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D-Day: Behind the Beaches

By Patrick Callahan
June 2009

About two weeks before the Normandy invasion of June 6, 1944, after months of preparation, Allied airborne planners realized that their drop plan just would not work. The plan was too ambitious; the drop zones were well beyond easy reinforcement from the landing beaches. Besides, intelligence had just learned that the German 91st Airlanding Division had just been posted to the proposed drop area. "Rommel's Asparagus" were popping up all over the Cotentin!

Consequently planners rushed to alter the plan to be a shorter cast. The new landing areas would have to be more easily reached by the forces coming up from the beaches and the paratroopers would have to be dropped in a better position to help to cover the invading troops from German counterattack from inland. After months memorizing every hedgerow, crossroads, bridge and identifiable enemy position in the central Cotentin, all that was now scrapped and a whole new set of objectives were hastily chosen.

Those objectives are familiar to the student of the American airborne invasion of Normandy today: Ste. Mere Eglise, Pouppeville, La Barquette, Manoir de la Fiere and many others. Like many of the Pacific islands at the time, few besides the local residents had ever heard of them. But soon, as with their Pacific cousins, that would change.



Because of the haste in which the plan had to be altered, mistakes were made. The most notably, despite some claims to the contrary today, the Allied planners had totally missed the fact that the Merderet Valley had been flooded. Photos taken from aircraft show the flooded areas as large grass fields next to the river. For a perfect example, see page 124 of "Utah Beach to Cherbourg" American Forces in Action Series Facsimile Reprint 1984 (Center of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C.) The aerial photograph shows La Fiere causeway and bridge and the surrounding "fields". It is easy to see how the mistake was made after viewing this photograph.

The Germans had opened the locks in 1940 soon after occupying the area. The areas around the river bank had slowly filled and tall grass grew up through the shallow water making them look like grassy pastures from the air. This was not picked by Allied planners because they did not begin to study potential invasion areas until late 1942 and it wasn't until 1943, when the invasion plan was expanded, that the Merderet Valley was even looked at.

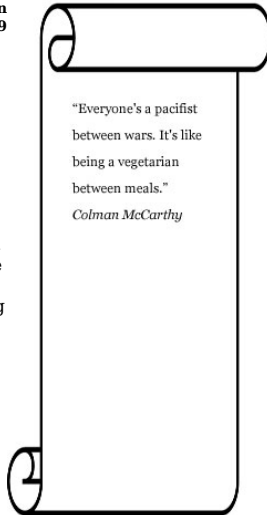
Consequently the 1st Battalion of Colonel Howard R. Johnson's 501st Regiment, 101st Airborne Division was assigned the mission of capturing the locks at La Barquette so that they could not be manipulated by the Germans to flood the already flooded Merderet Valley! In fact, when Col. Johnson's group arrived at the lock the first thing they did was check the lock's winding station to see if the equipment still worked.

Finding the Path

Other than the lock itself there are no other important terrain features in the immediate area of this section of the lower Douve River. There are no bridges, villages, causeways, crossroads, or battery positions in the area, nothing but the locks and a large swamp.

This seems to be proof that the Allied planners had no clue that the Merderet Valley was already flooded. How could the Merderet could be affected by a lock on the Douve? The Merderet is a tributary of the Douve and part of the same river system.

La Barquette Locks also controlled water flow into the Douve River and its estuary the "Prairies Marecageuses." Flooding here could potentially effect movement over the Carentan Causeway. This was a terrain feature airborne planners did know about. But they underestimated the time that the waters would take to rise in the Douve



"Everyone's a pacifist between wars. It's like being a vegetarian between meals."
Colman McCarthy

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system, and thus overestimated the lock's tactical value. Even if Allied planners had a less hurried appraisal of La Barquette as a strategic and tactical objective it still may have been slated for capture because other than the bridges on the Carentan Causway it is the only other solid crossing of the lower Douve River.

Although no drop or landing zones were mistakenly planned for inundated areas, many were in close proximity to the floods. This, combined with intense flak, too-high air speeds, bad navigation and either early or late green jump lights in the transport planes, caused many hundreds of paratroopers to land not only off their mark, but in the drink — including 82nd Division Assistant Division Commander James Gavin.



All this happened despite the fact that for the first time the Allies were using specially trained "Pathfinders". Men who would drop before the main assault to mark the drop zones with special assembly lights that follow up troops could rally on. This came as a result from the widely scattered drops in North

Africa and Sicily where men were scattered all over the map, making assembly the date from hell.

The problem was so bad in North Africa that when 2nd Lt. Dan A. DeLeo's Paratroopers of the 509th Battalion were dropped for a raid on the El Djem bridge not one reached their objective. In Sicily the situation improved but things were still terrible. The then-Col. James Gavin landed 20 miles from his objective and was not sure he was even on Sicily when he landed. His location was confirmed by an Italian prisoner who could only repeat "Mama Mia, Mama Mia" over and over again when, under questioning, Capt. Ben Vandervoort threatened to rearrange certain parts of his anatomy with a jump knife. Gavin did get to Biazzo Ridge in time to blunt a German counter attack by elements of the Herman Goring Panzer Division. But that is another story.

