



June 6th: landing craft going into the beaches by Norman Wilkinson, 1944. National Maritime Museum [BHC1635]

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE ALLIED 21ST ARMY GROUP D-DAY, 6 JUNE 1944

THE GREATEST SEABORNE INVASION THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN

by Ian R Gumm MSTJ TD VR BSc (Hons)

PART TWO – THE OPPOSING FORCES

The German Forces

At the time of Operation OVERLORD, the command structure of the German Armed Forces reflected the growing mistrust of the Führer, Adolf Hitler. All military operations in Western Europe were placed under the direction of Oberkommando der Wehrmacht [OKW]; Armed Forces High Command. The task of defending Western Europe against a possible Allied invasion was given to Oberbefehlshaber West [OBW], whose commander-in-chief at the time of Operation OVERLORD was Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt.

OBW however, had no direct authority over either the German Navy or German Air Force, both of whom reported to their separate High Commands, which in turn reported directly to Adolf Hitler.

It should be noted that OKW was separate from its rival Oberkommando des Heeres [OKH]; Army High Command which ran the war in the east. Both organisations reported directly to the Führer and had to compete for men and resources.



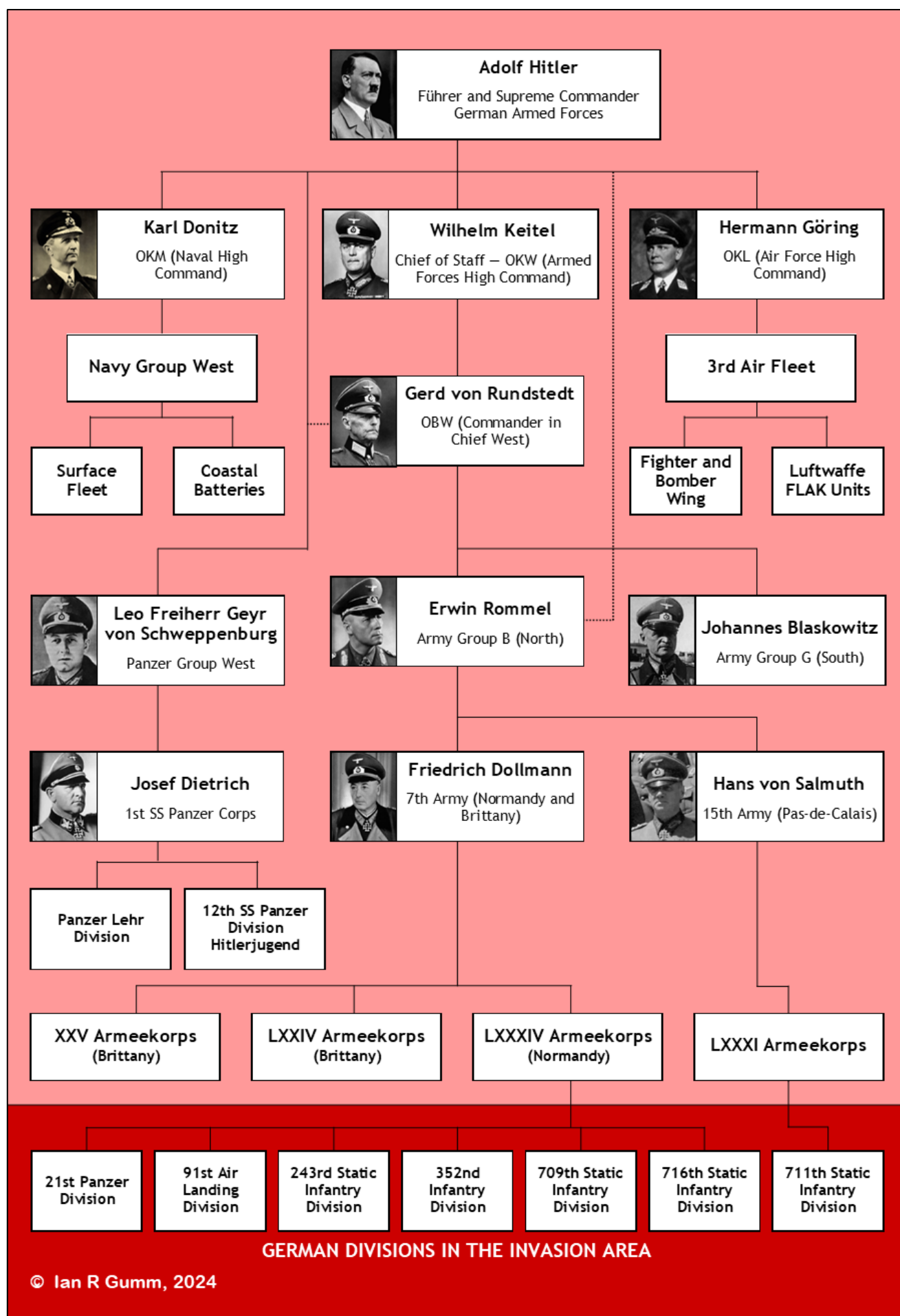
Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt. [Bild 183-L08127]

Panzer Group West, commanded by General der Panzertruppe Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg, had been sent to Northwest Europe as the Theatre Armoured Reserve.



General der Panzertruppe Leo Freiherr Geyr von Schweppenburg.

General der Panzertruppe von Schweppenburg, however, did not come under the command of OBW but reported directly to Hitler, he was to operate in conjunction with OBW, but he received his orders directly from the Führer.



Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt had two Army Groups under his command: Army Group B in the north and Army Group G in the south. The commander of Army Group B was Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel, and the commander of Army Group G was General Johannes Blaskowitz.



The German commanders in the west: General Johannes Blaskowitz, Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel, and Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt. [Bild 101I-719-0247-17A]

Whilst Generalfeldmarschall Rommel was subordinate to Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt, Adolf Hitler appointed him the Inspector General of Coastal Defences. Consequently, Rommel reported directly to the Führer on the defence of the coast and was entitled to appeal directly to Hitler on any pressing tactical concerns. As such, Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt's authority over Generalfeldmarschall Rommel was limited.

The German military doctrine for the defence of Normandy was based upon a threefold approach. This employed a mobile defence in depth, augmented by significant local striking power, to hold back the allied invaders until their true direction could be established. Once this direction was established, a mobile strategic armoured reserve would be released to deliver a decisive counterstroke to defeat the Allied landing using the classic German strategy of annihilation. The mobile strategic armoured reserve would be positioned well to the rear to prevent it from being committed prematurely and allow it to be directed in a rapid thrust against the main allied force's weak points.

