

American Airborne: Normandy Invasion Stand List

1. Operational Setting, Plans, Air Movement, and Parachute Assault
2. La Fièvre Bridge, 6 June
3. Chef-du-Pont
4. Sainte-Mère-Église, 6 June
5. Objective WXYZ and the Northern Causeways
6. Brécourt Manor and the Southern Causeways
7. Securing the Southern Flank
8. Ste.-Mère-Église, D+1
9. The 325 GIR and the Merderet River, D+1 – D+3

Administrative notes:

Blue highlights refer to the PowerPoint visual aids.

Yellow highlighted text refers to movements in the virtual terrain. Screenshots will be added to this walk book in the future.

Notes in blue font are intended for the instructor.

Stand 1: American Airborne Plan

Visuals:

- 1A. German Dispositions: UTAH Beach Area
- 1B. Airborne Division Organization for NEPTUNE
- 1C. Area of Operations
- 1D. Airborne Assault Flight Routes
- 1E. Drop Pattern
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Orientation:

Visual 1A: German Dispositions: UTAH Beach Area

Virtual View: Start with an overhead view of Ste.-Mère-Église, looking generally north. This view is the starting point for the stand and we will not move from this point until later.

1. We are currently overlooking the town of Ste.-Mère-Église, one of the principal objectives for the airborne forces.
 - a. It is also a critical road junction of roads leading from the beach and westward across the Merderet River.
 - b. The road that runs north through the town is the N-13, the major road between Carentan, to the south, and Cherbourg with its major port facilities.
2. Ste.-Mère-Église is also located roughly in the center of the German defenses of the Utah Beach area.
3. The key terrain feature of the southern Cotentin in regard to Neptune was the Douve River and its major tributary, the Merderet River (*Utah Beach* to Cherbourg, 3).

Virtual View: Point out the Merderet River, inundated area, and the crossings at La Fiere and Chef-du-Pont on cue with the following.

- a. These two watercourses flow generally east and southeast and turn toward the English Channel near Carentan.
 - b. Neither river was a major obstacle, but the areas around them were prone to flooding. A factor the Germans took to their advantage using the lock at La Barquette.
 - c. Major crossing points of the Douve were near Carentan, Beuzeville, and Pont L'Abbé.
 - d. The Merderet had crossings at Chef-du-Pont (4.5 Km southwest) and near La Fièrè (3.5 Km west).
4. The east coast of the Contentin Peninsula, behind Utah beach, was low-lying marshland and had been flooded inland up to two miles in some locations. A series of causeways controlled movement across these areas (*Utah Beach to Cherbourg*, 3). (Instructor note: Not visible in the virtual view)
 5. Inland from the marshes the land was hedgerow, or bocage, country (Badsey, Stephen. *Utah*

Beach, 27).

- a. The bocage consisted of irregular shaped farm fields, typically for dairy cattle or apple orchards, which were surrounded by dirt embankments with thick hedgerows and trees on top.
- b. These farm fields date back to medieval times and farmers over the centuries added to the dirt embankments through the cultivation of fields and pushing excess dirt and debris to the periphery of the usable land. Over time, the vegetation continued to grow, causing thick barriers around these plots of land.
- c. The thickness and height of the hedgerows varied from just a couple of feet tall with sparse vegetation to six-foot embankments and impassible vegetation that grew over small farm roads almost like jungle canopy.
- d. The tactical implications of fighting through such terrain was very much underappreciated prior to the invasion.

Description:

1. German dispositions (From Badsey, 28-40)

- a. The defenses in the Cotentin peninsula fell under the command of the Seventh Army, Colonel General (Generaloberst) Friedrich Dollmann, and the LXXXIV (84th) Corps under General of Artillery (General der Artillerie) Erich Marcks.
- b. Much of the German arrayal in the Airborne area of operations was in support of the beach defenses along the coast. Numerous artillery battery positions were located in the 101st AO from the 709th IN Div (defending Utah) and the 91st Airlanding (Luftlande) Division.
- c. The 1058th Grenadier Regiment, detached from the 91st Airlanding Div, had a dual mission to defend the Cherbourg road and to support the 709th Div, which was guarding the eastern coast of the Cotentin.
 - (1) The 3/1058th was located at St-Côme-du-Mont.
 - (2) Its 1st and 2d battalions were located north IVO Montebourg.
- d. The 100th Panzer Training and Replacement Battalion, attached to the 91st Div, was equipped mostly with 30 obsolescent French tanks and was located northwest of Carentan.
- e. The 6th Parachute Regiment (6th Fallschirmjäger Regiment or FJR 6) was deployed across the southern portion of the Cotentin with its three battalions located near Periers, Lessay, and Carentan. In total, it had approximately 3,500 men.
- f. The 91st Airlanding Division (-) was located west of the Merderet River as a reserve force and also to guard against an airborne assault. The division, when consolidated, had a strength of about 8000 personnel. Major General Wilhelm Falley located his headquarters near Picauville. The division had recently arrived and spent its brief time in Normandy prior to the invasion emplacing anti-airborne obstacles, "Rommel's Asparagus" in the fields west of the Utah area.

- g. The 795th Georgian Battalion, an “Ost battalion,” (minus one company) was detached from its parent unit, the 739th Grenadier Rgt (709th Division). Its mission was to reinforce the 1/919th Grenadiers at Utah. Its headquarters was in Turqueville, east of Ste.-Mère-Église.

Visual 1B: Airborne Division Organization for Neptune

2. Task Organization of the two Airborne Divisions.
 - a. Each airborne division was only authorized two parachute regiments and based on the mission each was assigned a third.
 - b. Each glider regiment only had two battalions assigned; a third battalion was added to each division from the 401st Glider Regiment (originally assigned the 101st Abn Div).
 - c. *Instructor Note: Discuss key weapons and organizational differences according to the audience. Bottom line: airborne divisions are much lighter than a standard IN Div.*

Visual 1C: Area of Operations

3. The original plan for the two Airborne Divisions. The **initial** plan was for the 101st to have all the actual D-Day assignments and the 82d would conduct a parachute assault further west near Ste. Sauveur-le-Vicomte during the night of D-Day to D+1, to assist in cutting off the Cotentin Peninsula.
4. General Bradley changed the mission on 26 May based on updated intelligence that the German 91st Luftlande (Airlanding) Division had reinforced the peninsula and had elements positioned on the original drop zones for the 82d. (WWII Operations Reports, 82d, Box 12346).
5. 82d Mission (final): Seal off the Cotentin from the south by destroying the bridges over the Douve River upstream from its junction with the Merderet, at Pont-l'Abbe and Beuzeville, by occupying and hold both banks of the Merderet River, and then protecting the southwest flank of VII corps by securing the line of the Douve River. Seize Ste.-Mère-Église and its important road junction for use by follow-on forces. (Ambrose, *D-Day*, 234; Harrison, 289-93).
 - a. 505th PIR (COL William E. Ekman) mission was to drop east of the Merderet River on DZ “O,” capture Ste.-Mère-Église, establish two bridgeheads on the west bank of the Merderet at Chef-du-Pont and la Fière, and establish a defensive line north from Neuville-au-Plain to Beuzeville-du-Plain to tie in with the 101st Abn Div (502d PIR) to the east. (Harrison, 289).
 - b. 507th PIR (COL George V. “Sip” Millett) mission was to drop west of the Merderet on DZ “T”. It was to assist the 505th in securing the la Fière Bridge, and then defend from Gourbesville (now part of Picauville), to Renouf, linking in with the 505th to the east and the 508th to the south. (UTAH Beach to Cherbourg, 30).
 - c. 508th PIR (COL Roy Lindquist) mission was to drop west of the Merderet on DZ “N.” It was to defend the Douve River line, destroying the bridges at Pont l'Abbé and Beuzeville-la Bastille. It was to link in with the 507th to the North and the 101st Division to the southeast. (UTAH Beach to Cherbourg, 30).
 - d. 325th GIR (COL Harry Lewis) mission was to land on D+1 at LZs “E” and “W” (50 Horsas,

150 Wacos) in two echelons, two hours apart. Upon landing the regiment was to advance west to the Merderet River near Chef-du-Pont (Blair, 260).

- e. The Howell Force was the division's seaborne elements that were designated to land on Utah Beach on D-Day.
 - (1) BG George B. Howell was the commander of the 2d Abn Bde, an independent command. For Neptune, the brigade's two infantry regiments, the 507th and 508th PIRs, were assigned to the 82d. Howell was effectively without a command and served as a second assistant division commander for Neptune.
 - (2) TF Raff was part of the Howell Force. COL Edson Raff was the former commander of the independent 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion and had made the first American combat jump in North Africa in WWII.
 - (3) TF Raff was equipped with 21 Sherman tanks (from the 746th Tk Bn), two armored cars, and 90 troops from the 325 GIR. Its mission was to reinforce the division (Blair, 195).
 - f. DIVARTY. All three of the 82d's artillery battalions, the 319th GFAB, 320th GFAB, and the 456th PFAB, would arrive in the initial assault, unlike in the 101st. Neptune planners anticipated that the 82d required extra support because it was landing further inland and would be more isolated. (Blair, 192-193).
6. 101st Mission (final) - Primary task was to seize the four exits at the western ends of the causeways leading from Utah to allow for the rapid movement of the seaborne force inland. Its secondary mission was to destroy two bridges across the Douve River, one at the main highway northwest of Carentan and other a railroad bridge to the west, to protect the southern flank of VII Corps. The division was to seize the La Barquette lock and establish a bridge head over the Douve River by capturing the two bridges near Le Port to assist in the link-up between the VII and V Corps. Lastly, it was to be prepared to exploit southward through Carentan (Ambrose, *D-Day*, 234; Harrison, 280-9).
- a. 502d PIR (COL George V.H. Moseley, Jr) with 377 Prcht FA Bn (attached) mission was to land on Drop Zone "A" and destroy the enemy coastal battery located west of St. Martin-de-Varreville, seize the two northern beach exits (Exits 3 and 4) and establish a defensive line tying in with the 82d Abn Div to the west (505 PIR). (WWII Operations Reports, 101st, Box 14371; Harrison, 280).
 - b. 506th PIR (COL Robert Sink) with 1/C/326 Abn EN Bn was to land on DZ "C," and seize the southern two beach exits (Exits 1 and 2). The 3d Battalion would land on DZ "D," seize two bridges at Le Port and establish a bridgehead there for subsequent exploitation southward, while defending the Douve River line within the Regimental area of operations. (WWII Operations Reports, 101st, Box 14371; Harrison, 282).
 - c. The 3/501 PIR was to land on DZ "C" (with the 506th), serve as the division reserve, and prepared to mark and protect glider landing zone "E." (WWII Operations Reports, 101st, Box 14371).
 - d. 501st PIR (-) with 326 Abn EN Bn (-) was to land on DZ "D" and seize the lock at La Barquette, destroy the bridges on the St.-Côme-du-Mont – Carentan road, seize St.-Côme-du-Mont, if possible, and destroy the railroad bridge to the west (Harrison, 286).

- e. 327 GIR (COL George S. Wear) with 1/401 GIR attached was to land by sea and reinforce the division as it moved inland.
- f. DIVARTY. Among the division's three artillery battalions, only the 377th PFAB would conduct the airborne assault. The 321st GFAB and the 907th GFAB would both come by sea.
- g. COL Joseph "Bud" Harper, the 401 GIR commander, was relegated to commanding the division's seaborne forces as noted above and the division's logistical "tail" (Blair, 192).

7. The Airborne Assault.

Visual 1D: Airborne Assault Flight Routes (Zaloga, *US Airborne Divisions in the ETO*, 60)

a. The air movement plan:

- (1) 822 C-47s were used to move 13,000 paratroopers from both US divisions to Normandy. The IX Troop Carrier Command organized the movement into two missions: Albany (101 Abn Div) and Boston (82 Abn Div) from 15 Airfields in the UK.
- (2) It was approximately a two-hour flight to the DZs with a time on target starting at 0130 for the 101st and about an hour later for the 82d. (*Instructor Note: ToTs vary widely by source*).
- (3) The flight routes approached the DZs from west to east, to avoid the invasion flotilla (and the disastrous Sicily fratricide incident) and to maximize surprise. The route was well-marked with ships equipped with visual and electronic navigation beacons (Blair, 217).
- (4) Pathfinders from both divisions were scheduled to precede the main bodies by about 30 minutes. (*Instructor Note: Optional Information (from Blair, 217):*
 - (a) The pathfinder force for both divisions totaled about 260 personnel, loaded onto 20 x C-47s.
 - (b) Their mission was to mark six drop zones and one glider LZ.
 - (c) Teams were equipped with Eureka transponding radar, while certain aircraft carried the Rebecca Transceiver. Each drop zone was also to be marked with lights for nighttime identification (a "T" – color-coded by DZ) and panels for daytime use.
- (5) Two glider missions would follow by dawn with another two missions scheduled for the evening of D-Day, to be covered later in the staff ride (Ambrose, *D-Day 22*; Harrison, 279).
- (6) For most of the pilots of the Troop Carrier Command, this mission was their first time in combat. Most had not been trained to fly at night. They traveled in a V-of-V formation – three aircraft in a group and three groups to a line. (Ambrose, 198).

b. Execution:

- (1) At 052215 June 101st Airborne Division started taking off its departure airfields.

(Harrison, 275).

- (2) Most of the pathfinder missions did not go as planned as pathfinder sticks were widely scattered. Only two of seven teams landed on target (DZs "O" and "C"). In other areas nearby German activity prevented the teams from marking the DZs.

Visual 1E: Airborne Drop Pattern

- (3) The main body encountered the same problems as the pathfinders on a much larger scale:
 - (a) Cloud cover along the French coast disrupted plane formations as many aircraft broke formation to get above or below the clouds. German anti-aircraft fire added to the mayhem.
 - (b) Planes dropped Soldiers from between 500-2500 feet, and many troops jumped out with the plane going too fast.
 - (c) Confused pilots dropped their sticks of paratroopers too early, too late, and often nowhere near their drop zones.
 - (d) The results were that paratroopers were scattered all over the southern portion of the Cotentin Peninsula.

Vignette: PFC George Alex, 19 years old, 82d Abn Div, described the flight from England: discussing preparation for the drop while flying to the DZ.

"All this is going through your mind. You're wondering: What am I doing here? Why did I volunteer? Am I crazy?... Then one man gets airsick and pulls his steel helmet off to heave into it. And then everyone else down the line follows suit. ... We are all sick and the plane stinks and we are ready to get out anytime. Let's get the green light on and get out of the plane.

When the time came to go, out the door we went. We didn't hesitate for one moment. We are happy to get out of that thing, so off we went. Yes, I was afraid. I was nineteen years old and I was afraid." (Source is unknown)

Vignette: George Koskimaki, MG Taylor's radio operator, described:
"Men landed in pastures, plowed fields, grain fields, orchards, and hedgerows. They landed at the base of anti-glider poles (Rommel's asparagus), in tall trees, and small trees. They landed on roof tops, in cemeteries, town squares, backyards, paved roads, and in roadside ditches. They landed in canals, rivers, bogs, and flooded areas." (Koskimaki, George. D-Day with the Screaming Eagles, 87).

c. Results:

- (1) By the end of D-Day each division could only account for about 2500 of their 6000 soldiers, or about 40% (Ambrose, *D-Day*, 237).
- (2) It would take days for both divisions to assemble fully.

8. Initial Glider assault D-Day. Starting at about 0352 (101 Abn Div) and 0410 (82d Abn Div), about 100 gliders landed in Normandy with results no better than the Airborne assault.

a. 82d Abn Div: Mission Detroit (from Blair, 234-35).

- (1) Plan: Land on LZ "O" with 52 gliders carrying 220 personnel, 22 jeeps, 16 AT guns, and 5 ammo trailers. One jeep carried the large division command radio (a high-powered SCR-499 radio normally carried in a 2 ½ -ton truck).
- (2) Results: 7 gliders cut loose (or released) over western Normandy, 7 landed west of the Merderet, 23 gliders landed on or close to the LZ, with another 9 landing within 2 miles of the LZ (two came down in Ste.-Mere-Église).
- (3) Only 8 AT guns and 11 jeeps were still in workable condition. The division command radio was lost. Landing casualties were 3 killed and 23 injured.

b. 101st Abn Div: Mission Chicago (from Zaloga, Steven. *US Airborne Divisions in the ETO 1944-45*, 64 and Blair, 222).

- (1) Plan: Land on LZ "E" with 52 gliders carrying 155 personnel, 16 AT guns, and 25 jeeps. One jeep carried the division command radio.
- (2) Results: 1 glider, carrying the command radio, aborted over England, 1 plane and glider were shot down, 1 glider released south of Carentan, 6 landed on the LZ, 15 were within a half-mile, 10 landed about 1.5 miles west, and the remaining 18 were widely scattered in a radius of two miles.
- (3) Only 6 AT guns and 3 jeeps were recovered. Casualties were 5 killed and 17 injured in the landings. BG Donald Pratt, the ADC, was killed.

9. Even with the poor drop and landings, the soldiers and leaders from both divisions knew their battalion and regimental plans and moved toward accomplishing the mission.

10. The wide scattered drop did have some unintended advantages. The Germans were confused as to what was occurring. Fallschirmjäger Wolfgang Geritzlehner said, "*The Sky was filled with planes. At one stroke there were soldiers coming out of all corners. It was like a swarm of maddened bees.*" (Hargreaves, Richard. *The Germans in Normandy*, 41).

Visual 1F: German Initial Reactions

11. German Initial Reactions at Higher Echelons. (*Note to instructor: we will get into the tactical details as we discuss the various tactical actions*).

a. According to the German Seventh Army War Diary, it acknowledged landing of paratroopers about 0130.

- (1) By 0250, there were reports of paratroopers landing all over the Cotentin Peninsula, to include claims of landings on the west side of the peninsula.
- (2) It was not until about 0400 that they surmised that the American intention was to cut the Cotentin Peninsula. (WWII Operations Record, VII Corps, Box 3835: History of the VII Corps for the period 6-30 June, 40-1).

b. In the meantime, COL GEN Dollman, CG Seventh German Army, ordered moves to

destroy the Airborne forces.

