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QUADRANT CONFERENCE

AUGUST 1943

PAPERS AND MINUTES OF MEETINGS

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C.C.S. 304

10 August 1943

COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF

WAR CABINET

CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE

OPERATION "OVERLORD" — OUTLINE PLAN

Covering Note by the British Chiefs of Staff

1. We have examined carefully the outline plan for operation *OVERLORD* which General Morgan has submitted. We have the following observations:—

a. It will be observed that General Morgan lays down three main conditions which must be created if the operation is to have a reasonable prospect of success. These are:—

(1) There must be an overall reduction in the strength of the German Fighter forces between now and the time of the assault.

(2) German reserves in France and the Low Countries as a whole, excluding Divisions holding the coast, G.A.F. divisions, and training divisions, should not exceed on the day of the assault 12 full strength, first quality, divisions. In addition, the Germans should not be able to transfer more than 15 first quality divisions from Russia during the first two months.

(3) The problem of beach maintenance over a prolonged period in the Channel must be overcome.

We entirely agree with General Morgan that these conditions are essential, and we shall have certain proposals to make during the *QUADRANT* discussions with a view to their fulfillment.

b. The annexed table (Annex "A") shows:—

(1) The Allied rate of build-up as planned by General Morgan.

(2) The maximum rate of German build-up which General Morgan considers acceptable.

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From this table it will be seen that our margin of superiority over the maximum acceptable rate of German build-up, particularly during the first two critical days, is small. Moreover, the figures in the Table do not sufficiently reflect the handicap under which our newly-landed divisions must suffer when engaging the enemy's divisions which have all along been established on land. We think it important, therefore, that the scale of German reserves should be reduced by some means below the maximum specified by General Morgan in his second condition. Otherwise, the operation may not succeed.

c. We think the general rate of advance planned by General Morgan is optimistic. Recent experience in Sicily shows that if the enemy is resisting fiercely, and if the country lends itself to defense, the advance is bound to be slow. The country south of the Caen beaches is in many respects admirable for delaying actions. We think that this part of General Morgan's plan should be carefully re-examined.

2. Subject to the above observations, we recommend that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should approve General Morgan's outline plan and authorize him to proceed with detailed planning, and with full preparations. We gave instructions to this effect before leaving England, in order that no time should be lost, and we ask the Combined Chiefs of Staff to endorse our action.

S. S. QUEEN MARY,

10TH AUGUST, 1943.

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COMPARISON OF OUR OWN BUILD UP WITH THE GERMAN RATE OF
REINFORCEMENT, WHICH C.O.S.S.A.C. STATES CAN BE ACCEPTED.

ANNEX A

DAY	COSSAC'S BUILD-UP Detail	GERMAN RATE OF REINFORCEMENT THAT CAN BE ACCEPTED	TOTALS, (equivalent divs.)	ALLIED GERMAN	COMMENTS
(1)	(11)	(111)	(111)	(11)	(111)
D Day	Three assault divs. One bde. gr. Three tr. bdes. 2/3 airborne div.	One def. div. (constant) Three divs. (one armd.)	5	4	
D+1	Three assault divs. One follow-up div. Three tr. bdes. 1-1/3 airborne div.	One def. div. Five divs. (two armd.)	6 1/3	6	There will be one additional British follow-up div. actually landed but not operational until D+2.
D+2	Three assault divs. Two follow-up divs. Three tr. bdes. Two airborne divs.	One def. div. Five divs. (two armd.)	6	6	There will be one additional British follow-up div. and one build-up div. actually landed but not operational until D+3.
D+3	Three assault divs. Three follow-up divs. Three tr. bdes. One build-up div. Two airborne divs.	One def. div. Seven divs. (four armd.)	10	8	There will be one and one-third additional British build-up divs. in addition, actually landed, but not operational until D+4.
D+4	Three assault divs. Three follow-up divs. Three tr. bdes. One-third build-up div. Two airborne divs.	One def. div. Seven divs. (four armd.)	11 2/3	8	There will be two tr. bdes. and one-third British build-up div. in addition, actually landed but not operational until D+5.

C.O.S.S.A.C. (43) 28.

ANNEX B

OPERATION "OVERLORD."

