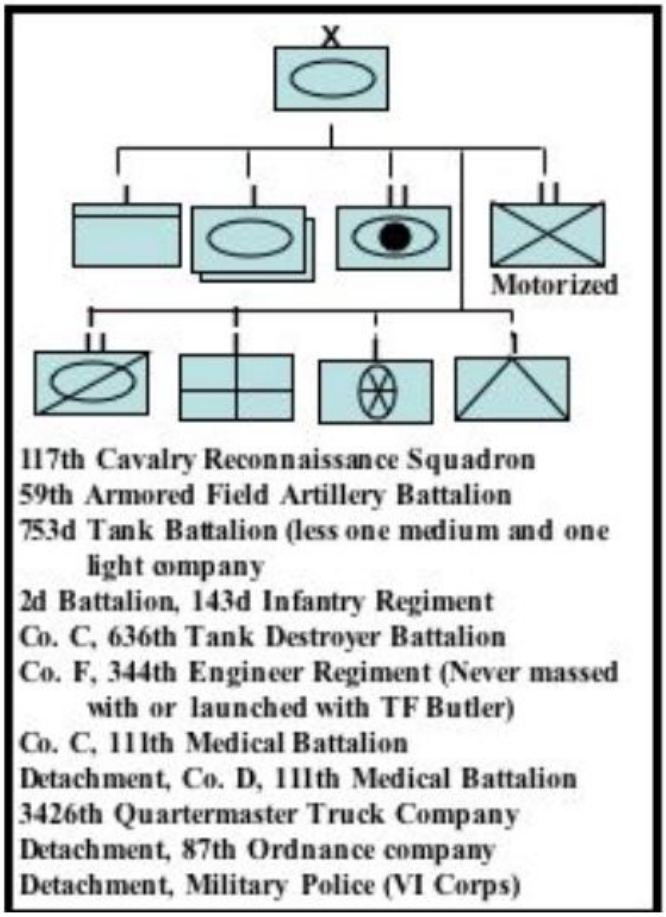

Figure 6. Task Force Butler Task Organization

TF Butler was built entirely from units with combat experience. All three divisions selected to conduct Operation DRAGOON were experience divisions. Most units had been involved in at least two amphibious operations and had a minimum of one year of combat experience.[28] One notable exception to this was the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, the unit the task force was built around. This unit had seen roughly one month of continuous combat operations in Italy prior to being withdrawn from the Italian campaign to support Operation DRAGOON.[29] This unit was well prepared, training extensively over an almost three year period, and performed well during its limited combat operations in Italy.[30] The amount of combat experience shared by TF Butler's staff and subordinate units is a point of comparison that cannot be ignored when later comparing its capabilities with that of the CC Sudre.

Comparing Apples and Oranges (or Tanks and Armored Cars)

To what degree did VI Corps achieve Truscott's visions of building a provisional armored group capable of replicating the capabilities of an armored combat command? Examining the composition of a typical US Army Combat Command, a French Combat Command, and the approved troop list for TF Butler is the means available for determining the success of the VI Corps staff. This case study will examine the major maneuver and indirect fire systems available to all three organizations. Several points of comparison can be used to measure success. This study will limit the examination of these systems to a comparison of combat strength and an assessment of combat capabilities provided each organization. Comparison of combat strength will focus on comparison of troop and equipment levels. Table 1 will be used throughout as a means of comparing equipment levels of the various organizations. Following the comparison of equipment levels, this study will assess the differences in how task organization impacted the

capabilities of each formation. The offensive nature of this organization suggests that the assessment begin with the mobile striking power available to these formations.

Table 1. Organic Equipment of Comparable Combat Formations

Equipment	Combat Command	CC Sudre	Task Force Butler	Difference	
				TF Butler vs. US CC	TF Butler vs. CC Sudre
M3 Stuart or M5 Lee (variant)	17	17	17	0	0
M4 Sherman (75mm or 76mm variant)	53	53	34	-19	-19
M4 Sherman (105mm)	6	6	2	-4	-4
M10 Tank Destroyer (3 in.)	0	12	12	12	0
M3 Halftrack	87	19	26	-61	7
M8 Greyhound Armored Car (37mm)	0	13	40	40	27
Jeep (4x4)	47	90	135	88	45
57mm AT guns	9	3	3	-6	0
37mm AT guns	0	4	4	4	0
.50 cal MG	63	28	48	-15	20
.30 cal MG	78	52	85	7	33
M7 Priest SP Artillery (105mm How.)	18	0	18	0	18
M2A1 105mm Towed Howitzer	0	18	0	0	-18
M21 HT (81mm Mortar)	3	0	0	-3	0
81mm Mortars	7	12	11	4	-1
60mm Mortars	9	18	36	27	18
M8 Howitzer Motor Carriage (75 mm)	3	0	6	3	6
Rifle Squads	27	27	27	0	0

Note: In difference columns a positive result denotes where TF Butler had superior numbers of that equipment type. A negative result denotes where TF Butler was numerically deficinet by comparison of that equipment type. Note 2: This table compares the combat strength the combat strength totals of combined Infantry, Armor, Cavalry, and Tank Destroyer units. No other arms or services are included in these calculations.

The preponderance of combat power available to each of these three formations was concentrated in their assigned armor battalions. In 1944, the armor battalion was organized in accordance with TO&E 17-25 (dated 15 September 1943). It contained 53 M4 medium tanks, 6 M4 105mm tanks, and 17 M5A1 (or M3 variant equivalent) light tanks.[31] This powerful force was part of the combat power of both American and French combat commands; each had a full, roughly equivalent, armor battalion. TF Butler was at a distinct disadvantage, being assigned only

two armor companies. Despite TF Butler's disadvantage in numbers of tanks is not as great as it first appears.

In one weapons category, all three formations were equal, the light tank. TF Butler had no true armor battalion, but the 117th Mechanized Reconnaissance Squadron had an organic light tank company with tanks equivalent to the light tank used in the US or French combat command. The light armor company had the exact same task organization as a light tank company assigned to an armored battalion; each had 17 M3 or M5A1 light tanks. Butler could use the light armor company in the same or similar manner to the commander of a combat command if he desired. He needed only to task organize his force and assign the light company to a different subordinate command or assign it a specialized task. The disparity in numbers of tanks with heavier armor and more powerful armament was of more concern.

At first glance, TF Butler was at a distinct disadvantage when comparing the number of medium tanks with those in either combat command. It had only two companies of medium tanks each with 17 M4 (75mm or 76mm variant) and one M4 105mm tank. To offset this lack of offensive striking power, VI Corps assigned a tank destroyer company with 12 M10 tank destroyers.[32] M10 tank destroyers were marginally better armed (each carrying a 3-inch gun) but with less armor than the army's medium tanks. Though not a true tank equivalent it was close, and was often used by US commanders as tanks when no tanks were available. The tank destroyer company significantly closed the combat power gap when comparing TF Butler to the typical American combat command. The combat command had a force of medium armor that was about two platoons greater in strength than TF Butler. Compared to the French Combat command the comparison was not so favorable.

The disparity was greater when comparisons with CC Sudre (the typical French combat command) are made. The French army assigned a tank destroyer company to its combat commands. The French tank destroyer company was equal in strength and organization to that which was attached to TF Butler. The disparity amounted to a difference in combat power of about twenty-three tanks (the equivalent of a tank company reinforced by an armor platoon, or four total platoons)--a far more significant force. The disparity in striking power was offset to a degree by the number and strength of the armor cars available to TF Butler.

TF Butler was built around the Corps mechanized cavalry squadron. This gave the task force a fast, mobile element with striking power that cannot easily be discounted. A high proportion of its combat power was made up by mechanized cavalry troops. These units were assigned jeeps mounting .50 caliber machine guns and 60mm mortars, and the M8 Greyhound.

The M8 was one weapons category where TF Butler was far superior to the typical US and French Army combat commands, forty and twenty-seven vehicles respectively.[33] The M8 can be likened to a lighter armed, lightly armored, and wheeled equivalent of an M3 or M5 light tank.[34] These vehicles, though incapable of destroying enemy medium or heavy tanks, were highly effective against less heavily armored vehicles (such as halftracks or armored cars), unarmored vehicles, and personnel. Forty armored cars would have done much to offset the capabilities gap caused by the more numerous tanks of the US combat command. The large number of armored cars in TF Butler could not offset CC Sudre's armored strength. TF Butler remained far less capable than CC Sudre when comparing the relative strength of their armor thrust. Other capabilities unique to armored cars, notably those assigned to the cavalry, improved upon weaknesses or limitations in the other formations.

The weapons configuration of the M8 armored car helped to minimize some of the disadvantages. Each M8 carried a 37mm gun, a co-axial .30-caliber machine gun, and a turret mounted .50-caliber machine gun. The number of machine guns carried by the M8 counterbalanced the disparity in machine guns between the combat command's armored infantry battalion and TF Butler's motorized infantry battalion (TF Butler had eight less heavy and medium machine guns). TF Butler was far superior to CC Sudre in heavy and medium machine guns, totaling fifty-three more in the task force. Provided that commanders task organized the infantry and cavalry units as combined arms teams, the capabilities of the task force's infantry would vary little from that of the combat command and would exceed that of CC Sudre's. Yet, an even more important capacity was provided by the M8.

The radio's use and usefulness as a means of command and control in combat was discussed in the previous chapter. The mechanized cavalry embraced the radio in a way not equaled by the other arms. It was designed specifically for reconnaissance, and was assigned better communications systems with longer ranges to facilitate this role. The cavalry equipped most (roughly 84 percent) of their M8 armored cars with two radios, one short range (SCR-508) and one long range (SCR-506).[35] The assignment of the mechanized cavalry squadron to TF Butler allowed a number of capabilities that would not have been enjoyed as readily by the other formations. TF Butler would be able to communicate with higher headquarters and subordinate units, either directly or by relaying transmissions, over longer distances. This allowed the task force to attack across a broader frontage and far deeper than the communications capabilities of either the combat command or CC Sudre would allow. Though TF Butler did not have the armored punch of the other formations, the cavalry's M8s gave it unique capabilities that made it more effective in first locating and then reporting enemy strength. TF Butler would later use this

capability to mass its forces from great distances to attack or bypass enemy concentrations. Another vehicle in the US arsenal helped to mitigate the disparity in combat power between the three units.

The assault gun was a tracked vehicle that carried a 75mm gun. This vehicle was used in a number of roles. The 75mm gun was superb in attacking enemy positions in built up areas. It could be used to provide indirect fire support when needed. It could even be used in an anti-tank role (though its main gun was not intended for this purpose). Its 75mm gun was effective against lightly armored or unarmored vehicles, even if its effectiveness against German heavy armor was in doubt. TF Butler had as part of its mechanized cavalry squadron a single assault gun troop with six M8 75mm HMC. TF Butler had twice the assault guns of the US combat command, which had a single three-vehicle assault gun platoon organic to the armored infantry battalion. The comparison is even more favorable when compared to CC Sudre, which had no assault guns attached to its task organization. Though insufficient in numbers to completely compensate for the difference in combat power these vehicles certainly helped to bring the striking power of TF Butler closer to that of a US combat command and to that of CC Sudre.

Armored vehicles were not the only sources of combat power available. The infantry made up roughly one-half of the maneuver force of the average US combat command and about one-third of TF Butler. At first glance, all three combat formations are roughly equivalent in numbers, equipment, and capabilities of infantry. There are significant differences in both combat power and capabilities based on unit type. Both CC Sudre and TF Butler were assigned a single motorized infantry battalion, an equivalent force. The typical US combat command contained a more powerful armored infantry battalion. This unit was more powerful, more survivable, and

more maneuverable on the combined arms battlefield. It projected its power using a vehicle unique to the era--the M3 half-track.

The halftrack was an open top vehicle that blended wheeled and tracked suspension. The M3 was typically only assigned to units organic to armor divisions. The M3 was far more capable than the 2-1/2 ton truck (deuce-and-a-half) used by motorized infantry in support of mobile combat operations. It was a platform more suitable to providing tanks with infantry support. Tracked vehicles, halftracks included, can go places that trucks often cannot. Trucks are often relegated to roads, and traverse rough or muddy terrain with difficulty. Conversely tracked vehicles can travel up steeper embankments, push through walls, cross over rubble, and run over rough and muddy terrain with a speed and ease rarely matched by their wheeled counterparts. Neither TF Butler nor CC Sudre could match the cross-country capabilities of an armored infantry battalion. Armored Infantry riding in half-tracks could follow and keep up with tanks wherever they traveled, whereas the truck riding motorized infantry of TF Butler and CC Sudre were generally relegated to the roads. The machine gun provided the armored infantry with significant advantages over other infantry formations.

In an armored infantry battalion, the M3 typically carried a squad (eleven soldiers) of infantry, and a .50 caliber machine gun.[36] These vehicles provided the soldiers it carried with limited armored protection from direct fire and shrapnel as it approached the enemy. Ideally this vehicle would dismount soldiers from a concealed position close to the objective. Here both the machine guns and mortars were dismounted, or if able the halftracks with weapons mounted, would move via a concealed route to positions where these weapons could support the dismounted attack with direct fire. The motorized infantry battalion had seventy-eight fewer machine guns than their armored infantry counterpart and unarmored vehicles that could not hope

to exactly replicate the abilities of the armored infantry in combat. Despite these limitations, the motorized infantry was not as outclassed as it might seem.

Despite the protection and firepower offered the armored infantry by use of the half-track, several factors helped mitigate these advantages. First, rare were the occasions when a commander would be able to employ all of the available machine guns or mortars in a unit's inventory in support of his units attack. Often terrain would limit the employment of machine guns, thus enabling the motorized infantry to employ as many machine guns in the attack as their armored counterparts. Second, the motorized units were assigned more mortars than their armored counterparts; compensating some for the implied disadvantage of having fewer organic machine guns. Indirect fire also increased the ability of motorized infantry to suppress enemy forces in rough terrain or in situations where direct fire weapons could not engage the enemy. Next, in heavily forested or mountainous terrain of southern France, tanks were often relegated to the roads, at times negating the importance of the cross-country mobility of tracked vehicles. Finally, when the infantry dismounted and attacked an objective, their speed, weapons, numbers of squads, and capabilities were identical; there was no difference between armored or motorized infantry assaulting an objective on foot. In both cases, the infantry often relied on the artillery to assist their attack.

The field artillery battalion provided the most powerful indirect fire support asset available to all three units. Two units, TF Butler and the US combat command, had identical self-propelled field artillery battalions armed with 18 M7 Priest 105mm howitzers. The CC Sudre was assigned a towed-artillery battalion. It is likely that CC Sudre was assigned the M2A1 105mm towed howitzer, the same artillery piece assigned to US infantry divisions. This resulted in a difference in overall performance and capability between the French and American units.[37] It

fired the same 105mm artillery round and was easier to dig-in, but the disadvantages out-weighted any performance similarities or advantages. It would have required more time to establish, and to breakdown and displace from their firing positions--a distinct disadvantage in mobile combat operations. It also provided less armor protection to the gun crews, making them more vulnerable to direct and indirect fires. Both TF Butler and the US combat command had a capabilities advantage over the CC Sudre, but TF Butlers had a significant advantage that becomes apparent after examining the assets available to all three formations.