- (1) The 91st Airlanding Division was released from its reserve role and attached to the LXXXIV Corps. At 0235 it was ordered to attack from the west with the 1057 Regiment and part of the 100 Panzer Training and Replacement Battalion (equipped with French tanks) to clear the west side of the Merderet River.
 - (2) The detached 1058 Regiment (91st Div) was to attack from the north with its two battalions (vicinity Montebourg) toward Ste.-Mère-Église to clear the east side of the Merderet and destroy the perceived American main effort located there.
- c. At about 0600 General Marcks (LXXXIV Corps) ordered the 6th Para Regt to attack through Carentan and clear the rear area of the 709th Div between Carentan and Ste.-Mère-Église.
- d. The 6th FJR had been widely dispersed to defend against air landings and took most of the day to assemble near Carentan. The attack started at about 1900 on the evening of D-Day, and was engaged with the American Airborne forces for the next three (+) days (Isby, David C. ed. *The German Army at D-Day: Fighting the Invasion*, 227-29)
- (1) 2d Bn was ordered to attack towards Ste.-Mère-Église
 - (2) 1st Bn was ordered to move to the high ground vic Ste Marie-du-Mont and protect the flank of the regiment.
 - (1) 3d Bn remained vic Carentan to provide a regimental defense in depth
 - (2) 3/1058 Grenadiers, attached, was to remain at St. Côme-du-Mont. (Harrison, 278, 293-300).
- e. At 0130, the 352d Infantry Div, which was defending east of the Vire Estuary (Omaha Beach area), went on full alert (for this section, see Isby, 193-195).
- (1) At 0200, the Commander, Lieutenant General (Generalleutnant) Deitrich Kraiss, believed that a major airborne operation was underway south of Carentan.
 - (2) Thinking that the American intent was to separate his division from the 709th, he committed his reserve, the 915th Regiment to the Vire Estuary.
 - (3) At 0550 Kraiss realized that he had committed a regiment against a mis-dropped planeload of 101st paratroopers. He held the 915th Regiment where it was – out of position to meet the landings at Omaha, a move that would have consequences on the German defenses later.
- f. Lt. Gen. Falley, commander of the 91st Airlanding Division, was killed in a paratrooper ambush while returning from Rennes to his headquarters near Picauville.
- g. Lt. Gen. von Shlieben, commander of the 709th Division, would not return from the wargame at Rennes until mid-day. Thus, two of three division commanders on the Cotentin were absent for much of D-Day, hindering German reactions.

Analysis:

1. How effective was the execution of the marshalling and air movement phases of the operation? Consider the use of multiple departure airfields, the use of in route navigational aids, deconfliction of parachute and glider assault routes and the time phasing of serials by drop zone.
Note: the four phases of an airborne assault (FM 3-99, 6 Mar 15) are: ground tactical plan, landing plan, air movement plan, and marshalling plan.

2. Why did the execution of the plans for the airborne and initial glider landings go so poorly?

Consider: Poor aircrew training: many of the pilots had never flown at night, let alone in combat. The effects of the weather over the French coast disrupted aircraft formations. Pathfinders were unable to mark DZs/LZs. Night time mission. German AA fire. There was no plan for SEAD.

How do we overcome these issues today? Consider: Joint training in Abn operations, the use of SEAD, employment of counter air (USAF), Close combat attack, CAS, improved capabilities in airborne ISR of the objective area, improved communication systems within the Airborne Assault Force. Doctrine: Today we have doctrine that was developed over time, to which the Neptune operation was a contributing factor.

3. What were some of the risks in selecting drop zones, particularly those west of the Merderet River? How can some of the risk be mitigated?

Consider: Units (507 and 508 PIRs) dropped on the far side of the Merderet, a natural obstacle, were in danger of being isolated on the west side. Surprise and size of the drop, speed in securing bridges, and violence of action were all relied upon to mitigate the risk.

The 82d Abn Div was given the bulk of the glider missions on D+1 because it was further inland than the 101st and it was assumed that it would need the added Infantry and Artillery reinforcements. For the 101st, it was almost completely reliant upon reinforcement by sea and depended on an on-time successful amphibious assault.

Stand 2: La Fière Bridge

Visuals:

- 2A. Merderet River, 6 June 1944: La Fière
- 2B. Merderet River, 6 June 1944: Amfreville Area
- 2C. La Fière Bridge: Seizing the Manor
- 2D. La Fière Bridge: German Counterattack

Orientation:

Visual 2A: Merderet River, 6 June 1944: La Fière or **Visual 1E: Airborne Drop Pattern**

Virtual Orientation: Overhead view of La Fière bridge looking west. Rotate around in place to correspond with the description below.

1. The Merderet River, which generally flowed through here from north to south, eventually joined the Douve River.
2. The bridge at La Fière was crucial to linking the troops landing on both sides of the Merderet River. The narrow crossing was raised a few feet above the river.
3. A manor house with several out buildings was located on the southeast corner of the bridge.
4. The flooding in this area made the Merderet River almost a kilometer wide and about a meter deep (Gavin, James M. *On to Berlin*, 106 and Ambrose, *D-Day*, 206).
5. There was a causeway on the other side of the bridge that led to the small hamlet of Cauquigny. The road continued southwest to Pont L'Abbé, about 3.5 miles away.
6. DZ "T," the designated DZ for the 507th PIR, is about 1.5 miles to the northwest.
7. The town of Amfreville, one of the prominent villages west of the Merderet, is located a little under 1.5 miles (2.25k) to the northwest, south of DZ "T."
8. The railroad line leading to Cherbourg crossed the Merderet just under a mile (1.3k) to the north. It was one of the most prominent terrain features in this area. It continues south to Chef-du-Pont and then on to Carentan.
9. DZ "O," the designated DZ for the 505th PIR, is a little over a mile to the northeast.
10. To the east, the road leads to Ste-Mere-Église, which is just over two miles away.

Description:

1. **La Fière Bridge.** The 1/505 PIR's mission was to secure the crossing points assigned to the 82d at La Fière and Chef du Pont (Harrison, 290). A/1/505 was to secure the bridge at La Fière to prevent the Germans from attacking against the Utah landings. Securing the bridges would also enable the subsequent forces (90 ID) to cut the Cotentin Peninsula.
 - a. Fortunately, 1/505 had one of the best drops on the American side of the invasion (Blair, 247). A Co landed just east of the railroad and assembled every trooper of the company, except for two, within an hour of the drop (Badsey, *Utah Beach*, 129). As a result, A Co

(LT John Dolan, Cdr) was the first organized unit to reach the bridge area (Murphy, Robert M. *No Better Place to Die*, 62). (*Instructor Note: Personnel numbers and times are all estimates and vary by source. The times used here are from Robert Murphy's book. LGOPs on the visual stand for Little Groups of Paratroopers).*)

Virtual View: Move west along the road toward the bridge. Stop just west of the Y intersection of the road and look off to the right. Go to ground level as described below to get a feel for the hedgerow fighting.

- (1) By 0730, the company had closed to within 300 meters of the bridge.
 - (2) Paralleling the north side of the road, the company encountered stiff German resistance along the hedgerows.
 - (3) For the next 3-4 hours the company fought around the hedgerows and the periphery of the manor grounds.
 - (4) The German force that occupied the area consisted of 28 soldiers from the 1057th Regiment of the 91st Div. This platoon-size force had arrived to defend the bridge around 2300 on 5 Dec (Crookenden, Napier. *Drop Zone Normandy*, 125).
- b. Meanwhile, a separate group of troopers mostly from the 507th, who had been mis-dropped on the wrong side of the Merderet, arrived in the area around 0800.

Virtual View: Move around the manor to the east and approach the complex from the southeast IAW the description below

- (1) Led by CPT Ben Schwartzwalder (G/507 PIR), the group came under fire from the manor and attempted to seize it from the south.
- (2) Under heavy fire, the attack culminated and Schwartzwalder regrouped, unaware of A/505's maneuvers in the area.

Virtual View: Move back to the initial stand viewpoint for this section

- c. The La Fièvre Bridge became a collection point for other groups of paratroopers trying to make their way to the western objectives. The railroad embankment was an easy navigational aid for the hundreds of mis-dropped paratroopers.
- (1) COL Roy Lindquist (508 PIR Commander) arrived in the area shortly after Schwartzwalder's group, maybe at around 0830, with about 130 troopers from both the 507th and 508th PIRs.
 - (a) Lindquist had landed in the marshy area east of Amfreville and gathered troopers as he moved south along the railroad embankment.
 - (b) He was ultimately making his way toward the bridge at La Fièvre and his southern objective of Pont l'Abbé, about 6 kms away.
 - (2) Elements of C/505 arrived in the area shortly after the Lindquist group. Their mis-dropped attached engineers eventually followed.
 - (3) Sometime between 0730 and 0900 MAJ Fred Kellam, the 1/505 commander, arrived

on the scene (Whitlock, Flint. *If Chaos Reigns*, 277).

- (4) At about 0900, BG Gavin, (ADC, 82d Abn Div), LTC Arthur Maloney (XO, 507 PIR), and LTC Edwin Ostberg (Cdr, 1/507 PIR) arrived with a group of approximately 300 troopers (Omaha to Cherbourg, 38).
 - (5) By mid-morning, there were between 500 and 600 troopers gathered in the area between La Fière and the railroad line (Harrison, 291).
- d. Gavin met with MAJ Kellam (1/505 Commander). After a brief conversation, Gavin was confident that Kellam had the situation well in-hand. He left the battle under the control of the 1/505.
 - e. Gavin turned his attention to the other Merderet River Bridge at Chef-du-Pont. He sent LTC Maloney with a group of about 75 soldiers south along the railroad embankment to seize the objective.
 - f. A short while later Gavin led another group of about 100 troopers toward Chef-du-Pont to check on the status of the operation there (*Instructor Note: Chef-du-Pont will be discussed in detail in the next stand*).

Visual 2B: Merderet River, 6 June 1944: Amfreville Area

Virtual View: Move west, still in the air, so that the participants can see Amfreville in the satellite imagery (the village was not built in VBS 3). Point out the approximate locations on the ground where the descriptions take place.

2. Actions near Amfreville, west of the Merderet.
 - a. LTC Charles Timmes, Commander of 2/507, landed about 1000 meters east of Amfreville. He assembled about 50 men.
 - (1) Hearing gunfire in the direction of Amfreville, Timmes decided to attack toward the town from the Southeast, but did not get far due to increasing German resistance (Nordyke, Phil. *All American All The Way*, 249).
 - (2) Lacking combat power, Timmes decided to establish a defensive position in an orchard between Amfreville and the Merderet.
 - (3) Timmes knew the importance of the La Fière Causeway (securing the west side was a 507 PIR objective) and sent a patrol under Lt Lewis Levy (D/507 platoon leader) to seize the western end. On the way Levy ran into another group of D/507 troopers under LT Joseph Kormylo.
 - (4) Combined, the group had about 30 men. By 1200, they established a defensive position around the Cauquiny Church near the western end of the causeway (Blair, 246).
 - (5) The area around the church offered the best defensible ground in the area, providing a field of fire down the road leading to the causeway.
 - (6) The Levy-Kormylo force was unaware of actions on the east side of the river, as Kormylo later stated, "It was about 1130. I could hear firing on the east bank, but it was

irregular and I did not have the feeling that any important action was taking place on the other side.” (Nordyke, 253).

- (7) The assortment of paratroopers on the east side of the river were equally unaware of the presence of Levy and Kormylo on the west side.
- b. Also in the vicinity of Amfreville was COL George (Zip) Millet, the 507 PIR commander. He was one of the few troopers to land on DZ “T” as planned (This section is from Blair, 232 and Nordyke, 271, 284).
- (1) Millet quickly gathered 40, or so, troopers on the DZ and started moving toward Amfreville (*Instructor note: the ACL of a C-47 was 28, so perhaps not quite two full planes’ worth of troops landed on the designated DZ*).
 - (2) Upon reaching the outskirts of Amfreville, Millet quickly realized that the Germans occupied the town in force. There was no way he could capture the objective with the limited combat power on hand.
 - (3) He therefore withdrew to a more defensible position about 1000 meters northwest of the town and dug in for the night.
 - (4) Over the next several days, Millet’s group would continue to collect stragglers until his force numbered about 250 troops (Blair, 264).

Visual 2C: La Fiere Bridge: Seizing the Manor (*Instructor Note: This visual comes from a sketch map in Murphy, 72. The sketch is based off a veteran’s account.*)

Virtual View: Go to ground level east of the Manor and south of the road. Follow CPT Schwartzwalder’s attack through the manor area and stop on the far side of the manor.

3. Seizing the manor. The 1/505 continued to fight through the hedgerows northwest of the manor (Sources for this section are Murphy, 56-63; Nordyke 252-257; Whitlock, 274-279; (*Instructor Note: times vary widely by source. Some sources put the end of the fight at 1430, while 505 PIR participants put the end of the fight before noon.*)
 - a. COL Lindquist took command of the various paratroopers from the other regiments and held a reserve position about 300 yards to the east of the manor house.
 - b. Wanting to assist the 1/505, he sent CPT Schwartzwalder’s 80-man contingent of mostly G/507 troopers to support the attack from the south side of the road. He sent a message to the 1/505 that never reached A Co.
 - c. Meanwhile, the 505 troopers had attacked up to the manor, into the courtyard, and all firing had ceased. All that was left to do was clear the buildings.
 - d. By 1000, Schwartzwalder and another small mixed group of paratroopers had closed on the south and east sides of the manor.
 - e. Firing erupted from the second story of one of the buildings (may have been the main house or one of the farm buildings) and all three groups of paratroopers returned the fire. Eventually a group of 508 troopers cleared the building.
 - f. Sometime between 1030 and 1100, the battle for the La Fièrè manor and the west side of the bridge was over.

- g. Out of the 28-man German platoon holding the manor, 20 were killed or wounded and only 8 men were unharmed when taken captive.

Virtual View: Follow CPT Schartzwalder's movement to the Cauquigny Church. Fly over the causeway, avoiding the German vehicles on the road (the German CATK has not occurred yet).

- h. With the manor secure, CPT Schwartzwalder continued his attack across the causeway. Eliminating a few German positions on the causeway, the group linked up with the troopers at the Cauquigny church at about 1345.
 - (1) Still focused on his mission west of the Merderet, CPT Schwarzwaldler took the bulk of the contingent at the church to link up with LTC Timmes' force near Amfreville (still in the orchard north of Cauquigny).
 - (2) All that remained holding the western edge of the causeway was 12 men (Utah to Cherbourg, 39).

Visual 2D: La Fièvre Bridge: German Counterattack

Virtual View: Start at ground level at the church in Cauquigny, facing west down the road.

- 4. German Counterattack. The Germans reacted quickly to the American attack across the bridge.
 - a. Artillery impacted around the 505's positions on the east bank, while small arms fire and German infantry advanced on Cauquigny from the south (strength is unknown).
 - b. At about 1700 Infantry from the 1057th Regiment (91st Airlanding Div) attacked from the west, with primarily captured French light tanks (100th Panzer T/R Bn) in support.
 - c. The Levy-Kormylo force from the 507th PIR, retained its position for a short time, destroying two tanks with Gammon grenades, but was forced to withdraw to Timmes' force in the orchard east of Amfreville.

Virtual View: Move up in the air and face east to get a view of the breadth and the depth of the American defense from the German perspective.

- d. The Germans continued the attack across the bridge toward the 505's positions with four tanks (1 x Pzkw III, 2 x R-35 Renault light tanks, 1 x H-39 Hotchkiss Lt tank) and around 200 infantrymen following in support.
- e. A contingent of about a platoon (+) from B/508 PIR, which had been committed to the west side of the river to reinforce the bridgehead, arrived south of the causeway at the same time as the German attack. Too late to reinforce the troopers at Cauquigny, it was forced to swim back across the river to the eastern side.

Virtual View: Move across the bridge toward the American positions. Stop next to the lead tank, at ground level. to a position on the ground near the AT gun that provides a view toward the bridge. Move forward on cue to one of the bazooka positions next to the bridge, looking at the destroyed German vehicles.

- f. Meanwhile the 1/505 PIR had consolidated the defense on the eastern side.

- (1) Paratroopers blocked the road with a broken down truck and surface-laid mines.
- (2) Two bazooka teams were positioned on either side of the road near the bridge and a 57mm AT gun had been positioned along the road on high ground to the east (Nordyke, 260-261).

Virtual View: Switch positions to get a view of the German attack from the American side. Take up a ground-level view near the AT gun, looking toward the bridge. Move forward on cue to one of the bazooka positions next to the bridge, looking at the destroyed German vehicles.

- g. A sharp engagement ensued and the American force repelled the German attack. The four German tanks were destroyed and the infantry routed. The 57mm AT gun went through multiple crews as troopers became casualties. All four members of the two bazooka teams were later awarded DSCs for their actions (Nordyke, 265).

Visual: Apply the build to the slide

- h. German machine gun fire, mortar fire, and occasional artillery fire fell on the American positions for the rest of the day, with occasional tank sightings on the German side.
 - i. During one of these mortar attacks, MAJ Kellam was killed and the 505 PIR XO, LTC Mark Alexander, assumed command of the battalion and the force defending the area.
5. By about 2000 the fighting for the bridge and causeway on 6 June ended (Badsey, 76). Neither side controlled the crossing nor could either side cross in sufficient strength to establish a bridgehead. La Fièrè would continue to be a focal point for both sides for the next three days.

Analysis:

1. Evaluate CPT Schwartzwalder's decision to leave the position near the Cauquigny Church to link up with LTC Timmes.

Pro: It was a good decision given what he knew at the time. The far side of the bridge was secure, he was not in contact with the enemy, and there was a significant amount of combat power on the east side of the river that could be used to reinforce the position at the church. Plus, his mission was on the west side of the river.

Con: He never should have left the position without a relief in place with the follow-on element (elements of B/508). Retaining control of the river crossing was vital for the division and for follow-on forces coming from Utah Beach. A little tactical patience would have gone a long way.

Note: None of the sources indicates whether Schartzwalder had permission to continue his original mission once on the far side of the river and there is no mention of him being reprimanded, either.

