

Operation Dragoon: The Race Up the Rhone

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Operation Dragoon: The Race Up the Rhone, by MAJ Michael T. Quigley, US Army, 79 pages.

While much has been written and learned from Operation Overlord and the invasion of Normandy, military leaders have largely ignored Operation Dragoon and the lessons it provides for future military operations. As the US Army enters into a period of declining resources and missions focused on worldwide employment of its combat power, Operation Dragoon provides a historical example for future forced entry operations over foreign shores in a resource and time constrained environment. Although set against the backdrop of the vast industrial capabilities of the US during World War II, Dragoon lacked resources, support, and time to plan the operation. These factors are all pertinent to today's US Army planners and commanders. As one of the most successful campaigns in World War II, modern military officers should be familiar with the exploits of US Seventh Army and its French allies.

This work argues that Operation Dragoon and its subsequent campaign in southern France was vital to set the logistical conditions that rapidly defeated Nazi Germany. While previous works have highlighted logistical lessons, Operation Dragoon has not been studied for applicable lessons pertaining to Operational Art, Mission Command, or logistics execution through the lens of Operational Art. Through understanding the strategic context of this campaign, the invasion of southern France, the campaign through the Rhone Valley, and its overall effects on the European Theater of Operations, useful lessons are drawn for both contemporary commanders and planners while highlighting the necessity of this campaign to winning the war against Germany.

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Acronyms

ETO	European Theater of Operations
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MTO	Mediterranean Theater of Operations
LTG	Lieutenant General
NATO-MTOUSA	North African Theater of Operations - Mediterranean Theater of Operations United States Army
MG	Major General
NATOUSA	North African Theater of Operations – Mediterranean Theater of Operations
SOS	Service of Supply
MAAF	Mediterranean Allied Air Force
BG	Brigadier General
CBS	Coastal Base Section
DBS	Delta Base Section
CONAD	Continental Advance Section
DOS	Days of Supply

Introduction

On August 15, 1944 the picturesque beaches of France's famed Southern Riviera erupted as World War II finally reached its shores and Operation Dragoon commenced.¹ Operation Dragoon and the subsequent campaign in southern France was instrumental to the Allies' war efforts in Europe and provides valuable lessons to contemporary planners and commanders. Dragoon's planning process provides lessons for modern planners. It is similar in size and scope to potential future contingencies with which military leaders and planners will struggle. It highlights how poor logistics planning coupled with catastrophic success creates dilemmas where commanders must choose between overextension and culmination.² Dragoon's effects on the available combat power in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) during World War II demonstrate that sound operational planning must link logistical realities to campaign planning. These lessons are relevant to US military planners in a period of substantial resource shortfall in an ever-changing and complex world.

Understanding how to execute large-scale unit landings in places such as North Africa, the Mediterranean Sea, and elsewhere, still remains a requirement for US Army planners. Like Dragoon's era, today's planners also face significant shortages of amphibious shipping and landing craft and are routinely challenged in choosing a landing site offering the best chance of success. Choices such as: landing width and depth, enemy defenses, anti-air capabilities, throughput and more, still define the speed and tempo of their campaign.³ While other invasions

¹ Operation Dragoon was originally named Operation Anvil.

² "The point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations, offense or defense. (JP 5-0)", Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2016), 57.

³ Tempo is defined by the US Army as, "The relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy." Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2015), 1-91.

during World War II offer other valuable lessons, few can provide the example of culmination that Dragoon exhibited with both good and bad outcomes. Through useful study of the causes of operational culmination, today's student of war can learn invaluable lessons from this operation.

Operation Dragoon suffered from catastrophic success, shattering initial assumptions through the length of the operation, from the initial landings to the movement inland. Dealing with an intelligent and adaptive enemy and a shortage of transportation assets, the commanders had to make vital compromises and take risks that ultimately failed to destroy the German Army. However, Dragoon achieved a strategic advantage for General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the efficient opening of another front, which placed the German Army in a significant dilemma. Today, Operation Overlord receives the majority of attention in the ETO. This research argues that it was Operation Dragoon that set the necessary conditions, in combination with Operation Overlord, to defeat Nazi Germany. Despite Prime Minister Winston Churchill's objections to Dragoon, the operation provided the necessary logistics capability to ensure the rapid defeat of Germany. The southern ports directly supported over half a million fighting soldiers and allowed twenty divisions access to Europe. No additional logistics feat comes close to these successes compared against the limited resources it took to achieve.

Background

In 1941, Chancellor Adolph Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union. Having already conquered Poland, France, and Czechoslovakia, Hitler pushed towards, but ultimately failed to take Moscow. Hitler's armies were slowly forced back towards Germany as the Soviet Red Army began its lengthy advance toward Germany.

Supporting his Army's effort, Premier Josef Stalin urged his western allies to open a second front, drawing German forces away from the Soviet advance west. Beginning in 1942, the British and American forces, along with a multitude of other nations of the British

Commonwealth and expatriated armies of defeated European countries, launched a series of assaults in North Africa and the Mediterranean in support of Stalin's request. Although victory was not guaranteed, the invasion of France as the final approach to defeat Germany was imminent.

Methodology

This study focuses on the strategic need for Operation Dragoon and the strategic effects it had on the ETO through two case studies, each also providing lessons and insights while supporting the central argument that the invasion and campaign were logistically vital for the ETO and a rapid defeat of Nazi Germany. The strategic influences on Operation Dragoon are examined first, to gain understanding of why this operation occurred. The following case studies focus on the planning and execution of Operation Dragoon and the subsequent campaign for southern France. Lessons from these studies will be judged against modern US Army doctrine to provide specific and useful lessons for modern commanders and planners. These studies focus on operational art in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0 *Unified Land Operations*, selected elements of operational art from Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, ADP 4-0 *Sustainment*, and ADP 6-0 *Mission Command*. By focusing on operational art and other selected principles related to the challenges that occurred during Operation Dragoon, operational planning insight can be derived and carried forward for modern planners and commanders today.

As the campaign developed, the commanders utilized operational art in their attempts to achieve multiple effects throughout their respective areas of operation, all tied to the overall strategic goal of securing and opening an additional front in southern Europe. Examining the conclusion of the campaign and its strategic effects, proves that Dragoon was vital to the defeat of Nazi Germany while providing lessons to modern military planners and commanders.

How the commanders made decisions and guided their organizations will be judged through an examination of the principles of Mission Command from ADP 6-0.⁴ This study will focus specifically on the use of mission orders, obtaining shared understanding, and providing a clear commander's intent.⁵ Mission Command, when implemented to its fullest extent, created conditions that allowed for the exploitation of enemy weaknesses on the battlefield and shaped successive plans. If commanders obtain shared understanding of their higher commander's end state along with realistic estimates of supportability, subordinate commanders can properly tailor their orders to achieve these expectations.⁶ These expectations, issued through mission orders, allow commanders at every level to take advantage of their current situations while reducing constraints.⁷ Lacking detailed orders, a clear commander's intent guided their subordinates' actions based off their shared understanding.⁸ This process of having these three key elements of mission command reinforces their importance to modern commanders and planners.

Using the lens of ADP 4-0 to examine the planning and execution of the invasion sheds

⁴ Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 3-4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶ Shared understanding allows the commander and staff to understand "their operational environment, their operation's purpose, its problems, and approaches to solving them." It forms the "basis for unity of effort and trust." A commander does this by "collaboration to establish human connections, build trust, and create and maintain shared understanding and purpose," *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ Mission orders "are directives that emphasize to subordinates the results to be obtained, not how they are to achieve them." The use of mission orders "maximize individual initiative, while relying on lateral coordination between units and vertical coordination up and down the chain of command." It allows commanders to "intervene during execution only to direct changes, when necessary, to the concept of operations," *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ "Commander's intent is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired results without further order, even when the operation does not unfold as planned," ADP 6-0, 3-4.

light on several lessons and considerations for modern logistics planners on how to avoid culmination while maintaining tempo.⁹ The principles of logistics: continuity, responsiveness, and improvisation are the focal points of this study.¹⁰ Simply stated, logistics should provide continuity for the requirements needed, respond to changing situations, and allow commanders and planners to think outside the box while meeting the combat requirements through whatever means are available.¹¹ Combining these three principles of logistics sets the backdrop of doctrinal considerations in Operation Dragoon.

Before proceeding with the individual case studies of how to avoid future mistakes, this work begins with the strategic effects desired. The initial and final results of this campaign provided the ETO with the ability to deploy additional divisions from the US to Europe, support an additional Army Group, and present an additional problem to the German High Command, forcing limited German forces to confront Sixth Army Group. Bearing in mind both why Dragoon was executed and its strategic and operational achievements are necessary before gaining an understanding of the importance of Operational Dragoon. It was fundamentally driven by the needs of the strategic goals of the ETO and its final results were critical to the eventual defeat of Germany.

Strategic Context

On the evening of August 14, 1944, radio listeners across France heard the phrase,

⁹ ADRP 3-0, *Unified Land Operation*, 4-8.

¹⁰ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 4-0, *Sustainment* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 3.

¹¹ “Continuity is the uninterrupted provision of sustainment across all levels of war.” “Responsiveness is the ability to react to changing requirements and respond to meet the needs of maintain support.” “Improvisation is the ability to adapt sustainment operations to unexpected situations or circumstances affecting a mission.” Ibid., 3-4.

“Nancy has a stiff neck,” signaling to various French partisan groups that the invasion of southern France would occur within the next twenty-four hours.¹² Years of arguments, strategic planning, and political desires shaped the events leading to August 15, 1944. Resource planning had as much of an impact on the invasion as did the politics directing its execution. Prime Minister Churchill attempted to change the plan several times, creating a political tug-of-war that was resolved only days before the assault.

Understanding why there was a desire to invade France and create a second front is the first step to understanding how this campaign developed. The Soviet paranoia that the United Kingdom might declare a separate peace with Germany in 1941, coupled with the overwhelming success of Germany’s 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, initiated the call for a second front early in the war.¹³ As a string of conferences and meetings occurred between the military and political leaders of the Allies, all struggled in providing viable military courses of action to defeat the Axis powers in a unified manner. Through this discourse, the idea to open the second front in France was first discussed as a possibility at the Trident Conference in 1943.¹⁴ At the subsequent Quadrant Conference, plans for a cross-channel invasion developed further and southern France emerged as a method to support the assault across the channel.¹⁵ However, it was not until November 1943, at the Eureka Conference in Tehran, with President Roosevelt, Prime Minister

¹² William B. Breuer, *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of the South of France* (Novato, CA: Presido Press, 1987), 80.

¹³ Mark A Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press Inc., 1977), 14.

¹⁴ The Trident Conference was held in May 1943 in Washington, DC. Jeffery J. Clarke and Robert Ross Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1993), 5.

¹⁵ The Quadrant Conference was held in August 1943 in Quebec Canada, Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943*, 112.

Churchill, and Premier Stalin, that the Allies began considering the strategic benefits and shortfalls of Dragoon.



MAP 3

Figure 1: Map of the European Theater of Operations

Source: Clarke and Smith, United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine, 72.

As the three leaders of the major Allied powers crafted their initial plans for the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, it was understood that disagreement over the strategic path forward occurred. Churchill and the British blue water strategy of wearing Hitler down around the periphery of Europe stood in direct contrast with the Soviet Union's strategy of

immediately opening a second front in France.¹⁶ The Soviet idea consisted of two concurrent invasions of France in order to reinforce the main Allied landing in northern France and relieve pressure on the eastern front.¹⁷ It was at Tehran that Churchill first asked the broader question regarding the Soviet Union's post-war plans, which Stalin dismissed.¹⁸ This sole question drove Churchill's opposition to the invasion of southern France.¹⁹ He would rather have had this force employed further east in the Mediterranean influencing Turkey into joining the war and have Allied troops pushing north against Austria through the Aegean Sea, forestalling future Soviet influence in that region post World War II.²⁰

Ultimately, the question was settled by Roosevelt and the American strategists. American divisions and supplies still in the US needed a port of entry to the ETO, which southern France provided, whereas northern France could not due to the massive requirements of the Normandy invasion.²¹ A significant portion of troops that would have supported Churchill's plans were

¹⁶ Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943*, 112-116.

¹⁷ Prime Minister Churchill wanted to engage across the borders of Germany, not drive into the heart of Germany to defeat Hitler. *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers the Conferences at Cairo and Tehran 1943*, ed. William Franklin (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961), 554-555; this idea became central to Prime Minister Churchill's thoughts on strategy. Charles Wilson (Lord Moran), *Churchill: Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran* (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1966), 185.

¹⁹ Charles Wilson (Lord Moran), *Churchill: Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran*, 173.

²⁰ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 20; Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943*, 145-146.

²¹ David D. Dworak, *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign, 1942-1945* (New York: Syracuse University, 2012), 373-374 accessed on 21 March 2016, http://surface.syr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=hst_etd; *Personal Communication from General Handy to General Eisenhower*, 31 March 1944, accessed 20 March 2016, https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/d_day/Overlord_Part_2.pdf

needed to support Operation Overlord, and they were not going to be released to support a move into the Adriatic.²² As the US Army provided the majority of the fighting forces for the second front in France, their desires took precedence and lacking the necessary troops, Churchill's strategy was not considered supportable. During this period of planning, supporting the invasion of Normandy by invading southern France, continued to remain only a concept; there were many other challenges to overcome before it became reality.

As the planning for the second front commenced, the problems of Operation Overlord began to overtake the needs of Dragoon. The first problem encountered was a lack of assault shipping and transports available to conduct the invasion in 1944. Despite Operations Overlord and Dragoon becoming a priority in November of 1943, the resourcing for these operations was still lacking enough transports to do both both operations simultaneously; Overlord took precedence and transport for Dragoon was reallocated.²³ No additional assault shipping or transports were available from the US as they had already stripped allotments from the Pacific to meet Overlord's requirements.²⁴ Additionally, Overlord began expanding; the plan required additional divisions, and with only one other operation from which to draw resources, Dragoon was put on hold.

