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COMMANDOS IN THE FIELD 1945

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FOREWORD

"I cannot discover the policy of not hitting the enemy as hard as one can, and in the most vulnerable place."

Wellington to Castlereagh, Peninsula, 1814.

COMBINED OPERATIONS PAMPHLET No. 28

COMMANDOS IN THE FIELD

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COMMANDOS IN THE FIELD

SECTION 1—INTRODUCTION

General

1. The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide commanders and planning staffs with a guide to the employment of commandos in the field. The pamphlet gives details of roles suitable for commandos and also refers to their organisation, equipment and training, since these are important factors in the choice of their tasks.

2. Although they are capable in certain circumstances of approaching their targets by parachute or glider, commandos will be considered primarily in their relation to an amphibious assault. Their tasks, both during and after such an assault, can be conceived generally in terms of infantry roles, but commandos must always be considered as specialist troops, with both the qualities and the limitations of specialists.

Characteristics of commandos

3. Commandos can be used either in conjunction with a major assault by our land forces, or alone. Solitary commando operations are discussed briefly in the section on raids (Section 2) and more fully in Combined Operations Pamphlet No. 28—"Small Scale Raids"; but the present pamphlet is mainly concerned with commando roles in conjunction with a major assault. Most commando tasks belong to this category, though they may be either preparatory to the main assault, an integral part of it, or subsequent to the landing and, therefore, integrated with the land operations which follow it.

4. A commando can, if necessary, be used for any normal infantry task in the amphibious assault. It is, however, less suitably equipped for defence than the infantry battalion, since its lack of anti-tank artillery and its comparative weakness in mobile fire power puts it at a disadvantage when subjected to a co-ordinated attack. Offensively, however, the commando seeks to replace fire-power with surprise, and to achieve surprise by agility and speed over difficult terrain. Accordingly, although in an assault it may profitably be ordered to secure a particular feature—possibly to a flank—it should be relieved and withdrawn into reserve, or at least reinforced, before it has to withstand a full-scale counter-attack by infantry or armoured formations backed with artillery support.

Although commandos are trained to cross obstacles, natural and artificial, it is not necessary to search for such conditions. They can, of course, be equally well put ashore across a good sandy beach, always provided that the fire support accorded is in proportion to the enemy opposition that is anticipated.

Again, commandos are trained to operate in the dark, to an extent that they prefer the cover of darkness to the advantages of daylight for almost any of their tasks. When required, however, they can be landed in daylight under the same conditions as other troops taking part in the assault landing.

5. Further characteristics, more fully described in the chapters on employment and training, can be summarised here.

Their training in handling minor landing craft, combined with the ability to negotiate difficult landings referred to already, offsets to a certain degree some of the limiting factors in an amphibious assault. Such limiting factors are the time required for mounting, a wind force or sea force which would normally be prohibitive, difficult beaches, etc.

They must be trained to the highest possible degree of physical endurance and self reliance, so that they can march long distances, at high speeds, and over bad terrain, and maintain themselves to a certain extent without normal sources of supply. They must be experts in minor tactics, and their training in the art of concealment fits them especially for tasks requiring infiltration behind the enemy's lines.

Lastly, there is the quality best described as a suppleness of the whole unit in action. It is derived partly from the simplicity of the commandos organisation and ability to carry their own heavy support weapons, partly from the inculcation of individual initiative, and partly from a habit of carrying out all tasks with a minimum of written orders, etc. This quality helps commandos to mount an operation quickly, to adapt themselves to drastic changes in the tactical situation at the last moment and to react quickly to the needs of the tactical situation.

Commando methods in relation to their role

6. The particular qualities of commandos enable them in many circumstances to achieve advantages over the enemy by the surprise resulting from their line of approach. Except on a small island, no enemy can adequately defend the whole of his coastline. He must site his defences to cover mainly those sectors where a landing seems to him to be practicable. It is through those other sectors, where a landing seems to be impracticable and where the defences may consequently be weak, that commandos should be introduced whenever tactically convenient, for, like all infantry, they seek to land with as little opposition as possible. Once ashore, their speed across difficult country can be exploited to attack the enemy in flank or rear, or to capture some salient feature which is beyond the reach of the main assault forces.