The problem with the Pathfinders was that they were not dropped any more accurately than anyone else. Some were on the mark, most were not. For some the light failed to work, some could not light their light due to the proximity of German troops. Some were lost. Some were killed. But most Pathfinders made the best of their situation (as did most troopers that night) and lit their lights were they could, figuring that the troops would have to gather wherever the light is, and they did.

Revised Plans

Many troopers simply just ran into each other or the enemy in the dark in chance encounters that were often comical and sometimes deadly. General Maxwell Taylor, 101st Airborne Division commander, landed totally alone in a field. After milling around for a while and falling flat at every sound and shadow, he finally met up with a private who was equally spooked. Once they had identified each other, a process which had nearly caused both a cardiac arrest, they hugged, the private and the general, like old girl's-school chums at a class reunion. All of this occurring in the dead of night in the middle of a Normandy cow pasture.

Then there was Maj. Vaughn, the S-4 of the 101st's 502nd Regiment. He and Capt. Buker, the regimental S-2, had met Lt. Colonel Robert G. Cole, 3rd Battalion Commander, and some troopers. Discovering that they were more than five miles from their drop zone they set off toward their objective. As they moved along their numbers swelled. Not many of the men were from Cole's Battalion, there were even a few 82nd strays tagging along. After several hours they bumped into a German patrol and Vaughn was instantly killed. After years of training and preparation his combat life lasted only long enough to march several miles down a French lane.



Many didn't even get that far. They drowned in the swamps, entangled in their risers, loaded down with gear, and disoriented. They succumbed to waters that in daylight, under normal conditions, would not have been nearly as deadly. The first concern of those who did rise out of the swamps was to get to the nearest dry ground, regardless of the direction. Objectives could wait. In addition, the herding instinct took over and men tended to follow the crowd, wherever it went.

Despite the difficulties of the swamp, lost equipment bundles, missing and jump injured men, scattered drops, mixed units, and a few shrinking violets, the U.S. paratroopers won through. Throw in bad or no communications, and their achievement becomes even more impressive. In fact rumors were rampant on D-Day behind the

beaches that the seaborne landings had not even taken place! No one including top airborne leaders knew if that was true or not until after daylight, when seaborne units appeared at places like the Pouppeville Exit. Even then it was just a "local" event. Lesser men of all ranks would have folded with the strain.

The Germans had their moments, too. Much is made about Lt. Turnbull's magnificent stand at Neuville-au-Plain, but at La Fiere just 24 Germans held off six separate but uncoordinated assaults before giving up the Manor grounds late on D-Day afternoon.

Both airborne divisions fought with a minimum of seaborne help for the first few days of the invasion. Some seaborne help did come up into the airborne areas of operation, but the heavy lifting was done by those troopers who had dropped, rose from the swamps, assembled, and moved on their objectives, regardless of all obstacles and despite friendly or enemy numbers.

U.S. airborne doctrine had units move on objectives without waiting to come to full strength. This worked out, as many objectives were taken by under-strength and mixed groups from all units. Because of the scattered nature of the drop and the multiple objectives, and the fact that the paratroopers usually fought the Germans where they found them, confused the German command as to just what the paratroopers were trying to accomplish.

It was not pretty, but the revised plan had worked. German batteries were destroyed, key terrain was occupied and held, and German counter thrusts were blunted.

Can players do as well with their "revised plan"?

Panzer Grenadier: D-Day Behind the Beaches

Game length: 96 turns (24 hours)

First turn: 12 am midnight 6 June, 1944 at U.S. player's option.

Other: None.

Board orientation is the same as [Panzer Grenadier: Airborne](#) Scenario 11. (See page 4 of the *Airborne* scenario book.)

Axis Forces

Elements of the 91st Airlanding Division:

Germans set up first, but only after the Allied player secretly chooses the objectives and plans the drop. Strongpoints set up in hexes 0412 and 1013. Place first.

For setup hex roll 1D6 (one six-sided die). On a result of 1-2, set up in hex 0307; on 3-4, hex 0606; one 5-6, hex 0904.

- 1 x 105mm battery (dug in)
- 1 x Wagon (dug in)
- 1 x Gren (dug in)

Leader: 1 x Lt.

May set up anywhere, dug in, at the Axis player's option; the Grenadier platoon may "split" into two one-step units at the Axis player's option so it may set up in more than one hex:

- 1 x Gren
- 1 x HMG (reduced)
- 1 x 20mm Flak battery (may set up hidden)

Leaders: 1 x Capt., 1 x Lt.

