



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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S: 18 March 2005

ATSS-BAR

17 March 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR Faculty Advisor, Group Room L07, Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002

SUBJECT: The Normandy Campaign, D-Day

1. Thesis Statement: The initial success of the Allied campaign in Normandy was the result of a unified command and the ability for the combatant commanders engaged on the ground to freely maneuver his forces.
2. Discussion. The ability for the Allies to successfully assault and defeat the Germans at the start of the Normandy Campaign was primarily due to a unique command and control atmosphere. The Allies allowed the combatant commander on the ground to freely maneuver the forces under his control to complete the assigned objective. The German combatant commander opposing the Allies was not as fortunate. His hands were tied in that in order for him to move soldiers against the Allied invasion it took permission from the highest commander, Adolph Hitler. This paper will demonstrate how the Allied combatant commander was successful against the German having the ability to maneuver forces while engaged. The counterpoint will pose and discuss a hypothetical situation that the German combatant commander possessed the ability to maneuver his forces against the Allies, driving them into the Channel.
3. Haines Award. We do request that the Haines Award Selection Board to consider this paper for the General Haines Award for Excellence in Research. *Writing Research Papers* Seventh Edition by James D. Lester is the guide used in the preparation of this research paper.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. W. Pickett", is written over a horizontal line.

CHRISTOPHER W. PICKETT
MSG, USA
Group Chairperson

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ATSS-BAR

SUBJECT: The Normandy Campaign, D-Day

MSG SEAN M. BREWER

MSG DAVID N. SWAINE

SGM JANOS GERVAI

The Normandy Campaign, D-Day

By
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United States Army Sergeants Major Academy
Group Haines Research Paper
SGM ZaGara
L07

Thesis: The initial success of the Allied campaign in Normandy was the result of a unified command and the ability for the combatant commanders engaged on the ground to freely maneuver his forces.

I. Introduction (MSG Pickett, C.): The Allied invasion of Normandy France was one of enormous proportion that forever changed the course of history. It would involve a mass of forces put together by the Allied nations unified under a single common goal and a single command for operation. The relationship of the overall Allied commandant commander, General Eisenhower with his subordinate combatant commanders was a formula for success. On the opposing side of the Allied forces was a German force equally prepared to defend against the invasion. The Achilles heel for the German defenders was the inability of their Field Marshall Erwin Rommel to have the flexibility of maneuvering his forces. Unlike the Allied force commanders, who were able to adjust the plans issued according to the enemy situation, Rommel and his commanders could not. Rommel would not be allowed to counter the Allied strikes as they occurred due to a system of command directives that separated German forces and required permission from Higher Headquarters in Berlin before repositioning. This process caused time to be taken away, allowing the tactical advantage to be on the side of the Allies. This paper will focus on the success of the Allied invasion while the German counter focuses on Rommel having the ability to freely maneuver his forces like his Allied counterparts.

II. Body:

- A. The First Strike (MSG Pickett, C.):** Allied airborne troops led the D-Day landings in a combined parachute and glider assault in order to throw a net of protection around the Normandy beaches. This effort is in support of the massive invasion force that was to land on the beaches at dawn.
- B. The British Airborne Units and Mission (MSG Swaine):** The British 6th Airborne Division was to land Northeast of Caen and secure the left flank of the invasion force by controlling bridges over the Orne Canal and River in order to prevent the Germans from bringing in reinforcements. The units consist of the following: Divisional Headquarters, British 6th Airborne Division, 3rd Parachute Brigade consisting of three Allied Parachute battalions, one parachute Squadron, one Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, and a Parachute Field Ambulance Company, 5th Parachute Brigade consisting of three Allied Parachute battalions, one parachute Squadron, one Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, and a Parachute Field Ambulance Company, and finally the 6th Airlanding Brigade consisting of three Infantry battalions and one Airlanding Field Ambulance Company.
- C. The British Airborne Landings and Objectives (MSG Swaine):** The first Allied troops land in France at 0016 hour with the first glider plowing into a barbed wired fence. The objectives of this force were the bridges over the Orne Canal and River and the German Battery at Merville.

