

34th Infantry Division in North Africa, 1942-1943

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

34th Infantry Division in North Africa, 1942-1943, by MAJ Peter B. Rampaart, US Army, 50 pages.

When the 34th Infantry Division landed on the beaches outside of Algiers on 8 November 1942 and joined the Allied invasion of North Africa, it was one of the first US units to see action in World War II. In a short time, the Red Bulls overcame numerous obstacles to prepare for that moment. An overabundance of obsolete equipment, limited opportunities for professional education, and a post-mobilization training regime riddled with missed opportunities all contributed to the division's performance during the North African Campaign. Although significant, these obstacles alone do not account for the Red Bulls' lackluster performance. Major General Charles Ryder's operational approach and subsequent influence on planning also played a critical role. The experiences of the Eastern Task Force during the Algiers landings were a consequence of an unbalanced operational approach that relied too heavily on risk and tempo to achieve the desired results. Anxious to redeem themselves, the Red Bulls finally received an opportunity at the Battle of Djebel Tahent (Hill 609) on 27 April 1943. Unlike the Algiers landings, Ryder employed a methodical operational approach that properly addressed risk and tempo while incorporating combined arms maneuver to defeat the Barenthin Fallschirmjäger Regiment. Although not solely responsible, the evolution of Ryder's operational approach played a significant role in the 34th ID's success and failures during the North African Campaign.

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Acronyms

AAR	After Action Review
AD	Armored Division
AEC	Army Extension Course
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CPX	Command Post Exercise
CAACSC	Corps Abridged Command and Staff Courses
DIVARTY	Division Artillery Headquarters
FM	Field Manual
HF	High-Frequency
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
ID	Infantry Division
IN	Infantry
ME	Main Effort
NGB	National Guard Bureau
OA	Operational Approach
OPORD	Operations Order
UTA	Unit Training Activity
WWI	World War 1
WWII	World War 2

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Introduction

The most important military problem facing the country was to devise the most effective means for preparing great armies of citizen soldiers.

—John McAuley Palmer, *A History of the Army National Guard*

As one of the first US divisions to see combat during World War II (WWII), the 34th Infantry Division (ID) stood at the precipice of a new type of warfare for the US Army. After initially seeing an increase in volunteers during the Great Depression, the Red Bull Division quickly became the victim of the Depression era's austere budgets. While it was possible to conduct basic soldiers' tasks and small unit tactics during yearly annual training, officer education and staff training were almost nonexistent. This shortfall meant the Red Bull Division saw limited training that prepared its soldiers and staff for future combat operations.

As the war in Europe continued to grow, it appeared more likely that the United States would not sit on the sidelines forever. As the US Army looked for ways to increase its numbers, the federalization of the eighteen National Guard (NG) divisions coupled with the Burke-Wadsworth Selective Service Act of 1940 were important steps in this process. The 34th ID's turn came on 10 February 1941, when the division officially started its path to wartime service. After some initial missteps, the soldiers of the Red Bull Division conducted an intense training period at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Upon arrival, the division dealt with myriad issues, including a constant influx of new personnel, lack of basic equipment, the removal of key leaders, and a last-minute change in force structure. Already a victim of the interwar period's meager training budgets and scarce officer training, the 34th ID's staff did not have the luxury of attending the New Divisions courses and its experience during the Louisiana Maneuvers did little to prepare it for combat. Finally, a short but intense training period in Northern Ireland, which saw the division spread out and unable to conduct large-scale maneuvers, concluded its pre-combat training.

The tactical shortcomings of the 34th ID during its combat debut are documented. Starting with the initial landings as part of Operation Torch in North Africa and continuing throughout the North African Campaign, the combat record of the 34th ID was very different from the hard-fought reputation the division had achieved by war's end. The Red Bulls' combat struggles were only part of the difficulties experienced during its participation in the North African Campaign. Decisions made by the division commander and his staff also played a critical role in the subsequent outcomes.

The commander's Operational Approach (AO) also contributed to the success and failure of the 34th ID.¹ Although not defined in doctrine at the time, the commander's ability to understand the broader strategic environment, his commanders' overall intent, and how the 34th ID fit into the campaign directly led to the plans executed by the units under his command.² A key component to developing an OA is the use of operational art.³ While this concept also did not exist in 1942, the components of skill, knowledge, and experience were still critical in the successful development of operations. Vast differences between the commander and his staff in these crucial areas created planning and execution difficulties early on. The relatively short time the commander and his staff worked together before the launch of combat operations further exacerbated the issue.

Although the lack of training and equipping contributed to the initial failures of the Red Bull division, it is important to note that the North African Campaign provided the 34th ID with

¹ The Operational Approach, a primary product of operational design, allows the commander to continue Joint Planning Process, translating broad strategic and operational concepts into specific missions and tasks to produce an executable plan. For details, see US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 2017), IV-1.

² US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 5-0, The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 1-4.

³ Operational Art is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means. For details, see US Joint Staff, *JP 5-0, Joint Planning* (2017), IV-1.

numerous instances of first opportunities. The North African Campaign was the first time Major General Charles Ryder and his staff operated in combat as a complete team. It was also the initial attempt of the commander and his staff to coordinate large troop movements, utilizing new tactics and force structure under combat conditions. Moreover, the North African Campaign was the first time the division commander had interacted at the corps level, and within the constructs of a multi-national operation.⁴ These interactions and subsequent limitations all played a role as Ryder framed the environment and developed his operational approach.

The experiences of the 34th ID on their journey to North Africa provide valuable lessons for National Guard and Reserve forces as they prepare for integration into large-scale combat operations. Quality training and education before mobilization can prevent many of the issues that plagued the Red Bulls early on. Integration into Regular Army and multinational exercises is a critical requirement for successful inclusion into future missions and should not be limited to pre and post-mobilization training. Understanding the importance of training with current doctrine and equipment is another lesson learned from the Red Bulls.

Of the ten elements of operational art, tempo, phasing and transition, and risk provide the best insights into the development of Ryder's OA throughout the North African Campaign.⁵ Starting with landings in Algiers and concluding with the Battle of Hill 609, the acceptance and implementation of risk and tempo combined with the integration of structured phasing and transitions provide an increased understanding of the development and maturation of the division commander and his staff as the Red Bulls battled across North Africa.

⁴ Between two or more forces or agencies of two or more nations or coalition partners. For details, see US Joint Staff, *JP 5-0, Joint Planning* (2017), GL-12.

⁵ Army commanders and their staffs use intellectual tools [element of operational art] to help understand an operational environment as well as visualize and describe their approach for conducting an operation. Tempo is the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy. A phase is a planning and execution tool used to divide an operation in duration or activity. Risk is the probability and severity of loss linked to hazards. Risk, uncertainty, and chance are inherent in all military operations. For details, see US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2017), 2-4.

Interwar Years

The limited budgets during the Great Depression (1929-1939) significantly affected the 34th ID in the interwar years and manifested themselves in the three critical areas of equipment, education, and training. Even though these issues were widely known and systemic throughout the entire National Guard, the widespread lack of funds prevented these problems from being addressed. The first of these issues was the limited readiness and obsolescence of a majority of the division's equipment. While directly affecting the 34th ID's ability to train, equipment issues also directly affected its ability to conduct its wartime mission. The Chief of the National Guard Bureau (NGB), Major General Albert H. Blanding, remarked, "the state of training of the National Guard cannot, however, reach the standard desired until all units have received their modern arms and equipment."⁶ Among the most critical equipment shortfalls were small arms, anti-tank weapons, and wireless communications. As late as 1938, soldiers in the 34th ID were still using World War I (WWI) vintage cart-mounted .30 caliber machine guns, long since retired from regular army units. Training with outdated equipment was the norm rather than the exception for the Red Bulls for a majority of the Depression years.

Another critical piece of equipment still missing from the 34th ID inventory were High-Frequency (HF) radios. Put to great use by the German Army in 1939 and onward, HF radios had yet to reach the Red Bulls in sufficient numbers. With the increase in distances of modern combat, the ability for commanders and staff to use HF radios for command, control, and communication was vital. To further complicate the situation, there was a drastic shortage of qualified operators to use the radios due to limited training. The lack of radio sets and qualified operators prevented commanders from integrating this paradigm-changing technology into their training plans before federalization.

⁶ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1941), 12.

As expected, mechanization of the National Guard was dramatically slower than that of the regular army during the interwar period. Even though the 34th ID's tank company from Duluth, Minnesota, became the first National Guard armor unit in 1920, half of the National Guard cavalry was still riding horses in 1940 and did not fully convert to mechanized methods until mid-1942.⁷ Predictably, the increased mechanization of the National Guard saw an increase in the number of vehicles required to conduct operations. However, the number of vehicles procured by the NG did not keep pace with modernization and peaked at a deficit of 30,843 vehicles of all sorts in 1940.⁸ It was not until 1938 that 34th ID units stopped using Class-B Standardized Military Trucks left over from WWI.⁹

Officer education was also an issue throughout the interwar years. With education funds profoundly affected by Depression-era budgets, National Guard officers found options for continuing their education limited. National Guard quotas to attend Regular Army (RA) component schools were few and difficult to acquire. Between the years 1934 and 1940, only 5,946 of the 14,457 National Guard officers attended a Regular Army component school.¹⁰ The nature of these schools varied greatly from basic branch training courses to professional education to instructor courses. By the end of 1940, only sixty-three percent, or 3,746, of those officers were still in the guard.¹¹ The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth was the seminal training that prepared officers for duty on divisional staffs, yet only 143 officers out of a total of 14,501 in the entire National Guard attended CGSC from 1938 to 1941. In the four states from which 34th ID drew its officers, Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota,

⁷ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office), 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ Homer Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears in World War II* (Lake Mills, IA: Graphic Publishing, 1988), 21.