The Axis player may check strongpoints AFTER they have been selected and placed but before other Axis forces are placed. Keep the strongpoints' compositions secret until they activate or the U.S. enters the strongpoint hex.

Axis Reinforcements

Start rolling six turns (1 1/2 hours) after the initial drop. At the beginning of each turn roll 1D6. On a result of 1 (or 1-2 if the time is 0600 or later), receive initial reinforcement of:

- 1 x Sdkfz 222
- 1 x Motorcycle

Leader: 1 x Lt.

Roll on the table below for entry location.

Beginning the turn AFTER any initial reinforcement unit spots an enemy unit or is fired upon, the Axis player rolls once each turn for additional reinforcements. They roll for entry in the same manner

as the initial reinforcements above.

The additional reinforcements are composed of:

- 1 x ENG
- 1 x HMG
- 1 x Gren
- 1 x 81mm
- 4 x trucks

Leaders: 1 x Capt., 2 x Lt., 1 x Sgt.

They all enter at one time as a group at the same location as the initial reinforcements. In addition, roll again 1D6 each turn. On a roll of 1, add:

- 1 x S.35

When the initial Axis reinforcement arrives roll again 1D6. Enter on or within one hex of the rolled location:

1. Hex 0017
2. Hex 0106
3. Hex 1101
4. Hex 1210
5. Hex 0501
6. Hex 0517

All successful Axis reinforcement rolls are a 1 and are a 1 and 2 at 6 a.m. or later. In addition, if any reinforcement roll comes 12 turns (4 Hours) after the initial drop all successful rolls are a 1 and 2. Which ever condition comes first applies.

Axis morale: 8/7

Initiative: 3

Off-board artillery: None at start, but may appear via special event.

Allied Forces

Before play begins or either player sets up, the Allied player secretly determines his victory objectives by rolling on the chart below. The player notes the roll and keeps it secret until game's end. The player then plans the location and timing of his paratroop drop. Then the Axis set up their units.

Roll 1D6 for objective.

1. Eliminate the 105 battery + Hexes 0509 and 0604
2. Hexes 0412 and 0509 and 0613
3. Hexes 0516 and 0613 and 1013
4. Hexes 0412 and 0516 and 1013
5. Eliminate 105 battery + Hex 0412 + Hex 0509
6. Eliminate 105 battery + Hex 0604 + Hex 0803

1st Battalion (reinforced) (?) Parachute Infantry Regiment, (?) Airborne Division

- 9 x Para
- 3 x Para HMG
- 1 x Para ENG
- 1 x Jeep

Roll 1D6. On a 1-3 the regiment attaches 1 x 75mm pack howitzer battery. On a 4-6 the regiment attaches 1 x 81mm mortar platoon.

Leaders: 1 x Major, 2 x Capt., 1 x 1st Lt., 2 x 2nd Lt., 1 Sgt.

Allied Reinforcements: Elements of the 12 Regt. 4th U.S. Infantry Division

Enter on a die roll of 1 starting at 1200. Roll each turn. Subtract one from the entry die roll at 1600 and thereafter. Enter any east edge hex.

- 2 x Inf
- 1 x HMG (reduced)

Roll 1D6. On a 1-3, include 1 x Stuart. On a 4-6, include 1 x Sherman.

Leaders: 1 x Capt., 1 x Lt.

Off-board artillery: 1x16. Only regular infantry leaders, not paratrooper leaders, may call in artillery.

Morale: All Parachute units 8/8. All seaborne units 8/7.

Initiative: 4

Off-board artillery: None at start but arrives with seaborne reinforcements.

Special Rules

1. Two Lifts: Due to the shortage of transport aircraft the above parachute units MUST be split into two "lifts". The initial "lift" is composed of any 8 Paratrooper Infantry, Engineer, or HMG platoons plus any 4 Leaders. One of these leaders MUST be a Captain or higher in rank. Historically U.S. infantry company organizations provide for a 3-1 ratio of Parachute Infantry to HMGs and that is the way they dropped. But this is the player's plan so they should assign units as they see fit, within scenario parameters. Players must schedule the timing of the first "lift's" drop. But it may arrive late. See the drop procedure below.

The second "lift" is composed of all remaining units and leaders. At least one of those leaders must be a Captain or higher in rank. These are glider units and land via the glider rules found in scenario 11 with the following die-roll modifications:

+2 Daylight turn (a turn with visibility of MORE than one hex).

+1 Landing hex is inside original drop zone.

-1 Axis AA Battery "in range" of landing hex (no LOS is necessary, just the distance and the battery must expose its' position if it is hidden and Axis player wishes to use this modifier).

The second lift may not be scheduled to arrive until at least eight turns, or two hours, after the first lift drops. It also must make the same roll that the first lift makes to see if the lift arrives late. In addition, if the first lift arrived late the second lift will be late by the same amount plus any additional delay the second lift may roll for when it lands.