Thus, if a commander can so adjust his plan to make it practicable, commandos should be allowed to assault a lightly defended but topographically difficult sector of the beach, eg cliffs, and to do so under cover of darkness.

Limitations of commandos

7. A commando is a specialised unit with certain inherent drawbacks to its employment in a non-specialised role. These drawbacks arise principally from lack of administrative facilities, and from lack of fire power, particularly in supporting weapons. Commandos are normally allocated to theatres of operations not as single units, but in brigades. If so allotted, the brigade organisation enables them to overcome a number of their administrative difficulties, since besides certain facilities (vehicles, repair personnel, etc) on its establishment, brigade headquarters forms a nucleus to which additional elements, such as additional medical personnel, can be attached for specific theatres and operations.

Opportunities should continually be sought for using commandos to the best advantage and they should not be assigned to tasks which might equally well be carried out by infantry.

Past experience has shown that suitable tasks are constantly to be found even during a protracted period of static warfare following a sea-borne assault. The limiting factor in the employment of commandos is not a scarcity of tasks, but a scarcity of men, due to a wasting strength which can only be made up in the field if special arrangements for reinforcements are made during planning.

Tactical handling of commandos

8. After the initial assault it may be necessary to employ the units of a commando brigade on widely separated tasks, to operate under different formation commanders.

A commando brigade headquarters must, therefore, be capable of being split, and of forming two commando formations.

9. A commando consists of a headquarters (including attached RAMC and REME), five fighting troops, and a heavy weapons troop. The heavy weapons troop is mobile, its jeeps being allotted to it for the transport of its 3-inch mortars and medium machine-guns. The heavy weapons troop provides a measure of supporting fire within the unit, and enables it to increase the scope and duration of any large scale raid or to undertake further tasks after the initial assault.

10. In operations where commando transport is not landed, or where the supporting weapons are needed ashore before the jeeps can land, both mortars and machine-guns can be brought into battle by man-handling. This will be necessary when approaching over difficult terrain, such as cliffs.

Communications

11. Commandos and commando brigades are equipped with the same types of communications equipment as infantry battalions and brigades. Details of the employment of this equipment and of the signal organisation are given in Combined Operations Pamphlet No. 6(a)—"Military Communications in Combined Operations."

12. The Commando Group organisation includes a headquarters signal company which provides:—

- (a) Communications between Group and brigades.
- (b) Signal personnel for small raids.
- (c) Cable detachments for brigades.

SECTION 2—RAIDS

General

13. Commando raids are generally sea-borne operations on a small scale with a limited objective, and are concluded by re-embarkation. They may be carried out by commandos alone, or the force may include a proportion of other arms.

14. Raids may be planned to end in re-embarkation, but contingencies may arise which delay the withdrawal by sea and even prevent it taking place at all. There may be casualties to craft, there may be adverse weather; the commander may decide to exploit the raid further than was thought possible in planning.

Planners must always foresee such contingencies, however unlikely they may seem, and some method of maintaining the raiding force, whether by sea or by air, must be provided. Moreover, maintenance must be capable of operating early, for a commando has no administrative tail, relying as it does on the facilities at brigade for maintenance in the field.

Types of raids

15. Raids are discussed in detail in Combined Operations Pamphlet No. 28—"Small Scale Raids." They can be briefly summarised here and conveniently classified under the objects they seek to attain.

- (a) Reconnaissance raids for specific intelligence purposes.
- (b) Raids for general reconnaissance.
- (c) Raids to destroy enemy installations, headquarters and defences.
- (d) Diversions.

16. **Specific reconnaissance raids**—Commandos will only be required to undertake this type of raid if certain special units trained and equipped for these tasks are not available in a particular theatre. Commandos, however, are not trained in the technique necessary for complete beach reconnaissance.

17. **General reconnaissance raids**—Before any combined operation there will be a requirement for general information regarding the enemy coast and details of his dispositions and equipment. This information may be obtained by small scale commando raids which may include in their objective the capture of prisoners and specimens of enemy equipment.