Stand 3: Chef-du-Pont

Visuals:

3. Merderet River, 6 June 1944: Chef-du-Pont

Orientation:

Virtual View: Start in the air overlooking the La Fièrre Bridge, the manor, and the American positions in the hedgerows. Follow the verbal cues as listed below.

Visual 3: Merderet River, 6 June 1944: Chef-du-Pont. Use this visual throughout the stand.

1. We are currently located near La Fièrre with the same view as in the last stand.
2. The bridge across the Merderet at Chef-du-Pont lies approximately 2.77 kilometers (1.72 miles) south of here.
3. The railway to the east of La Fièrre runs south through Chef du Pont and served as an easy navigation aide between the two locations.

Description:

1. As at La Fièrre, the 505 PIR had the mission to secure the bridge. The 508 PIR had the mission to secure the west side of the river, along with the rest of its mission of securing the Douve River line.
2. As discussed in the previous stand, BG Gavin sent two groups to seize the objective:
 - a. LTC Arthur Maloney (XO, 507 PIR), with a group of about 75 soldiers, took a wide path to approach the town of Chef du Pont from the east.
 - b. The second group left a short time later and followed the railroad. LTC Edwin Ostberg (Cdr, 1/507) led this second group, which had approximately 100 troopers from both the 507th and 508th PIRs (Nordyke, 279). Gavin elected to accompany this second group to assess personally the situation (Gavin, *On to Berlin*, 127).

Virtual View: Follow Ostberg's route south along the railroad to the creamery as outlined below.

3. Ostberg's force reached Chef du Pont at about 1000 without making any contact with the enemy. It arrived before Maloney's group because it had taken the more direct route.
 - a. However, as Ostberg's force moved through the town toward the bridge, it made contact and had to clear the buildings that lined both sides of the road, which took another two hours.
 - b. Eventually, the troopers seized a large creamery that stood a short distance away from bridge.

Virtual View: Take up a view from the creamery looking toward the bridge.

4. Germans from the 1057th Regiment (91st Airlanding Div) resolutely defended the bridge. They had constructed multiple fighting positions, about 10 yards apart, on both shoulders of the causeway. Due to the heavy flooding in the area, movement was restricted to the road

(Nordyke, 280).

5. As Ostberg's troopers attacked, Maloney's force arrived and provided much needed manpower.
6. After multiple attempts to seize the eastern edge of the bridge, the paratroopers were finally successful, killing 24 Germans in the process.

Virtual View: Move to the east side of the bridge, looking west as detailed below.

- a. The Americans controlled the east side of the bridge and the Germans controlled the west side of the bridge. The bridge prevented the Americans from seeing the Germans on the other side and the American position was exposed enough that any movement drew fire.
 - b. Ostberg and a small group of men attempted to bound across the bridge to seize the far side, but failed. Ostberg was wounded in this attack.
 - c. The stalemate continued throughout the afternoon.
7. Meanwhile, the larger threat to the airhead developed at La Fièrè, as described in the last stand. Gavin assessed that the larger threat was at La Fièrè and took Maloney's command back to reinforce the position there, leaving CPT Roy Creek (E/507 PIR) and 34 men to defend the eastern side of the bridge.
 8. After the loss of such combat power, the defense of the bridge began to deteriorate in the late afternoon and evening.
 - a. The Germans reinforced the western bank with a light artillery piece that they used in direct fire mode at a range of about 600 yards (Murphy, Robert. *No Better Place to Die*, 81).
 - b. Creek could see a formation of German infantry about three hundred yards to the north, in a position to attack his defense from the rear.
 9. At 2110 it was still daylight and the defense still held. A glider that was scheduled to land at LZ W miraculously landed without damage in the middle of Creek's position (Murphy, 82).
 - a. It contained a 57-mm AT gun from C Battery, 80th AA Bn.
 - b. The glidermen quickly put it into action and destroyed the German artillery piece that had caused much damage to Creek's men.
 - c. A second glider, a Horsa, landed with a platoon of infantry that was integrated into the defense.

Virtual View: Move to the hedgerows just north of the bridge and orient on the west side of the river.

10. With this larger force and in the gathering darkness, Creek was able to adjust his arrayal to positions that dominated the Germans. After about a 10-minute fight all but two of the Germans on the far side were either killed or wounded. The two remaining Germans ran away.
11. Creek once again assaulted the far side and was finally able to seize the bridge.

12. BDA. The Germans suffered 40 dead on and around the Chef-du-Pont bridge. The American losses were 13 dead and 23 wounded (Murphy, Robert M. *No Better Place to Die*, 83).
13. Creek and his force of mostly 507th PIR troopers held their positions until COL Lindquist and his 508 force relieved them late in the afternoon of 7 June.

Virtual View: Take up a position in the air, near the creamery, looking northwest toward Hill 30.

14. Hill 30. Meanwhile, on the western side of the river, LTC Thomas Shanley, (Cdr, 2/508 PIR) took significant pressure off the defenses at La Fièrè and Chef du Pont (Harrison, 293).
 - a. Shanley landed north of Picauville and over the course of the pre-dawn hours assembled a small group of about 35 paratroopers. His battalion's objective was to destroy the Douve River Bridge at Pont l'Abbé.
 - b. After dawn, he started to encounter heavier German resistance. By 1200, he was engaged on three sides and abandoned the mission at Pont l'Abbé (Nordyke, 277).
 - c. Instead, he opted to consolidate as many friendly forces as possible at the most defensible terrain in the area, Hill 30 east of Picauville. He made contact with two larger groups: one to his north under LT Norman McVicar (approx. strength of 60), and one to the south of Picauville under MAJ Shields Warren (XO, 1/508), with an approximate strength of 200. Warren had assumed command of the battalion after LTC Herbert Batcheller was KIA.
 - d. By the end of the day all three groups had linked up on Hill 30, though both the Shanley and Warren force had to fight off infantry and tank attacks on the way (Nordyke, 277).
 - e. LTC Shanley now had an aggregate strength of about 400 paratroopers. It was a good-sized force, but was critically short of key weapons: it contained three M1919 .30-cal. Light (machine guns, one BAR, one bazooka, and one 60mm mortar (Whitlock, Flint. *If Chaos Reigns*, 278).
 - f. At least a battalion of Germans from the 1057th Regiment opposed Hill 30. Picauville was in the center of the 91st Airlanding Division's area of operations and was the location of the division headquarters. Recall that a paratrooper ambush killed MG Falley earlier in the morning.
 - g. Despite concentrated German attacks, heavy indirect fire, and numerous casualties, the force on Hill 30 held its position. ([Elements of 1/508 PIR linked up with the besieged paratroopers on 9 June - covered later in the staff ride](#)).

Analysis:

1. What level of leaders made the difference on the American side – the senior leaders, the junior leaders, or both? What elements of mission command make such an effort possible today? [Mission Cmd \(ADP 6-0, 31 Jul 19\): The Army's approach to command and control that empowers subordinate decision-making and decentralized execution appropriate to the situation. Principles of Msn Cmd: Competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, commander's intent, mission orders, disciplined initiative, risk acceptance](#)
2. Did the operation accomplish its purpose, even though the specific objectives of seizing Chef-du-Pont, the Douve River line, and the consolidated airhead line west of the Merderet

were not accomplished? Consider the disruption of German forces and how German units were dealing with the airborne threat rather than focusing on the Utah and Omaha landings

3. Why was the German reaction slow and uncoordinated? Consider: Poor communication (many lines cut by paratroopers), conflicting reports over the size and scope of the operation, scattered drops made the intel picture murky, and senior leaders at Rennes for the war game and not in their HQs (91st Airlanding Div CG (Falley) KIA on 6 Jun), the Bocage and flooding hindered the enemy movement as much as it hindered the US movement.

Stand 4: Sainte-Mère-Église

Visuals:

- 4A. Ste.-Mère-Église, 6 June 1944 (Actions 1-3)
- 4B. Ste.-Mère-Église, 6 June 1944 (Actions 4-6)

Orientation:

Virtual View: Conduct the stand from up in the air just south of Ste.-Mère-Église looking north up the N-13. Rotate in the view to point out the locations of the following, on cue:

Visual 4A: Ste.-Mère-Église, 6 June 1944 (Actions 1-3)

- a. The planned location for UTAH Beach is about 2 miles to the east-northeast. (Instructor Note: Utah beach is not visible in this terrain tile).
- b. The main road through town in 1944 was the N13.
 - (1) Neuville-au-Plain is about 2 kms (1.3 mi) north.
 - (2) St.-Côme-du-Mont is about 8.8 kms (5.5 mi) to the south.
 - (3) La Fièvre is approximately 3.44 kms (2.1 mi) to the west.
 - (4) Chef-du-Pont is about 4.4 kms (2.75 mi) to the southwest.
- c. The drop zone for this objective was to the northwest (DZ “O”).
- d. The aircraft bringing the paratroopers flew from west to east.

Description:

- 1. The 3/505 PIR (LTC Edward “Cannonball” Krause) had the mission to seize Ste.-Mère-Église to deny the Germans use of the important road that ran through the village from Cherbourg to Carentan. Similarly, it would afford a high-speed avenue of approach for the Americans.
- 2. The 2/505 PIR (LTC Benjamin Vandervoort) had the mission to secure the area north of Ste.-Mère-Église and establish the regiment’s northern line of defense (Harrison, 289).
- 3. Like the 1/505, the rest of the regiment had a fairly accurate drop. Pathfinders on DZ “O” had been able to mark the drop zone correctly with the illuminated “T.” Planes destined for the DZ were to identify it easily and they delivered their paratroopers on and close to the DZ.

Virtual View: Go to ground level with a view toward the church. Rotate in the virtual view on cue with the following description:

- 4. However, some of the paratroopers landed in the town of Ste.-Mère-Église. The movie, *The Longest Day* (as well as Cornelius Ryan’s book) has made this incident famous.
 - a. The townspeople were already in the square, trying to put out a fire when the paratroopers

started dropping into town.

b. Mayor Charles Reynaud left this account:

“Sainte-Mère-Église was in trouble, and the church was calling for help [the bells]. Just at that moment, a big transport plane, all lights ablaze, flew right over the tree-tops, followed immediately by others, and yet others. They came from the west in great waves, almost silent, their giant shadows covering the earth. Suddenly, what looked like huge confetti dropped out of their fuselages, and fell quickly to earth. Paratroopers! The work at the pump stopped, all eyes were raised, and the Flak started firing. All around us, paratroopers were landing with a heavy thud on the ground. By the light of the fire, we saw a man manipulating the cables of his parachute. Another, less skillful, came down in the middle of the flames. Sparks flew, and the fire burned brighter. The legs of the paratrooper contracted violently as they were hit. His raised arms came down. The giant parachute, billowing in the wind, rolled over the field with the inert body.” (Badsey, *Battle Zone Normandy: Utah*, 134).

c. Private John Steele (505 PIR) came down of the side of the roof of the church tower and slipped down the side, snagging his parachute on a portion of the tower (on the west side-facing away from the town square).

(1) Today, a concrete figure and a parachute hangs on the side of the church (facing the square) to commemorate the liberation of the town. It is placed where tourists can see it from the church parking lot though in reality he was on the opposite side.

(2) Steele, who had been wounded in the foot, was discovered by the Germans and taken prisoner for two hours. He was freed when the 3/505 PIR cleared the town.

d. Another paratrooper, Private Ken Russell, also snagged on the roof. He cut himself free and survived.

e. Other paratroopers were not so lucky. Somewhere around 20 troopers from the 505 and 506 PIRs landed in the village. The German garrison killed many of them upon landing while others were killed while suspended from trees and light posts, their lifeless bodies remaining until they were cut down by their fellow paratroopers (Nordyke, 243).

f. PFC William Tucker recalled:

“There was a dead parachutist – caught in the tree and shot by the enemy – hanging from a tree right over my head. The solidier swayed back and forth...I felt shattered...There were bodies or chutes of six or eight other paratroopers who had been caught in the trees and also shot by the Germans as they hung there.” (Nordyke, 227)

Virtual View: Move to the west of the town to the approximate location where Ridgway established the division CP.

5. MG Ridgway and his staff landed with the 3/505 PIR and established his CP in an apple orchard about 1200 yards west of Ste.-Mère-Église.

a. (Optional vignette) As a division signal officer described: *“There was no CP as such – no tent. Just a place under a tree and not much to do. Mostly what we did at the CP was sit around and wait. Every now and then a stray bullet would come...”* (Blair, 242).

- b. Out of communication with just about everyone, due to the loss of both short range and long range radios in the drop, Ridgway described his situation on D-Day: *“There was little I could do during that first day toward exercising division control. I could only be where the fighting seemed the hottest, to exercise whatever personal influence I could on the battalion commanders...”* (Blair, 243).

Virtual View: Orient north, in the air, toward DZ “O” and follow the movement of 3/505 as it advanced on Ste.-Mère-Église.

6. Seizing Ste.-Mère-Église. Meanwhile, back on DZ “O,” LTC Krause had assembled about 180 men and started to move at around 0400 (Ambrose, 236).
 - a. Upon arriving at the city from the northwest, he sent elements of G and H Companies to move quickly and quietly through town to set up roadblocks on all the roads leading into the town (Nordyke, 226).
 - b. Company I followed a short time later to conduct a detailed clearing of the town. Surprisingly, the Germans seem to have stood down after the fire in the town square was extinguished. Item Company took 30 prisoners and killed about 10 Germans (Nordyke, 227 and *Utah to Cherbourg*, 33).

Virtual View: Move to the town hall:

- c. At about 0630 at the town hall, Krause raised the same American flag he had raised over Naples. This city thus became the first town in occupied France to be liberated by the Allies (Nordyke, 233; *Utah to Cherbourg*, 33, says that it was at 0430, unlikely given that the battalion did not start moving toward the objective until 0400).
 - (1) The quickness of the action surprised the Germans and cut the primary access road between Cherbourg and Carentan.
 - (2) Moreover, the communications cable between the two points was also severed (Harrison, 289).
 - d. By 0930, the town was fully cleared. Krause had an effective strength of 360 personnel out of his 706-man battalion, about half-strength (*UTAH to Cherbourg*, 93-97).
7. 2/505 PIR. Meanwhile, LTC Vandervoort, who had broken his leg just above the ankle in the jump, had assembled about half of his men. At about 0600, the battalion began to move toward its objective in the vicinity of Neuville-au-Plain (Nordyke, Phil. *An Irresistible Force*, 60).
 - a. COL William Ekman, the regimental commander, halted the battalion’s movement because he had not heard from his 3d Battalion and did not know the status of the Ste.-Mère-Église mission.
 - b. At about 0810 he therefore ordered Vandervoort to assume the mission to seize the town or assist whatever elements of 3/505 were located there.
 - c. Vandervoort complied with Ekman’s orders, but left LT Turner “Chief” B. Turnbull’s platoon (3/D/505) in the north to defend the highway running through Neuville (Harrison, 290). It was a decision Gavin described as one of the best tactical decisions in Normandy (Blair, 244).

- d. When Vandervoort arrived at Ste.-Mère-Église, he found that 3/505 had already accomplished the mission. The two commanders conferred and split the defense of the town in half. 2/505 occupied the northern part of Ste.-Mère-Église, enabling Krause and his 3/505 to concentrate in the south. Two companies of infantry were held in the city center as reserve.

7. German Reaction (from Badsey, 54-55).

Virtual View: Move to the southern outskirts of Ste.-Mère-Église, at ground level, looking south down the road in the direction of the German attack.

Visual 4B: Ste.-Mère-Église, 6 June 1944 (Actions 4-6)

- a. At about 1000, two companies of infantry and several self-propelled guns attacked north up the N-13 toward Ste.-Mère-Église (Instructor note: The units were probably from the 3/1058th Grenadier Rgt, but sources are unclear. The 95th Georgia battalion was in the area and the 2/6 Para Rgt had been ordered to attack in the direction of Ste.-Mère-Église. The mechanized elements may have been from the 100 Pz Tng Bn)

- (1) Company G manned the roadblock on the south side of town. A 57mm AT gun from the 80th AA Battalion stopped the German SPs while the rest of the defense halted the German infantry (Nurdyke, 240).

Virtual View: Maneuver in the virtual terrain south out of the city, using the hedgerow on the west side of the road as cover, in accordance with the description below.

- (2) Company I (80 men) conducted a limited counterattack from its reserve position in Ste.-Mère-Église.
 - (a) It moved south on the west side of the road through hedgerows and open fields to flank the German attack.
 - (b) Due to the confusion of the hedgerows, the flanking maneuver did not go far enough south and the attack emerged on the road in front of the leading edge of the German formation.
 - (c) I Co destroyed some German trucks, but was forced to withdraw under fire.
- (3) The I Co attack did not directly accomplish the desired results, but forced the German to withdraw and they did not attack again for the rest of the day (Nurdyke, 241).
- (4) Instead, the Germans continued to attack the town with mortars, nebelwerfers, and artillery.

Virtual View: Move in the virtual terrain to the northern outskirts of Neuville. Stand on the side of the road, looking north up the N-13.

b. Neuville-au-Plain.

- (1) LT Turner Turnbull, a half Cherokee Indian, had 42 men in his platoon (3/D/505). He established his defense just north of the small village. He covered the road with a bazooka and Vandervoort later attached a 57mm AT gun to him. (Instructor note:

Both Blair and Nordyke state that the platoon had one AT gun, while *Utah to Cherbourg* states the platoon had two).

- (2) At about 1300 the large German force from Montebourg attacked Turnbull's platoon with a battalion supported by at least three assault guns (Instructor note: Blair cites the attack began at 1300, while *Utah to Cherbourg* has the fight beginning at 1030).
- (3) The 57mm AT gun destroyed the first two vehicles while the third deployed smoke to conceal movement.
- (4) The German infantry maneuvered on either side of the road and through the adjacent fields while German mortars began to land on the American positions.
- (5) Turnbull's platoon fended off the attacks throughout the afternoon, but eventually the superior German combat power began to overwhelm the defenders.
- (6) At about 1600 Turnbull reported via radio to Vandervoort that he was about to be enveloped and could not hold out much longer (Blair, 245).
- (7) Vandervoort committed a platoon from the reserve, 1/E/505, to assist Turnbull in disengaging.
- (8) Together, this force successfully withdrew to the main defenses at Ste-Mère-Église. Only 16 of the 42 men in Turnbull's platoon remained (Harrison, 290).
 - (a) SGT Robert, "Bob" or "the Beast," Niland was killed in this battle. The Niland family lost three out of four sons around the 6th of June. The surviving fourth son, Frederick, or "Fritz," was in the 501st PIR. He was sent home as the only surviving son and became the inspiration behind the movie, *Saving Private Ryan*.
 - (b) Turner Turnbull was killed by artillery fire on 7 June.
- (9) The Germans advanced no farther than Neuville. Shortly after Turner's platoon disengaged, a naval gunfire liaison officer, who had jumped with the regiment, called in naval gunfire. The 14-inch shells from the USS Nevada (a Pearl Harbor survivor) was on target and halted the German attack.