2. Drop Procedure: The Allied player decides at what time and thus what turn the game will begin. Starting with midnight, 6 June, the player may schedule the first "lift" to land on any turn up to 0600. The second "lift" may be scheduled for any turn at least eight turns, or two hours, later.

After the drop is scheduled and just before it goes in, the Allied player rolls 1D6. On a 1-4 the drop is on time. Proceed to drop units. On a 5-6 the drop is late; roll again. On 1-3 there is a 15-minute delay. On 4-5 there is a 30-minute delay. On 6 there is a 45 minute delay.

The Allied player should increment the starting time by the die roll result if the drop goes in late. This roll simulates the difficulties of taking off, assembling, and then flying masses of aircraft, in the dark, over hostile territory, with each navigator doing his own thing. The Allies were fairly experienced, and were well organized and established on their English bases, but there were problems. Note that this roll may also delay the start of the "2d Lift" by AT LEAST the same amount of time.

Once the objectives and drop time have been determined, the U.S. player selects one clear hex anywhere on the board that is within two hexes of any board edge. This hex becomes the "Assembly Point" and ALL hexes within a two-hex radius become the "Drop Zone." The "Assembly Point" represents the optimal point at which the Pathfinder can place his assembly light. If situation arises where any portion of the assigned "Drop Zone" ends up in a swamp or river hex see optional rules Alternate Pathfinder arrival below.

Now that the "Assembly Point" and "Drop Zone" are established, the individual hexes must be assigned numbers. Each hex in the outer ring should be assigned a number from 1-12. Then each hex adjacent to the "Assembly Point" should be assigned a number from 13-18. The "Assembly Point" hex should be assigned the numbers 19-20.

Once all the "Drop Zone" hexes have been numbered, roll 1D6 for all leaders first and then for each platoon that is dropping from the initial lift:

1-3 = Land in the "Drop Zone". Roll again 1D20 (1 20 sided die) to determine the hex within the "Drop Zone" the platoon or leader lands on. Match the die roll result with a pre-numbered drop zone hex as described above to get the platoon or leader's landing hex within the "Drop Zone".

4-6 = Scatter, land outside the "Drop Zone". Roll again 1D20 TWICE. 1st roll result = Start counting on the board's left (west) edge. Count from North to South (top to bottom). The result gives the LANDING ROW. (Roll again to determine the landing row if the result is over 12.) 2nd Roll = the number of hexes counted down (left to right) the LANDING ROW, following the hex numbers, to find the LANDING HEX. If the result is higher than xx17 the platoon or leader lands off board. If it does it could possibly arrive later, see below.

Regardless of where on the board a platoon lands, once it is on the ground roll 1D6:

1 = Lose one step.

2-6 = No effect.

The landing die roll is modified by the following:

-1 Lands at night

-1 Axis AA Gun within range (no LOS is necessary, just range; the battery must expose its position if hidden in order to use this modifier.)

-1 Lands in a swamp, village or woods hex

-1 No leader in hex

+1 Lands in daylight (visibility more than one hex).

+1 Lands anywhere in the established "Drop Zone".

All modifiers are cumulative. Leaders do not make this roll as they cannot lose steps.

Once all step reductions are established, each platoon and leader make a normal morale check. If the unit passes, or fails by less than 3, it is disrupted. If it fails by more than 3 it is demoralized.

The morale check is modified by the following:

+1 Lands at night

+1 Lands in Swamp or woods or village hex

+1 Lands on an Axis unit

-1 Lands in Daylight. Visibility more than one hex.

-1 Lands in any "Drop Zone" hex.

All modifiers are cumulative.

Note that this leaves all platoons and leaders at least disrupted upon landing. Any leader that finds itself alone with an enemy unit upon landing rolls normally as per rule 6.71 for lone leaders in the Panzer Grenadier 2nd Edition rules. Once all landing hexes have been determined, and all step reductions and morale checks and assaults have been made, place a MOVED/FIRED counter on all surviving Paratrooper units still on the board.

Any 1st "lift" platoon forced to land on an Axis unit when it drops must conduct an instant Assault with a -2 column modifier. Because they land via the Scenario 11 glider rules the 75mm Battery, 81mm Mortar, and Jeep units, plus the other remaining units committed to the 2nd "lift" do not have this problem as they choose their landing hex the turn they come in.

Fog of war in no way effects the DROP PROCEDURE. All units land before fog of war rolls begin.

3. Scenario 11 special rule 1 is in effect.

4. Scenario 11 special rule 2 is in effect. (Don't count steps lost in the drop. Count only those step losses inflicted by the Axis.)

5. Scenario 11 special rule 3 is in effect. Visibility.

6. Scenario 11 special rule 5 in if effect with the following modifications:

Add a +2 modifier if the assembly attempt is within 2 turns, 30 minutes, of the "initial lift".

