**Instructions for the Omaha Beach Virtual Staff Ride**

**Preliminary Study and Organization**

**Overview**

This packet of materials is designed to help participants prepare for the Omaha Beach virtual staff ride (VSR). This introduction will provide background information on the purpose and the components of a staff ride and some suggestions on how best to use the read ahead material in preparation for the staff ride.

The United States Army’s publication for conducting staff rides is *The Staff Ride: Fundamentals, Experiences, Techniques* (available at through the Army University Press website at: e Combat Studies Institute website at: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Books/CSI-Press-Publications/Staff-Ride-Handbooks/#staff-rides>. This book defines the staff ride as a three-phased activity: a preliminary study of a historical event, a field phase at the ground or virtual location of that event, and an integration session.

The purpose of a staff ride is not solely to teach history. The primary purpose is to have participants draw insights and lessons from the battle or campaign which military professionals can use in analyzing their own missions and operations and through the experience, perhaps be able to help develop better solutions to similar future challenges.

Therefore, the purpose of the preliminary study phase is to provide participants a thorough understanding of the historical event ***prior to*** the field phase. In other words, to maximize the learning experience, the participants should already know ‘what happened.’ Preliminary study can include reading materials, classroom sessions, movies, and any other material that can be presented before one conducts the field phase. For this staff ride, the preliminary study phase is primarily provided in the read ahead materials and other options referenced in this package. The preliminary study phase is critical to the success of the field study phase and therefore equally critical to the success of the staff ride as a whole.

The field study phase most readily distinguishes the staff ride from other similar forms of historical study (i.e., battlefield tours and campaign/battle analysis). It adds the one critical element of study that cannot be replicated in the classroom, in map study, or in readings—a view of the actual or virtual terrain. Because the field study builds upon the preliminary study, each phase compliments the other to produce a coherent, integrated learning experience. The visual images and spatial relationships seen during the field study may reinforce or challenge analytical conclusions reached during the preliminary study or generate new insights that build upon the added dimension of seeing the actual or virtual terrain.

The integration phase provides an opportunity for participants to reflect upon the staff ride experience. Several positive effects stem from the integration phase. First, it provides the participants the opportunity to analyze the preliminary and field study in order to develop a richer overall view of the campaign. Second, it provides a mechanism through which participants may organize and articulate their impressions of both the event and the insights derived from its study that are applicable to them today. The integration phase for the Omaha Beach VSR will be conducted at the conclusion of the field study.

**General guidance.**

After the preliminary study phase, participants should know what the various key decisions were made, a general understanding as to why a given decision was made (or an educated guess – be prepared to defend your answer), and the results of those decisions. This is particularly true if the units choose to use the role player option.

Participants should take notes during the preliminary study phase for use during the field study.

The stands for the field phase are:

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| Stand 1 Background, Plans, and Preparations | Includes a detailed taerrain orientation of Omaha Beach including terrain characterisctics, obstacles, German organization, ,plans and initial actions, and US organization and plans for Omaha Beach |
| Stand 2  The Fight for the Beaches | Provides a detailed description of the landings and actions of Combat Team 16 in the east, followed by the landings and actions of Combat Team 116 in the west generally at battalion and company level. |
| Stand 3  The Battle Moves Inland (West) | Provides a detailed description of the fighting in and around the towns of Vierville and St. Laurent. It includes German counter-actions and US repsonses to those actions. |
| Stand 4  The Battle Moves Inland (East) & Final Dispositions | Provides a detailed description of the fighting in and around the towns of Colleville and le Grand Hameau. It includes German counter-actions and US repsonses to those actions. It concludes with a description of the actual results achieve on D-Day compared to the original plan and a summary of casualties. |

During the field phase, the staff ride instructor/facilitator(s) will orient the participants to the terrain. Upon completion of the orientation, ideally, the participants should be able to describe what happened, what the result was, and analyze the results of the events, actions, and decisions. As much as possible, the staff ride instructor/facilitator(s) will lead these discussions though open ended questions designed to analyze the events, actions, and decisions in relation to current leadership, tactics, and doctrine. The free flow exchange of ideas and questions are the hallmarks of a good staff ride and is strongly encouraged. The staff ride instructor/facilitator(s) should provide participants with the maximum opportunity to share their knowledge and ideas.

All participants will read the designated portions of the following books:

1. *Omaha Beachhead, 6 June-13 June 1944*, American Forces in Action Series, CMH Publication 100-11, Washington, DC: Center of Military History Facsimile Reprint, 1994.

The book can be downloaded at: <https://history.army.mil/html/books/100/100-11/index.html>

Or write “*Omaha Beachhead, 6 June-13 June 1944*, CMH Publication 100-11” into your search engine to locate it.

1. Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, United States Army in World War II series, Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993.

The book can be downloaded at: <https://history.army.mil/html/books/007/7-4-1/CMH_Pub_7-4-1.pdf> Or write “*Cross-Channel Attack*, CMH Publication 7-4-1” into your search engine to locate it.

**Role Playing.**

For preliminary study, the staff ride instructor/facilitator can assign participants a character for the purposes of role playing. Short bios of each are available from the CSI staff ride team on request, but each participant should conduct additional research on their characters’ actions on D-Day. For the staff ride field phase, the role players should be able to provide details of their character’s actions, decisions, etc., on D-Day. Depending on the size of the participating unit, the unit staff ride project manager can assign up to two participants to each character. Role players should do the group readings outlined below in which their particular character fits, (e.g., BG Norman D. Cota fits in Group 2 and BG Willard G. Wyman fits in Group 3, etc.). These characters are:

**US**

BG Norman D. Cota, ADC, 29th ID

BG Willard G. Wyman, ADC, 1st ID

COL Eugene N. Slappey, Cdr, 115th Infantry

LTC Max Schneider, Cdr, 5th Ranger Battalion

MAJ Sidney Bingham, Cdr, 2nd Battalion, 116th Infantry.