¹⁰ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix A.

and North Dakota, only sixteen officers out of 1,532 completed CGSC, and only two officers completed the war college by 1941.¹² Although the vast majority of staff officers in the 34th ID enrolled in some form of distance learning, it did not provide the quality training and instruction received from Regular Army schools. This issue was systemic throughout the National Guard as only 6,800 of the 21,074 officers had attended an Army service school by the end of 1941.¹³

An attempt to bridge the education gap for National Guard officers came in 1937 with the creation of the Corps Area Abridged Command and Staff Courses (CAACSC). The CAACSC was intended to take the traditional CGSC curriculum taught at Fort Leavenworth and teach it to National Guard officers within their respective corps.¹⁴ The three-year program, starting first with II and VI Corps, had an initial graduation rate of eighty-four percent as thirty-three of thirty-nine officers completed the course. The program eventually spread to the 34th ID's parent VII Corps in 1939, but unfortunately arrived too late for the officers of the Red Bull division to complete before federalization. The officers of the 34th ID were also not able to benefit from the New Divisions courses at Fort Leavenworth due to their early federalization and subsequent deployment date.¹⁵

The most common form of officer education for National Guard soldiers during the Great Depression Era was the Army Extension Courses (AEC) program, established in 1927. The AEC program consisted of a series of correspondence courses that allowed officers to continue their professional education when attending courses in-person was not possible. By 1932, sixty-six percent of National Guard officers had enrolled in some form of correspondence course.¹⁶ Overall

¹² US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, 61.

¹³ Kent Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer, and Bell I. Wiley, *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1947), 11.

¹⁴ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 26.

¹⁵ Peter Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 156.

¹⁶ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1938* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1938), 27.

participation in AEC remained high during the final years of the interwar period and only started to fall below its peak of ninety-one percent in 1941 after National Guard divisions began federalizing.¹⁷

The AEC program was the only way for most Red Bull officers to continue their education and there were limitations. One major issue identified was the inability of the US Army to update and revise course material with the latest information or doctrine. The lack of current material was a systemic problem that also manifested in the refresher training that soldiers needed to retain their instructor credentials. Although never rectified, Major General John F. Williams, Chief of the NGB, brought national attention to this issue in 1941. These shortcomings meant that the officers and staff of the 34th ID began its post-federalization training with outdated education and training.

Issues with interwar training ultimately affected the soldiers and officers of the 34th ID as they prepared for federalized duty. While the original time commitment required for an individual serving in the National Guard has changed very little since the interwar years, the methods have. The National Defense Act of 1920, also known as the Kahn Act, made the National Guard officially a component of the Army of the United States.¹⁸ The National Guard was also given a minimum of forty-eight Unit Training Activities (UTA) at the unit's local armory plus fifteen days of field training conducted at training facilities during the summer months.

Though National Guard units today group multiple UTAs into a single weekend, the standard practice for the interwar years was that National Guard units had one weekly UTA consisting of two hours of training or instruction conducted at a local armory. This method significantly restricted the training staff could accomplish due to the limited time available during weekly drills. On the eve of war in 1940, the Chief of the NGB identified this shortcoming by

¹⁷ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 26.

¹⁸ William Riker, *Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1957), 81.

stating, “It is therefore advisable that if the Guard is mobilized in the near future primary attention should be given to basic first essentials of training for some time before it is called upon to perform in large-scale maneuvers.”¹⁹ Even with the increase to sixty UTAs and extending summer field training to three weeks in 1940, this assessment shows that even the most basic soldier skills were not being adequately trained at local armories or during yearly summer training.²⁰ These difficulties suggest that complex training involving Command Post Exercises were all but impossible.

Another training problem encountered which affected the 34th ID was the limited number of qualified instructors. Properly credentialed instructors for National Guard soldiers only came from two sources. The first was National Guard soldiers who attended Regular Army courses and then returned and taught these skills to their units. This problem was closely related to the officer education limitations because National Guard officers had similar difficulties attending basic branch schools even though, from 1925 through 1940, the National Guard had more soldiers than the Regular Army.²¹ By 1941, only 108 actively drilling 34th ID Officers had attended the Regular Army Infantry course, forty had attended the Field Artillery school, twenty the Cavalry course, and thirteen the Engineer course. This school created a potential pool of only 181 instructors to train the entire division.²² The instructors were limited by the fact that their information and techniques were only as current as when they attended their Regular Army class. The Chief of the NGB identified the lack of updated information in 1939 by stating, “in the past the annual flow of fresh information and training from these centers of Army tactical and technical development has not been large enough to spread adequately through the whole

¹⁹ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

²¹ Jim Hill, *The Minute Man in Peace and War: A History of the National Guard* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Press, 1964), 348.

²² US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 25.

organization of the Guard.”²³ Unfortunately, the RA did not resolve this issue in time for the Red Bulls to benefit before their federalization.

Assigned to the VII Corps area of responsibility in 1936, the 34th ID finally received a second source of qualified instructors from the RA. Headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, VII Corps’ 9,968 personnel initial support only consisted of conducting daily operations, finance, and quartermaster duties. It was not until two years later that the Regular Army removed the restrictions which prevented assigning their officers and NCOs to positions that allowed them to instruct the National Guard units within the corps’ area of responsibility.²⁴ With these restrictions removed, the 34th ID finally had a second source of instructors who could theoretically teach the most current doctrine. The results of this policy change were less than the 34th ID had hoped for as the Regular Army instructors assigned to the corps were severely lacking in quantity and by 1940 there were only 496 officers and 367 NCOs assigned as National Guard instructors nationwide and only forty-one assigned to VII Corps in 1941.²⁵

Staff training in general, mostly in the form of Command Post Exercises (CPX), was limited to a handful of opportunities for the 34th ID during the interwar years. In adherence to the training standard at the time, the weekly UTAs did not afford staff officers sufficient time to conduct adequate training. The only opportunity the division staff had to conduct realistic staff training came during the fifteen-day summer camp, typically held at Camp Ripley, Minnesota. Staff training conducted during summer camp typically consisted of routine staff operations required to support National Guard units while training. Examples of this type of operations involved regular administrative and logistical support to soldiers and not the type required to maneuver a division against a well-trained enemy.

²³ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1939* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1939), 26.

²⁴ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1938*, 27.

²⁵ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, 69.

Starting in 1935, the War Department initiated a program that introduced full-scale Army maneuvers in one of the four Army areas. These maneuvers were fundamentally different as they now included National Guard divisions assigned to that area. In August of 1937, the 34th ID Staff, as part of VII Corps, participated in Fourth Army's maneuvers at Camp Ripley. A summary provided by the Chief of the NGB stated, "under this program, National Guard division commanders and staffs had tours of duty at command post exercises and starting in 1935 National Guard troops were engaged in army maneuvers with Regular Army troops under identical corps and army control."²⁶ The Fourth Army maneuvers consisted of the only realistic upper echelon training the 34th ID staff received before federalization. In 1940, as war approached, the NGB directed all field armies to conduct a twenty-one-day maneuver exercise that included almost all National Guard units throughout the country. Just as they had in 1937, the 34th ID participated in the Fourth Army maneuvers.²⁷ Unfortunately, the results of these maneuvers were disappointing. An official report stated, "At the conclusion of summer encampments in 1940, the NGB estimated that twenty percent of staff and division officers were unqualified for their positions, in part because less than a third of the National Guard officers inducted during 1940 and 1941 ever completed an Army course in leadership."²⁸

Federalization

Officially federalized on 10 February 1941, the 34th ID reported to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana for one year of training. Army headquarters had decided to send National Guard units from Northern states to the South to avoid the harsher Northern climates. After their arrival, training and equipment issues continued to plague the Red Bulls. The combination of slow industrial ramp-up and competition with Lend-Lease requirements caused shortages in vital

²⁶ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, 11.

²⁷ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 11.

²⁸ Christopher Gabel, *The US Army CHQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1991), 16.

pieces of equipment, such as machine guns and mortar tubes, which prevented proper training.²⁹ While some soldiers resorted to improvisation by utilizing stovepipes for mortars and fabricating wooden machine guns from pictures, this ad-hoc training significantly affected the early weeks of training.³⁰ Equipment shortages eventually improved but were never fully solved. The division did not start receiving M1 Garands until April, two months after arrival, and did not see its primary anti-tank weapon until they arrived in North Africa.³¹

Force structure changes were another major issue for the 34th ID and had a dramatic effect on staff planning and execution. At the time of federalization, the structure of the 34th ID was the square division with 22,000 men. The table of organization was very much a legacy design and could absorb the type of attrition typical of WWI style fighting. It had two infantry brigades with two infantry regiments each.³² Successful employment of this type of formation “involved placing the division’s four regiments (hence square) online, with battalions in column within each regiment. Following a rolling barrage, successive waves of infantry, supported by massed machine gun fire, hurled themselves against the enemy defenses.”³³ The square division was the only formation that the 34th ID commanders and staff had known since 1918, and all training and planning had centered on this force structure.