Generalfeldmarschall Rommel disagreed with this approach. He believed the absence of German air superiority meant that any Allied invasion could not be defeated using a mobile strategic armoured reserve, as the Allied Air Forces would

destroy it before they could get into position. He preferred to keep the main combat forces in reserve immediately behind the coastal defences to mount swift counterattacks against the allies as they came ashore to drive them back into the sea before a large beachhead was established. Generalfeldmarschall Rommel thought that it would take the Allies some time to build up their armoured strength on the beaches and, in the first 48 hours of the landings, the Germans would have an overwhelming armoured advantage.

Generalfeldmarschall Rommel argued that the marshy ground of the Normandy coast, which was often broken up by hills and heavy woods, was vastly different to that of the flat terrain of the Eastern Front. The flatter pasture areas, over which armour could operate, were also far from ideal, as these were dotted with heavily wooded copses and bisected by huge earthen banked hedgerows, known as the Normandy bocage. This terrain would restrict the rapid movement of massed armoured columns and have a significant degrading effect upon their deployment. He, therefore, requested that the armoured divisions of Panzer Group West be stationed closer to the coast but Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt and General der Panzertruppe von Schweppenburg disagreed. Generaloberst Heinz Guderian, the Inspector General of Panzers, also disagreed with Generalfeldmarschall Rommel, as he felt this could lead to disaster should their guess where the invasion would come incorrect and, if that were the case, this would be almost impossible to rectify.

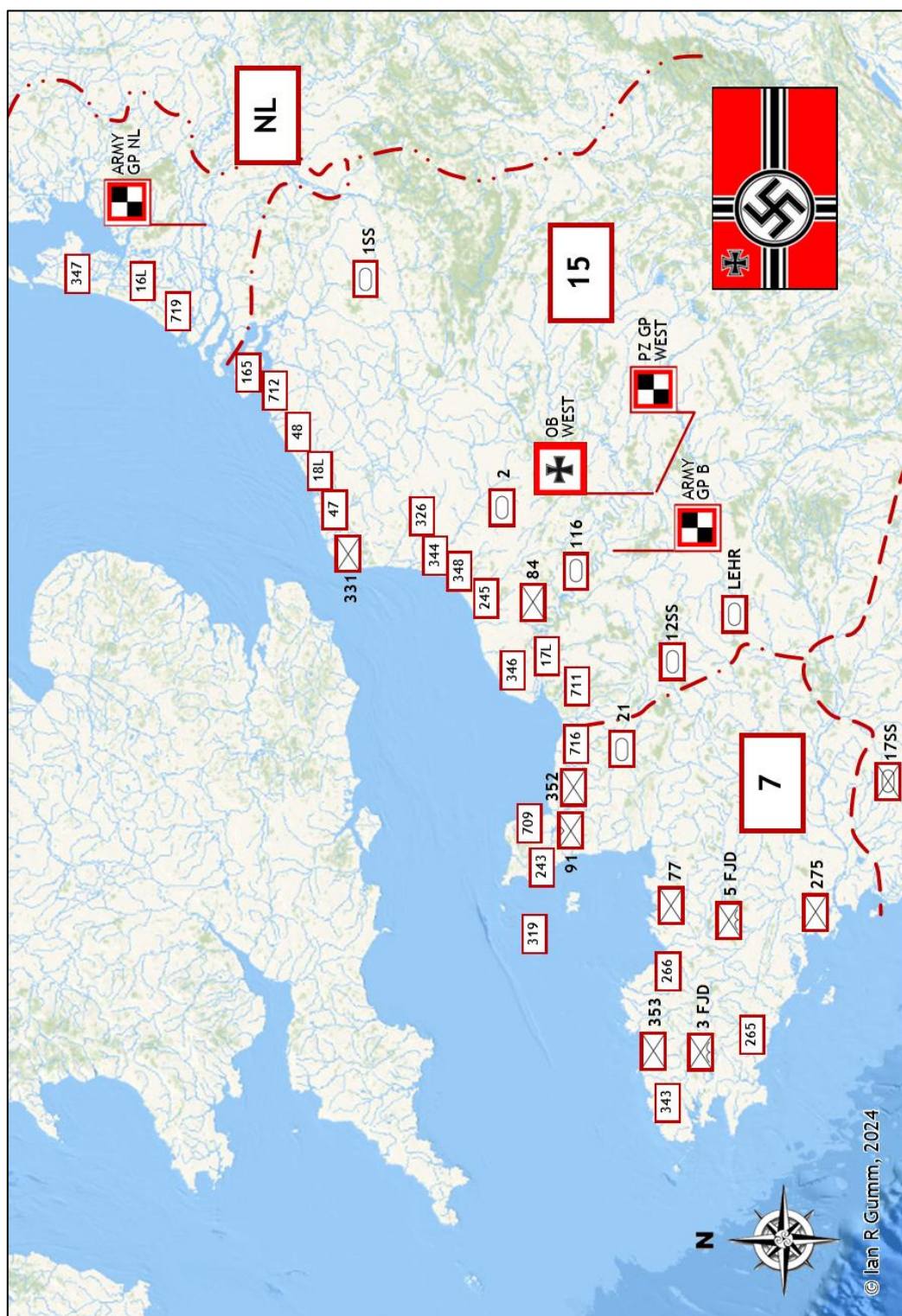


Generaloberst Heinz Guderian. [Bild 183-S73534]

Generalfeldmarschall Rommel appealed to Adolf Hitler, and, although the Führer favoured Rommel's approach, he compromised by placing three of the nine Panzer Divisions in Northwest Europe under Generalfeldmarschall Rommel's direct command. The 2nd, 21st and 116th Panzer Divisions were assigned to Army Group B and put under Generalfeldmarschall Rommel's direct command. General der Panzertruppe von Schweppenburg's Panzer Group West

retained the 1st SS, 12th SS and Lehr Panzer Divisions and the 17th SS Panzer-Grenadier Division, and General Blaskowitz's Army Group G gained the 2nd SS, 9th SS and 11th Panzer Divisions.

The disagreement between Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt and Generalfeldmarschall Rommel aggravated an already complex commander–subordinate relationship, and, although Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt was in command of the German Army in Western Europe, it was not difficult to see that he did not exercise full control over it.



Disposition of German Forces in Northern France. [© Ian R Gumm, 2024]

By 1944 the German Army had become quite adept at fighting defensive battles, due to its experiences on the Eastern Front. Losses had resulted in the strength of many of the Divisions in the Wehrmacht being reduced from 9 to 6 or 7 Battalions and some of these Divisions being reconstituted based on skeleton cadres after their decimation on the Eastern Front. How these divisions were deployed, however, was not changed to reflect their reduced manpower and the divisional frontages remained the same, which placed an increased demand on their officers and men. Their morale in general remained high due to their past achievements, professionalism, and experience. Several of the units being reconstituted had bonded together through vigorous training and their experienced battle-hardened veterans. This meant that throughout Northwest Europe there were several strong, cohesive units deployed at that time.