18. **Raids to destroy enemy installations, etc.**—Commandos may be used in small scale amphibious assaults with the object of destroying enemy headquarters, military or industrial installations, etc. If timed just before a major amphibious assault, they might be employed to destroy enemy radar or other parts of his coast defence system. Targets for such raids must normally be on, or close to, the coast if the raids are to be terminated by re-embarkation.

19. **Diversions**—Diversions can be divided into feints (with usually a tactical object), and raids where diversions on a strategical scale are the main but not the sole object, and where this object can best be achieved by landing and engaging enemy troops.

SECTION 2—EMPLOYMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH A MAIN ASSAULT

Suitable commando objectives

20. As already stated in Section 1, commandos may be asked to secure any reasonable infantry objective, but it is found in practice that their allotted tasks in the assault, when this is made in conjunction with a major amphibious operation, usually fall into one or other of the following categories:—

- (a) To attack isolated defence posts and coast defence batteries, or important terrain features, usually to a flank, which command the main beaches, approaches, or covering position, and to which access is topographically difficult.

This is a role in which a commando can very profitably be employed.

- (b) To land on a flank and thereafter to wheel inland to attack the enemy's main beach defences in flank and rear.
If the beaches on which it is proposed to land the main assault forces are flanked by sectors of difficult terrain—cliffs, boulders, swamps—which are comparatively lightly defended, the use of commandos in this way may be the key to a successful assault. There will have to be, however, the most careful co-ordination between the fire support programme and the commando time-table.
- (c) To land in a lightly defended area and to infiltrate rapidly inland across the enemy's lines of communication, possibly in conjunction with an airborne attack or in co-operation with local guerilla forces, and thus to delay the counter-attack that is expected against our main bridgehead.
- (d) To land unopposed after the main assault and, passing through the covering position, to seize key communication points and tactical features whose prolonged occupation by the enemy would impede our main advance.
- (e) To make independent subsidiary assaults either before, simultaneously with, or after, the main assault for the same purpose as that in (d) above. Provided they are given adequate support to get ashore, commandos can fulfil such tasks.
- (f) To attack isolated objectives which do not require a normal military formation (a brigade or more), and for which the allotment of an infantry battalion would seriously disturb the organisation of the main force.

To use a commando for such tasks is entirely legitimate; but it is a recourse of convenience, justified only by the absence of any more suitable commando tasks, or by an acute shortage of normal infantry units.

- (g) Lastly, by creating diversions, to deceive the enemy into committing his reserves or a part of his forces, in such a way as to suit the commander's strategic plan. Such diversions will usually take the form of mounting a typical commando amphibious operation; and the lengths to which such feints will have to be carried will depend on the enemy's susceptibility to reaction.

Tactical requirements

21. It will thus be seen that, taking a broad view, commandos are normally used tactically in one of three ways:—

- (a) To enable our main forces to land either unopposed or with reduced opposition.
- (b) To delay the enemy's counter-attack against our assault forces.
- (c) To facilitate the advance of our main forces from their covering position.

If the commandos are to fulfil whatever task they are allotted in one or other of the above tactical roles, the plan must obviously be

devised so as to present them with the best chance of circumventing opposition until such time as they must fight for their main objective. It is solely for this purpose, and for the purpose of achieving surprise, that commandos are specially trained, organised and equipped to move fast across difficult country, to seek the unlikely approach, and to take advantage of the cover of darkness.

SECTION 4—EMPLOYMENT AFTER THE ASSAULT

22. Tasks allotted to commandos in protracted land operations should be those which give full scope to their specialised training. Unless this principle is accepted commandos are unlikely to be employed in the most effective way.

Such operations will have the best effect if mounted in conjunction with, or as diversions to, our own major land offensives.

Tasks during a later stage of the initial assault

23. The following are examples of general tasks which commandos might carry out in a later phase of the assault :—

- (a) To deal with enemy forces which may be untouched by the main attack.
- (b) To carry out diversions with a view to reducing enemy opposition to the main attack.
- (c) To hold a part of the covering position until they can be relieved by units of the field force and released to go forward as an offensive patrol, or as attacking forces against enemy centres of resistance, headquarters, or lines of communication.
- (d) To be held in reserve as a mobile striking force, ready for embarkation at short notice to carry out a further landing on the flanks of the main assault.
- (e) To raid enemy headquarters and lines of communication, possibly some distance in the rear of the main battle, by sea-borne landings on some deserted strip of coast, or by landing by parachute or glider.