²⁹ Richard Stewart, “The ‘Red Bull’ Division: Training and Initial Engagements of the 34th Infantry Division, 1931-43,” *Army History* (Winter 1993): 2.

³⁰ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 40.

³¹ Peter Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 29.

³² US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 10.

³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

CHART 1—SQUARE INFANTRY DIVISION, 1941

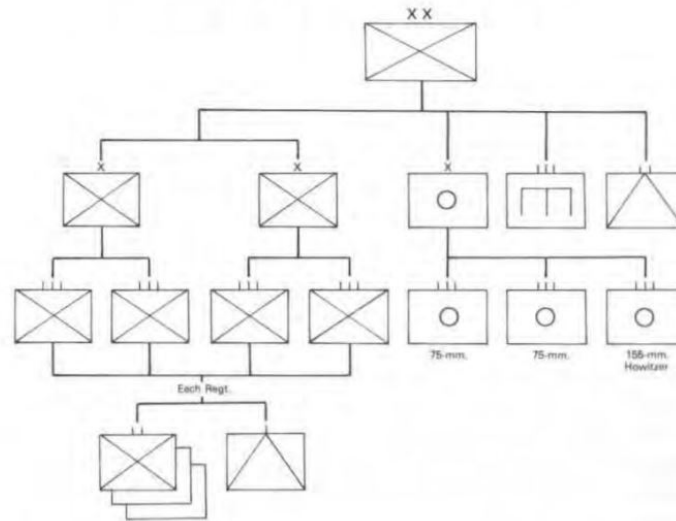


Figure 1. Square Infantry Division. Christopher R. Gabel, *The US Army CHQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1991), 10.

In 1939, the US Army started reorganizing infantry divisions under the new triangle division force structure. With a total manning of just 15,000, a twenty-five percent reduction in infantry soldiers alone, the overall force structure changed as well. Now infantry divisions comprised of three infantry regiments, each having three infantry battalions apiece and an anti-tank company.³⁴ This transition had a dramatic effect on the 34th ID with the loss of two brigade headquarters along with the 164th Infantry Regiment. Also disbanded was the 59th Field Artillery Brigade to create the Division Artillery Headquarters (DIVARTY) and a significant shuffle in the medical and engineer units.³⁵ The implementation for the triangle division was slow for the federalized divisions. The 34th ID did not transition until February 1942, just before leaving for Europe.³⁶ The delay resulted in the 34th ID conducting division, corps, and army level maneuvers in their old formations.

³⁴ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1940*, 11.

³⁵ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 63.

³⁶ Greenfield, Palmer, and Bell, *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops*, 433.

CHART 2—TRIANGULAR INFANTRY DIVISION, 1941

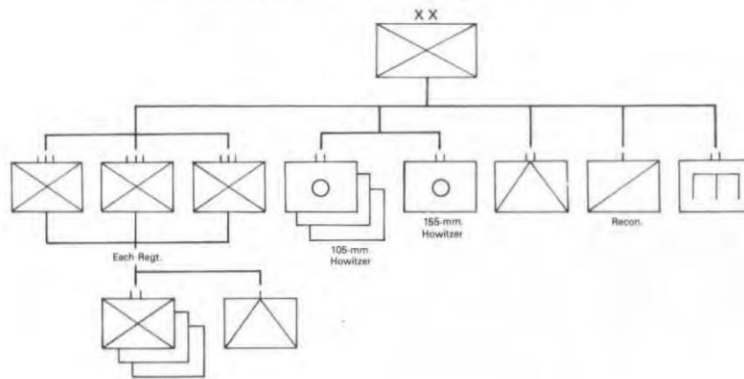


Figure 2. Triangle Infantry Division. Christopher R. Gabel, *The US Army CHQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1991), 11.

The post-federalization training conducted by the Red Bulls once they arrived at Camp Claiborne fell under the purview of the General Headquarters (GHQ). Led by Lieutenant General Lesley McNair, the GHQ’s mission was “to prepare units to take the field on short notice at existing strength, ready to function effectively in combat.”³⁷ While not having direct command over the division’s activities, the GHQ’s primary role was to oversee, interpret, direct, and synchronize all post-federalization training. The division conducted training in a tiered system that dedicated a majority of the time to the brigade phase. After completion of the brigade phase, the staff gained experience during the four weeks of divisional level training which in turn prepared them for the corps and army maneuvers.³⁸

One soldier described the corps maneuvers of June 1941 as “the only exercise to be conducted until the Atlantic Maneuvers in Ireland, which provided appreciable benefits from the battalion to platoon level.”³⁹ Despite being grand in design, it was much less fruitful for the division staff. While the Red Bulls maneuvered against the 32nd ID, the GHQ regulations only provided four umpires at the division level, which limited the amount of training and evaluation

³⁷ Greenfield, Palmer, and Bell, *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops*, 16.

³⁸ US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, 18.

³⁹ Ankrum, *Dogface Who Smiled Through Tears*, 47.

the commander and staff received.⁴⁰ The result of this experience echoed the 1937 and 1940 Camp Ripley maneuvers in size and scale and resulted in the GHQ finding similar issues with divisions coordinating subordinate units. Despite these shortcomings, the division staff was able to learn some valuable lessons regarding the importance of logistics coordination and troop movements.

The intent of the Louisiana Maneuvers, in August 1941, was to be the culminating event of the 34th ID's year of federalization. Although the largest maneuvers ever conducted in the United States, they marked another example of a missed opportunity for the Red Bulls.⁴¹ Assigned to the V Corps of Third Army (Blue force) for the first phase of the maneuvers, the 34th ID spent much of the time as the Corps reserve on the eastern flank of the battle. During this time the Red Bulls saw minimal action which resulted in the staff receiving little opportunity to train as a maneuver force. Phase two of the maneuvers saw the 34th ID move approximately twenty miles from battle positions near Oakdale, Louisiana and seize the city of Alexandria, Louisiana, however, it did little else after that.⁴² Upon completion of the Louisiana Maneuvers, GHQ directed all units to focus on small unit training for the next four months and limited the staff's training opportunities to small CPXs.⁴³

The lack of amphibious training before departure for Europe was another missed opportunity for the division staff. Even though the importance of amphibious landings was generally understood, the 34th ID did not receive any before moving overseas. Lieutenant General McNair adamantly opposed any form of specialized training, preferring to stick with the

⁴⁰ US War Department, *Field Manual: FM 105-5 Umpire Manual* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1942), 36.

⁴¹ Kent Greenfield, and Robert R. Palmer, *Origins of the Army Ground Forces General Headquarters, United States Army, 1940-1942: Study No. 1* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 24.

⁴² US War Department, *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, 98.

⁴³ Kent Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer, and Bell I. Wiley, *The Origination of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 17.

fundamentals of soldiering. His belief was, “even though landing is the first step; success presumably will come only from skill in combat.”⁴⁴ Lack of sufficient training equipment notwithstanding, even those few divisions that were authorized to conduct amphibious training were only allowed to do so for about a third of their time ceding the rest to their normal GHQ approved training of basic soldier skills.

Personnel issues also continued to plague the officers and staff of 34th ID throughout the post-federalization period and manifested itself in two ways. First, there was a constant loss of soldiers and staff. The 34th ID continued to suffer from personnel turnover right up to its departure for North Africa.⁴⁵ Secondly, was the sudden replacement of the division commander just before the Louisiana Maneuvers. Major General Ellard Walsh, who had assumed command after the 1940 summer camp maneuvers at Camp Ripley, stepped down for medical reasons right before the division maneuvers. Replacing him was Major General Russell P. Hartle, a well-qualified Regular Army officer with extensive leadership experience. Despite these qualifications, Major General Hartle’s arrival right before the division training event added another layer of complexity to the staff’s development.

The open hostility towards National Guard officers from GHQ was another issue. Lieutenant General McNair found National Guard officers generally lacked proper training and the capability to lead, especially those in the senior ranks.⁴⁶ By the end of 1941, he only found two National Guard colonels he considered fit for promotion while his belief was “that a citizen officer, in general, should be content to reach the highly respected grade of Colonel, and that the high command should be by selected professional soldiers.”⁴⁷ Distraught at the lack of progress

⁴⁴ Greenfield and Palmer, *Origins of the Army Ground Forces General Headquarters, United States Army, 1940-1942: Study No. 1*, 20.

⁴⁵ Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe*, 19.

