

MILITARY HISTORY STUDY GROUP
WAR GAME
26 MAY 2005

OPENING NARRATIVE (FOR BOTH SIDES)

It is one of the ironies of military history that the German General Staff, whose planning ability was regarded by most professionals as second to none, did not make contingency plans for the invasion of Britain prior to World War 2. Stranger still, was the fact that nothing was done even after Britain declared war on Germany on Sunday 3 September 1939. Neither was there any thought of planning to invade Britain during the nine month phoney war period before the German offensive was launched through the Ardennes in May 1940. Even when France was obviously crumbling and its collapse imminent, still no plans were made.

It thus became clear to British intelligence that Hitler may have been influenced by his own peace time ambassador to Britain, Von Ribbentrop, and possibly by the attitudes of influential people like Lord Halifax, who later became a member of the British War Cabinet, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and other aristocratic fellow travellers in his belief that the British Government would see the hopelessness of their cause and eventually agree to a compromise peace. As it happened his estimate was a close call. Lord Halifax, favoured by both King George VI and Queen Elizabeth for Prime Minister, rather than Churchill, actually voted with one other war cabinet member for a compromise peace. The vote, held in war cabinet in September 1940, was two for a compromise and two against with Churchill casting the final vote to pursue the war against Germany whatever the cost. Therefore, Hitler's estimate of the situation was dreadfully close and would have alarmed many Britains (and many Australians for that matter) had they known at the time.

Then on 2 July 1940 Hitler suddenly did an about face. He ordered a study of the problem of overcoming Britain by invasion. The appreciation and plan, which was completed by the German General Staff in less than two weeks, was approved by Hitler almost immediately so that on 16 July Hitler ordered the preparation for the invasion. It was allotted the codeword "Sealion". The battle for Britain was soon to start.

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NARRATIVE 1 (FOR GERMANY)

The overall task of launching Sealion was given to Field Marshal von Rundstedt and his Army Group A.

Rundstedt's appreciation of the British Army strength, its dispositions and intentions were that

The order of battle for Army Group A, which comprised about 39 infantry divisions, 6 armoured divisions, 3 motorised divisions and 1 airborne division was;

16th Army. General Busch
9th Army. General Strauss

Placed under Command of Army Group A for the first phase of Sealion was 4 Corps (three divisions) from 6th Army.

Army group A was disposed as follows

16th Army was located in the north in the areas BOULOGNE-CALAIS-SCHELDE Estuary.

9th Army with 4 Corps under command were both located in the south in the areas CHERBOURG-SEINE Estuary..

DISCUSSION POINT 1

As Field Marshal von Runstedt be prepared to give your outline plan for the army invasion of Britain.

NARRATIVE 2 (FOR GERMANY)

Rundstedt's outline for the invasion of Britain was plan was;

16th Army was to establish a bridge-head in the areas LYMPE-FOLKESTONE-DOVER-RAMSGATE.

9th Army was to establish a bridgehead in the areas PORTLAND-SOUTHAMPTON-BRIGHTON.

The invasion was to be preceded by the night time drop of an airborne division at D-6hrs to capture the cliff tops from DOVER to FOLKESTONE.

Operation Sealion comprised four waves and a subsidiary operation. The first wave comprised a force of ten divisions, which was to land in the two areas described above between D Day and D+4. From D+5 to D+7 this force would advance inland in the form of a pincer movement with 9th Army advancing north from PORTSMOUTH and 16th Army advancing east along the Thames Estuary with the eventual objective of both armies linking up to isolate London.

The second wave would be a mobile exploitation force composed of six armoured and three motorised divisions in three corps. This would be followed by a third wave of nine infantry divisions and a fourth wave of eight infantry divisions.

A subsidiary operation which was to be conducted by 4th Corps with three divisions, in the first wave, was to sail from CHERBOURG and land at LYME BAY (near PLYMOUTH). Its task was to push northward to the SEVERN Estuary.

The German Naval Staff estimated that the cross channel conveyance of the first wave alone which comprised 250,000 men (excludes the airborne division) would require 155 transports totalling some 700,000 tons and 3000 smaller craft (1720 barges, 470 tugs, and 1160 motorboats.

As planning did not start until the latter part of July the German Naval Staff soon declared that such a large quantity of shipping could not be assembled ready to launch Sealion before the middle of September. This was contrary to Hitler's directive that preparations were to be completed by mid-August. Hitler eventually accepted this later launch date.

In the meantime, Hitler and all his commanders believed that the attainment of air superiority was a prerequisite for the invasion, a task willingly accepted by Reich Marshal Goering.

Goering delegated this task to appreciated that the RAF had

NARRATIVE 2 (FOR GERMANY)

As be prepared to give your outline plan for the destruction of the RAF.

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RAMSGATE. task was to establish a bridge head in the areas LYMPE-FOLKESTONE-DOVER-RAMSGATE.

9th Army was located in the areas CHERBOURG-SEINE Estuary and had the task of establishing a bridgehead in the areas PORTLAND-SOUTHAMPTON-BRIGHTON.

The invasion was to be preceded by the night time drop of an airborne division at D-6hrs to capture the cliff tops from DOVER to FOLKESTONE.

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The second wave would be a mobile exploitation force composed of six armoured and three motorised divisions in three corps. This would be followed by a third wave of nine infantry divisions and a fourth wave of eight infantry divisions.

A subsidiary operation which was to be conducted by 6th Army, with three divisions, in the first wave, was to sail from CHERBOURG and land at LYME BAY (near PLYMOUTH). Its task was to push northward to the SEVERN Estuary.

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