- D. **101st Airborne Objectives and their Maneuver Commanders (MSG Brewer):** The objective of the 101st Airborne led by Major General Maxwell Taylor, was to seize the inland sides of the four causeways leading from Utah Beach; therefore, allowing the 4th Infantry Division to exit the beaches during the dawn invasion. In addition, they were to destroy two highway bridges and a railroad bridge north of Carentan, and seize the lock at La Barquette.
- E. **82d Airborne Objectives and its Maneuver Commander (MSG Brewer):** To the west, the objective of the 82nd Airborne Division, under Major General Matthew Ridgeway and Brigadier General James Gavin, was to destroy two bridges on the Douve, capture the crossroads town of Sainte-Mere-Eglise, and secure the west bank of the Merderet River.
- F. **The Omaha Beach Landing (MSG Pickett, M.):** The landing at Omaha Beach began at 0635. The assault was slowed by underwater obstacles which bogged down the landing craft making them easy targets for German gunners.
- F. **The Utah Beach Landing (MSG Pickett, M.):** The landing at Utah Beach began at 0630. Despite landing south of the target the assault went according to plan.
- G. **The Gold Beach Landing (SGM Gervai):** The British XXX Corps consisting of the 50 Infantry Division had the task to invade Gold Beach. The objectives of the 50th Division were to cut the Caen-Bayeux highway, link up with the Americans from Omaha Beach to the west at Port-en-Bessin, and link up with the Canadians from Juno Beach to the east.
- H. **The Juno Beach Landing (SGM Gervai):** The 7th Brigade of the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division, landed at Juno Beach. The main task of the 7th Brigade on D-Day was to cut the Caen-Bayeux road, invade the Carpiquet airport in Caen, and make a link between the Gold and Sword Beaches.
- I. **The Sword Beach Landing (SGM Gervai):** The British 3rd Infantry Division, with French and British commandos attached the Sword Beach. The objective of the 3rd Division was to reach Ouistreham to capture Caen and the Carpiquet airfield. The attached commandos had the task of fighting their way off the beach and penetrated toward the bridges over the Orne River and Caen Canal. There they were to link up with forces of the 6th Airborne Division.
- J. **The German reaction to the Allied Assault by resetting the stage (MSG Pickett, C.):** A hypothetical discussion is introduced that allows for Generalfeldmarschall Rommel to have complete control of all German forces in the Normandy Area. A breakdown of units with their missions and locations is discussed.
- K. **Reacting to the Airborne Assaults (MSG Pickett, C.):** Generalfeldmarschall Rommel's reaction to the initial opening engagements of the Normandy Campaign.

How he is able to adjust forces under his control to render the airborne assault useless.

- L. **Reacting immediately to the different beach threats and driving the Allies back (MSG Pickett, C.):** The discussion addresses how Generalfeldmarschall Rommel employs those forces now under his control. He has effectively made the airborne assaults useless and maneuvered his forces to drive the beach landings back into the English Channel.

- III. **Conclusion (MSG Pickett, C.):** The Allied invasion of Normandy would as history tells us become an Allied victory. This victory was relied exclusive on the fact that the Allied Chain of Command operated in a decentralized environment. Commanders engaged on the ground were allowed to adjust the maneuver of their forces based on the movement and strength of the enemy. The advantage was purely on the side of the Allies. This paper demonstrates that had the Germans combatant commander been allowed the same flexibility with which to maneuver forces, the outcome could have been far different. The bottom-line is that the Allied system of decentralized control to the commander on the ground was the most tactical advantage of World War II, no matter what theater.

NORMANDY 1

The Allied invasion of Normandy France was one of enormous proportion that forever changed the course of history. It would involve an array of combat forces put together by the Allied nations that had never occurred before in the history of warfare. All components of the Allied forces were unified with one common goal under a single operational command. The relationship of the overall Allied combatant commander, General Eisenhower with his subordinate combatant commanders, was a formula for success that allowed for the ultimate success of the campaign. The initial success of the Allied campaign in Normandy was the result of a unified command and the ability of the combatant commanders engaged on the ground to freely maneuver his forces.

On the opposing side of the Allied forces was a German force equally prepared to defend against the invasion. The Achilles heel for the German defenders was the inability of the commander on the ground to maneuver German forces in the area without Hitler's approval. That commander was Generalfeldmarshall Erwin Rommel who had the responsibility to defeat the Allies on the beach. However, unlike the Allied force commanders, who were able to adjust the plans issued according to the enemy situation, Rommel and his commanders could not.

Rommel would not be allowed to counter the Allied strikes as they occurred due to a system of command directives that separated German forces and required permission from Higher Headquarters in Berlin before repositioning. This process caused time to be eaten away, allowing the tactical advantage to be on the side of the Allies. This paper points out the successes of the Allied invasion while the German counter will be done as if Rommel had the ability to freely maneuver his forces like his Allied counterparts. The German counter will demonstrate that if Rommel and his commanders were allowed to maneuver their forces freely, the outcome could have been much different.

NORMANDY 2

Allied airborne troops led the D-Day landings in a combined parachute and glider assault in order to throw a net of protection around the Normandy beaches. This effort was critical to support the massive invasion force that was to land on the beaches at dawn. The first units to strike the German defenses in Normandy belonged to that of the British 6th Airborne Division consisting of the following: A Divisional Headquarters, British 6th Airborne Division, 3rd Parachute Brigade consisting of three Allied Parachute battalions, one parachute Squadron, one Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, and a Parachute Field Ambulance Company, the 5th Parachute Brigade consisting of three Allied Parachute battalions, one parachute Squadron, one Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery, and a Parachute Field Ambulance Company, and finally the 6th Airlanding Brigade consisting of three Infantry battalions and one Airlanding Field Ambulance Company.

The mission of the British 6th Airborne Division was two fold. First, they were to land Northeast of Caen and secure the left flank of the invasion force by controlling two strategically vital bridges over the Orne Canal and River in order to prevent the Germans from bringing in reinforcements and enable the Allies to advance eastwards. The second objective was the destruction of the Merville Battery. Several miles to the northeast of these bridges was an imposing fortification that contained four large calibre guns, which could do terrific damage to the invasion fleet. The 6th Airborne Division had to attack and destroy these guns in the hours before the landings took place as pointed out by Mark Hickman in his book, 6th Airborne Division -Normandy.