CPT Joseph T. Dawson, Cdr, G Company, 16th Infantry

2LT John Spalding/SSG Philip Streczyk, Leaders, 1st Assault Section, E Company, 16th Infantry

**German**

LTG Dietrich Kraiss, Cdr, 352nd Infantry Division

COL Ernst Goth, Cdr, 916th Grenadier Regiment

LTC Ernst Meyer, Kampfgruppe Meyer

**Organization by Group.**

For larger numbers of participants (@20 or more), the participants can also be divided into 4 groups:

Group 1: 16th Infantry and east side of the beach. This group should be prepared to tell the story of the combat actions on the eastern half of Omaha Beach from the perspective of the company commander. Specifically, the events and significance of the following:

* + The regiment’s mission and objectives at the company and Battalion Landing Team levels.
  + Actions and outcomes of the initial assault companies’ landings (E, F, I, and L Companies).
  + Actions and outcomes of the 3rd Battalion’s ascent to the bluffs and at WN 60. Focus on L Company’s (LTs Cutler and Monteith) actions.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 1st Assault Section, E Company’s (LT Spalding/SSG Streczyk) ascent to the bluffs and at WN 64.
  + Actions and outcomes of the G Company’s (CPT Dawson) ascent to the bluffs.
  + G Company’s (CPT Dawson) movement to Colleville and the fighting en route and in the town.
  + 1st Assault Section, E Company’s (LT Spalding/SSG Streczyk) movement to Colleville and the fighting south of town.
  + L Company’s (LTs Cutler and Monteith) initial patrols to Cabourg and le Grand Hameau.
  + LT Monteith’s actions during the German counterattack on L Company.
  + 3rd Battalion’s (CPT Richmond) capture of le Grand Hameau.
* Group 2: 116th Infantry and west side of the beach.
  + The regiment’s mission and objectives at the company and Battalion Landing Team levels.
  + Actions and outcomes of the initial assault companies’ landings (A, E, F, and G Companies).
  + Actions and outcomes of the 1st Battalion’s (A and B Companies) landings at Vierville Draw.
  + Actions and outcomes of the F and G Companies at Les Moulins Draw.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 3rd Battalions landings between WN65 and WN66.
  + Actions and outcomes of C Company’s capture of Vierville.
  + Actions and outcomes of C Company’s attempts to breakthrough west of Vierville.
  + Actions taken by Cota and Canham.
* Group 3: 115th Infantry.
  + The regiment’s original mission.
  + Actions and outcomes of the regiment’s landings at Easy Red.
  + The regiment’s mission as ordered by BG Wyman.
  + The regiment’s reorganization on the bluffs and German counterattack.
  + The regiment’s attack plan on St. Laurent.
  + Actions and outcomes of the regiment’s attack on St. Laurent.
* Group 4: Rangers (2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions).
  + The battalion’s mission and objectives at the company and Battalion Landing Team levels.
  + Actions and outcomes of C/2nd Ranger Battalion’s landing at Charlie Beach and the assault on WN73.
  + Actions and outcomes of A & B/2nd Ranger Battalion’s landings their assault on WN70.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 5th Ranger Battalion’s landings at Dog White Beach and its movement to the bluff.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 5th Ranger Battalion’s attempts to move south of Vierville.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 5th Ranger Battalion’s attempts to breakthrough west of Vierville.
* Group 5: Germans.
  + The 352nd Infantry Division’s initial mission.
  + The 352nd Infantry Division’s mission after March 1944.
  + The 352nd Infantry’s Division’s role in the construction and defense of Coastal Defense Sector 2 (Omaha Beach).
  + Actions taken by LTG Kraiss the evening of 5 June 1944.
  + The mission and disposition of the 914th Grenadier Regiment prior to D-Day.
  + The mission and disposition of the 916th Grenadier Regiment prior to D-Day.
  + The mission and disposition of Kampfgruppe Meyer (915th Grenadier Regiment and the 352nd Fusilier Battalion prior to D-Day.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 914th Grenadier Regiment on D-Day.
  + Actions and outcomes of the 916th Grenadier Regiment on D-Day.
  + Actions and outcomes of Kampfgruppe Meyer on D-Day.

**Reading Assignments.**

To prepare for the field phase, participants should read the following excerpts from the two read-ahead books outlined above:

Groups 1-4 *Cross Channel Attack* pages 305-328

Group 5 *Cross Channel Attack* pages 249-252, 254-258, 263-266,

330-335

Groups 1-5 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 1-33

Groups 1-4 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 37-44

Group 2 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 45-47

Group 3 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 47-49

Group 2 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 49-53

Group 3 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 53-57

Groups 1-4 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 58-59

Group 2 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 59-65

Group 3 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 65-74

Group 4 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 75-78

Groups 1-4 *Omaha Beachhead* page 92

Groups 2 & 4 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 93-96

Group 2 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 97-98

Group 3 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 98-101

Groups 1-4 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 105-111

Group 5 *Omaha Beachhead* pages 112-115

The staff ride instructor/facilitator can also use a combination of these approaches. Some participants can be assigned a character for example, but still be a part of one of the groups above.

**Summary.**

As with all staff rides, the unit is responsible for determining training/learning objectives and desired outcomes for the staff ride and tailoring the staff ride to meet the unit’s needs. The CSI staff ride team is able to help the staff ride instructor/facilitator in determining what those might be and whether the staff ride itself will support the desired objectives. Contact the CSI staff ride team for further information or clarification of these instructions.