Mortars are the weapons that allowed TF Butler to overmatch both CC Sudre and the US combat command in firepower. TF Butler has an advantage in mortars of seventeen and thirty-one respectively. The disparity in the number of mortars between the three formations is the result of the assignment of 117th Mechanized Cavalry Squadron with its forty-seven mortars to the task force. Mortars are the most responsive indirect fires available to commanders in the field. Mortars, organic to units at company or troop level, guaranteed commanders the indirect fire support they needed in minutes. Artillery belonged to the combat command and supported missions the commander thought important. It was entirely possible that requested artillery support might never come, if the unit requesting fires had lower priority for support. TF Butler, due to its superiority in mortars; and provided ammunition was available, could fire more indirect fires missions, more often, over a larger frontage than could either friendly or enemy units fighting in southern France. This was a significant advantage that would play a major role in the fight to come.

Conclusion

TF Butler's task organization effectively met Truscott's intent of having an armored force capable of the replicating the capabilities of an armored combat command. It was not a perfect

match. In comparing the capabilities of TF Butler with either French or American combat commands, one will find that where capabilities did not perfectly align, as with medium tanks, other weapons and units assigned to the task force largely mitigated the shortfall. A cursory review of table 1 demonstrates, barring a few notable exceptions, that TF Butler had more equipment and more weapons than the typical American combat command and CC Sudre. These advantages in some key weapons types only hint at capabilities provided by the unique task organization of TF Butler.

TF Butler's unique task organization gave it capabilities beyond those of a standard armored combat command. The assignment of the 117th Mechanized Cavalry Squadron to TF Butler significantly expanded the task force's capabilities. TF Butler was far more capable of conducting reconnaissance and security missions than either CC Sudre or the typical US combat command. The addition of the mechanized cavalry, with its robust communications infrastructure, expanded both the operation depth and frontage over which the task force could operate. No combat command, American or French, could approach the ability of TF Butler to project or mass combat power over long distances.

The VI Corps staff succeeded admirably in achieving Truscott's stated goal. To be sure, it had slightly reduced armored striking power. It was also not as capable of rapid cross-country mobility. However, the advantages of this task force, composed largely of combat experienced units, certainly out weighted its shortcomings. TF Butler's task organization provided it with armored striking power only slightly weaker in offensive punch than that of a US Combat Command or of CC Sudre. Thus, TF Butler constituted a large armored strike force created from organic corps assets that could be used to assist subordinate units in dire need or to exploit success.

[1]Tsouras, 93.

[2]Clarke and Smith, 5-7.

[3]Ibid., 36.

[4]Truscott, 382-383. Force 163 was the designation given to a small planning staff detached from 7th Army as part of Allied deception operations. Force 163 headquarters were located at Ecole Normale, Algiers. The initial troop lists prepared by Force 163 consisted of an assault force of two infantry divisions, with attached armor and tank destroyer battalions, supported by an airborne operation of one regimental combat team (RCT). The landing was to be followed by the remaining American Division time to be determined. The Two French Corps (totaling seven divisions) of the French First Army were to commence landing on D+3. (Truscott, 208); and Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations*, 56. Operation ANVIL had been renamed Operation DRAGOON on 1 August 1944, due to fears that an intelligence leak had compromised the mission name.

[5]Truscott, 397. Truscott stated that the troop lists contained "units we did not need and omitted others we did need. After it had been analyzed, I submitted a revised list to General Patch with specific requests for additional units we considered essential."

[6]Ibid., 382-3, and 401. I have not been able to pinpoint an exact date for the assignment of CC Sudre to VI Corps. But it is clear from Truscott's memoirs that it was not included in his briefing at the Force 163 Headquarters (16-17 June 1944). It is also clear that BG Sudre flew from North Africa to visit Truscott on 5 July 1944 to "discuss the employment of his [Sudre's] command." Based on these entries, I have made the assumption that an updated and refined troop list was provided to Truscott by Force 163. This troop list became the basis for future planning.

[7]Ibid., 407.

[8]Ibid., 394-5. "In the invasion area we expected to find at least 10 infantry battalions, 50 tanks, 84 fixed coast defense guns and 14 self-propelled guns immediately available to oppose us. We estimated that the enemy could confront us with at least a division and a half, on D Day, more than two divisions by the morning of D plus 1, more than three divisions on D plus3 including half of a Panzer division with 80 or more tanks, more than five divisions on D plus 4 including an entire Panzer division with some 200 tanks."

[9]Truscott, 395.

[10]Ibid., 404. General Jean Marie Gabriel de Lattre de Tassingny (often called de Lattre for short), the French 1st Army Commander, was a major obstacle preventing the assignment of CC Sudre to VI Corps. The French jealously guarded their military assets. Truscott stated, "He [De Lattre] explained that General De Gaulle had consented to the loan of this armored combat command [CC Sudre] to serve under an American command only with the understand it would be available to him when and where he [De Lattre] wanted it and in no case later than D plus 3."

[11]Ibid., 405. Truscott, as the date of the amphibious assault approached, was informed that CC Sudre was assigned to VI Corps until D+3 when it would revert to French Control. Truscott would be unable to use it for a potential exploitation to the North or Northwest. Still deeming a combat command necessary, Truscott attempted to look for an American combat command, but was unable to get one assigned; "a recommendation I made, for the substitution of an American armored combat command, was turned down as being impracticable for political and other reasons." and Ibid., 407. The primary reason for this was that Operation OVERLORD had priority for both troops and support. All US Army armor divisions save one (the 1st Armor Division) was either in or slated to go to Normandy. Withdrawing a combat command of the 1st Armor Division from Italy would also be "impossible for logistical reasons, even had it been practicable in a political sense." The American JCS would not allow the diversion of assets from Normandy and the British would not allow the withdrawal of any additional assets from Italy.

[12]John J. McGrath, *The Brigade: A History, Its Organization and Employment in the US Army* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 2004), 48. According to both doctrine TO&E and intent, the combat command had no forces assigned to it but did typically get assigned two habitual attachments: an armor battalion and an armored infantry battalion. This practice varied from armor division to armor division. The self-propelled artillery battalion was usually only assigned to a combat command when it was assigned a mission far from its parent division's ability to support with artillery. Steven J. Zagola, *US Armored Divisions: The European Theater of Operations 1944-1945* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2004), 21. Hereafter referred to as Zagola, US Armor ETO. The concept behind the organization was that only two combat commands would be employed in combat at any one time, with one resting, refitting, and waiting in reserve. As with the modern army all artillery is employed. Armor divisions rarely attach artillery battalions to combat commands, but would support each forward combat command with an artillery battalion, and use the third artillery battalion in their command to reinforce the artillery firing in support of the combat commands in contact with the enemy.

[13]McGrath, 49. "The mission-oriented/task organized structure of the combat command often did not survive the crucible of combat. Many divisions retained the same organization for combat commands throughout the war. The detachment of combat commands to support infantry divisions or to otherwise fight independent of their parent divisions encouraged this." In effect, combat commands were being employed outside the armor division's range to effectively command and control, and support them.

[14]Operations in Tunisia, Sicily, and Italy were conducted on terrain rarely conducive to massed armor formations.

[15]Zagola, US Armor ETO, 10-16; and Steven J. Zagola, *US Armored Units, in the North African and Italian Campaigns 1942-1945* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2006), 15-16. Hereafter referred to as Zagola, US Armor MTO. Both books give good, if brief synopses' of the task organization of the "Heavy" Armored Divisions and the "Light" Armored Divisions. The "Heavy" Armored Division was the division the US Army went to war with. It was created with TO&E 17 (dated 1 March 1942), a document that sought to fix problems identified by the lessons learned from the fall 1941 army maneuvers. The maneuver units of a "Heavy" Armor Division

included three regiments, organic regiments and two combat commands. Two of the regiments were armor and one regiment was armored infantry. Each regiment had three battalions. The armor division also included three artillery battalions. So the relative strength in battalions was 6 armor, 3 armored infantry, and 3 self-propelled artillery (6:3:3) or two armor for every infantry or artillery battalion. In addition, the Armored division included a mechanized cavalry squadron, and a heavy engineer battalion, and a number of service units. During Operation Anvil/Dragoon only the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Armored division were organized as Heavy Divisions. The first was serving in Italy and would soon be reorganizing as a "Light" Armored Division. The 2nd and 3rd Armored Divisions were serving in Northern France and would remain "Heavy" Divisions throughout the war. All other divisions, 13 of 16, were organized as "Light" Armored Divisions. It was at the time of the creation of this organization and the inability of some organizations to convert (due to involvement in combat operations, or because of the personal involvement of high ranking officers in theater) that the distinctions of "Heavy" and "Light" were created to describe the capabilities of both organizations. The "Light" Armored Division was created with TO&E 17 (dated 1 September 1943). This reorganization was based on the lessons learned from the fighting in North Africa, focusing primarily on the failures at Kassarine and Faid passes. The primary difference between the two organizations was the reduction in the number of armor battalions to achieve an equal ratio of armor, infantry, and artillery battalions (3:3:3). Another major difference was the complete elimination of the three regimental headquarters and the creation of a third combat command- combat command reserve (CCR). CCR was to act in two roles. First it was an administrative headquarters where combat units rotated from direct combat to reconstitute losses, perform maintenance on equipment, and rest. Its second role was supposed to be as a tactical reserve in times of emergency, though that was not its primary role. See also McGrath, 48-50. This books discusses the role of the regimental headquarters of both armor and infantry units within the "Heavy" Armored Division as largely administrative. When the armor division went into combat the regiments would transfer a number of battalions to a designated combat command, of which there were two in the heavy division (CCA and CCB). The regiments or regimental headquarters were available to the division commander to provide a third combat command if required or act as the headquarters for a specially created task force.

[16]Ibid., 76-92. At this stage of the war 13 of 16 Armored Division's were patterned on TO&E 17, dated 1 September 1943. All were based on the light Division TO&E. See also McGrath, 48. He has one error, he counts only 15 Armor Divisions, 13 of which he denotes as light divisions. 1st--3rd Armor Division's were all organized on the "heavy" model. 4th--14th, 16th, and 20th Armored Divisions were all organized on the "light" model. Shortly, after the invasion of Southern France, and prior to the Po Valley Offensive the 1st Armor Division reorganized from a "heavy" to a "light" Armored Division.

[17]Truscott, 402. Truscott conducted an inspection CC Sudre, on 18 July 1944. According to his aides journal "0900 motor to CC1 [CC Sudre], 1st DB for inspection of brigade. Met by Gens (sic.) du Vigier and Sudre and staffs. Brigade looks very good indeed. Men alert, and new equipment."

[18]McGrath, 49.

[19]Jean Marie Gabriel de Lattre De Tassigny, *The History of the French First Army*, trans. Malcolm Barnes (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1949), 54. Marshal de Lattre, was General de Lattre, Commander, French First Army, during the invasion of southern France. The selection quoted is a footnoted reference to General Sudre's combat command.

[20]FM 100-5, 5. The task force was incorporated into doctrine as a unit designed "to insure unity of effort or increase readiness for combat; part or all of the subordinate units of a command may be formed into one or more temporary tactical groupings (task forces), each under a designated commander. In each, the unity of tactical organizations is preserved as far as practicable. In an infantry division, the term combat team is usually applied to a task force consisting of a regiment of infantry, a battalion of light artillery, and essential units of other arms in suitable proportion."

[21]R. Manning Ancell, and Christine M. Miller, *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II Generals and Flag Officers, The United States Armed Forces* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 43. BG Butler was a West Point graduate. He was an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers. He was also an experienced combat leader who commanded the 168th Infantry Regiment, 34th Division during combat operations in both North Africa and Italy. In 1944 he was promoted to brigadier general and was reassigned to become the Assistant Division Commander, 34th Division, and was later selected to be the Assistant Corps Commander, VI Corps. MG Truscott trusted him and had an extremely high opinion of him. Truscott, 420. Truscott writes, "He had been my assistant Corps Commander since Anzio. He was thoroughly familiar with all my views, and he was one of the most fearless men I ever met."

[22]Truscott, 407.

[23]Fredric B. Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I," *Armored Cavalry Journal* (January-February 1948): 13.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Truscott, 407.

[27]Ibid.

[28]2/143rd Infantry was part of the 36th "T-Patch" Infantry Division, Texas National Guard Unit. Its induction in combat was during the landings at Salerno. It fought up the Italian peninsula and took tremendous casualties at the Rapido River. It was involved in two amphibious landings (Salerno and Anzio) prior to Operation Dragoon. It was motorized for operations conducted as part of TF Butler. Motorization was only due to the stripping of truck assets from the division and the attachment of the QM Truck Company. B, C/753rd Armor (SEP) had extensive combat dating back to Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. This battalion had worked with 36th Division prior to the invasion during operations in Italy. C/636th Tank Destroyer Company was a self-propelled company armed with M10 Tank Destroyers and M8 armored cars. Its combat

experience includes Salerno, Anzio, fighting north past Rome. This unit also worked with 36th Division prior to the invasion.

[29]Samsel, 63-68. The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had only limited combat experience in Italy. It entered combat on 24 May 1944 and was withdrawn from combat on 20 June 1944. One notable aspect of their month in combat is that this unit spearheaded both the Fifth Army advance to link-up with the embattled forces in the Anzio beachhead, and the VI Corps advance north to the Leghorn.

[30]Ibid., 6, 10, and 35-41. The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.) was a New Jersey National Guard Unit. Originally a horse cavalry unit, it was officially changed to mechanized cavalry in late 1940. The squadron was part of the 102nd Cavalry Regiment (later 102nd Cavalry Group) which was officially activated on 6 January 1941. It was shipped to North Africa in early 1943. It landed in Algiers on 3 January 1943. Its mission in North Africa was as the security element for Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ). One interesting fact was that this unit had some experience working with the French Army. During the almost eighteen months spent in North Africa it spent several months assisting in the training of French Foreign Legion Cavalry. This may have helped during the combat operations in Southern France, specifically in dealing with the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) also known as Maquis.

[31]Zagola, US Armor MTO, 38-39.

[32]Butler, Part I, 13; and Zagola, US Armor MTO, 47.

[33]Combat Commands had no armored cars unless mechanized cavalry or tank destroyer units were attached, as was the case for CC Sudre. See Zagola, U.S. Armor MTO, 44-50. Not included in the armored car count is the M20 armored car. This vehicle was a turret less, .50 caliber machinegun armed variant of the M8 Greyhound. This vehicle was used for command and control, reconnaissance, and for a number of other functions. The vehicles were used in a number of mechanized units including mechanized cavalry and tank destroyer units. In mechanized cavalry they would have been used almost exclusively for command and control. These vehicles comprised a significant portion of the combat power of their units. A tank destroyer company, according to TO&E 18-25 (dated 15 March 1944) included 8 armored cars. These vehicles should have been M20 Armored Car; however M8 armored cars, halftracks, or light tanks may have been used as substitutes for these vehicles.

[34]The M8 Greyhound was similar in many respects to the US Army's light tanks. Both were used in reconnaissance roles as well as for other missions. Both mounted a 37mm gun and a .30 caliber machine gun in their turrets, and mounted .50 caliber machine guns on turret rings for use against attacking aircraft or against ground targets. There the similarities end. The light tank had two more .30 caliber machine guns than did the M8 armored car; both machine guns were hull mounted. Light tanks were developed to engage in offensive operations against the enemy. The M8 was not. Light tanks had heavier armor that the armored cars. Light tanks were tracked vehicles that had greater cross-country mobility than did the wheeled armored cars. To the armored cars advantage was a much smaller logistical tail. Armored cars required both less fuel

and maintenance then light tanks. Additionally, since it was designed for all armored cars had two radio mounts

[35]Steven J. Zaloga, *M8 Greyhound Light Armored Car 1941-91* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2002), 19-20; and John Sayern, *US Army Infantry Division 1944-1945* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2007), 44. For ranges of these communications systems see Sayern, U.S. ID in ETO. Both are FM systems, subject to interference from the interference and reduced performance from terrain. The SCR-508 had a range of 10 miles when both sending and receiving units were stationary and conditions were perfect. The SCR-506 had a voice range of 25 miles and 50 miles for morse code messages when both sending and receiving units were stationary and conditions were perfect.