Operation Dragoon's stagnation became a rallying attempt for Prime Minister Churchill

²² Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 14-15.

²³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, Message from General Eisenhower to General Marshall on Meeting with the British Chiefs of Staff, 21 March 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, accessed 20 March 2016, https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/d_day/Overlord_Part_2.pdf, 1-2.

²⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 13.

to again re-engage the Allied leadership with his periphery strategy.²⁵ Churchill demanded increased engagement in Italy and amplified the importance of supporting Overlord's increased troops requirements.²⁶ With Prime Minister Churchill's calls for action in Italy, designated troops for Dragoon were instead assigned to assault Anzio on the Italian mainland.²⁷ With limited available landing craft or troops, it appeared that the invasion of southern France would fade away. However, despite Churchill's repeated efforts, the needs of Overlord and the arguments of General George C. Marshall and General Eisenhower supplanted the British Prime Minister's desire to switch the strategy.²⁸

The driving strategic issue confronting Overlord was the logistical footprint needed to support the final Allied drive into Germany. Dragoon became the solution. US planners realized that what Normandy lacked in port capacity, southern France provided in abundance, with Marseille, the largest port in France.²⁹ This port provided the capability of bringing in supplies and an additional forty divisions from the United States that would otherwise have to wait until Operation Overlord seized Antwerp to do so.³⁰ Additionally, it would keep German units from Normandy and present additional problems to the German command as the forces pushed

²⁵ *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1960), 392-393.

²⁶ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 14-15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁸ President Roosevelt order to have General Wilson to plan Operation Dragoon, overrode all final objections. *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield, 394.

²⁹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 19; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), 9.

³⁰ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 243; *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield, 393.

northward to link with those of Operation Overlord. Since the rapid defeat of Germany was the key to Allied strategy, Dragoon made perfect sense to occur nearly simultaneously to Overlord. This became evident in the early days of the Normandy Campaign as the advancing Allied forces became mired in the hedgerows.

As the Italian campaign was placed behind the priority of Overlord, excess forces within the two theaters and those still in the United States were available for use but lacked a port of entry. Ensuring they were rapidly put into combat necessitated their movement through a port system capable of handling this additional requirement.³¹ With the capture of Cherbourg behind schedule and a storm destroying one of the two Mulberry breakwaters protecting beach operations, off-loading capacity and clearance in northern France was incapable of taking on additional units.³² If these units were to be employed, Dragoon offered the fastest and most direct method of delivering this additional combat power without straining the already delicate ETO port situation. Additionally, these forces could increase the overall logistics capacity for the ETO by seizing the southern ports and relieve the overall pressures on the northern ports in France.

Logistics considerations to defeat Germany shaped the final decision to execute Dragoon.³³ The need to bring more divisions to France, coupled with the Germans' actions destroying the port of Cherbourg, convinced the military planners they needed the ports of

³¹ Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *U.S. Army in World War II The War Department Global Logistics and Strategy*, vol. 2, 1943-1945 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), 2:370.

³² Randolph Leigh, *48 Million Tons to Eisenhower* (Washington, DC: The Infantry Journal Inc., 1945), 20-21; A Mulberry Breakwater was a series of sunken Liberty ships which provided a protected harbor within the beach control area allowing for increased time to off-load vessels via causeway piers and bare beach operations.

³³ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 19; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 294.

Marseille and Toulon.³⁴ As the situation in Italy progressed, forces became available for use again.³⁵ These available forces would support Overlord, by invading southern France.³⁶ Finally, Operation Dragoon was approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on July 2, 1944, the final preparation for the operation could now begin.³⁷

Case Study One: The Invasion of Southern France

Planning the Operation

British General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, the Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean Theater, and his deputy commander, General Jacob Devers, were tasked with ensuring the planning moved forward.³⁸ General Wilson was primarily focused on the Italian Campaign, and as the planning wove through a series of commanders and staffs with responsibilities changing at various times. Force 163 was tasked by General Wilson to begin the planning of this operation.³⁹ Eventually, the planning for the operation fell to the commander who would conduct the mission, Lieutenant General (LTG) Alexander Patch, who commanded US Seventh Army, and temporarily, the VI Corps until its new commander could assume

³⁴ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 290, 294; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 19.

³⁵ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁹ Force 163 was a small planning group that began the initial planning for the operation and later grew into US Seventh Army. *Ibid.*, 31, 35.

responsibility.⁴⁰ Initially, Force 163 had been focused on planning and executing the logistics needed to support Dragoon under General Devers, North African Theaters of Operations - Mediterranean Theater of Operations, US Army (NATO-MTOUSA). NATO-MTOUSA focused on ordering the necessary supplies and vessels to support the invasion and the 120-day campaign in southern France.⁴¹ From March until July 1944, as the various staffs combined, they put together the core plans of the invasion.⁴² While the American Army was heavily invested in the planning effort, they only provided three divisions to the operation, the 3rd, 45th, and 36th Infantry Divisions. The majority of the forces involved in the operation, however, would be the French divisions scattered throughout the MTO.

These French divisions were vital to the invasion and its subsequent campaign, providing the only armored division in the initial endeavor and the combat power needed to seize the ports. There was an internal tension between the French and American commanders as the majority of forces involved in the operation were French but three US divisions would lead the initial assault.⁴³ The American-centric command structure after the invasion was also disliked by the overall commander of the Free French Forces, General Charles De Gaulle.⁴⁴ Despite his eventual

⁴⁰ US Seventh Army Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945* (Heidelberg: Aloys Graf, 1946), 1:3. For the actual invasion, Major General Lucian Truscott would lead the VI Corps. Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 36-37.

⁴¹ Lucian K. Truscott, *Command Missions* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company Inc., 1954), 387; Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:5. Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 48.

⁴² Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁴⁴ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:15; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 27-28.

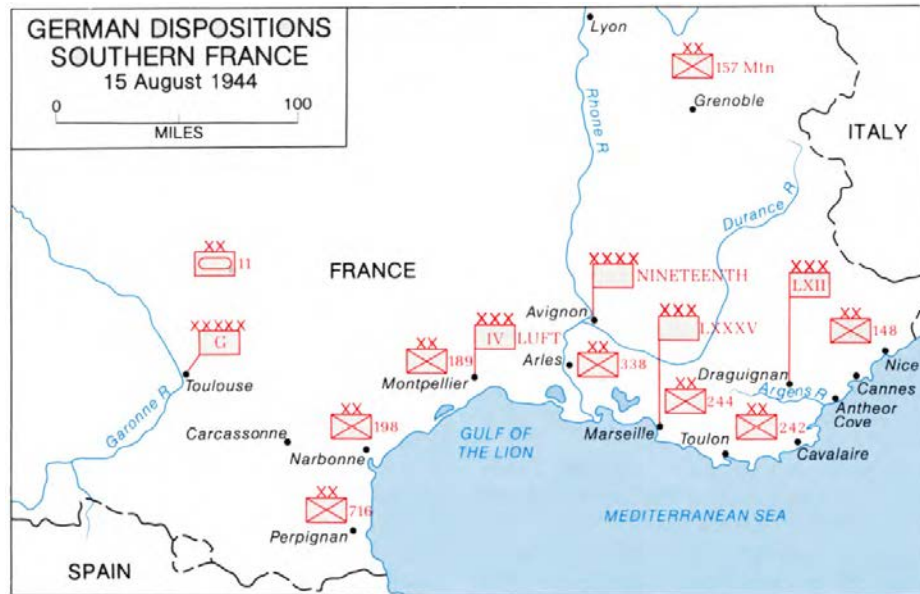
acceptance of US command of Dragoon's French forces, General De Gaulle appointed General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny as the French commander of the First French Army.⁴⁵ This created a separate Army command, combining the French forces of the operation.⁴⁶ For the purposes of the invasion, they were temporarily placed under the command of the US Seventh Army.⁴⁷ After the invasion's success, the French forces would remain under General Dever's overall command, setting the stage for an additional Army Group in the ETO.⁴⁸ Eventually resolving the French hierarchy struggle, the planners examined the German troop dispositions and the terrain as they finalized their plans.

⁴⁵ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:15-16.

⁴⁸ This made US Seventh Army both an Army Headquarters and an Army Group Headquarters setting the conditions for the future command structure of the forces in southern France, Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 29.



MAP 2

Figure 2: German Dispositions in Southern France

Source: Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 66.

General Johannes Blaskowitz, Commander *Army Group G*, and General Friedrich Weize, Commander *19th Army*, were responsible for the German plans to defend southern France.⁴⁹ The Germans' immediate problem was one of not knowing precisely where the landing would occur, coupled with the overall quality and quantity of their troops. With only four static infantry divisions, five reserve divisions, and four well-equipped and trained divisions, they had to cover hundreds of miles of coastline.⁵⁰ As conditions in Normandy deteriorated for the Germans, General Blaskowitz's force was reduced to support that defense, leaving only seven infantry divisions to face the coming assault.⁵¹ *Army Group G* was a secondary concern to the German

⁴⁹ German units will be italicized for clarity and rapid identification versus Allied units.

⁵⁰ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

High Command and Hitler; the actions in Normandy were more pressing than those in southern France.

As General Blaskowitz attempted to improve his position, Hitler's indecisiveness remained an insurmountable hurdle. One Panzer Division, the *11th Panzer Division*, was available to *Army Group G*; the other Panzer Division had moved north to counter Normandy forces.⁵² Understanding that an assault was imminent, General Blaskowitz pleaded with the German high command for the release of the panzers, but it was not until August 11 that Hitler approved their use, too late for them to arrive in time.⁵³ By August 14, the Germans had a good idea of where the landings would occur and when.⁵⁴ On the morning of August 15, units, including the *11th Panzer Division*, were beginning to move to reinforce Marseille and the surrounding area.⁵⁵

⁵² Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 62-63.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 67, 70.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

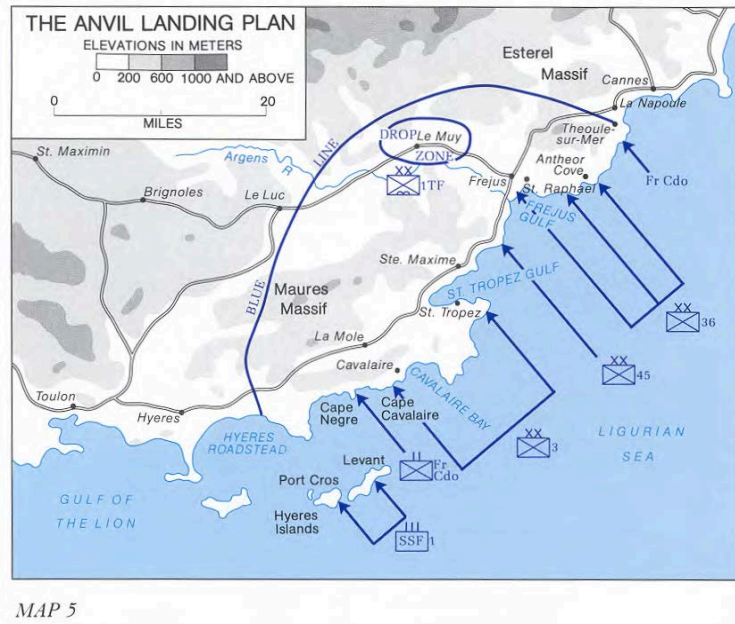


Figure 3. Map of the Invasion Plan

Source: Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 76.

As the Germans moved into new and prepared defensive positions, the Allies stood ready to execute their plan. With three US Infantry Divisions, the assaults would occur along three beaches, code-named Alpha, Delta, and Camel. These divisions were assembled as the VI Corps under their new commander, Major General (MG) Lucian Truscott. The plan called for the 3rd Infantry Division to assault Alpha Beach on the extreme left of the invasion area.⁵⁶ The 45th Infantry Division would assault the center at Delta beach while the 36th Infantry Division assaulted the right flank at Camel.⁵⁷ Behind this initial lodgment, the II Corps of the French Army under General de Tassigny would then land and seize the ports of Toulon and Marseille, with an

⁵⁶ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:Map between 56-57, 59, 60; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 109.

⁵⁷ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:Map between 56-57, 60; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 109.

additional French Corps arriving later.⁵⁸ Before the invasion, combined aerial and naval bombing would weaken the German defenses.⁵⁹ Special Commando units would move against German-held islands early in the morning of the assault to silence coastal gun batteries and secure freedom of movement for the Western Task Force.⁶⁰ Finally, a provisional airborne division, the First Airborne Task Force, under the command of BG Robert Frederick would secure the access roads to the beaches with assistance from French resistance fighters hindering German movement and coordination.⁶¹

The plans for Operation Dragoon called for an eventual movement north of both armies, threatening retrograding German units and forcing the re-allocation of additional German units to defend against the Allied thrust. The seizure of Marseille accomplished Eisenhower's requirement for a large port to deploy US-located divisions while the invasion ensured the employment of the French forces in the MTO. Finally, Dragoon would achieve the strategic objectives established at the Tehran conference to support a secondary assault on the second front and reduce pressure on the resurgent Soviet Army.⁶² A successful invasion would transition into a campaign based on

⁵⁸ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:Map between 56-57, 58; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 80.

⁵⁹ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:60-61; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 81-82.

⁶⁰ Jacques Robichon, *The Second D-Day*, trans. Barbara Shuey (New York: Walker and Company, 1962), 93.

⁶¹ Ibid, 77; First Airborne Task Force approximated a full Airborne Division consisting of a British Parachute Brigade, American Parachute Regiment, an additional US Parachute Battalion, a Glider Battalion, four Parachute Field Artillery Battalions, and support troops. Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 38-39.

⁶² Alan F. Wilt, *The French Riviera Campaign of August 1944* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 55.

achieving these objectives.

There was only one issue with the post-landing plan—they lacked one.⁶³ Their orders laid out a vague movement west through the Rhone Valley to Lyon or a strike north towards Grenoble, due to the limited time available for planning the invasion. General Wilson attempted to fix this lack of planning four days before the invasion began on August 11, but it was too late.⁶⁴ The focus remained on the beaches and the ports. In the minds of the planners, this was the critical goal of their enterprise.