Add a +1 modifier if the assembly attempt is within 45-90 minutes after the "initial lift".

Allow lone leaders to also attempt to gather steps under the same restrictions as platoons.

All rolls AFTER 90 minutes, 6 turns, are as per special rule 5, Scenario 11 original instructions and receive no modifier.

7. Drifting Off-Board. Any units or leaders that drifted off the board may attempt to reenter the board by the U.S. player attempting to activate them. The U.S. players may stack off board units as they see fit. When they come down all off board units must also make landing rolls for step reductions normally. Ignore any disruption/demoralization for units landing off board. They are considered to have landed on clear terrain. On any turn that is a DAYLIGHT turn (more than 1 hex visibility) and is at least 90 minutes, 6 turns, after the "Initial Lift" the U.S. player may try to activate off-board units at any time during their turn in an attempt to return them to the board. If the activation is successful, the U. S. player rolls 1D6:

1. Enter any north edge hex and stop.
- 2-3. Enter any east edge hex and stop.
- 4-5. Enter any south edge hex and stop.
6. Enter and west edge hex and stop.

Any off board LEADER who is entering the board may make an additional roll to try to gather additional troops on their way to the objective. Roll normally, using this scenario's modifiers, for additional steps using special rule 5 in Scenario 11 when any off board leader enters the board. When these units enter the board place a MOVED/FIRED marker on the unit in the first hex entered.

8. OPTIONAL: Alternate Pathfinder Arrival: The pathfinder rolls just like everyone else who missed the "Drop Zone" to determine his drop hex. Wherever he lands becomes the "Assembly Point" unless it is in a swamp hex, in which case the first "dry hex" he enters becomes the "Assembly Point." This is always the closest non-swamp hex. If dry land hexes are equidistant, the AXIS player chooses the "Assembly Point" hex. This will alter the location of the planned "Drop Zone".

Even if a swamp hex is within the normal radius of a "Assembly Hex" to qualify as being within the "Drop Zone," a swamp hex MAY NEVER be considered a "DROP ZONE" hex for any purpose except landing location. In these cases the size of the "Drop Zone" is reduced by the number of swamp hexes in the normal "Drop Zone" radius.

If the pathfinder landed off-board, use the alternate landing procedure described above for ALL landing units in the first lift. The scenario then has no "Drop Zone" at all. If the new assembly point would place the DZ partially off the board, and not in swamp hexes, those units that landed in the off board portion of the DZ are treated normally as far as landing modifiers and morale checks are concerned. (Assume a Clear landing hex.) They must attempt to recover normally in their "off board" positions. Demoralized units need not retreat. Once recovered, they then can enter the board in any "Drop Zone" hex during any following turn via activation and then stop and receive a MOVED/FIRED counter.

9. Fog of War is in effect with a 3D6 roll of 15+ after each player has taken at least two activation attempts.

Victory Conditions

The Allied player wins if he or she attains their rolled for objectives. The Axis player wins if he or she prevents the U.S. player from winning. Control of objective is as per normal rules. Destruction of the battery is defined as eliminating the battery step.

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Scenario Notes: Behind the Beaches

By Patrick Callahan
February 2008

The 'Behind the Beaches' scenario puts the Allied player in the position of a battalion commander just at the point when the drop plan has to be revised. The U.S. player must plan and execute an airborne drop on objectives not of his or her choosing. The objective, if captured, then has to be defended from any direction.

The German player also has a formidable challenge. He must try to determine the Allied intentions and thwart them. This is not easy with U.S. paratroopers scattered all over the board. The Germans can be sure of reinforcement, but when, and where? The terrain and scenario and units are hypothetical but capture the flavor (we hope!) of that time and place.

Before play starts the U.S. player rolls a die to determine which objectives he or she must capture. This represents higher headquarters (regiment) assigning objectives to a lower echelon (battalion), represented by the U.S. player. The player is then free to plan the drop and assault within scenario limitations and special rules. The player must also plan the timing of the drop and follow-up forces. The player must try to pick a landing zone that is safe but close to the assigned objectives and that allows for a defensible place for follow-up forces to land.



A German 105 mm howitzer on display in modern Normandy.

Both players must also plan for any reinforcement the Axis may receive. Axis reinforcement may come just about any direction. This complicates the choice of landing zones for the U.S. because it would be bad to have the landing zone (LZ) overrun before the second lift arrives.

The Axis player is also at the mercy of higher headquarters. The German's most powerful unit, the 105 mm battery, is also placed by a die roll that represents higher headquarters orders. The Axis must try to position his Captain, Grenadier platoon and HMG to cover potential objectives AND his artillery, a tall order for a short force. They will also hopefully be positioned to assist incoming reinforcements. A lot depends on the status of the strongpoints and the position of the AA battery. Any of these units are potentially in a position to give the U.S. fits. Just one of them in the right place could be decisive. Even if it eventually is eliminated, its presence can dump U.S. plans in the recycle bin.