[36]Almost all half-tracks were weapons carriers, but there were numerous variants. The variants of the M3 halftrack, to name just a few, include: mortar carriers, howitzer carriers, command and control vehicles, anti-aircraft vehicles, and anti-tank vehicles. Each had a particular role.

[37]Sayern, U.S. ID in ETO, 7 and 18.

CHAPTER 4

LEADERSHIP

> Much of what I have said has been by way of repetition of one thought which I wish you gentlemen to carry with you to your new duties. You will be responsible for a unit in the Army of the United States in this great emergency. Its quality, its discipline, its training will depend on your leadership. Whatever deficiencies there are must be charged to your failure or incapacity. Remember this: The truly great leader overcomes all difficulties, and campaigns and battles are nothing but a long series of difficulties to be overcome. The lack of equipment, the lack of food, the lack of this or that are only excuses/the real leader displays his quality in his triumphs over adversity, however great it may be.[1]
>
> General of the Army George C. Marshall, 27 September 1941,
> The Army and Navy Register, 4 October 1941

Introduction

At dawn, on 18 August 1944, BG Butler commenced offensive operations in command of a task force that had formed only the previous afternoon. At first, this may seem unremarkable. The task force was used as a means of organizing a force to meet a particular mission. Its use was not an uncommon occurrence in the US Army during World War II. However, unlike most task forces constituted during the war, TF Butler was not built on a preexisting command structure. Its staff officers had been pulled from among assistant staff officers working on the VI Corps staff. The task force headquarters had no equipment assigned to it. Initially, it only had one unit assigned. The entire task force had been originated as an idea only eighteen days earlier, and had assembled the afternoon prior to its attack.

The results achieved from this ad hoc organization far exceeded any reasonable expectations. In the fourteen days of its existence, Butler's task force advanced over 235 miles, liberated approximately 6,645 square miles of southern France, captured more than 3,500 German prisoners (including 3 Generals), and destroyed hundreds of German vehicles.[2] Even

more remarkable, the task force seized a key piece of terrain along the enemies' line of withdrawal, and held it until reinforcements arrived two-days later, initiating the eight-day battle at Montelimar, France.

In examining TF Butler's success during the campaign a few consistent themes begin to emerge. Butler built the capabilities necessary to effectively exercise command, providing the vision and direction needed to effectively synchronize his ad hoc force. Butler's subordinate leaders understood the capabilities of their forces and used them within their doctrinal roles. Furthermore, the understanding of unit capabilities enabled the task force to task organize on the move, giving the task force the capability to influence events and rapidly resolve situations as they occurred. TF Butler's success lay in the commander's employment of its subordinate components in accordance with unit capabilities and contemporary doctrine.

18 August 1944

The US VI Corps found itself in an unanticipated situation as dawn broke over the eastern horizon on D+3 (18 August 1944). The Allied situation was far better than had been predicted by Seventh Army planners.[3] The corps had obtained almost all of its initial objectives ahead of schedule, securing the beachhead by the end of D+1.[4] It was now postured to conduct the second stage of the campaign, "to reorganize the assault force and mount an aggressive drive west and northwest," while the German Army was still reeling and unable to mass the forces able to contain the Allied beachhead.[5] The Allied commanders, concurring with Truscott's assessment of the situation, decided to accelerate the campaign to exploit German weakness; and hastened the landing of follow on forces by as much as a week.[6]

The German Nineteenth Army's defense of the coast had collapsed. Though resistance had stiffened in the days following the invasion, the Germans were never able to stem the Allied

advance. On 17 August 1944, the German Nineteenth Army tried to establish a defensive line east of Toulon to give

> combat forces still west of the Rhone [River] time to transfer to the east side of the river, whether for defensive purposed or to build up the strength needed to launch a substantive counteroffensive.[7]

This defensive line would allow the garrisons of Toulon and Marseilles to strengthen their defenses. Unfortunately for the German Army, the US VI Corps launched a series of attacks designed to expand the beachhead and keep pressure on the German Army. Truscott focused most of his combat power on securing the critical port cities west of the beachhead and had overrun the planned German defensive line before it could be established.[8]

That same day, an intelligence coup significantly influenced the future course of the Allied campaign. While the Nineteenth Army struggled to stabilize the situation east of Toulon, its higher headquarters, Army Group G, was attempting to implement a withdrawal order.[9] As the withdrawal order made its way down German command channels, ULTRA intercepts of those same orders changed the anticipated direction of the campaign. These intercepts offered the Allies the possibility of trapping and destroying the German Nineteenth Army, the larger of the two armies that composed Army Group G.

The Allied command decided to once again accelerate the campaign. The French II Corps would not be allowed to assemble as originally planned. Instead, French combat units were to be rushed east, conduct a forward passage of lines through the lead American elements, and attack Toulon on the 19th.[10] VI Corps was ordered to attack westward to Aix-en-Provence, 15 miles north of Marseilles, to protect the French northern flank and to secure crossing sites over the Durance River. VI Corps would also attack north to seize Sisterone in preparation for future offensive operations directed against Grenoble; operations that would hopefully trap nineteenth

army before it could withdrawal.[11] Operationally, the stage was now set to launch Butler's attack.

Brigadier General Butler's Wild Ride

A short summary of TF Butler's tactical operations is needed to fully appreciate its accomplishments. The narrative can best be broken down into four distinct time periods: planning and preparation (1 to 17 August 1944), exploitation (18 to 20 August 1944), the attack on Montelimar (20 to 23 August 1944), and reconstitution as the 36th Division reserve. Each time period is distinct because of the types of operations conducted.

Planning and preparation occurred 1 to 17 August 1944, and has been discussed at some length in earlier chapters. That discussion addressed the building of the staff, creation of a communications architecture, and selection of units, but it did not discuss mission analysis conducted in preparation for tactical operations. Planning itself was conducted in a time-constrained environment, with the initial attack order being issued to subordinate unit commanders with less than two weeks to prepare.[12] On 17 August, shortly after assembling at Le Muy, France, leaders were issued updated situation and mission briefings, task organized, and resupplied prior to conducting combat operations.

The exploitation commenced shortly after dawn on 18 August 1944. Butler launched the task force north and west along multiple routes. He used his mechanized cavalry and his artillery spotter plane for observation and security, both forward and on the flanks, Butler's task force struck deep into enemy territory. During the exploitation, the task force faced numerous challenges, both anticipated and unanticipated. These included supply shortages, insecure lines of communication, securing large numbers of prisoners deep behind enemy lines, and the loss of

communications with higher headquarters. TF Butler's adaptive and resourceful leaders overcame all these obstacles.

About four hours prior to dusk, on 18 August, TF Butler secured the town of Reiz after advancing 50 miles from their start line. The next two days saw similar success; the task force subsequently secured the towns of Sisterone (40 miles) and Aspres-sur Beuch (50 miles) in turn. Generally, enemy contact was light; but there were several significant skirmishes fought at major towns (Barjols and Digne), river crossings (Malijali), and passes (Col Bayard and Col de la Croix Haute) enroute to Aspres-sur-Beuch. On 20 August 1944, with forces arrayed in an outpost line oriented north against enemy forces in vicinity of Grenoble, Butler received a change of mission.

At 2045 hours, 20 August, Truscott, VI Corps commander, radioed a warning order to the task force.[13] He ordered the Butler's task force to move to Montelimar with all speed, seize the town, and block German routes of withdrawal. 36th Infantry Division would follow the task force as soon as it was capable. Early the next morning, Colonel Theodore J. Conway, from VI Corps Headquarters, arrived at Butler's command post with refined written instructions.[14] Butler was ordered to attack ninety miles west to seize the high ground overlooking the city of Montelimar, but not the city itself. Furthermore, it had to be done prior to dark. In addition, Truscott was sending Butler two artillery battalions and the remainder of the 143rd Regiment to support offensive operations near Montelimar.

Butler and his staff spent a frenzied night issuing orders and reorienting forces westward in preparation for the morning's attack. Butler, soon lengthening his supply lines by an additional 90 miles, realized that he could not discount the risk posed by the large German force at Grenoble.[15] The attack west only increased the risks. Lacking guidance from higher

headquarters, Butler had arraying forces to deal with the threat. He retained the outpost established at Col la Croix Haute, and ordered the establishment of an outpost at Col Bayard the following morning. These two passes were the primary north-south routes from Grenoble, Conferring with a French colonel (a link to the local Maquis) and Colonel Conway, they agreed to a plan by which the task force would maintain outposts securing Butler's flank and rear until relieved.[16] Conway agreed to send the 36th ID to relieve them as soon as possible. This plan agreed to, Butler continued to reorient his forces and prepare for the attack on Montelimar.

The attack on Montelimar commenced early on the morning of 21 August.[17] Almost immediately after his mechanized cavalry began its westward movement, Butler received reports of an enemy patrol moving south through the Col Bayard towards Gap. Unsure if this constituted the beginning of a larger attack, and with well over one thousand enemy prisoners still in Gap, Butler determined to respond with strength to discourage the enemy. He left behind most of his armor to secure the passes and the task force's lines of communication.

Butler then continued his ninety-mile attack over mountainous and heavily forested roads that reached the high ground north of Montelimar on 21 August 1944.[18] The initial attack surprised German forces retreating north along highway N-7 and resulted in heavy enemy casualties. Butler, weakened after leaving behind the majority of his armor to secure the passes north of Aspres-sur-Buech, established a defense along the high ground; awaiting the arrival of reinforcements and the supplies necessary to continue offensive operations. Unable to maintain a roadblock through the night, TF Butler spent the next two days trying desperately to hold onto the high ground overlooking Montelimar and attacked retreating convoys using both direct and indirect fire.

During these two critical days, both sides rushed reinforcements to what became know as the "battle square."[19] As Allied reinforcements arrived, they were rapidly integrated into attacks designed to secure the key terrain to the north and east of Montelimar. TF Butler was disbanded with the arrival of the 36th Division headquarters, on 23 August; but both Butler and his task force remained in the fight until the division could assume full control of the battle later that afternoon.[20] The task force's deactivation proved to be temporary and it was soon reconstituted with a new mission.

On 24 August, a much-reduced TF Butler was assigned to the 36th ID as the division reserve. It remained inactive throughout that day; but, from the 25 to 29 August, the task force remained in almost constant contact. It was tasked to cut off the German withdrawal route by establishing a roadblock north of Montelimar on N-7. Most of these attacks failed to achieve their objectives because the task force lacked the strength necessary to accomplish the assigned missions. On one occasion, it was ordered to establish blocking positions in vicinity of Crest, to protect against a threat to the 36th ID's lines of communication. Its final attack, on 29 August, succeeded in taking the town Loriol, south of the Drome River, and capturing approximately 550 German soldiers.[21] On 30 August, fourteen days after it was first assembled, it was deactivated for the final time.[22] Overall, TF Butler performed well. Success was no accident. Among the most important factors in its success was the exercise of command.

The Exercise of Command Within the Task Force

On 1 August 1944, Butler was assigned the command of a phantom unit. He had no staff, no subordinate commanders, and no equipment; yet he had command authority and all the responsibility that went along with it. He had received a lawful order, a mission, from his commander and he was required to carry out his instructions to the best of his abilities. As a

commander, and in order to properly exercise command of his paper unit, Butler needed to build the capability to effectively conduct the necessary functions of command.[23] This section will focus on how Butler created the capacity to properly execute two of the functions of command, the production of combat orders and the establishment of signal communications, and examine their overall effect on the campaign.

On 1 August 1944, BG Frederic Butler was the first and only member of his Task Force. Had he commanded an armored combat command or a regiment of infantry, he would have had a headquarters with all the necessary staff to immediately begin analyzing the mission, and start building mission plans. Butler had no means of rapidly analyzing the mission, and subsequently no means to produce a combat order for his yet to be determined subordinate units. In addition, had he been a unit commander he would have had subordinate commanders whose staffs would be providing him data on everything from personnel numbers to supply levels to equipment maintenance. Butler had none of this information and had no ability to gather it.

Butler's first step was to select his staff from among the various assistant staff officers working in the corps staff. He built a standard US Army staff; it had all the primary staff sections based on specialized functions (S-1 to S-4), but had only essential specialty staff officers (for example, the communications officer). The staff would not be robust, but would represent all the components that had become essential to effective command in the US Army. These men needed to be put to work quickly. There was approximately ten days until the final loading of units and their commanders on board vessels bound for southern France.[24]

A clarification of the mission was required. There were too many unknowns in the operation. The assembly of the task force could be as early as D+2, but planners believed a strike north along the Rhone could not be accomplished until much later.[25] In addition, guidance for

the employment of his unit was quite broad. Butler could be ordered to exploit a weakness or to reinforce a division in need. The task force needed to be prepared to attack north or to attack west. Butler initially assigned his staff to focus on the tasks they could immediately influence. He assigned the staff the daunting tasks of building a unit from components taken from across the entire corps, and in developing the communications architecture required to effectively command and control the task force. He then sought guidance from higher headquarters. The development of this communications architecture will be dealt with later in this section.

The staff rapidly compiled a recommended list of units that were to be assigned to the task force. The staff's immediate problem was to create a force that was available for employment by D+2. The late date, and the fact that most units had already loaded their heavy equipment, precluded the assembly and loading of the task force as a separate entity.[26] Further, many of the units had significant parts to play in the coming amphibious assault. The staff had to identify units within these constraints. Ultimately, they created a troop list from units that were scheduled to land prior to D+2, and had only a minor role in operations immediately following the landing. Both Butler and Truscott approved this list without modification. It was good solid staff work made possible by the guidance provided the staff by both Truscott and Butler.

Butler, having created his staff, approved the troop list, and finalized his communications plan, focused on developing combat orders for his subordinate units. While his staff was working other issues, Butler tried to narrow down the scope of the mission. He held several conferences with Truscott before and during mission planning. Truscott eventually refined his orders, "to proceed to Sisterone and from there, be prepared to continue north to seize Grenoble or turn west and seize high ground north of Montelimar."[27] Butler no longer had to worry about locations south of the Durance River and focused his staff on planning the first phase of the operation, the

attack on Sisterone. This focus allowed the staff to conduct more detailed analysis of the mission.

Focus resulted in a more productive staff. Combat orders were rapidly produced and were disseminated to unit commanders within four days.[28] All subordinate commanders and their division commanders were briefed on the mission, the selected route, and all pertinent details of the operation prior to the corps departure from Naples.[29] LTG Patch briefed and approved of the plan prior to departure. Leaders at all levels of the chain of command, understood the role that they were to play in the operation prior to departing. Considering the inability of units to task organize and rehearse together prior to embarking for the invasion, the ability to produce and disseminate orders was key to the success of subsequent operations.

Butler and his staff had effectively translated Truscott's vision into a plan understood by all pertinent leaders. Changes continued and combat orders changed with the situation. The existence of a staff allowed mission analysis to continue even after the production of combat orders. Continued and more focused mission analysis allowed the staff to identify and resolve several problems prior to commencing the attack. Two examples of the problem solving function of the staff, and how it impacted the campaign, were selection of routes and the addition of liaisons to the task force.