The single planning factor having the most effect on the campaign's development came from the logistics planners. When examining what the campaign might look like, they made critical assumptions on the tempo of the campaign as they began ordering supplies in early 1944.⁶⁵ Due in part to the constant cancellation and lateness of the plan's final approval, the supply situation should have been critically low, but it was not due in part to General Devers. Without any troops assigned, the logisticians had sent forth requisitions in January of 1944 on an estimate of 450,000 men for thirty days.⁶⁶ These supplies moved forward from US Army Service Forces between February and April.⁶⁷ Even though Operation Dragoon was eventually canceled,

⁶³ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 83-84.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁵ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:21; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 51-52; ADRP 3-0, 4-7.

⁶⁶ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 48; this was refined down to 366,833 personnel by D+30 and 576,833 personnel by D+65; Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:65.

⁶⁷ Flatted cargo refers to supplies loaded onto a vessel and covered with material allowing other cargo to be loaded overtop. This allowed vessels to store material while conducting other missions. *Logistical History of NATOUSA-MTOUSA* (Naples: G. Montanino, 1945), 114-115.

General Devers and the North African Theater of Operations, US Army (NATOUSA) Service of Supply (SOS) commander, made the decision to keep these supplies separate in the event it was revived.⁶⁸ By the time it became finalized, seventy-five percent of the needed material was on-hand for a two-division assault.⁶⁹ By D-Day all supplies needed until D+90 were either on-hand or in the distribution pipeline.⁷⁰ All of these projections and orders were based on several key assumptions.

These assumptions were typical of the planning done at that time. The first assumption was that there would be a slow move inland.⁷¹ Based on the timeline created by US Seventh Army, the first port, Toulon, would be seized by D+20.⁷² With these underlying assumptions, the logistics planners believed this type of operation would require more ammunition than fuel.⁷³ All the planners had to do was look at Normandy and their previous experiences to find confirmation for their assumptions.⁷⁴ They therefore cut fuel estimates by twenty percent, removed fuel units from the priority of offloading, and focused instead on ammunition to defeat the anticipated

⁶⁸ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 48-49.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

⁷² Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:67; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 51.

⁷³ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 51-52.

⁷⁴ At Anzio, Sicily, North Africa, and Normandy, the Germans did not withdraw, focusing instead on launching counter-attacks against the lodgment. This drove a decrease in initial fuel stocks and an increase of ammunition to support this. They did this knowing they assumed risk if the operation changed. Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:64; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 52.

German counter-attack.⁷⁵

The logistic planners assumed that they could move roughly 277,700 tons over the beaches during the first month of operations while concurrently landing the entire forces during this period.⁷⁶ This would prove more than adequate to supply the initial capture of the ports, the protection of the French Army, and defeat the German counter-attack. While their initial estimates regarding the flow of cargo proved exceptionally accurate, their assumptions about the pace of the advance were drastically incorrect, contributing to the eventual issues of the campaign.

At the tactical level, units were given guidance as to what supplies they would take with them. This planning represented the aforementioned requirement of ammunition over fuel, but did include enough fuel allocation for seven days of operations.⁷⁷ Although this seems like a minor footnote, it is important to examine the tactical level to understand how operational planning affects both tactical plans and future operations. Having learned from previous experiences that the initial supply status of units was critical to their next actions, they paid particular attention to this part of the plan and all units in the invasion deployed with three days of supply.⁷⁸ With seven days of fuel, based on the previous assumption of twenty operational miles per day, by D+5, the staffs could only expect to be eighty to one hundred miles inland at best.

⁷⁵ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:64; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 51-52.

⁷⁶ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:65; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 52. All tons in plans and material are listed as Long Tons. A long ton is equal to 2,250 lbs.

⁷⁷ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:63-64; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 50.

⁷⁸ Headquarters, US Seventh Army, Annex 6, *Admin Plan to Seventh Army Outline Anvil, Italy, 1944*, presented in, Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 50.

As orders trickled down to the divisions, they provided the details necessary to conduct the landing, but lacked a cohesive plan for the event afterwards. Highlighting the general missions of VI Corps, US Seventh Army, and their sister divisions, 3rd Infantry Division's Field Order No. 12 provides the entire concept of the invasion on one page.⁷⁹ Aside from one task, they also included their own missions on this same page. Extensive intelligence annexes conclude that there should be no heavy resistance obstructing their landing. Detailed planning for the invasion included assault time tables for the beaches, along with precise timelines for follow-on forces. On these timelines, combat forces took precedence over the support units, with the 45th Infantry Division G-4 suggesting that transportation assets be prioritized and taken over some combat elements; this was ignored.⁸⁰ Their maps provided detailed objectives and plans immediately following their successful assault on the beaches, but after D+2, they have only their initial guidance. Finally, the division planners attached alternate plans for their amphibious assault to the end of their field order, providing alternatives for the commander.⁸¹ These alternate plans, although not used, provided options for the division if their landing went awry. From the strategic guidance down to the division orders, the overall planning was synchronized and nested within the strategic goals of General Eisenhower and General Wilson, and the intent of US Seventh Army and VI Corps commanders.

With all plans finalized, the time had come to put them into action. As the various ships sailed, airplanes loaded their bombs and paratroopers, and soldiers readied their equipment, Prime Minister Churchill attempted one last postponement. Churchill examined the breakout occurring

⁷⁹ Headquarters 3rd Infantry Division, *3rd Infantry Division Field Order No. 12.*, 3.

⁸⁰ 45th Infantry Division G-4 Section, History of the G-4 Section – French Campaign August 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Box 1028, G-4 History, August 1944, 2.

⁸¹ Headquarters 3rd Infantry Division, "Annex B," in *3rd Infantry Division Field Order No. 12.* (Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Box 775), 4.

in Normandy and saw an opportunity to send these forces to Brittany and secure the ports there.⁸² This idea was turned down both by the JCS and General Eisenhower.⁸³ With the plan already in motion, General Wilson also disagreed with the practicality of assaulting Brittany.⁸⁴ The dice had already been cast and there was no turning back. Finally, Churchill relented and decided to observe the invasion first hand.⁸⁵ So, as the morning of the invasion dawned, the one man who vehemently opposed the concept from its inception was now a part of the invading forces approaching the French coast.

The Landings

Operation Dragoon made full use of the combined air and sea power of the Allied forces, mirroring the Normandy invasion with an airborne assault, coordinated partisan attacks, and a complex deception plan. Technology played its part as new weapons were put into action and concepts of control were employed on a unique platform. Understanding of the planning, preparation, and the results of the invasion will set the framework for how the campaign emerged.

The success of the operation focused on creating multiple dilemmas for the Germans. One of the aspects of this was the month-long air campaign against the Germans defenses and avenues of approach. The Mediterranean Allied Air Force (MAAF) developed a four-phase

⁸² Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 282-284; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 21.

⁸³ *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield, 394; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 21.

⁸⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 21-22.

⁸⁵ Charles Wilson (Lord Moran), *Churchill: Taken from the Diaries of Lord Moran*, 180; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 284.

operation to support Dragoon.⁸⁶ After severely damaging the *Luftwaffe*, the main effort focused on destroying critical infrastructure in the invasion area.⁸⁷ These targets, mostly bridges and major rail lines, isolated the invasion area protecting it from German counter-attacks.⁸⁸ Switching to coastal targets on D-1, they added their firepower to the naval guns, reducing the Germans' immediate defenses on the beach.⁸⁹ Overall, the MAAF ensured that German air power was mostly negated in the invasion, while ensuring the invasion was protected from counter-attacks.

Further supporting the operation, MTO forces executed a deception plan, Operation Ferdinand. The Allied Navy launched its portion of the operation, known as Operation Rosie, prior to D-Day. Rosie used US Navy PT Boats to simulate a raid on the Port of La Ciotat.⁹⁰ These actions created a radar image mimicking a massive invasion fleet on German radar, triggering false alarms across the German command structure.⁹¹ Additionally, it was used as a propaganda tool by Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels to provide some good news to the German public about the successful defeat of an attempted Allied landing.⁹² Modeled after Operation Overlord, the MAAF began its portion of Ferdinand concurrently with the Navy simulating a paratrooper drop using dummy paratroopers rigged with explosives, further

⁸⁶ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:61-62.

⁸⁷ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 81-82.

⁸⁸ Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces In World War II*, vol. 3, *Europe: Argument to V-E Day January 1944 to May 1945* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 423.

⁸⁹ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:61.

⁹⁰ Breuer, *Operation Dragoon The Allied Invasion of the South of France*, 99-101.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 179.

confusing the German High Command.⁹³ These deceptions stressed the readiness of the Germans as they remained on high alert for hours awaiting an invasion.

On the morning of August 15, the previous night's airborne assault by the First Airborne Task Force had resulted in limited gains. Despite the failure of landing American pathfinders, British pathfinders succeed in their efforts, but only forty percent of the paratroopers were assembled after their drops.⁹⁴ Regardless, by the end of the evening, their major objectives to prevent enemy movement into beachhead areas, secure the town of Le Muy, and clear landing areas for glider troops, had all been achieved except for the seizure of Le Muy.⁹⁵ The most appreciable part of their plan was the isolation of the *19th Army* Headquarters by cutting communication lines and rendering German communications ineffective during the critical early hours of the invasion.⁹⁶ Despite not achieving all of their intended objectives, their ability to create massive confusion and deny German commanders instructions in the vital first hours of the invasion created a serious dilemma for *Army Group G*.

As the airborne soldiers created chaos in their rear, the German units defending the beachheads found themselves under a mass of fire from the Allied navy. In all, approximately 15,900 shells were fired at German positions during D-Day. Each assaulting division had its

⁹³ Wilt, *The French Riviera Campaign of August 1944*, 91; Breuer, *Operation Dragoon The Allied Invasion of the South of France*, 102-103.

⁹⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 102. Clarke and Smith state that this number is contradictory with official Army Air Force history. It is also in conflict with the statements in the US Seventh Army History. Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:112.

⁹⁵ This also contradicts with the statements of US Seventh Army stating that all tasks prior to H-Hour were accomplished. Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:114-115; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 77, 104.

⁹⁶ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 105.

supporting naval gunfire, divided among their predetermined boundaries.⁹⁷ Before departing Italy, the divisions and their supporting naval force practiced and trained together, developing relationships between the divisions, their naval fire control parties, and their supporting vessels.⁹⁸ Confounding things for the beach defenders even further, drone ships carrying explosives moved forward and detonated, clearing paths for the advancing landing craft.⁹⁹ Although, not all of these vessels worked, some did, in what is perhaps the first use of autonomous vessels in war. The combination of naval gunfire, partisans, paratroopers, and airplanes all in a tightly constrained area afforded a unique challenge to control.

Managing the invasion area was the USS Catoctin, a vessel specifically designed by the US Navy as a command and control ship for amphibious operations.¹⁰⁰ Onboard this vessel were all the assorted command elements for the invasion, which provided a central point of control for the operation. Until the US Seventh Army and VI Corps Headquarters landed, the Western Naval Task Force Commander, Vice Admiral Henry K. Hewitt was in overall command of the invasion.¹⁰¹ With the USS Catoctin, Vice Admiral Hewitt coordinated, tracked, and observed all elements of the fight in near real time.¹⁰² For the first time in a World War II amphibious assault,

⁹⁷ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 44.

⁹⁸ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:78; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 44.

⁹⁹ Some drone ships did not successfully detonate as planned or failed to reach their targets. Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:119; Breuer, *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of the South of France*, 66-67.

¹⁰⁰ Breuer, *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of the South of France*, 66-67.

¹⁰¹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 45.

¹⁰² Breuer, *Operation Dragoon: The Allied Invasion of the South of France*, 66-67.

all orders came from a single point of control, purposely designed to provide coordination and rapid decision-making.



MAP 6

Figure 4. Map of the Final Invasion Plan and D+1 Objective Line

Source: Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 109.

At 0730 on August 15, VI Corps began their assault. The mission of VI Corps was to occupy all terrain, up to the blue line, seen on Map four (above), and prepare to attack to the west and northwest as soon as ordered by VI Corps.¹⁰³ The forces and men conducting this assault

¹⁰³ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:119; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 77; Headquarters, 3rd Infantry Division, *3rd Infantry Division Field Order No. 12.*, 1.

were experienced veterans, some with multiple amphibious assaults.¹⁰⁴ Within their task organization, they had modified the normal division structures, creating self-supporting battle-groups thereby increasing the combat flexibility of each regiment.¹⁰⁵ This shaped the early hours of the assault as the individual soldiers understood their operation due to their experience and had the necessary task organization to rapidly defeat the limited German resistance.

The 3rd Infantry Division came ashore on left of the invasion beaches at Alpha Beach and rapidly secured them under weak opposition from the mixture of German and *Ost*, non-German, defenders.¹⁰⁶ Light opposition allowed them to move rapidly inland.¹⁰⁷ The 45th Infantry Division assaulted the center beaches, faced the opposition of a lone 75-millimeter gun, which was rapidly silenced, and continued their drive inland to secure their objectives.¹⁰⁸ On the right of the invasion beaches, the 36th Infantry Division made most of its landing as prescribed.¹⁰⁹ However, they encountered a stiffer German resistance than their sister divisions.

Divided into Camel Red, Camel Blue, and Camel Green, the 36th Infantry Division was supposed to secure these beaches and move inland. The assaults on Camel Green and Blue

¹⁰⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 36-37.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰⁶ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:120; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 110-112; Donald G. Taggart, ed, *History of the Third Infantry Division In World War II* (Nashville: The Battery Press, 1987), 206.

¹⁰⁷ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division In World War II*, 211; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 110.

¹⁰⁸ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:129-133; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 112-113.