⁴⁶ Mark Calhoun, *General Lesley J. McNair: Unsung Architect of the US Army* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 225.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

the National Guard made during post-federalization training, McNair wanted to demobilize all National Guard divisions. The US Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshal, however, understood the political fallout that such a decision entailed, and opted to retain the National Guard forces while conducting a wholesale change of the senior leadership. General Marshal's decision led to the replacement of all but two senior National Guard commanders and numerous senior staff officers after the 1941 summer and fall maneuvers.⁴⁸

The final piece of the 34th ID's pre-combat training regimen occurred in Northern Ireland. As the first units started arriving in late February 1942, many of the same issues that had plagued the division in Louisiana, such as equipment shortages and an influx of new personnel, continued abroad. The lack of division-sized training areas caused the Red Bulls to spread out over the entire countryside of Ulster, and later in Scotland, in regimental size elements.⁴⁹ While this allowed units to focus on small unit tactics, it significantly limited oversight. The division did benefit in two specific areas from its time in Ireland. First, units finally rehearsed amphibious operations off the coast of Scotland.⁵⁰ The training opportunity was the only time the division practiced this vital skill before the landing in support of the North African Campaign. Second, the division participated in the Atlantic Maneuvers in July with the 1st Armored Division (AD).⁵¹ These maneuvers were critical for several reasons. First, this was the only time the division was maneuvered under the new triangular division force structure before it saw combat. These maneuvers also helped forge the close working relationship between the Red Bulls and the 1st AD. As the North African Campaign progressed, these two divisions continued to work closely together. Finally, the division was able to draw from the experience of the 59th and 61st British

⁴⁸ Michael Doubler, *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: The Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 175.

⁴⁹ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 82.

⁵⁰ Charles W. Ryder, Ryder Papers, 1917-1950, Regimental Training Plans (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS), Box 2.

⁵¹ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 94.

divisions, some of whom had just recently returned from combat in North Africa. The lessons learned from the Atlantic Maneuvers and the interaction with their British counterparts proved to very valuable in the coming weeks as the Red Bulls prepared to enter combat.

One last significant personnel change occurred during the 34th ID's stay in Northern Ireland. On 12 June 1942, Major General Hartle handed over command to Major General Charles Ryder. Like his predecessor, Ryder was a Regular Army officer who had combat experience in WWI. As with the previous change of command, this occurred right before the execution of major maneuvers. Even though Ryder stayed in command through the entire North African Campaign, once again the staff had to adjust to a new commander at the last minute.

Algiers Landing

The *Infantry* is essentially an arm of close combat. Its primary mission in the attack is to close with the enemy and destroy or capture him.

—*FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations*

Although the landings at the Port of Algiers and the immediate surrounding areas were only a small part of Operation Torch, Allied commanders saw the capture of Algiers as decisive to all of North Africa.⁵² Combined with landings in Oran and Casablanca, “the thought of a North African undertaking at that time was inspired by the hope of winning the initiative at a relatively small cost, and closing and tightening the ring around Germany.”⁵³ Opening a front in North Africa gave the US the opportunity to finally engage the German Army while simultaneously allowing the British to open sea lines of communications throughout the Mediterranean Sea. A secondary benefit, and no less critical to this operation was the possibility of bringing France back onto the Allied side once the Vichy forces in North Africa surrendered or were defeated.⁵⁴

⁵² Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Picador, 2002), 93.

⁵³ Leo Meyer, *Command Decisions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), 174.

⁵⁴ George Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 240.

Added to this discussion was the building anxiety of the American public to initiate combat operations with the Germans. While actively battling the Japanese in the Pacific, the US had yet to engage German forces in combat despite having declared war almost a year earlier.

Set for 8 November 1942, the invasion consisted of two major efforts. First was a pair of amphibious landings, one to the east and the other to the west of Algiers, which served two purposes. One was to secure key terrain which consisted of various airfields as well as coastal defense systems that otherwise posed a significant threat to landing craft and naval vessels. The second phase required each landing force to converge on and seize Algiers and its strategic port. The initial hope was that by the time the noose started tightening around Algiers, the Vichy French units within the city would surrender.⁵⁵

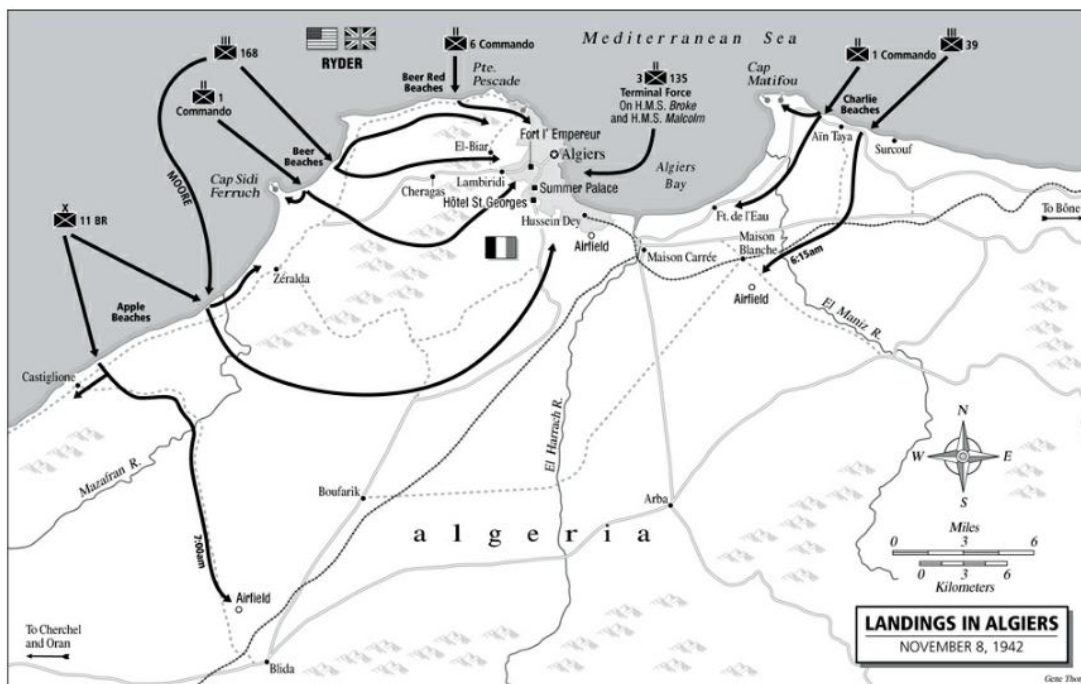


Figure 3. The Algiers Landings. Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Picador, 2002), 92.

The second effort was a commando raid on the port itself, aptly named Operation Terminal. This effort was to commence once the first wave of the amphibious landings was

⁵⁵ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 240.

complete with the primary objective of capturing intact the port and its facilities for future use by allied forces. The capture of the port defenses and key targets was the primary objective for the commando force. To accomplish this required the neutralization of the cable barrier protecting the port itself.⁵⁶ This secondary objective required the destroyers, tasked with landing the commandos on the docks, to neutralize the barrier before debarkation.

The plan included a coordinated effort of the commando force seizing the port and key facilities. Once secured, commandos would hold out for the arrival of the two amphibious forces that were to attack simultaneously toward the city of Algiers and relieve the commandos. With all three units linked up, and the city and port captured intact, planners assumed Vichy French forces would either surrender or switch their allegiance to the Allied powers.⁵⁷

Several influences helped shape Ryder's OA for the landings in Algiers. The first was tactics identified in the 1941 version of Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Field Service Regulations – Operations. This manual contained the primary doctrine for all combat divisions and provided guidance ranging from tactical operations to leadership issues.⁵⁸

Chapter Four, primarily dealing with the exercise of command, also discussed communications between and within the various command posts. Doctrine at the time identified the primary means of communication to subordinate units as wire lines which Ryder's OA with his command post initially located at sea aboard HMS *Bulolo*.⁵⁹ To command and control the operation, Ryder used less reliable HF radios, which had a limited range and were also easily intercepted. FM 100-5 cautioned that the "interception of radio messages must be presumed, when prompt action is called for, the commander must decide whether the urgency of sending the

⁵⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 253.

⁵⁷ Meyer, *Command Decisions*, 185.

⁵⁸ Walter Kretchik, *US Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 143.

⁵⁹ Vincent O'Hara, *Torch: North Africa and the Allied Path to Victory* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2015), 162.

message in the clear outweighs the value to the enemy information contained within.”⁶⁰ The limitations and risks associated with HF radios required Ryder to move his command post ashore earlier than was optimal. The shortcomings of HF radio use after the landings further limited Ryder’s ability to command or control as his forces were spread out over fifty kilometers.⁶¹ These limitations also forced the division commander and his staff to rely on much slower messengers.

The final plan for the invasion called for both night operations and attacking a city. Chapter Twelve of *FM-100-5* identified both as “special operations,” and dedicated extra emphasis to them.⁶² Ryder accounted for these elements into the final Operations Order (OPORD) through landing times and recommended precautions. The two-pronged assault on the city of Algiers directly followed *FM 100-5* guidance: “when immediate capture of the town is essential, the main attack is directed against the flank or rear of the town in order to secure the advantages of an enveloping attack.”⁶³

One important note is that although *FM 100-5* was the seminal document for divisions, it did not address amphibious operations. *FM 100-15, Field Service Regulations: Larger Units*, which dealt with corps level units and above, briefly mentioned, “maximum results are to be expected when the maneuver can be launched with surprise; when the envelopments by sea-borne and air-borne troops can strike simultaneously.”⁶⁴ To address this lack of information, Ryder and his planners could turn to *FM 31-5, Landing Operations on Hostile Shores*. Taken almost verbatim from the US Navy’s *Fleet Training Publication 167*, this manual provided US Army

⁶⁰ US War Department, *FM 100-5, Field Service Regulations: Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1941), 37.

⁶¹ O’Hara, *Torch*, 91.

⁶² US War Department, *FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations: Operations* (1941), 209.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁴ US War Department, *FM 100-15, Field Service Regulations: Larger Units* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1941), 38.

forces with amphibious doctrine and planning guidance.⁶⁵ It seems very likely that the combination of these three documents profoundly influenced the doctrinal portion of Ryder's OA.