The German force opposing the Allied invasion in Northwest Europe was Army Group B commanded by Generalfeldmarschall Rommel. Army Group B was made of Generaloberst Friedrich Dollmann's German Seventh Army [GE 7 Army], which was deployed in the west, and Generaloberst Hans von Salmuth's German Fifteenth Army [GE 15 Army], was deployed to the east of the River Dives and concentrated in the Hauts-de-France, which includes the Pas-de-Calais.



Generaloberst Friedrich Dollmann.

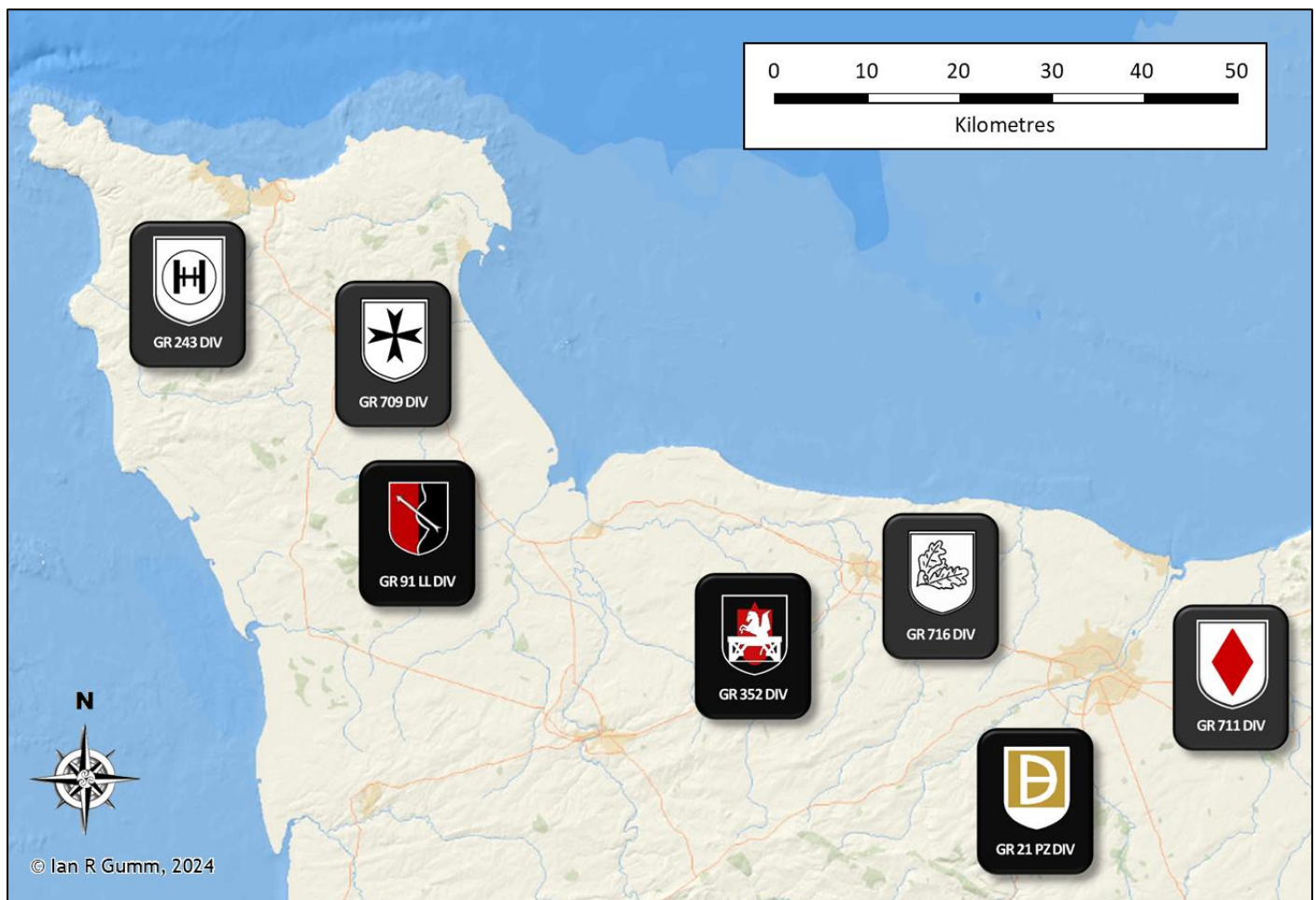


General der Artillerie Erich Marcks.

The GE 7 Army was deployed to the west of the River Dives and spread out thinly throughout Brittany and Normandy, the German XXV Armeekorps [GE XXV Corps], German LXXIV Armeekorps [GE LXXIV Corps] and the bulk of II Fallschirm-Korps in Brittany, and the German LXXXIV Armeekorps [GE LXXXIV Corps] commanded by General der Artillerie Erich Marcks in Normandy.

Generalfeldmarschall Rommel had 39 Infantry Divisions and three Panzer Divisions under his direct command. Priority for equipment and men was given to the GE 15 Army, and two of the three Panzer Divisions available to Generalfeldmarschall Rommel were deployed in the Hauts-de-France area to support it.

Generaloberst Friedrich Dollmann's GE 7 Army, whilst the weaker of Army Group B's two armies, had several good units within its organisation that had been sent to Northern France to be reformed and reconstituted. In addition, Generalfeldmarschall Rommel assigned Generalmajor Edgar Feuchtinger's 21st Panzer Division [21 PzD] to be the Panzer Division to support the GE 7 Army and they were deployed around and south of Caen.



Disposition of German Forces in the Invasion Area. [© Ian R Gumm, 2024]

The German units in the invasion that were assigned to the GE 7 Army were:

243rd Static Infantry Division [243 ID] commanded by Generalleutnant Heinz Hellmich and had its command post [CP] at the Château de Malassis. The 243 ID was raised in July 1943 and was in Bretagne until early 1944 when it was sent to Normandy. It was assigned to guard the western seaboard of the Cotentin Peninsula, though it took time before it took over the west coast. It was upgraded from a German Static Defence Division to a Nominal Attack Division in late 1943 by issuing six of its Battalions with bicycles. The 243 ID consisted of:

- Grenadier-Regiment 920 [GR-920] commanded by Oberst Bernhard Klosterkemper.

