

# *From Omaha Beach to the Rhine*

the 5<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion  
in the European Theater

by Robert W. Jones, Jr.



The 5th Ranger Battalion aboard landing craft in Weymouth, southern England, on 1 June 1944 (D-5). They were ferried from the quay to the landing ship HMS *Prince Baudouin*, which carried them across the English Channel to Normandy. (National Archives)

**I**n the darkness of 23 February 1945 a long column of Rangers moved quietly through the German woods. Suddenly the lead element of the column stumbled on an enemy strong point. Surprised by an American unit two miles behind their lines, twenty Germans surrendered after a brief firefight, becoming prisoners. On the surface the Ranger mission was simple; seize and hold the key terrain along the Irsch-Zerf road for 48-hours to block a German retreat and/or a reinforcing counterattack from the east. After nine days of heavy fighting, the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion was relieved after suffering ninety casualties.<sup>1</sup> This was one of the notable battles fought by the 5th Rangers in World War II.

Seven Ranger Infantry battalions were formed during the war. While basically organized in the same manner, the Ranger battalions of World War II fall into three distinct groups by theater – the Mediterranean, European, and Pacific (the Philippines). Three previous *Veritas* articles have covered the Rangers in the Mediterranean Theater (North Africa, Sicily, and Italy) and the 2nd Ranger Battalion in Europe. This article describes the origins, campaigns, and combat exploits of the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion in Northwest Europe.<sup>2</sup> However, it was the success of the 1st Ranger Battalion in North Africa that led to the creation of other battalions.

The achievements of the 1st Ranger Battalion in North Africa caused Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Theater Commander, to order Lieutenant Colonel William O. Darby to form additional units for the Mediterranean. However, there was a concurrent requirement for an assault force for the invasion of France. As a result, the 2nd Ranger Battalion was activated on 1 April 1943 at Camp Nathan Bedford Forrest, Tennessee. Following the 1st, the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were activated on 22 April 1943 in North Africa. All three battalions of “Darby’s Rangers” led the invasions of Sicily (Operation HUSKY) and Italy (Operation AVALANCHE).<sup>3</sup> Although the 2nd Rangers were created in April 1943, training did not begin in earnest until 30 June 1943 when Major James Earl Rudder became the battalion commander.<sup>4</sup>

## Forming a Battalion

While the 2nd Rangers trained hard in the summer heat and humidity of Tennessee, Allied planners in England realized that another battalion of assault troops was needed for the D-Day invasion. This led to the formation of the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion, which was activated on 1 September 1943 at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. Major Owen H. Carter assumed command and chose Captain Richard P. Sullivan as the battalion executive officer.<sup>5</sup> In three days they selected 34 officers and 563 enlisted men for the new unit. Many of the Ranger volunteers came from the 26th Infantry Division, a National Guard unit from New England (the “Yankee Division”), which was training at Camp Forrest.<sup>6</sup>



As the commander of 1st Ranger Battalion, Major William O. Darby became the unofficial “Godfather” of the Mediterranean Theater Rangers. He commanded the 6615th Ranger Force and was killed in action on 30 April 1945 as the Assistant Division Commander of the 10th Mountain Division in Italy. (National Archives)

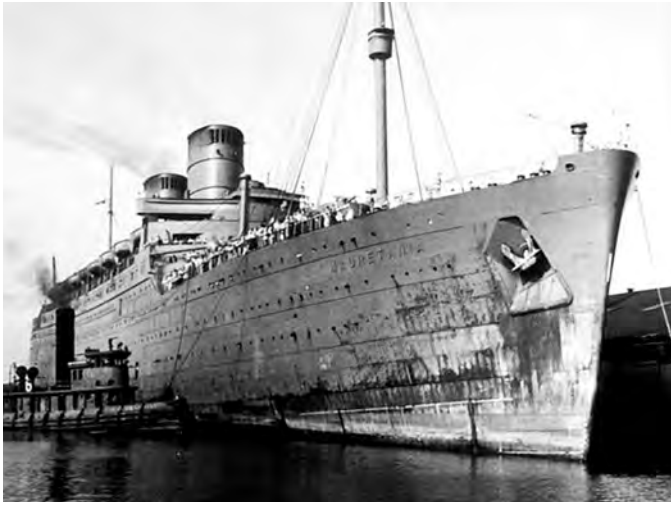
## 5th Ranger Insignia

The 5th Rangers adopted the insignia of the 2nd Ranger Battalion, a horizontal blue diamond, bordered in gold, with the word “RANGERS” in gold, inside. The blue diamond patch was worn until early 1945. CPT John C. Raaen, Jr. who had been medically evacuated to the United States, had Morrie Luxembourg, a New York City haberdasher, make a 5th Ranger scroll prototype. These were sent to the unit, by then in Germany. With captured German Army funds the battalion S-4 contracted some Bavarian nuns to reproduce the new scrolls.<sup>10</sup>



The Blue Ranger Diamond SSI  
The 5th Ranger Battalion Scroll  
(Scroll courtesy of LTC David G. Knapp)

Since the unit had to be in England by the beginning of 1944, the 5th Ranger training in the United States was compressed. “The training was ten times more intense than training with the infantry. We were physically stretched to our limits and not all men passed. They were dropped,” said First Lieutenant (ILT) Charles “Ace” Parker, who transferred from the 98th Infantry Division to become a platoon leader in Able Company.<sup>7</sup> After two months of accelerated combat training and hard physical conditioning, the 5th moved south by troop train to Florida. On 5 November 1943, the battalion began two weeks of amphibious training at the U.S. Navy Scout and Raiders



**The 5th Rangers sailed across the Atlantic on the HMS *Mauretania*. The ship was one of several fast former luxury ocean liners pressed into military service as troop ships. Due to their speed, most sailed without escorts and carried up to 14,000 soldiers each trip (about the size of a World War II infantry division). (*Military History Institute*)**

School at Fort Pierce, FL. Once done the unit boarded trains on 20 November for Fort Dix, New Jersey.<sup>8</sup>

At Fort Dix the 5th Rangers validated their fitness for combat. Long speed marches culminated in five-day tactical field problems at the company and battalion levels. Having been certified for overseas deployment the 5th Rangers “returned to camp and had a shakedown. We had our damaged equipment and clothing replaced. On 20 December, the battalion moved to Camp Kilmer [New Jersey], where all personnel were able to have six days of leave, which was rotated and limited to a distance of fifty miles,” said Staff Sergeant (SSG) Richard N. Hathaway, Jr., of Able Company.<sup>9</sup>

After four months of tough training, the battalion boarded the HMS *Mauretania* at the New York port of embarkation. On the night of 8 January 1944, the ship moved out of the harbor where it collided with a blacked out freighter. “We were forced to return to our dock. By the time we docked, scaffolding had been set up and floodlights were ready to illuminate the area that had to be repaired. Repairs were made and we were on our way the next morning,” said SSG Hathaway.<sup>11</sup> The voyage across the Atlantic was not a pleasure cruise for the majority of the Rangers crammed into the former British luxury liner with 14,000 other troops.

The ship immediately hit the rough winter waters of the Atlantic Ocean. To compound matters, the ship zig-zagged as a defense against German submarines. “We traveled alone, not in a convoy, since our speed and maneuvering would normally avoid all enemy submarines,” remembered SSG Hathaway.<sup>12</sup> Many of the soldiers were seasick before the ship was out of sight of land. “We went over in the dead of winter. The Atlantic was hit with terrible storms and high seas. Most troops were seasick and the food was awful and only two meals per day,” remembered SSG John L. Burke.<sup>13</sup> The British

menu exacerbated the problem. “The smell of lamb and mutton cooking was too nauseating to eat. I ate Hershey bars and drank Coca Cola from the ship’s store,” said PFC Thomas E. Herring.<sup>14</sup> “I crossed the ocean ‘by rail,’ spending most of my time throwing up over the rail of the ship!” recalled Private First Class (PFC) James Garabee, who had been recruited at Camp Kilmer just before the battalion left for England.<sup>15</sup>

Those not sick enjoyed the voyage. “As an officer we had meal tickets for the 1st or 2nd seating [of a meal]. My roommate was seasick all of the way over. I used his ticket and ate both seatings all of the way across, I never had it so good,” said 1LT John J. Reville.<sup>16</sup>

The ship made it across the Atlantic unmolested by German U-Boats and arrived in England ten days later. “The only scary moment was when we were held in the outer harbor of Liverpool, England, for twenty-four hours because the opening through the minefield was not wide enough to allow our ship to enter the inner harbor,” said SSG Hathaway.<sup>17</sup> A minesweeper temporarily widened the harbor entrance to allow the ship to enter. “We docked in Liverpool on 18 January 1944 and saw for the first time the [German] bomb damage,” said Hathaway.<sup>18</sup> Now in England the 5th Rangers were thrust into a demanding pre-invasion training regimen.

## Training in Britain



Unbeknownst to the 5th Rangers the planned invasion of Europe was just four months away. After the ship docked “we loaded a train and moved to Leominster, England, where we began extensive training in cliff scaling, rappelling, rope bridge crossings, and field exercises,” said SSG Hathaway.<sup>19</sup> After two months of arduous training the unit moved by rail and ship to Tighnabraich, Scotland for British Commando training.