24. Roles outlined in sub-paragraph (d) above merge into the category of auxiliary landings subsequent to the original invasion referred to in sub-paragraph (e) of paragraph 20, and may be a source of employment for commandos during many months of protracted land operations. For in most amphibious operations the enemy will have a sea flank, which can be exploited for a long time.

The closer such landings are to the enemy's front, and the more successful they are in cutting into his lines of communication, the greater will be the weight and speed of any local counter-attack which the enemy is able to mount. When commandos are so used, experience shows that they will be required to take up a defensive position; and depending on the time taken by the field force to join up overland, or on the possibility of reinforcing the bridgehead by sea, they may be required to fill the roles of infantry battalions until relieved. Even with the arrival of the field force overland or over the beaches, commandos may, for a time, have to take their place alongside infantry in the line.

That this should be undertaken only if circumstances absolutely demand it has been emphasised already. Employment of specialised troops in roles for which they are not organised is not only a waste of manpower, but will also result in the commando units being diminished by casualties till they are too small to be employed until again brought up to strength.

Commandos should, therefore, be withdrawn from the line at the earliest possible moment, for if they are expended in infantry tasks, commanders must realise that they will not be available later in their specialised role.

Roles during protracted operations with no sea flank to be exploited

25. Where the enemy is not vulnerable from the sea, or where considerations of weather or strategy require that he be attacked overland, there are a variety of roles in which commandos can be usefully employed.

26. The following aspects of the commando technique which aims at exploiting surprise and speed, concealment and darkness, should be used as a guide towards selecting tasks in this stage of the operations :—

- (a) Ability to lie up during the day and strike at night at headquarters, tank harbours, communications or installations on the enemy's L of C, and to lay ambushes for AFVs or MT moving up to the battle area.
- (b) Forced marches by small bodies of men along concealed routes. (40 miles in 24 hours is not unusual on commando exercises, and has been recorded in actual operations.)
- (c) Infiltration up to and through the perimeter defences of airfields, and the sabotage of aircraft on them.
- (d) Raids at night to obtain identifications, to capture prisoners, and to increase tension and distract the defence.

SECTION 5—ADMINISTRATION IN THE FIELD

General

27. The administration of commandos in the field, particularly when they are brigaded, should provide no abnormal problems. In operations, however, where commandos' transport is not landed, or is landed in a later phase than that of the formation under whom they are employed, that formation may have to accept full administrative responsibilities. Similarly, when employed in an isolated role such as infiltration, where the use of their transport is not possible, commandos may have to rely temporarily on the administrative facilities of the nearest unit or formation.

The firm base

28. A commando brigade overseas should concentrate as soon as possible after the initial assault at a firm base, at which training and preparation for all subsequent operations can be co-ordinated, and from which these operations can be mounted.

So long as there is still a sea flank to be exploited this firm base should be by the sea and as near as possible to an embarkation point.

The ideal site would be close to a small harbour, where the craft can lie up, particularly if landing craft have been temporarily allocated to the brigade for training and operations.

29. A commando brigade overseas may be allotted temporarily to a corps or lower formation for operations. It should revert direct to army command as soon as possible, and should remain so during the period it is in reserve. Although the location of the firm base will often bring a commando brigade into the area of local administration of a district or sub-area, commandos should not be called upon for garrison or similar duties. If this occurs it will detract from the mobility of the unit and the speed with which subsequent operations can be mounted.

Special stores

30. Certain items of equipment will not be replaceable from army ordnance depots and base ordnance depots unless a special provision has been made.

Commando brigades should, therefore, be permitted to demand direct from Combined Operations Stores Depot at home, or from its nearest satellite overseas, such special equipment as is included in the AFG 1098 of commando units.

Transport

31. Their scale of transport makes commandos almost independent for :-

- (a) Supply, administration, and communications in the field.
- (b) Transport of essential operational stores.
- (c) Transport of heavy weapons.
- (d) The movement of approximately two troops, the heavy weapons troop, and commando headquarters at one time in its own transport.
- (e) Limited mobile reconnaissance.