5 June 1944, 2230 hours, southern England, thousands of allied troops readied themselves for what was to be the greatest battle of all time. At dawn on 6 June 1944, two Allied armies, one British and one American, landed on the beaches of Normandy in France. It was the largest invasion ever attempted, and its ultimate goal was to secure a foothold in Europe, to defeat

Germany and liberate the Continent from Nazi rule. Hickman as points out that, leading the invasion, landing by parachute and glider, several hours before the first troops assaulted the beaches, were three Airborne Divisions; two were American and landed in the west, the other, the 6th British Airborne Division, landed in the extreme east.

The 6th Airborne Brigades objectives were the two Bridges over the Orne Canal and River, dubbed Pegasus Bridge. These objectives had to be secure to enable the allied troops to move from the beachhead and to prevent the Germans from bringing reinforcement, especially the 21st Panzer Division to squash the landing at Sword Beach.

At 0001 hours, the Allied gliders were over France, the invasion had begun. The first glider of Allied troops from the 6th Airborne land in France at 0016 hours plowing into a barbed wired fence at about 100 mph. It landed in a field within 47 yards of objective Pegasus Bridge as planned. MAJ John Howard with his elite troops was onboard. They quickly exited the glider to avoid becoming sitting ducks next to a guarded bridge in enemy territory. Intelligence indicated that the bridge was rigged with explosive and there were over 600 tanks close by, so they had to move quickly to secure the bridge before the Germans blew it up. They stormed towards Pegasus Bridge with MAJ Howard leading the charged toward the bridge. At the bridge, LT Brotheridge led the charge across the bridge with loud battle cries in order to shock the enemy. He fired the first shot on D-Day killing a sentry on the bridge. Seconds later, he was killed by German machine gunfire, being the first to die by German gunfire on D-Day. The charge was successful, the German guards fled and the Allies secured defensive position around the bridge. The objective was secured at 0021 hours. They must now hold the bridge until reinforcements arrived.

At 0130, the German counter attack began with two Panzers coming towards Pegasus bridge, the Allies did not have anti-tank weapons, but they had a primitive grenade launcher that was successful in blowing up the first tank. The other tank turned tail and ran. The bridge was still secured. The 21st Panzer division was only 30 minutes away in Caen but could do nothing because they had to get Hitler's authorization on what to do. At his time, Hitler was sleeping and no one had the courage to wake him, and even if he was awake, he did not have situational awareness to know what to do. Only the on ground commander had that insight. If Rommel the commander in charge of the Normandy defenses was in Normandy he could have made some decision, however he was in elsewhere celebrating his wife's 50th birthday. In the book, D-Day: The Lost Evidence, by Going, Chris and Alun Jones, they point out, that the 21st panzer division was not to move without orders from Army group B. This caused the commanders to hesitate because of fear to make a decision whereby creating favorable situation for the Allied.

The 9th Parachute Battalion's task was to destroy the German Gun Battery at Merville. At about 0100 hours on D-Day when the paratroopers began jumping, their equipment was torn from them because the planes were flying too fast. Some even landed without weapons. Bad weather and pilot errors left them scattered over the countryside not knowing where to find their objective. Of all of these units, the 9th Parachute Battalion suffered worst from the misfortunate airdrop. Their task was to destroy the Merville Battery, but after hours of waiting at the rendezvous, no more than one hundred and fifty of their men arrived and very little of their special assault equipment was found. Their commander, LTC Terence Otway, had no choice but to attack with what he had.

The Battery was a formidable position. One hundred and thirty Germans, supported by numerous machine-gun positions, defended it, all sitting inside two huge belts of barbed wire, in

between which was a minefield. Silently, the paratroopers cut their way through the wire and cleared paths of mines. As they were forming up for the attack, they were spotted and fired on by no fewer than six machine-guns. As these were being dealt with, Otway gave the order to attack, whereupon the assault party charged across the minefield, lobbing grenades and firing from the hip at any sign of enemy resistance. The Germans fought back hard and cost the assault party dearly, however, they could not be prevented from reaching the casemates, and once inside they engaged their defenders hand-to-hand. At a heavy cost, the guns were destroyed and in so doing the lives of hundreds, possibly thousands of men in the invasion fleet were saved as pointed out by Hickman.

While the British were assaulting their assigned objectives, United States paratroopers from the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions were assaulting assigned objectives. This would be the first time in history that airborne units from two different countries combined together under a joint command against an enemy force. Little did the separate combatant commanders realize that they were indeed creating a new doctrine that would revolutionize military tactics for years to come. Like the British airborne units, the United States airborne units executing Operation Neptune had separate missions that needed accomplishing for this elaborate plan to be successful.

Operation Neptune was the largest use of airborne troops up to that time. Paratrooper elements of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions comprising of 6 regiments, numbering more than 13,000 men, were flown from bases in southern England to the Cotentin Peninsula in approximately 925 C-47s. An additional 4,000 men consisting of glider infantry with supporting weapons, medical, and signal units were to arrive in 500 gliders on D-Day and on D plus one to reinforce the paratroopers. Additional troops from sea borne echelons were to join the divisions

on D plus one as well. The paratroopers had the most difficult task of all, the initial operation of a night jump behind enemy lines five hours before the coastal landings.