- Grenadier-Regiment 921 [GR-921] commanded by Oberstleutnant Jacob Simon.
- Grenadier-Regiment 922 [GR-922] commanded by Oberstleutnant Franz Müller.
- Artillerie-Regiment 243 [AR-243] commanded by Oberst Eduard Hellwig.
- Panzerjäger-Abteilung 243 [PzJgAbt-243] commanded by Hauptmann Horst Nesselhauf.
- Pionier-Bataillon 243 [PiBtl-243] commanded by Hauptmann Lorenz Reicherzer.
- Nachrichten-Abteilung 243 [NachrAbt-243] commanded by Hauptmann Horst-Alex von Bierbrauer zu Brennstein.

Attached to this Division were:

- Ost-Battalion 561 [OstB-561]
- Panzerabteilung 206 [PzAbt-206] commanded by Major Ernst Weng.
- Maschinengewehrbataillon 17 [MGB-17] commanded by Major Hans Reichert.
- Schweres Stellungswerferregiment 101 [sSWR-101] commanded by Major Rasner.

709th Static Infantry Division [709 ID] was a German Static Infantry Division commanded by Generalleutnant Karl-Wilhelm von Schlieben which had its CP at Château Chiffrevast. This Division was deployed in the eastern half of the Cotentin Peninsula and included Cherbourg within their area of responsibility. The 709 ID consisted of:

- Grenadier-Regiment 729 [GR-729] commanded by Oberst Helmuth Rohrbach.
- Grenadier-Regiment 739 [GR-739] commanded by Oberst Walter Köhn.
- Grenadier-Regiment 919 [GR-919] commanded by Oberstleutnant Günther Keil.
- Artillerie-Regiment 1709 [AR-1709] commanded by Oberst Robert Reiter.
- Panzerjäger-Abteilung 709 [PzJgAbt-709] commanded by Hauptmann Willi Hümmerich.
- Pionier-Bataillon 709 [PiBtl-709] commanded by Major August Hornung.
- Nachrichten-Abteilung 709 [NachrAbt-709] commanded by Major Hartmann.
- Sturm-Bataillon AOK 7 [SBtl-7] commanded by Major Hugo Messerschmidt.

91st Luftlande Division [91 LLD] commanded by Generalleutnant Wilhelm Falley was deployed in the centre of the Cotentin Peninsula and had its CP at Bernaville Château. It had originally been sent from Germany to Nantes but was

rerouted to the Cotentin Peninsula in early May 1944 to strengthen the defences near Cherbourg. Their primary role was anti-air landing and this division had full attack capability. The 91 LLD consisted of:

- Grenadier-Regiment 1057 [GR-1057] commanded by Major Sylvester von Saldern.
- Grenadier-Regiment 1058 [GR-1058] commanded by Oberst Kurt Beigang.
- Artillerie-Regiment 191 [AR-191] commanded by Oberstleutnant Heinrich Kiewitt.
- Panzerjäger-Abteilung 191 [PzJgAbt-191] commanded by Oberleutnant Reimer.
- Pionier-Bataillon 191 [PiBtl-191] commanded by Leutnant Bonecamp.
- Nachrichten-Abteilung 191 [NachrAbt-191] commanded by Hauptmann Günter Buchreih.
- Fla-Kompanie 191 [FlaK-191].

Attached to this Division were:

- Fallschirmjäger Regiment 6 [FJR-6] commanded by Major Friedrich-August Freiherr von der Heydte.
- Panzer Ersatz-und-Ausbildungsabteilung 100 [PzAbt-100] commanded by Major Bardtenschlager.
- Artillerie-Regiment 621 [AR-621] commanded by Oberstleutnant Hermann Seidel.

352nd Infantry Division [352 ID] commanded by Generalleutnant Dietrich Kraiß was a full attack capability division. It had been formed in occupied France in early November 1943 and its CP was located at Littry. It was one of ten new infantry divisions raised to replace losses on the Eastern Front and was to be combat-ready by May 1944. Once up to strength and trained the 352 ID was expected to be transferred to the Eastern Front. However, there was no clear date for their transfer to the Eastern front and with the threat of an Allied invasion in the West, the 352 ID received orders to prepare for the defence of the Atlantic Wall, in the Normandy area.

The 352 ID, when formed, was a mix of experienced soldiers drawn from worn-out or disbanded divisions that had served on the Eastern front, young German conscripts and a significant number of eastern volunteers, the latter mainly employed in divisional support roles. Throughout the training period there were shortages of men, equipment, and fuel, and by early 1944 the Division, though nearly fully equipped, was not yet ready for front-line infantry combat.

With the Normandy coastal area extending 100 kilometres, Generalfeldmarschall Rommel decided to place the 352 ID between the 709 ID and the 716th Static Infantry Division [716 ID] to defend the 53 kilometres long 'Bayeux zone'. They were deployed east from the base of the Cotentin Peninsula along the coast to Arromanches-les-Bains and covered an area that included the whole of OMAHA Beach and the western end of GOLD Beach. It consisted of:

- Grenadier-Regiment 914 [GR-914] commanded by Oberstleutnant Ernst Heyna.

- Grenadier-Regiment 915 [GR-915] commanded by Oberstleutnant Karl Meyer.
- Grenadier-Regiment 916 [GR-916] commanded by Oberst Ernst Goth.
- Artillerie-Regiment 352 [AR-352] commanded by Oberst Kurt-Wilhelm Ocker.
- Panzerjäger-Abteilung 352 [PzJgAbt-352] commanded by Hauptmann Werner Jahn.
- Pionier-Bataillon 352 [PiBtl-352] commanded by Hauptmann Paul Fritz.
- Divisions-Füsilier-Bataillon 352 [FusBtl-352] commanded by Rittmeister Eitel Gerth.
- Nachrichten-Abteilung 352 [NachrAbt-352] commanded by Hauptmann Kurt Ehrhardt.
- Ost-Bataillon 439 [OstB-439] commanded by Hauptmann Hans Becker.

The GR-915, which had two battalions, was positioned just south of Bayeux as a counterattack reserve, along with the FusBtl-352. On the left flank, the 2nd Battalion GR-916 [II/ 916] was positioned behind the gun emplacement at Pointe-du-Hoc and towards the centre defending OMAHA Beach. The 1st Battalion GR-916 [I/ 916] was deployed in the 716th Static Infantry Division's [716 ID] sector in the western end of GOLD Beach. PzJgAbt-352's self-propelled anti-tank guns and assault guns were in reserve between the left and centre of the divisional areas. When the Allied seaborne assault went in on D-Day this Division was conducting an exercise against an amphibious assault.