Although approximately half a commando can be moved by road at one time in unit transport, additional vehicles will be required from corps or army resources if a whole unit or units are to travel by road. This must be borne in mind when operational moves overland are being considered. Once established in a new locality, whether in the line or in reserve, a commando can maintain itself from day to day by means of its own transport, particularly if brigaded with other commandos in a commando brigade.

Medical

32. There is at present no medical organisation designed to cope with the diversity of tasks and the conditions characteristic of commando operations.

The existing medical organisation in the Commando Group is limited to the provision of a medical officer and nine nursing orderlies RAMC per commando, with an ADMS and small administrative staff at Commando Group Headquarters. This allows for the attachment within each commando of one nursing orderly RAMC to each troop, the remainder, with the regimental medical officer, forming the

regimental aid post at or near commando headquarters. Experience has shown that this establishment is too small and requires to be increased by a minimum of six nursing orderlies or stretcher bearers RAMC, to allow a distribution of at least two RAMC personnel per troop. For the present these must be obtained from a co-operating field ambulance.

33. Behind the regimental aid post there is no commando medical organisation, there being no field ambulance or its equivalent included in Commando Group. The evacuation of casualties, therefore, depends upon the temporary attachment from other formations of a field ambulance, a portion of a field ambulance, or a field dressing station.

34. The disadvantages of this procedure should be realised by formations concerned.

- (a) Medical units or sub-units may not be readily available. If available, their tasks on the swift and widely separated operations which commandos undertake, may separate them indefinitely from the formations from which they have been detached.
- (b) As existing field medical units are neither equipped nor organised for the commando type of role, they will require to be suitably organised and equipped.
- (c) Their personnel may require special training to fit them for their new role.

Replacement of casualties in the field

35. The biggest problem which commando troops have to meet in the field is the replacement of casualties.

The first reinforcements establishment can only be implemented on instructions from the War Office. If these are given, first reinforcements will normally go overseas with the first reinforcements of the force. They will be moved to the commando brigade firm base as soon as this is established and be ready for assimilation into the unit as replacements. If the initial landing is an opposed one the problem of reinforcement will arise early.

36. To keep commandos up to strength in the field two measures are necessary :-

- (a) Facilities must be granted all along the lines of communication for the rapid despatch from the Holding Operational Commando at home of such drafts of trained recruits as are available.
- (b) Second echelons and base depôts in the theatre of operations must co-operate in sending forward direct to the commando brigade's firm base all commando personnel casualties as soon as these are fit to rejoin their units. This is contrary to the usual procedure, whereby personnel discharged from base hospitals wait in their respective base depôts against bulk demands by formations.

If the strategic situation permits, a commando which has had heavy casualties should be replaced by a fresh unit. The strength of a commando must not be allowed to fall below the minimum required for reforming.

SECTION 6—PLANNING

Introduction

37. The elasticity required of commandos in their organisation and tactics is equally essential in their planning procedure. And while it is axiomatic that the chances of success are greatly increased by adequate time and facilities for planning and rehearsal, it has nevertheless been proved that amphibious assaults can be improvised at a few hours notice, provided certain favourable conditions already exist.

This section is an attempt to summarise, in general terms, the lessons learned during the planning stages of many commando operations.

Time required for planning

38. It is usually found that the time required for planning varies directly with the strength of enemy opposition expected, and inversely with the degree of mutual understanding already established between the commando troops, the particular naval forces involved, and the staff of the superior military commander who is launching the operation.

The influence of existing conditions on time required for planning

39. It will thus be seen that the time required to plan an operation depends not only on the needs of the case, but also on the conditions existing when the operation is first authorised.

40. The time required to mount an operation will be devoted less to planning than to the establishment of mutual understanding between all concerned, and the integration of the forces involved. However, as a general guide to the time required to launch a commando operation in the course of a military campaign, a total of 14 days joint planning between the naval and commando forces involved should always be adequate given favourable weather for training and the prior existence of intelligence concerning the target. Alternatively, a period of seven days will usually be enough once the naval units and commando troops have been integrated into a single force for the purpose of the operation.