The requirement to conduct amphibious operations tested Ryder and his staff given the limited amount of exposure the 34th ID had to this specialized type of operation before execution. Ryder was able to supplement his lack of amphibious knowledge and experience with two after-action reports (AAR) from Operation Ironclad and the Dieppe Raid to provide critical insight for the upcoming invasion. Operation Ironclad was the British invasion of the port of Diego Suarez, Madagascar on 5 May 1942 to disrupt Imperial Japanese Navy operations in the Western Indian Ocean.⁶⁶ The landings consisted of a two-pronged assault with units attacking towards the city of Diego Suarez while seizing key targets such as aerodromes and coastal defense guns. Considered an overwhelming success, the Operation Ironclad AAR identified several key lessons.

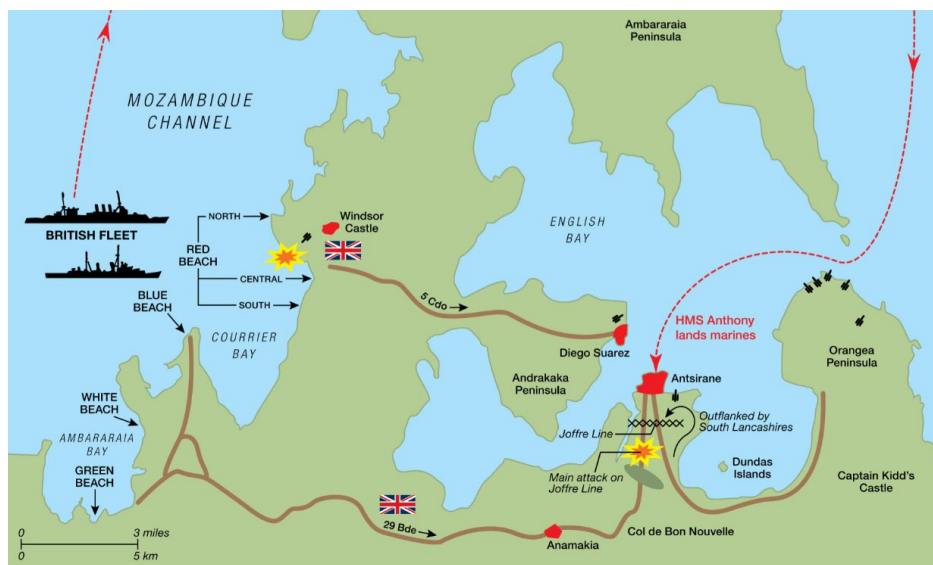


Figure 4. Operation Ironclad. Cliff Lloyd, *Operation Ironclad: The British Invasion of Madagascar* (Lancashire, UK: History and Latte, 2015), 6.

The first group of lessons dealt directly with amphibious operations. The first idea stressed the importance of training soldiers to load into their assault craft, in full combat gear, at

⁶⁵ Michael Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 158.

⁶⁶ Cliff Lloyd, *Operation Ironclad: The British Invasion of Madagascar* (Lancashire, UK: History and Latte, 2015), 20.

night during rough weather conditions.⁶⁷ While loading onto landing craft was difficult for novice soldiers during daylight hours it was critical that soldiers practice this operation, especially given the inexperience of the 34th ID with amphibious operations and the limited training opportunities. The AAR also focused on the critical element of navigation both from ship to shore as well as cross country. Lacking in both accuracy and scale, the maps used during Operation Ironclad resulted in navigation issues that slowed the pace of operations.⁶⁸

Another group of lessons outlined in the AAR concerned post-landing operations. The British accepted risk during the initial landings by pushing their infantry forward without waiting for armored or mechanized support to maintain their tempo.⁶⁹ Although this decision initially had its advantages, infantry and armored units quickly became exposed without mutual support from one another. The AAR also identified communications between commanders as a critical issue. While communications between battalions were generally good, there was a systemic breakdown in communications to higher echelons.⁷⁰ The cause of this issue was attributed to operator error more than equipment malfunction.

The Dieppe Raid was the Allied attempt to assault the city of Dieppe, France, on 19 August 1942 to gather intelligence and test German reactions. The information gained for the raid helped guide Allied planning during subsequent operations.⁷¹ Similar to Operation Ironclad, it consisted of an amphibious landing on multiple beaches followed by the seizure of key targets. However, unlike Operation Ironclad, this operation consisted of a commando raid. While the Dieppe Raid ended in catastrophe, it identified several key lessons for Ryder and his staff.

⁶⁷ Ryder Papers, Operation Ironclad AAR, Box 2.

⁶⁸ Lloyd, *Operation Ironclad*, 80.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷⁰ Ryder Papers, Operation Ironclad AAR, Box 2.

⁷¹ Robin Neillands, *The Dieppe Raid: The Story of the Disastrous 1942 Expedition* (London: Aurun Press, 2006), 75.

Regarding amphibious operations, the AAR identified the proper navigation of the landing craft as a major concern. During the raid, serious issues arose when numerous landing craft were unable to navigate from the landing ships to their designated beaches accurately. Ryder even highlighted the importance of this issue in red pen on his copy of the AAR when he circled, “every possible navigation aid including silhouettes of the coastline on either side of their allotted landing place [should be provided].”⁷² Despite the increased awareness, navigation issues continued to plague the Red Bull commander.

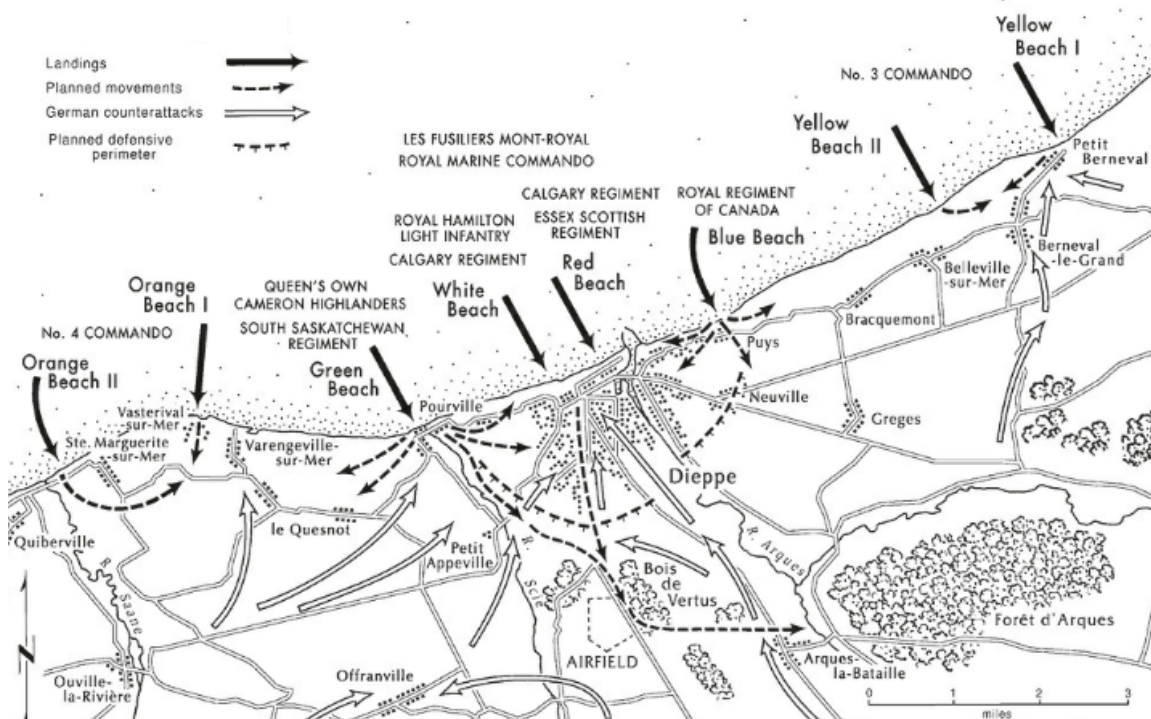


Figure 5. The Dieppe Raid. Mark Zuehlke, *Tragedy at Dieppe: Operation Jubilee* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre Publishing, 2014), 12.

Another area of concern for Ryder from the Dieppe Raid AAR was the proper allotment of forces in the primary landing force.⁷³ The AAR recommended a careful balance between committing enough forces to establish a beachhead while retaining enough to allow for further

⁷² Ryder Papers, Dieppe Raid AAR, Box 2.

⁷³ Mark Zuehlke, *Tragedy at Dieppe: Operation Jubilee* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre Publishing, 2014), 336.

exploitation. The AAR also warned against inflexibility in planning: “The greater the strength allotted to the assault the weaker the floating reserve – the more rigid your plan – and the less chance of switching landing craft and troops to areas where success has been gained.”⁷⁴ This warning also gained the attention of Ryder’s red pen and was critical during the Algiers landings. Although the final invasion plan wound up being an amalgamation of the appropriate parts of both Operation Ironclad and the Dieppe Raid, the AARs helped identify potential shortcomings and provided valuable insight to Ryder as he developed his OA.