The Secretary,

Chiefs of Staff Committee,

Offices of the War Cabinet.

15th July, 1943

1. In my original Directive (C.O.S. (43) 215 (O)) I was charged with the duty of preparing a plan for a full scale assault against the Continent in 1944 as early as possible.

2. This part of my Directive was subsequently amplified (see C.O.S. (43) 113th Meeting (O), Item 4), in that I was ordered to submit an outline plan for an assault, with certain specified forces, on a target date the 1st May, 1944, to secure a lodgement on the Continent from which further offensive operations can be carried out. It was indicated to me, in the course of this amplification, that the lodgement area should include ports that, suitably developed, could be used by ocean-going ships for the build-up of the initial assault forces from the United Kingdom, and for their further build-up with additional divisions and supporting units that might be shipped from the United States or elsewhere.

3. I have the honour now to report that, in my opinion, it is possible to undertake the operation described, on or about the target date named, with the sea, land and air forces specified, given a certain set of circumstances in existence at that time.

4. These governing circumstances are partly within our direct control and partly without. Those within our control relate first to the problem of beach maintenance, and secondly to the supply of shipping, naval landing craft and transport aircraft. Wherever we may attempt to land, and however many ports we capture, we cannot escape the fact that we shall be forced to maintain a high proportion of our forces over the beaches for the first two or three months while port facilities are being restored; and that, in view of the variability of the weather in the Channel, this will not be feasible unless we are able rapidly to improvise sheltered anchorages off the beaches. New methods of overcoming this problem are now being examined. There is no reason to suppose that these methods will be ineffective, but I feel it my duty to point out that this operation is not to be contemplated unless this problem of prolonged cross-beach maintenance and the provision of artificial anchorages shall have been solved.

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5. As regards the supply of shipping, naval landing craft and transport aircraft, increased resources in these would permit of the elaboration of alternative plans designed to meet more than one set of extraneous conditions, whereas the state of provision herein taken into account dictates the adoption of one course only, or none at all. In proportion as additional shipping, landing craft and transport aircraft can be made available, so the chances of success in the operation will be increased. It seems feasible to contemplate additions as a result either of stepped-up production, of strategical re-allotment or, in the last resort, of postponement of the date of assault.

6 I have come to the conclusion that, in view of the limitations in resources imposed by my directives, we may be assured of a reasonable chance of success on the 1st May, 1944, only if we concentrate our efforts on an assault across the Norman beaches about Bayeux.

7. As regards circumstances that we can control only indirectly, it is, in my opinion, necessary to stipulate that the state of affairs existing at the time, both on land in France and in the air above it, shall be such as to render the assault as little hazardous as may be so far as it is humanly possible to calculate. The essential discrepancy in value between the enemy's troops, highly organised, armed and battle-trained, who await us in their much vaunted impregnable defences, and our troops, who must of necessity launch their assault at the end of a cross-Channel voyage with all its attendant risks, must be reduced to the narrowest possible margin. Though much can be done to this end by the means available and likely to become available to us in the United Kingdom to influence these factors, we are largely dependent upon events that will take place on other war fronts, principally on the Russian front, between now and the date of the assault.

8. I therefore suggest to the Chiefs of Staff that it is necessary, if my plan be approved, to adopt the outlook that Operation "Overlord" is even now in progress, and to take all possible steps to see that all agencies that can be brought to bear are, from now on, co-ordinated in their action as herein below described, so as to bring about the state of affairs that we would have exist on the chosen day of assault.

9. Finally, I venture to draw attention to the danger of making direct comparisons between operation "Husky" and operation "Overlord." No doubt the experience now being gained in the Mediterranean will prove invaluable when the detailed planning stage for "Overlord" is reached, but viewed as a whole the two operations could hardly be more dissimilar. In "Husky," the bases of an extended continental coastline were used for a converging assault

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against an island, whereas in "Overlord" it is necessary to launch an assault from an island against an extended continental mainland coastline. Furthermore, while in the Mediterranean the tidal range is negligible and the weather reasonably reliable, in the English Channel the tidal range is considerable and the weather capricious.

10. Attached hereto are papers setting forth the plan that I recommend for adoption.

F. E. MORGAN, Lieutenant-General,
Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander (Designate).

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