716 Static Infantry Division [716 ID] commanded by Generalleutnant Friedrich-Wilhelm Richter was a German Static Defence Infantry Division and its CP was located at La Folie-Couvrechef. It was deployed along the coast between Arromanches and the west bank of the River Orne. This Division was overstretched and unusually weak, in terms of equipment and men, and two of its Battalions were made up of Russians under a cadre of German Officers and NCOs. It consisted of:

- Grenadier-Regiment 726 [GR-726] commanded by Oberst Walter Korfes.
- Grenadier-Regiment 736 [GR-736] commanded by Oberst Ludwig Krug.
- Artillerie-Regiment 1716 [AR-1716] commanded by Oberstleutnant Helmut Knüppe.
- Panzerjäger-Abteilung 716 [PzJbAbt-716] commanded by Oberleutnant Kurt Kaergel.
- Pionier-Bataillon 716 [PiBtl-716] commanded by Major Günter Koch.
- Nachrichten-Abteilung 716 [NachrAbt-716] commanded by Major Werner Liedloff.
- Ost-Bataillon 441 [OstB-441].

The GE 716 Inf Div were deployed covering an area that included most of GOLD beach and all of JUNO and SWORD beaches.

711th Static Infantry Division [711 ID] commanded by Generalleutnant Josef Reichert was a German Static Defence Infantry Division within the LXXXI Armeekorps of GE 15 Army and its CP was located at Vauville. It was deployed east of the River Dives and had a strength of around 7,000 men. It consisted of:

- Grenadier-Regiment 731 [GR-731] commanded by Oberst Enno Erich von Limburg.
- Grenadier-Regiment 744 [GR-744] commanded by Oberst German Maier.
- Artillerie-Regiment 1711 [AR-1711] commanded by Oberstleutnant Hermann Freiherr von Ebner.
- Panzerjäger- Kompanie 1711 [PzJgK-1711] commanded by Hauptmann Werner Herr.
- Pionier-Kompanie 711 [PiK-711].
- Nachrichten-Kompanie 711 [NachrK-711] commanded by Oberleutnant Friedrich Franz Bruel.

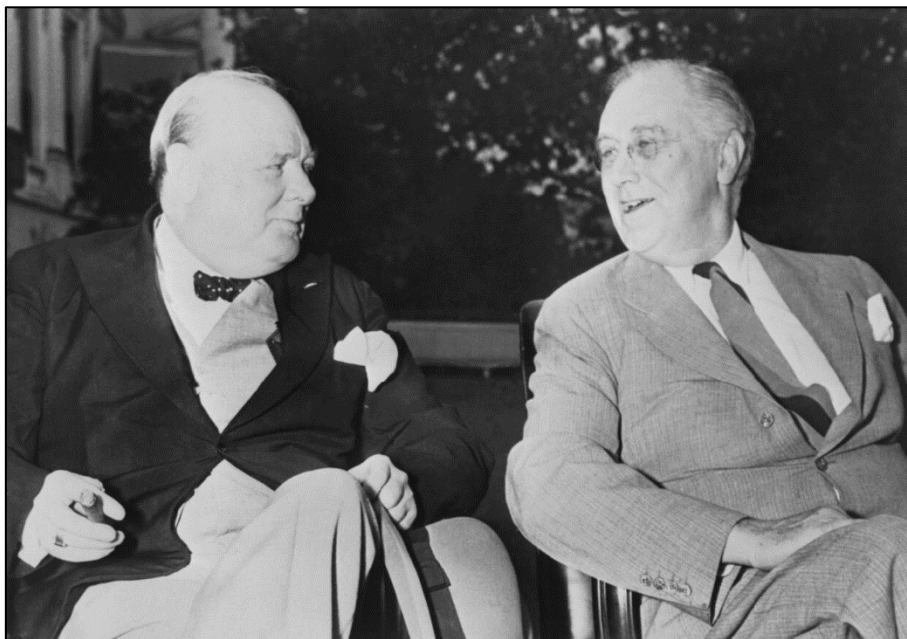
21st Panzer Division [21 PzD] commanded by Generalmajor Edgar Feuchtinger was well equipped and had just under 16,300 men. Its CP was located at Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives. The 21 PzD was one of Rommel's favourite units and had a strong core of battle-hardened veterans, many of whom had served under Rommel in his desert campaign in North Africa. It consisted of:

- Panzer-Regiment 22 [PzRgt-22] commanded by Oberst Hermann von Oppeln Bronikowski.
- Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 125 [PzGrRgt-125] commanded by Major Hans-Ulrich von Luck.
- Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 192 [PzGrRgt-192] commanded by Oberst Josef Rauch.
- Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 155 [PzAR-155] commanded by Oberst Heribert Hühne.
- Panzerjäger-Abteilung 200 [PzJgAbt-200] commanded by Major Werner Freiherr von Lyncker.
- Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 200 [StuGAbt-200] commanded by Major Alfred Becker.
- Panzer-Aufklärung-Abteilung 21 [PzAufklAbt-21] commanded by Major Waldow.
- Heeres-Flakartillerie-Abteilung 305 [FAAbt-305] commanded by Hauptmann Hellmuth Ohlendorf.
- Panzer-Pionier-Bataillon 220 [PzPiBtl-220] commanded by Oberleutnant Franz Hoegel.
- Feld-Ersatz-Bataillon 220 [FeldErsBtl-220] commanded by Hauptmann Wilhelm von Braucke.

Generalfeldmarschall Rommel moved the 21 PzD closer to Caen to support the 716 ID in the 'Canal zone' when they were placed under his direct command. They moved forward on the eve of the invasion and their presence so far forward caught the Allies by surprise. This division posed the principal threat to the Allies during the landings on D-Day.

The Allied Forces

American President Franklin D Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed to form a Combined Chiefs of Staff at the ARCADIA Conference held in Washington DC at the end of December 1941/beginning of January 1942. This body became the primary means for consultation between the two Chiefs of Staff of Britain and the United States.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D Roosevelt relax on the grounds of the White House during the ARCADIA Conference. [IWM HU 90349]

In January 1943, Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan had been appointed as the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander [COSSAC] and he carried out the preliminary planning for an invasion of German-occupied Northwest Europe. His plan had been presented to the British Chiefs of Staff Committee in July of that year.

In December 1943, at a meeting in Cairo, Winston Churchill and Franklin D Roosevelt agreed to the appointment of General Dwight D Eisenhower as the Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces, the force that was to carry out the task of invading Northwest Europe.

On being appointed as the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower left for England and, on arrival, set up his Headquarters in Bushy Park, London. This headquarters was known as the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces [SHAEF] and had authority over all branches of the armed forces. General Eisenhower appointed the best commanders available for this organisation: Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder was appointed as the deputy

commander; Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay as the naval commander; General Sir Bernard Montgomery as the commander of land forces and invasion commander; and Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory as commander of the Allied Air Forces.