¹⁰⁹ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:135-138.

progressed with little resistance from the Germans.¹¹⁰ Camel Red, however, proved to be a different story. A direct route into the town of Freyus was the follow-on objective for Camel Red forces, which was important due to the connection of two major roads within the invasion area that met at this town and its airfield.¹¹¹ The Germans had foreseen this and heavily defended the potential landing sites.¹¹² Despite all of the preparations by the Allied Navy and Air Force, the defenses were still formidable and would have inflicted heavy casualties on the landing troops. The decision to proceed fell on Rear Admiral Spencer S. Lewis, commander of the Naval Task Force for Camel Beaches.¹¹³ With the 36th Division commander ashore and unreachable, Rear Admiral Lewis decided to move the forces from Camel Red to Camel Green instead.¹¹⁴ His ability to see the overall situation led to a decision which saved countless lives, without impacting the results of the invasion.

Transitioning from planning to execution, Operation Dragoon was initially successful. The VI Corps had established the beachheads, initial objectives had been seized, and no German counter-attack had challenged control of the beaches. Supporting efforts all played their parts in the initial success of the invasion, allowing for a relatively low-cost success.¹¹⁵ The situation

¹¹⁰ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:135-138; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 113-115.

¹¹¹ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:118.

¹¹² Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 115-116.

¹¹³ Ibid., 116-117; Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:140.

¹¹⁴ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:139-141; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 117.

¹¹⁵ Total casualties for the first day were estimated at ninety-five killed and 385 wounded,

evolved into how much further could the VI Corps advance. Command and control during the operation provided the opportunity to move troops as necessary to reduce casualties, new technology had proven mostly effective in its use, and the veteran troops of the VI Corps had rapidly seized their beachheads.

Unlike Normandy, the German Army did not heavily contest the landing zones. The defending troops were either destroyed during the bombardments, quickly overcome by the VI Corps, or were fighting the First Airborne Task Force. It is clear that Operation Dragoon exploited the German weaknesses on the coast and created too many issues that the *19th Army* and *Army Group G* could not overcome. Failing to mount a successful counter-attack during the morning and mid-afternoon of the invasion protected the VI Corps during their most vulnerable moment.

Expanding the Lodgment

By the late afternoon of August 15, the planned troop formations were ashore and achieving initial success. VI Corps now anticipated moving into increasingly stiffer German resistance and confronting a German counter-attack.¹¹⁶ The *11th Panzer Division* had begun movement the previous day but was still not across the Rhone River, and thus was not in a position to launch a counter-attack. Meanwhile, tied down by partisans and the paratroopers, local German units were on the defense, incapable of launching any coordinated counter-attacks.¹¹⁷

The *244th Infantry Division* was able to execute a previously ordered attack against the Airborne Task Force, but by the time it was put into action during the early morning hours of August 16,

with the second day's results similar to the first. Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 122.

¹¹⁶ Headquarters 3rd Infantry Division, "Annex B," in *3rd Infantry Division Field Order No. 12.*, 4-5.

¹¹⁷ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:172.

units from the 45th Infantry Division and the First Airborne Task Force had united and defeated the effort.¹¹⁸ German resistance was negligible, and the invasion forces seized more ground against this disjointed defense.

By D+2, the morning of the August 17, the US Seventh Army was established ashore under LTG Patch, having achieved all its major objectives. Operation Dragoon had gone well, fully two days ahead of schedule.¹¹⁹ As the stockpiles on the beaches were assembled, the divisions brought the rest of their material and troops ashore. Lack of German resistance was so acute that LTG Patch ordered the French forces' arrival moved forward and by D+5, elements of the French Army were arriving five days ahead of schedule.¹²⁰ While some minor failures occurred during the invasion, the rapid success of the first two days of combat provided an example of both a well-planned and well-executed operation.

Analysis of the Plans and Invasion

The combination of planning and execution of the invasion highlights the success of Operation Dragoon and underscores the true difficulties it encountered. These issues provide the lessons that modern planners and commanders should take away from the planning and execution of the invasion. Foremost of these difficulties was the constant conflict between the political goals and the strategic plans involved in launching Operation Dragoon, confounding General Eisenhower's ability to use operational art in the ETO. This friction impacted logistics planning, exercising mission command in the development of orders, and the overall strategy employed in the operation. Logistics support of the operation during its initial planning provides lessons for

¹¹⁸ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 118-120.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

future planners who must consider how their plans effects future operations in terms of continuity and improvisation. They must realize that these initial ideas carry through into their next operation or phase and shape their follow-on operations. Conducting the landing highlights the fact that a well-made plan requires key principles of mission command to turn this plan into a successful operation. To create success, the commanders of Dragoon relied on solidified strategic guidance, enabling mission command to develop the plans, and the logistics support necessary to invade southern France.

Without General Eisenhower, political support from the US, and the JCS, the invasion of southern France would have never occurred.¹²¹ The guiding concepts driving the commanders and their staffs during the planning process for an operation derive from operational art and the interplay of strategy and the desired political outcomes.¹²² The fighting between three heads of state, each attempting to impose their own will for their desired outcomes, created a great deal of conflict. During this process Operation Dragoon challenged Prime Minister Churchill's strategies and political goals, resulting in a high level of political friction over its planning. While Churchill attempted to stop it, albeit failing to stop the invasion, General Eisenhower and General Wilson did not divest themselves of the planning groups and resources gathered to support Dragoon. General Eisenhower recognized that in order to achieve his political objective, he had to continue fighting to execute Operation Dragoon.

General Eisenhower's understanding that the situation in northern France depended on

¹²¹ Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, *Minutes of Meeting Held in Conference Room, Widewing, 1430 hours, 27 March 1944*, 31 March 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, accessed 20 March 2016, https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/d_day/Overlord_Part_2.pdf.

¹²² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

tactical operations in southern France highlights his innate application of operational art.¹²³ As a theater commander he was focused on the things he could affect, troop flow, and available combat forces. While Prime Minister Churchill was focused on the politics of a post-World War II Europe, General Eisenhower remained focused on objectives in front of him.¹²⁴ This example highlights the disconnect between politics and military strategy. The commander of the ETO had to first win the war in order for there to be a post-World War II Europe. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the JCS understood this problem as well, providing General Eisenhower his desired second front in France.

General Eisenhower achieved this political victory through operational art as well. He understood what he could and could not effect, realizing that in order to defeat Germany, he needed more logistics and units than he had available at the time.¹²⁵ As the Normandy forces stalled in the hedgerows, then began a rapid breakout outpacing their logistics and approaching culmination, this became increasingly apparent.¹²⁶ Lacking the necessary transport capacity to launch Dragoon concurrently did not diminish this need.¹²⁷ With an additional six divisions in the south, the port capacity Marseille offered, and the problems this operation would create for the

¹²³ “Operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.” ADP 3-0, 9-10.

¹²⁴ “The *commander’s intent* is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander’s desired results without further orders, even when the operations does not unfold as planned (JP 3-0).” ADP 6-0, 3-4.

¹²⁵ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 290-291.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 292; ADRP 3-0, 4-8, 4-9.

¹²⁷ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 15.

Germans, Dragoon would ultimately shorten the war in the ETO.¹²⁸ General Eisenhower focused on how his strategy would achieve the political objective of ending the war through multiple tactical actions across the ETO, not the political objective of staunching Soviet expansion in Europe. Priorities mattered.

At the operational level, the successful application of supporting efforts before the invasion and during the landings highlight how linking tactical actions at this level increases the likelihood for a desired outcome. Preparing the battlefield for weeks beforehand, the MAAF ensured that the landing areas were isolated from any potential counter-attack by *Army Group G*. The MAAF also forced enemy units to move slowly and avoid massing, which hindered their movement further. Preparatory fires, airborne assaults, and commando strikes all set conditions for the landings. The experienced troops of the VI Corps, benefiting from this extensive combination of tactical actions, rapidly accomplished their first objectives and established the lodgment. Similar in theory to operational art's achievement of strategic objectives, applying the same methodology to the invasion ensured initial success.

Linking these actions together is one aspect of success in applying operation art. Having the necessary supplies to achieve them is another matter. If General Devers and NATO-MTOUSA had not ordered the necessary supplies, then kept them available, the operation would have been significantly delayed.¹²⁹ This concept ensured continuity of logistics for Operation Dragoon.¹³⁰ Had these supplies been moved to another operation, or distributed somewhere else, the delay caused by ordering new supplies would have significantly set back the invasion date.¹³¹ This

¹²⁸ ADP 4-0, 4; this concept is also captured in basing in operational art, ADRP 3-0, 4-6.

¹²⁹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 49; ADP 4-0, 4.

¹³⁰ ADP 4-0, 4.

¹³¹ Ibid, 3; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater*

foresight ensured that the MTO remained responsive to the changes of the strategy.

When viewing the campaign through the principle of responsiveness, the logistics planners used their estimates to develop a cohesive plan that they thought would meet the needs of the fighting forces.¹³² As the plans developed based off a slow movement forward from the beaches, the logisticians altered their plans ensuring that the need for ammunition inherent in this approach was available by sacrificing unnecessary fuel to support this rate of march. While they acknowledged all of the tenets within responsiveness in this action, they constrained themselves by assuming that this was fact and not amendable to change.¹³³ The planners had forgotten that the enemy also gets a say in how fast the advance progresses. In this circumstance, lacking a cohesive defense, the US Seventh Army accelerated their forward progress and the planned increase of ammunition did not materialize as a true requirement. A twenty percent reduction in fuel reduced the availability of the most needed commodity during an aggressive pursuit for a mechanized army.

This lack of fuel, a calculated risk taken by the planners, coupled with a lack of trucks to move supplies forward in the initial waves of the invasion, created the necessary conditions in the first few days of the invasion to shape the campaign. Improvisation would become increasingly important as the troops advanced further into France, and the origins of this problem began in the planning of Dragoon with the assumptions that the campaign would proceed slowly.¹³⁴ The importance of critically thinking about logistics factors during the planning phase is critical to

of Operations Riviera to the Rhine, 49.

¹³² Responsiveness is defined as “the ability to react to changing requirements and respond to the meet the needs to maintain support.” This allows commanders to “maintain operational focus and pressure, set the tempo of friendly operations to prevent exhaustion, replace ineffective units, and extend operational reach,” ADP 4-0, 4.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

mitigating the amount of improvisation that must occur later. Had the logisticians revisited assumptions, or developed contingency plans to address a possible change in the rate of advance, they could have avoided the need for this study to look at improvisation.¹³⁵ The key lesson to take from viewing the planning and execution of Dragoon from the perspective of improvisation is that it directly results from enemy actions or in the case of this operation, enemy actions combined with planning assumptions made before the troops make their first steps ashore.

Before 3rd Infantry Division stepped onto the beaches of southern France, their Field Order No. 12 highlights a solution for planners who do not have the necessary time to develop detailed plans, mission command.¹³⁶ This order provides evidence that the principles of mission command—shared understanding, mission orders, and risk acceptance—are vital to an operations success.¹³⁷ Even though the political and strategic friction complicated the ability for planners and commanders to develop their final plans, they still created the shared understanding necessary to invade southern France and apply operational art to create success.

By continuing their planning and discussions despite the turbulence of the final decision to execute Dragoon, they enabled a continuing discourse on the final outcome, stemming from shared understanding of the environment.¹³⁸ This discourse resulted in their ability to assemble rapidly the plans for a successful assault from July 24 to August 15. In the short amount of time between the final decision to launch Dragoon and the landings, they used their innate knowledge gained from their previous planning to put in place the finishing touches on the orders to assault

¹³⁵ ADP 4-0, 4.

¹³⁶ ADP 6-0, 3-5.

¹³⁷ “Through mission command, commanders initiate and integrate all military functions and actions toward a common goal— mission accomplishment,” *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

southern France.¹³⁹ These orders were exceptionally detailed leading up to the assault, then became vague afterwards.¹⁴⁰ It was these vague concepts that highlight another principle of mission command that was in use in 1944.

Mission orders gave the units flexibility to shape their operations and enabled them to react at the lowest levels to take advantage of the situation in their immediate vicinity by linking their tactical actions to the broader objectives of the campaign.¹⁴¹ By not constraining their units with specific orders detailing their every action, the plans for Operation Dragoon allowed for the chaotic nature of war to be counter-acted by commanders on the ground who had the clarity to make decisions without awaiting further guidance.¹⁴² This is evidenced in the decisions moving the assault force from Camel Red, the rapid drive inland past units' original objectives, and modifications to the deployment of the French Forces.¹⁴³ These decisions, made due to the conditions on ground, were ingrained in the concept that the commander in the fight knows more than the commander in the rear. Despite having the USS Catocin as the centralized command and control node, the various commanders in Dragoon let their units be guided by mission orders and the clear understanding of the overall commander's intent for the invasion.

Having a clear understanding of the commander's intent, combined with mission orders, and having a shared understanding are what allowed the above events to occur.¹⁴⁴ With a vessel such as the USS Catocin on-station for the invasion, it would have been exceptionally easy for

¹³⁹ ADP 6-0, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Headquarters 3rd Infantry Division, *3rd Infantry Division Field Order No. 12.*, 1.

¹⁴¹ ADP 3-0, 9-10.

¹⁴² ADP 6-0, 5.

¹⁴³ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division In World War II*, 211.

¹⁴⁴ ADP 6-0, 3-4.

LTG Patch, General Devers, or Vice Admiral Hewitt to take control of the invasion and issue specific orders down to the units as they advanced. Instead, they trusted in their units' commanders, and having provided a clear commander's intent, they could instead focus on making other decisions, gaining shared understanding through the reports they received, and allowing their fighting formations to execute their missions.

By examining the planning and execution of the invasion of southern France through the aspects of mission command, operational art, and logistics, it becomes evident that decisions made in 1944 have relevancy today. As the Allied forces moved off the beaches and the campaign for southern France began in full swing, these same principles will provide additional insights and lessons learned. Some of which, like logistics planning, originated during this planning phase of the operation. The interconnectivity between operational art, mission command, and logistics is evident in this first study of Operation Dragoon and they become even more reliant upon each other as the campaign unfolds.