Rangers who thought that stateside training was tough were in for a big surprise. SSG Henry S. Glassman commented: “It was this training in Scotland that the Rangers believe brought them through the invasion of France and all the difficult assignments that followed. The hills of Scotland proved to be more than anything that had been encountered before and here Rangers were made or lost.”<sup>20</sup>

On the Scottish coast amphibious assault landings were practiced daily. Using Air Corps photographs of the projected Normandy landing beaches, sites with barbed wire, beach obstacles, and anti-assault landing devices had been specially prepared to train the Rangers.<sup>21</sup> From different types of landing craft, the Rangers practiced the battle drill of assembling at a predesignated rally point and continuing the attack until it became second nature. “We did an awful lot of boat landings, coming in on the beach, dropping off in that ice cold water of the damn Scottish fjords, getting sopping wet and then going on to the objective,” said 1LT Parker, a platoon leader in Able Company.<sup>22</sup>

What was different from all previous Ranger training was being billeted in civilian homes. Families provided rooms for the Rangers during Commando training because barracks were short. "Every evening we were told where we were to meet for the next day's training and what sort of training it was to be. A sandwich lunch with hot coffee was brought to us in the field, [and] often [eaten] in rain or snow," remembered SSG Hathaway.<sup>23</sup>

April 1944 was a tough month for the 5th Rangers. After finishing Commando training on 2 April, the battalion moved south to the Assault Training Center in Braunton, England. There they practiced amphibious landings in British and American landing craft in a region that closely matched the Normandy coastline.<sup>24</sup>

In the midst of the hazardous training several company commanders complained about LTC Owen H. Carter's leadership style. Technician 5<sup>th</sup> Grade James E. Kidwell recorded one incident: "No [Ranger] officer was to ask anyone to do anything he wouldn't do. In Scotland our Battalion Commander had the entire battalion walking in

a ditch chest deep in water – but he led from the bank."<sup>25</sup> Corporal Arden V. Mischke commented that, "several company commanders had lost confidence in Colonel Carter's leadership qualities and had written a letter to higher headquarters about their problems. When Colonel Carter found out about it he shipped the officers out. Captain Heffelfinger must have been one of the officers because we had a new company commander . . . 1LT George Miller."<sup>26</sup>

The transfers proved to be temporary. "Within a couple of days all of the officers that had been shipped out were back with the 5th Rangers and Colonel Carter was transferred," said Mischke.<sup>27</sup> The "Captain's Revolt" brought a new battalion commander with extensive combat experience. Major (MAJ) Max F. Schneider was one of the original company commanders of the 1st Ranger Battalion and later a battalion executive officer in Darby's Rangers. After being wounded in Italy and medically evacuated, Schneider became LTC James E. Rudder's 2nd Ranger Battalion executive officer.<sup>28</sup> He took command on 17 April 1944.

## Colonel Max F. Schneider

Colonel Max F. Schneider (1912-1959) was born in Shenandoah, Iowa on 8 September 1912. In February 1930, Schneider enlisted in the Iowa National Guard. After commercial pilot training in St Louis in 1931, he worked as a transport pilot before a crash ended his flying career. During the remainder of the 1930's Schneider worked a variety of civilian jobs and continued to serve in the Iowa National Guard. In 1939 he was commissioned an Infantry 2nd Lieutenant in the 168th Infantry Regiment (Des Moines, Iowa).<sup>1</sup>

The 168th Regiment was inducted into Federal Service on 10 February 1941 as part of the 34th Infantry Division (Iowa, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota National Guard). The 34th Division trained at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana and took part in the Louisiana Maneuvers in July and August 1941. The division then moved to Northern Ireland in January and February 1942 where Schneider volunteered for the new 1st Ranger Battalion.

In Northern Ireland, First Lieutenant Schneider was selected by Major William O. Darby, as the first commander of Easy Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion. Promoted to Captain, he led the company throughout the North African campaign, earning the Silver Star. In Sicily and at Salerno he was the executive officer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion, earning him promotion to Major. After being seriously wounded by a land mine on 28 September 1943 he was evacuated to England.<sup>2</sup>

LTC James E. Rudder wanted an experienced executive officer for the 2nd Ranger Battalion and chose Schneider. Following the "Captain's Revolt" (March 1944), Schneider assumed command of the 5th Ranger Battalion for the Normandy invasion.<sup>3</sup> Schneider turned the battalion over to Major Richard P. Sullivan in July 1944 and returned to



LTC Max F. Schneider (L) congratulates 1LT Charles "Ace" Parker of Able Company, 5th Rangers after he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on D-Day.

the United States to attend Command and General Staff College. After CGSC, LTC Schneider commanded a training unit at Camp Robinson, Arkansas until the war ended.

Colonel Schneider's post-war assignments included Fort Benning, Georgia, Germany, Japan, and Korea. He died in South Korea in 1959 while the G-3 of the Eighth U.S. Army. His awards included the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, the Glider Badge, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.<sup>4</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 Colonel (Retired) Robert W. Black, telephone interview by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 14 April 2009, historian's notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 2 Robert W. Black, *Rangers in World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1992), 18, 75.
- 3 Henry S. Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers" (Buchdruckerei Hausser, Germany, 1945), 13; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 170.
- 4 Black, telephone interview, 14 April 2009.

After Braunton, the unit moved to Swanage, England for additional training. "There we were introduced to the use of eight-foot sections of aluminum scaling ladders. We were quartered in a hotel on the top of an eighty-foot cliff. When we arrived at the beautiful wide front steps, our battalion commander [LTC Schneider] told us that we would use those stairs only once. At first none of us knew what he meant, but we soon found out. My men and I were quartered on the third floor in two rooms. In each room near the window was a coil of rope tied to a pipe. We were instructed to throw the rope out of the window, then rappel down the wall of the building to the yard, run across the yard, climb over an iron picket fence, and rappel down an eighty-foot cliff to the beach below," said SSG Richard N. Hathaway, Jr.<sup>29</sup> After just a few weeks of cliff climbing and rappelling, the 5th Rangers joined the 2nd Rangers to finalize preparations for the coming invasion.

## The Normandy Invasion

The Allied plan to invade France was massive. Years of planning and training culminated on 6 June 1944. On five designated invasion beaches (Omaha, Utah, Gold, Sword, and Juno), six Allied divisions would assault into Normandy.<sup>30</sup> Three airborne divisions, two American and one British, would land by parachute and glider beyond the beaches to secure routes into the interior. The combined Allied invasion force numbered over 2,800,000 men. Over 4,000 ships and almost 12,000 aircraft supported the landing. A total of 174,320 men and 20,018 vehicles had to be loaded aboard ships, airplanes, and gliders to make the D-Day assault.<sup>31</sup>

The D-Day mission of the U.S. V Corps was to assault German coastal defenses on Omaha Beach and establish a beachhead three to four miles deep. The corps sector was a 6,000-yard wide stretch of beach located between Vierville and Colleville, France. Success would enable follow-on forces to push into the interior and continue the fight. The 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions, with engineer

and armor attachments, would be the main assault. The Ranger Battalions, attached to the 29th Infantry Division, had a special mission on the corps right flank.<sup>32</sup>

On 9 May 1944 the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions became the "Provisional Ranger Group" for Operation OVERLORD. Previously the European Theater G-3 (Operations) had controlled the two battalions, since there was no overarching "Ranger" headquarters. As the senior battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel James E. Rudder was designated the Ranger Group commander. The two battalions were divided into three Ranger task forces.<sup>33</sup> Task Force A, made up of the 2nd Ranger Battalion's Dog, Easy, and Fox Companies and elements of Headquarters Company, had the daunting task of destroying the six 155 mm guns at Pointe du Hoc. This mission was critical because the guns could fire on two invasion beaches, Omaha and Utah, as well as the massive invasion flotilla in the Channel. Led by LTC Rudder, Task Force A would land and use rocket-propelled grapnel secured ropes to climb the 90-foot cliffs below the guns. Simultaneously four specially-equipped amphibious DUKWs (a 2 ½ ton amphibious truck) would land and place their fire ladders against the cliff. Once atop the cliff, the Rangers would destroy the guns and hold Pointe du Hoc until relieved.<sup>34</sup>

The smallest of the Ranger units, Task Force B, was CPT Ralph Goranson's Charlie Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion. After landing on "Charlie Sector" of Omaha Beach, Task



**Specially modified deep water M-4 Sherman Tanks landed on D-Day to provide fire support for the infantry. Most never made it past the beach. They either flooded or were destroyed by the concentrated German fire. Mounted on the rear of the tank are two exhaust vents to allow the engine to run in the deep surf. (Center for Military History)**





"All soldiers carried a heavy load of equipment into combat, although different soldiers carried slightly different equipment, depending on their mission. I wore a steel helmet and a liner. Underneath that I wore a wool-knit cap. The battle dress was an impregnated, olive drab, fatigue-type uniform that was designed to reduce casualties should the Germans use toxic chemicals. We used stripped-down field packs and carried some "K" and a "D" rations (Fortified chocolate bar), a mess kit with knife, fork and spoon. And a rain coat. Attached to the pack was a bayonet and an entrenching shovel. I had an eighty-one millimeter white phosphorous mortar round tied on the top of my pack . . . Everyone carried extra explosives."