Butler and his staff, now focused on an attack on Sisterone, did a more detailed evaluation of the terrain. They determined that route Napoleon, the route initially selected, was unsuitable. The route was immediately changed and all subordinate commanders were informed prior to leaving Naples.[30] The focus on this northern attack, and the potential for independent action well behind enemy lines also identified a need for French speakers to help coordinate with

the local population--more importantly the local resistance. Butler asked for and received a Maquis Liaison team that was incorporated into the task force staff.[31]

After landing, the execution of command became easier with the temporary assembly of the task force at Le Muy during the afternoon of 17 August. With all his subordinate units bivouacked at one location, Butler assembled all commanders to review the situation and receive updated orders.[32] However, this concentration of subordinate elements was only temporary. Butler's ability to exercise command once his forces attacked was dependant on the establishment of signal communication.

The establishment of signal communication was critical to his ability to exercise command once his task force commenced its attack. Butler needed powerful and reliable equipment to receive intelligence reports from units deployed across a broad front, and the ability to use that information to rapidly mass his combat formations against enemy positions. In addition, he needed to maintain contact with higher headquarters to make certain that his task force functioned in a manner complementary to (such as operating within the commander's intent) US VI Corps operations. Butler's responsibility in this area was two fold. First, he was responsible for providing establishing, and maintaining a communications network for use by his headquarters and his subordinates. Second, he was responsible for establishing and maintaining signal communications systems within the VI Corps networks.

Butler had no organic communications equipment for his ad hoc staff. Fearing that the appropriation of communications equipment from corps would impact the corps ability to command and control, he decided to meet his requirements by using the reconnaissance squadron's communications systems as the centerpiece of his own.[33] He planned to colocate his command posts with that of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.) to facilitate his

access to the excellent cavalry communications systems.[34] It was a simple, and yet elegant solution to a complex problem. More important, it worked remarkably well.

Throughout the operations of the task force, Butler never lost communications with his subordinate elements. The cavalry squadron's need to control formations over broad frontages ensured that its long range communications systems were more abundant and far superior to those of most larger units (for example, combat commands or infantry regiments). Using the cavalry squadron's communications equipment allowed Butler to disperse his forces over a large area with little actual risk. It allowed him to collect intelligence on the enemy's location while at the same time maintaining a safe distance between his main body and any potential threats, and continuing to advance deep into enemy territory. Butler never lost an opportunity to mass forces on an enemy due to a failure of communication within his task force.

Communications with higher headquarters proved more difficult. Butler's concern for the corps' ability to command and control its formations allowed him to anticipate the potential for communications failure. As a back-up, he anticipated using his artillery spotter plane's radios, and increased range to relay messages between his headquarters and corps.[35] Butler's force was projected to operate deep behind enemy lines and well forward of any supporting combat formations from VI Corps. Butler's orders instructed him to attack as far north as Sisterone (over ninety miles from his initial start point); yet he did not ask for, nor did he receive a high power long distance radio. Ultimately, his preparations for communicating with his higher headquarters proved inadequate.

By the end of the first day's advance, he had lost communications with VI Corps. In an attempt to remedy the situation, he sent an operations officer in his artillery spotter plane back to VI Corps headquarters to seek guidance. In effect, he sent a messenger, the doctrinally correct

thing to do; however, it was a less than ideal expedient. Over the first two days, he sent messengers to VI Corps headquarters several times, but this type of communication was infrequent and unreliable. He could not send regular updates to VI Corps; which in turn had no clear idea of Butler's whereabouts, status, or concerns. Further, Butler had a follow-on mission once he seized Sisterone, and had no means of receiving the guidance he needed regarding the mission without the loss of his spotter plane.

Fortunately for Butler, east of the Rhone River the situation for the German Army was far more confusing, preventing a potentially disastrous situation. The communications situation improved on the night of the 19 August 1944. Truscott, frustrated with his inability to communicate with Butler, dispatched a SRC-299 long range radio along with a strongly worded note instructing him to send reports every two hours.[36] Upon the receipt of the radio, Butler was able to maintain contact with higher headquarters, and was eventually able to get the guidance he required.

Butler's exercise of command of a unit, that in the strictest sense was non-existent, was impressive. First, he built a staff and a task force. Next, he developed a communications framework, that while slightly flawed, allowed him to effectively command and control his subordinates; essential for the exercise of command. Finally, he and his staff created combat orders that provided his subordinates with a clear understanding of the mission they were assigned. This creation of the tools of command was essential to mission success. Until their assembly at Le Muy, TF Butler's subordinate units had conducted two days of continuous combat operations under different commands. Without prior planning and advance orders of the exploitation, it would have proved exceedingly difficult for these units to execute an attack the following morning. Butler, operating initially with no staff, no subordinate commanders, and no

equipment, built the capability to conduct an attack deep behind enemy lines in accordance with the instructions provided by higher headquarters. Yet building the capacity to command and control a formation would have been useless without a fundamental understanding of how to apply combat power.

Employment of Forces

It is essential for combat leaders to understand the proper employment of the forces at their disposal. Such understanding is fundamental to combined arms warfare and the reason behind the publication of doctrinal manuals. Understanding the employment of the various arms ensures that each type of unit is employed within its capabilities. Situations change, and different missions require different tools. Commanders need to recognize the requirements in order to build or tailor forces capable of accomplishing the mission. By synchronizing the effects of the various arms, a commander can achieve a result greater than the effect of any one branch. Often smaller combined arms forces are capable of achieving the same results as larger more homogenous force. This section will focus on Butler's ability to employ the forces at his disposal and examine his use of cavalry during the exploitation and his initial employment of forces to secure the high ground overlooking Montelimar on 21 August 1944.

Butler's attack was almost a textbook example of an attack in a war of movement. The situation was unclear, and he had no firm intelligence on the location of the enemy. Unsure if the enemy was stationary or mobile, he employed his mobile combined arms command as if it was conducting a meeting engagement. He launched his command over several routes, securing his main body with small detachments sent along his flanks and rear. The mechanized cavalry provided the core of these small combined arms detachments sent in the van and as flank security. Butler's colocation of the task force and the 117th Cavalry's command posts virtually

guaranteed that he would have an influence on the employment of cavalry, that and it would provide him with near real time information. As contact was made, he could rapidly assess the threat, and either mass his forces to attack or bypass enemy concentrations as the situation dictated.

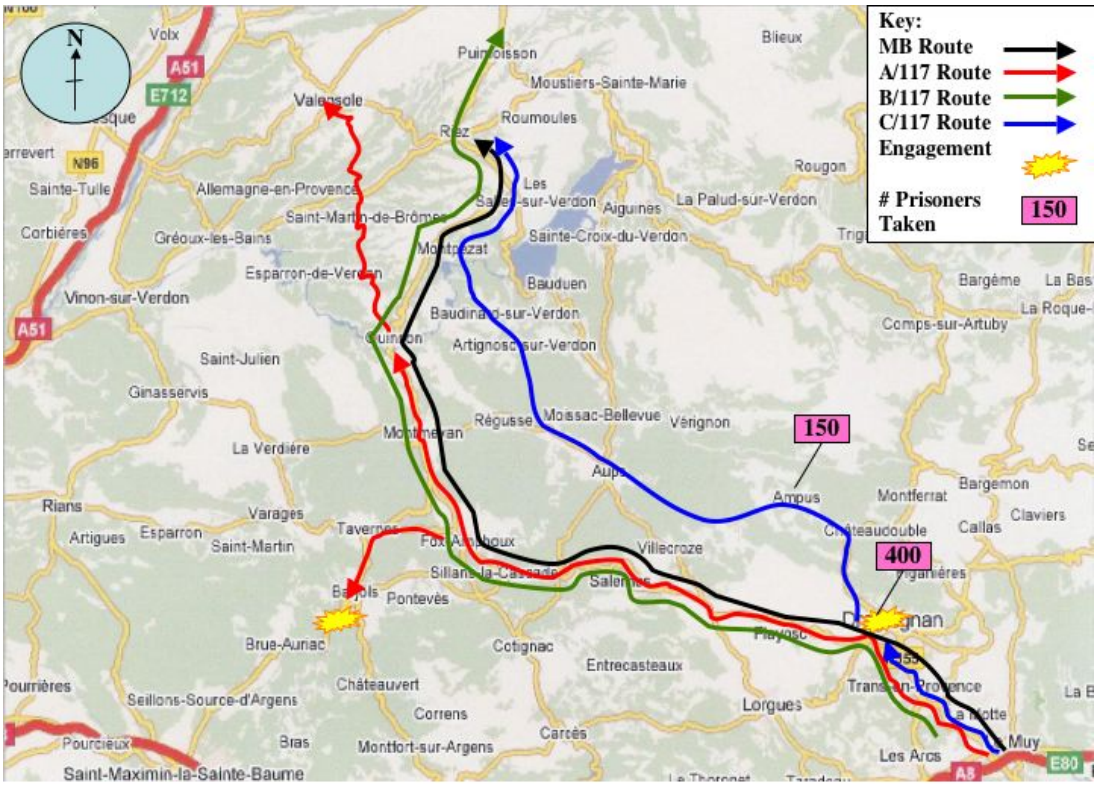

Figure 7. Task Force Butler Advance to Reiz, 18 August 1944
Source: Google.com, http://maps.google.com/ (accessed 24 November 2007).

The attack commenced in the early morning hours of 18 August 1944 (see figure 7). Reiz was the first day's objective. The task force main body attacked first west and then north along

axis Draguigan-Salernes-Fox Amphoux- Quinson- Riez. The cavalry deployed its three reinforced mechanized cavalry troops forward and along the flanks of the main column.

C/117th Cavalry, assigned the mission of screening the task force's eastern flank, moved north along an alternate route. Almost immediately after commencing operations the troop made contact with enemy forces just outside of Draguigan. In a short sharp engagement, it accepted the surrender of General Neuling, the German LXII Corps Commander, and his corps staff of approximately 400 officers and men.[37] Following this initial coup, the troop continued with its assigned mission, meeting with enemy resistance north of Draguigan until approximately noon.

A/117th (-) was positioned well forward of the main column of the task force. It remained in the lead until it was halted at Quinson where it ran into a bridge destroyed by the local Maquis.[38] After locals rebuilt the adjacent ford using flagstones and rocks, A/117th (-) was ordered to secure the left flank of the advance. It moved northwest and established an outpost at Valensole.[39] Its remaining platoon had been dispatched to Barjols with the mission of securing the left rear flank. At Barjols, it ran into stiff resistance. This platoon was instructed to maintain station until relieved by elements from the 45th Infantry Division.

B/117th Cavalry assumed the lead upon crossing ford at Quinson. It led the main body the remainder of the way to Reiz, securing the town at 1800.[40] After advancing 50 miles from his point of departure, fuel shortages caused Butler to halt the column for the night.[41] Butler recalled all distant cavalry outposts and assembled his task force at Reiz. He then ordered the 117th Cavalry to establish an outpost line, the rough equivalent of a modern screen line, along the major avenues into the town from the north and west.[42]

Task Force Butler renewed the attack early on the morning the 19 August 1944 (see figure 8). His plan was to attack along axis Reiz-Valensole-Oraison-Sisterone. In order to reduce

fuel consumption and increase the overall security of his force, Butler decided to advance the main body of his task force by bounds.[43] The mechanized cavalry would clear the routes up to predetermined locations, which would trigger the forward bound of the main body.

A/117 once again took the lead. It advanced along axis Reiz-Valensole-Oraison. As it approached the Durance River, it sent multiple patrols out to scout for crossing sites. One platoon was sent south to Vinon to protect the southern flank and found a bridge over the Durance destroyed. A crossing site over a partially destroyed bridge was located at Brillanne. The troop, minus the element at Vinon, crossed the Durance and continued the advance northwest until it met resistance at Chateau-Arnoux. After some initial shelling from the attached assault guns the troop commander, Captain Piddington, accepted the surrender of the 150 German defenders. He then continued the advance north and secured the town of Sisterone.

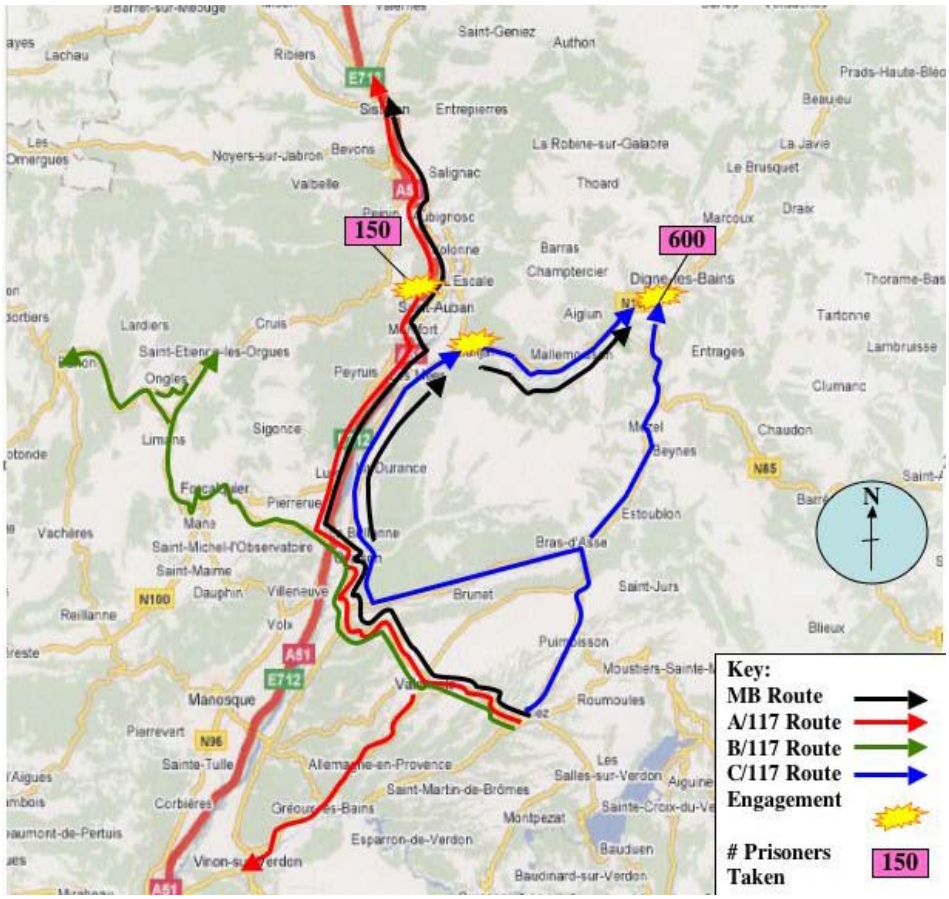

Figure 8. Task Force Butler Advance to Sisterone, 19 August 1944
Source: Google.com, http://maps.google.com/ (accessed 24 November 2007).

C/117th followed immediately behind A Troop. Upon crossing the bridge at Brillanne it moved to screen the task force's western flank. It moved first west and then north. By day's end, it had established a strong outpost in the town of St. Etienne-les-Orgues and a platoon outpost in Banon.