Visual 4C: 82d Airborne Division, End of D-Day

8. 82d Abn Div, End of Day, 6 June.

- a. As darkness fell on 6 June, the 82d had captured two of its principal objectives: Ste.-Mère-Église and the bridge at Chef du Pont. The Division had seized the east end of the bridge at La Fièvre.
- b. The Division had been unable to secure the Douve River line and the airhead was not as envisioned. There was heavy German pressure to the north and south of Ste-Mère-Église and at La Fièvre.
- c. The division had accountability of only about 2500 of its Soldiers. Of the 9 infantry battalion commanders, 2 were KIA, 2 had jump injuries, and 2 were WIA. The other 3 were isolated on the west side of the Merderet. COL George Millet (507 Cdr) became a POW on 8 June.

- (1) 1/505: Fred Kellam (KIA)
 - (2) 2/505: Benjamin Vandervoort (jump injury-broken leg)
 - (3) 3/505: Ed Krause (WIA)
 - (4) 1/507: Ed Ostberg (WIA)
 - (5) 2/507: Charles Timmes (isolated IVO Amfreville)
 - (6) 3/507: Ed Kuhn (jump injury)
 - (7) 1/508: Herbert Batcheller (KIA)
 - (8) 2/508: Thomas Shanley (isolated IVO Picauville, Hill 30)
 - (9) 3/508: Louis Mendez (uninjured, isolated)
- d. Revised casualty estimates in August 1944 calculated the following D-Day losses: 1259 total casualties; 156 known killed, 344 wounded, and 756 missing/captured (Harrison, 300).
- e. The division only had 8 out of the 16 x 57mm AA guns that went in on the initial assault and was short on class V of all types.
- f. The Div Arty had 6 x 75mm pack howitzers (319th GFAB), and 1 or 2 x 105mm snub-nosed howitzers (320 GFAB) (Blair, 261).
- g. Ridgway did not have communication outside of his division and no idea how, or if, the seaborne invasion had fared.
- h. Nevertheless, there was reason for optimism.
- (1) When the 4 ID landed, its 8th Infantry Rgt had a march objective of Les Forges, two miles south of Ste.-Mère-Église.
 - (2) Task Force Raff, part of the division's sea land force, had the mission to break through to Ste.-Mère-Église to support the division. It had a company each of Sherman tanks and glider infantry. Unknown to Ridgway, TF Raff had advanced to Les Forges where it halted for the night (Blair, 256). ([Instructor Note: More on TF Raff later in the staff ride](#))
 - (3) Lastly, Operation/Mission Elmira was due to come in at 2100 and 2300 to deliver two battalions of artillery, AA guns, medical supplies, and vehicles.
9. Operation Elmira was the 82d's portion of the glider operation scheduled to take place in three lifts for both divisions (source for this section is Blair, 254-55 and Nordyke, 282-83).
- a. The 101st was allocated the first mission (codename Keokuk) while the 82d received the second two.
 - b. The approach for all glider missions was from east to west to minimize exposure to German AA fires (unlike the airborne assault).
 - c. The division allocated the bulk of the glider mission to artillery and AT pieces. In total, the division was to receive 177 gliders containing: 13 x 57mm AT guns (C/80th AA Bn), 12 x 75mm pack howitzers (319 GFA Bn), 24 x snub-nose 105mm howitzers (320 GFA Bn), 163 vehicles, 300,000 lbs of class V, and class I and VIII supplies.
 - d. Other divisional assets arriving included HQ, 80th AA Bn, 82d Sig Co, the division's recon

platoon, the division HQ, 307th Med Co, 307th EN Bn.

- e. The designated LZ was LZ "W," which was not secure. Ridgway attempted to divert the gliders to LZ "O" using green smoke, a green "T," and a Eureka beacon.
- f. Both lifts arrived on time just after 2100 and at 2305, at sunset. Some serials detected the change in LZs, while others did not. An observer with TF Raff noted the landings on LZ W:

"It was too small a landing ground for so many gliders under any conditions. Only a few of them were able to make it. For desperate seconds they beat the air over our heads like monstrous birds. Then they crashed into trees and hedgerows on each side of us. The pancaked down on the road. The skidded crazily, and stopped...All of our tanks began firing at once and everyone with a rifle shot it off, trying to get some lead into the woods where the Germans were and so slow up the fire on the helpless gliders. Men were scrambling from the wrecks of the gliders, running about as if in a daze." (Blair, 255).

- g. Both lifts were scattered across the countryside.
 - h. Out of the 175 gliders that made the trip (two gliders aborted at takeoff), only 8 made undamaged landings. In total, 33 troopers were killed and 124 were wounded or injured. The vast majority came from the wooden framed Horsa gliders, as compared to the steel framed Wacos. The US Army did not use Horsas again after Operation Neptune.
10. One benefit of the glider landing was that Ridgway received confirmation that the amphibious landing was successful and that he could expect reinforcement from the beach soon.
11. Additionally, a patrol from 2/505 had met a patrol from the 12th IN, 4ID near Beuzeville-au-Plain, which was a couple of miles northeast of Ste.-Mère-Église.
- a. Ridgway sent the assistant G3, LTC Walter Winton, to link-up with MG Raymond Barton, the 4ID CG.
 - b. Winton met Barton at about midnight (now 7 June). Barton learned of the 82d's situation and forwarded the report to LTG Lawton Collins, VII Corps CG, who was still offshore.
 - c. Barton then promised Winton that he would send help, to include tank destroyers at first light.

Analysis: Instructor Note: Pick one or two of the questions. Could save a more in-depth discussion of command and control for the integration session and apply the discussion to both Airborne divisions.

- 1. Evaluate US action at the small unit level, especially LT Turnbull. Was the decision to leave a platoon in Neuville as key as Gavin described? Why or why not?
Consider: The platoon was conducting a mission that the entire battalion was assigned. It halted the first German attack on Ste.-Mère-Église at a time when the defenses around the town were just being established.
- 2. Evaluate MG Ridgway's quote: *I could only be where the fighting seemed the hottest, to exercise whatever personal influence I could on the battalion commanders...* How well did he and Gavin do in this regard? Was their presence appropriate or was it too much? How do leaders know when to exert themselves and when to rein themselves in? Consider the

following from ADP 6-0 (31 Jul 19): "Command and control is the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of a mission." Elements of Command: Authority, Responsibility, Decision-making, Leadership. Elements of Control: Direction, Feedback, Information, Communication.

3. What effect did the 82d's actions on D-Day have on the overall Neptune operation?

Pro. Seizing the bridge at Chef du Pont, the east side of the La Fièrre bridge, Ste.-Mère-Église denied the Germans use of main avenues of approach that could have been used to oppose the beach landings. The 82d engaged the 91st Airlanding division, which prevented its commitment against Utah. Airborne drops in general forced the Germans to commit forces to engage that threat, moving critical reserves away from the invasion beaches.

Con. With the exception of the 505 PIR, the division was scattered all over the peninsula. Many groups were isolated on the far side of the river and had to be rescued, causing the commitment of combat power in that effort. Other scattered troopers took days to reach other friendly formations. The Germans were somewhat slow to react to the airborne insertion. Even without the airborne operation, the Germans may not have been able to prevent the lodgment at Utah.

4. How effective had the division established a lodgment at this point? FM 3-99 Abn and Air Aslt Operations, 6 Mar 15, quotes JP 3-18 on page 1-1: "A lodgment is a designated area in a hostile or potentially hostile operational area that, when seized and held, makes the continuous landing of troops and materiel possible and provides maneuver space for subsequent operations."

Stand 5: Objective WXYZ and the Northern Causeways

Visuals:

- 5A. The Northern Causeways
- 5B. Objective WXYZ

Orientation:

Visual 5A: The Northern Causeways

Virtual View: Start with an overhead view of Objective WXYZ, oriented north. Rotate in the virtual terrain to match the points below:

1. Currently located at OBJ WXYZ, the village of Les Mézières. The road that ran through the objective area is now the D423.
2. The coastal battery (WN-108) at St. Martin-de-Varreville is about 450 meters east down the road.
3. Utah beach is about 4km (2.5 mi) east of here. Causeway, or Exit, 4 is in view.
4. DZ "A" is about 1 Km to the west down the road.
5. Ste.-Mère-Église is about 6 road kilometers (3.7 mi) to the west ([not built in this terrain database](#)).

Description:

1. The 502d PIR Mission. The 502d PIR and the 377th PFA were to land on DZ "A." The 502d's primary mission was to seize the northern two beach exits, 3 and 4, to assist the 4th ID in moving rapidly inland.
 - a. The 3/502d was responsible for seizing the two beach exits.
 - b. The 2/502 had the mission to destroy the four-guns of the 122mm coastal battery at WN 108, near, St. Martin-de-Varreville, remain there as the regimental reserve, and make contact with the 506 PIR to the south.
 - c. The 1/502 had the mission to clear the series of buildings just to the west of St. Martin-de-Varreville, labeled the WXYZ complex. This area was thought to house the battery garrison, the 1st Company, 1st Bn, 1261st Coast Artillery Regiment. It then had the mission to secure the 377th PFA's firing position, defend the northern sector of the division, and make contact with the 82d Abn Div to the west.
2. The regiment was widely scattered, as were the rest of the drops that night. The 2d Bn was so widely scattered that it took no major part in the fighting on D-Day as a cohesive unit.
3. The 3d Battalion Commander, LTC Robert Cole, landed just east of Ste.-Mère-Église. He gathered a diverse group of about 75 troopers: some from the 82d, some from his regiment, and some from the 506th PIR. He led this group toward exits 3 and 4.

Virtual View: Move in the virtual view to the east to get a view of the German resistance nest. On cue look toward Exit 4 and 3.

- a. On his way toward his beach objectives, he reconned the coastal battery and discovered that it had been heavily damaged by air raids and abandoned (Bando, Mark A. *The 101st Airborne at Normandy*, 60).
- b. Cole next split his force and sent an element to secure each beach exit, which they did by about 0730.
- c. At 0930, the element at Exit 3 made contact with a group of Germans retreating from the beach. In this engagement, the Germans lost between 50-75 men and the paratroopers sustained no casualties.
- d. At 1300, Cole's force established contact with 1/8 IN from the 4ID.
- e. By the end of the day, Cole has amassed 250 paratroopers and was ordered to move the next day to Blossville, south of Ste.-Mère-Église, to constitute the regimental reserve.

Virtual View: Rotate north and move to the vicinity of St.-Germain-de-Varreville, up the modern D-14 coastal road.

4. The 1/502 PIR Commander, LTC Patrick Cassidy, landed a little less than 2 kms (1 mile) north of OBJ WXYZ near St.-Germain-de-Varreville.
 - a. Cassidy gathered a group of about 50 paratroopers and moved toward his objective. He deployed a separate force of about 45 men (under LT W.A. Swanson) to Foucarville to block the roads leading to Utah and to establish the right flank of the airhead line.

Visual 5B: Objective WXYZ (source: Battle Zone Normandy: *Utah Beach*, 143)

Virtual View: Move south in the virtual view to a position north of the farm containing Building W, oriented south. Go down to ground level and follow the cues below:

- b. Cassidy's group arrived at the bombed-out building W a little before daybreak (Whitlock, 175).
- c. Finding it abandoned, he established the building as his CP and reconnoitered the destroyed gun position across the road. There, he found LTC Steve Chappuis, the Commander of 2/502, with about a dozen troopers. Chappuis had been injured in the jump and elected to stay at the gun position (his primary objective) to gather more of his battalion.
- d. Cassidy left to accomplish his own mission. He set out to secure the St.-Martin-de-Varreville intersection to prevent enemy movement against the beach landing and to seize the rest of the WXYZ complex.

Virtual View: Move in the virtual view at ground level toward the village of Les Mézières, moving southwest down the modern D423. Stop at the building labelled as Building 1 on the visual. Follow the movements of SSG Summers IAW the following description.

5. Cassidy ordered SSG Harrison Summers to take 15 men and clear Objective WXYZ (most of this account is from Badsey, 142-46; Whitlock, 176-77; and Bando, 60-64).

- a. Summers did not know most of the men and only a few of them were from 1/502 PIR. He attacked in a southwest direction along the road at about 0830 (Ambrose, 303).
- b. Building 1. Summers approached the first house on the right (north side of the road) and came under fire from the Germans inside. Laying down a base of fire, Summers kicked in the door and killed four with his Thompson. The remaining Germans and some French civilians escaped out the back door.
- c. Summers crossed to the south side of the road and cleared a group of three buildings (Bando, 63).
 - (1) Building 2. In clearing building 2, he found only a sick child.
 - (2) Building 3. The Germans in building 3 engaged the small force of paratroopers. Private William Burt, armed with an M1919 .30 caliber machine gun, laid down suppressive fire while Summers and LT Elmer Brandenberger assaulted the building.
 - (a) Brandenberger was wounded in the assault.
 - (b) Summers burst through the door, killed another six Germans and took a number of prisoners.
 - (3) Building 4. Summers continued to the adjacent building, building 4, and found it empty. Exhausted, Summers took a 30-minute break while his ad hoc squad caught up to him, resupplied his ammunition, and took charge of the EPWs (Ambrose, 298).
- d. Building 5. At about this point in the action, Summers was joined by a Captain (different accounts claim he was from 101st or the 82d) who was killed by a sniper on the approach to the building. Summers went about clearing this large building room-to-room by himself, killing another six Germans. (Bando, 63).
- e. After he had completed clearing building 5, Private John Camien took the captain's place:

"Camien called out to Summers: 'Why are you doing it?'
'I can't tell you,' Summers replied.
'What about the others?'
'They don't seem to want to fight,' said Summer, 'and I can't make them. So I've got to finish it.'
'OK,' said Camien. 'I'm with you.'" (Ambrose, 298)
- f. The two paratroopers moved down the road and approached a cluster of buildings on the north side of the road. They took turns clearing buildings 6, 7, and 8, while Burt on the .30 cal machine gun covered their movements. In this action, they killed at least another 15 Germans.
- g. Mess Hall. With two buildings to go, Summers approached the next, somewhat larger, building, which was almost another 1/4 mile down the road.
 - (1) When he entered the building, there were about 15 Germans inside eating breakfast, completely unaware of the battle that had been going on outside.
 - (2) Summers shot them all as the Germans scrambled for their weapons.

h. Barracks. The last building was a large, a two-story farmhouse that the Germans used as a barracks. Next to the house was a haystack and a wooden storage shed.

- (1) About 70 meters of open ground separated the mess hall from barracks.
- (2) As Summers and his squad approached the building, the Germans engaged, killing four paratroopers and wounding another four (Whitlock, 177).
- (3) Burt, still on the .30 cal machine gun, returned fire, setting the haystack on fire. The fire spread to the shed, which was being used for ammunition storage.
- (4) As rounds began to cook off, Germans began to flee the building into the open ground that Summers' men were covering.
- (5) At about this time, an NCO had come down the road from the 1/502 CP with a bazooka. He began to fire rockets into the farmhouse, catching it on fire.
- (6) More Germans fled the building into the open kill zone. When it was over about 80 Germans had tried to flee. Around 50 had been wounded or killed in the open. The remaining 30, or so, fled into the hedgerows where they eventually surrendered.
- (7) It was about 1530 when the fighting on the objective was mostly over. About that time, more paratroopers and elements of the 4ID arrived to clear out the remaining resistance.

i. In this action, about 150 Germans had been killed or captured. Summers was single-handedly responsible for many of them. LTC Cassidy recommended him for the Medal of Honor, but instead was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and given a battlefield commission.

6. End of Day, 6 June. LTC John Michaelis, the 502d PIR XO, had assumed command of the regiment after COL George Moseley had broken his leg in the jump. He arrived in the area of OBJ WXYZ with about 200 men.

7. Cassidy was able to move on to the rest of his objective of securing the northern end of the division's airhead, while continuing to assemble scattered paratroopers.

Analysis:

1. How does SSG Summers apply the dynamics of leadership as outlined in ADP 6-22, The leader, the led, the situation? (See ADP 6-22, July 2019, pp. 1-17 – 1-19):

Consider:

The Leader: influences others to accomplish missions. Takes charge when in charge. Self-awareness and knowing one's strengths and weakness.

The Led: Inexperienced subordinates require more oversight and control. How was Summers a trusted follower when told to take an ad hoc unit to clear the objective?

The Situation: Analyze how Summers considered the characteristics of the mission and the personnel at hand to act immediately and decisively.

2. How well does SSG Summers illustrate the Warrior Ethos outlined in The Soldier's Creed (ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession, July 2019, pp. 2-8 – 2-9):

I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.

Stand 6: Brécourt Manor and the Southern Causeways

Visuals:

6A: Southern Causeways
6B: Brécourt Manor

Orientation:

Visual 6A: Southern Causeways

Virtual View: Start with an overhead view from DZ "C" oriented north. Move in the virtual terrain to match the points below:

1. Currently located south of DZ "C."
2. To the east is Ste.-Marie-du-Mont.
3. The town of Pouppeville is just over 1.5 miles (2.5k) east of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont.
4. Point out causeway 1 to the east of Pouppeville.
5. Causeways 2, 3, and 4 can be seen in the distance.