(said Staff Sergeant Richard N. Hathaway, Jr.)

Force B had two "be-prepared" missions. The first was to follow the assault of Able Company, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division, across the beach to seize Vierville and a German strongpoint at Pointe et Raz de la Percée. That element was reinforced with a platoon of amphibious tanks from Baker Company, 743rd Tank Battalion. The second contingency for the Ranger company was to attack Pointe et Raz de la Percée by climbing the cliffs, if the assault was stopped in Vierville. After clearing Pointe et Raz de la Percée, CPT Goranson would link up with LTC Rudder at Pointe du Hoc.<sup>35</sup>

Task Force C, commanded by LTC Max Schneider, was the largest Ranger force. The 5th Ranger Battalion and Able and Baker Companies, 2nd Rangers were the exploitation force. The eight-company force would wait offshore for a prearranged signal from LTC Rudder. The timing of the Ranger mission was critical. If the assault on Pointe du Hoc was successful, Rudder would send the message, "Praise the Lord." Task Force C would then land at the Pointe du Hoc and move through Task Force A to secure the area and to attack Vierville from the flank. If Schneider did not receive the message by H+30 (30 minutes after the 0630 scheduled landing) or if the mission failure codeword "Tilt" was received, Task Force C would immediately land on Omaha Beach, fight its way through the Vierville draw, and then eastward to Pointe du Hoc.<sup>36</sup>

Since Task Force C was the exploitation force, LTC Schneider and his staff task organized the battalion



5th Rangers riding British Landing Craft Assault (LCA) 1377 to the HMS Prince Baudouin in preparation for the D-Day landings. The Rangers preferred the LCA because they had benches to sit on, speed, and an armored bow for protection. In the center of the photo is Major Sullivan, to his left Royal Navy Sub-Lieutenant Ernest "Joe" Pallent, commander of the British landing flotilla, and Captain John C. Raaen, Jr., the Headquarters Company Commander (far right). (National Archives)

with additional fire support. During the invasion, the assault units were expected to have significant casualties and were authorized fifteen percent over strength (about seventy extra men). Schneider used some of the

additional manpower to form an 81 mm mortar platoon in Charlie Company and a 60 mm mortar platoon in Fox Company.<sup>37</sup>

## The Reality of the Ranger Assault



[Author's Note: This section provides only a small "snapshot" of the 5th Ranger role on D-Day. Numerous books have been written about the D-Day Invasion providing much more detail.]

The military axiom, "No plan survives first contact with the enemy," applied to the Rangers on D-Day. The lead landing craft of Task Force A (LTC Rudder) became misoriented and headed toward Pointe et Raz de la Percée, three miles to the east. Seeing the error, Rudder directed his flotilla commander back on course, but it caused Task Force A to land thirty minutes late. LTC Rudder's three companies charged across the shell pocked beach and quickly climbed the cliffs as the the destroyers USS *Saterlee* and HMS *Talybont* provided close-in fire support. Within 45 minutes, the German battery was secure, but the three company force had to hold off several counterattacks. Because of the 30 minute delay and garbled radio transmissions, LTC Schneider did not receive any code word from Pointe du Hoc.<sup>39</sup>

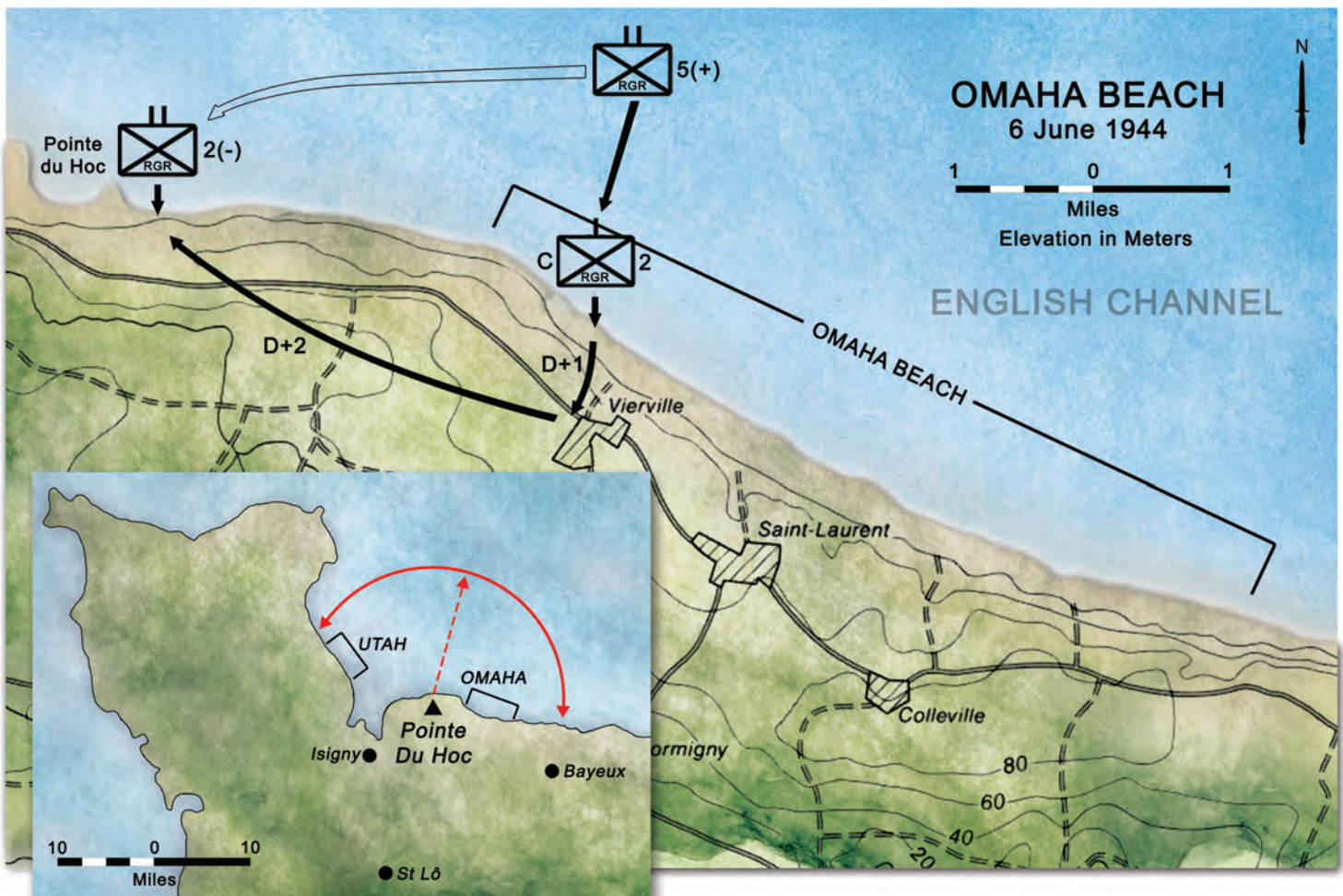
Task Force B landed on Omaha closely behind Able Company, 116th Infantry, and ran into a maelstrom of machinegun fire from the bluffs above the beach. The

concentrated fire decimated two-thirds of Able Company and almost half of the Rangers before they could move across the wide beach to the shelter of the sea wall.<sup>40</sup> Overcoming the obstacles and in the face of heavy enemy fire, the Rangers reached the base of the cliff 350 yards from the sea wall. Using bayonets and knives, SGT Richard Garrett and SGT Julius Belcher began climbing the cliff. Reaching the top, they dropped down ropes and were followed by 1LT Bill Moody and PFC Otto Stephans. But even with gaining the high ground Task Force B was quickly stalled by the intense enemy fire.<sup>41</sup>



OMAHA BEACH, France by Joseph Gary Sheahan, 1944 depicts the intensity of fire during the first few hours of the landing. (U.S. Army Art Collection)

In the choppy English Channel LTC Schneider, a veteran of numerous amphibious landings, waited for the signal from Rudder. Receiving none, he ordered the flotilla to Omaha Beach at 0710, ten minutes past the



While LTC Rudder's Task Force A landed at Pointe du Hoc, Task Force B (C/2nd Rangers) landed at Omaha Beach. At 0710 LTC Schneider ordered his eight-company Task Force C to land on Omaha. By D+1, attached to the 116th Infantry Regiment, they had secured Vierville. On D+2 Task Force C and elements of the 116th Infantry fought their way to Pointe du Hoc and relieved LTC Rudder's Rangers. (Inset map) The 155 mm guns at Pointe du Hoc could have fired on both Utah and Omaha beaches. Fortunately the cannons were not yet emplaced in firing positions.