The objective of the 101st Airborne, led by Major General Maxwell Taylor, was to seize the inland sides of the four causeways leading from Utah Beach; thus, allowing the 4th Infantry Division to exit the beaches during the dawn invasion. In addition, they were to destroy two highway bridges and a railroad bridge north of Carentan, and seize the lock at La Barquette. At 2215 on D minus one, over 430 C-47s began taking off from England with 6,600 paratroopers from the 101st scheduled to drop at H minus hours. Preceding the main echelons of paratroopers by half an hour were 20 pathfinder aircraft, which had the mission of marking six-drop zones for both divisions and one landing zone. The pathfinder team's zone markings were not entirely successful, however their efforts contributed to the overall mission success.

The 101st paratroopers approached the Cotentin from the west and made their landfall in the vicinity near the town of Les Pieux. Aircraft formations were tight until reaching the coastline where they were met by dense cloudbanks that loosened the formations causing a scattered drop. In general, the 101st did not have a good drop, although better than that of the 82nd. This poor drop resulted in 1,500 paratroopers being KIA or captured, as well as sixty percent of their equipment being lost due to landings in swamps or into fields covered by enemy fire. Only a fraction of the division's organized strength could initially be employed to undertake the planned missions, and at best, the mixed groups of paratroopers did not correspond with their original assignments. The fifty-one Waco gliders carrying command personnel and antitank weapons came in early on D-Day morning. This type of landing had never been attempted before in darkness, which resulted in many glider wrecks as they landed in the small Normandy fields. At

the end of the day, the loss of personnel was not too excessive and the equipment suffered relatively little damage.

The confused German command was uncertain whether the landings represented a major action or an Allied attempt to tie off the Cotentin Peninsula at its narrowest point. This uncertainty and unplanned deception played directly into the maneuver commander's hands. The uncertainty of the German command became duplicated among their subordinate and lower units. This uncertainty, coupled with the lack of German command leadership, made them reluctant to move out of prepared defenses to attack the 101st paratroopers. The Germans did not take advantage of any window of opportunity to launch a counter attack on the invading American forces. Thus, the enemy's confusion and offset aided the airborne maneuver commanders to lead their groups of highly motivated paratroopers to accomplish most of their initial missions. Their critical mission provided for the clearing of the enemy's secondary beach defenses and a defense security posture for VII Corps' southern flank, which enabled further exploitation of the enemy.

To the west, the 101st Airborne and 82nd Airborne Divisions, under the command of Major General Matthew Ridgeway and Brigadier General James Gavin, had gained possession of the east bank of the Merderet River near St.-Mere-Eglise. The occupation of these positions actually fell far short of the mission assigned to the division by plan. The 82nd was to assist in sealing off the peninsula from the south by destroying bridges at Pont-l'Abbe and Beuzeville-la Bastille, and to secure bridgeheads across the Merderet. Protection of the southwest flank of VII Corps was to be accomplished by securing the line of the Douve River. Additionally, they were charged with taking the offensive to the west in the direction of St. Sauveur-le Vicomte.

The drop of the 82nd did not go as planned; the regiments assigned to the zones west of the Merderet had the worst drop in the entire operation. The 507th PIR landing was widely scattered on the drop zones north of Amfreville. The 508th PIR landing southwest of Amfreville and north of Picauville had a slightly better drop. In contrast with these two PIRs, the 505th PIR landings northwest of St. Mere-Eglise, between the railroad and the main highway, had one of the best drops of any airborne unit involved. Nearly 1,000 of the 2,200 men landed on target, and most of the others, although scattered to the northeast, were able to assemble rapidly. As fortune would have it, these paratroopers landed in an area that had minimal German Army occupation. The rapid assembly of the 505th PIR enabled them to quickly capture the St.-Mere-Eglise objective, that later became a focal point for the Allies offensive.

The capture of St.-Mere-Eglise, and the fights for the Merderet River crossings at la Fiere and Chef-du-Pont, together constituted the principal efforts of the 82nd on D-Day. Furthermore, there were also a number of isolated groups of the highly motivated paratroopers that organized themselves west of the Merderet, and fought independently for several days. These isolated groups of paratroopers contributed in some degree to the overall accomplishment of the division's missions, even though their efforts were not part of the planned objectives.

The airborne phase of the Campaign is now complete and now begins the most critical phase of the Normandy Campaign, the beach landings. Like the airborne assaults, General Eisenhower and his planning staff also divided up the beaches to be assaulted by nationality. He gave command of the beaches codenamed Omaha, Utah and the assault of gun Emplacements at Pointe-Du-Hoc to the United States contingent under the command of General Omar Bradley. Gold, Juno, and Sword beaches were given the British contingent of forces under the command

of British Field Marshall Dempsey. The overall commander of the beach assault forces was British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery.

The American landing on the beaches of Normandy occurred on a scale never seen before in military history. The American assault took place on a two-beach front, code named Omaha and Utah, and at Point-Du- Hoc. The success of the entire European invasion rested on the successful beach landings. The Allied mission was to land, penetrate the Atlantic Wall and secure a lodgment in an area suitable for operations. Once a beachhead had been established, and room to deploy inland was secured the Allies could begin the process of bringing ashore the weapons needed to seal the German's fate. To establish this beachhead the Allies could count on their air superiority to hamper German movement of reinforcements.