Description:

1. The 506th PIR (minus 3d Battalion), under COL Robert Sink, and 3/501 PIR were assigned to land on DZ "C." The 3/506 and a platoon from the 326 EN Bn was to land on DZ "D" (covered in the next stand). (The below description is primarily from *Utah to Cherbourg*, 20-30).
 - a. The 2/506 (LTC Robert Strayer) had the mission to secure the two southern Utah exits, Exits 1 and 2. Those missions fell to F and E Companies, respectfully. D Company was to remain at the battalion assembly area at the village of Hébert as the battalion reserve.
 - b. The 1/506 (LTC William Turner) was to assemble at Hiesville and form the regimental reserve.
 - c. The 3/506 (LTC Robert Wolverton) was to seize the bridges at Le Port and secure a bridgehead for follow-on operations. (Cover at next stand)
 - d. The 3/501 PIR (LTC Julian Ewell) was designated as the division reserve. MG Taylor was also scheduled to land on the same DZ.
2. The 506th experienced the same scattered drop as the 502d. The 2/506th was especially scattered across the countryside.

Virtual View: Staying up in the air, orient in the virtual view to follow the description, on cue.

3. On DZ "C," Sink assembled about 40 personnel from his headquarters and Turner assembled about 50 troopers. Together, the group moved to Caloville (*Utah to Normandy* misspells the hamlet as Culoville).

- a. Not knowing the status of the 2d Bn, Sink sent Turner with his small group to secure Exit 1, just east of Pouppeville.
 - b. At about the same time, MG Taylor had ordered the 3/501 PIR (LTC Julian Ewell) to seize the same exit. Taylor was also unable to communicate with his subordinate units and committed his reserve to what he believed was his most crucial mission.
4. The assembled force from 3/501 consisted of about 40 troopers from the 3/501st and 18 officers from the division staff, to include BGs Taylor and McAuliffe (Divarty Cdr). As Taylor put it: “*Never were so few led by so many.*” (Blair, 238). [Instructor note: Blair estimates that this force was closer to 90 troopers as compared to the numbers listed above from *Utah to Cherbourg*.](#)
- a. This conglomeration moved toward Exit 1 at about 0600 and met little resistance in route.
 - b. At about 0900, the paratroopers engaged approximately 70 Germans from the 3/1058th Regiment of the 91st Airlanding Division in Pouppeville. House-to-house fighting ensued until the Germans surrendered to 2/8 IN from the 4ID, which approached from the beach (H-hour at Utah was 0630). The time was approximately 1200. (Harrison, 283).
 - c. Ewell’s force sustained 18 casualties, while the Germans sustained 25 casualties and 38 became EPWs (*Utah to Cherbourg*, 22).
 - d. When the elements from 1/506 PIR reached the town, the fighting had ended and the 4ID was moving inland. Therefore, LTC Turner marched back to Caloville.

Virtual View: Move to a point north of Le Grand Chemin and face south. Follow in the virtual view, on cue, to the southern end of the village still looking south.

5. Meanwhile, an element of 2/506 PIR under, LTC Strayer, had assembled approximately 200 troopers near Foucarville, way out of the regiment’s AO. (Winters, Richard. *Beyond Band of Brothers*, 82-83). [Optional Details:](#)
- a. It was an assortment of about 90 D Co troops, about 15 from E and F Cos, about 80 from HHC under the S2 (LT Lewis Nixon) and S3 (CPT Clarence Hester), and 20 some-odd troopers from the 508th PIR.
 - b. Strayer met the larger force with a group he had assembled while moving from where he landed north of DZ “A,” even though Strayer had injured his knee in the jump.
 - c. At about 0430, the group marched south toward Exit 2 following the modern D14.
 - d. The movement was slow as the group made contact with isolated German elements. Eventually, Strayer made it to Le Grand Chemin, about 1 kilometer (.62 miles) from the causeway road that led to Exit 2 and Utah Beach (modern-day D913 to La Madeleine).

Virtual View: Move from the air down to ground level at the southern end of Le Grand Chemin still looking south.

- e. At Le Grand Chemin, the battalion had come into contact with a well-defended artillery battery near Brécourt Manor. D Co had tried a hasty assault but failed.

- f. This German artillery position was located about 3 miles from La Madeleine at Utah Beach. It presented a serious threat against the forces landing there.
- g. Strayer had D Co bypass Brécourt to seize the all-important Exit 2, which it did by 1330.
- h. He next called upon the E Co XO, Lt Richard Winters, to destroy the guns. At 0830 Strayer's order was issued through the S3: *"There's fire along that hedgerow there. Take care of it."* (Winters, 83).
 - (1) Winters was acting commander of E Co because the company commander, LT Thomas Meehan had not been seen on the ground in France (it was later discovered that Meehan's plan had been shot down with everyone onboard KIA).
 - (2) Winters had himself, LT "Buck" Compton, 9 riflemen with two M1919 (light) machine guns, and one 60mm mortar with no baseplate.

Visual 6B: Brécourt Manor (Visual is taken from a map in the Dick Winters collection at AHEC). **Virtual View:** Start in the air behind the German line looking down at the gun positions. Or, start at ground level behind the gun line and pan around the virtual view in concert with the description listed below:

- 6. The German Position. (Instructor Note: The arrayal of the German guns, whether all four were on line or one offset and oriented north, is very heavily debated among historians and among the participants themselves. So too is the question as to whether the position was entrenched or if the Germans made use of existing ditches to move in between the guns. Even archeological evidence has proved somewhat inconclusive (see the Queen's University, Belfast geoforensic study report in SRT SharePoint files). In our VSR database we are using the arrayal of one off-set gun and a rudimentary trench system, which seems to agree with most veteran accounts. For more information on this topic, see Larry Alexander's *In the Footsteps of the Band of Brothers*, beginning on page 104).
 - a. The position consisted of four 105mm (10.5 cm) LeFH 18/40 light field howitzers from the 6th Company of the 91st Artillery Regiment.
 - b. Counting from the German left to right, the number 1 gun was oriented generally north along a generally east-west running hedgerow. It was offset from the rest of the gun line, forming a sort of "L" shape.
 - c. Guns 2-4 were oriented generally east, toward causeway 2 at Utah (causeway 2 is not depicted on the visual; it is southeast off map). These guns were positioned along a hedgerow running generally north-south. The guns were positioned somewhere between 60 and 90 meters apart (Alexander, *In the Footsteps of the Band of Bros.*, 107).
 - d. According to Winters, a rudimentary trench connected the guns of the battery (unlike in the miniseries) (Alexander, *In the Footsteps*, 99). The FDC was located near gun #3.
 - e. An MG42 was located in the northeast corner of the position whose field of fire was probably across the front of the three guns that were on-line.
 - f. At least two MG42s protected the rear of the position across the open field in a parallel hedgerow (Instructor note: The positions in the virtual view are representative).

- g. Other German positions existed around the manor house, with at least one more machine gun oriented down the main road leading from the manor.
- h. Each artillery piece would normally have a crew of six. In total, the German force at Brécourt was estimated to be at least 50.

Virtual View: Move back to the previous position on the southern corner of Le Grand Chemin, facing south. Orient to the right (west) toward the double hedgerows. Enter the ditch between the two hedgerows and move down the ditch as described below.

7. Brecourt Manor – Leader’s Recon and Prep. (Instructor note: the material for Brécourt comes primarily from three sources: Winters and Kingseed’s *Beyond Band of Brothers*, Alexander’s *Biggest Brother*, and Ambrose’s *Band of Brothers*. The account varies slightly by author).

- a. Winters left his NCOs to prepare the men for the assault – no extra gear outside of ammunition and grenades – while he went forward on a leader’s reconnaissance. In Winters’ words:

“...I conducted a hasty reconnaissance of the enemy position. A leader gains an advantage in combat if he is able to appraise the terrain and the situation quickly and correctly.” (Winters, 84).

- b. Winters followed a drainage ditch between two hedgerows to approach the German position. He arrived at a point where he could see four German guns:

“The guns seemed to be set in a trench in an open pasture. The battery was firing directly down causeway #2 in the direction of Utah Beach, where the initial waves of the 4th Infantry Division were already landing.” (Winters, 84)

Virtual View: Move back down the ditch to the starting point. Take up a view in the air looking back in the direction of the German gun line. Make sure that both hedgerows that the two groups of paratroopers used to approach the position is visible.

Visual 6C: Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944

- c. Winters developed a plan to attack the flank of the position, using two assault teams, a support by fire element, and a team to destroy the guns (Alexander, Mark. *Biggest Brother*, 10).
 - (1) Winters led one group, consisting also of CPL Joe Toye, PVT “Popeye” Wynn, and PVT Gerald Loraine (from Rgt Hq – Sink’s driver).
 - (2) LT Buck Compton led the second group, consisting of SGT Bill Guarnere and CPL Don Malarkey.
 - (3) The machine gun teams were composed of PVTs John Plesha and Walter Hendrix on one gun and PVT Joe Liebgott and Cleveland Petty on the other.
 - (4) The demo team consisted of SGT Carwood Lipton and PVT Mike Ranney.

8. The Assault on Gun 1.

- a. Compton led his group down the eastern of the two hedgerows that led to the German position. Lipton and Ranney accompanied them.

Virtual View: Move down to ground level and follow Winters' movements:

- b. Winters led the rest of the group down the western parallel hedgerow.
- c. When both groups had closed on the German position, still undetected, Winters emplaced the machine guns on the flanks to cover the two assault teams. Leibgott and Petty were on Winters' right, while Plesha and Hendrix were on the left.
- d. Winters sent Lipton and Ranney to the far right to protect the flank. Lipton did not have a clear view because of an intervening hedgerow, so he later climbed a tree for a better vantage point.
- e. Once in place, Winters initiated the attack with Lieb Gott's machine gun, oriented on gun 1.
- f. Winters' group provided further suppressive fire to allow Compton's group to get within grenade range to the German machine gun position.
- g. Just as Compton's group was ready to throw its grenades, Winters charged the first gun position, arriving as Compton's grenades exploded. Both assault groups entered the trench at the same time.
- h. As both groups entered the trench, they came under heavy German fire from both the trench and from at least two MG-42s across the field.

- (1) Popeye Winn was wounded in the buttocks and fell into the trench, while apologizing: "*I'm sorry, Lieutenant, I goofed. I goofed. I'm sorry.*" (Winters, 85).

- (2) A German "potato masher" grenade landed in the middle of the group, resting in between CPL Toye's legs. Luckily, the butt of his rifle absorbed most of the impact and Toye emerged unscathed.

- i. Compton's men destroyed the MG-42 in the trench and the now consolidated assault group moved quickly toward Gun 1. In less than 30 seconds from the time the group had entered the trench, they had captured the first gun (Winters, 86).

- (1) Three men of the gun crew attempted to run away across the field. Winters, Loraine, and Guarnere killed the three of them.

- (2) This initial fight is when Malarkey ran out into the field to retrieve what he thought was a Luger from one of the Germans, narrowly making it back to the trench (with no Luger), as depicted in the series *Band of Brothers*.

9. Gun 2.

- a. Winters quickly turned his attention to the second gun and the possibility of a counterattack.
- b. Looking down the trench, toward the second gun, he observed two Germans setting up a machine gun. Winters promptly shot them both.

- c. Somewhere during this time, a German ran toward the Americans with his hands up. Loraine punched him in the jaw with brass knuckles, leaving him on the ground moaning (there is some speculation that it was Toye with the brass knuckles).
- d. Lipton and Ranney (the demo team) had now arrived at the first gun. Not wasting any time, Winters decided to rush the second position:

“In our initial attack, I noticed that as we approached the gun position, German machine gun fire from across the open field behind the battery had slackened as we got closer to the actual gun position. Call it a sixth sense, but I decided that if we moved quickly and laid a strong base of fire support, the assault team would only be exposed for a minimal amount of time.” (Winters, 87).

- e. Winters left three men near the first gun to provide suppressive fire, while Lipton went back to Le Chemin to retrieve the demolitions he had mistakenly left behind.
- f. The rest of the group attacked the second gun and quickly seized it without sustaining any casualties.

10. Gun 3.

- a. As Winters turned his attention to the third position, he received some much-needed help. PVT John Hall, from HHC (not A Co as some argue) and another trooper arrived to assist.
- b. Winters brought up his two machine gun teams and sent a runner back to battalion to request ammunition and reinforcement (Alexander, 14).
- c. After about 30 minutes, Winters attacked with Hall advancing down the trench while Winters, Guarnere, and Compton attacked outside the trench.
- d. The attack carried the gun, capturing six Germans in the process. PVT Hall was killed in the trench.
- e. Upon consolidating on the third gun, Winters found the dugout containing the FDC. In it, he found documents and a map displaying all artillery positions and machine gun emplacements on the Cotentin Peninsula. Though Winters claims he found the map around gun 2, his description sounds more like the FDC, which was near Gun 3 (Winters, 88).
- f. Winters sent these valuable pieces of intel back to battalion along with the German prisoners. Once again, he requested resupply and reinforcement. (Alexander describes in his books that Winters went back himself to get resupply and reinforcement. No one else mentions the incident, to include Winters)
- g. CPT Hester (Bn S3) came forward and personally delivered three blocks of TNT and one incendiary grenade.
 - (1) Hester informed Winters that LT Ronald Speirs, from D Co, was bringing five men forward to reinforce the position.
 - (2) He also told Winters that the battalion was moving to Ste. Marie-du-Mont and that Winters was to finish clearing the objective and then catch up.

(3) He further stated that LT Nixon (Bn S2) had gone to the beach to deliver the maps Winters had found to the forces landing there.

h. Winters' men went about the task of spiking the three guns while they awaited Speirs. Lipton finally returned with his demolitions bag too late to be of assistance.

11. Gun 4.

a. Speirs arrived with five other men and after a brief sitrep from Winters, assaulted the fourth gun (Alexander, *Biggest Brother*, 16).

b. With Speirs in the lead, they overwhelmed the position, sustaining one KIA and two WIAs.

c. Then they destroyed the final gun.

d. Winters decided that it was time to withdraw. The mission had been accomplished, but they were still under heavy fire from the other side of the field and from around the manor.

e. Using his machine guns and Malarkey on his mortar, the element successfully broke contact and returned to Le Grand Chemin. The time was approximately 1130 (Ambrose, 83).

12. Final actions.

Visual 6D: Brécourt Manor, 6 June 1944

Virtual View: Take up a view in the air near Le Grand Chemin, looking back toward the German position. Follow the route of the final attack through the hedgerows behind (to the west of) the artillery position to the manor house, as described:

a. LTs Harry Welsh, Warren Roush, and about 30 other E Co troopers had recently arrived at Le Chemin and met Winters upon his return.

b. LT Lewis Nixon showed up shortly thereafter with two Sherman tanks from Utah.

c. With this now much stronger force, Winters returned to Brécourt to complete clearing the area.

d. This larger force approached the objective from behind the artillery battery on the opposite side of the hedgerow from the open field.

e. The tanks cleared the hedgerow by fire and then continued to the manor, with the infantry in support. Any Germans that were not wounded or killed retreated from the area.

f. The battle at Brécourt Manor took about three hours. By the end of the battle, about 17 paratroopers under Winters, and another five under Speirs, had attacked approximately 50 Germans in prepared positions.

(1) American casualties were 3 KIA and 7 WIA (Winters had initially reported 4 KIA and 6 WIA, because he thought that Speirs had suffered 2 KIA, but later found out one of the supposed KIAs survived).

(2) The Germans suffered 15 KIA and 12 captured. All four guns were destroyed.

- (3) Though the De Vallavielle family had been present during the fight, no one was killed. One of the sons had been wounded (by an American) but was evacuated and later recovered.
- g. COL Sink recommended Winters for the Medal of Honor for his actions, but the award was downgraded to a DSC at the division level (Numerous stories about that Taylor had agreed to recommend only one MoH from the division for Normandy and it went to LTC Robert Cole from 3/502 PIR for his actions at Carentan).
- h. Guarnere, Compton, Loraine, and Toye all received Silver Stars. Lipton, Malarkey, Ranney, Liebgott, Hendrix, Plesha, Petty, and Wynn all received Bronze Stars for valor.
13. Later in the afternoon, Winters led E Co to the vicinity of Ste. Marie-du-Mont where it spent the night with the rest of the still forming 2d Battalion.
14. On the night of 6 June, the 506th had assembled about 650 of its troops, mostly from the 1st and 2d Battalions along with mis-dropped troopers from across both Airborne divisions (*Utah to Cherbourg*, 23).
- a. Sink maintained his headquarters at Caloville for the day.
- b. The 1st Battalion had attacked northeast to Holdy (just under a kilometer WSW of Ste.-Marie-du-Mont) to destroy another undetected German 105 battery, very similar to the action at Brécourt Manor.
- c. The 4th ID seized Ste.-Marie-du-Mont as elements moved inland.
15. Communications throughout the division had been poor. Sink had accomplished his objectives concerning the beach exits but knew nothing of the status of his 3d Battalion and its mission to secure the bridges near Le Port.
16. The division made plans to move south the next day to support both missions there.

Analysis:

1. How well did the 502d PIR accomplish its mission of securing the northern section of the airhead line?
- Pro.** The regiment accomplished the intent of securing the airhead line. The line drawn on the map was inconsequential. German forces could not maneuver against Utah or the flank of the regiments as they focused on their missions. FM 3-99 states on page 4-17: "The airhead line extends far enough beyond the landing area to ensure uninterrupted landings of personnel, equipment, and supplies. It secures the requisite terrain features and maneuver space for such future offensive or defensive tasks as called for in the mission...Commanders adjust the disposition of units and installations to fit the terrain and the situation...The degree to which the airhead line is actually occupied and organized for defense is largely determined by the mission, enemy capabilities, and the defensive characteristics of the terrain."
- Con.** The regiment did not make contact with the 82d Abn Div on its left flank near Ste.-Mère-Église so a gap existed between the two divisions. Luckily, the Germans were unable to identify it or take advantage of it. Furthermore, the 22d and 12th IN Rgts of the 4ID eventually advanced past the positions of the 502d later on D-Day. Had the 502d advanced to the planned airhead line, arguably the 4ID could have made a deeper penetration on the first day.

2. Explain how LT Winters exemplified Troop Leading Procedures IAW ADP 6-0 (p. 2-18):

- Receive the mission
- Issue a WARNORD
- Make a tentative plan
- Initiate movement
- Conduct reconnaissance
- Complete the plan
- Issue the order
- Supervise and refine

Remember that: “TLPs enable small-unit leaders to maximize available planning time while developing effective plans and preparing their units for an operation...Leaders modify the sequence to meet the mission, situation, and available time. Leaders may perform some steps concurrently while performing other steps continuously throughout the operation.”