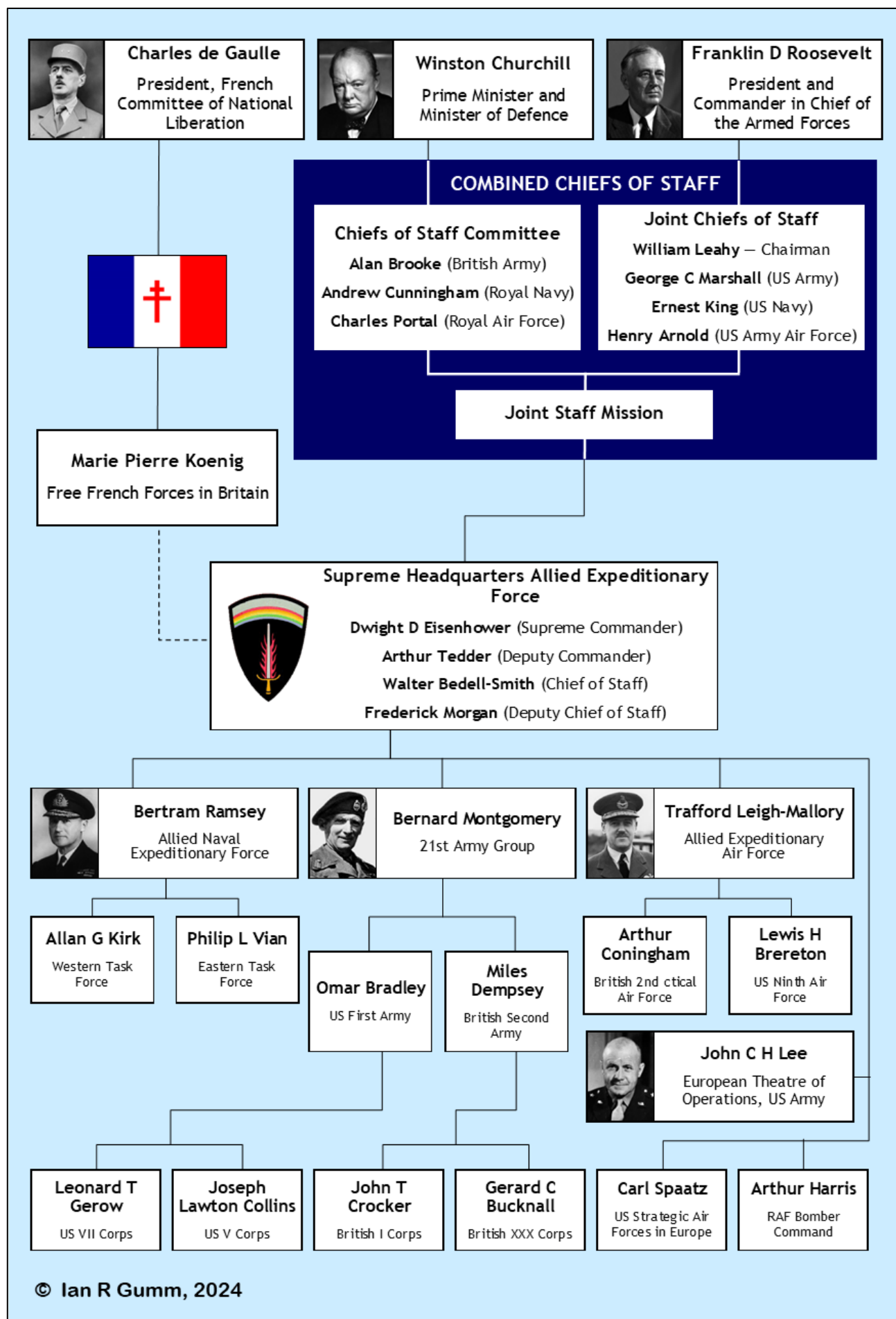


Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces commanders. Front row: Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, General Dwight D Eisenhower, and General Sir Bernard Montgomery. Back row: General Omar Bradley, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory and Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith. [IWM TR 1631]

Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith continued as General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff and Lieutenant General Morgan became the Deputy Chief of Staff. With its organisation established, SHAEF got on with the job of preparing for the assault on German-occupied Northwest Europe.



Lieutenant General Walter Bedell Smith. [LCPP003B-39572]



Lieutenant General Morgan's first staff plan was a three-division affair landing in the Bay of the Seine on three beaches of the Calvados Coast of Normandy in the Caen-Bayeux area and an airborne assault by two brigades on the city of Caen.

On being appointed commander of land forces and invasion commander, General Sir Bernard Montgomery reviewed the proposed invasion plan. He revised this to have six Allied infantry divisions making the initial seaborne assault on five landing beaches and three Allied airborne divisions to secure the flanks.



General Sir Bernard Montgomery. [IWM TR 1039]

General Montgomery's force to carry out the invasion was the Allied 21st Army Group. This consisted of two Allied Armies, the US First Army [US 1 Army], and the British Second Army [BR 2 Army].

Lieutenant General Omar Nelson Bradley commanded the US 1 Army consisting of Major General Leonard Townsend Gerow's US V Corps and Major General Joseph Lawton Collins' US VII Corps.

Major General Collin's US VII Corps was assigned the task of assaulting and securing the most westerly of the Invasion beaches, which was codenamed UTAH. The US VII Corps consisted of Major General Raymond O Barton's US 4th Infantry Division [US 4 ID] and Brigadier-General Jay MacKelvie's US 90th Infantry Division [US 90 ID]. For D-Day, two American airborne divisions were attached to the US 1 Army, Major General Matthew Bunker Ridgway's US 82nd Airborne Division [US 82 ABD] and Major General Maxwell D Taylor's US 101st Airborne Division [US 101 ABD].

Major General Gerow's US V Corps attacked with two divisions up, the US 29th Infantry Division [US 29 ID] on the right (west) and the US 1st Infantry Division [US 1 ID] on the left (east). The US 2nd Infantry Division [US 2 ID] provided follow-up troops and acted as the Corps reserve. The US 2nd Ranger Battalion [US 2 Ranger] assaulted the German

Coastal Artillery Battery located at Pointe-du-Hoc with three of their companies and the remainder, with the US 5th Range Battalion [US 5 Ranger], landing at OMAHA Beach.



Lieutenant General Omar N Bradley, Major General Leonard T Gerow, General Dwight D Eisenhower, and Major General J Lawton Collins.