B/117th remained on the east side of the Durance River where it was assigned the task of securing the eastern flank of the task force. Its advance made contact almost immediately, resulting in the two significant actions the task force encountered that day--at Digne and Malijali. At Digne, B/117th (-) launched a coordinated attack with the local Maquis, which initially gained

entry, but was repulsed after receiving heavy small arms fire.[44] Another attack was planned for noon. The task force sent a small patrol, the remaining platoon of B/117th Cavalry, with instructions to proceed to Malijali, then on to Digne. At Malijali, the patrol made contact with enemy forces and cleared them from the south side of the Bleone River; however, the patrol was unable to advance to the northern bank and continues toward Digne.[45] Shortly after noon, the second attack on Digne began. It would continue for over six hours. It was only after the task force reinforced B Troop with a small combined arms force, including medium tanks, that German resistance ended. Approximately 600 Germans surrendered at Digne.

The task force main body made its first planned jump after Oraison had been cleared. Butler, out of contact with higher headquarters and without a clear understanding of corps dispositions, decided to reduce the strong enemy garrison along his lines of communication prior to moving his task force to Sisterone. Prior to moving, it dispatched the relief force to help B Troop put down the resistance at Malijali and Digne. TF Butler arrived at Sisterone at 1800. It did not recall its cavalry troops, but instead maintained a fairly broad frontage with a cavalry screen extending along axis les-Orgues-St.Etienne-Sisterone-Digne. The evening that followed was relatively uneventful.

The situation was unclear on the morning of 20 August (see figures 9 and 11). Butler had achieved his initial objective of capturing Sisterone. He had received no instructions from VI Corps despite several attempts over the previous two days to receive guidance. During the night of 19-20 August 1944, Butler received guidance from VI Corps that stated his mission was unchanged.[46] Butler was initially unsure whether to continue the attack north or to the west, but reports of enemy locations demonstrated that the largest threat was from the north.[47] Butler was

desperate for guidance, but did not want to wait for fear of ceding the initiative to the enemy.[48] He renewed his attack north in the direction of Gap.

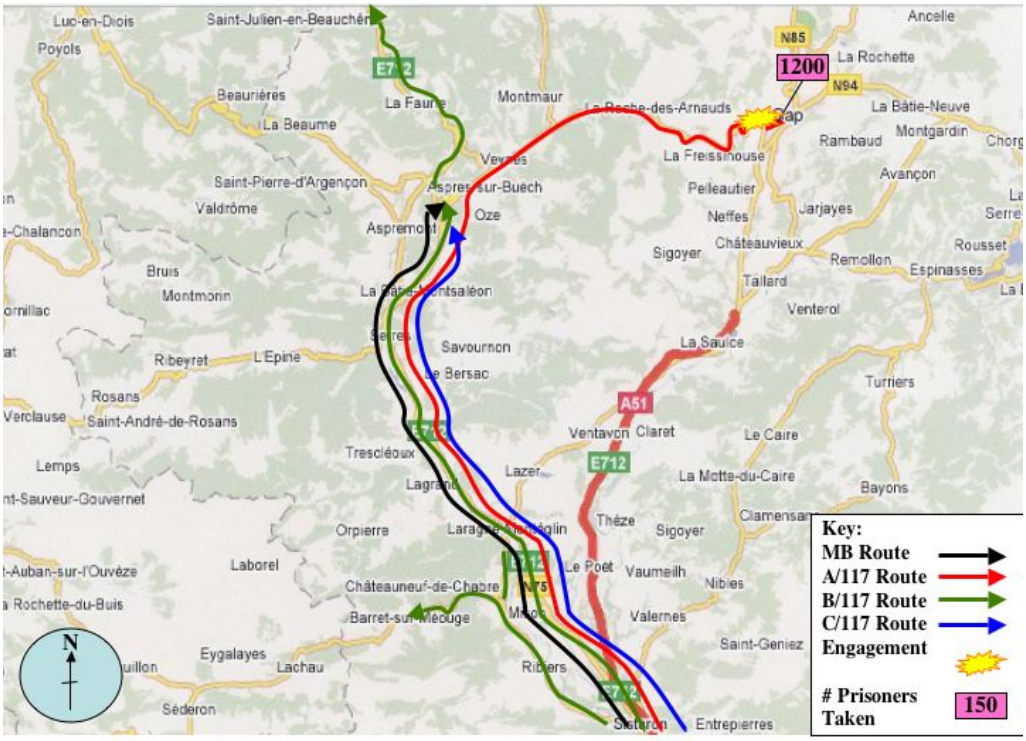

Figure 9. Task Force Butler Advance to Aspres-sur-Beuch and Gap, 20 August 1944
Source: Google.com, http://maps.google.com/ (accessed 24 November 2007).

C/117 (+) spearheaded the advance of the task force. It attacked north along axis Sisterone-Monteglin-Montrond-Aspres-sur-Buech. Meeting only light resistance it secured Aspres-Sur-Beuch by early afternoon. It continued north eventually establishing its command post at Col la Croix Haute, and platoon outposts at Mens, Clelles, and Barret-le-bas.

A/117 (+) was tasked with screening the task forces right flank. The troop, reinforced with several assault guns from E/117, was ordered to advance on Gap via les Blanches. Meeting only light resistance on the western outskirts of Gap, it soon found itself immediately outside the

town. Captain O. Brown, commander of E/117, drove into town under a white flag and bluffed its 900-man garrison into surrendering.[49]

TF Butler moved the main body to Aspres-sur-Buech. B/117th Cavalry maintained station at Digne. That afternoon it rejoined its squadron at Aspres-sur-Buech. It was employed as part of the outpost line outside of Aspres. This effectively ended the exploitation conducted by TF Butler. That evening Butler received the change of mission directing him to attack and seize the high ground overlooking Montelimar.

Butler's employment of cavalry in his attack in a war of movement was in accordance with traditional horse cavalry doctrine. What was unusual was his use of cavalry as a combination of screening force and advance or flank guard. Normally, once contact was made with the enemy, the cavalry screen would delay the enemy force long enough for the advance guard or main body to deploy. Once the advanced or flank guard deployed the cavalry was supposed to withdraw to its flanks. Butler was operating deep behind enemy lines, with a combat command equivalent, and could not disperse additional forces in the advance or flank guard roles. He did not know if a friendly follow on force would arrive anytime soon. His solution was to adjust doctrine to fit the situation.

Butler adjusted his task organization. He task organized additional assets to the cavalry squadron, allowing it to make the troops into small combined arms forces.[50] The more robust task organization allowed him to blend the roles of advance or flank guard with the more traditional cavalry screen mission. In some ways this helped speed up the tempo of his offensive operation. It allowed the cavalry to develop and in some cases resolve contact with enemy forces without the need to employ a force from his main body. Butler seldom dispatched additional

forces to support a mechanized cavalry troop during the advance. The one notable exception was at Digne.

This unique task organization also allowed the cavalry to conduct missions ranging across almost the entire spectrum of cavalry doctrine. In the space of three days, the mechanized cavalry conducted reconnaissance, offensive (screen) and defensive (outpost) security missions, attacks against built up areas and river crossing sites, and established defenses of built up areas and defiles.

Butler's skillful use of cavalry in the offense was matched by the defensive employment of his command the following day at Montelimar (see figure 10). On 21 August 1944, following a road march of ninety miles over narrow-mountain roads, TF Butler emerged into the Montelimar battle square. B/117th Cavalry attacked and seized high ground overlooking highway N-7, north and northeast of Montelimar. C/117th Cavalry attacked from Crest along the north shore of the Drome River towards the bridge at Livron. At Livron, two platoons from C Troop attacked two German convoys destroying over fifty vehicles and forcing the Germans to disperse in panic.[51] The remainder of TF Butler, following a short distance behind the attacking cavalry, secured positions in the on the high ground overlooking N-7. From the high ground TF Butler fired on the retreating German columns with tanks and armored cars.[52] The task force's command post set up at Marsanne, and Butler immediately started assessing the situation.

Butler's task force managed to surprise the Germans at Montelimar and achieved its initial goals. The task force seized the high ground overlooking the northern approaches to Montelimar and even managed to establish a roadblock across N-7, cutting off the German's route of withdrawal. Though Butler had met Truscott's intent, his situation was still very tentative.

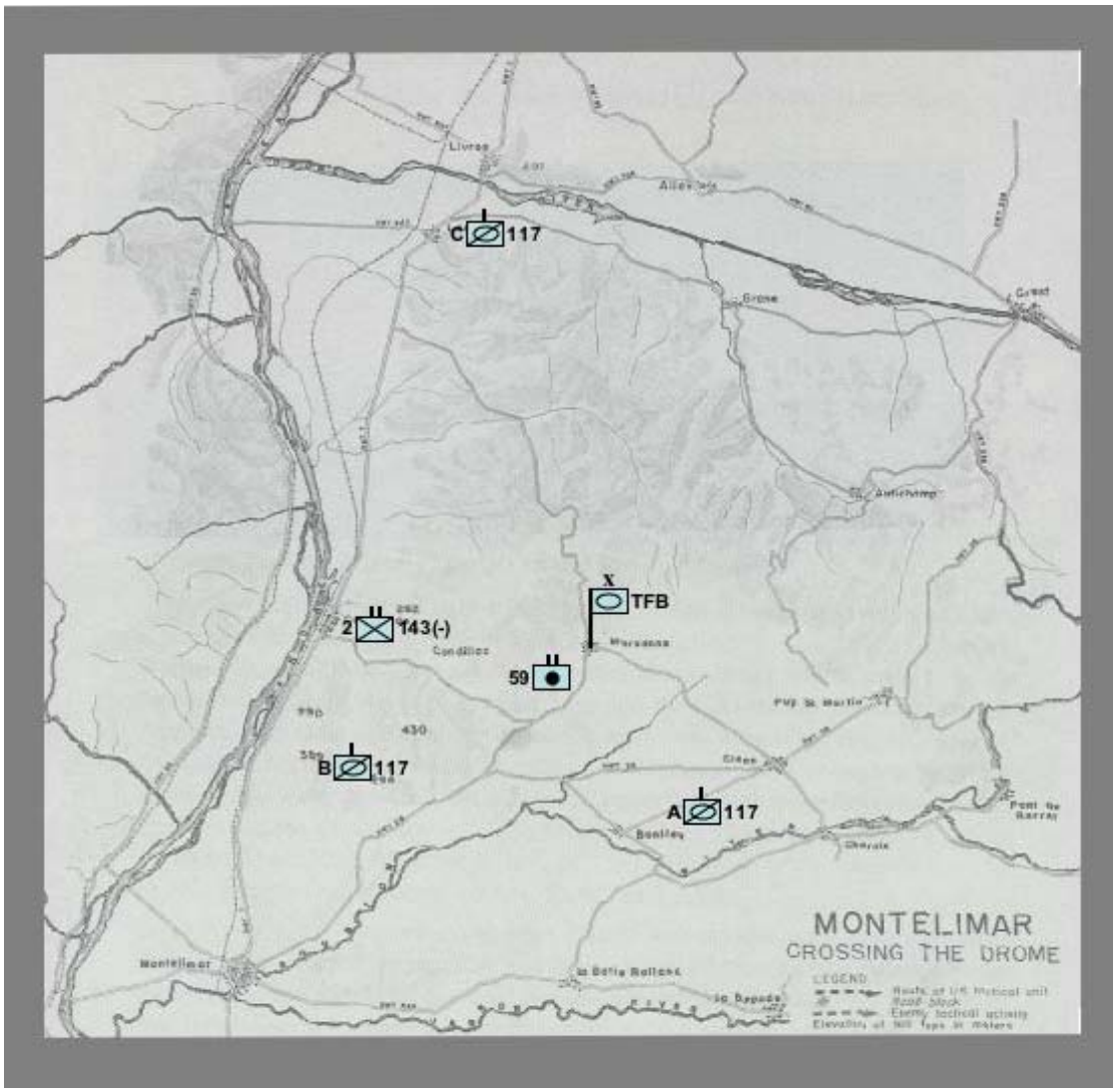

Figure 10. Task Force Butler Employment of Units in the Defense, as of 23 August 1944
Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations, The Seventh United States Army in France and Germany 1944-1945, Volume 1* (Nashville: The Battery Press, Inc., 1988), 200-1 and 208-9.

Butler was in an unenviable situation. He was uncertain of enemy strength or dispositions in the vicinity. His task force was dispersed across more than ninety miles of rough mountainous terrain. The majority of his heavy weapons were task organized to two combined arms forces left behind to block two major mountain passes; securing the task force's supply lines from the large

enemy force operating near Grenoble. These forces would remain unavailable to him until they were relieved by the lead elements of 36th ID, and he was unsure how quickly this would occur. Finally, he was at the end of a 235-mile supply line and was expending ammunition, especially artillery and tank rounds, at an alarming rate.

Butler understood that his task force could not conduct any further offensive operations. The forces immediately available to him were not enough even for the task at hand.[53] Butler's forces at Montelimar included: two reduced strength battalions (infantry and artillery), a reduced strength cavalry squadron, and a company of combat engineers.[54] Butler's situation would improve with the arrival of A/117th Cavalry later that evening. But the task force still lacked the majority of its armored striking power.[55] Butler decided to establish an area defense until such time as the arrival of reinforcements allowed him to resume offensive operations.

Butler examined the ground and determined that the key terrain feature was the high ground north and north east of Montelimar. Bounded on the west by the Rhone River and the east by the Roubion River it would canalize any attacker coming from Montelimar, unless the attacker attempted to cross the Roubion River several miles to the east of Montelimar. The occupation of that high ground posed a serious threat to the German withdrawal; one that he knew the Germans could not long ignore.

Butler arrayed his forces to retain control of the key terrain. First, he assigned the combat engineer company to the infantry battalion as a replacement for its missing company. He then placed the 2-143rd Infantry battalion (-) in the rough and wooded high ground of the Condillac pass. This allowed it to control N-7 running north, and the east west route from N-7 to Marsanne and the task force command post. In effect, he placed his infantry in rough ground overlooking an intersection of two major routes, the one spot on the battlefield where a single infantry

battalion could effectively be employed in stopping the withdraw of enemy forces on N-7, while defending the command post and artillery from an armored attack along a high speed route.

Butler deployed the cavalry to maximize its capabilities based on the terrain and the limited assets available to the task force. It was arrayed in an "L" shaped deployment over a twenty-five mile frontage. C/117th Cavalry was in the north securing the Drome River valley (northern route to Crest). Butler kept B/117th Cavalry (+) in its commanding positions on the high ground overlooking the northern and eastern approaches to Montelimar. A/117th Cavalry arrived late and was not employed until early the following morning. At first light it was assigned, with local Maquis, to screen the Roubion River along the southern flank. In essence, he used his cavalry in an economy of force role by spreading it out across the high ground overlooking the northern approaches to Montelimar and along the Roubion River. The cavalry's training in spotting fires and their heavier, long-range weapons could be dispersed over longer distances in such a way that their direct fires could be mutually supporting. In addition, the cavalry's skill at artillery spotting and long-range weapons were far better suited to the defend against enemy attacks over the more open southern terrain and might be used to great effect in interdicting enemy traffic withdrawing north along N-7.

The remainder of his planning and preparations also was in line with doctrine. Butler placed the 59th Artillery battalion (-) in the center of the sector, in vicinity of Marsanne, so that it could fire in support of the entire task force. Butler's medium armor was still well to the rear; however, he did plan for its consolidation in the rear for use as the task force reserve. The net effect was a defense that was within the capabilities of the forces he had on hand.