The 5th Rangers and elements of the 116th Infantry relieve Ranger Force A at Pointe du Hoc on D+2 (8 June 1944). The arrow identifies LTC Rudder. Soon after this photo was taken, the entire element left Pointe du Hoc to continue its attack to the west. (*Military History Institute*)

## Father Lacy



LTC James E. Rudder congratulates Chaplain Joseph Lacy after presenting him with the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on D-Day. (*Photo courtesy of Major General (R) John C. Raaen, Jr.*)

“The landing craft kept being hit and Chaplain Lacy was down by the water’s edge, hauling wounded kids from the waves and administering last rites with bullets slapping all around,” recalled Major Richard P. Sullivan. “I was up by the sea wall, getting the guys organized, and I sent down a Ranger telling the chaplain to get up here and get under cover.” “Chaplain Lacy sent back the message: ‘Tell the Major I am doing my job, and he should stick to doing his.’”<sup>46</sup> For his numerous acts of heroism on D-Day 1LT (Chaplain) Joseph R. Lacy was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

deadline. Schneider was in a unique position as the only Ranger officer in his command who was a combat veteran. Off the coast he could see what was happening on the beaches and had the time, albeit a little, to evaluate the situation. He elected to land his force on the right flank of Omaha Beach, which was receiving relatively light fire (compared to the rest of the area). This decision resulted in Task Force C landing mostly intact.

On Omaha Beach the 29th Infantry Division was stalled. The troops had taken cover behind a seawall. Heavy German machinegun fire raked the beachhead. Brigadier General Norman D. Cota, the assistant division commander of the 29th, walked up to LTC Schneider and said, “We have to get the hell off this beach. Rangers, lead the way!” That was the catalyst. Soon small parties of Rangers, infantry, and engineers scrambled over the seawall to set explosive charges.<sup>42</sup>

On LTC Schneider’s signal, the Rangers breached the barbed wire defenses using Bangalore torpedoes. Momentarily hidden from enemy observation by the clouds of rising smoke from the explosions and grass fires, the Rangers quickly moved through the gaps and up the hill. Dog Company, led by First Lieutenant Francis W. Dawson’s platoon, assaulted the hilltop and eliminated an enemy strongpoint, enabling the rest of the battalion to move inland. After working its way through the belt of German minefields, the battalion began attacking the formidable defenses around Vierville.<sup>43</sup>

1LT “Ace” Parker led Able Company, 5th Rangers to the prearranged rally point, the *Chateau de Vaumicel*, southwest of Vierville. When the unit stopped, Parker had only 23 men, less than half of his company. Undeterred, 1LT Parker continued on with his mission – the relief of the Rangers at Point du Hoc. On its own, the small force finally reached Rudder’s men at 2200 hours with 20 German prisoners captured during firefights along the way.<sup>44</sup> However, the rest of Schneider’s force did not immediately follow.

Still attached to the 116th Infantry Regiment (29th Infantry Division), Colonel Charles D. W. Canham, the regimental commander, ordered the Task Force C Rangers to assist his depleted unit in the defense of Vierville and protect the beachhead against an enemy counterattack. This mission delayed their movement to Pointe du Hoc. Once that mission was accomplished, Schneider’s force fought west to finally relieve Rudder’s battered contingent on 8 June (D+2).<sup>45</sup>

## Aftermath of Normandy



After linking up with Task Force A on 8 June 1944, the 5th Rangers enjoyed a brief respite. On the Cherbourg Peninsula the Allies were inundated by the sudden influx of German prisoners. The First Army Provost Marshal set up temporary POW camps, ranging in size from 500 to 10,000 men. The 5th Ranger Battalion was tasked to guard POW



camps at Valognes and Foucarville. "Prisoners were marched down to the beach in groups of about a hundred and loaded onto ships to England or the U.S.," recalled Sergeant Victor "Baseplate" Miller, Easy Company.<sup>47</sup> Guard duty was interspersed with training replacements and serving as a reaction force, in case by-passed German forces on the Jersey and Guernsey Islands attempted to raid the coast.<sup>48</sup> LTC Schneider left the battalion in July 1944 for an assignment in the United States and Major Richard P. Sullivan, the battalion's executive officer since activation, assumed command.<sup>49</sup> After the POW security mission, the 5th Rangers were committed to offensive operations in the Brittany Peninsula.

**The Brittany Campaign** As Allied forces pushed inland from the invasion beachhead, enemy forces regrouped and withdrew to secondary defensive positions. The primary Allied push was eastward, with a secondary thrust to the southwest, along the French coast and the Brittany Peninsula.



The Germans had fortified and garrisoned several of the major ports in Brittany. The largest of these was Brest, with a civilian population of 80,000. The port was the second largest in the country. Since the French surrender in 1940, Brest had become the principal German submarine base. *General der Fallschirmtruppe* (paratrooper general) Hermann B. Ramcke and 40-50,000 Germans defended the city. The port's medieval fortress with its moats and walls had been augmented with minefields, trenches, and pillboxes. Over a hundred cannons and anti-aircraft artillery pieces protected the defenses.<sup>50</sup>

As the Allies moved east toward Germany, they fought three enemies: the Germans, the weather, and the lack of supplies. More ports had to be opened to increase the flow of supplies from England.<sup>51</sup> One of the two "Mulberry" experimental floating docks off Omaha Beach had been ripped apart by a summer storm. The Allies could no longer rely on support coming across the invasion beaches, especially with the stormy fall and winter weather approaching. The Allied armies needed thousands of tons of supplies daily to sustain the push into Germany. Securing the port cities of Cherbourg, Le Havre, and Brest became critical to the Allied effort.<sup>52</sup> In Brittany both the 2nd and 5th Ranger battalions served as "fire brigades" to push into hot spots.

The 5th Rangers formed two task forces for their Brest mission. One task force, consisting of Able, Charlie, and Easy Companies, led by the new battalion XO, MAJ Hugo W. Heffelfinger, relieved elements of the 2nd Infantry Division northwest of Brest. Easy Company was later repositioned into a gap between the 8th and 29th Infantry Divisions near Gousneou to conduct patrols. On 1 September, the rest of the battalion was attached to the 29th Division to "straighten out the lines" of the division by knocking out pockets of German resistance in preparation for the attack on Brest.<sup>53</sup>

The assault on Brest began on 3 September when the 5th Rangers assaulted Fort Toulbrouch, one of the many forts surrounding the harbor. Fighting was so intense that the battalion reserve had to be committed to stop a counterattack and Headquarters Company was reorganized into a rifle company and placed in reserve.<sup>54</sup> The next day the 5th Rangers attacked again with coordinated artillery and air support. CPT Bernard M. Pepper's Baker Company assaulted just 20 yards behind eight P-47 fighters strafing the German positions. "It was

**A patrol from Easy Company, 5th Rangers, moves out using captured horses and a bicycle near Grandcamp, France. It was not a publicity stunt. They returned with 53 German prisoners. (National Archives)**





The cut off German troops on the Brittany Peninsula put up a tenacious defense. Once inside the port city's defenses, the American soldiers had to fight house to house often using tanks and tank destroyers. (National Archives)

amazing to see the smoke and dirt and Rangers running into it and disappear out of sight. The Germans, before they could recover, found the Rangers on top of them and . . . the fort was captured," said SGT Arden Mischke.<sup>55</sup> The sixty-man Baker Company captured Fort Toulbrouch and over 300 prisoners within 6 minutes of the final attack.<sup>56</sup> On 5 September, the entire 5th Battalion attacked Fort de Mengant supported by a platoon from Able Company, 644th Tank Destroyer Battalion. After heavy fighting, Fox Company took the fort with a bayonet charge.<sup>57</sup>

Pulled off the line for a well earned one-day rest, the Rangers "were surprised to see two intoxicated German soldiers walking down the road toward us carrying a suitcase. When we coaxed them up to us we found the

suitcase was full of French money. They told us they had robbed their supply store (Post Exchange to us)," said SGT Arden Mischke. The Germans were relieved of their money and left to sober up in a POW camp.<sup>58</sup> The incident provided a brief humorous interlude from the tough fighting.

Heavy fighting continued as the 5<sup>th</sup> Rangers were shifted to the Le Conquet Peninsula, west of Brest. The Germans, in anticipation of an Allied attack, had improved their defenses. "We didn't know what to expect as we made our way to the town. Once in, it was dash from building to building, expecting any minute to be fired upon. At last, we had completed our task of securing it [Le Conquet]. At that moment there was a

The Allied Armies pushed rapidly out of the D-Day beachhead into France. By December 1944, most of France was liberated. (Inset) The 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions moved into the Brittany Peninsula for operations around Brest. Both units would take critical forts protecting the port city.





Artist's rendition of Lieutenant Greene's eleven-man Easy Company patrol, under the cover of darkness, placing demolitions charges and pouring a mixture of gasoline and heavy oil into the air vents. When detonated the pillbox erupted, illuminating the area. The patrol suffered no casualties. (Illustration by Mariano Santillan)

great rumpus and we were . . . ready to repulse whatever was coming. Lo and behold, here came the Free French [Forces] marching in with banners, and the populace now came out and cheered them," said Sergeant "Baseplate" Miller.<sup>59</sup> The Free French "liberated" Le Conquet at the cost of four wounded Rangers.<sup>60</sup> Despite some machinegun fire from a neighboring town, the French continued their celebration into the night.