Case Study Two: The Campaign for Southern France and its Aftermath

Operation Dragoon provides modern military planners a successful example of an amphibious assault. The campaign for Southern France highlights how catastrophic success can create culmination. Accelerating the plans due to decreased German resistance created this culmination by disregarding the effects it had on the US Seventh Army's supply situation. This case study examines the campaign through the lens of operational art as defined in ADP 3-0 and selected elements of operational art from ADRP 3-0, the principles of continuity, responsiveness, and improvisation as defined in ADP 4-0, and shared understanding, the use of mission orders, and providing a clear commander's intent from ADP 6-0. These lenses provide modern commanders and planners additional insight to the importance of these principles by examining how US Seventh Army transitioned from the invasion into campaigning.

The Pursuit

On August 17, the II Corps of the French First Army disembarked and rapidly assembled beyond the beaches.¹⁴⁵ Due to the acceleration of their landings earlier, the attacks on Toulon and Marseille began on August 19.¹⁴⁶ General de Tassigny planned a near simultaneous assault on the ports with his forces, and by the morning of August 20 or D+5, Toulon was under siege.¹⁴⁷ As this siege began, General de Tassigny divided the French II Corps and moved towards Marseille.¹⁴⁸ With both ports under siege, the US Seventh Army abandoned their protective actions, beginning the pursuit of the retreating German *19th Army*.

MG Truscott foresaw the need to exploit probable German weaknesses with a ready and mobile task force, ordering BG Butler to assemble this force after the landings. Task Force Butler assembled and given its first mission on the morning of August 18.¹⁴⁹ Task Force Butler's objective was to secure a river crossing near the Durance, hold the bridges, and be prepared to move north or west to Montelimar as needed.¹⁵⁰ The task force was small and mobile and

¹⁴⁵ French I Corps was not planned to arrive for several days. Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 151.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:152.

¹⁴⁷ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 137-138.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 140. The French Army consisted of mostly French colonial troops and former French Army Officers. At the time of the assault the First French Army consisted of four divisions: 1st Infantry, 3rd Algerian, 1st Armored, 9th Colonial, and some assorted other smaller groups of French forces. Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:151-152.

¹⁴⁹ Brigadier General Frederick Butler assumed command of this task force comprising of a reconnaissance squadron, a tank battalion, motorized infantry, a tank destroyer battalion, artillery battalion, an engineer regiment, and logistics forces. Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 132.

¹⁵⁰ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and*

assumed risk of being destroyed or rendered combat ineffective if it met a larger enemy formation.¹⁵¹ VI Corps began their attacks as the task force advanced. The 3rd Infantry Division secured the right flank of the French II Corps as they began their investment of the ports, and the 45th Infantry Division moved northwest, pressuring German withdrawals.¹⁵² On the right flank of the invasion force, the First Airborne Task Force secured the Italian border, and the 36th Infantry Division advanced north and northwest towards the Rhone Valley, seizing Grenoble.¹⁵³ By anticipating a determined German counter-attack, the VI Corps discovered that their initial plans were baseless. With little resistance, US Seventh Army began rapidly expanding their control in southern France.

Before D-Day, the VI Corps mission was to prepare for and conduct attacks to the north and west after a successful invasion.¹⁵⁴ By D+2, only their commander's intent guided their next actions; they were beyond the confines of their original plan. US Seventh Army was incapable of establishing command and control over both the VI Corps and French First Army as they were still not fully ashore. This forced LTG Patch to rely on the orders crafted for US Seventh Army before the invasion.¹⁵⁵ His decisions began significantly impacting the plan's timelines, as actions

Germany 1944-1945, 1:173.

¹⁵¹ Jacob L. Devers, "Operation Dragoon: The Invasion of Southern France," *Military Affairs*, vol. 10 No. 2 (Summer, 1946): 35, accessed 20 March 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1983451>.

¹⁵² Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:182-183; *Ibid.*, Map foldout between 1:182-183.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁵⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 77.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 124-125; An example of this board guidance is provided by examining the order developed by the division headquarters. Headquarters 3rd Infantry Division, *3rd Infantry Division Field Order No. 12*. 1.

not scheduled for days were already in execution.

The speed of the advance inland and the early arrival of the French Army created future conditions affecting this rapid advance inland. The early arrival of the French displaced the landing schedules of supplies and other units, and US Seventh Army advanced without regard to the strain on the logistics system that was developing behind them. As Task Force Butler moved northward, they encountered little resistance from the Germans. Likewise, the rest of VI Corps met only isolated pockets of German resistance. The US Seventh Army's rapid advance was the results of *Army Group G's* focus on saving as much combat power as possible versus mounting a serious defense.¹⁵⁶ As Task Force Butler was ordered to Montelimar, approaching the main route that *19th Army* was using for their retreat, this lack of resistance abruptly changed.¹⁵⁷ The route of the German retreat was approximately 200 miles from the invasion beaches, running along the Rhone River near the town of Montelimar. As it became the focal point of VI Corps operations, their distance from their supply dumps continued to increase.

The Montelimar Battle Pocket

Two major geographical features contributed to the situation leading to the campaign's greatest lost opportunity, the Montelimar Battle Pocket. Southern France has two natural valleys moving north to Lyon and west to Toulouse as shown below. *Army Group G* and the *19th Army* chose the most direct route back to Germany, the Rhone Valley. The Rhone River splits the valley running north and south along the mountains to the west. Montelimar abuts this mountain range with large hills to the east and the Rhone River separating the town from the mountains. As the terrain forced the retreating *19th Army* through a narrow funnel. On August 20, LTG Patch

¹⁵⁶ Detwiler, Burdick, and Rohwer, eds., "ETHINT 19 An Interview with Rittm Wilhelm Scheidt," in *World War II German Military Studies*, vol. 2, *Part II. The ETHINT Series*, 2, 4-6.

¹⁵⁷ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:188.

realized that he could use this terrain to destroy 19th Army. This became his focus, and that of VI Corps, for the next phase of the campaign.¹⁵⁸

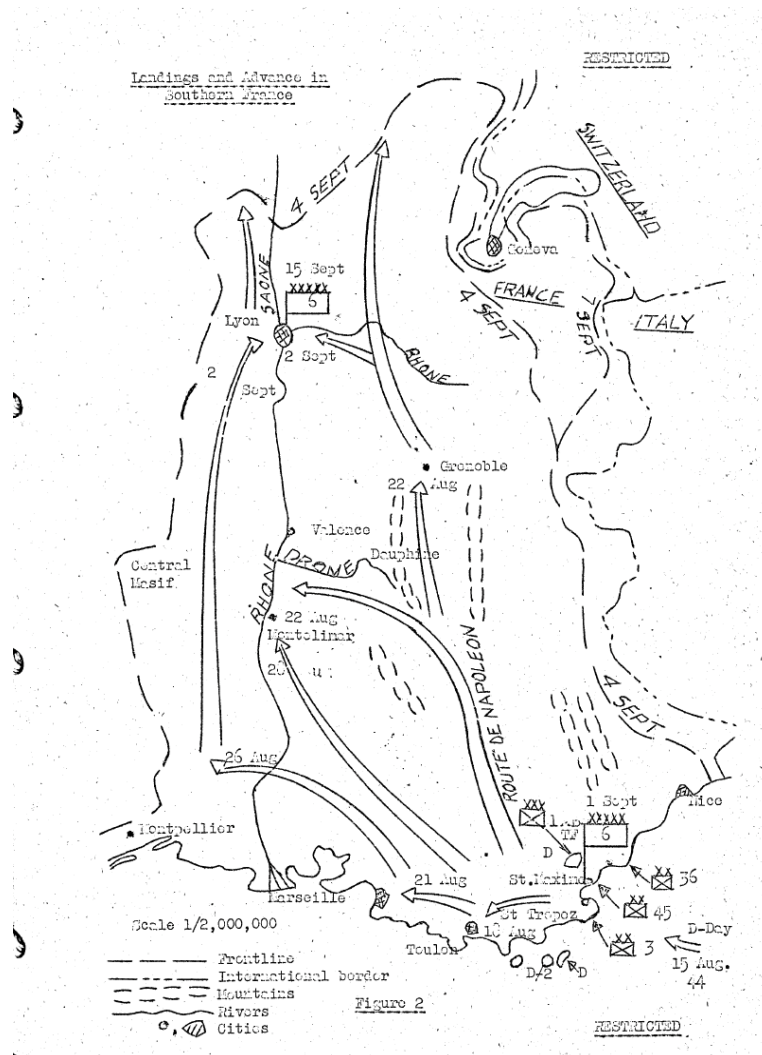


Figure 5. Overview of the Campaign

Source: G-3, *Final Report G-3 Section 6th Army Group*, Heidelberg, Germany 1 July 1945.

Task Force Butler played the critical role to stop the 19th Army from continuing their withdrawal. The task force was ordered to block the German's retreat at Montelimar on August

¹⁵⁸ Truscott, *Command Missions: A Personal Story*, 424.

21.¹⁵⁹ Supporting their effort, the 36th Infantry Division was tasked to reinforce Task Force Butler and move with all possible speed to Montelimar.¹⁶⁰ MG Truscott massed whatever forces were available, ordering an additional regiment from the 45th Infantry Division to join the fight.¹⁶¹ While Task Force Butler was a highly mobile organization, the 36th Infantry Division was not, having provided Task Force Butler with most of their trucks.¹⁶² The units of VI Corps all relied on their organic trucks to rapidly move across the battlefield. Commanders had to choose between mobility or resupply as their supply lines were already over 100 miles long. As Task Force Butler moved towards Montelimar, the 36th Infantry Division attempted to join them, but lacked the trucks necessary to concurrently move and supply themselves.

Task Force Butler arrived in the Montelimar area on the evening of August 21 and by morning had established a hasty defense. The German withdrawal continued as BG Butler moved his forces into position. In the *19th Army*, three German divisions, including the *11th Panzer Division*, were still south of Montelimar.¹⁶³ Despite repeated attempts to push BG Butler and his task force aside, the most the Germans achieved was forcing several American units to fall back. Task Force Butler did not abandon the blocking positions on the eastern side of the river, but was unable to block the western side of the Rhone or dislodge the German from the hills overlooking

¹⁵⁹ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:188; Truscott, *Command Missions A Personal Story*, 425.

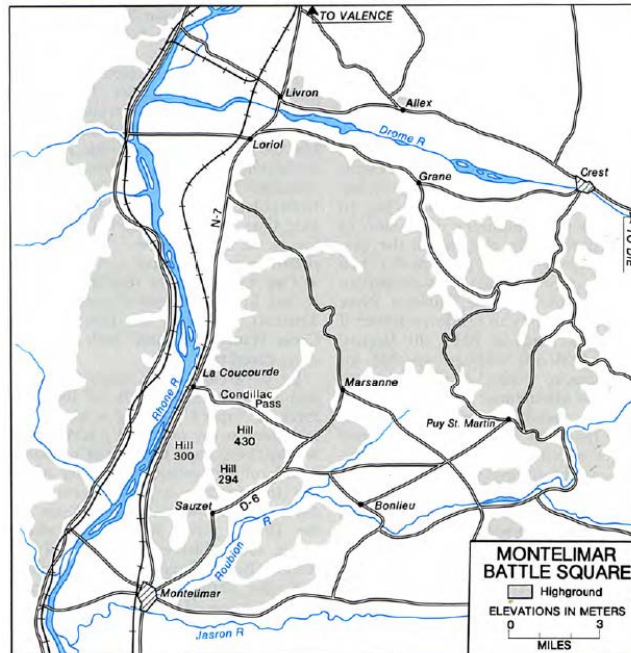
¹⁶⁰ Truscott, *Command Missions A Personal Story*, 423-424; *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:188-189.

¹⁶¹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 160.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 169.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 149; Detwiler, Burdick, and Rohwer, eds., "ETHINT 19 An Interview with Rittm Wilhelm Scheidt," in *World War II German Military Studies*, vol. 2, *Part II. The ETHINT Series*, 5.

Montelimar.¹⁶⁴ BG Butler's small force could not dislodge the Germans from these hills, nor block their retreat. If VI Corps wanted to completely block the *19th Army* retreat, they needed more troops.



MAP 9

Figure 6. Map of Montelimar Battle Square

Source: Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 148.

Task Force Butler faced two main issues as the battle progressed; they lacked both ammunition and the necessary manpower to block the retreat. At most, they could delay and inflict as much punishment as possible on the Germans.¹⁶⁵ Consisting of only a few fighting organizations—four regiments, one each of infantry, artillery, tanks, and tank destroyers—they lacked the fighting

¹⁶⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 150; Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:198.

¹⁶⁵ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 150; Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:199.

capabilities and numbers of the VI Corps divisions.¹⁶⁶ 36th Infantry Division lacked the necessary transportation to arrive in time to correct this issue.¹⁶⁷ Finally on August 25, the 36th Infantry Division began arriving, too late to close the door on the *19th Army* as the bulk of the remaining German elements made their way out of the battle pocket.¹⁶⁸

Despite the arrival of the 36th Infantry Division, the moment to trap the remaining German units had passed. Task Force Butler was too small to block the German's retreat on the west side of the river and commanders of the German units fought hard enough to run the gauntlet of fire and escape. The late arrival of the 36th Infantry Division forces resulted in heavy fighting, but they could not position their forces fast enough to blunt the German counter-attacks that created the opportunities for men and material to escape north. While the VI Corps inflicted significant damage with their artillery, they lacked the ammunition to keep up steady fire, thereby not destroying the Germans fleeing north. They were only capable of delaying and damaging them due to a lack of available combat power, lack of artillery ammunition, and the tenacity of the German's desire to escape.¹⁶⁹

Outside the battle pocket, LTG Patch recognized that the decisive moment to inflict significant damage or possibly destroy the remnants of *Army Group G* had arrived. LTG Patch

¹⁶⁶ This task force was comprised of a reconnaissance squadron, a tank battalion, motorized infantry, a tank destroyer battalion, artillery battalion, an engineer regiment, and logistics forces. Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 132.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 152.

¹⁶⁸ Truscott, *Command Missions: A Personal Story*, 427; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 158; Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:199-200.