Butler's skill employing combat forces was demonstrated by the success of his defense on 22-23 August. On 22 August, the Germans attacked TF Butler from two directions. One

column, a feint, attacked north from Montelimar and dispersed an American roadblock near Sauzet.[56] The combined American and Maquis force withdrew to the high ground overlooking the site. The main attack was directed against the southern flank, at a river crossing, nine miles east of Montelimar. Enemy infantry supported by tanks achieved some initial success crossing the river and capturing Puy St. Martin, cutting off the American supply lines to Crest by early afternoon. American dispositions allowed the A/117th Cavalry, with Maquis and artillery support, to slow the enemy attack, preventing the Germans from taking Marsanne and threatening the task force's command post. The American defense held the Germans from further advances until later that afternoon when the arrival of the task force's tanks from Gap allowed Butler to counterattack the Germans, driving them back south of the Roubion River.

Butler's employment of his subordinate elements conformed to their doctrinal capabilities throughout this operation. During the exploitation, he used his mechanized cavalry to clear routes forward of and to screen the movements of the main body of his task force. This allowed Butler to locate and either bypass or concentrate forces against an enemy element as the situation dictated. It was a textbook example of the use of cavalry in support of an exploitation or a meeting engagement, resulting in effectively increasing the speed and tempo of his advance. In the defense, he arrayed his forces in accordance with their doctrinal capabilities, enabling the task force to hold the high ground against superior German forces until the arrival of reinforcements on 23 August. Butler's understanding of the capabilities of his units translated into a skilled application of their capabilities to meet mission requirements, and allowed him to tailor his force to meet unforeseen situations.

Task Organization the Move

The ability to task organize on the move is a critical attribute for effective leadership of a combat organization. An old military adage states that "no plan survives the first shot fired." It speaks to the nature of war. The enemy may act in ways previously unanticipated during planning. To succeed, military organizations need to be able to rapidly adapt and overcome situations more quickly than their adversary. The doctrine of combined arms warfare in practice at the time suggested that an attack by one arm was the exception rather than the rule. Doctrine also indicated that an attack by a force composed only of one arm was less capable of succeeding because of the inherent weaknesses of that arm could easily be exploited by an opposing combined arms force. Doctrine required commanders and staffs organize a force capable of accomplishing the mission, and do so rapidly.

Adaptive flexible leadership is particularly important when commanding a force assigned to the reserve, involved in a pursuit, or tasked to exploit the success of a previous attack. At various times throughout its existence, TF Butler fulfilled all these roles.[57] Butler and his staff demonstrated their adaptability, on several occasions during the campaign. The first such occasion was Butler's creation of a flying column for attacks on Malijali and Digne. Second, was the creation of a combined arms force to create blocking positions at Col de Bayard and Col de la Croix Haute. These were not the only examples of task organization on the fly by TF Butler, but they were perhaps the most influential to the conduct of the campaign.

The second day of offensive operations, 19 August 1944, dawned with the task force consolidated in and around Reiz, France; the day's objective was Sisterone. During the task force's advance B/117th Cavalry, screening the eastern flank of task force, made contact with German forces at Malijali and Digne. Stiff German resistance and the inability of the cavalry

troop to overcome resistance prompted Butler to organize a small combined arms element of one motorized infantry company and one medium tank company. He selected the executive officer of the infantry battalion to command this force, instructing him to "clean up Malijali, and then swing east and attack Digne from the west and north in conjunction with Troop B already there and fighting in from the south."[58] The arrival of this small force at Malijail rapidly ended all resistance north of the Bleone River. The Maquis pursued those who fled, allowing the force to continue on to Digne. The arrival of this powerful combined arms force at Digne caused the immediate capitulation of the German garrison. All fighting ceased and BG Hans Schuberth, Feldkommandatur 792, surrendered the remaining 600 men at 2000 hours.[59] TF Butler was able to maintain its offensive northward, secure in the knowledge that no large enemy force was behind them, threatening its lengthening supply line.

The situation Butler encountered two days later, on 21 August, was significantly different than that faced by his command at Digne (see figure 11). By daybreak, Butler had assembled the bulk of his task force at Aspres, and had established two small outposts at Col de la Croix Haute (north of Aspres-sur-Buech) and at Col Bayard (north of Gap).[60] These blocking forces consisted primarily of elements of A/117th reinforced primarily with local Maquis. In addition, one company of infantry remained at Gap primarily to assist with German prisoners.[61] Almost immediately after his mechanized cavalry commenced its advance westward, Butler received reports of an enemy patrol consisting of at least one tank and three scout cars moving south toward through the Col Bayard towards Gap. Unsure if this constituted the beginning of a larger attack, and with well over one thousand enemy prisoners still in Gap, Butler determined to respond with strength to discourage the enemy. He decided detached his tanks, tank destroyers, and a battery of artillery from the task force's main body.[62] He ordered this force, with local

Maquis providing the infantry, to immediate advance and seize Col Bayard. The enemy, no more than a patrol, was driven back, and a strong outpost was established in the pass. The Germans never again attacked south from Grenoble.

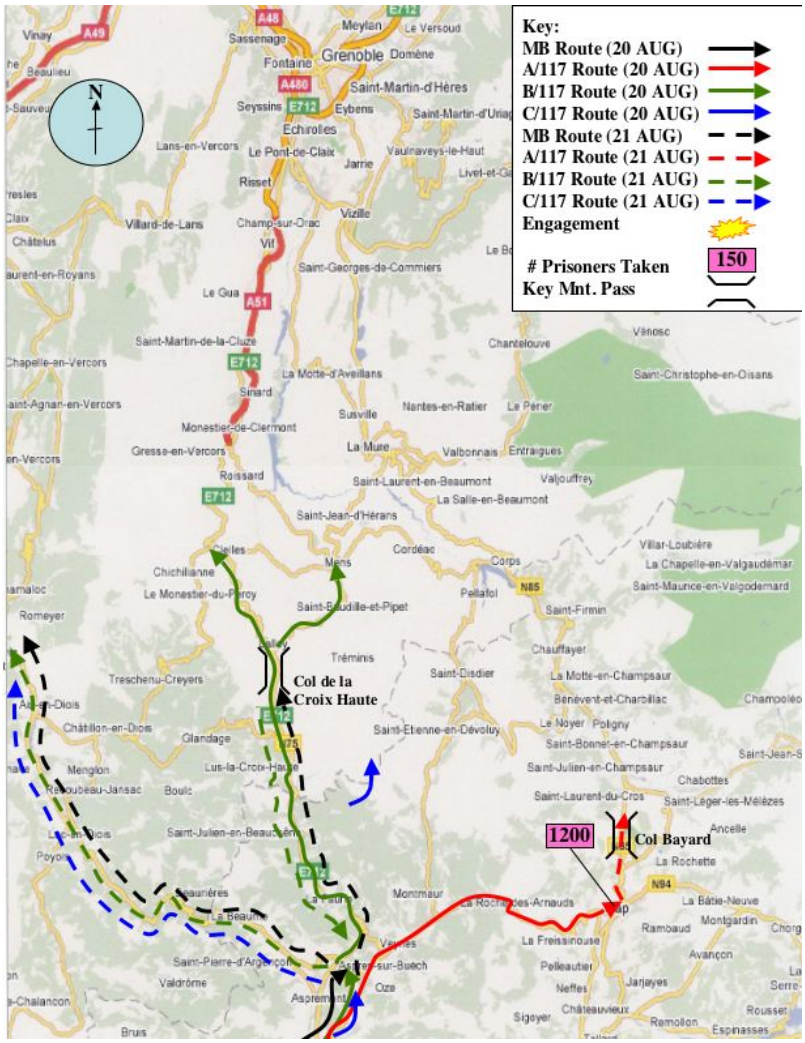

Figure 11. Blocking Positions at Col de la Croix Haute
Source: Google.com, http://maps.google.com/ (accessed 24 November 2007).

Butler's ability to task organize on the move contributed to the overall success of the campaign. His actions at Digne led to the capture of a battalion-sized garrison that, if bypassed,

could have either struck at his vulnerable supply lines or delayed the advance of the 36th ID to the south. At Aspres, Butler secured his flank, and was able to continue his attack on Montelimar. Though there is no evidence to prove that the action at Col Bayard prevented an enemy counterattack at Gap, a weak response might have encouraged an even larger German force to attack against Butler's long and vulnerable lines of supply, and might have forced the 36th ID to conduct costly attacks to retake Gap. TF Butler's creation of small, combined-arms forces dealt with potentially dangerous situations by generating combat power faster than the enemy could respond. The net result was that the Task Force was able to maintain the momentum of the offensive all the way up Montelimar. In addition, it allowed for the more rapid advance of follow on forces, whose route had been cleared of all hostile forces.

Conclusion

TF Butler carried out an envelopment of the German Nineteenth Army in what would become one of the most successful operational pursuits of the war. The task force attacked over two hundred miles into the enemy rear to seize high ground overlooking highway N-7, north of Montelimar. In so doing, TF Butler assisted US VI Corps' canalization of the German Nineteenth Army into a narrow escape corridor. Though unable to block the German withdrawal route, as directed, it did manage to hold key terrain until additional forces could be rushed north; forces that would severely attrite a larger and more powerful enemy. In the end, it was a much reduced, far less capable Nineteenth Army that escaped the VI Corps trap and made its way to Lyon.

The task force's remarkable level of success has to be examined in context. This ad hoc force was created as an afterthought only seventeen days prior to its assembly at Le Muy, France. Its subordinate units had no habitual working relationships, and had no opportunity to train with

or rehearse prior to embarking on the attack. Greater command influence was required to ensure that this unusual mixture of units could work together to achieve a common goal. BG Butler provided that command influence.

TF Butler's success lay in the leadership's employment of its subordinate components in accordance with unit capabilities and contemporary doctrine. Butler, and his subordinate leaders, consistently and continuously exerted their leadership thus ensuring mission success. Butler built capabilities to (such as, staff and communications architecture) necessary to effectively exercise command and provided his ad hoc command with the vision and synchronization necessary to conduct an exploitation. He understood the capabilities of the forces at his disposal, and used them in accordance with their doctrinal capabilities. This actually sped up the tempo of the operation during the advance and allowed a relatively small force to secure and maintain control of critical terrain until the arrival of follow on forces. His understanding of unit capabilities informed his ability to task organize them on the fly and allowed him to effect the outcome of events by the dispatching small, powerful, combined-arms forces to rapidly resolve situations that occurred. Success had not been guaranteed. The task forces leadership enabled this ad hoc amalgamation of unit to work as a team.

---

[1]Tsouras, 272.

[2]Fredric B. Butler, "Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part II," *Armored Cavalry Journal* (March-April 1948), 38; and Harold J. Samsel, *Operational History of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.) World War II* (Short Hills: Harold J. Samsel, 1982), 75.

[3]Clarke and Smith, 124. "For all practical purposes, his [Truscott's] forces had gained the initial objectives that the Seventh Army had assigned to them, and had done so twenty-four to forty-eight hours before most planners had thought possible."

[4]Ibid., 122. See page 76 for a discussion of the initial Allied objective. The initial objective was an arc of coastline that extended on a roughly 20-mile radius from the center of the

beachhead at the Cape of San Tropez. The line depicting this arc was called the beachhead or blue line. See pages 76-77 for the overall significance of the blue line. It was the point at which army planners "believed that this projected beach head had sufficient depth to protect the landing sites from long-range German artillery; provided space for support airfields and adequately dispersed supply dumps; and gave the initial Allied ground combat units--the U.S. VI Corps and the leading echelons of the First French Army--enough area in which to maneuver. Seizing the terrain within the blue line would also provide the Seventh Army with high-ground anchors for its flanks as well as dominating heights along which Allied troops could prepare defenses against German Counterattack. Ensconced along the high ground, Seventh Army forces could deny German access to the beachhead, while simultaneously preparing to break out in the direction of Toulon and Marseille."

[5]Ibid., 124-5.

[6]Ibid., 133. "The campaign in southern France was quickly reaching a crisis point. Well before 19 August the unexpected weakness of German resistance in the assault area had brought about two significant changes in Seventh Army plans. The first was Truscott's exploitation order of late August, which had started 3d and 45th Divisions westward and TF Butler northward. The second, made by Patch was to accelerate the unloading of the French II Corps. Original plans had called for the first echelon of the French II Corps to land between 16 and 18 August, and the second between the 21st and 25th. Seeking to exploit German weakness and speed up the move to Toulon and Marseille, Patch, in conjunction with Admiral Hewitt and General de Lattre, pushed up the schedule. The bulk of the first French echelon came ashore on 16 August, and elements of various French armored units arrived the next day. This allowed the troop transports to make a rapid trip back to Corsica, and returned with troops of the second echelon on the 18th. By nightfall that day almost all troops of the II corps (excepting those of one armored combat command and one regiment) were ashore, but scarcely half the trucks, tanks, tank destroyers, artillery, and other heavy equipment were on hand."

[7]Ibid., 128.

[8]Ibid., 128-129.

[9]Ibid., 134-137. OKW, with Hitler's concurrence, issued the withdrawal order to Army Group G at 1115, 17 August 1944. The state of German communications at the time of the invasion did not allow for the rapid transmission of this order to its subordinate commands. What is clear is that the staffs of the Nineteenth Army and the German LXXXV Corps were developing plans to slow Allied advances south of the Durance River by phased withdrawal to three successive delaying positions. The intent of the defensive operations had changed significantly in less than twenty-four hours. Originally the Germans intended to delay the Allies to build combat power east of the Rhone for either a defense of the port cities, or to conduct a major counterattack on the beachhead. The new order changed the mission such that German forces were to delay the Allies so that combat forces could move to the east side of the Rhone with enough strength to secure route of withdrawal, and allow for the orderly retreat of Army Group G from southern France.

[10]Ibid., 133-134. “Meanwhile, on 17 August, Patch and de Lattre decided to move the French troops up to the line of the Real Marin and Gapeau rivers on the 19th instead of assembling all of French II Corps, including its missing equipment, near the beaches. This decision alone had the French forces moving westward at least six days earlier than originally planned. Finally, rather than waiting until 25 August, when all the French vehicles and equipment would be ashore, de Lattre wanted to attack Toulon as soon as possible, asking only for the return of Sudre’s armor on the 19th and the loan of artillery ammunition from Seventh Army stocks. With this help he felt he could launch an effective assault on 20 August before the Germans had time to organize their defenses. Patch agreed to the acceleration, supplied the ammunition de Lattre needed, released CC1 to French control, and at noon on the 19th directed de Lattre to move immediately toward Toulon and Marseille.”

[11]Ibid., 134.

[12]Butler, Part I, 13.

[13]Clarke and Smith, 147.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Butler, Part 2, 34.

[17]Clarke and Smith, 147.

[18]Ibid., 147-149.

[19]Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations*, 193-4. “There is no doubt that topography was destined to play an important role in the battle of Montelimar. South of the town and east of the Rhone a Broad plane extends for seven miles. Montelimar is a Key communications center. Highway 7 runs north and south through the town; town; two roads branch out to the west to cross the Rhone River; two other lead to the east towards Nyons and Crest. Two tributaries flow into the Rhone River from the east at points almost midway between the city of Lyon and the Mediterranean. The Drome, the larger and more northerly of the two streams, empties into the Rhone some four or five miles west of the towns of Livron and Loriol. The Roubion River, the smaller and more southerly tributary, discharges into the Rhone about two and a half miles southwest of Montelimar. Fifteen or 20 miles inland from the east bank of the Rhone are the Foothills of the French Pre-Alps. This area of less than 250 square miles is bounded on the west by the Rhone River, on the north by the Drome, on the East by the Foothills of the Pre-Alps, and on the south by the Roubion River. This terrain, roughly a square, with Montelimar, Charols, Crest, and Livron at its four points, was the setting for the eight day battle of Montelimar.”