In order to keep the German panzer divisions northeast of the Seine River the Allies launched an elaborate deception plan named "Fortitude." These elaborate but little known deceptions saved thousands of soldier's lives. When the Allies started planning the second front in 1943, they knew that landing on the far side of the channel and securing a beachhead would be the most difficult part. While they planned to land in Normandy, they decided to try to deceive the Germans into thinking the main attack would come at Pas-de-Calais.

The Germans, expecting an invasion, had erected strong fortifications along the coast. Beaches were lethal jungles of mines and barbed wire; guns faced out to sea and reinforcements waited inland. Starting in 1943, a skilled team worked to create the illusion of a large invasion force massing in Kent, England. The deception included dummy tanks and aircraft, made of inflatable rubber and placed in realistic looking camps and filling the harbors with fleets of mock landing craft. To German reconnaissance aircraft, it all looked real, even down to attempts at camouflage. Knowing that German intelligence would be trying to find out more, double agents

planted stories and documents with known German spies. General Patton was supposedly commander of the non-existent force. Broadcasting fake radio transmissions made the Germans think the Allies were busy organizing a large invasion force.

The hoax was successful beyond the Allies wildest hopes. German forces were concentrated in the Pas-de-Calais. The deception continued during and after D-Day. While the real invasion force landed in Normandy, Allied planes dropped silver foil to give the impression of massed planes and ships crossing from Dover. The Germans thought the Normandy landings were a diversion, and kept back reserves of tanks and troops in the Calais area to counter what they thought would be the real invasion. By the time the German leadership realized the deception, it was too late to counter the invasion.

The initial American assault from landing ships and craft was on a three-division front, including two Ranger battalions, between the Orne River and the Cotentin Peninsula. The U.S. V Corps consisting of the 29th and 1st Infantry Divisions had the responsibility of securing Omaha Beach and the U.S. VII Corps consisting of the 4th infantry Division had the responsibility for securing Utah Beach. The U.S. 2nd Ranger Battalion had the responsibility of capturing a gun battery at Point-Du-Hoc.

The main objective of the American ground forces training was to get ashore. All the training focused on the D-Day assault and nothing further. This single focus later came as a hindrance when the units advanced ashore and had to take on the rigors of hedgerow fighting. The training they received included loading and unloading of landing craft, countless hours on rifle and machine gun ranges, live overhead fire, demolitions, poison gas drills, and first aid. This type of training was common among the other divisions in the assault force. The Ranger battalions were

composed of all volunteers. Their training included 25-mile speed marches, mountain climbing, cliff scaling, hand-to-hand combat, and special training with rocket propelled grappling hooks.

The landing at Omaha Beach began at 0635. The men landing at Omaha beach encountered the fiercest resistance anywhere on D-Day. When the first wave landed, they found that the naval gunfire and air bombardment did little to soften the German defenses. Underwater obstacles slowed the assault, bogging down the landing craft and making them easy targets for German gunners. The Allied intelligence indicated a lightly defended beach. They somehow overlooked the highly trained German 352nd Infantry defending the beach.

The bluffs over watching the beach gave the defenders excellent fields of fire and observations. On the approach to the beach, many of the landing craft never made it to shore. The ones that made it ashore, dodging artillery and mines, discharged their troops in water over their heads. The casualty rates at the beach were extremely high, some units suffering over 90 percent killed or wounded. The engineers with the task of reducing the obstacles at the beach had problems clearing lanes. The German gunners zeroed in on them once they realized their mission. As the morning wore on the incoming tide covered the marked lanes and the second wave encountered the same condition as the first wave. At one point in the operation, commanders considered abandoning the assault and diverting troops to the other landing sites. Slowly a foothold was established and soldiers began to advance across the fire swept beach. By the end of D-Day V Corps had established a beachhead on the Normandy coast.

Several minutes before the assault on Omaha beach, VII Corps started their assault on Utah Beach. Unlike the V Corps assault, the landing went rather smoothly. By luck, the moving tide pushed the assault boats about 2000 yards south of the intended landing site. This site was much less defended than the planned site. The commanders on the beach quickly exploited this mishap

and redirected the additional waves to a new, less defended landing site. At the end of the day, the VII Corps had not achieved their entire objective but had a firm foothold on the shore of Normandy.

Point-Du-Hoc was located northwest of Omaha Beach. The point was a rocky outcropping with nearly vertical cliffs that ended in the channel. The U.S. 2nd Ranger Battalion had the mission to scale the 100 foot high cliffs and neutralize a battery of 155mm guns on the point. The operation faltered shortly after it had begun. A, B and C Companies of the Rangers depended on A Company of the 116th regiment to secure the beach for their landing. This plan failed after the Germans wiped out A Company of the 116th at the beach. C Company landed shortly after the ill-fated A Company and immediately started taking fire. Only 31 men from C Company made it to the base of the cliffs. Unable to move off the small beach the Rangers had no choice except to go up. Several Rangers made it to the top of the cliff, threw down ropes, and assisted the remaining Rangers up the cliff. Once on top the Rangers discovered telephone poles sticking out of the pillboxes and no gun battery present. D Company made it to shore intact, scaled the cliff and cleared German positions much the same as C Company. Around 0830, a patrol discovered the relocated artillery battery about 250 yards inland and put it out of commission. Throughout the rest of the day, the Rangers cleared a farmhouse, numerous trench lines and other German fortifications. At the end of the day only 50 of the 200 rangers who made it to the top were capable of fighting. The Rangers completed their mission and prevented the artillery from pouring deadly fire on Omaha Beach and our ships at sea.