Planning factors

41. The ingredients of any plan are:—

- (a) Intelligence.
- (b) Bulk allotment of resources.
- (c) A directive giving the object of the operation, and the specific tasks in their order of priority.

Beyond these three factors, all that is normally required is a further statement of those restrictions which must necessarily be imposed by general strategical needs, or by the tactical requirements of other operations in the same theatre. It is clear that the fewer the restrictions the easier will be the task of the joint naval and commando planners concerned.

Restrictions

42. Restrictions may be necessary for a variety of reasons. For instance:—

- (a) It may be politically undesirable for a certain area to be bombed unless the target is clearly visible; and consequently the forces undertaking the operation will have to accept the additional casualties resulting from the absence of this support.

(b) There may be certain weapons, still on the secret list, which are required for the operation but which may not yet be taken into an engagement where they are liable to fall into enemy hands.

(c) There may be occasions when a superior commander will be unwilling to agree to the employment of forces—particularly naval units—in a way which he considers to be unduly hazardous.

(d) As regards operations undertaken as an integral part of a tactical plan, there will always be factors—which amount to restrictions—co-ordinating the commando operations with those of the main forces. In particular, the commando assaults will have to be most carefully synchronised with the main operations as regards both the hour and the time at which commando troops are to be withdrawn or relieved. In this respect, it is the duty of both commando and naval planners to make sure that the superior military commander is not unduly optimistic, and is well aware of the possibilities and consequences of delay either on the part of his main forces or of the commandos themselves.

Intelligence

43. Deliberate raids—Deliberate raids require the most detailed intelligence that can be prepared, checked, and collated. This must include air photographs taken periodically, the last sorties being made as late as possible before the time of sailing, and a careful calculation of weather probabilities. Models and coastal silhouettes will also be helpful.

44. Opportunist operations—In the case of a commando operation undertaken in the course of a general campaign, it will very rarely be possible for detailed intelligence to be collated. It will usually suffice if the joint naval and commando planners are given the fullest possible access to all existing intelligence in the headquarters of the superior commander, and if the necessary priorities for air photography are agreed on a generous scale.

45. Air photographs—Large scale vertical photographs are necessary for planning commando landings. Comparative cover over a period of at least twelve months should be compared with new air photographs. Small-scale photographs will not enable an interpreter to judge accurately the height of obstacles which have to be crossed or to distinguish real weapons and real minefields from dummy defences.

Oblique photographs should be obtained where possible to supplement the information given by the vertical photographs. Accurate coastal silhouettes can be produced by photographing models. Oblique photographs of the coast showing, if possible, types of beach obstacles if they exist, taken at the lowest possible level, are of the greatest value as an aid to an accurate landing.

Photographic cover should be ordered early, together with the latest interpretation reports and annotated photographs. Whenever possible, specially detailed work should be undertaken by a trained photo-interpreter who must be conversant with the details of the plan. The question of security should be borne in mind when ordering special sorties, particularly low obliques.

Allotment of resources

46. It will not usually be possible or advisable for a superior commander to make a final allotment of resources at the time when he issues his initial directive to the commando formation commander. It will usually be better for the commando formation commander to have the opportunity to examine the intelligence in relation to his tasks and to state his requirements in terms of naval and air support, and of any auxiliary troops—such as armoured units or artillery—which he may think necessary. In this event, a provisional commando plan, or outline plan, will be drawn up for the amendment or approval of the superior commander, and will state clearly the resources entailed. If these are not available, then the plan will have to be varied accordingly.

Directive by the superior commander

47. There will be times when it is possible for the superior commander to state only the "object" of an operation and the resources available. It then becomes the duty of the commando formation commander to resolve for himself the tasks that he must undertake to accomplish that object, and the order of their priority. It is, however, desirable that this should be done in the first instance so as to narrow down the limits within which the commando planners must approach their problem.

Once the tasks, in their order of priority, have been made clear, as much as possible should thereafter be left to the discretion of the joint naval and commando planners, subject to the restrictions stated in paragraph 42 above.

Centralisation

48. It has been found advisable in the past to keep commandos as far as possible under centralised control, and consistently under command, of a single formation on the highest possible level.