The Rangers moved along the coast reducing German fortifications. At Fort du Portzic the 5<sup>th</sup> Rangers developed a new technique to overcome the pillboxes. In the darkness of 17 September, Lieutenant James F. Greene, Jr. led an eleven-man Easy Company patrol to eliminate a pillbox that had resisted artillery, bombing, and repeated ground attacks. "We carried two 40-lb demo charges and a 50-lb charge, including 20 gallons of a gasoline and heavy oil mixture. We approached the pillbox cautiously, placed the charges around it, and started pouring our mixture into the air vents, then we all took cover . . . an enormous explosion followed at 2210 [hours] The pillbox erupted in bright flames, illuminating the area all around, while we watched full of awe . . . it had worked!" recalled Greene. The patrol suffered no casualties.<sup>61</sup> The next day when the Brest garrison surrendered at 1200 hours, the 5th Rangers became the 12th U.S. Army Group reserve.<sup>62</sup>

Conventional units fought the remainder of the campaign in Brittany. The two Ranger battalions were pulled off the line and allowed to recuperate. The 5th Rangers had suffered a 30% casualty rate (137), with 24 killed in action during its nineteen days of fighting around

Brest.<sup>63</sup> The Brittany Campaign received scant attention. The Allied armies were racing across France and Belgium and Field Marshall Bernard L. Montgomery's Operation MARKET-GARDEN, the ground and airborne invasion in the Netherlands, was beginning. After Brest, the 5th Ranger Battalion was attached to Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third U.S. Army for the drive across France into Germany.

## Across France and into Germany



On 1 December 1944, the 5th Rangers were attached to the 6th Cavalry Group. The mechanized reconnaissance units and the Rangers worked well together.

A collection of half-tracks, jeeps, and trucks were scrounged to carry the Rangers and the two units were organized to fight as combined arms teams.<sup>64</sup> The cavalry had speed and firepower, while the Rangers could seize and hold areas. The unit fought first around Toul, then Nancy. Ranger casualties mounted during the heavy fighting near the German border area. The fight for Lauterbach was typical.<sup>65</sup>

On 4 December 1944, Fox Company attacked across open ground to seize Lauterbach. As the 1st platoon closed to 100 yards of their objective, withering small arms fire erupted from well-concealed enemy positions. Two camouflaged machineguns created an effective crossfire. Mortar and artillery fire stalled the assault. PFC Leo G. Samborowski, a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) gunner, moved to engage the two machineguns. In a desperate move, PFC Samborowski charged forward alone, firing eight magazines from his BAR. He killed one machinegun crew and suppressed the second machinegun long enough for his fellow Rangers to flank the position. As they launched their attack, a hail of enemy machinegun bullets hit Samborowski, killing him. The veteran of Normandy and Brest was posthumously



Attached to the 6th Cavalry Group for mobility these Rangers ride in the open turret of an M-10 Tank Destroyer. Once contact was made the Rangers dismounted to deal with the infantry threat. (Military History Institute)



Corporal Andrew "Pappy" Speir played a "cat and mouse" game with a German Tiger Tank in Lauterbach. The 2.36-inch Bazooka rockets bounced off the heavily armored tank. Luckily the tank was firing blind into the buildings. (Illustration by Mariano Santillan)

awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.<sup>66</sup> Samborowski's sacrifice provided the opening into Lauterbach.

The assault continued and the company gained a toehold in the town. The Germans counterattacked with infantry supported by a Tiger tank. The tank smashed into a house forcing the Rangers inside to withdraw next door. From there, Corporal Andrew "Pappy" Speir fired his 2.36-inch Bazooka at the tank from the second floor. The tank fired back at him at point blank range, knocking him off his feet. He scrambled back up, unhurt, to load and fire more rockets. This went on until Ranger mortar and supporting artillery fire drove the German infantry out of town. Without ground support the tank retreated.<sup>67</sup> But the fight was not over for the Rangers.

On 16 December 1944, the Germans launched a major counteroffensive in the Belgium Ardennes, known as the "Battle of the Bulge." The Rangers, still attached to the 6th Cavalry Group, conducted screening operations to deceive the enemy as to their true size. The Ranger and cavalry patrols countered enemy patrols that probed the American lines for a weakness. On 24 December, the 5th Rangers moved to Metz to recuperate, reorganize, and refit.<sup>68</sup> The battalion was then attached to the 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division as it attacked further into Germany.

By mid-January 1945, replacements were trained under the tutelage of veteran Rangers amidst sub-freezing temperatures and snow. Allowed to recruit fifty volunteers from rear echelon troops of the Twelfth Army Group, General Bradley said "It [the 5th Rangers] was almost trampled in the rush of a thousand applicants."<sup>69</sup> After selecting the best candidates, the 5th Ranger Battalion strength was still only 398 men and officers, still some 108 soldiers below its authorized strength.<sup>70</sup> But, the unit in its depleted condition was deemed combat ready.



BAR gunner PFC Leo G. Samborowski valiantly attacked a German machinegun position. PFC Samborowski fired eight magazines (160 rounds) from his BAR killing one machinegun crew, but was cut down by a hail of bullets from the second machinegun. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. (Illustration by Mariano Santillan)

Lieutenant General Walton Walker's XX Corps had managed to breach the Siegfried Line and needed to exploit this success. At Weiten, the 5th Rangers received the mission to infiltrate nine miles behind German lines and seize key terrain between the towns of Irsch and Zerf. At the intersection of four valleys, the road from Irsch to Zerf climbs up for two and a quarter miles eastward through open fields onto a treeless plateau. A Ranger blocking position two miles above Zerf provided an almost unobstructed view of the valley.<sup>71</sup> In a double envelopment, an armored task force from the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division would assault from the north, while the 301<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 94<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division attacked from the west. The 301st would relieve the Rangers. Holding the plateau would prevent the enemy from using the Irsch-Zerf road network to launch counter-attacks against the

American offensive and would block the best German withdrawal route from its defense along the Saar River.<sup>72</sup> The Rangers had less than 24 hours to plan the operation.

## The Irsch-Zerf Fight



On 23 February 1945 under cover of darkness, the battalion crossed the Saar River on a footbridge. Just before midnight, the 5th Rangers passed through the 302nd Infantry Regiment, 94th Infantry Division. Moving in two columns into enemy territory, each man was heavily burdened by extra ammunition and anti-tank

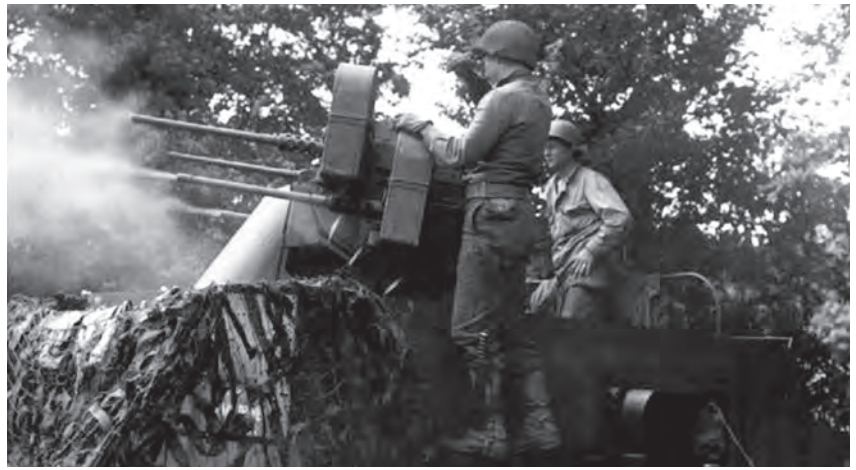
mines. Night movement over the rugged, heavily wooded terrain was made more difficult by harassing enemy artillery fire and occasional ambushes. Captured Germans slowed down the Rangers. "The woods became so heavy we were confused. Then we called for artillery fire, two rounds, on our objective to help us establish our position. We listened to the rounds go over. After that we knew our position and directions," recalled LTC Sullivan.<sup>73</sup> The advance resumed through thick woods towards the objective.<sup>74</sup>

A break in contact between Baker and Easy Companies stopped the battalion. Patrols failed to reestablish contact between elements. Finally LTC Sullivan could not wait any longer and the unit continued movement. As a result, the separated 2nd Platoon, Baker Company would not rejoin the unit for a day, to further deplete the already under-strength battalion.<sup>75</sup>

As the Rangers moved closer to the objective, contact became more frequent. Enemy patrols blundered into the Ranger formation and more prisoners were taken. The number grew to 110, further slowing movement. The Rangers happened upon a German aid station. "A doctor with a nice white medical vehicle who when captured said, 'This is 4000 yards behind the lines – No, no! – you can't be here!' recalled LTC Sullivan. "He stayed with us the next four days taking care of our wounded and the wounded Germans and did a good job."<sup>76</sup>

The Germans had no idea a battalion was moving behind their lines.<sup>77</sup> By 0800 hours on 25 February, advanced elements of the battalion had reached the objective. LTC Sullivan ordered the companies to set up their defense as planned. Forming an egg-shaped defensive perimeter 200 yards wide and 1,000 yards long, the Rangers effectively blocked the Irsch-Zerf road on the plateau.<sup>78</sup>

Once discovered, the Germans counterattacked the Rangers with rockets, artillery, and infantry. "We saw a Kraut SP [self-propelled gun] coming down the road from the west. The crew, upon seeing us, jumped out and ran like hell before we could get to them. We fired a bazooka [at it] but it didn't seem to damage the SP. We finally poured gasoline on it and burned it," said