As far back as the initial planning for the North African campaign, it quickly became apparent to General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his planners that Algiers was a strategic, decisive point and the key to Algeria. Because Algiers was the political center for Algeria and home to the senior diplomats, its seizure could act as a springboard for future operations into North Africa.⁷⁵ This vital factor ensured that the Eastern Task Force received extra support and scrutiny throughout the planning process.⁷⁶

Political influence also played a significant role in the development of Ryder’s OA. From the very beginning, there was a concerted effort to put an American face on the operation to ensure there was no doubt as to US dedication, not only to the Algiers operation but to the overall war effort. This influence had a direct and immediate effect on planning. The Operation Torch appointment order directed Ryder to provide an overwhelming appearance of US forces participating in the landings. The appointment order went even further to state, “with a view to inducing the French not to offer or prolong resistance, the greatest prominence is to be given to the participation of US forces in the assault.”⁷⁷ To meet General Eisenhower's intent, Ryder directed that the first troops to land will be primarily US to ensure, “while so far as predictable,

⁷⁴ Ryder Papers, Dieppe Raid AAR, Box 2.

⁷⁵ Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 93.

⁷⁶ O’Hara, *Torch*, 99.

⁷⁷ Ryder Papers, Operation Torch Appointment Memo, Box 2.

all parleys will be conducted by US Officers.”⁷⁸ This guidance essentially tied Ryder’s hands and dictated what units went ashore first regardless of whether they were the best qualified.

The multi-national make-up of the Eastern Task Force was another political element that Ryder had to factor into his approach and saw the integration of many non-US forces into the Algiers plan. The multi-national requirement resulted in the incorporation of both regular British soldiers as well as the unique capabilities of No. 1 Commando and No. 6 Commando (each a battalion-sized unit). Having trained together only once during the Atlantic Maneuvers, the addition of the British units added another layer of complexity to the operation. Their inclusion also came at the expense of the 133d Infantry, which was cut from the mission and left in England.

The final plans, agreed upon by the Allied commanders, tasked the British to provide the bulk of the troop transport ships and landing craft due to limited availability of US Navy assets in the Mediterranean during the North African Campaign.⁷⁹ Still reeling from recent losses and with a majority of assets dedicated to conducting operations in the Pacific, the US Navy was only able to provide limited support during the North African Campaign. With its priorities focused on the Imperial Japanese Navy, it was unclear when the US Navy would have the assets to support Allied operations in North Africa.⁸⁰ The lack of US Naval support meant that Ryder and his staff had to coordinate with Royal Navy assets for air and fire support.

The necessity to conduct the landings as part of a joint force added another major element of complexity in the development of Ryder’s OA.⁸¹ Ryder and his staff now had to factor in the

⁷⁸ Ryder Papers, Operation Torch Appointment Memo, Box 2, 1.

⁷⁹ Meyer, *Command Decisions*, 195.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁸¹ A Joint Force is a force composed of elements, assigned, or attached, of two or more military departments operating under a single joint force commander. For details, see US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2017), GL-10.

role naval elements played in the operation. The largest hurdle Ryder and his staff tackled was the coordination of Naval Gunfire support during the landings. Until field artillery landed ashore, fire support from ships at sea remained the only method of fire support provided to the landing forces. This type of support remained critical to neutralize and suppress the coastal gun batteries scattered throughout the landing beaches until ground forces could capture them. Multinational issues and limited naval gunfire training further limited fire support and was not until daybreak that the first artillery pieces landed and became available to provide support.⁸²

When analyzing the OA for the Algerian landings, Risk, Tempo and Phasing and Transitions are three elements of operational art that are worth noting. While completely avoiding risk is impossible, *FM 3-0* states, “Commanders accept risk and seek opportunity to create and maintain the conditions necessary to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative and achieve decisive results.”⁸³ The first example of risk accepted during the Algerian invasion was in the execution of Operational Terminal. Of the two amphibious AARs Ryder referenced, the Dieppe Raid was riskier and formed a basis for Operation Terminal. The overall complexity of the operation, starting with the requirement of the destroyers cutting the cable barrier, increased the chances of a catastrophic loss of men and material. Tragedy almost struck when enemy fire severely damaged HMS *Malcolm* and forced it to withdraw with half the assault force. The decision to use the destroyers to enter the enemy harbor and deposit the raiding team increased the risk. Although total surprise was essential to the success of Operational Terminal, it was hard to attain when the landings on both sides of Algiers two hours previously alerted the French garrison that something was happening.⁸⁴ Ryder also accepted risk that his raiding force could hold out long enough for the two amphibious landing forces to fight their way to Algiers and relieve them.

⁸² O’Hara, *Torch*, 91.

⁸³ US Army, *ADRP 3-0, Operations* (2017), 2-10.

⁸⁴ William Breuer, *Operation Torch: The Allied Gamble to Invade North Africa* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), 159.

The next example of accepted risk was executing the landings without adequate armor support or anti-armor weapons. The Eastern Task Force was the only one of the three that did not have armor assets assigned to it despite intelligence indicating that Vichy French forces in the vicinity of Algiers possessed tanks.⁸⁵ Further compounding risk was the fact that units in the Eastern Task Force had few anti-tank weapons. This issue came to a head when the raiding force encountered Vichy French tanks at the port and had only anti-tank grenades with which to defend itself. Since most soldiers had little to no training with these types of weapons, the grenades proved to be of little use, and the remaining armor threat forced their surrender.⁸⁶ Ryder accepted a good deal of risk during the Algiers landings by not including these assets.

Ryder also accepted risk in the assumption that the Vichy French forces would surrender once the landings were successful. Defending the population of 260,000, the Algiers Division and coastal defense forces consisted of approximately 16,000 French and African colonial forces.⁸⁷ With a total force of approximately 10,000 US and 23,000 British soldiers, Ryder assumed that this force would land and attack in sufficient numbers to convince the Vichy French government to surrender the city of Algiers.

Ryder attempted to address risk in his OA by designating the British 36 Infantry Brigade as the reserve throughout the operation. The decision to keep the 36 Brigade on its transports was an attempt to hedge his bets if one of the amphibious landings failed and was a lesson learned from the Dieppe Raid AAR.⁸⁸ This decision ultimately benefited the Eastern Task Force when a German torpedo struck the transport USS *Thomas Stone* and rendered it unable to complete the landings.⁸⁹ Ryder then committed his reserve to the landings.

⁸⁵ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 128.

⁸⁶ O'Hara, *Torch*, 97.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸⁸ Ryder Papers, Dieppe Raid AAR, Box 2.

⁸⁹ Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 166.

Ryder made good use of tempo in his OA in two specific areas. The first was in the amphibious landings to the east and west of the city of Algiers. Utilizing concurrent landing operations, Ryder was able to produce a complementary effort against the Vichy French that prevented them from focusing on either of the landing forces. Initially stalled by navigation issues between the landing ships and shore, the Eastern Task Force units were ultimately able to assemble themselves and dictate a tempo to seize the initiative.⁹⁰ The simultaneous movement of both amphibious landings and their subsequent pace towards the city of Algiers prevented the Vichy French forces from massing their defenses against the allied forces.

Another critical element to the success of Operational Terminal was tempo. Although launching after the initial wave of landings started, the Commando force utilized tempo and the cover of darkness to enter the Algiers harbor and storm the docks before the Vichy French forces had time to react. Unfortunately, the raiding force was no longer able to dictate tempo when the first attempt to breach the cable barrier failed, and harbor defense units subsequently spotted them.⁹¹

Phases and transitions also played an essential role in Ryder's OA to the Algiers landings. Given the overall task of capturing the city of Algiers and its port, Ryder divided his OA into five phases that if done sequentially would meet his operational intent. The first phase included the amphibious landing and securing of the beachhead. Shortly after the establishment of the first wave, the second phase was initiated concurrently with the launching of Operation Terminal.⁹² Phase three began once units had enough forces available to move and capture local defense and other key targets. Phase four included movement towards the city of Algiers and phase five was the capture of the city itself and relief of the commando force. Beyond the seizure of Algiers, Ryder also had to include two other potential phases and transitions in his OA. The

⁹⁰ O'Hara, *Torch*, 88.

⁹¹ Philip St. John, *Thirty-Fourth Infantry Division* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing, 1989), 14.

⁹² Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 159.

initial planning guidance received from Allied Forces Headquarters required Ryder to include the possibility of transitioning and attacking to the east and seizing the port of Bougie should the Eastern Task Force encounter light resistance.⁹³

When examining the effects of Ryder's OA for the invasion of Algiers, it shows a mix of both good and bad planning. While a good operational approach considers risk and uncertainty equally with friction and chance, it appears that Ryder was willing to accept too much risk when it came to the execution of Operation Terminal.⁹⁴ The complexity of the plan and loss of surprise significantly increased the risks to the raid force which ultimately lead to the failure of Operational Terminal and their capture. Ryder's OA did effectively integrate tempo which allowed the allied forces to dictated the pace of the battle and react quicker than the Vichy French forces. The successful use of phases and transitions enabled concurrent and mutually supporting actions during all phases of the operation that eventually overwhelmed the Vichy forces and forced their surrender.⁹⁵

Battle of Djebel Tahent (Hill 609)

Many generals, in the course of history, having taken a hill at the cost of a division, and many have lost a division without taking a hill. Bradley took a key hill and gained a division.