The landing of the Allied British, Canadian and French Forces on the Gold, Juno and Sword beaches on the D-Day was the part of the biggest military operations in the history. Soldiers from several units and from different countries had to work together

with full coordination. The success of these multiple operations demonstrates the great work accomplished by the allied forces during the preparation and execution of the invasion.

The British Second Army under Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey had the task to invade the Gold, Juno, and Sword beaches. The elements of the Second Army were the follows: The British XXX Corps consisting of the 50th Infantry Division had the task to invade the Gold Beach. The parts of the 50th Infantry Division were the 69th, the 151st, the 231st Brigades and the 61st Reconnaissance Regiment, the 50th Division's Engineers and Signals. The 74th, 90th, and 124th Field, 102nd Anti-Tank and 25th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments also belonged to the 50th Division. On the Juno Beach landed the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division included the 7th, 8th, 9th Brigades, the 1st Special Service Brigade and the Divisional Troops such as 7th Reconnaissance Regiment, 3rd Canadian Division's Engineers, and Signals, the 12th, 13th, 14th Field, 3rd Anti-Tank and 4th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiments. The British 3rd Infantry Division contained the 8th, 9th, 185th Brigades and the Divisional Troops with French commandos attached the Sword Beach.

The success of the invasion depended on the units' advance on the beaches. Before the first units reached the three designated landing zones, Allied Naval Forces bombarded the significant German defensive installations with more or less success. Gold Beach was more than 5 miles wide and it had 3 subdivided sectors such as Item, Jig and King. H-Hour at Gold Beach set for 0725 hours, one hour later than the scheduled landings on the American beaches, allowing for a longer Allied naval bombardment of the objective. The objectives of the 50th Division were to cut the Caen-Bayeux highway, link up with the Americans from Omaha Beach to the west at Port-en-Bessin, and link up with the Canadians from Juno Beach to the east. Units of the German 716th Division and elements of the veteran 1st Battalion of the 352nd Division defended the coast.

Because of the shelving sand, the British troops had to leave the grounded landing crafts earlier and the soldiers waded a long way ashore. The first wave suffered under heavy fire from the German defense units. The 1st Battalion lost their commanders within a few minutes. The British had heavy casualties; however, it was not typical for the whole Gold Beach. Fortunately, for the British units the shore bombardment was mostly effective earlier and managed to destroy the German armored resistance. The Germans held out at La Riviere approximately until 1000, and the British managed to occupy La Hamel at the mid-afternoon. By the evening of June 6, the 50th Division had landed 25,000 men, on the Gold Beach and penetrated six miles inland.

Juno Beach with its 6 miles width also had three sectors namely Love, Mike and Nan. This beach had very heavy German defenses. The main task of the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division on D-Day was to cut the Caen-Bayeux road, invade the Carpiquet airport in Caen, and make a link between the Gold and Sword Beaches. The first assault wave landed at the Juno Beach at 0755 hours, 10 minutes past H-Hour and fully three hours after the optimum low tide. This delay was because of the Canadians had a difficult situation. During the first wave, half of the D-D tanks sunk before they could fire a single shot. Numerous soldiers also died when the landing crafts doors opened to a hail of German machinegun fire. Contrasted with the Gold Beach, the shore bombardment had not been effective on Juno Beach. The German defense units had practically no casualties. The 7th and 8th Brigades had tremendous losses and because of this, the men thought the invasion had been unsuccessful. Adding to their difficulties during the fight the sea was coming in and the beach was narrower and narrower. Germans slowly moved back because of the Canadian heroic fight. At the end of the day, 21,400 soldiers landed on Juno Beach and the 3rd Division had linked up with the British 50th Division from Gold Beach to the west, but to

the east, the Canadians were unable to make contact with the British 3rd Division from Sword Beach.

Sword beach was 5 miles wide from Lion-sur-Mer to Ouistreham. The sectors were the Oboe, Peter, Queen and Roger. The objective of the British 3rd Infantry Division was to reach Ouistreham to capture Caen and the Carpiquet airfield. The attached commandos had the task of fighting their way off the beach and penetrated toward the bridges over the Orne River and Caen Canal. There, they were to link up with forces of the 6th Airborne Division. The Allies reached the Sword Beach at 0725 hours on D-Day. The landing units met with moderate fire and by 0800 hours, the fighting was mostly inland. British and French commandos also landed on the beach and they had separate targets in Ouistreham. The commandos of the 1st Special Service Brigade with the commander Lord Lovat had the task to link up with the 6th Airborne at the bridge Pegasus on the Orne River and Caen Canal. At the end of the day, the British had landed 29,000 men on the Sword Beach and had at about 700 casualties. The commandos had linked up with the airborne forces at the bridges. However, the British units did not reach Caen.