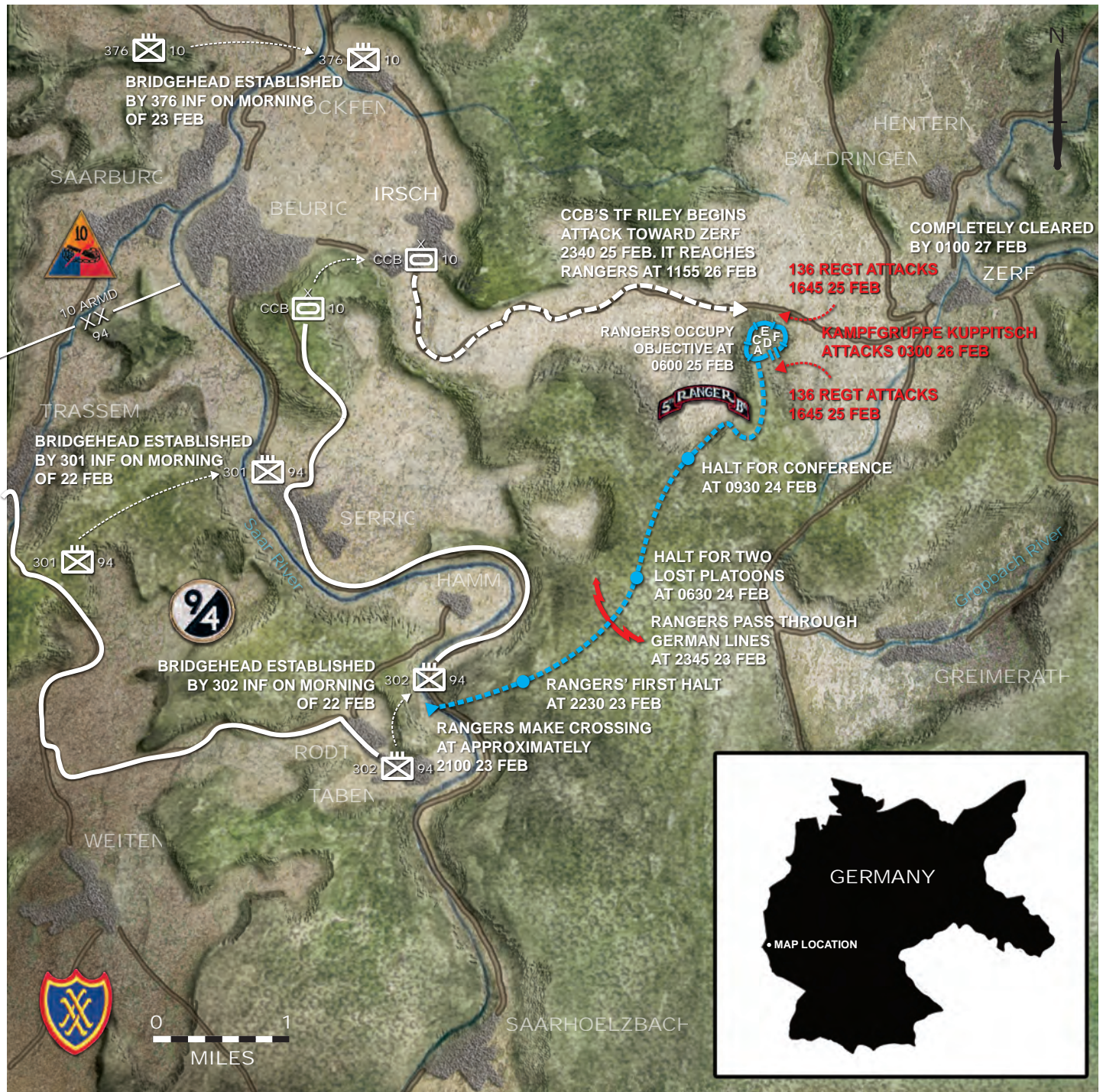
With the German Air Force threat reduced to nothing, anti-aircraft "quad 50s" were used as ground support weapons. The four .50 caliber machineguns could send a hail of bullets at the enemy. (Center for Military History)

LTC Sullivan. "From that point we had trouble."<sup>79</sup> With ammunition, water, food, and medical supplies running low, a 94th Infantry Division artillery spotter aircraft dropped some supplies into the defensive perimeter.<sup>80</sup> "I radioed . . . that we could probably hold out if someone came through to relieve us within 48 hours. I told them we did not have to eat, but we must have enough ammo for 48 hours. Our communications were also running out because of weak [radio] batteries," said LTC Sullivan.<sup>81</sup> The Germans launched repeated counterattacks to dislodge the Rangers.

The next day Task Force Riley (10th Armored Division) managed to reach the Rangers. With them was 1LT Louis J. Gambosi's "lost" platoon (2nd Platoon, Baker Company). Gambosi had joined Task Force Riley, aboard its half-tracks and cleared three roadblocks for the armored element as it fought toward the beleaguered battalion.<sup>82</sup> The reinforcements did not bring relief to the Rangers as planned.

Instead, the Rangers received orders to attack further into Germany attached to the 301st Infantry Regiment. The 301st Infantry brought food, ammunition, and water for the Rangers.<sup>83</sup> To boost its firepower, a platoon of tanks, a platoon of tank destroyers, and a section (two) of anti-aircraft "quad" .50 caliber machineguns on halftracks were attached to the battalion.

The next morning, the Ranger Battalion repositioned to higher ground further to the south to create a stronger defensive position. The Germans repeatedly counterattacked. The heavy artillery bombardments were brutal. During one attack on 1 March, the Baker Company commander, Captain Bernard M. Pepper, said that in one platoon alone, "10 men were casualties during the first 15 minutes of this fire. Only the platoon leader [1LT Gambosi], a radio man, and one rifleman remained [uninjured]."<sup>84</sup> Finally, on 3 March it was over. The two-day defensive mission had lasted nine days and bled the 5th Battalion dry. Captain Charles H. Parker, the Able Company commander, reported that: "A Co. came out of this operation with one officer and 24 men. F Co. came out with two officers and 18 men."<sup>85</sup> Casualties for the battle



The 20th Corps attacks across the Saar River. Attached to the 94th Division the 5th Rangers infiltrated to block the Irsch-Zerf Road. The Rangers were relieved first by the 10th Armored and then the 94th Infantry Divisions only to be given another mission – to attack further into Germany.

at Irsch-Zerf were heavy for the battalion; 34 killed, 140 wounded, and 12 missing, putting the unit strength at only 212 men.<sup>86</sup> Although seriously depleted from sustained combat, the 5th Ranger Battalion continued to serve.

## Occupation and the End of the Rangers

Army-wide infantry replacements for the European Theater were scarce in March and April 1945. Although fighting in Germany was still fierce, the

end was near for the Nazi regime. In April elements of the U.S. First Army met the Soviets on the Elbe River. On 30 April, Adolf Hitler committed suicide and the Allies accepted the German surrender on 8 May 1945 – VE Day. When the war ended in Europe the 5th Rangers were in Luxembourg. They then moved into Germany, and finally to Austria supporting Military Government units (today's Civil Affairs). The 5th Rangers guarded supplies and rounded up German soldiers. SSG Henry S. Glassman, Headquarters Company, recalled that they collected all weapons and cameras in each German

town. The battalion formed softball, basketball, and boxing teams to keep the troops out of trouble.<sup>87</sup> Many of the Rangers felt this was the “calm before the storm” anticipating movement to the Pacific Theater. However, Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945 (VJ Day) and the 5th Ranger Battalion, like the 2nd before them, was shipped back to the United States as a unit. From Camp Lucky Strike, one of the “cigarette-name camps” established around Le Havre, France, the 5th Rangers boarded the USS *Sea Snipe* for Boston. The 5th Ranger Battalion deactivated without fanfare on 2 October 1945 at Camp Miles Standish, Taunton, Massachusetts. It was an inauspicious end for an elite infantry unit.<sup>88</sup>



**Conclusion** While the combat exploits of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ranger Infantry Battalion are less chronicled than those of “Rudder’s Rangers” (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ranger Battalion) or “Darby’s Rangers” (the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalions) in the Mediterranean, it contributed significantly to winning the war



Rangers from Headquarters Company enjoy a beer during occupation duty in Germany. They have the older Ranger insignia on their shoulder and the Ranger diamonds with a “5” inside painted on their helmets. (Military History Institute)

## Richard P. Sullivan: the “unknown Ranger Commander”

Lieutenant Colonel Richard P. Sullivan (1917-1999) was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts on 9 September 1917. In 1936 he joined Baker Company, 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment (Massachusetts National Guard), which was part of the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (the “Yankee Division”). After graduating from the Massachusetts Military Academy, in November 1940 he was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of Infantry. On 16 January 1941 the 26<sup>th</sup> Division was inducted into federal service and began a one year training program. When the Japanese attacked on Pearl Harbor, the division was retained on active duty “for the duration.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1943, while assigned to the 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment Captain Sullivan volunteered for the 5th Ranger Battalion and became its executive officer (XO). Serving as both the battalion XO and the provisional Ranger Group XO, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry during the Normandy landings in June 1944. He assumed command of the battalion in July 1944 and led the unit through the Brittany Campaign and into Germany. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in September 1944, Sullivan commanded the 5th Ranger Battalion until the end of the war. In 1946 LTC Sullivan was medically retired from the Army.