¹⁶⁹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 150.

ordered the 3rd Infantry Division north, applying pressure on the retreating German units.¹⁷⁰ He also ordered units from the 45th Infantry Division to move west, applying additional pressure on the German Army.¹⁷¹ Finally, he issued orders for the next phase of the campaign, envisioning advancing the VI Corps to Lyon, linking with LTG George S. Patton's US Third Army, and then moving east across France to the Rhine.¹⁷² These orders fell within the general guidance provided before the invasion, but LTG Patch first had to finish the VI Corps' immediate task at Montelimar.

The Americans still were incapable of permanently blocking the road on the eastern side of the Rhone River, so they continued destroying as much of retreating German Army as they could.¹⁷³ While the remnants of *Army Group G*, including the *19th Army*, *11th Panzer Division*, *LXXXV Corps*, and various other units, did not escape from the battle without heavy losses in equipment and soldiers, beginning August 29, they made good their escape with a significant amount of troops and combat power.¹⁷⁴ As 3rd Infantry Division moved north, they encountered several German units that they destroyed or captured, but their lack of fuel prevented them from arriving in time to attack the main body of German forces.¹⁷⁵ The Germans had narrowly escaped entrapment and continued their march north to Lyon as VI Corps moved to pursue.

Contributing to *Army Group G*'s successful escape was the distance of the VI Corps

¹⁷⁰ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:208.

¹⁷¹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 160.

¹⁷² Truscott, *Command Missions: A Personal Story*, 433.

¹⁷³ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:219.

¹⁷⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 166-167; Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:216-217.

¹⁷⁵ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 163.

supply lines and the lack of transportation available for 36th Infantry Division. VI Corps was incapable of adequately supporting themselves as Montelimar was approximately 200 miles from the beaches.¹⁷⁶ The 36th Infantry Division was positioned to move to Montelimar, but incapable of mustering the necessary transportation to move there in time at the speed which MG Truscott intended. At this point in the campaign, the base section responsible for establishing forward logistics dumps was still establishing itself.¹⁷⁷ As a result, supplies were still being drawn directly from the beaches.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, trucks were incapable of taking the most direct routes, which delayed the movement of supplies forward due to the damage done by the MAAF, which had destroyed vital rail lines and bridges to isolate the battle space and slow the German's ability to attack the beaches.¹⁷⁹ These issues directly impacted IV Corp's ability to resupply their units, the 36th Infantry Division's ability to reach Montelimar in time, and the 3rd Infantry Division's attack north.

The 3rd and 36th Infantry Divisions were not alone in their troubles. The 45th Infantry Division found themselves in a similar predicament by not enforcing the suggestion made during their planning of the invasion. They did not prioritize trucks in their landing plan.¹⁸⁰ Failing to heed this advice, combined with the extended round trip to their supply dumps, created a major

¹⁷⁶ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 169.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 203-204.

¹⁷⁸ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:218

¹⁷⁹ Historical Section, *Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:219; Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, (Heidelberg: Aloys Graf, 1946), 34.

¹⁸⁰ 45th Infantry Division G-4 Section, *History of the G-4 Section – French Campaign August 1944*, 2.

operational hindrance.¹⁸¹ This resulted in trucks being driven for eighteen to twenty-four hours a day in attempts to supply the forces moving towards Montelimar.¹⁸² Constant use of the trucks across VI Corps took a heavy toll on both the drivers and their machines.¹⁸³

VI Corps experienced this critical shortage of trucks across their formation, logistically constraining the advance from the speed necessary to entrap the retreating German Army.¹⁸⁴ As VI Corps pursued *Army Group G*, they continued the overextension of their supply line, resulting in shortages of ammunition, mobility, and most critically, fuel. Each day this distance became greater, consuming more fuel, requiring more fuel, and resulting in additional time to deliver supplies. Behind the front lines, engineers were working on repairing bridges and roads damaged by the air campaign, but until more trucks and rail transport became available, the supply situation for VI Corps would not improve. VI Corps found itself struggling to balance the need to supply itself and pursue the Germans.¹⁸⁵ Operation Dragoon had reached its culmination point.

The Ports

Marseille and Toulon, the primary objectives for the French II Corps, provided the eventual solution to the VI Corp's logistics problem.¹⁸⁶ General de Tassigny attempted to seize

¹⁸¹ 45th Infantry Division G-4 Section, *History of the G-4 Section – French Campaign August 1944*, 2.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸³ 45th Infantry Division G-4 Section, Annex 7, *History of the G-4 Section – French Campaign August 1944*.

¹⁸⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 169-170.

¹⁸⁵ Dworak, *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign, 1942-1945*, 448-449.

¹⁸⁶ Leigh, *48 Million Tons to Eisenhower*, 42; Dworak, *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign, 1942-1945*, 373-374.

both ports ahead of schedule. While aggressive assaults and poor logistics planning contributed to the logistical culmination of the VI Corps, the French used aggressiveness to their advantage, unhindered by lengthy supply lines. Their proximity to the beach supply dumps prevented the logistical restrictions that were hindering the rest of the US Seventh Army.

Initial plans called for the capture of Toulon by D+15, August 30, and Marseille by D+45, September 29.¹⁸⁷ The French II Corps expedited that process dramatically. Forces moved west to assault Marseille as the initial investment of Toulon began on August 20, effectively splitting the French II Corps. This resulted in the investment of both ports by August 23.¹⁸⁸ Despite Hitler's orders to fight to the last man and destroy the ports, the German defenders largely ignored this order. As the fighting continued past August 23, the Germans' will to resist diminished and they began surrendering, either as isolated individuals or by entire positions, and failed to render the ports completely inoperable.¹⁸⁹ Ultimately, both ports were in French control by August 28 and roughly two weeks later, September 15, the first Liberty ships pulled into Marseille for unloading.¹⁹⁰ As the ports returned to operational status within weeks of capture, the flow of divisions from the United States could now be routed through southern France. Of more immediate concern, Dragoon forces could now increase their supplies and bring ashore the units needed to move them forward.

Although the German defenders of Marseille and Toulon significantly outnumbered the French forces, the voracity of the French assault achieved results that the planners had not anticipated. By splitting the arrival of French First Army prior to the invasion, only the French II

¹⁸⁷ Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 35.

¹⁸⁸ Robichon, *The Second D-Day*, 282-283, 290.

¹⁸⁹ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:161.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:162; Leigh, *48 Million Tons to Eisenhower*, 42-43.

Corps was available. General de Tassigny, though, purposefully increased the ratio of defenders to attackers with his decision to split this force further and envelop both ports simultaneously. The audacity displayed through these actions adhered to the overall aggressiveness of the US Seventh Army during the campaign. Proximity of their objectives to the beaches allowed the French to take these risks without worrying about their supplies, relying on *élan* and the crumbling morale of the besieged Germans to offset the French lack of numbers.

Encircling the cities, their forces immediately began offensive operations. German strength was eventually brought to parity by the French II Corps' constant pressure. By August 23, enough German's had surrendered, bringing the two opposing forces to equal size.¹⁹¹ General de Tassigny accepted both ports' surrender on August 28 as additional French reinforcements arrived and four additional days of fighting broke the Germans' will to resist.¹⁹² An outnumbered attacking force seized a heavily defended urban city while suffering minimal losses in less than a week, defying established military logic by attacking when vastly outnumbered. French *élan* carried the day.

This rapid capitulation of the ports, so early in the campaign, had two immediate effects. First, the initial timeline established before the invasion was completely invalidated. The rate of advance by VI Corps and the early capture of the ports accelerated the initial plans' timelines to the point of irrelevancy. Secondly, the French First Army was now available for the push to Lyon. This created additional logistics problems for the US Seventh Army by having to supply an additional corps advance. While this further reduced the limited distribution available, it also provided additional forces to pursue the retreating German Army.

¹⁹¹ Robichon, *The Second D-Day*, 293.

¹⁹² Ibid.

The Campaign's End

While the ports of Marseilles and Toulon were liberated, the time spent fighting at Montelimar allowed the US Seventh Army to build supplies forward for their next offensive north. This was done through a variety of means from both the organic units of US Seventh Army and the Coastal Base Section (CBS).¹⁹³ The CBS was the logistics unit tasked with providing support to US Seventh Army during the campaign and was commanded by MG Arthur Wilson.¹⁹⁴ CBS had enacted what limited actions it could as the US Seventh Army's critical supply situation developed, but it became difficult for the CBS's limited available units to meet US Seventh Army needs with an approximate 400-mile round trip supply line and barely functional railroads. As new truck units arrived on the beaches, they immediately loaded supplies and departed for the front lines.¹⁹⁵ CBS also ordered all units arriving at the beaches to unload their organic cargo and conduct a supply run to the division dumps located at various points behind their lines.¹⁹⁶ Providing VI Corps with additional supplies, they helped enable the commencement of LTG Patch's previous orders to push towards Lyon as *Army Group G* retreated north.¹⁹⁷ For the rest of the campaign, this pattern of balancing the drive north with the available supplies became normal operation for US Seventh Army.

¹⁹³ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 234; Base Sections were the logistics units operating behind the Army and Army Group areas, tasked with providing on-ward movement of supplies supporting their endeavors; Originally named Coastal Base Station, it was renamed Continental Base Station on September 7, 1944. Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 34.

¹⁹⁴ Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 2, 17.

¹⁹⁵ Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 34.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁹⁷ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 171.

Fighting the ever-present threat of logistics culmination, the divisions acted to maintain the necessary supplies. The 45th Infantry Division seized an undamaged rail line, established a division railroad, and moved their supplies forward, utilizing their attached chemical troops as train engineers.¹⁹⁸ 3rd Infantry Division truck drivers pushed themselves for days without sleep to make the required supply runs.¹⁹⁹ While these actions did not permanently solve the units' problems with logistics, they provided temporary methods to increase their rate of advance.

While the majority of the forces were involved in either the final stages of the battle for Montelimar or the seizure of the ports, MG Truscott ordered a reduced 45th Infantry Division to cut off the German's retreat by seizing Bourg-en-Bresse, northeast of Lyon.²⁰⁰ Elements of the *11th Panzer Division* disrupted the advance of the 45th Infantry Division long enough for the German's to again make good their escape.²⁰¹ *Army Group G* continued their retreat north as the majority of the VI Corps began converging on Lyon, and the French consolidated their gains in the ports. MG Truscott had to take risks if he wanted to delay the Germans' retreat in time for his forces to catch them.

MG Truscott's order to the 117th Cavalry Squadron to block a significantly larger German force at Montrevel was one of the calculated risks that he took. His order assumed that this unit could stop or delay the German retreat long enough for VI Corps to deal a decisive blow.

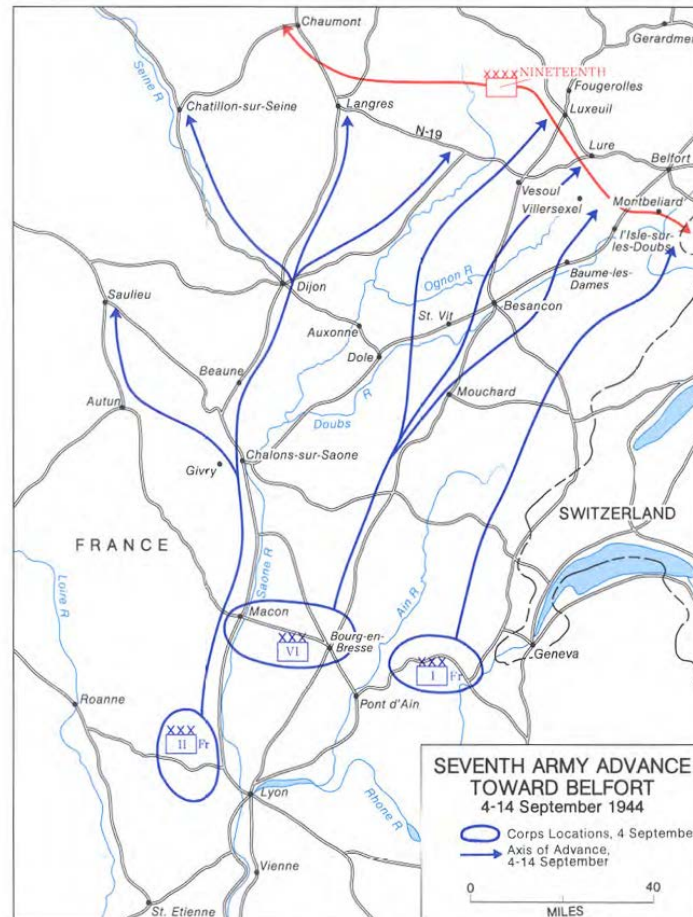
¹⁹⁸ 45th Infantry Division G-4 Section, History of the G-4 Section – French Campaign August 1944, 8; The Historical Board, *The Fighting Forty-Fifth: The Combat Report of an Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge: The 45th Infantry Division, 1946) ,102.

¹⁹⁹ Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 234.

²⁰⁰ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 174-175.

²⁰¹ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:259; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 177-178.

The 117th Cavalry was unable to withstand the determined German counter-attacks.²⁰² The risk that MG Truscott assumed highlights the continued aggressiveness of US Seventh Army in their attempts to delay the Germans long enough for their logistically restrained forces to move forward. The inability to support a rapid pursuit made this type of risk necessary if VI Corps hoped to destroy the Germans before they could reach friendly lines north of the Rhone Valley.



MAP 11

Figure 7. US Seventh Army Advance from 4-14 September.

Source: Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 187.

²⁰² Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:259-260; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 178-179.

By September 4, the chance to capture the Germans at Lyon had disappeared, despite the risks taken by VI Corps.²⁰³ LTG Patch therefore modified his original orders and approved a new plan proposed by MG Truscott.²⁰⁴ However, the arrival of the French I Corps sparked an issue with US Seventh Army's new plan.²⁰⁵ US Seventh Army was now predominately French and General de Tassigny had a fundamentally different idea on how use his now complete French First Army.²⁰⁶ This was exacerbated by General de Tassigny's perception that the French forces were not part of the decision-making process.²⁰⁷ General de Tassigny's disagreement with LTG Patch's plan brought up earlier issues about the inner workings of the Allied Force from before the campaign.²⁰⁸

LTG Patch resolved the issue with General de Tassigny by acknowledging that the formal creation of the French First Army was inevitable, giving a political advantage to General de Tassigny.²⁰⁹ The plan solidified with the newly-arrived French I Corps attacking northeast, the French II Corps attacking northwest towards Dijon, and the VI Corps pursuing the Germans northeast.²¹⁰ This plan linked Operation Dragoon forces with General Eisenhower's forces,

²⁰³ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 180-181; Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:260.