If the German combatant commander were allowed to freely maneuver his forces in reaction to the start of the Normandy campaign rather than seeking permission from Berlin, the outcome of the invasion would have resulted in an Allied defeat. In order to understand why this last statement is correct, one needs to look at Adolph Hitler's past decisions. The year was 1943, and World War II and the reality of Adolph Hitler's plan of conquering Europe was not going as expected. Although, the German Armies were successful in the West by easily driving through the Lowlands into France and ending at the English Channel, the situation to the east was troubling.

Hitler had lost all confidence in the abilities of his German Army General Staff and issued a proclamation that once placed, units will not move without his explicit permission. Hitler also broke up all unities of command, assigning separate commanders duties within the same sector of operation. An example of this can be found in Normandy, where Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel was in charge of coastal defenses and Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt as commander of German forces in the West. This order would cost him dearly, setting the stage for a major Allied victory 18 months later at the start of the Normandy campaign.

This complex chain of command would effect how the Germans reacted to an Allied assault in France. Both generals involved in the defense of the Atlantic Wall had different thoughts in how to best repulse an Allied landing in Western France. Generalfeldmarschall Rommel was of the firm belief that the only way to defeat an invasion was to counterattack the beaches as early as possible with armor, and wanted at least some armor placed close enough to the beaches to deliver an immediate counterattack. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt favored concentrating the Panzer divisions farther inland so that the primary enemy line of advance could be determined, and then a counter-attack in force could be launched to blunt it. These two far different thoughts of maneuver, combined with the inability of Generalfeldmarschall Rommel to properly control the units with the mission of defeating an Allied landing in Normandy, are examples of some of the major factors that allowed for an Allied success.

The remainder of this paper is presented as a counter to the Allied invasion by means of a hypothetical situation. This hypothetical situation gives Generalfeldmarschall Rommel complete control of the German Forces in the West who had the mission of defending and defeating the Allied forces at the start of the Normandy Campaign. It also takes into account that Hitler's order of 1943 was not issued and Generalfeldmarschall Rommel has the ability to freely

maneuver the German forces as he sees fit. The paper does not add any additional units to the area of operations nor does it add any additional obstacles, it merely demonstrates to the reader that Hitler made a major tactical error in his order in 1943. Had this not occurred, the Allied assault on the Western Fortress as it was called by Allied command would have had a far different outcome.

The first of many factors taken into consideration prior to the actual initial battles of the campaign are the defenses and German units controlled by Generalfeldmarschall Rommel. The defenses established by Rommel were elaborate and designed for a dual purpose, to stop the invasion on the beach and also contain an inevitable paratroop assault. To stop the beach invasion forces, Rommel oversaw the fortifying of already heavily defended ports, by the laying of additional anti-personnel mines in a 100-meter-wide belt. Rommel also established a network of trenches, firing pits, and resistance nests dug into the bluffs overlooking the beaches, which were supported by pillboxes and concrete bunkers covering the principal beach exits. Finally, Rommel flooded the valleys of the Orne, Merderet, and Douve rivers. These rivers were located on the flanks of the prospective Allied lodgment area and were flooded to impede the mobility of any assaulting forces. To defend against a paratroop assault within the German rear area, Rommel had all prospective glider landing areas and personnel drop zones either flooded or large stakes placed in the ground to hinder and contain the force.

The next factor was the troop strength Rommel had available to him in the area of coastal defense operations. Each unit had a specific mission in his elaborate but common sense plan in the defense of the Atlantic Wall, to push the Allies back in the channel within 48 hours. The 716th German Infantry, which was comprised of the 441st, 726th and 736th Infantry Regiments protected the coastal area of the Omaha, Gold, Sword, and Juno landing zones.

The 352nd German Infantry Division, comprised of the 914th, 915th, and 916th Infantry Regiments defended the Omaha landing zone, and city of St. Lo. The 709th German Infantry Division comprised of the 729th, 739th and 919th Infantry Regiments protected the eastern, and northern coast of the Cotentin Peninsula, including the Utah beach landing zone. Finally, the 243rd German Infantry Division comprised of the 920th, 921st, and 922nd Infantry Regiments protected the western coast of the Cotentin Peninsula. Although personnel estimates are sketchy concerning the actual strength of each one of these units, historians believe the strength to have been roughly 100,000. It must be noted that Rommel's coastal defense units were made up of two different types of soldiers. One type was Germans who, usually for medical reasons, were not considered fit for active duty on the Eastern Front. The other type of soldier found in the unit came from various other nationalities such as Soviet prisoners of war from the southern USSR who had agreed to fight for the Germans rather than endure the harsh conditions of German POW camps.