Stand 7: Securing the Southern Flank

Visuals:

7A: The Lock, 6 June 1944

7B: The Lock, 7 June 1944

7C: The 101st Airborne Division, End of D-Day

Orientation:

Visual 7A: The Lock, 6 June 1944

Virtual View: Start with a view in the air just south of the Douve River. The lock should be in view at the bottom of the screen, looking north toward Drop Zone "D." Move in the virtual view in concert with the orientation as follows:

1. Currently located at the lock over the Douve River at La Barquette.
2. The lock itself was hand-operated and about 30 feet long (Rendezvous w/Destiny, location 2097).
3. Drop Zone "D" is about 1.5 kilometers north-northeast (not visible in the virtual view).
4. The small village of La Basse Addeville is about 1 kilometer to the north-northwest, while Les Droueries is about 2 kilometers north-northwest (neither are visible in the VV).
5. St-Côme-de-Mont is about 1.13 kilometers to the northwest (not visible in the VV).
6. Carentan is about 2 kilometers south of this location, visible in the virtual view.
7. The bridges near Le Port (off the virtual view) are about 2 kilometers to the east.
8. The Douve River bridges on the N-13 north of Carentan are about 1500 meters to the west (visible in the virtual view).
9. The terrain in the area around Drop Zone "D" was low-lying and prone to flooding and was crisscrossed with irrigation canals (not depicted in the visual or in the VV). There were fewer hedgerows than in the rest of the 101st Abn Div AO.
10. At the time of the invasion, the area was heavily flooded. Movement through the area was along the roads, though some of the flooded areas were negotiable by foot.
11. Allied planners placed a lot of importance on controlling floodwaters, which was over-estimated. The areas prone to flooding did so slowly and also drained slowly. The effects of the lock would take some time to have the desired result (see note on page 26 of *Utah to Cherbourg*).

Description:

Virtual View: Maintain a view in the air above the lock, oriented northeast in the direction of DZ "D."

1. The 501st PIR, under COL Howard Johnson, was to land on DZ “D” with its 1st and 2d battalions, plus C/326 Abn EN. The 3/506 PIR, under LTC Robert Wolverton, was also scheduled to land on DZ “D.”
 - a. The 1/501st (LTC Robert Carroll) had the mission to seize the Douve River locks at La Barquette to control the flooding of the Douve and Merderet Rivers upstream. The Germans had already made use of the lock for that very purpose.
 - b. The 2/501st (LTC Robert Ballard) with C/326 Engineers had the mission to destroy the highway and railway bridges over the Douve River north and northwest of Carentan to prevent the Germans from reinforcing against the landing area.
 - c. The regiment had the additional mission to seize St.-Côme-du-Mont, “if possible.”
 - d. The 3/506 PIR (LTC Robert Wolverton) had the 506th mission to seize the two bridges across the Douve near Le Port and establish a bridgehead on the opposite side to enable subsequent attacks in the direction of Omaha.
2. The Germans around DZ “D” were from the 3d Battalion, 1058th Grenadier Regiment. The battalion was headquartered in St.-Côme-du-Mont and was well prepared. The German defenses around DZ “D” may have been the best in Normandy. (Cole, 288 and Rapport, Leonard and Northwood, Arthur. *Rendezvous with Destiny*, Kindle edition, location 2208).
 - a. An anti-aircraft gun located south of St.-Côme-du-Mont engaged aircraft as they approached the DZ.
 - b. A house on the west end of the DZ had been soaked in oil and was set on fire, illuminating the DZ for German machine guns and mortars.
3. The landings.
 - a. The 1/501st was badly scattered as only 18 of 45 sticks landed on or near the DZ. LTC Carroll was KIA, the Bn XO was wounded and captured, and all of the company commanders were missing (Rapport and Northwood, location 2097).
 - b. The 2/501st fared better and LTC Ballard had assembled a force of about 250 personnel prior to moving toward his battalion’s objective.
 - c. The 3/506 sustained the highest rate of killed in action and POWs in the airborne assault on D-Day. As a result, only 150 of the 723 paratroopers who jumped made it to the objective by the end of D+2 (Bando, 105).
4. The Barquette Lock.

Virtual View: Move to a position north of the lock on the road that leads south to the lock. Go down to ground level, face south, and trace COL Johnson’s route.

- a. COL “Skeets” Johnson landed on target on DZ “D,” thanks in part to a door bundle that had become stuck in the door of the aircraft when the green light came on early (*Utah to Cherbourg*, 28).
- b. Johnson moved south toward the lock and assembled about 150 men by the time he closed on the lock.

- c. As dawn approached, he sent approximately 50 troopers to seize the lock and the far side of the objective.

Virtual View: Move south across the bridge and take up a position along the streambed on the far side of the objective.

- d. Under sporadic small arms fire, the force crossed the lock, secured the far side and began to dig in.
 - e. The Germans responded with indirect fire, but not before the troopers had sufficiently dug in.
5. Satisfied with the situation at the lock, COL Johnson moved back north to link-up with his regimental S3, MAJ R.J. Allen at La Basse Addeville.

Virtual View: Raise up in the air and face northwest in the general direction of La Basse Addeville (not built in the virtual terrain).

- a. Allen had assembled a force consisting of about 100 troopers and Johnson wanted to employ them to destroy the Douve River bridges IAW his regiment's mission (*Utah to Cherbourg*, 28).
 - b. Johnson arrived at about 0900 and learned that another force of approximately 250 troopers under LTC Robert Ballard, the 2/501 Commander, was located near Les Droueries.
 - (1) Ballard had attacked toward St.-Côme-du-Mont, as stipulated in the regimental order, because the town was along his march route to the Douve bridges north of Carentan.
 - (2) Intel estimates stated that the Germans occupied St.-Côme-du-Mont in platoon strength. However, Ballard encountered a much larger force near Les Droueries at about 0530.
 - (3) Despite his best efforts throughout the day, Ballard could not disengage to move to Allen's position at La Basse Addeville.
 - (4) COL Johnson was not in a position to assist Ballard from La Basse Addeville, either, because there was a German force in between the two groups.
 - c. At about 1330, Johnson decided to take the bulk of the force he had under his control, about 100 men, back to La Barquette to use that location as the point of departure for the attack upstream.
 - d. MAJ Allen remained at La Basse Addeville with about 50 personnel because he was in contact with the enemy.
6. When COL Johnson's group arrived back at La Barquette, they came under heavy indirect fire and small arms fire from the direction of St.-Côme-du-Mont and Carentan.
- a. Lieutenant Farrell, from First Army who was trained for directing naval gunfire, was with COL Johnson's group (Rapport and Northwood, Kindle location 2114).

- b. He was in communication with the *USS Quincy*, a heavy cruiser, located off Utah Beach.
- c. Farrell was able to adjust the fire of the *Quincy's* eight-inch guns to neutralize the German fire on the area around La Barquette. He then shifted the guns to support 2/501 PIR at Les Droueries using a chain of radio relays between LTC Ballard through MAJ Allen (*Utah to Cherbourg*, 29 and Rapport and Northwood, Kindle loc 2137).

Virtual View: On cue, move upstream toward the bridge over the Douve River to the West, about 1500 meters away.

7. COL Johnson was ready to attack to the Douve River bridges, but a patrol reported that German resistance was more than the force at hand could defeat.
8. Johnson decided to further reinforce his position around La Barquette, which had grown to about 250 troopers by 2000.
9. Through the night, Johnson sent patrols to locate the 506th PIR and the division headquarters without success.
10. He was in contact with a small force from 3/506 PIR under CPT Charles Shettle, the Bn S3, who had reached the battalion's bridge objectives near Le Port (Rapport and Northwood, Kindle locations 2218-2242).
 - a. Both the battalion commander, LTC Robert L. Wolverton, and the Battalion XO, MAJ George S. Grant, had been killed on the drop zone.
 - b. Shettle assembled a small group of about 15 personnel and set out for the two wooden bridges.
 - c. The group closed on the objectives at about 0430. Shettle's force had grown in strength along the way to just under 100 personnel.
 - d. The much understrength battalion forced a crossing but was unable to hold the far side after coming under increased German pressure. Throughout the day of 6 June, it continued to resolutely hold the western side of the bridges.

Note to Instructor: The following section contains more detail on the 3/506 at the Le Port bridges. Substitute it for the above paragraph and use as time allows or if it meets a specific unit's training objectives.

11. The 3/506 PIR and the bridges at Le Port.
 - a. LTC Robert Wolverton, 3/506 Commander, and MAJ George Grant, Bn XO, were both killed in the jump. Wolverton never made it to the ground; his body was recovered from a tree, which the Germans had used for target practice (Gardner and Day, 132, 182).
 - b. CPT Shettle assembled about 15 men and moved toward the objective.
 - c. The group picked up more men in route and numbered 34 troops when it reached the northern bridge at 0430 (Rapport and Northwood, location 2221).
 - d. Two paratroopers from H Company volunteered to cross the bridge, under machine gun fire, to recon the far side (and were awarded DSCs for their actions).

- e. A short while later, two LTs, also from H Co, led separate five-man patrols to the far bank. A third H Co LT followed with more men.
- f. The separate groups consolidated on the far side and killed thirteen Germans and destroyed three machine gun positions (Rapport and Northwood, location 2233).
- g. Shettle asked COL Johnson at La Barquette for reinforcement, but Johnson did not have the manpower to spare.
- h. Shettle's force accomplished the battalion's mission but did not have sufficient strength, or ammunition, to retain the far side of the river against the growing German pressure.
- i. After holding the east bank for two hours, the battalion consolidated its position on the near side and prepared the two bridges for demolition in case the Germans attacked in force.
- j. Later during the night of 6 June, an additional 40 troopers who had been mis-dropped near Carentan arrived to reinforce Shettle's group.

Instructor Note: The following part of the VSR is optional; it fits well with the stand covering La Barquette on D-Day and fills the gap between the Airborne module and the Carentan Module for the 101st. It can be cut in interest of time.

Visual 7B: The Lock, 7 June 1944

Virtual View: Move in the virtual view to the road intersection known as "Hell's Corners." Take a position slightly in the air, looking northeast.

12. La Barquette "Hell's Corners" on D+1 (the following material comes from Bando, 102-104 and Rapport and Northwood, location 2625-2675)

- a. On the morning of 7 June, approximately 500 Germans from the 1st Bn, 6th Para Rgt were withdrawing from St.-Marie-du-Mont on a cross country route directly to Carentan.
- b. The approximately 250 Soldiers from the 501st PIR positioned at La Barquette blocked this path.

Virtual View: Rotate in the direction of Carentan and point out the church steeple from near ground level. Then, rotate back to facing northeast and move to the hedgerow northeast of Hell's Corners. Go to ground level. Continue to face northeast looking across the open, flooded fields.

- c. The 501st troopers identified this large body of Germans from a great distance across the open countryside at about 1500.
 - (1) COL Johnson reinforced the northern side of the perimeter with six of his eight machine guns.
 - (2) Johnson further issued orders for everyone to hold their fire. A single machine gun under his supervision would initiate fires.
- d. The Germans continued to close the distance and entered the flooded fields to the front of the American position.

- e. At about 1600, at a range of 350 meters, Johnson initiated fires with the single machine gun. Within seconds the rest of the positions engaged.
 - f. Leo Gillis later described the action:
“The Germans looked like a big black cloud crossing that area – you could see them coming. When firing started, it was like shooting ‘em in a barrel. They were trapped and they made a stupid move to begin with. They never should’ve been crossing an open area like that. They were in a foot of water...” (Bando, 103).
 - g. The engagement lasted for almost an hour, with a couple of lulls in the fighting as the Americans attempted to talk the Germans into surrender. Throughout the engagement, indirect fire from St.-Côme-du-Mont and Carentan fell on the American positions.
 - h. When the Germans finally gave up, they had sustained around 150 killed and wounded. Approximately 350 surrendered and about two dozen escaped (Bando, 104).
 - i. Losses on the American side totaled about 10 killed and 30 wounded (Rapport and Northwood, loc 2675).
13. Johnson’s force continued to hold the position through the rest of the day and throughout D+2 (8 Jun), under German artillery fire, until finally relieved.

Visual 7C: 101st Airborne Division, End of D-Day

14. 101st Abn Div, End of Day, 6 June (Division HQ located vic. Hiesville-Le Caudet Farm).
- a. At the end of the day, the 101st had accomplished its most important mission, the seizure of the Utah Beach exits. The 4th ID had indeed been able to move inland to secure an initial amphibious lodgment (*Utah to Cherbourg*, 41).
 - b. The 502d PIR was more or less in position and secured the northern flank of the division.
 - c. The southern and western flanks of the division were a concern.
 - (1) The 3/506 had only been able to retain the near side of the Le Port bridges.
 - (2) The 501st PIR had seized the La Barquette Lock, but could not advance up river to destroy the road and railway bridges northwest of Carentan.
 - (3) The Germans were in strength at St.-Côme-du-Mont, denying elements of the 501st of maneuver room outside the swampy areas.
 - d. MG Taylor stated that out of the 6600 troopers who were inserted on D-Day, only about 2500 were accounted for by midnight. (SHAEF: G-3, General Record, Box 43). Of the 9 infantry battalion commanders, 3 were KIA and 2 had jump injuries. COL George Moseley, 502 PIR Commander, broke his leg in the jump.
 - (1) 1/501: LTC Robert Carroll (KIA)
 - (2) 2/501: LTC Robert Ballard
 - (3) 3/501: LTC Julian Ewell
 - (4) 1/502: LTC Patrick Cassidy
 - (5) 2/502: LTC Steven Chappuis (jump injury-leg)

- (6) 3/502: LTC Robert Cole
 - (7) 1/506: LTC William Turner (KIA, 7 June)
 - (8) 2/506: LTC Robert Strayer (jump injury-knee)
 - (9) 3/506: LTC Lee Wolverton (KIA)
- d. In August 1944, the division calculated its losses on 6 Jun as: 1240 total; 182 known killed, 557 wounded, and 501 missing/captured (Harrison, 284 footnote).
- e. The division only had 6 out of the 16 x 57mm AA guns that went in on the initial assault, 1 out of 6 x 75mm howitzers, and was also short on class V of all types (Rapport & Northwood, Kindle location 2422-2460).
- f. Taylor experienced the same challenge as Ridgway in terms of communications within the division: radio contact was spotty to non-existent, resulting in a very vague situational understanding (Rapport and Northwood, Kindle location 2477).
- (1) This lack of communication resulted in three battalions moving toward Exit 1.
 - (2) Taylor and COL Sink had no knowledge of the state of the 3/506th's mission at the bridges at Le Port.
 - (3) The 501st situation at La Barquette was uncertain.
- g. However, Taylor had reason to be optimistic.
- (1) He had linked up with the 4 ID and could commit his combat power away from the beaches and toward St.-Côme-du-Mont, the Douve River objectives, and ultimately toward Carentan – now a D+1 objective (Blair, 278).
 - (2) His seaborne force, consisting of the 327 GIR and the 321st and 907 Glider Artillery Battalions had started to land (Blair, 240).
 - (a) The landing did not go as planned as only the 1/327 landed on D-day.
 - (b) The other two rifle battalions (2/327 and 1/401) landed on the afternoon of D+1.
 - (c) The two artillery battalions did not complete their landings until D+2.
 - (3) Lastly, gliders as part of Operation/Mission Keokuk were due to arrive at 2100 to deliver command, communication, and medical assets.
15. Operation Keokuk was the 101st's portion of the larger glider operation (source for this section is Rapport and Norwood, Kindle location 2460 and Blair, 254).
- a. The 101st was allocated only the first lift because of the division's proximity to the seaborne forces that were to land on D-Day.
 - b. Unlike the initial D-Day assault, the approach for all glider missions was from east to west to minimize exposure to German AA fires.
 - c. In total, the division was to receive 32 Horsa gliders containing: 6 x 57mm AT guns, 40 vehicles, 19 tons of cargo, and 157 personnel (Zaloga, 66).

- d. The designated LZ was LZ “E,” which was not completely secure.
- e. At 2053, seven minutes early, the gliders began to land on the LZ, with 25 of the 32 gliders landing within two miles of the LZ. [Optional data:](#)
 - (1) [Five landed on the LZ and came under heavy German fire.](#)
 - (2) [Nineteen landed 2-3 miles northeast of the LZ.](#)
 - (3) [The remaining eight landed farther away.](#)
- f. The fragility of the large, wooden framed Horsa gliders and the small LZ resulted in many gliders crashing into hedgerows. In total, 14 troopers were killed in the landing or by German fire, 30 were wounded or injured, and 10 were missing or captured.

Analysis

1. How effective was the division in establishing its lodgment at this point? [Recall the definition from earlier in the staff ride: FM 3-99 Abn and Air Aslt Operations, 6 Mar 15, quotes JP 3-18 on page 1-1: “A lodgment is a designated area in a hostile or potentially hostile operational area that, when seized and held, makes the continuous landing of troops and materiel possible and provides maneuver space for subsequent operations.”](#)

[Pro.](#) The division obviously accomplished its mission of seizing the causeways as the 4ID was able to cross along all four exits with relative ease. Though understrength, the division secured all of its most important objectives. By nightfall on 6 June, it had established an airhead line that allowed for the forward movement of troops from the beachhead.

[Con.](#) The units designated to seize the causeways played a small role in physically seizing the causeways because they had been so badly scattered. The overwhelming success of the amphibious landing translated to the rapid movement inland that would have had equal success regardless of the airborne assault.

2. The definition of the command and control warfighting function in ADP 6-0 (Jul 2019) is: “The related tasks and a system that enables commanders to synchronize and converge all elements of combat power.” Both divisions struggled with this WfF. Why? What specifically gave the divisions (and lower echelons) such challenges?