²⁰⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 182.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 26-27.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

²¹⁰ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:269; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The*

entrapped the retreating Germans, and provided the groundwork for an independent French Army that General de Tassigny and General De Gaulle both desired, resolving the crisis.²¹¹

The plan that LTG Patch implemented is summarized as a four-day romp through France beginning on September 4. German units incapable of escaping to their new defensive lines were captured or destroyed as the three corps of the US Seventh Army advanced.²¹² After September 8, stiffening German resistance slowed the advance.²¹³ The most significant delay, aside from German resistance, was the continued lack of supplies, coupled with rain, and increasingly difficult terrain.²¹⁴ As the Germans retreated, they destroyed bridges and other critical infrastructure, adding to the Allied forces difficulties.²¹⁵ Finally, as the US Seventh Army reached the Belfort Gap on September 14, elements of the French II Corps met with General Patton's US Third Army, and the campaign came to a sudden and abrupt halt.²¹⁶ Operation Dragoon had joined with the ETO and this command and control issue needed to be resolved before operations could continue.

This transfer of command to the ETO began earlier on September 4. General Devers

European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine, 182-183.

²¹¹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 183.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 187-188.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 188-190; Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:276-277.

²¹⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 186, 190, 196-197.

²¹⁵ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:277.

²¹⁶ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 193; Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:282-283.

visited General Eisenhower at his forward command post to discuss the future of his Army Group as they rapidly approached linking with ETO forces.²¹⁷ It was not until that date that General Wilson, commander of the MTO, reached out to General Eisenhower to coordinate the turnover of Sixth Army Group.²¹⁸ The final coordination between the two commands began on September 7 as the meeting point drew closer.²¹⁹ It was decided that the operational units of the armies would transfer to the ETO and the logistics units would remain tied to the MTO.²²⁰ Finally, on September 19, after the transfer was completed, the various units within eastern France met to determine how their next moves should occur.²²¹ By transferring the Sixth Army Group, the ETO presented a unified front in the next step of the war in Europe, while simultaneously freeing the majority of France by placing a wall of soldiers between Germany and their remaining units left behind Allied lines.²²²

From September 15 onwards, Operation Dragoon forces, previously operating under the MTO, now belonged to the ETO, and southern France was not the strategic priority.²²³ Citing a lack of critical supplies, both LTG Patton's US Third Army and General Dever's newly-created Sixth Army Group were halted, providing the time to move the necessary supplies forward.²²⁴

²¹⁷ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:283.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 1:283-284.

²²⁰ Ibid., 1:284-285.

²²¹ Ibid., 286.

²²² Taggart, *History of the Third Infantry Division*, 234.

²²³ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 193; Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:283

²²⁴ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and*

As seen in the examination of the campaign, the US Seventh Army was incapable of halting the German retreat, plagued by a lack of supplies, a lack of trucks, and insufficient mobility. Dragoon began the campaign with the goals of preventing German forces from moving north to reinforce the defense of Normandy, bringing additional logistics capacity to the ETO, and providing ports to bring new forces into theater; by its end, they had accomplished only two of these goals. The US Seventh Army and the First French Army were concentrated in the ETO and new divisions and supplies from the United States were on their way through the newly-opened ports of southern France. Before the invasion occurred, German units left southern France to reinforce the German defense of Normandy, leaving a bare minimum of available forces to defend against Dragoon.²²⁵ General Eisenhower could finally bring the maximum force to bear against Germany with the the port capacity and logistics capability of southern France.

The Logistics Tail

The importance of campaign's logistics must be examined in further detail to understand the issues encountered by US Seventh Army and how they were eventually addressed. To provide clarity on how the campaign's issues were resolved, this examination addresses actions taken during the campaign and after its conclusion on September 15. Part of the initial plans, CBS was ordered by US Seventh Army to establish their headquarters in Toulon, eventually move to Marseille, and include some forces with the initial landings.²²⁶ After surveying Toulon, and the

Germany 1944-1945, 2:336.

²²⁵ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 62-63.

²²⁶ CONAD History, *Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 34; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 206.

rapid fall of Marseille, the CBS established themselves at Marseille on August 24.²²⁷ While the supply dumps at the beaches handled US Seventh Army support, the establishment of the base section began the process of shortening the supply lines and shifting responsibility of supplying US Seventh Army.

The CBS needed functional ports and more transportation assets to move supplies forward before fully assuming support to the US Seventh Army. Prior to the invasion, with the assistance of French liaison officers, CBS planned the physical location of their future dumps and layout of their storage spaces.²²⁸ To prevent labor shortages while handling cargo at the ports, they planned for the use of local French civilians as contractors and 30,000 Italian troops.²²⁹ Having secured ground and labor, the CBS needed trucks to move supplies forward. By the end of September, the CBS had twenty-seven truck companies available for movement, but due to the ever increasing distance, this still was not enough trucks to meet US Seventh Army requirements.²³⁰ Despite having the largest port in France functional again, the growing distance to the front lines continued to hinder supply efforts.

To meet the needs of the US Seventh Army and French First Army, an advance section was needed to store and move supplies forward, while receiving supplies from the ports via a base section.²³¹ An advance section had to remain highly mobile to meet the needs of its supported army.²³² Logistics forces supporting Dragoon remained part of the MTO for months,

²²⁷ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 204.

²²⁸ Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 6.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid., 61.

²³¹ Ibid., 70.

²³² Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication*

even though the combat forces now belonged to the ETO.²³³ On September 26, MG Larkin, NATOUSA Chief of SOS, ordered CBS disbanded, creating the Delta Base Section (DBS) and the Continental Advance Section (CONAD), splitting subordinate units as needed among them.²³⁴ The creation of CONAD would resolve the challenges of dealing with the support to US Seventh Army, while allowing the DBS to handle the port mission. To retain mobility, CONAD was limited to a stockage objective of fifteen days of supply (DOS).²³⁵ This number was merely an ideal planning factor based off the broad requirements of maintaining stocks set by the MTO; at no time in the several months following the invasion did they meet this objective.

CONAD planners had to balance the combat needs of US Seventh Army and French First Army with their ability to remain mobile. They determined that CONAD would focus only on what was constantly required for the fighting soldiers.²³⁶ Supplies that were constantly in demand, such as ammunition, food, fuel, clothing, replacement vehicles, and maintenance parts were handled by CONAD.²³⁷ Supplies not constantly used were handled by the DBS, eliminating movement of underutilized supplies.²³⁸ This method of supply assisted in offsetting the theater-wide shortage of trucks within the distribution network by reducing the number of trucks and

Zone, European Theater of Operations, 71-72; Field Manual (FM) 10-10 *Quartermaster Service in Theater Operations* (Fort Leavenworth KS: Combined Arms Research Library. Closed Stacks Department of the Army, 1942), 4.

²³³ Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 124-125.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

²³⁵ A stockage objective is the ideal amount of supplies on-hand based on an estimated daily consumption rate; *Ibid.*, 72.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

railcars needed to move supplies forward.²³⁹ Reducing the strain on the distribution network was a primary focus of both the DBS and CONAD.

By the end of September, the logistics units supporting Dragoon had received over 500,000 long tons of cargo at the ports.²⁴⁰ However, they were only capable of moving 283,000 long tons by a combination of both trucks and railcars.²⁴¹ The destruction of bridges and roads compounded this problem.²⁴² Road networks changed throughout the campaign as weather impacted certain roads, shifts in boundaries forced different road use, or engineers repaired routes. The combination of the lack of adequate transportation and a lack of engineers to fix roads, bridges, and railroads continuously limited distribution for the advancing forces.²⁴³ This problem was similar in the northern ETO; the forces there could not initially establish the means necessary to keep themselves supplied as they advanced rapidly inland.

Logistics support for Operation Dragoon was still establishing itself as the campaign progressed to its conclusion. Improvement in the supply situation required additional time and a stabilization of the front.²⁴⁴ As the front stalled in the Vosges, CONAD, DBS, and US Seventh Army built capacity by creating additional distribution capabilities such as rail lines, pipelines

²³⁹ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 205.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 207.

²⁴² *From the Sahara to the Rhine: A History of Army Supply Service* (Southern Line of Communication Publication: Communications Zone ETOUSA, 1945), 15.

²⁴³ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 208; *The 727th Railway Operating Battalion* (New York: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1948), 72.

²⁴⁴ Dworak, *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign*, 416.

and additional truck units.²⁴⁵ The southern ports and beaches, though, provided almost no support to non-Dragoon forces during the campaign due to the length of the supply lines and the immediate needs of US Seventh Army and the French First Army.²⁴⁶ However, given the time to improve their situation, the DBS and CONAD eventually built the necessary infrastructure to propel General Dever's Sixth Army Group and their newly attached divisions to their next objectives as the push into Germany commenced.

Analysis of the Campaign

Examining the campaign through the lenses of operational art, sustainment, and mission command provides lessons for modern commanders and planners for employment in future operations. Operational art was vital to the campaign's efforts to entrap and destroy *Army Group G*'s attempts to retreat north, while offering multiple options to the ETO for future operations. The issue of logistics within the campaign provides a warning on logistics planning and valuable lessons in both preventing culmination points while balancing the needs of the combat and sustainment forces. Finally, mission command highlights how organizations can achieve success by allowing their commanders to make decisions and take actions without constraints. However, the campaign also highlights the difficulty of not applying mission command to create shared understanding. The combination of using operational art, supporting the mission logistically, and enabling decisions at the lowest level can create conditions of success for any future operation.

LTG Patch and MG Truscott made use of operational art attempting to destroy the

²⁴⁵ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 203-208.

²⁴⁶ All monthly reports were viewed, almost no support was provided to non-US Seventh Army units. Historical Section, *CONAD Compendium Communications Zone European Theater of Operations* (Heidelberg: Aloys Graf, 1946), 2:519-811.

Germans attempting to flee north.²⁴⁷ The movements to Montelimar and the use of the 117th Cavalry highlight how they used tactical actions in attempts to cut-off their enemy, based on affecting the location of the enemy and their understanding of their own tempo.²⁴⁸ These were calculated risks that were linked to the constrained movements of the main forces of VI Corps to achieve the destruction of the Germans.²⁴⁹ Although they failed to achieve total destruction of the enemy, they severely damaged *Army Group G* in its withdrawal. Likewise, General de Tassigny also used operational art to rapidly capture the ports. General de Tassigny overwhelmed the Germans' will to fight by constantly attacking from multiple locations, applying pressure on the mentality of the besieged. These actions ensured that Operation Dragoon never ceased applying problems to the German forces.

While the Dragoon forces used operational art to pressure the German's retreat, the planned handover of Dragon forces between the ETO and MTO highlights a breakdown of the use of operational art. Each theater was operating in a vacuum in southern and northern France. While they were pursuing the same strategic objective, the ETO and MTO did not link their operations together, resulting in the loss of operational art.²⁵⁰ Until the beginning of September, over two weeks after the campaign for southern France began, the commands remained operationally isolated from each other. The ability of either theater commander to capitalize on possible actions reacting to the German retreat disappeared as the two fronts converged on each other.²⁵¹ Had coordination occurred prior to the convergence of the ETO and MTO, operational

²⁴⁷ ADP 3-0, 9.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 4-7.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 9-10.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

artists could have taken alternate actions, but this possibility was removed by the length of time it took to finally discuss the future of US Seventh Army and its French allies.

Strategically, Operation Dragoon provided the options that the ETO needed to increase their available combat power and their basing to support their forces.²⁵² Opening the ports of southern France allowed for US-based divisions to begin their entry to the ETO.²⁵³ Logistics options provided by the seizure of the ports of southern France gave both General Marshal and General Eisenhower extended operational reach in how they brought forces into theater, supporting them, and achieving the political aims.²⁵⁴ This allowed the issues within the logistics system to affect the arrival of new formations and supplies to prevent the additional delays could have occurred from being tied to the sole port of Cherbourg, increasing the operational reach of the ETO.²⁵⁵

The largest contributor to the escape of *Army Group G* through the Rhone Valley was the lack of logistics continuity between the beach supply dumps and the division supply dumps.²⁵⁶ This breakdown within the logistics support resulted from the extensive length of the supply lines, coupled with the arrival time of the CBS, which was required to fill the growing gap in continuity. Forcing US Seventh Army to supply itself over this distance constrained its ability to advance at the tempo necessary to prevent *Army Group G* from escaping.²⁵⁷ Eventually the creation of DBS and CONAD addressed the issue of continuity by resolving this existing

²⁵² ADRP 3-0, 4-6, 4-7.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 4-7, 4-8.

²⁵⁶ ADP 4-0, 4.

²⁵⁷ ADRP 3-0, 4-7.

vacuum, which created the necessary continuity to increase operational reach while preventing culmination.²⁵⁸ Fortunately for the Germans, emplacement of the necessary distribution capabilities took time that the US Seventh Army did not have. A balance between warfighters and sustainers during the early development of a pursuit was vital to prevent the culmination of the advancing VI Corps.

This lack of continuity requires a look at the responsiveness of the organizations supporting US Seventh Army.²⁵⁹ The CBS responded to the crisis by leveraging as many of their units as possible to increase the tempo and operational reach of US Seventh Army, going to the extent of impressing combat units to conduct supply movements forward.²⁶⁰ They had little other ability to respond to the logistics issues of US Seventh Army until the arrival of more logistics units and the repair of the ports was completed. MG Larkin's response to the issue, creating the DBS and CONAD to handle specific logistics functions, set the framework to solve the issues of operational reach and tempo.²⁶¹ CONAD became the logistics unit solely responsible for US Seventh Army's supply, ensuring that their demands were the sole responsibility of one organization.²⁶² Fulfilling the requirements of the army by having a dedicated logistics unit achieved responsiveness.