Except for the initial assaults of a large-scale operation—where commandos may be placed under command of an assault formation—it will rarely be profitable to decentralise commando troops below corps; and it will often be wiser to retain them directly under command of army or even army group. On these higher levels, the necessary intelligence, as well as the facilities for rapid movement of troops and the immediate supply of weapons, stores and other resources, will be more readily available. Furthermore, naval and RAF decisions will normally have to be agreed at a high level; and accordingly the higher the military formation that is in charge of the operation, the fewer will be the channels between planners and naval and RAF approval.

49. As regards decentralisation of detailed planning within the commando formation itself, the principle is that decentralisation should not take place until the operation is as firm as possible in respect of tasks and resources; but that when it does take place, it should be whole-hearted. A common procedure is for the commando formation commander to loan members of his staff to the subordinate headquarters to assist in planning and mounting the operation.

Re-assembly

50. No plan is complete unless it includes adequate arrangements for re-assembly after the operation, for reforming and, if possible, reinforcement. In certain commando operations, there may be no

organised withdrawal, and troops will be required to infiltrate back through the enemy lines either singly or in small detachments. This must be carefully planned so that our own forward units and formations assist the recovery of commando detachments and speed them on their way to a pre-selected concentration area in the rear.

Communications

51. Commandos are now well found as regards communications, equipment and personnel; but it will be important for the commando signals officer concerned to work closely with the signals staffs of the superior military formations, and of the Navy, as early as possible in the planning. This aspect of the plan is too often neglected until it is too late in the proceedings for necessary arrangements to be made.

SECTION 7—TRAINING

52. The training which a commando recruit receives can be divided into four parts:—

- (a) Preliminary training.
- (b) Basic training.
- (c) Advanced training.
- (d) Training with a unit.

Preliminary training

53. **Objects of preliminary training**—The objects of preliminary training are:—

- (a) To bring all personnel to the same standard of training before beginning basic training.
- (b) To bring all personnel to a high standard of discipline, administration, and weapon training.
- (c) To prepare personnel physically for the tests they will have to pass at the Commando Basic Training Centre.

54. **Subjects taught in preliminary training**—Subjects taught in preliminary training are:—

- (a) Of the first priority:—
 - (i) Weapon training—to include rifle, LMG, grenade (69, 75, 77, 79 and 36 (both 4- and 7-second fuze)), 2-in. mortar, TMC, Sten, Mark IV, PIAT, bayonet.
 - (ii) Discipline and interior economy.
 - (iii) Physical training, to include speed marching and unarmed combat.
- (b) Of second priority:—
 - (i) Map reading.
 - (ii) Field craft—sufficient to obtain full value from weapon training.
 - (iii) Night training.
 - (iv) Swimming.

55. **Standards to be attained in preliminary training**—Before beginning basic training, the aim must be to produce personnel who are:—

- (a) First class shots with the rifle, qualified in LMG, and passed in all tests of elementary training in these weapons and in the TMC, grenade, 2-in. mortar and PIAT.
- (b) Able to carry out speed marches of five miles in one hour, followed by digging and shooting.

Basic training

56. **Objects of basic training**—The objects of basic training are :—

- (a) The consolidation of the commando esprit de corps.
- (b) The establishment in all personnel of a sense of high achievement, and a confidence founded on the ability to survive strenuous physical training and to overcome severe obstacles.
- (c) The exercise of the physical stamina initiated in preliminary training.
- (d) The maintenance of the standard of discipline and weapon training achieved during preliminary training.
- (e) The practice of night fighting, and the belief that darkness is an aid rather than a deterrent to closing with and attacking the enemy.
- (f) Fostering the offensive spirit.
- (g) Self-reliance and ability to act independently.
- (h) The art of field craft and of making the best of uncomfortable conditions.

57. **Subjects taught in basic training**—Subjects taught in basic training are :—

- (a) **Of the first priority :—**
 - (i) Field craft—including night training, map reading, and bivouacking.
 - (ii) Physical training—including speed marching with normal operational loads.
 - (iii) Advanced weapon handling.
 - (iv) Use of enemy weapons.
 - (v) Medical instruction.
- (b) **Of second priority :—**
 - (i) Elementary combined operations.
 - (ii) Elementary cliff climbing.
 - (iii) A knowledge of mines and booby traps.
 - (iv) Watermanship and improvised bridging.