[20]Ibid., 154.

[21]Ibid., 166-167.

[22]Samsel, See page 14, Enclosure 1 (Detailed account of operations “Butler Task Force”), of Recommendation for Unit Citation, dated 26 April 1945. This document is included, unpaginated, in this book, following page number 75, and within the first thirty unnumbered pages of Part 2, *Task Force Butler*.

[23]The functions of command were necessary for the proper and smooth exercise of command. Discussed in chapter two of this case study the functions include: the responsibilities of the commander, the duties of the staff, various methods for analyzing the mission, establishment of command posts, production of combat orders, the establishment of signal communication, and reconnaissance. The unit commander was held responsible for failure to properly address any of these functions of command.

[24]Clarke and Smith, 89.

[25]Ibid., 80. Part of Truscott’s initial instructions to Butler. He was to have the provisional armored group scheduled ready to assemble at D+2 at the earliest. The date specified was based on the likelihood of CC Sudre being pulled from VI Corps control at or around that time, and because the force could not be loaded as a separate entity because of its late creation. Ibid., 83-84. AFHQ anticipated Seventh Army and the First French Army would be unable to strike north along the Rhone until 15 October. MED planners believed Patch and de Lattre would not have control of the Rhone to Lyon until Mid-Nov.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Butler, Part 1, 13.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Clarke and Smith, 132; and Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations,* 117.

[38]Samsel, Enclosure 1, 5; and Butler, Part I, 16. After several failed bombings by Allied aircraft, the local Maquis determined the bridge was probably important enough that it needed to be destroyed. The Maquis took matters into their own hands and destroyed the bridge. This would not be the only time Allied advances had been slowed or hindered by the activities of either the local Maquis or by Allied bombings. The destroyed bridge and the poor repair of the ford halted Butlers advance. The Maquis recruited local townsfolk to help build up the ford with flagstones and then to help guide vehicles across the river.

[39]Ibid.; and Butler, Part I, 14.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Butler, Part I, 16. Task Force Butler arrived at Reiz four hours prior to darkness but had only five hours of fuel remaining. Butler did not want to risk going forward with so little fuel. He was concerned about running into enemy contact without enough fuel to fight and maneuver. He felt that if a strong enemy force caught him at Reiz he would have enough fuel to successfully engage the enemy. Thus he decided that he would wait until the resupply convoy under his Task Force logistical officer, Major Hattox, arrived.

[42]Ibid., 16-18. He used the time to good effect: maintenance of equipment, feeding and resting his soldiers, gathering intelligence from local Maquis, and developing plans for the following day. In addition, the rough, mountainous terrain that the Task Force traveled through caused a loss of communications between the Task Force and VI Corps headquarters. Butler sent an operations officer back in his Piper Cub, an artillery spotting aircraft, south to reestablish communications and brief Truscott in person, get update on Corps current situation, and find the engineers which had been left behind.

[43]Butler, Part 2, 30. “My plan was now to move the force by bounds--the cavalry scouting; advancing; securing, and the heavy column running for it when the selected area was covered. That kept us on the road a minimum of time, saved gas and provided better insurance against enemy air observation. The first bound would take us to Oraison. The second boutnd would be to Sisterone itself. From Orasion the action against Digne could be supported, if necessary, or, if trouble came ahead, the weight could be thrown towards Sisteron, the day’s objective.”

[44]Butler, Part 2, 30.

[45]Ibid., 31.

[46]Clarke and Smith, 145.

[47]Butler received reports on enemy dispositions from various sources. He relied on his mechanized cavalry, his artillery spotter plane, and the local Maquis for his intelligence. In his

mind that morning were reports on enemy activity in vicinity of Grenoble. According to his sources there was a large enemy garrison in Gap, a strong enemy outpost south of Grenoble, and a large mobile force in and around Grenoble.

[48]Butler, Part 2, 32.

[49]Clarke and Smith, 145; and Samsel, Enclosure 1, 6.

[50]These additional assets included: medium tanks, tank destroyers, infantry, artillery, and maquis.

[51]Clarke and Smith, 149; and Samsel, Enclosure 1, 8; and Butler, Part 2, 34-35.

[52]Butler, Part 2, 34-36; and Samsel, Enclosure 1, 7.

[53]Ibid, 34-35. The bulk of the infantry and artillery, and the newly arrived engineer company were all that was brought that night. One company of infantry remained at gap, one artillery battery, tank destroyers, and medium armor had remained behind at Gap and in the two blocking forces north of Gap were they were to remain until relieved by follow on forces from the 36th ID. These forces were left behind to protect the lines of supply and communication from German forces in and around Grenoble. These elements of the Task Force left behind were all relieved by evening of 21 August 1944, but only A/117th CAV returned to the Task Force that night. The remainder of their infantry, armor, and tank destroyers would not arrive until the next day.

[54]Ibid., 35.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Clarke and Smith, 149. The recon battalion of the 11th Panzer Division, supported by elements of the 71st Luftwaffe Infantry training regiments attacked the American roadblock. This large force dispersed the roadblock but did not manage to gain a foothold in the high ground controlling the route.

[57]When it was initially conceived TF Butler was intended for use as VI Corps armored reserve. It needed to be prepared to support a division in need of assistance, or to exploit success either north or west. On 18 August, it commenced operations to exploit success with an attack to the north to seize Sisterone. When examining the corps situation against contemporary doctrine, the task force can be seen as an enveloping force of a larger corps pursuit. On 24 August 1944, it returned to the reserve role, though this time for the 36th ID, where it remained until the force was dissolved.

[58]Butler, Part 2, 31.

[59]Clarke and Smith, 133; and Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Report of Operations*, 177.

[60]Clarke and Smith, 147.

[61]Butler, Part 2, 33. The infantry company was sent to Gap to control prisoners and restore order from the celebratory French.

[62]Butler, Part 2, 34. In his memoirs he refers only to sending cavalry, tank destroyers, and artillery to respond to seize Col Bayard with the local Maquis. What is clear is that the tanks did not arrive at Montelimar until the 22 August. The armor was involved in the counterattack that drove German armor and infantry south of the Roubion River, reestablishing the southern flank.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

> It is appreciated readily that best results are obtained when units have been trained together in the tactical entity in which they are to fight. Any sportsman realizes that a team of all-stars thrown together for the first time is far from an effective game-winning aggregation.[1]
>
> Brigadier General Frederic B. Butler,
> *Armored Cavalry Journal*, March-April 1948

The End Results

On 30 August 1944, as the 3rd and 36th Infantry Divisions were mopping up German remnants in the Montelimar battle Square, TF Butler was dissolved for the last time. Its subordinate commands were rapidly absorbed into their parent units, or task organized to support other higher headquarters, in preparations for future offensive operations directed against Lyon. Little has been written about this unusual organization, yet its accomplishments were remarkable.

In just under fourteen days, TF Butler's attack advanced 235 miles from Allied front lines to seize terrain that dominated the German Nineteenth Army's withdrawal routes. During its advance it liberated approximately 6,645 square miles of southern France, including seven large towns and small cities, as well as numerous small towns and villages.[2] It was directly responsible for the capture of over 3,500 men, and the destruction or capture of thousands of combat vehicles.[3] More important, it had a dramatic effect on the course of the campaign; it increased the tempo and speed of the German withdrawal from southern France.

The German Nineteenth Army, confronted by the presence of a large Allied armored formation astride its withdrawal route, increased the speed of its withdrawal. Communications

difficulties and the resultant lack of intelligence made a clear picture of Allied dispositions impossible to attain. Allied armor was at Montelimar, and could potentially strike at any point along the length of their withdrawal route. To counter this, the 11th Panzer Division, the strongest and most mobile assigned to the Nineteenth Army, was reassigned from its rear guard mission and sent north. Part of the division was went to Montelimar to push TF Butler from the high ground and secure the German withdrawal route from Montelimar to the Durance River; however, a significant portion of the 11th Panzer was sent to establish blocking positions along all major east-west roads entering the Rhone River valley.[4] This reduced the strength of German delaying forces to the south, increasing the threat posed by Allied infantry divisions attacking north from the beachhead.

TF Butler also cleared routes and cities in the path of 36th Infantry Division's advance, reducing obstacles and speeding its progress northward. By 23 August 1944, only six days after the launch of TF Butler, the lead elements of the 36th Division had arrived in the Montelimar battle square. Thereafter, the steady increase in Allied strength in the battle square set in motion a six-day brawl in which the German Nineteenth Army fought desperately to keep open, and the US VI Corps struggled to cut, the German withdrawal route along highway N-7. The methodical and orderly withdrawal the Germans had anticipated turned into a disastrous race northward. The German Nineteenth Army, though it ultimately succeeded in withdrawing, did so at horrendous cost.[5]

Playing With an All-Star Team

Butler's quote at the beginning of this chapter concisely and effectively conveys the problem he faced in August 1944. The organization he both created and led was unusual in its day. The task force, as discussed in chapter 3, was a temporary tactical grouping commonly used

by the American army in World War II. The task force was normally built around a preexisting command, where the "unity of tactical organizations is preserved as far as practicable."[6] It allowed commanders to rapidly build and adjust combined-arms formations as the situation dictated; it allowed for the flexible application of combat power.

If Truscott had followed standard practice, he would have established his task force by selecting an existing command or headquarters, assigned it a mission, and attached additional units as needed from among the other arms. The benefits of this course of action are clear. The command, the staff, and the majority of its subordinate units would have had habitual relationships, trained together, and perhaps even fought together. In fact, many of the attached units might have had previous experience working, training, and fighting alongside the headquarters selected as the foundation of this task force. A command would have had standing operating procedures familiar to all the subordinate units; designed to help mitigate the challenges imposed by short planning horizons. Upon receipt of the mission, the command would have planned, rehearsed, and conducted required training in preparation for the mission. The mission may have been challenging, even difficult to prepare for, but might otherwise have been considered routine.

TF Butler was uncommon. It had no pre-existing headquarters, no staff, and no subordinate units. This combat command equivalent was created from a conglomeration of units selected from across an entire corps, with relatively few habitual ties. A plan was produced, and orders disseminated in ten days. About a week after the issuance of orders; it assembled, disseminated updated plans, and commenced the attack within a twenty-four hour period. There was no time for training together, and no time for rehearsals. The men of TF Butler were assigned a mission, difficult by any standards, under conditions that were abnormal by any

measure; yet, they scored an impressive string of successes that had a dramatic impact on the course of the campaign.

This case study has maintained that the success of the task force cannot be explained away as a fluke or due to the inclusion of so many veterans in the organization. As Butler alluded, all-stars do not guarantee a winning team. Instead this study has examined the success of the unusual unit by assessing contemporary doctrine, TF Butler's task organization, and its tactical employment. First, it determined that the American doctrine employed at the time of the operation was both mature and sufficiently well developed to allow the task force's leaders to effectively integrate its distinct elements into a powerful combined-arms organization. Next, an analysis of the task force's unique task organization found that it effectively replicated an armor combat command--the unit Truscott originally sought to secure for the mission. Finally, it considered the leadership's employment of its subordinate units, and found that it applied them in a doctrinally appropriate manner. In studying this campaign, it becomes apparent that the success of the task force was due to the leadership's understanding of doctrine, and its ability to employ its combat power in accordance with doctrine.

TF Butler, despite the numerous difficulties discussed, had one major advantage, it had a mature and battle-tested combined-armed arms doctrine. Doctrine provided the task force's soldiers and leaders the ability to coordinate and effectively synchronize their actions of the various arms they represented. The battlefields of North Africa and Italy had proved effective laboratories for assessing and improving their doctrine; testing the myriad offensive and defensive operations it prescribed across hundreds of different fields, defiles, mountains, and towns. US Army combined arms doctrine, without time needed to train, to rehearse, or to establish standing operating procedures; gave the task force's soldiery a common language and

common understanding of how to properly employ combat power. Without this doctrine, it is doubtful that the task force would have succeeded as dramatically as it did, if it succeeded at all.

Truscott's understanding of doctrine also gave him the ability to analyze the mission and determine what capabilities he required. The unique task organization was a function of the command's ability to identify a shortfall in capabilities. Truscott determined that he needed a mobile strike force capable of either supporting a subordinate division in distress, or to exploit success. He wanted to retain the French combat command for use as the corps reserve; however, without the guarantee of this support he improvised. Truscott articulated his intent to Butler and his corps staff, giving them the guidance they needed to create the provisional armored group. The force they created was roughly equivalent in combat power to a combat command. Though it lacked the offensive striking power of a combat command, its unique organization gave it capabilities and a flexibility that could not be matched by a standard combat command. The task force's organization was adequate to meet the mission for which it was originally intended--the seizure of Sisterone. TF Butler's subsequent actions validate its leadership's creation and employment of the task force as a combat command equivalent.

Experience, it must be admitted, did play a major role in the success of this operation. The leadership's experience was crucial. TF Butler's leaders were among the most combat experienced in the American army. They had planned and carried out several amphibious landings and had earned their experience with blood grudgingly spent on the battlefields of Italy. In Italy they learned the worth of their doctrine, applying it to the problems that faced.

The task force's leaders understood the role of command in battle. Butler's understanding of the doctrinal role of command made possible the building of his staff and his task force. It then facilitated the task force's rapid production and dissemination of orders to the subordinate

commanders. Application of doctrine helped to quickly establish reporting relationships so crucial for command. It allowed Butler to disperse and then rapidly mass combat power as the situation demanded. It also allowed him to remain in contact with higher headquarters, and allowed him to operate within the bounds of Truscott's intent.

Experienced leaders, doctrinally trained, had learned how to properly employ their units through trial and error. Once assembled, leadership employed its assigned combat power in accordance with each unit's doctrinal capabilities. It taught them the value of combined arms warfare, demonstrating that smaller combined arms units could often accomplish missions more effectively than larger more heterogeneous ones. Often the strengths of one arm offset the weaknesses of the other. The knowledge, so dearly bought in Italy, later informed their ability to react to unforeseen situations. Butler not only created combined arms units to accomplish specific missions but was able to rapidly assemble combined arms formations tailored to defeat enemy concentrations--as at Digne and Col Bayard.

TF Butler's success lay with the leadership's ability to employ these very different units in a doctrinally appropriate manner. The leaderships understanding of doctrine mitigated many of the shortcomings inherent in its ad hoc construction. It gave them a common language, and a way to coordinate that ensured success. Though Butler's task force was unique, even in its day, it provides an interesting and useful case study for the modern combat leader.

What Was Once Uncommon

In many ways today's army would have been familiar to the men fighting in southern France. Certainly the weapons and uniforms have changed; however, concepts of combined arms warfare have survived. Like TF Butler, the soldiers currently fighting the global war on terror fight in an integrated fashion with other combat arms and services. In the global war on terror, as

during World War II, units as small as platoons or sections might be task organized to a company to create a combined arms team as part of a larger battalion mission. However, whereas TF Butler was unusual in its day, the creation and use of ad hoc units today is not only more common, but it is being conducted at lower levels of command.