General Sir Miles Christopher Dempsey commanded the BR 2 Army consisting of Lieutenant General John Tredinnick Crocker's British I Corps [BR I Corps] and Lieutenant Gerard Corfield Bucknall's British XXX Corps [BR XXX Corps].



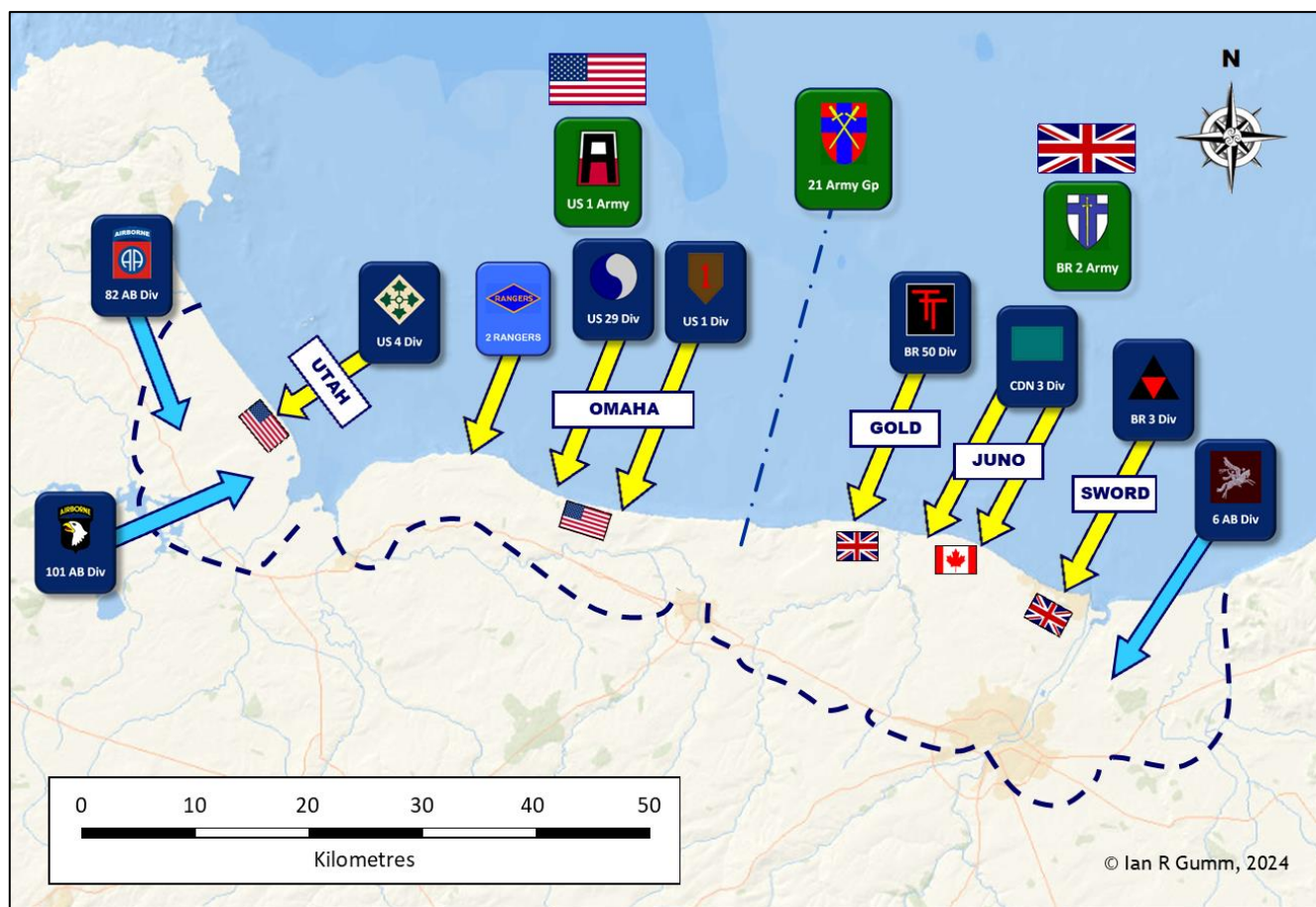
Lieutenant General John T Crocker, General Sir Miles Christopher Dempsey, and Lieutenant Gerard Corfield Bucknall in Normandy. [IWM B 5326]

Lieutenant General Bucknall's BR XXX Corps was assigned the task of assaulting and securing the most westerly of the British invasion beaches, which was codenamed GOLD. It consisted of Major General Evelyn W Baker's 49th (West

Riding) Division [BR 49 Inf Div], and Major General Douglas Alexander Henry Graham's 50th (Northumbrian) Division [BR 50 Inf Div]. Major General George Watkin Eben James Erskine's 7th Armoured Division [BR 7 Armd Div] was attached to provide armoured support.

Brigadier Hugh John Bernard Cracroft's 8th Armoured Brigade [BR 8 Armd Bde], Brigadier Ernest Cecil Pepper's 56 (Independent) Infantry Brigade [BR 56 IND Bde] and Lieutenant Colonel Cecil F Phillips's No 47 (Royal Marine) Commando [BR 47 RM CMDO] were all attached to the BR XXX Corps on D-Day.

Lieutenant General Crocker's BR I Corps was tasked with assaulting and securing the two most easterly of the landing beaches, codenamed JUNO and SWORD. BR I Corps consisted of Major General Thomas Gordon Rennie's British 3rd Infantry Division [BR 3 Inf Div], Major General David Charles Bullen-Smith's 51st (Highland) Division [BR 51 Inf Div], and Major General Rodney Frederick Leopold Keller's Canadian 3rd Infantry Division [CDN 3 Inf Div]. For D-Day, they had Major General Richard Nelson Gale's British 6 Airborne Division [BR 6 AB Div] attached.