LTC Richard P. Sullivan was the commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ranger Infantry Battalion for ten of its eleven months in combat, but he is virtually unknown, except to the veterans of the 5th Ranger Battalion. His awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Purple Heart, and the Combat Infantryman’s Badge.<sup>2</sup>

After the war, he returned to Massachusetts and civilian life. He and his wife Evelyn raised two sons



LTC Richard P. Sullivan promotes Dog Company 1SG Raymond M. Herlihy to 2nd LT in January 1945, somewhere in Germany. Sullivan would command the 5th Rangers for ten of its eleven months in combat. (Military History Institute)

and three daughters. Sullivan was a member of the Massachusetts Crime Commission for several years and was the president of the Empire Equipment Engineering Company in Providence, Rhode Island for 25 years, until he retired in 1980. He died of natural causes in 1999.<sup>3</sup>

### Endnotes

- 1 Major General (Retired) John C. Raaen, Jr., e-mail to Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 27 March 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Colonel (Retired) Leonid Kondratiuk, e-mail to Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Jones, Jr., 28 March 2009, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Richard P. Sullivan National Guard Service Card, Massachusetts National Guard Museum and Archives, Worcester, MA.
- 2 Richard P. Sullivan National Guard Service Card, Massachusetts National Guard Museum and Archives, Worcester, MA; Kondratiuk e-mail, 28 March 2009; Robert W. Black, *Rangers in World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1992), 419.
- 3 Tom Long, “Richard P. Sullivan, decorated for bravery in D-Day assault; at 81: [City Edition].” *Boston Globe*, August 5, 1999, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed April 20, 2009).

## 5th Ranger Training Battalion Dahlonge, Georgia



The unofficial scroll  
of the 5th Ranger Training Battalion

The 5th Ranger Training Battalion (RTB) is part of the U.S. Army Infantry Center and School's Ranger Training Brigade. The 5th RTB conducts the Mountain training phase of the Ranger Course. It is located at Camp Frank D. Merrill, near Dahlonge, Georgia.

in Europe. Although created for one mission – spearheading the invasion of Europe – its successes on D-Day resulted in the 5th Rangers commitment as a reaction force in France and Germany. The 5th Rangers finished the war in Austria as part of Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third U.S. Army and supported Military Government units in the Army of Occupation.<sup>89</sup> The 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion unit decorations included two Distinguished Unit Citations and the French Croix de Guerre. ♣

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## Epilogue



The activation of the  
75th Ranger Regiment in 1984  
was the first time since World War II that the Rangers  
had a separate command and control headquarters.

The World War II Rangers simply faded away during demobilization. For the next five years the Army was preoccupied with the postwar occupation and defense of Germany, Japan, and Austria from Communism. Constabulary and military government units assumed the post-conflict missions. Faced with budget cuts in early 1950, the Army eliminated units, delayed purchases of new equipment, and deferred maintenance on old equipment.<sup>90</sup> Everything changed in late June 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea.

Realizing the need for Ranger-type units in Korea, the Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins ordered the formation of a Ranger Training Center at Fort Benning, Georgia.<sup>91</sup> In October 1950 the first "Airborne Ranger" Infantry Companies began training at Fort Benning, Georgia. Several of these companies went to Korea to carry the Ranger legacy forward. However, in a surprising move the Army decided to deactivate the units in August 1951.<sup>92</sup> Only the Ranger Training Center (later the Ranger Department of the Infantry School) was retained as a small unit leadership training course.

The Rangers were reborn in 1974 when the Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton W. Abrams, directed the formation of two Ranger battalions. The 1st Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on 31 January 1974 and the 2nd Battalion (Ranger), 75th Infantry at Fort Lewis, Washington on 1 October 1974.<sup>93</sup> Both Ranger battalions spearheaded the invasion of Grenada on 25 October 1983. Following that success, the Army created a Ranger Regimental headquarters in July 1984, commanded by Colonel Wayne A. Downing. The 3rd Ranger Battalion was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia in October 1984.<sup>94</sup> The first Ranger Regimental mission was Operation JUST CAUSE, where it conducted combat parachute assaults on Rio Hato airfield and the Torrijos-Tocumen Airport in Panama on 19 December 1989.



## Endnotes

- 1 Michael J. King, *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1985), 53; Robert W. Black, *Rangers in World War II* (New York: Presidio Press, 1992), 293. **The official designation of the units was *Ranger Infantry Battalion*. However, most of the time the units were simply referred to as a "Ranger Battalion."**
- 2 Kenneth Finlayson and Robert W. Jones Jr., "Rangers in World War II: Part I—The Formation and the Early Days," *Veritas*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2006, 64–69; Kenneth Finlayson and Robert W. Jones Jr., "Rangers in World War II: Part II—Sicily and Italy," *Veritas*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2006, 49-58; Robert W. Jones Jr., "Beyond the Beach: The 2nd Rangers Fight Through Europe," *Veritas*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 16-32. **The seven Ranger battalions formed in World War II were the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 29th. The 29th Ranger Battalion (Provisional) was formed on 20 December 1942, shortly after the 1st Ranger Battalion shipped out for the invasion of North Africa. Major Randolph Milholland formed the battalion with volunteers from the 29th Infantry Division, a National Guard division with elements from Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. After training in Scotland and England, the 29th Infantry Division commander, Major General Charles H. Gerhardt, ordered the unit disbanded on 15 October 1943. The Rangers returned to their original units and fought with the 29th Infantry Division from D-Day until the end of the war. In some respects, the 29th Rangers fulfilled the original intent for creating a Ranger battalion—to spread experience and training throughout the division.**
- 3 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 77 and 136; Finlayson and Jones, "Rangers in World War II: Part II—Sicily and Italy," 55-57. **For the invasion of Anzio (Operation SHINGLE) the three battalions formed together as the provisional 6615th Ranger Force.**
- 4 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 108.
- 5 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 108 and 112.
- 6 Maria Moen, editor, *We Remember WWII: A Collection of U.S. Army Ranger Stories* (MN: Meadowlark Publishing, 2003), 48. **The 26th Infantry Division was activated on 16 January 1941 and began a train-up that included participating in the Tennessee Maneuvers. While a large part of the 5th Rangers came from the 26th Infantry Division, two other units providing soldiers were the 78th and 98th Infantry Divisions.**
- 7 Marcia Moen and Margo Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed: A Personal Account of Ranger "Ace" Parker* (Elk River, MN: DeForest Press, 1999), 60. **The 98th Infantry Division was then at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky.**
- 8 Arden V. Mischke, "D-Day June 6, 1944 Plus 183 Days with Company 'D' 5th Ranger Battalion," unpublished manuscript, Robert Black Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 31 (hereafter cited as Mischke manuscript and page number).
- 9 Richard N. Hathaway, Jr., *Training For Bloody Omaha: Activation, Training, and Combat of the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion through 8, June 1944*, <http://www.5thrangersecoc.com/history/train/train.html>, accessed on 21 December 2008, copy in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC (hereafter cited as Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*).
- 10 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 339.
- 11 Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 65-66; Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 12 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 13 John L. Burke, 5th Ranger Battalion, Veteran's History Project Questionnaire, Box 3, File 1490, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA (hereafter cited as Burke Veteran's Questionnaire).
- 14 Thomas E. Herring, 5th Ranger Battalion, Veteran's History Project Questionnaire, Box 3, File 1493, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA (hereafter cited as Herring Veteran's Questionnaire).
- 15 James Gabaree, 5th Ranger Battalion, "University of Adversity," copy in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC (hereafter cited as Gabaree, "University of Adversity").
- 16 John J. Reville, 5th Ranger Battalion, Veteran's History Project Questionnaire, Box 3, File 1570, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA (hereafter cited as Reville Veteran's Questionnaire).
- 17 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 18 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 19 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 20 Henry S. Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers" (Buchdruckerei Hausser, Germany, 1945), 12.
- 21 Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 12.
- 22 Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 67.
- 23 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 24 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 141; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 13.
- 25 James E. Kidwell, 5th Ranger Battalion, Veteran's History Project Questionnaire, Box 3, File 2973, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA (hereafter cited as Kidwell Veteran's Questionnaire).
- 26 Mischke manuscript, 35.
- 27 Mischke manuscript, 36.
- 28 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*; Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 69-70; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 177; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 13; Jerome J. Haggerty, "History of the Ranger Battalions, World War II," PhD Dissertation, Fordham University, New York, 1982, 204.
- 29 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 30 **The five invasion beaches were: Omaha (U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions), Utah (U.S. 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division), Gold (British 50<sup>th</sup> [Northumbrian] Division), Sword (British 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division), and Juno (3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division).**
- 31 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 175; Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 2002), 170.
- 32 War Department, *Small Unit Actions* (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1991), 1.
- 33 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 177; Department of the Army, *Omaha Beachhead* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1994), 31; John C. Raaen, Jr., *Sir, the 5th Rangers have landed intact: A story of D-Day and of the 5th Rangers*, unpublished manuscript, 1999, copy at the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 6.
- 34 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 179-180; Black, *The Battalion*, 181-183.
- 35 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 180; Black, *The Battalion*, 63-64.
- 36 Raaen, *Sir, the 5th Rangers have landed intact*, 8; Black, *The Battalion*, 63-64; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 179-180.
- 37 Raaen, *Sir, the 5th Rangers have landed intact*, 8; Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 27. **The 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion was organized like the other Ranger battalions of World War II with a headquarters company and six line companies of sixty-three to sixty-seven men. Each company had a headquarters of four (company commander, first sergeant, company clerk, and runner/messenger) and two platoons of thirty men each. The entire battalion was only 516 men with attached medical personnel. In comparison the current Ranger Battalions are more robust (over 750 Rangers), with a Headquarters Company, four rifle companies, and a support company. Today a Ranger company is much larger with three rifle platoons each with 40 and a Weapons Platoon of 21 (over 150 soldiers).**
- 38 Hathaway, *Training For Bloody Omaha*.
- 39 Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, 322; Cornelius Ryan, *The Longest Day, June 6, 1944* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1959), 209-210.
- 40 Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack*, 313-314.
- 41 Ryan, *The Longest Day, June 6, 1944*, 199-200; Black, *The Battalion*, 90-92. **On 6 June 1944, nineteen of the sixty-eight Rangers in Charlie Company, 2nd Ranger Battalion were killed on Omaha Beach.**
- 42 David W. Hogan, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1992), 44; Glassman, "Lead the Way Rangers," 20-24.
- 43 Glassman, "Lead the Way Rangers," 21; Major Hugo W. Heffelfinger, Headquarters, 5th Ranger Battalion, "5th Ranger Battalion Action Against Enemy Reports, 6 June 1944," ARSOF Archives, John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 44 Black, *The Battalion*, 137-138; Major Hugo W. Heffelfinger, Headquarters, 5th Ranger Battalion, "5th Ranger Battalion Action Against Enemy Reports, 6 June 1944," ARSOF Archives, John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum, Fort Bragg, NC (hereafter cited as 5th Ranger Battalion AAR and date); Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 93.
- 45 Hogan, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 44; Glassman, "Lead the Way Rangers," 20-24; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 218; Black, *The Battalion*, 146-151.
- 46 Tom Long, "Richard P. Sullivan, decorated for bravery in D-Day assault; at 81: [City Edition]." *Boston Globe*, August 5, 1999, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed April 20, 2009); Colin Nickerson, Globe Staff. "One searing day to last a lifetime New England veterans recount the courage, terror and triumph of D-Day:[City Edition]." *Boston Globe*, May 29, 1994, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed April 20, 2009).
- 47 Victor J. Miller, *My Life With the Rangers* (online edition, [http://www.5thrangercoy.com/history/miller\\_story.html](http://www.5thrangercoy.com/history/miller_story.html)), accessed on 21 December 2008, copy in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC), 17 (hereafter cited as Miller, *My Life With the Rangers* and page number).
- 48 Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 28; Miller, *My Life With the Rangers*, 17.