—A. J. Liebling, *The New Yorker*

The attack on Hill 609 was a seminal moment for the 34th ID during the North African Campaign. Five months removed from its baptism by fire at Algiers, the Red Bull Division had experienced numerous hardships as it moved across northern Algeria and into Tunisia. The battles of Kasserine Pass and Fondouk Gap were harsh and bitter lessons but helped forge the Red Bulls into a better fighting unit. As part of the larger First Army effort to “annihilate the German forces

⁹³ Ryder Papers, Operation Torch Appointment Memo, Box 2.

⁹⁴ US Army, *ADRP 3-0, Operations* (2017), 2-10.

and capture Tunis and Bizerte,” the 34th ID ultimately helped bring an end to the North African Campaign.⁹⁶ The action around Hill 609 commenced on 25 April 1943, with the Red Bulls providing a regiment for flank security to 1st ID, the main effort.

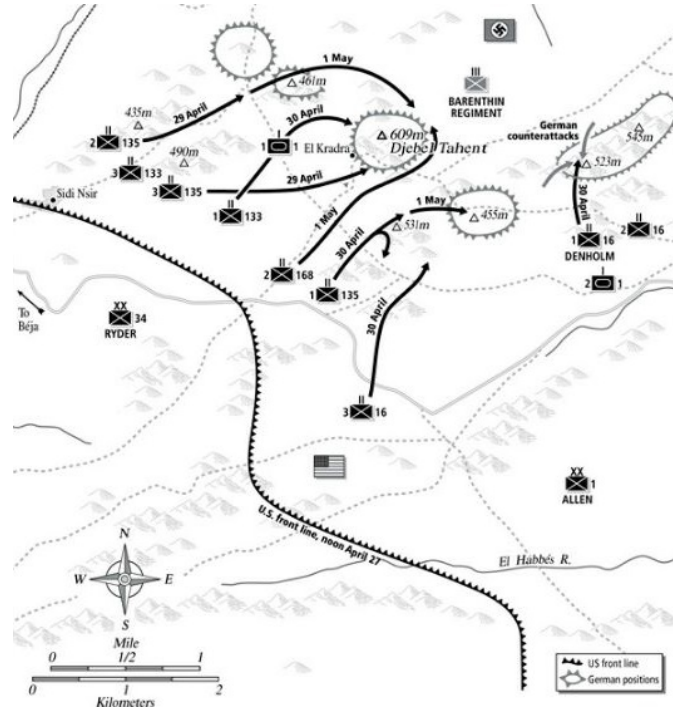


Figure 6. The Battle of Hill 609. Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Picador, 2002), 505.

After the first three days of the fighting, it became apparent that Hill 609 was the decisive terrain within the area of operation. Once identified, II Corp then designated the 34th ID as the corps main effort and ordered it to seize Hill 609.⁹⁷ A series of pitched battles in the lower hills surrounding Hill 609 commenced with numerous counterattacks and hilltops frequently changing hands. With the lower hills finally secured, the 34th ID turned its attention to Hill 609 which

⁹⁶ Headquarters II Corps, *Report on Operation Conducted by II Corps US Army Tunisia* (Third Floor Archives, Combined Arms Research Library, Ft. Leavenworth, KS), 4.

⁹⁷ Orr Kelly, *Meeting the Fox: The Allied Invasion of Africa From Operation Torch to Victory in Tunisia* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2002), 328.

consisted of numerous fighting positions blasted into the mountainside; these positions were almost immune to artillery attack and expertly camouflaged.⁹⁸

As with the preparation for the Algiers landing, politics once again influenced what role the 34th ID played in the final thrust towards Tunis. Major Generals George Patton and Omar Bradley, the latter having taken over command of II Corps from the former on the 15 April 1943, insisted that II Corps play a vital role in the First Army movement towards Tunis and Bizerte instead of the supporting role it originally was assigned.⁹⁹ Supported by General Eisenhower, II Corps was removed from a support role and given the more prominent mission, “to capture high ground east and west of CHOUIGUI and protect left flank of V Corps (ME), capture Bald and Green hill positions, exploiting toward MATEUR, and seize the high ground.”¹⁰⁰ Assigned to the left flank of the First Army formation, II Corps played a significant role in the final operation to secure the left flank by drawing German attention away from V Corps as it drove towards Tunis and captured the city of Bizerte along with its vital seaport.

At the time of this assignment, the entire II Corps was located on the right flank of the First British Army. This initial location required the entire corps to move approximately 150 miles to the northwest to properly position before the execution of the mission. The herculean effort resulted in the movement of over 100,000 men from the southern flank to the northern flank in less than two weeks.¹⁰¹ The long movement further complicated 34th ID planning as it was one of the last of the four divisions to move and the final units arrived late to the battle.

As a result of the difficulties encountered at the battle of Fondouk Gap, there was some consternation regarding the use of the 34th ID.¹⁰² Ultimately II Corps assigned the Red Bulls to

⁹⁸ John Hougren, *The Story of the Famous 34th Infantry Division* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1979), 25.

⁹⁹ Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 322.

¹⁰⁰ Headquarters II Corps, *Report on Operation Conducted by II Corps US Army Tunisia*, 2.

¹⁰¹ Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 323.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 322.

the center sector to secure the left flank of 1st ID. Major General Bradley thought this role allowed the 34th ID to have a part in the main battle and attempt to restore the confidence that the division had lost in its most recent combat experience. In doing so, Bradley wanted to ensure “no one will have to worry anymore about the 34th ID,” after this engagement.¹⁰³ The desire to redeem themselves in the eyes of the allied command from what he deemed unwarranted criticism weighed heavily on Ryder and his staff when planning future operations.

With his original mission of providing flank security and given the most updated intelligence, Ryder decided on an operational approach that assigned one regiment to provide flank security for the 1st ID while holding the remaining two regiments in reserve. Based partly on necessity, due to the expectation of his units arriving after combat actions had initiated, and partly by the guidance he received from II Corps and the estimated enemy locations. The 1st ID’s flank became exposed after three days of intense fighting and less than a day after the initial units started to arrive the first regiment of the 34th ID was committed to protecting the ME’s flank.

The 34th ID was subsequently ordered to seize Hill 609 once II Corps identified it as key terrain. After analyzing the terrain and intelligence, Ryder recognized the “checkerboard of interlocking defenses” of the lower hills surrounding the key terrain and directed his units to reduce the adjacent hills first before attacking Hill 609.¹⁰⁴ He was also aware that some of the intermediate objectives required coordination with 1st ID due to their proximity to the division boundaries. From this understanding, Ryder developed an operational approach that maximized the effects of his DIVARTY in support of infantry attacks to systematically seize the lower hills piecemeal to set the conditions to seize Hill 609.

There were three primary risks involved with Ryder’s operational approaches in the Djebel Tahent area. First was the commitment of only one infantry regiment to the initial support

¹⁰³ Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 327.

¹⁰⁴ Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 506.

of 1st ID's flank. There was little Ryder could do to negate this due to the transit times required to move his forces from the southern flank of the 1st Army. While this approach ultimately gave Ryder the flexibility to commit the other two remaining regiments as the battle unfolded, it severely limited the 34th ID's ability to react to a major enemy attack on 1st ID's flank until the rest of the units arrived.

The use of night attacks brought unique risks. Because the 34th ID had struggled with night operations during the previous battles, Ryder ordered extra training prior to the Battle of Hill 609 to help address that issue. Inclement weather also increased the risk when fog, which at times severely limited visibility and caused soldiers to hesitate in firing due to the inability to correctly identify targets.¹⁰⁵ While there was increased danger in conducting night operations, the decision to conduct night attacks also helped reduce risks in two crucial areas. First, attacking at night helped mask troop movements while improving secrecy and secondly, it prevented soldiers from exposure to devastating enemy fire during the daylight hours.

The utilization of armor on the final day of the assault posed another risk. Upon committing his reserve, Ryder sent an infantry regiment up the western slope of Hill 609 with seventeen Sherman tanks in support from the division's tank company. The use of tanks in such steep terrain led one armor officer to comment, "no one in their right mind would consider putting tanks in mountains."¹⁰⁶ Maneuvering on such a steep slope severely restricted tank movements and made recovery of damaged or destroyed vehicles nearly impossible. Having only one armor company assigned to his division, Ryder risked losing most of it during the final assault.

Like the landings at Algiers, Ryder made effective use of tempo throughout the operations around Hill 609. After the battle of Fondouk, the 34th ID reevaluated the application of

¹⁰⁵ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 265.

¹⁰⁶ Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 508.

rolling artillery barrages in their attack plans. The integration of the rolling artillery barrage, similar to WWI tactics, with infantry closely following behind the fires, proved to be very successful against German forces which did not have time to react once the artillery stopped and the infantry attacked.¹⁰⁷ These tactics helped the Red Bulls dictate the tempo of the operation and kept the Germans off guard. The use of superior artillery firepower to relentlessly attack German units for hours at a time forced them to take cover while providing Allied forces the opportunity to maneuver.

The extra training on night operations paid dividends during the Battle of Hill 609. The use of night movements and attacks helped ensure that the 34th ID dictated the tempo of the operation. By utilizing improved tactics and attacking at night, the Red Bulls were able to seize the initiative by catching German forces by surprise. Even when expected, the 34th ID's ability to attack at night proved to be a decisive advantage as the German forces were slower to react and unable to coordinate a proper defense. The use of night movements also helped prevent the Germans from influencing the 34th ID's tempo by negating their ability to mass fires. Because the Germans could not determine the location of Red Bull units at night, they were unable to affect their tempo appreciably.