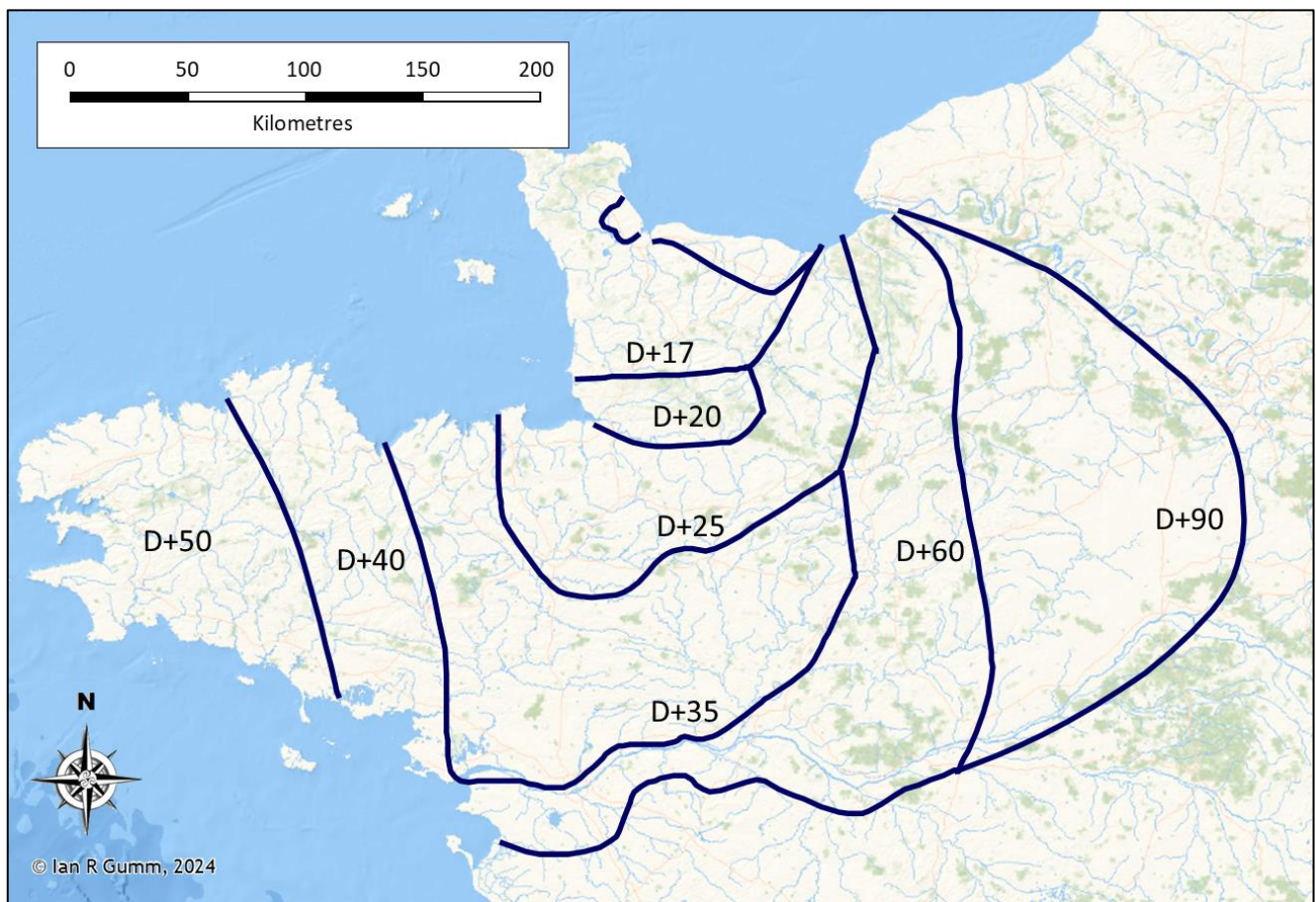
The Allied Plan for D-Day. [© Ian R Gumm, 2024]

In outline, the Allied plan for Operation OVERLORD was:

- The US 82 ABD and US 101 ABD would carry out an airborne operation to secure the western flank, while the US VII Corps assaulted UTAH Beach with one division up, the US 4 ID leading.
- Three companies of US 2 Ranger would assault the German gun emplacement at Pointe-du-Hoc.

- At OMAHA Beach, the US V Corps would assault with two divisions: the US 29 ID and US 1 ID. The remainder of the US 2 Ranger would land and head to Pointe-du-Hoc to reinforce their comrades while the US 5 Ranger came ashore behind the leading waves.
- At GOLD Beach, the BR XXX Corps would assault one division, the BR 50 Inf Div. Also landing at GOLD Beach were Brigadier Pepper's BR 56 IND Bde and Lieutenant Colonel Phillips's BR 47 RM CMDO. They would head inland to capture Bayeux and Port-en-Bessin respectively.
- The BR I Corps would assault JUNO beach with the CDN 3 Inf Div and SWORD beach with the BR 3 Inf Div.
- In the east the BR 6 AB Div would carry out the airborne operation to secure the eastern flank.

The objective for the first day was to link up the five landing beaches into one continuous lodgement area about 5–10 miles deep. The invasion forces were to secure all the principal roads and river crossings within the lodgement area and throw a cordon around Caen.



The Allied Objectives. [© Ian R Gumm, 2024]

Following this initial phase, the lodgement area was to be strengthened and enlarged using follow-up forces with the British concentrating on capturing Caen in the east and the Americans concentrating on capturing Cherbourg at the tip of the Cotentin Peninsula in the west.

By D+40 the objectives were to:

1. Create a beachhead that includes Caen and Cherbourg.
2. Breakout from the beachhead to liberate Brittany and its Atlantic ports.
3. Advance to a line roughly 125 miles to the southeast of Paris from Le Havre through Le Mans to Tours.

The intention was to liberate Paris within 90 days.

I thank Niels Henkermans for his kind assistance in reviewing the German Forces.

Look Forward

In part Three of D-Day, 6 June 1944 - The Greatest Seaborne Invasion The World Has Ever Known, I look at the Build-up to the Invasion.

Published by In The Footsteps®

This year is the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings and In The Footsteps is running two tours commemorating this momentous event. These are:

D-Day 80th Anniversary Small Group Tour - A 6-day 5-night tour beginning on 4 and ending on 9 June 2024. For details, please visit <https://www.inthefootsteps.com/d-day-80th-anniversary-small-grouptour.html>.

D-Day 80th Anniversary Coach Tour - A 6-day 5-night tour beginning on 4 and ending on 9 June 2024. For details, please visit <https://www.inthefootsteps.com/d-day-80th-anniversary-coach-tour.html>.

If you are interested in a tour following in the footsteps of The Allied 21st Army Group on D-Day at any other time, please visit <https://www.inthefootsteps.com/d-day-tour.html>.

If you are interested in a tour following in the footsteps of The Allied 21st Army Group, or indeed any specific Allied formation or unit, in the Battle of Normandy that followed, contact us via our Tailor-made Tours page, <https://www.inthefootsteps.com/tailor-made-tour-service.html>, telling us where you want to go, when, for how long, and the standard of hotel you would like and we will put together a proposal for your consideration.

© In The Footsteps, 2024

In The Footsteps Tours Limited, 5 Abbotts Close, Greytree, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7GQ

Website: www.inthefootsteps.com | email: info@inthefootsteps.com