58. **Standards to be attained in basic training**—Before beginning advanced training, all personnel must be :—

- (a) Enthusiasts for commando work, confident in their capabilities, and proud of their preliminary and basic training results.
- (b) Capable of carrying out speed marches of fifteen miles in two hours fifty minutes, followed by effective shooting.

Advanced training

59. **Objects of advanced training**—The objects of advanced training are :—

- (a) To teach those additional subjects needed by a reinforcement before joining a unit, with emphasis on section battle drill.
- (b) To maintain the standard already achieved in weapon training, physical fitness and discipline.

60. **Subjects taught in advanced training**—Subjects taught in advanced training are :—

- (a) **Of the first priority :—**
 - (i) Section training.
 - (ii) Mines and booby traps (both allied and enemy), and assault demolition.
 - (iii) Night training.
 - (iv) Medical instruction.
- (b) **Of second priority :—**
 - (i) Swimming.
 - (ii) Weapon training, including Colt .45 automatic.

61. **Standards to be attained in advanced training**—Before being considered available for drafting, all personnel must be disciplined, physically hard, self-reliant as fighting men, and fit in every way to take their place in a commando section.

Training with a unit

62. Training with a unit comprises troop and commando training to enable the unit to carry out any of the following tasks :—

- (a) Assault landings to carry out special tasks.
- (b) Landings in darkness in rough weather, and on rocky coasts where the defence is likely to be weaker than on open beaches.
- (c) Scaling cliffs, to strike inshore at places where the enemy least expects attack.
- (d) Getting behind the enemy lines by infiltration, or by landing from small craft, submarines, flying boats, or by parachute.
- (e) Tasks which entail living on the land and fighting for a number of days without administrative facilities.

Special training

63. **Selected personnel are trained in :—**

- (a) Rock assault—including landings from LCP(L), cliff climbing, deployment at the cliff top, and the elementary handling of dories.
- (b) Advanced dory training—including navigation, and the tactical handling of dories and diaghies for beach reconnaissance.

APPENDIX**THE EVOLUTION OF THE COMMANDO GROUP**

1. Commandos were first formed in 1940, with the primary function of making small scale sea-borne raids on enemy occupied coast.

During this period it was envisaged that the normal employment of commandos would be for short periods only, towards limited objectives, and as individual units. Consequently their composition, training and

equipment were designed to give speed and flexibility of manoeuvre, at the expense of supporting fire power and maintenance facilities. With no administrative problems in the field, their small administrative tail was static and based on the United Kingdom.

The Special Service Brigade

2. Commandos were originally incorporated in the Special Service Brigade, which comprised a number of commandos—nearly all army units—a number of special units, the Commando Depot and the Mountain and Snow Warfare Camp. These units were scattered throughout Great Britain, and the Special Service Brigade was responsible for their recruiting, training, administration and, to a certain extent, for the detailed planning of raids.

The Special Service Group

3. In September, 1943, the units were reorganised and the Special Service Group was formed, with a threefold object:—

- (a) **Decentralisation and reorganisation**—To facilitate command and administration at home, and to provide compact and self-supporting formations suitable for despatch to any theatre of operations.
- (b) **Increase in fire power of commandos**—To enable commandos to continue the battle after completion of their initial tasks, and, with additional fire power, to reduce defences and meet enemy counter-attacks.
- (c) **Increased administrative facilities**—To enable commandos to maintain themselves for an indefinite period ashore.

Decentralisation and reorganisation

4. The reorganisation scheme provided for:—

- (a) The formation, in place of Special Service Brigade, of the Special Service Group, consisting of a number of brigades, each of a number of commandos.
- (b) The formation of more commandos to bring the total to the requisite number of brigades.
These new units were found by the Royal Marine Division, and went through the normal process of training at the Commando Basic Training Centre.
- (c) The formation of the Holding Operational Commando to which recruits could be posted both before and after undergoing their initial training at the Commando Basic Training Centre.

Redesignation of Special Service Group and special service brigades

5. In November, 1944, the Special Service Group and special service brigades were renamed Commando Group and Commando Brigades respectively.