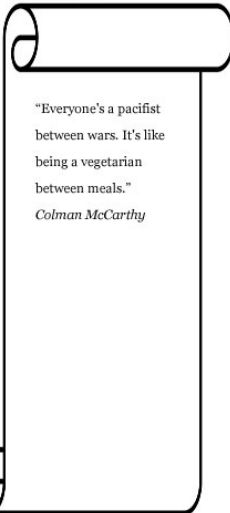
Just a note of clarification, United States airborne doctrine of the day designated any area that paratroopers dropped into as a drop zone (DZ). Any area slated to receive gliders was designated as a landing zone. U.S. doctrine did not include direct glider assault on objectives as did the British at the Ranville (Pegasus) Bridges and the Merville battery. The Germans also used direct glider assaults in Belgium, Holland and Crete. Generally speaking the U.S. doctrine had gliders coming down in friendly-occupied areas as reinforcement to troops already on the ground.

There were exceptions to this. Donald Pratt, 101st Airborne assistant division commander, chose to make the initial landing in a glider so as to have his staff and communication equipment assembled right away. Unfortunately his glider was fixed with armor plating that ruined the glider's flight dynamic and the glider crashed, killing all aboard. General Matthew Ridgeway, 82nd Airborne Division commander, also planned to land via glider but changed his mind at the last minute and decided to drop into Normandy just like one of his privates. He lived into the later 20th century.

The Pathfinders

As to the pathfinder's accurate drop in the scenario, playtesting suggested that on such a small board any enhanced realism that a variable pathfinder drop produced was more than offset by special rules and conditions necessary to deal with a drop zone that was partially or completely off the playing surface.

This was a fairly common occurrence. Situations developed where



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units would be off board but still in the drop zone. How do you get them back on? What happens if the pathfinder misses the board all together? It was realistic but it did not make for a balanced scenario. For the sake of simplicity and play balance we decided to simply ensure that the pathfinder landed in the intended assembly point. Even with this, the U.S. are typically scattered around to varying degrees but are never all bunched together in the DZ. This forces them to march on their objectives from all points of the compass just as they would if landing off board. The distance they travel is less but the challenges are the same.



La Fiere Causeway, just after the war.

The board seems to be a close approximation of the area around the La Fiere Causeway, which was the objective of the 1st Battalion of the 505th PIR on D-Day. The 505th had one of the best drops in the entire Normandy invasion, landing in Drop Zone "O". So if our hypothetical battalion is landing on similar ground, why not, for the sake of play balance and simplicity, give them the benefit of the same good fortune? Just as it is

with pain, some people have higher thresholds for realism and the its complications than others. It is the never ending struggle between realism and playability, with no "correct" answer.

With this in mind, optional rules are included to allow players to explore the possibilities of a jump gone really bad. When using this method the U.S. player's sweat glands often become dilated. Note that any of the optional rules pertaining to swamp hexes as drop zones apply to the "first lift" units also.

When simulating drops on larger boards the pathfinder could possibly land on any of them, but there is still the chance he will land off board. We are back where we started from a scenario design point of view, but you do end up with the larger playing surface.

The disrupted and demoralized condition of Allied units when they first land simulates the disorganized condition of the troops when they first hit the ground. They must assemble, get oriented, collect bundles, also duck fire and swim for their lives in some cases. It takes time to get organized.

As far as the German reinforcements are concerned, they come from any compass direction for the sake of variability. They represent the local regimental mobile force and thus could be anywhere in the regimental area of operations at any given time.

We modified the troop collection process for the paratroopers to reflect the time factor involved. The sooner after a drop the assembly process begins the more likely men are to be collected. As time progresses most of the men in a given area that want to assemble have already assembled. Since there is no limit to the number of steps that may be collected, part of the decision making process for the Allied player becomes, when is enough enough?

The die roll to determine if the drop arrives late is historical but is included mainly to add complications to planning and execution. A drop or landing planned for nighttime or a turn with limited visibility may find itself coming down in broad daylight. That isn't necessarily bad! Late troops from the "Second Lift" could find their drop zone overrun and have to divert to less attractive LZs. Late arriving troops may also find their objectives heavily defended.

Students of the Normandy drop will note that the timing of the second lift is somewhat fast. Historically, many glider landings were scheduled for noon on D-Day and many later around dusk depending on an individual unit's "revised plan" and logistical considerations. Players will also note that those reinforcements were from different units not the same unit split into half paratrooper half glider. For the sake of brevity and play balance I arbitrarily adjusted the timing of the "Second Lift". Players who don't mind waiting 45 to 75 turns for the possibility of reinforcement are encouraged to modify the procedure in any way they see fit. As far as the split-unit identification goes, players may designate them any way they see fit also. A single-unit identity was included for simplicity and flavor only.