- 49 Mischke manuscript, 13; Hogan, *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II*, 44-45; Miller, *My Life With the Rangers*, 17.
- 50 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 223; Black, *The Battalion*, 165. **Allied intelligence estimated 20,000 defenders, but sailors and construction troops at the bases and miscellaneous troops cutoff by the Allied advance had swelled the defense to almost 50,000. The defenders included the 2nd Fallschirmjäger (Parachute) Division, the 266th and 343rd Infantry Divisions, and some contingents of SS troops.**
- 51 Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 279-280; Hugh M. Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1993), 3-4; Richard Stewart, editor, *American Military History, volume II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 2005), 151-152; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1944 to May 7, 1945* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 89; Geoffrey Perret, *There's a War to be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 329. **Field Marshall Bernard L. Montgomery's 21st Army Group was moving in a northern thrust to capture ports along the English Channel, especially the great Belgian port of Antwerp. To the south the Americans attempted to clear the channel ports on the Brittany peninsula. This was a daunting task considering the peninsula was 200 miles long and 100 miles wide.**
- 52 Black, *The Battalion*, 165.
- 53 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 29 August 1944; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 31-32.
- 54 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 3 September 1944; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 33; James F. Greene, Jr., E Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, "Recollections of Brest," found at <http://users.skynet.be/jeeper/page123.html>.
- 55 Mischke manuscript, 16.
- 56 Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 34; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 3 September 1944; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 231.
- 57 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 5 September 1944; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 34-35; Mischke manuscript, 17; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 231-232.
- 58 Mischke manuscript, 17.
- 59 Miller, *My Life With the Rangers*, 21; Mischke manuscript, 19; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 36; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 9 September 1944.
- 60 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 234-235.
- 61 James F. Greene, Jr., E Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, oral history interview transcript by Dr. David Hogan, 8 March 1984, Carlisle, PA; James F. Greene, Jr., E Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, "Recollections of Brest," found at <http://users.skynet.be/jeeper/page123.html>; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 37-38; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 17 September 1944; Miller, *My Life With the Rangers*, 22; Mischke manuscript, 24-25; Captain Edward S. Luther, "After Action Report Company E, 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion, 21 September 1944," Veteran's History Project Questionnaire, Box 3, File 6628, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA.
- 62 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 18 September 1944.
- 63 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 18 September 1944; Mischke manuscript, 25.
- 64 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 252; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 1 December 1944.
- 65 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 1-4 December 1944.
- 66 Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 48; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 4 December 1944; Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 164.
- 67 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 252-253; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 49; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 4 December 1944; Moen and Heinen, *Reflections of Courage on D-Day and the Days That Followed*, 166-167.
- 68 Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 51; Miller, *My Life With the Rangers*, 31; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 270-271; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 21 December 1944; Hugh M. Cole, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge* (Washington DC: Center for Military History, 1965), 80-81.
- 69 Omar Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Holt, 1951), 491.
- 70 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 291; Major Hugo W. Heffelfinger, Headquarters, 5th Ranger Battalion, "5th Ranger Battalion Action Against Enemy Reports, 22 February 1945," ARSOF Archives, John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum, Fort Bragg, NC; Lieutenant Colonel Richard P. Sullivan, 5th Ranger Battalion, interview by Master Sergeant Monroe Ludden, 9 March 1945, Remich, Luxembourg, interview transcript, the Colonel Robert W. Black Collection, Box 5, Folder 3, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA, (hereafter cited as Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945).
- 71 King, *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II*, 44.
- 72 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 291; King, *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II*, 44.
- 73 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945.
- 74 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 293; King, *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II*, 45; Glassman, "Lead the Way, Rangers," 59-61.
- 75 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 293; First Lieutenant Louis J. Gambosi, B Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, interview by Master Sergeant Monroe Ludden, 5 March 1945, Remich, Luxembourg, interview transcript, the Colonel Robert W. Black Collection, Box 5, Folder 3, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA; Captain Bernard M. Pepper, B Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, interview by Master Sergeant Monroe Ludden, 9 March 1945, Remich, Luxembourg, interview transcript, the Colonel Robert W. Black Collection, Box 5, Folder 3, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 24 February 1945.
- 76 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 24 February 1945.
- 77 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 24 February 1945.
- 78 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 24 February 1945.
- 79 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945.
- 80 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945.
- 81 Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945.
- 82 **Task Force Riley, part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division's Combat Command B, under the command of LTC John R. Riley, consisted of the 21st Tank Battalion (minus Baker Company), Able Company, 54th Armored Infantry Battalion, and a platoon of Engineers.** Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 295; First Lieutenant Louis J. Gambosi, B Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, interview by Master Sergeant Monroe Ludden, 5 March 1945, Remich, Luxembourg, interview transcript, the Colonel Robert W. Black Collection, Box 5, Folder 3, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 25 February 1945.
- 83 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 27 February 1945; Sullivan interview, 9 March 1945; Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 301; King, *Rangers: Selected Combat Operations in World War II*, 52.
- 84 Pepper interview, 9 March 1945; 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 24 February 1945.
- 85 Captain Charles H. Parker, A Company, 5th Ranger Battalion, interview by Master Sergeant Monroe Ludden, 9 March 1945, Remich, Luxembourg, interview transcript, the Colonel Robert W. Black Collection, Box 5, Folder 3, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA.
- 86 5th Ranger Battalion AAR, 25 February 1945.
- 87 Black, *The Battalion*, 279-281; Moen and Heinen, *The Fool Lieutenant*, 255; Henry S. Glassman, 5th Ranger Battalion, Veteran's History Project Questionnaire, Box 3, File 1570, the Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA (hereafter cited as Glassman Veteran's Questionnaire).
- 88 Black, *The Battalion*, 283-284. **Camp Lucky Strike around Le Havre, France, was one of the "cigarette-name camps" established to house soldiers waiting for transportation back to the United States.**
- 89 Black, *Rangers in World War II*, 252.
- 90 David W. Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry: The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada*, (Westport CT, Greenwood Press, 1992), 96-98.
- 91 Robert W. Black, *Rangers in Korea* (New York: Ivy Books, 1989), 13-14, 17-18; 107-108. **General Collins wanted and proposed that one "Marauder" Company be assigned to each infantry division. Later the name was changed to "Airborne-Ranger Infantry Company."**
- 92 Charles H. Briscoe, "The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company: 'Buffaloes' in Korea, 29 December 1950-19 May 1951," *Veritas, The Journal of Army Special Operations History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2005; Black, *Rangers in Korea*, 202.
- 93 Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry*, 203.
- 94 Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry*, 223.

**A Panzer VI (Tiger II or King Tiger)  
in France, July 1944.**