In late 2003, I was a rifle company commander in the 101st Infantry Division (Air Assault), serving in Mosul, Iraq. The insurgency had been going on for months, a fact made deadly serious to me on day six of my command; the day I drove through an ambush. The proliferation of ambushes, sniper attacks, and the deadly improvised explosive devices used by the enemy led units to develop unique missions and techniques to stem the rising tide of violence. The operations conducted spanned the range from high-intensity to stability and construction operations. No matter the operation, the seizure of a threat target in urban terrain or the lower intensity "focus neighborhood" mission, and regardless of the terrain; the cordon and search provided the foundation of most combat operations.

My company was one of nineteen combat companies assigned to secure the city of Mosul (April 2003 to February 2004).[7] Missions that required the seizure of multiple targets, or a house-to-house search of a city neighborhood or local village, were frequent fixtures of combat operations in Mosul. Many missions, especially short notice ones, presented commands with serious and unforeseen challenges. These missions, when assigned, were an exercise in the management of combat power and provided numerous challenges in the effective exercise of command. Battalions and companies, stretched thin by requirement to provide twenty-four-hour security to numerous fixed sites, including small company lodgments; and by the need to patrol the city streets usually resorted to the creation of temporary ad hoc formations to meet mission.

My company, C/3-502nd Infantry, was no exception. I had one platoon securing a major hospital, one securing a bank in the town of Qara Qosh (30 km outside Mosul), and the majority of my last platoon securing my company lodgment. For the three or four daily patrols or missions I had one reinforced squad, my mortar section, and my fire support sections. My sister companies were little better.

My company, despite it continuous missions, still had to conduct combat missions. When a major mission was assigned to my company I could muster at most a platoon. To ensure mission accomplishment, the battalion would assign additional platoons and sections to my company for the duration of the mission. For a typical mission, I had three reduced strength rifle platoons; an anti-tank section; a mortar section; and a civil affairs, psychological operations, or tactical human intelligence team. Only the mortar team and one of the rifle platoons were organic to my command. Like TF Butler, we assembled organizations on the move, sometimes conducting combat operations without rehearsals. At times like these, we trusted that leaders at all levels could effectively employ their units in accordance with doctrine.

The story of TF Butler is instructive to American military leaders, both current and future. Butler's task force is an example of successful conduct of combat operations with a force whose components had little experience working with each other and, worse, had no opportunity to train. It stresses the importance of doctrinal knowledge. Officers can assume that they will be operating in a chaotic environment in which the unforeseen and unforeseeable will change the way they operate. Further, operating as part of a pure company, troop, or battery of any type is unlikely.

Success in contemporary and future environments will hinge on a commander's ability to be flexible. Knowledge of contemporary combined arms doctrine will give flexibility to the

commander. A commander knowledgeable in only his branch's doctrinal manuals operates at a handicap. Understanding today's capstone doctrinal manuals: FM 3.0 Operations manual, FM 3-24 Counter-Insurgency Operations, and FM 3-90 Tactics; will provide the commander the ability to effectively integrate the various arms and services in both training and in combat. A knowledge of doctrine, and the ability of leaders to apply it, will ensure the use of units in doctrinally appropriate manners, and successful integration of arms during combat operations. This is the lesson of TF Butler.

---

[1]Butler, Part II, 38.

[2]The large towns/small cities referred to in this paragraph include: Reiz, Oraisone, Digne, Chateux Arnoux, Sisterone, Gap, and Aspres-sur-Buech.

[3]Butler, Part 2, 38.

[4]Clarke and Smith, 153.

[5]Ibid., 167-168. 'Although exhausted and thoroughly disorganized, the Nineteenth Army had managed to save the bulk of the 11th Panzer Division, Kneiss' LXXXV Corps with two greatly weakened infantry divisions, and a host of miscellaneous units, parts of units and individual groups of army, air force, navy, and civilian personnel. West of the Rhone, the bulk of the IV Luftwaffe Field Corps, including the understrength 716th Infantry Division and an assortment of units under the 189th Divisions, had pulled abreast of Montelimar as early as August and had also continued to the north, led by the Taking into account all available information, the German Army units moving up the east bank of the Rhone suffered about 20 percent casualties. More important, most of these losses came from front-line combat unite, greatly reducing their effective combat strength, which was defined by the German Army as fighting troops forward of the infantry battalion headquarters. Fore example, the 338th Division (omitting the attached 933d Grenadiers) was down to 1,810 combat effectives by the 31st, and the 198th Division was reduced to about 2,800. In addition, both units had lost much of their as well as substantial quantities of other equipment such as vehicles, radios, crew-served weapons, and small arms. Thus, although thus the total manpower, or "ration," strength of these units might have been considerably more than their combat effective strength--as determined by German accounting--they could assemble little more than a single, weak regimental combat team apiece for action. At the end of the month, the US Seventh Army intelligence thus rated the 338th Division as only 20 percent effective but, over generously, put the equally damaged 198th at 60 percent. In, contrast the 11th Panzer Division, the "Ghost Division," survived the Montelimar withdrawal in relatively good condition, suffering no more than 750, casualties and arriving at Vienne with about 12,500 effective. The unit also brought out 30 of its 40-odd heavy

tanks, and 75 percent of its other vehicles. With accuracy, the Seventh Army G-2 rated the panzer division as 75 percent effective.'

[6]FM 100-5, 5.

[7]2d BDE, 101st Infantry Division (AASLT) was assigned the mission of securing Mosul, Iraq, and its environs, during the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq. Mosul, the largest city in Northern Iraq, had a population of 1.7 million alone. The 502d Infantry Regiment, or "Strike Brigade," was a brigade combat team that consisted of four rifle battalions, a mechanized team, an artillery battalion, an engineer company, and two MP companies. This force of twelve rifle companies, four anti-tank (Heavy Weapons) companies, three artillery batteries, a mechanized team, and the two military police companies provided the majority of the combat power available to secure an area encompassing thousands of square kilometers and a population well over two million Iraqis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Ancell, R. Manning, and Christine M. Miller. *The Biographical Dictionary of World War II General and Flag Officers: The U.S. Armed Forces.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Bauer, Eddy. *Illustrated World War II Encyclopedia, Volumes 11-13.* Manaco: Jaspard Polus, 1966. Reprint, H. S. Stuttman, Inc., 1978.

Bennett, Ralph. *Ultra in the West, The Normandy Campaign 1944-45.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979.

Bertin, Francois. *Allied Liberation Vehicles 1944.* Philadelphia: Casemate, 2007.

Breuer, William B. *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of Southern France.* Novato: Presidio Press, 1987.

———. *Hoodwinking Hitler: The Normandy Deception.* Westport: Praeger, 1993.

Bull, Stephen. *World War II Infantry Tactics: Squad and Platoon.* Elite Series no. 122. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2004.

———. *World War II Infantry Tactics: Company and Battalion.* Elite Series no. 105. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2005.

Clark, Lloyd. *Anzio: Italy and the Battle for Romr--1944.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006.

Clarke, Jeffrey J., and Robert Ross Smith. *Riviera to the Rhine.* Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993.

de Lattre de Tassigny, Jean. *The History of the French First Army.* Translated by Malcolm Barnes. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952.

Doubler, Michael D. *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994.

Dunnigan, James F., and Albert A. Nofi. *Dirty Little Secrets of World War II.* New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1994.

Forty, George. *US Army Handbook 1939-1945.* Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2003.

Funk, Arthur Layton. *Hidden Ally, The French Resistance Special Operations and the Landings in Southern France, 1944.* Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1992.

Gabel, Christopher R. *The Lorraine Campaign: An Overview, September-December 1944.* Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1985.

———. Leavenworth Papers no. 12, *Seek, Strike, and Destroy: U.S. Army Tank Destroyer Doctrine in WWII.* Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1985.

Gill, Lonnie. *Tank Destroyer Forces; WWII.* Paducah: Turner Publishing Co., 1992.

Giziowski, Richard. *The Enigma of General Blaskowitz.* New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997.

Gorin, Lewis J., Jr. *The Cannon's Mouth: The Role of U.S. Artillery During World War II*. New York: Carlton Press Inc., 1973.

Greenfield, Kent Roberts, and Robert R. Palmer. *Origins of the Army Ground Forces: General Headquarters United States Army, 1940-41*. Washington, DC: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1947.

Grossjohann, Georg. *Five Years Four Front's: A German Officer's World War II Combat Memoir.* Translated by Ulrich Abele. Bedford: Aegis Consulting Group, 1999; Presidio Press, 2005.

Hart, Stephen A. *Panther Medium Tank 1942-1945.* New Vanguard Series no. 67. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2003.

Hofmann, George F., and Donn A. Starry, ed. *Camp Colt to Desert Storm: The History of U.S. Armored Forces.* Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999.

House, Jonathan M. *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century.* Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 2001.

Hughes, Matthew, and Chris Mann. *Fighting Techniques of a Panzergrenadier 1941-1945: Training, Techniques, and Weapons.* Osceola: Amber books Ltd., 2000.

Irwin, Will. *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944.* New York: Public Affairs, 2005.

Jurando, Carlos Caballero. *Resistance Warfare 1940-1945.* Translated by Anunciacon Somavilla. London: Men-at-Arms Series no. 169. Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1985; Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1995.

Mauldin, Bill. *Up Front.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1945.

Mitcham, Samuel W., Jr. *Retreat to the Reich; The German Defeat in France, 1944.* Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2000. Reprint, Stackpole Books, 2007.

McGrath, John J. *The Brigade: A History, Its Organization and Employment in the U.S. Army.* Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 2004.

———. *Crossing the Line of Departure, Battle Command on the Move a Historical Perspective.* Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 2006.

Nafziger, George F. *The German Order of Battle: Panzers and Artillery in World War II.* Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1995. Reprint, Stackpole Books, 1999.

Reynolds, Michael. *Steel Inferno, 1st SS Panzer Corps in Normandy*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1997.

Rottman, Gordon L. *US Airborne Units in the Mediterranean 1942-1944.* Battle Orders Series no. 22. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2006.

Rush, Robert S. *US Infantrymen in WWII (2), Mediterranean Theater of Operations 1942-45*. Warrior Series no. 53. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2002.

———. *GI; The US Infantryman in World War II.* Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2003.

Salisbury-Jones, Guy. *So Full a Glory, A Biography of Marshal De Lattre de Tassingy.* New York: Praeger, 1955.

Samsel, Harold J. *Operational History of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.) World War II.* Short Hills, New Jersey: Harold J. Samsel, 1982.

———. *The Battle of Montrevel, France; Sept. 3, 1944; 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.).* Fort Pierce, FL: Harold J. Samsel, 1986.

Sayen, John. *US Army Infantry Divisions 1942-1943.* Battle Orders Series no. 17. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2006.

———. *US Army Infantry Divisions 1944-1945.* Battle Orders Series no. 24. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2007.

Shirley, John. *I Remember, Stories of a Combat Infantrymen in World War II.* Livermore: Camino Press, 1993.

Summer, Ian. *The French Army 1939-45 (1).* Men-at-Arms Series no. 315. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1998. Reprint, Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2005.

———. *The French Army 1939-45 (2).* Men-at-Arms Series no. 318. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1998. Reprint, Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2005.

Thomas, Nigel. *Foreign Volunteers of the Allied Forces 1939-1945.* Men-at-Arms Series no. 238. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1991. Reprint, Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1998.

Truscott, Lucian K., Jr. *Command Missions.* New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1954. Reprint, Novato: Presidio Press, 1990.

Tsouras, Peter G., ed. *The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations*. Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2000.

Weigley, Russel F. *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany 1944-1945.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.

Whitlock, Flint. *The Rock of Anzio, From Sicily to Dachau: A History of the U.S. 45th Infantry Division.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1998. Reprint, Westview Press, 2005.

Windrow, Martin. *French Foreign Legion 1914-1945.* Men-at-Arms Series no. 325. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1999.

Yeide, Harry. *Weapons of the Tankers; American Armor in World War II.* St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2007.

Yeide, Harry and Mark Stout. *First to the Rhine: The 6th Army Group in World War II.* St. Paul: Zenith Press, 2006.

Zaloga, Steven J. *M3 and M5 Stuart Light Tank 1940-1945*. New Vanguard Series no. 33. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1999.

———. *M4 (76mm) Sherman Medium Tank 1943-1965*. New Vanguard Series no. 73. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2003.

———. *M8 Greyhound Light Armored Car 1941-91*. New Vanguard Series no. 53. Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2002.

———. *M10 and M36 Tank Destroyers 1942-53*. New Vanguard Series no. 57. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2002.

———. *US Armored Units: The European Theater of Operations1944-45.* Battle Orders Series no. 3. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2004.

———. *US Armored Units in the North African and Italian Campaigns 1942-1945.* Battle Orders Series no. 21. New York: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2006.

Periodicals

Butler, Fredric B. “Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I.” *Armored Cavalry Journal* (January-February, 1948): 12-18.

Butler, Fredric B. “Southern France Exploits of Task Force Butler Part I.” *Armored Cavalry Journal* (January-February, 1948): 30-38.

Government Documents

Headquarters, Department of the Army. FM 1-02, *Operational Terms and Graphics*, Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2004.

———. FM 2-7, War Department Field Manual, *Cavalry Drill Regulations, Mechanized*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 2-10, Cavalry Field Manual, *Mechanized Elements*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941.

———. FM 2-15, Cavalry Field Manual, *Employment of Cavalry*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941.

———. FM 2-20, War Department Field Manual, *Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop Mechanized*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 2-30, Cavalry Field Manual, *Cavalry Mechanized Reconnaissance Squadron*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943

———. FM 2-30, War Department Field Manual, *Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Mechanized*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 6-20, War Department Field Manual, *Field Artillery, Tactical Employment*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 7-10, Infantry Field Manual, *Rifle Company, Rifle Regiment*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 7-10, War Department Field Manual, *Rifle Company, Infantry Regiment*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 7-15, Infantry Field Manual, *Heavy Weapons Company, Rifle Regiment*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 7-20, Infantry Department Field Manual, *Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron. Mechanized*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 7-20, War Department Field Manual, *Infantry Manual*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 7-40, Infantry Field Manual, *Rifle Regiment*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 17-10, Armored Force Field Manual, *Tactics and Technique*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 17-30, Armored Force Field Manual, *Tank Platoon*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 17-32, War Department Field Manual, *Tank Company*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 17-32, War Department Field Manual, *Tank Company*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 17-33, War Department Field Manual, *The Armored Battalion, Light and Medium.* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.

———. FM 17-33, War Department Field Manual, *Tank Battalion*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 17-36, Tentative Field Manual, *Employment of Tanks with Infantry*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 17-36, War Department Field Manual, *Employment of Tanks with Infantry*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 17-100, Armored Command Field Manual, *The Armored Division*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 18-5, Tank Destroyer Field Manual, *Organization and Tactics of Tank Destroyer Units*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations, *Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941.

———. FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations, *Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1944.

———. *Report of Operations: The Seventh United States Army, In France and Germany 1944-1945, Volume I*. Germany: 1946. Reprint, The Battery Press, Inc., 1988.

US Army. *143d Infantry After Action Reports: World War II, 1943–1945*. Germany: 36th Infantry Division, 1945

Other Sources

Funk, Arthur L. “Fighting in Southern France.” TMs (photocopy). Special Collections, Texas Military Forces Museum, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

Combined Arms Research Library
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
250 Gibbon Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2314

Defense Technical Information Center/OCA
825 John J. Kingman Rd., Suite 944
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-6218

Dr. Christopher R. Gabel
DMH
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

LTC (Ret) Louis A. DiMarco
DMH
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301

LTC (Ret) Frederick A. Baillergeon
CTAC
USACGSC
100 Stimson Ave.
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301