The German reinforcement rolls also come early. Again this is for brevity. They are timed to compete with the just coagulating paratroopers. This kind of race would be difficult to simulate 45 to 75 turns into the game.

Allied Strategy

Allied strategy starts with placement of the DZ. It should be near the objective. It should have as much clear terrain as possible. It should contain areas where the gliders can come down safely later.

The second thing that the Allied player must consider is the timing

of the drop. After looking at the drop procedure modifiers the Allied player may be tempted to make the drop during the daylight hours instead of at night. It could work. But the reinforcement die roll for the Axis is then 1-2 from the start, making it much more likely that the Germans could interfere before the U.S. has reached or taken their objectives. It allows the AA battery to fire early and often. The U.S. often wants to bypass German units at night to reach the U.S. objectives. They can't do that after daylight. Landing in daylight also shortens the game.

Once on the ground and in a reasonable condition the U.S. must move to the objective as soon as possible. This is the trick. Can you assemble enough, fast enough? The temptation always exists to stay put to try to assemble just a few more steps. A balance must be struck between time taken recovering and assembling and time taken attacking objectives in a timely manner. The placement and strength of platoons and leaders once on the ground will have a large influence on this. The more scattered the drop the more complicated and time-consuming the assembly and approach to the objectives. Remember, as the Allied player you have to go where you have to go regardless of the landing position or condition of the paratroopers. In the meantime the Germans aren't just sitting around waiting for a call. They're going to the dance regardless.



Know your mission!

Stay focused on where you are going. It is easy to get sidetracked by Axis units. Fight only on and for ground you NEED to take or hold. If possible, try to knock out the German 105 mm battery even if it is not a rolled-for objective, or it will harass you all game long. This may also help conceal your real objectives.

The second lift can be the salvation of the Allied player. Here are the heavy weapons that are so desperately needed. Coming in with them is some semblance of transport in the form of the Jeep platoon. Also included are some much-needed infantry. Play has shown that the safest thing for the second lift is to come in during daylight hours inside the original DZ, thus trying to reap the benefits of the daylight and DZ modifiers. This is not always possible because Axis platoons or the AA battery, if positioned awkwardly from a U.S. perspective, could raise Ned with the glider landings. The U.S. player has the advantage of choosing the landing hexes for "Second Lift" platoons. Hopefully "Second Lift" units will be able to land in a hex that is not under the AA fire landing modifier, even if the landing is out of the DZ, as the AA battery may still be hidden. (See landing modifiers.)

If the U.S. can get their "Second Lift" troops down in good shape, getting the battery/mortar into action is Mission One. If nothing else it may draw the attention of Axis forces that should most likely be concentrating on other things. Garrison the battery in a spot that can cover all rolled for objectives, if possible, and dig in if necessary. If the battery/mortar sets up in a separate hex from an objective hex, that is not necessarily bad. The Axis may spend valuable time and effort trying to attack the battery/mortar in a non-objective hex.

The Allied seaborne reinforcements are small and late but represent the only armored unit that the Allies can count on during the scenario. The sooner this reinforcement comes up from the beaches the better, especially if the second lift goes bad.

Axis Strategy

Axis strategy starts with placement of the Grenadiers. They should be placed in a potential objective hex somewhere near where the battery sets up. The wagon should set up with the 105 battery or possibly the AA battery. The strongpoints at least are a known quantity before play begins. Hopefully they will be operational and will positively affect the overall Axis setup. The AA battery should be garrisoned with at least a half step of Grenadiers and placed in any objective hex. The hex with the longest LOS would be a good spot or a hex that is centrally located to maximize the adverse landing modifiers on descending paratroopers.

Once the Allies are on the ground the placement of the DZ may be an indicator of where the U.S. objectives are. At least it may tell you where they are NOT.

When the reinforcements arrive try to combine the 81mm and the 105 battery under a good leader for a hefty punch. This kind of firepower can break up an attack and it can open the way to an objective. This combination can become a game winner for the Axis player. The Allies 75mm Pack Howitzer can't match them, even if they get it.

Once all Axis reinforcements are all on the board, their strength equals a reinforced company with some armor in support. Once

committed they should try to stay together in order to counter attack any objective already attained or currently under assault by the Allied player. As they move toward the Allied units they may pick up friendly isolated units along the way. Again here the trucks can be of value shuttling units to trouble spots.

Try to avoid small knots of paratroopers that have been scattered around the board and have not yet assembled on an objective. These are the victims of "Fog of War" rolls or off board late arrivals. Individual steps and platoons that landed in out of the way places and were lower-priority units in the race to the objectives hexes. They may try to harass the Axis relief column. These Allied "lost" units that have been struggling to get into position can suddenly become addicted to the nasty habit of coming into play just at the wrong place and the wrong time for the Axis.