Until these logistics units were in place, US Seventh Army had to attend to their own supply needs through a variety of improvised measures. Even if the planners had included the initial fuel allotment, distribution of the fuel remained the crux of the issues for US Seventh

²⁵⁸ ADP 4-0, 4; ADRP 3-0, 4-5, 4-8.

²⁵⁹ ADP 4-0, 3.

²⁶⁰ Historical Section, *CONAD History, Continental Advance Section, Communication Zone, European Theater of Operations*, 34; ADP 4-0, 4; ADRP 3-0, 4-5, 4-7.

²⁶¹ ADRP 3-0, 4-5, 4-6, 4-7.

²⁶² ADP 4-0, 3.

Army.²⁶³ 45th Infantry Division's creation of a division-owned railroad is an example of how resourceful the units became in maintaining their advance.²⁶⁴ Additionally, the commanders in US Seventh Army were adept at allowing the pace of their advance to be molded by their available logistics after the Battle of Montelimar.²⁶⁵ Initially, units took extreme action to meet their commanders' expectations, but after failing to stop the Germans at Montelimar, they planned their operations to avoid reaching a culminating point again. US Seventh Army commanders looked for other methods to stop the Germans' retreat based off their understanding of their formations and the tactical risks they could take to balance their operational reach with the enemy's location.²⁶⁶

Shared understanding and LTG Patch's intent provided the necessary knowledge for the use of mission orders that guided the US Seventh Army north. This shared purpose allowed the US Seventh Army to modify their use of mission orders based off the Germans' movements and to take the calculated risks they did attempting to prevent their escape.²⁶⁷ Unhindered by detailed orders from LTG Patch, MG Truscott had a free hand in shaping the VI Corps' actions, as evidenced by the movement to Montelimar.²⁶⁸ While this proved unsuccessful, based off the constraints of his logistics support and mobility issues, the plan MG Truscott devised highlights the importance and practical use of these key tenants of mission command, use of mission orders

²⁶³ ADP 4-0, 4.

²⁶⁴ 45th Infantry Division G-4 Section, History of the G-4 Section – French Campaign August 1944, 8.

²⁶⁵ Dworak *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign*, 447-448; Truscott, *Command Missions A Personal Story*, 436.

²⁶⁶ ADRP 3-0, 4-9.

²⁶⁷ ADP 6-0, 5.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

and shared understanding.

At the upper echelons, however, the late coordination between the ETO and MTO shows a clear lack of shared understanding, resulting in a lack of a nested commander's intent linking the two.²⁶⁹ General Wilson attempted to rectify this in some manner prior to the launching of the invasion when he tried addressing the planning after the invasion on August 11, but the invasion fleets were already underway and until mid-September, nothing was guiding the advance north through the Rhone Valley, aside from the MTO's initial guidance and understanding.²⁷⁰ This problem should have been addressed prior to the invasion by Operation Dragoon forces or at worst, after the invasion began moving north, but prior to the transition of the Sixth Army Group to the ETO.²⁷¹ Lacking this coordination, there was no shared understanding or clear commander's intent to guide the mission orders coordinating the combined actions of the forces of General Eisenhower with those of General Wilson.

The campaign for southern France offers ample opportunity for modern planners and commanders to learn lessons and apply them to future endeavors. As the US Army prepares for future campaigns, the lessons of the campaign for southern France should be in its thoughts. The doctrine available to the US Army is sufficiently capable of guiding future operations, but it would be remiss not to draw upon the lessons of history that may apply to the next campaign. With a knowledge of military history, doctrine, and critical thinking about the problems they face, modern commanders and planners can succeed in recreating the successes of Operation Dragoon while avoiding its mistakes.

²⁶⁹ ADP 6-0, 3.

²⁷⁰ Historical Section, *The Seventh United States Army Report of Operations France and Germany 1944-1945*, 1:283; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 231-232; ADP 6-0, 3-4; Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 84.

²⁷¹ ADP 3-0, 9-10.

Southern France's Effects on the European Theater of Operations

While the campaign and invasion were significant to southern France's freedom, over time, the results of the campaign and invasion significantly impacted the ETO. It eventually prevented German forces in the south from reinforcing Normandy, and creating multiple problems for the Germans.²⁷² It also allowed employment of the French forces in the MTO and port capability for additional divisions arriving from the US.²⁷³ While meeting these goals, the invasion of southern France served the broader goal of employing an additional Army Group against German forces in France that would have been otherwise almost impossible to support from Normandy, thereby shortening the war.

Operation Dragoon failed its primary goal of keeping a significant number of German units away from the Normandy invasion. Due to the delay in launching the operation, German units flowed north, leaving behind only a minimum number of defenders for *Army Group G*.²⁷⁴ These forces moving north included a German Panzer Division and numerous Infantry Divisions. With only a minimal force left to defend the southern coast, the desired effect that General Eisenhower, General Marshall, and the JCS sought was not achieved, but did set conditions for the great successes Dragoon accomplished. Operation Overlord drew away significant combat power from the south of France that could have made Dragoon less of a pursuit and more of the fight envisioned by the planners.

While this primary goal initially failed, the ports of southern France provided the

²⁷² Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 231-232.

²⁷³ Dworak, *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign*, 456-457.

²⁷⁴ Clarke and Smith, *United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations Riviera to the Rhine*, 70.

necessary capacity to begin deployment of additional forces into Europe. The employment of a French Army, the ability to deploy an additional six US divisions, and the three divisions that conducted the invasion, had a significant impact on the overall operations within the ETO.²⁷⁵ Creation of the Sixth Army Group fielded an additional 500,000 soldiers to apply pressure on the German Army.²⁷⁶ These forces would have been incapable of receiving support from the northern ports until after Antwerp and its approaches were finally seized by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in December 1944.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Dworak, *Victory's Foundation: US Logistics Support of the Allied Mediterranean Campaign*, 456.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 456-457.

²⁷⁷ See Figure 1 for long tons handled by port in the ETO. Antwerp achieved more cargo flow for two months over that of Marseille. Historical Section, European Theater of Operations, *Historical Report of the Transportation Corps European Theater of Operations*, vol. VII, *Historical Report Part 3*, table 8a, presented in Ruppenthal, *The United States Army in World War II The European Theater of Operations: Logistics Support of the Armies*, vol. 2, *September 1944-May 1945* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1959) 124; Numbers were obtained based on average planning factors per Infantry Division and Armor Division. Coakley and Leighton, *U.S. Army in World War II The War Department Global Logistics and Strategy*, vol. 2, 1943-1945, 823.

TABLE 4—TONNAGES DISCHARGED AT CONTINENTAL PORTS: JUNE 1944–APRIL 1945
[Long Tons ^a]

Year and Month	Total	OMAHA Beach	UTAH Beach	Cherbourg	Nor-mandy Minor Ports ^b	Brittany Ports	Le Havre	Rouen	Antwerp	Ghent	Southern France
<i>1944</i>											
June.....	291,333	182,199	109,134								
July.....	621,322	356,219	193,154	31,658	40,291						
August.....	1,112,771	348,820	187,955	266,644	125,353	9,499					174,500
September.....	1,210,290	243,564	150,158	314,431	100,126	75,198					326,813
October.....	1,309,184	120,786	72,728	365,603	58,816	77,735	61,731	26,891			524,894
November.....	1,402,080	13,411	12,885	433,301	48,707	64,078	148,654	127,569	5,873		547,602
December.....	1,555,819			250,112	50,749	27,327	166,038	132,433	427,592		501,568
<i>1945</i>											
January.....	1,501,269			262,423	47,773		198,768	157,709	433,094	15,742	385,760
February.....	1,735,502			286,591	41,836		195,332	173,016	473,463	69,698	495,566
March.....	2,039,778			261,492	39,691		192,593	268,174	558,066	172,259	547,503
April.....	2,025,142			181,043	47,542		165,438	240,708	628,227	277,553	484,631

^a Exclusive of bulk POL and vehicles.

^b Including Granville.

Source: Historical Report of the Transportation Corps, ETO, Vol. VII, April-June 1945, App. 7, Table 8A.

Figure 8. ETO Port Downloads

Source: Historical Section, ETO, *Historical Report of the Transportation Corps European Theater of Operations*, vol. VII, *Historical Report Part 3*, table 8A, accessed on 28 May 2016, <https://www.fold3.com/image/291732200>, presented in Ruppenthal, *U.S. Army in World War II European Theater of Operations Logistical Support of the Army*, vol. 2, 282-283.

An examination of the overall long tons needed to support the ETO provides a telling example of how Field Marshal Montgomery set the conditions that could have enabled use of Dragoon forces had they come in through the northern ports. Failing to take Antwerp meant that the port of Marseille provided the most overall tonnage, twenty-six percent, of any single port in the ETO until 1945. These supplies almost exclusively supported the Sixth Army Group.²⁷⁸ Aside from handling the majority of the humanitarian supplies for the ETO, the southern ports did not

²⁷⁸ Additional supplies brought through the ports also served civilian relief projects and provided limited support to General Patton's US Third Army, Historical Section, *CONAD Compendium Communications Zone European Theater of Operations*, 2:519-811.

deliver on the promise of providing support to the Normandy forces, which continued to rely on their own ports until Field Marshal Montgomery finally seized Antwerp. As the Normandy forces advanced, they encountered similar issues with increased distance and a lack of trucks to support their attacks. Seizing Marseilles and Toulon provided General Eisenhower options.

If Dragoon forces had been employed in northern France, the number of logistics units would not have impacted the overall logistics issues there, even if employed to seize the Brittany ports. The northern ports could not have handled an additional monthly average of 414,000 long tons needed to support the Sixth Army Group.²⁷⁹ As evidenced in their move north, the US Seventh Army, and eventually the Sixth Army Group, were constantly beleaguered by the same problem of distance which likewise affected the Overlord forces. Augmenting additional capacity into the supply chain would have allowed for better support from the ports, but it would have lacked the necessary port capacity to field the Sixth Army Group. Until Antwerp was seized, the limited capacity to unload the additional supplies needed to sustain their efforts would have negated any benefits from this additional capacity.

Without the southern ports providing a direct supply line to the Sixth Army Group, 500,000 soldiers would have been underutilized in any other location in the ETO until early 1945. Applying pressure on the southern flank of the German Army forced them to spread across a broad front to defend the border of Germany and France. As the VI Army Group pushed north, they created additional dilemmas for the German High Command that would have been extremely difficult to create in any other situation. As time and combat developed the theater, the combination of forces and their dedicated logistics finally achieved the Allied commander's desired effect of drawing German combat power away from the Normandy forces to deal with

²⁷⁹ The average long tons needed is based off the months' average download in the southern ports from August to December 1945. Historical Section, ETO, *Historical Report of the Transportation Corps European Theater of Operations*, vol. VII, *Historical Report Part 3*, table 8A, presented in Ruppenthal, *U.S. Army in World War II European Theater of Operations Logistical Support of the Army*, vol. 2, 282-283.

Dragoon forces, but not in the manner they had originally envisioned.

Deploying an additional five US Infantry Divisions and one US Armored Division through the southern ports allowed for their immediate use in the war, without adding to the already strained northern ports capacity. These additional forces required the German High Command to allocate their already overextending forces to combat them. Moving these additional US forces in theater is not captured in the data from the figure above. The previous figure showing long tons leaves out a critical metric, the number of vehicles gaining entry to the ETO through the southern ports.²⁸⁰ In addition to the approximately three million total long tons required to support Sixth Army Group, approximately 320,000 long tons were delivered through the southern ports as the new divisions arrived.²⁸¹

It would have been extremely difficult for the ETO to deliver these forces in a timely manner, and then provide for their support without the southern ports. These additional divisions provided more combat power for use against the Germans without forcing the northern ports to face the additional delays needed to unload these units.²⁸² It is reasonable to discern that the advance by the northern ETO forces would have been burdened by port delays created through Sixth Army Group's employment in the north. This delay would have added additional time to

²⁸⁰ As noted on the figure, it does not account for vehicles or fuel moving through the ports.

²⁸¹ Historical Section, ETO, *Historical Report of the Transportation Corps European Theater of Operations*, vol. VII, *Historical Report Part 3*, table 8A, presented in Ruppenthal, *U.S. Army in World War II European Theater of Operations Logistical Support of the Army*, vol. 2, 282-283; Coakley and Leighton, *U.S. Army in World War II The War Department Global Logistics and Strategy*, vol. 2, 1943-1945, 823.

²⁸² This delay is based off the total long ton requirement of 320,000 of their equipment, not including their supplies, versus cargo downloaded at ports during the first six months of fighting. Historical Section, ETO, *Historical Report of the Transportation Corps European Theater of Operations*, vol. VII, *Historical Report Part 3*, table 8A, presented in Ruppenthal, *U.S. Army in World War II European Theater of Operations Logistical Support of the Army*, vol. 2, 282-283; Coakley and Leighton, *U.S. Army in World War II The War Department Global Logistics and Strategy*, vol. 2, 1943-1945, 823.

the ETO as it approached and crossed into Germany. Operation Dragoon and its subsequent campaign were instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for the eventual defeat of Germany.

Conclusion

The Allies needed the ports of southern France to defeat Nazi Germany. Seizing these ports with Operation Dragoon and the subsequent campaign achieved this end, while providing valuable lessons for modern planners and commanders. Operational art is an essential tool for creating success at all levels of war. Logistics planners and commanders must have the necessary assets in place to provide the necessary divide between the needs of the front lines units and their capability to provide those needs to enabling operational art's application of tactical actions achieving strategic objectives. Commanders should let their units be guided by mission orders and the clear understanding of their commander's intent to achieve the tactical results supporting the strategic and political objectives. Understanding the dynamics of the invasion of southern France and its effects on the ETO provides a means for contemporary planners to understand their past, present, and future.

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