[Consider linking the discussion to the C2 tasks and systems listed in ADP 6-0: The Tasks are: Command Forces, Control operations, Drive the operations process, Establish the C2 system. The C2 System are composed of: People, Processes, Networks, Command posts.](#)

[For an airborne unit, consider asking the follow-on question as to what tools or systems the unit has today to overcome the C2 issues encountered during Neptune.](#)

3. What are the strengths and weaknesses in having a seaborne element as opposed to inserting all forces by air?

[Strengths:](#) An entire infantry regiment and two artillery battalions were landed together relatively close to the rest of the division, albeit behind schedule. Once the troops and equipment were on the beach, they were a consolidated unit that could be committed to the fight.

Weaknesses: Inserting a division by both air and sea required the division to nearly double its planning efforts to address both means. The division could not count on having the seaborne elements on D-Day, as it actually turned out, due to unloading and landing issues. Even so, the division could not plan to have those elements in case the amphibious assault had failed.

Stand 8: Ste.-Mère-Église, D+1

Visuals:

- 8A. Ste.-Mère-Église, 7 June
- 8B. Ste.-Mère-Église, 7 June
- 8C. Ste.-Mère-Église, 7 June, Clearing North

Orientation:

Virtual View: Begin with a view over the center of the town, looking north up the N-13, with the town of Neuville-au-Plain at the top of the screen.

Visual 8A: Ste.-Mère-Église, 7 June.

1. We are currently located over the center of Ste.-Mère-Église looking north.
2. Neuville-au-Plain, the site of the 1058th Grenadier Regiment's attack on D-Day, is at the top of the screen, approximately 2 km (1.3 mi) away.
3. Recall that the 3d Platoon, D Co, 505 PIR fought a pitched battle there the previous day.

Virtual View: Move to the north side of the town and come down to ground level inside the town, just past city hall. Move forward on cue according to the description below.

4. Point out city hall on the right side of the road.
5. A hospice was located on the northern outskirts of the town. It served as one of the division's field hospitals during the operation.
6. The 2/505th's defense of the north side of town was arrayed just outside of the town (Nurdyke, *Irresistible Force*, 72), along one of the hedgerows. D Co held the line with two platoons; its third platoon (1/D) was in reserve.
7. E Company was the battalion reserve and was located back in the town. The company consisted of one organic platoon and one ad hoc platoon of glider pilots and mis-dropped troopers from both airborne divisions (Nurdyke, 304-305).

Description:

1. Early on D+1, the Germans renewed their attacks against the northern perimeter of Ste.-Mère-Église and at La Fièvre (next stand).
2. The attack on Ste.-Mère-Église consisted of the 1st and 2d battalions of the 1058th Regiment, the Seventh Army Sturm Battalion, and seven self-propelled assault guns from the 709th AT battalion. Parts of three artillery regiments provided fire support (Nurdyke, 303).
 - a. The German attack began with a heavy artillery bombardment, followed by an infantry assault along with a column of vehicles with the seven assault guns attacking south along the N-13.

(1) In this attack, a 57mm AT gun under LT John C. Cliff from A/80th AA Bn destroyed a

German truck carrying infantry at the head of a convoy.

- (2) An armored car engaged the American gun, but the paratroopers knocked out that German vehicle too.
- (3) Next, an assault gun (Stug III, Ausf G) approached the AT gun position. Firing smoke to conceal its movement, the Stug III rapidly advanced on the position. Undeterred, the crew got a mobility kill against the vehicle. At almost point blank range, the AT gun and the Stug dueled back and forth until the AT gun eventually completed the destruction of the SP gun.
- (4) The crew displaced the AT gun to a position next to the destroyed Stug to gain a better field of fire.
- (5) As the paratroopers were positioning the gun, a second assault gun appeared. It engaged the position and wounded the crew, effectively putting the gun out of action.
- (6) As the assault gun advanced on the edge of the town, firing smoke grenades to conceal its movement, PVT John E. Atchley, from H/505, took over, as described:

“Private Atchley, despite the fact that he had never previously fired an anti-tank gun, left his place of cover and fearlessly moved over to man the gun. Although without aid, Private Atchley’s second shot destroyed one of the advancing tanks [assault gun], whereupon the other tanks [assault guns] turned about and retreated.” (Taken from PVT John E. Atchley’s DSC citation at: <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/21854>, accessed on 9 August 2021). PVT Atchley was later KIA on 3 Jan 45 in Belgium.

Visual 8A: Apply Build Photo depicts one of the destroyed Stugs north of Ste.-Mère-Église.

Virtual View: Take up a position on the northern outskirts of Ste.-Mère-Église, up in the air with a view of the fields to the northeast.

Visual 8B: Ste.-Mère-Église, 7 June

- b. The rest of 2/505’s defenses were as hard pressed as those along the N-13. The D Co positions in the north had slowly given ground and were collapsing on the northern outskirts of Ste.-Mère-Église.
 - (1) 1LT Waverly W. Wray, the D Co XO, was ordered to attack the eastern flank of the attacking 1/1058 Regiment with the 1st platoon from D Co (the company reserve).
 - (2) Wray led the platoon around the German flank and caught the Germans completely off guard and vulnerable, killing the battalion commander and decimating the battalion with mortar and machine gun fire. This spoiling attack forced the Germans to withdraw. **Optional details follow:**
 - (a) Wray embarked alone on a leader’s recon to determine the situation, moving back over terrain the company had occupied earlier in the day. He moved some three hundred, or so, yards north along the German flank and then moved west a couple of hundred yards to almost the N-13 (Nurdyke, 305-307).
 - (b) On a sunken lane, he came across a group of eight Germans huddled around a radio. When Wray attempted to take them captive, one of the officers reached for his pistol. Wray shot them all, eliminating the commander and part of the staff of

the 1/1058 Rgt.

- (c) Two Germans nearby heard the shooting and popped up out of a slit trench and fired on Wray. Though wounded through the ear, Wray killed both Germans with a single round each.
- (d) Wray continued on his personal recon and discovered another east-west running sunken farm road, upon which the German battalion occupied in preparation for its next attack. Wray positioned a machine gun to fire down the lane and positioned the rest of the 2d platoon to cover the German front.
- (e) He next employed 60mm mortars to fire on the far end of the German line and began walking the fire back to the east. The Germans were trapped in the sunken road, caught in a crossfire of mortar and machine gun fire.
- (f) As Germans sought to escape from the road, the D Co troopers decimated the German ranks. Disorganized and shattered, the Germans withdrew to the north (Nordyke, 308).

(3) Wray was recommended for the Medal of Honor, but the award was downgraded to a Distinguished Service Cross. Wray was later KIA on 21 Sep 44 in Nijmegen, Holland.

- c. The mid-morning retreat of the 1/1058 Regiment caused the rest of the German attack in the north to culminate as adjacent units withdrew sequentially. German artillery continued to fall on and around the city.

Virtual View: Move to the southern outskirts of Ste.-Mère-Église. Take up a position in the air looking south along the N-13. Orient the virtual view on cue with the following description.

3. Actions to the South of Ste.-Mère-Église. Clearing the N-13 from the south to Ste.-Mère-Église was largely a 4ID operation (*Utah to Cherbourg, 61-63*).
- a. The Georgian 795th Battalion, headquartered in Turqueville, held a salient that included the town and Hill 20 south of Ste.-Mère-Église.
 - b. In the late morning of 7 Jun, the newly arrived 8th Infantry attacked from the south.
 - c. 1/8 IN was the first battalion to attack and seized Turqueville. Later in the day, it advanced north, to the east of Ste.-Mère-Église.
 - d. The 3/8 IN attacked up the N-13 with 2/8 IN on its right flank. The 3/8 IN fought an intense engagement along the road. By mid-afternoon, it reached the southern outskirts of Ste.-Mère-Église (Nordyke, 312).
 - e. 2/8 IN fought its way through the small village of Ecoqueneville and met strong German resistance along the route. After clearing Ecoqueneville, the 2d Battalion continued its advance and entered Ste.-Mère-Église from the northeast, also in the afternoon.
 - f. While the 8th IN was fighting its way north, TF Raff had taken a different route to bypass the German resistance south of Ste.-Mère-Église.

(1) As mentioned earlier, TF Raff consisted of a company of Sherman tanks (C/746 Tk

Bn), a platoon of armored cars, and F/325 GIR (Nordyke, 310). Because of the division's lack of radios, Raff was not in communication with Ridgway.

(2) COL Raff led his force from Les Forges west to Chef du Pont and from there, northeast to Ste.-Mère-Église. Raff arrived at the division CP in the early afternoon (Nordyke, 312).

4. Throughout the day senior leaders converged on Ste.-Mère-Église.

a. BG Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., ADC 4ID, was the first to arrive in the morning in his jeep "Rough Rider" (Blair, 259).

b. COL James Van Fleet, the commander of the 8th IN Rgt, arrived shortly after Raff (Nordyke, 312).

c. Later that afternoon both MG Barton, CG 4ID, and LTG J. Lawton Collins, CG VII Corps, arrived.

Virtual View: Move back the northern outskirts of Ste.-Mère-Église, in the air, with a view up the N-13 with Neuville-au-Plain in view.

Visual 8C: Ste.-Mère-Église, 7 June, Clearing North

5. The Germans to the north of Ste.-Mère-Église were still a threat. The 1058th Regiment had a strength of just over one battalion, the Seventh Army Sturm Battalion, and five assault guns. Additionally, the Germans had kept Ste.-Mère-Église under constant artillery fire.

6. With the imminent arrival of the 2/8 IN, Ridgway and Van Fleet issued an order for a coordinated attack to eliminate the German threat to the north. The attack was to begin at 1715. (Nordyke, 312).

a. The attack called for the 2/505 to attack along the N-13 with tanks from TF Raff in support. The 2/8 IN was to attack along the west side of the highway.

b. As 1700 approached, 2/8 IN had not yet arrived. 2/505 adjusted its plan to attack alone. (Nordyke, 314).

c. At about this time, the 746th Tank Bn (-) arrived from the 4th ID. (the following account is from Nordyke, 315, 320; *Utah to Cherbourg*, 63-64).

(1) It had been serving as the division reserve when LTG Collins ordered its commitment to Ste.-Mère-Église earlier that morning.

(2) LTC C.G. Hupfer commanded the battalion. His combat strength at Ste.-Mère-Église consisted of one tank company (B Co [auth 17 x M4s]), an assault gun platoon (5 x M4s), and the battalion headquarters section (2x M4s).

(3) The battalion (-) drove through the town without stopping and continued its movement north up the N-13, completely separate from, and uncoordinated with, the 2/505 attack.

(4) The tanks continued toward Neuville-au-Plain and made contact with the five remaining German armored vehicles from the morning attack.

- (5) In this first engagement, the battalion destroyed two German vehicles and one AT Gun, at the cost of losing the lead Sherman.
- (6) Hupfer did not want to be confined to the N-13 in a frontal assault. Instead, he ordered a recon to find a way to attack the enemy flank. When a route down secondary roads to Neuville-au-Plain was identified, he sent a force consisting of 10 x M4s.

Virtual View: Move northeast of the town and follow secondary roads into Neuville, staying up in the air. Upon entering Neuville, go to ground level, along the road populated with buildings, until reaching the N-13. On the N-13, orient south and move back down the road in the direction of Ste.-Mère-Église. Move on cue.

- (7) This tank force was able to travel mostly uncontested through the area that the 1/1058 Rgt had occupied in the morning, though it did receive sporadic artillery fire.
 - (8) The two platoons moved to Neuville and attacked the rear of the German armor. In this engagement, the battalion destroyed another two German assault guns, lost two Shermans, captured 60 prisoners, and freed 19 captured paratroopers.
- d. Meanwhile the 2/505 was prepared to launch its attack. A short time prior to crossing the LD at 1715, an artillery forward observer from the 4th ID arrived and called for 155mm artillery fire onto suspected German positions just to the front of the LD.
- (1) The attack north was an overwhelming success. The additional American artillery, the 746th Tk Bn attack, and aggressive infantry attack routed the 2/1058 Regiment.
 - (2) E Company took 168 German prisoners, to include the battalion commander, and left an uncounted number of German dead in the hedgerows. The adjacent D Co platoon killed many others who had tried to escape east across the N-13. According to one E Company trooper, they had not lost a single man (Nordyke, 320).
7. This final battle permanently ended the German threat against Ste.-Mère-Église. In the coming days the 505 PIR would support the 4ID attack north toward Cherbourg.
 8. In the near term, this victory allowed Ridgway to concentrate on seizing the crossings over the Merderet, one of the original D-Day objectives, and in relieving the isolated pockets of paratroopers on the far side.

Analysis.

1. Though the operation to defeat the Germans north of Ste.-Mère-Église was successful, what was the risk of the bold, unplanned, and unsupported 746th Tank Bn attack?

Consider: Fratricide. What could have happened if the battalion had been cut off in its flanking maneuver? How does a commander decide when to accept risk in such a maneuver compared to the time, and perhaps the opportunity lost, in stopping to make a hasty plan with the local ground commander (in this case, LTC Vandervoort of 2/505).

2. Evaluate LTG Collins' decision in ordering MG Barton to commit his tank reserve, the 746th Tk Bn. Was he right in forcing the commitment of his subordinate commander's reserve? Why do you think MG Barton was not in favor of the move, though he complied with the order?

Pro. Yes, LTG Collins made the correct decision. He recognized the importance of Ste.-Mère-Église and understood the gravity of the tactical situation surrounding the town. He had every

right to commit his subordinate unit to retaining the town. In the end, the 746th Tk Bn's attack north of Ste.-Mère-Église was critical to defeating the remaining German forces that threatened the city.

Con. LTG Collins should have told Barton to reinforce the town immediately and left it up to his subordinate commander to figure out how best to execute the order. By ordering the commitment of Barton's reserve, he took away what little flexibility Barton had in exercising C2 over his division. As it turned out, the 746th Tk Bn did little in reinforcing the city; it arrived as the 8th Infantry had mostly destroyed the German resistance south of the city. Though the 746th continued to the north and conducted its own hasty attack, the 505 PIR had already committed tanks from TF Raff to the mission.

Stand 9: The 325 GIR and the Merderet River, D+1 – D+3

Visuals:

9A: 325 Glider Infantry Regiment
9B: La Fièrre Bridge-7 Jun 44, German Attack
9C: Merderet River: 8-9 June 1944
9D: Merderet River: 9 June 1944

1. La Fièrre Bridgehead, 9 June (Utah to Cherbourg, 122) or 1/325 GIR attack, 9 Jun (Nordyke, 335), or La Fiere Causeway Attack, (Nordyke, 360).

Orientation:

Virtual View: Take up a position in the air on the southern boundary of the virtual view, near the town of Les Forges looking North. Ste.-Mère-Église should be visible to the north.

Visual 9A: 325 Glider Infantry Regiment

1. We are currently located to the south of Les Forges, a little over 4 kms (2.5 mi) from Ste.-Mère-Église.
2. LZ "E" is just to the east of here, while LZ "W" is just north of Les Forges.
3. Chef-du-Pont is just under 4 kms (1.5 mi) west of Les Forges.

Description:

1. On the morning of D+1, one quarter of the division's combat power of infantry had yet to arrive in Normandy. The 325 GIR, to include the 2/401 GIR, was scheduled to arrive in two lifts, one at 0700 (Mission Galveston) and 0900 (Mission Hackensack) Both of these glider landings occurred prior to the attack of the 8th IN covered in the previous stand (information for this section comes from Blair, 260-261 and Nordyke, 292, 296-97).
 - a. Mission Galveston consisted of 100 gliders from two departure airfields and carried the 1/325 GIR, some engineers, and artillerymen – 717 personnel. Equipment-wise the mission contained the rest of the division's artillery (40 x guns and 40 x vehicles), and a much needed class V resupply.
 - (1) The designated LZ was LZ "E." The gliders met the TOT under intense German ground fire. The gliders were released too far east and too low in altitude. As a result, the gliders were scattered without a single one landing on the LZ.
 - (2) Casualties from the landings totaled 17 killed and 98 injured. LTC Klemm Boyd, the commander of the 1/325, was among the injured and evacuated. MAJ Teddy Sanford, the Bn XO, assumed command.
 - b. Mission Hackensack also consisted of 100 gliders from two departure airfields and carried the 2/325 GIR and the 2/401 GIR – about 1330 personnel. Equipment included 20 jeeps, 9 trailers, 12 81mm mortars, and six tons of class V.
 - (1) The target LZ was LZ "W," part of which the Germans still occupied. As with the previous glider mission, gliders came on time, under heavy ground fire, and were

scattered about the countryside. Those that landed in close proximity to the Germans at Les Forges were particularly hard hit.

(2) Landing casualties totaled 16 killed and 74 injured.

Virtual View: Move in the air to Chef-du-Pont. Follow the road from Les Forges (in the satellite imagery) to the railroad line. Orient North and look toward La Fièrè and Ste.-Mère-Église on cue with the following:

2. Despite being widely scattered, the regiment had largely assembled by 1100. COL Harry Lewis, the Regimental Commander, moved two battalions to the vicinity of Chef du Pont to assume the role as the division reserve. He sent 2/401 to Carquebut to destroy a reported German force that proved false. The battalion then proceeded to the Chef du Pont area.
3. Later in the day, BG Gavin ordered the 1/325 to La Fièrè. The 2/325 was ordered to Ste.-Mère-Église where it was attached to the 505 PIR for subsequent operations with the 8th IN Rgt (Blair, 261).

Visual 9B: La Fièrè Bridge: 7 Jun 44, German Attack

Virtual View: Move back to the vicinity of La Fièrè. Take a position in the air with a view of the bridge, the manor, the La Fièrè village, and Cauquigny across the flooded area.

4. La Fièrè. Earlier that day, 7 June, the defenders at La Fièrè had been in another pitched battle over the control of the causeway. At about 0800, the 1057 Regiment renewed its attack with heavy mortar and artillery fire.
 - a. At 1000 the assault began. Two Renault tanks led the attack followed by at least 200 infantrymen and two more Renaults (Murphy, 94).
 - b. The defenders were still primarily from A/505 and still had two bazookas and the 57mm AT gun in support.
 - c. In this renewed assault, the lead tank was knocked out near the same location as the Panzer III from the previous day, effectively blocking the road. The remaining tanks could not advance.
 - d. However, the German infantry used the destroyed vehicles as cover and the fight raged on at a range of about 40 meters (Murphy, 96).
 - e. On the north side of the road the 1st Plt, A/505 took significant casualties and was down to about 15 men remaining (Harrison, 345).