Ryder understood that to capture Hill 609 required the removal of the German forces from the surrounding hills.¹⁰⁸ To properly remove the German forces, Ryder's operational approach relied heavily on the 34th ID's ability to successfully transition between phases to seize the lower hills, 435, 490, 461 and 531 before attacking Hill 609. By utilizing the combination of simultaneous and sequential phasing, the 34th ID was able to capture the lower hills before focusing on Hill 609.

¹⁰⁷ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 275.

¹⁰⁸ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 628.

The OA developed by Ryder for the Battle of Hill 609 showed the hallmarks of a commander and staff who had used the hard-learned lessons of the previous six months of combat to increase their knowledge, experience, and judgment. The integration of rolling artillery barrages and the utilization of combined arms forces were a direct result of the failures at Fondouk Gap.¹⁰⁹

Ryder's acceptance of risk during the Battle of Hill 609 was noticeably different from the Algiers landings. While attacking at night increased the overall risk as forces maneuvered through the numerous hills surrounding Hill 609, Ryder was able to mitigate a much larger risk of exposing his forces during daylight hours. The incorporation of tanks in mountain attacks, an asset not available during the Algiers landings, was also risky. However, the result of combining armor and infantry outweighed the risk of losing them. After brutal attacks from what one officer described as "the toughest German combat units fighting with their backs to the wall for a final do or die defense," the Red Bulls were able to capture and retain Hill 609 through the successful use of combined arms and maneuver.¹¹⁰

Ryder's OA also effectively used phases and transitions throughout the battle by seizing the lower hills before concentrating on the Hill 609. Dividing the lower hills into phases allowed the Red Bulls to focus on each section piecemeal and to transition as necessary. With the lower hills secured, the final transition to Hill 609 commenced with all available forces. The ability to quickly transition between the lower phases helped prevent the Germans from massing forces. The final successful piece of Ryder's OA was the use of tempo. Through the combination of indirect fires, combined arms maneuver, and quick movement between phases, the 34th ID was able to keep the Barenthin Fallschirmjäger Regiment off balance and unable to conduct a coordinated counterattack.

¹⁰⁹ Information and Education Section, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, *The 34th Infantry Division: Louisiana to Pisa* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1945), 18.

¹¹⁰ Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 321.

Conclusion

Criticism exists only to recognize the truth, not to act as judge

—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

The Great Depression years were tough for the soldiers and staff of the 34th ID.

Antiquated and obsolete equipment coupled with an impractical training schedule prevented the division from developing the skills necessary to conduct its wartime mission.¹¹¹ Soldiers and staff also dealt with a lack of quality military education that would have provided them with the tools to succeed.

The disjointed and chaotic post-federalization training set the stage for numerous missed opportunities. Participation in large scale exercises, including the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, resulted in the 34th ID losing out on its only chance to participate in a large-scale exercise before its combat debut. A last-minute transition to the Triangle Division force structure coupled with the replacement of the longtime division commander, Major General Walsh, further exacerbated the efforts of the 34th ID staff to prepare for combat. While most training conducted in Northern Ireland was at the regimental and battalion levels, the 34th ID did have one opportunity to maneuver under the new formation.

The lack of training and experience before the launch of the North African Campaign played a significant role in the actions of the 34th ID during the Algiers landings. The arrival of Ryder and his subsequent influence on the planning and execution of that operation were equally important. As a new commander, thrust into the planning of a much larger operation, Ryder had a multitude of factors to consider while crafting his OA. As part of a multi-national relationship, Ryder utilized current doctrine while borrowing heavily from previous British experiences. With this knowledge, he developed an OA that tried to ensure the safety of the port while ultimately

¹¹¹ Greenfield and Palmer, *Origins of the Army Ground Forces General Headquarters, United States Army, 1940-1942: Study No. 1*, 17.

capturing the city of Algiers. Ryder ultimately decided on an OA that used tempo and phases and transitions to balance and mitigate risks associated with a commando raid.

After losing the element of surprise, Major General Ryder's approach had dire consequences when the decision to launch Operation Terminal led to the disastrous results of the raiding force. While the soldiers fought valiantly on the docks of the harbor, no amount of training made up for the slow tempo of the landing forces. The inability of the Eastern Task Force to rapidly transition to phases four and five prevented them from reaching Algiers in time to relieve the raid force. Further complicating the overall success was the decision to continue the mission despite half of the Operational Terminal forces failing to reach the objective. Drawing from the experiences from both Operation Ironclad and the Dieppe Raid, Ryder utilized the hard lessons learned to successfully develop an operational framework that allowed Allied forces to dictate tempo and seize the initiative.¹¹² While the tempo was not quick enough to save the raiding force from surrender, Ryder's OA did ultimately lead to the successful capture of Algiers.

The OA utilized by Ryder during the Battle of Hill 609 was markedly different from that of the Algiers landings and consisted of a better balance between risk, tempo, and phases and transitions. The difference was partially due to the experience gained from six months of combat operations the 34th ID staff and their commander had accumulated before the Battle of Hill 609. It was also due to the assumption that the Barenthin Regiment would put up stiff resistance.¹¹³ With the hard lessons and bitter resentment stemming from the Battle of Fondouk Gap, Ryder ensured his OA included better use of mutually supporting attacks and combined arms to prevent needless casualties.¹¹⁴

The OA for the Battle of Hill 609 was also noteworthy for its quick development due to the rapidly changing circumstances. Originally planned as the supporting effort to 1st AD, the

¹¹² Ryder Papers, Operation Ironclad AAR, Box 2.

¹¹³ Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 321.

¹¹⁴ Ankrum, *Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears*, 266.

Red Bulls soon found themselves thrust into combat against a determined enemy when the main effort stalled. Drawing on his previous experience, Ryder developed an OA that once again sought to establish a favorable tempo through the combination of rolling barrages and tank support to maintain the initiative.¹¹⁵ Ryder was also able to use simultaneous and sequential phasing to his advantage by seizing the lower hills before transitioning to Hill 609, his main objective. The effectiveness of these transitions prevented the German forces from successfully countering the 34th ID's movements.

Ryder approached risk during this operation in a more careful manner than the landings at Algiers. From the beginning of the battle, Ryder relied heavily on night attacks to seize objectives. While operating at night raised the risk to his forces, the German soldiers were unprepared for these types of tactics. The advantage gained from the element of surprise far outweighed the risk of conducting these operations. The increased utilization of tanks with mutually supporting infantry formations further mitigated the risk to the attack. While the soldiers of the 34th ID ultimately decided the fate of the invasion of Algiers and Battle of Hill 609, the OA developed by Ryder and supported by his staff played a significant role in those outcomes.

There are numerous lessons from the Red Bulls' experience that are relevant in today's operational environment. The reduction of RA force structure and the new focus on large-scale combat operations increases the likelihood that National Guard units will participate in future combat operations alongside their RA partners. Special emphasis must be given to proper education, training, and equipping to prevent the type of issues experienced by the Red Bulls and other National Guard units during post-federalization training.

The importance of education at all levels of the National Guard starting from newly enlisted privates to officers attending War College is paramount. As the National Guard transitioned from an operational reserve to a combat-ready force post-9/11, the requirement for

¹¹⁵ Information and Education Section, *The 34th Infantry Division: Louisiana to Pisa*, 19.

proper education that was on par with RA forces was vital. Providing similar, if not the same, education as RA soldiers prevented the hardships in leadership and training encountered in 1940 and allowed for quicker integration for the National Guard as they joined RA units on deployment. The availability of technology coupled with the ability to provide accurate and updated information has also allowed the National Guard to use decentralized education programs similar to the AEC successfully. Maintaining this capability continues the advantages of the previous programs without the inherent risks of outdated doctrine.

Proper training of National Guard units is another important takeaway from the 34th ID's experience. The interwar training regiment consisting of a weekly training session at the local armory proved inadequate to prepare soldiers and staffs for their wartime roles. While the grouping of multiple UTAs during a weekend addressed this shortcoming, the quality of the training must also be maintained to develop and maintain critical skills. The continued utilization of National Guard units in Corps and Division training exercises and participation in Combat Training Center rotations will allow for quick and efficient integration into RA command structures. Coupled with a robust post-mobilization training program that focuses on deployment tasks, National Guard units can avoid many of the pitfalls that plagued the Red Bulls during their first combat experience.

Ensuring units have the proper equipment is the final lesson to be learned from the 34th IDs' experience. For a variety of reasons, the Red Bulls lacked modern equipment throughout the interwar years and more importantly during their post-federalization training. This shortfall had disastrous results on the docks in the Port of Algiers. To properly integrate the National Guard into AC missions, emphasis should remain on providing units with equipment, that at a minimum, approach the capabilities of their AC partners. Whenever this is not possible, equipment must be made available post-federalization in order to prevent the type of difficulties experienced during the landings in North Africa.

While the experiences of 34th ID during the interwar period and post-federalization training were common amongst most other National Guard divisions, their case was especially tough due to a late mobilization and early deployment. Understanding the issues that caused friction and difficulties through their long journey from Minnesota to North Africa can help as the AC and the National Guard transition their focus from a Post-9/11 mentality to large-scale combat operations.

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