Don't be afraid to use your wagon to shuttle units to trouble spots. It is faster than it looks and gets the road bonus and possibly a strategic move also. A quick move to a contested objective by a single platoon can stave off disaster just in time.

If your artillery becomes insecure, use the wagon to try to move it to a safer hex. If you detect a U.S. build-up near the battery position and time and position allow, try to move the battery away. Keeping the U.S. chasing the battery around could really upset their plans. But note that this takes timing. If the U.S. can catch the battery while limbered it could get ugly and the U.S. player could gain a cheap objective. Also to be considered is the fact that every turn the battery is moving, it is not firing.

Special Events

This optional special events table is a compilation of actual historical events that took place all over the Cotentin on D-Day. General Wilhelm Falley, commander of the 91st Airlanding Division, really was ambushed and killed by Lt. Malcomb D. Brennan and a small party of troopers from the 3rd Battalion of the 508th Regiment. The general was returning to his command post in Picaerville from the war games in Rennes. The reinforcement die roll that follows his successful escape is just another nasty variable for the Allies and a big lift for the Axis if it comes.

General Gavin did show up unexpectedly here there and everywhere on D-Day. Someone similar to him just might make an appearance here too. These are naturally one-time events. Follow the instructions on the special event chart if the event is rolled again.

Special Events Table

2	A U.S. brigadier general and 1.5 parachute platoons. Roll 1D6. On a result of 1-2, include 1 x HMG (reduced); on 3-6, no effect. The brigadier leaves via Special Rule 4 in Scenario 6 (Cassidy). This is a one-time-only event. If it is rolled again treat it as NO EFFECT. If the general is called away he leaves all but a half-step of the paratroopers that he arrived with as reinforcements.
3-5	Strays arrive. U.S. receives a paratrooper step for any reduced infantry unit of Axis choice.
6-9	No effect.
10-12	As the first activation of the turn, a German truck platoon, representing a German general (Morale 9) in a staff car, must instantly attempt to traverse the length of board from hex 0517 to 1001. No activation die roll is necessary to move this unit and it does not count movement factors as it goes. It simply moves hex to hex. It must stay on the road and may not stop. It may attempt to bypass enemy units on the road via shortest route but must get back on the road as soon as possible. It may not enter a swamp hex if the road is blocked and no other route around exists; the general must surrender instead. It is subject to opportunity fire with all normal modifiers from any Allied units capable of firing at it as it moves down the road. These Allied units may combine fire as usual. These Allied units do not count this fire as activation; it is free. The general's car must continue to move even if it becomes disrupted or demoralized. Once the general is eliminated or exits the board, play resumes normally.

One hour (four turns) after the general successfully traverses the board and exits hex 1001 the German player gets one additional reinforcement die roll:

- On a 1-2, the Axis receives 1 x Panzer IV platoon (enter on or adjacent to hex 1001) plus artillery 2x16.
- On a 3, the Axis receives 2x16 Artillery.
- On a 4, the Axis receives 1x16 Artillery.
- On a 5-6, no effect.

This is also a one-time event. If it is rolled again, Axis work parties are called in. The U.S. player chooses any one reduced Axis Grenadier unit to receive a step reinforcement.

Names and Numbers

Author James Jones used the method of placing hypothetical terrain and units in a historical setting to help readers maintain the proper historical perspective and emotional connection to his fictional novel *The Thin Red Line*. As C for Charlie impaled itself on the "Dancing Elephant" it somehow took on a different timbre knowing this was Guadalcanal and not a fictional island as was depicted in

other lesser novels about the South Pacific war. Because D-Day holds a special place in the American mindset I decided to keep it as the scenario location rather than inventing a whole fictional drop. The following list of hypothetical location names serves the same function that the "Dancing Elephant" and "Giant Boiled Shrimp" did for Jones.

- Hex 0803 Chateau Tessier
- Hex 0613 Manoir Lalime
- Hex 0604 Dion-du-plain
- Hex 0412-0409 Mandville and Mandville causeway
- Hex 0516 Station Moreau (rail crossing)
- Hex 1013 Chapelle-Cherbourg RR Bridge
- Hex 0509 Ste. Ambrose
- Hexes 0707-0708 Bois du Parente (Parente's Woods)
- Hexes 1105-1106 Bois du Marcell
- The river is still the Merderet.

The U.S. unit is fictional. It is representative of all U.S. airborne infantry battalions on D-Day. If players wish they may assign any unit designation, historical or not, or simply refer to it as Task Force (put your last name here). For additional chrome the U.S. player is encouraged to name or letter the drop and landing zones.

I hope players will enjoy this scenario. I've tried to incorporate the trials and tribulations of both sides in the scenario design. I also tried to make the situation as variable as possible thus enhancing replayability. None of the preceding would be possible without a good game design to build on. I welcome any feedback. Contact me at CallDi@juno.com

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