In the book, The German Army D-Day, Fighting the Invasion, the real ace in the hole for Rommel in his defense of the Atlantic Wall would have lied in his reserve strength if he had control to freely maneuver forces. The 21st German Panzer Division, a veteran panzer unit, comprised of the 22nd Panzer Regiment, 200th Assault Guns Battalion and the 125th and 192nd Panzer Grenadier Regiments were located in the Caen region. The 6th German Fallschirmjäger Regiment, an elite parachute regiment belonging to the 2nd German Fallschirmjäger Division along with the 30th German Fast Infantry Brigade, comprising of 3 bicycle battalions were located in the vicinity near the town of Carentan. Finally, there was the 12th SS Panzer division which had recruited its soldiers directly from the Hitler Youth movement at the age of sixteen was stationed to the southeast of Caen. The reserve strength estimate of forces available to

Rommel would be in the neighborhood of an additional 150,000 soldiers to the 100,000 defending the coastline. The unique characteristic about these reserve forces was the fact that all the units, except one, were made up of hard core combat veteran soldiers who had just rotated from the eastern front. The one unit that had not seen action yet was the 12th SS Panzer division but, the ferocity and brain washing of the Hitler Youth program made up for the lack of experience.

The template of defensive forces of the Atlantic Wall was now set, all that was left for Rommel was for the Allied forces to commence the anticipated assault. On the night of June 5th, 1944, Rommel would have to wait no more. The opening salvo of the attack began when the British 6th Airborne Division went into action, at ten minutes past midnight with the objective of capturing Pegasus Bridge and others on the rivers at the east flank of the sword beach landing area, and also a gun battery at Merville. Rommel, knowing that this was the opening assault realizes immediately that these bridges were critical to his defense of the beach area. Should they fall into enemy hands or worse destroyed, it would cut off elements of the German Fifteenth Army to the west should they be needed in mop-up operations of the Allied invasion. To counter this assault, Rommel moves the 12th SS Panzer Division south from its position around Caen to engage with and destroy the British 6th Airborne Division. After completing that task, the division has follow on orders to move to tactical assembly areas in order to reinforce the beach line along Juno and Sword beaches.

The next airborne assault requiring Rommel's immediate attention and adjustment of forces would be the 82nd and 101st Airborne Division's parachute assault. History has told us that these two divisions completely missed their objectives due to unexpected weather conditions and the effectiveness of Rommel's established defenses of expected glider landing zones and drop

zones. The Allied divisions were effective, despite missing their initial objectives, in disrupting and confusing the German's. This disruption made an effective counter attack by the Germans impossible along the eastern side of the area of operations. Rommel though, under this hypothetical situation, takes the weather conditions into account. Finding out that the United States paratroop divisions were rendered incapable from intelligence gathered from captured paratroopers, he goes into action.

Rommel orders the 6th German Fallschirmjäger Regiment supported by the 30th German Fast Infantry Brigade both located in the vicinity of Carentan to establish blocking positions in the sector. He orders the move of the 21st German Panzer Division to move at full speed east to tactical assembly areas located north of Carentan directly in the middle of both Omaha and Utah beaches. This division receives strict orders to bypass any type of engagement with Allied paratroopers operating in the area. Their main objective is to be in place at their respective assembly areas to counter the anticipated beach assaults. Rommel now has the airborne assault under control; he knows that the Allied paratroopers cannot succeed without receiving reinforcements from the beach landings. Peter Tsouras points out in his book, Disaster at D-Day, The Germans defeat the Allies, June 1944, that by engaging these scattered forces with quick limited forces, Rommel can concentrate on defeating the Allies at the beach.

The assault of the Allied beach landings begins practically simultaneously throughout the Normandy coastline. Rommel allows for the allied units to gain but a small foothold on the five beachfronts. Having moved his reserves into tactical assembly areas behind the beach line, he wanted to allow the Allied commanders to believe their paratroop assaults had been successful. Finally, after the first 6 hours of the beach assault, Rommel decided to execute his counter attack in order to crush the Allied invasion. He immediately orders the 12th SS Panzer Division,

which was fresh from defeating the British 6th Airborne Division back into the attack supporting the 716th German Infantry along Gold and Juno beaches. Meanwhile, elements of the German Fifteenth Army roll across the bridges to the west which had been the British 6th Airborne objectives assaulting Sword beach in support of the 716th German Infantry there.

In the east, Rommel splits the 21st German Panzer Division between Omaha and Utah beaches in support of the counter attack launched by both the 352nd German Infantry and 709th German Infantry Divisions respectively. Rommel also requests and is immediately granted the 17th SS Panzer Division located to the far West around Poitiers France to move east in order to hit Utah beach for mop up operations. This request for forces was made due to the 17th SS Panzer Division was located in a blocking position in reaction to an anticipated Southern France beach landing. Within 24 hours of the invasion, Rommel now has the initiative against an Allied Force invasion force numbering in excess of 360,000 troops. After 48 hours, in accordance with his well-devised plan, Rommel pushes the Allies back into the channel and is able to maintain Fortress Europe at his Atlantic Wall.

The Allied invasion of Normandy was as history tells us, become an Allied victory. This victory relied exclusive on the fact that the Allied Chain of Commands operated in a decentralized environment. Commanders engaged on the ground were allowed to adjust and maneuver their forces based on the movement and strength of the enemy. The advantage was purely on the side of the Allies. As this paper demonstrates, had the Germans combatant commander, Generalfeldmarschall Rommel, been allowed the same flexibility with which to maneuver his forces, the outcome could have been far different. The ultimate success of the operation was that the Allied system of decentralizing control to the commander on the ground resulted in a German defeat.

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