Sergeant William D. Owens stated: *“They really clobbered us...The artillery shells and mortars were coming in like machinegun fire. I don’t know how it was possible to live through it. Then the infantry came again and we gave them everything we had. The machinegun I had was so hot it quit firing. I took...a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle] and I fired until I ran out of ammunition. I then took a machinegun [from two paratroopers who had been killed] and rested it across a pile of dirt...with this and one other machinegun and a 60mm mortar we stopped them. But they had gotten to within twenty-five yards of us. I really thought we had it.”* (Blair, 263).

- f. The Germans requested, and received, a 30-minute truce to remove their dead and wounded. The defenders at La Fièrè did the same. At least one paratrooper estimated that the Germans evacuated close to 200 dead and wounded (*Ibid*).
- g. After the truce was over, the Germans renewed the indirect fire attack but did not attempt another infantry assault.
- h. At the end of the day, the 1/505 was relieved by elements of the 507th and 508th PIRs, supported by at least two tanks from the 746th Tk Bn. The 1/325 GIR was in reserve to the east of the position. In total, the force at the bridge numbered about 600 (Harrison, 396).

Visual 9C: The Merderet, 8-9 June

Virtual View: Remain in a central position, in the air, where participants can see the La Fiere area and Chef-du-Pont. Rotate in the view or move to a better location to get a view of the locations as the following details are discussed.

- 5. The Merderet, 8-9 June. The division's focus remained on securing a crossing of the Merderet River. It was still an important objective for the VII Corps and for First Army in its effort to cut the Cotentin Peninsula.
 - a. It was also important for the division to link up with the 507 and 508th PIR elements that had been isolated on the far side of the river since the airborne assault. COL Millet was still located northwest of Amfreville and LTC Timmes' 2/507 was still isolated in an orchard east of Amfreville. LTC Shanley's 2/508 remained isolated on Hilltop 30 west of Chef du Pont.
 - b. The plan.
 - (1) Chef-du-Pont. COL Lindquist's elements of the 508th would attack from Chef du Pont to link-up with the elements of 2/508 (under LTC Shanley) on Hill 30. To assist in this effort, the 2/508 was to attack toward the Chef du Pont bridge to clear the causeway.
 - (2) La Fièrè. COL Millet's group (about 250 personnel) was to fight its way to Timmes' group (Blair, 264-65; Utah to Cherbourg, 120-121).
 - (3) Simultaneously, the 1/325 GIR would attack across a flooded roadway north of the La Fièrè Causeway and link up with Timmes. The 1/325 would then attack to Cauquiny to secure the far side of the causeway.
 - (4) On order, the 2/401 GIR would attack across the causeway and link up with the 1/325 GIR to consolidate the bridgehead.

- c. Execution.

Virtual View: Move to the vicinity of the bridge at Chef-du-Pont with a view toward Hill 30. Follow the description below and look south toward the Douve, as the limitations in the virtual tile allow.

- (1) On 8 Jun the operation to link up the elements of the 508th near Chef du Pont failed almost from the start.

- (a) A force of 23 troopers from Hill 30 successfully fought its way to Chef du Pont. However, when COL Lindquist launched the relief convoy toward Hill 30 it came under heavy artillery fire from German positions south of the Douve.
 - (b) Unable to move forward, Lindquist canceled the attack.
- (2) After dark that same day, both the 1/325 GIR and the Millett force began their movements toward Timmes.

Virtual View: Move back toward the west end of the La Fièrè causeway/Cauquigny Church and get a view in the air toward Amfreville. Rotate in the view to IAW the description below.

- (3) The Millett force, encumbered with about 96 German EPWs, became separated in the dark.
- (a) Millett with about 100 troopers walked into a German bivouac site. Millett was captured and most of the rest of his element was captured or killed (Blair, 268).
 - (b) The second group consisted of the remaining 150 Soldiers and the EPWs. CPT Paul Smith, a company commander from the 507th, initially commanded this group. He led them to a position northwest of a grey manor, dubbed “the grey castle.”
 - (c) MAJ Harry Harrison, the XO of the 508th PIR, escaped from the Millett group, linked up with Smith, and took command of the element.
 - (d) Though expressly ordered to remain on the west side of the river and to link up with Timmes and the 1/325 GIR, Harrison withdrew the force to the east side of the river. (Side note: Harrison was investigated for this incident and was transferred to the 28ID where he was KIA in November, 1944).

Virtual View: Move to a position in the virtual view where Timmes’ Orchard, the river, and the railroad are in view. Stay in the air and orient in the view to match the description.

- (4) Meanwhile, the 1/325 GIR infiltrated across the river, linked up with Timmes, and attacked toward Cauquiny.
- (a) The Germans resolutely defended the village and the attack failed.
 - (b) MAJ Sanford’s force of glidermen and paratroopers sustained heavy casualties and withdrew to Timmes’ orchard where it established a defense.
 - (c) In this action PFC Charles N. DeGlopper covered the withdrawal and was later awarded the Medal of Honor, the 82d’s only Medal of Honor in Normandy.

Instructor note: Read the citation as time allows.

Citation: “...on 9 June 1944 advancing with the forward platoon to secure a bridgehead across the Merderet River at La Fiere, France. At dawn the platoon had penetrated an outer line of machine guns and riflemen, but in so doing had become cut off from the rest of the company. Vastly superior forces began a decimation of the stricken unit and put in motion a flanking maneuver which would have completely exposed the American platoon in a shallow roadside ditch

where it had taken cover. Detecting this danger, Pfc. DeGlopper volunteered to support his comrades by fire from his automatic rifle [a BAR] while they attempted a withdrawal through a break in a hedgerow 40 yards to the rear. Scorning a concentration of enemy automatic-weapons and rifle fire, he walked from the ditch onto the road in full view of the Germans and sprayed the hostile positions with assault fire. He was wounded, but he continued firing. Struck again, he started to fall; and yet his grim determination and valiant fighting spirit could not be broken. Kneeling in the roadway, weakened by his grievous wounds, he leveled his heavy weapon against the enemy and fired burst after burst until killed outright. He was successful in drawing the enemy action away from his fellow soldiers, who continued the fight from a more advantageous position... In the area where he made his intrepid stand his comrades later found the ground strewn with dead Germans and many machine guns and automatic weapons which he had knocked out of action."

Virtual View: Move back to the east side of the river, in the air, looking west at the La Fiere Bridge with Cauquigny in the distance.

6. At First Army headquarters, the situation on the Cotentin was becoming serious. The Germans were reinforcing the peninsula through the western approaches. The longer it took First Army to isolate the Cotentin, the harder the fight would be (Blair, 269).
 - a. Therefore, Bradley ordered Collins at VII Corps to commit one of his reserve divisions to the mission.
 - b. Collins committed the "green" 90th Division, by way of the La Fièrè bridge. The attack was to begin on 9 June.
7. Having another division take over his objectives did not sit well with Ridgway. He ordered an attack for the morning of 9 June and appointed Gavin to oversee the operation (Blair, 270).

Visual 9D: Merderet River, 9 June

8. The plan called for the 2/401 GIR to make a frontal attack across the causeway.
 - a. The 82d DIVARTY massed 25 guns to support the attack. (*Optional details: 7 x 75mm pack howitzers from the 319th GFAB, 8 x 105mm snub-nose howitzers from the 320th GFAB, and 10 x 75mm pack howitzers from the 456th PFAB (coming ashore from Utah).*)
 - b. The 90th ID committed the 344th (105mm) and 345th (155mm) FABs to the fight. (*Instructor note: the number of guns per battalion is unknown. Blair cited 12 x 155s in the 345th FA Bn, which is the MTOE strength.*)
 - c. Tanks from the 746th Tank Bn also supported the attack (Gavin estimated there were "about a dozen" medium tanks [Gavin, 136]).
 - d. Gavin issued a be prepared mission to a company (+) sized element from the 507 PIR to assume the attack if the 2/401st culminated. CPT Robert D. Rae commanded the company with the acting regimental commander, LTC Arthur A. Maloney, close at hand. (Maloney was the 3/507 Cdr and took over the regiment when Millet was captured).
9. The attack began at 1030 with artillery fire. The tanks from 746th Tk Bn moved up to the hedgerows near the causeway and added to the prep fires.

- a. At 1045, a single smoke round signaled the artillery end of mission so the infantry assault could commence.
- b. Gavin waited for LTC Charles Carrell's 2-401st to attack. After a few minutes of inaction, Gavin confronted Carrell and ordered him to attack. When he balked, Gavin relieved him on the spot (Blair, 273; Gavin, 136).
- c. MAJ Arthur Gardner, the 325 Regimental S3, took command and started to get the men moving.

Virtual View: Move to ground level, standing on the east side of the bridge, looking west.

- d. By this time, the Germans had recovered from the shelling and covered the bridge with machine gun, mortar, and small arms fire.

Virtual View: Move forward at ground level to a spot just in front of the last German tank.

- e. E Company led the attack and only a few men made it all the way across in this initial assault. Many of the men sought shelter in the ditches and behind the destroyed German equipment. Many were hit on the causeway, adding to the reluctance to move forward.
- f. A Sherman tank attempted to move across the causeway and hit a friendly mine, complicating the already chaotic scene.
- g. As Ridgway, recounted: *"The fire was so intense that the men were physically recoiling. We just grabbed our men and walked them out. The physical force of that fire pouring in was such that they just stopped and started back – not from cowardice at all. We just grabbed them by the shoulders and led them down into this thing and pushed them. We were right there too. This is where your personal presence makes a hell of a lot of difference. I haven't the slightest doubt that if Gavin and I and the battalion commanders had not been there that crossing of the causeway would not have succeeded. The men would not have gone."* (Blair, 274).
- h. G Company was next in the order of movement and added to the congestion on the causeway. Small groups of troopers continued to make their way across to the far bank, gaining a foothold on the northern side.
- i. Gavin, sensing that the attack was faltering, ordered Rae and the 507th men forward. They assaulted at about the same time as F Co, 2/401st.

Virtual View: Move across the bridge to the Church at Cauquigny and continue to look west down the road.

- j. Gathering stragglers as they moved forward, Rae and the glidermen from F Co made it to the far side and expanded the foothold (Rae was later awarded the DSC for this action).
- k. Rae next led his element directly down the road to Le Motey (SE "suburb" of Amfreville).
 - (1) Once there, the troopers came under friendly artillery fire.
 - (2) Gavin, not knowing the forward line of the advance, had identified Le Motey as a likely rally point for the Germans because it sat on high ground.

(3) When the artillery fire shifted from the bridge it oriented on Le Motey. When the fire mission was initiated, it came down on the friendlies forcing them to withdraw.

- I. As elements attempted to form a consolidated bridgehead, the hedgerow country caused a great deal of confusion, isolating some units that caused them to withdraw back to the bridge.

Virtual View: Ascend in the view and rotate in accordance with the following descriptions.

- m. Luckily, the Germans had withdrawn from the area to a defensive line west of Le Motey. Officers and NCOs prevented the collapse of the bridgehead and were eventually able to restore order.
10. By the end of the afternoon the bridgehead was consolidated. From north to south units were disposed as follows: 2/507 PIR, 1/325 GIR, and 2/401 GIR. Still later in the day, 1/508 PIR moved to the south and finally linked up with the elements from LTC Shanley's group on Hill 30.
 11. At last, the conditions were set for the 90th ID to assume the attack to the west.
 12. The 82d in the rest of the Normandy Campaign (Blair, 294-95).
 - a. The division remained in the line until 8 July after 33 days of combat. After establishing the bridgehead at La Fièvre, the division secured the southern line of the Douve River and seized a bridgehead across it. Meanwhile, the 505 PIR attacked with the 4ID northward.
 - b. After consolidating back as a division, it joined the 9th and 90th IDs in attacking westward across the Cotentin. On 3 July, it spearheaded the newly arrived VIII Corps' breakout offensive. The offensive ultimately failed, but the division had attacked rapidly and seized all of its objectives.
 - c. The division returned to England by way of Utah beach. Out of the nearly 12,000 men that made the trip to Normandy, only 6545 were fit for duty. Total casualties were 5245 killed, wounded, and missing. Of these, 1282 were killed and 2373 were wounded and evacuated. The remaining 3655 casualties were either missing, captured, or wounded and returned to duty (Steven Zaloga in *D-Day: Utah Beach and US Airborne Landings*, 91, lists casualties as 457 KIA, 1440 WIA, and 2583 MIA/POW, for a total of 4480).
 13. The 101st Abn Div in the rest of the Normandy Campaign (Blair, 296; Norwood).
 - a. The division remained in the line for about 30 days. On 7 July it moved to an assembly area at Utah Beach for its return trip to England.
 - b. After D-Day, the division secured St.-Côme-du-Mont on 8 June (506 PIR). With three regiments (502 PIR, 506 PIR, 327 GIR) the division seized Carentan on 11 June, thus effectively linking up the Omaha Beach forces (V Corps) with the Utah Beach forces (VII Corps). The division, along with the 2d AD defended the vital city and crossroads against repeated attacks from the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Div.
 - c. The division was relieved from its positions around Carentan on 29 June for occupation/security duties northward toward Cherbourg. The division made stops in St Saviour le Vicomte, pont le Abbé, and Tollevast (Bando, 153).

- d. The division returned to England on 13 July. It had suffered a total of 4670 casualties (Blair, 296). Of that total, 546 were killed, 2217 were wounded and 1907 were reported as missing/captured (Zaloga, 91).

Analysis

1. Comment on Bradley's decision to commit the 90th ID, part of the VII Corps Reserve. Was it the right decision? What other option did Bradley and Collins have?
 - a. Pro: It was absolutely the right decision. Bradley's job as the First Army Commander was to see the larger picture at the operational level. He could plainly see that the tactical commanders were becoming bogged down and needed to push the VII Corps to meet the operational objective of seizing Cherbourg. The first step was still to cut the Cotentin Peninsula to prevent the Germans from reinforcing Cherbourg.
 - b. Con: The mission was a VII Corps mission. By re-tasking the 90th ID from its mission from advancing to the north along with the 4th ID, Bradley slowed the overall attack to the north toward Cherbourg. The 82d seized the bridgehead on its own with only additional artillery in support.
2. Comment on Ridgway's decision to launch his own attack on the 9th. Why conduct a frontal attack with an inexperienced battalion, new to the division? Should he have just let the 90th ID assume the mission as Bradley wanted?

Points to consider: Every other battalion in the division had already been committed; the 2/401st was the only uncommitted battalion left. There was no way Ridgway was going to let another division take over his mission when he still had uncommitted combat power. It was as unthinkable to Ridgway then as it would be with any currently serving division commander.

3. What effect did the 2/401st commander's attitude have on the execution of the mission? Was Gavin right to relieve him?

Consider: According to Blair (pp. 270, 273), LTC Carrell felt like he was given a suicidal mission because the 2/401st was a newly assigned unit to the division and was therefore expendable. His negative attitude permeated the battalion as it waited in its assault position. Carrell faltered at a critical time and could not lead the assault. He became the first commander that Gavin relieved in the heat of combat, so it was not a snap decision on Gavin's part. It could be argued that Gavin should have done it sooner. Side note: Carrell was transferred to the 90th ID where he later successfully commanded an infantry bn.

4. The 507th was also new to the division and had its baptism of fire on 6 June. Gavin had very mixed feelings toward the 507th up to that point (See *On to Berlin*). In fact, after Normandy Gavin, as the new division commander, had to choose which regiment, between the 507th and 508th, to release from the division. He chose the 507th. Why did he trust CPT Rae and LTC Maloney on this day?

Consider: Gavin had been overseeing the operations at La Fièvre since D-day. He had seen firsthand how Rae and Maloney had performed in the heat of combat. He trusted them in line with current US Army doctrine on mission command.

American Airborne Operation Neptune Final Analysis

The facilitator could lead one final analysis of the operation as a whole or incorporate some of these questions as points of discussion during the Integration Phase.

1. The American Airborne portion of Neptune was far from perfect, though it arguably accomplished the mission and the intent. What went wrong with the operation?

Consider:

The point of failure for the airborne divisions was the scattered drops. Only 10% of the paratroopers landed on their drop zones; 25% were within a mile; another 25% were within two miles. 35% were scattered anywhere from 5 to 20 miles away, with the remaining 5% missing (Zaloga, *D-day: Utah and US Airborne Landings*, 63).

By midnight on 6 Jun, the 82d had assembled about 2000 troopers under division control (out of the 6750 that jumped), while the 101st had assembled approximately 2500 (out of 6600) (Harrison, 228 and 300).

Compounding the problem of assembly was the maze of hedgerows, flooded farmlands, and lack of communication equipment for dispersed groups to talk to one another.

Casualties from the drop have never been determined with great accuracy due to the large number of missing and missing-presumed captured. Most estimates put the casualties at around 10%, far lower than the estimated 50-70% losses put forth by Air Vice Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory.

Neptune was the largest Airborne operation of the war up to that point. It was the first operation involving two American Airborne divisions. Excluding Operation Dragoon (southern France), it was the last night Allied airborne assault in Europe of the war.

2. How well did the Airborne phase of Neptune adhere to the principles for joint forcible entry operations from FM 3-99 (pp. 1-2 – 1-4):

Achieve Surprise

Control of the Air

Control of Space

Electromagnetic Spectrum Management: the planning, coordinating, and managing use of the electromagnetic spectrum through operational, engineering, and administrative procedures, to include functions of frequency management.

Operations in the Information Environment

Sea Control

Isolate the lodgment: joint force attacks to protect the establishment of the lodgment, e.g. CAS, joint fires

Gain and Maintain Access

Neutralize Enemy Forces within the Lodgment

Expand the Lodgment [See question 3 below.](#)

Manage the Impact of Environmental Factors

Integrate Supporting Operations: recon, surveillance, security, intel, sustainment, etc.

3. Evaluate how well both divisions conducted follow-on operations after the airborne assault, IAW FM 3-99, p. 4-18: "Commanders must develop contingency plans for possible follow-on operations...The employment of ABNAF (Airborne Assault Force) on the ground is similar to that of other Infantry ground forces."