

Granville Charles Schuch – October 26 – November 10, 1942

Part 2 – Through the Gates of Hell

Operation Torch - Background

Operation Torch (initially called Operation Gymnast) was the British-American invasion of French North Africa in World War II during the North African Campaign, started 8 November 1942. It was launched under the supreme command of the unknown U.S. Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower with substantial UK support and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, Bart, GCB, Naval Commander-in-Chief, the Allied Expeditionary Force with Vice-Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay as his Deputy, who would plan the ground effort. Eisenhower himself had never before commanded a major operation of war and was about to receive a baptism of fire.



The objective of Operation Torch was to gain complete control of North Africa from French Morocco to Tunisia, trapping Rommel's Afrika Korps between Torch and the British Eighth Army to the east. After defeating Rommel, the Allies would control North Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea.

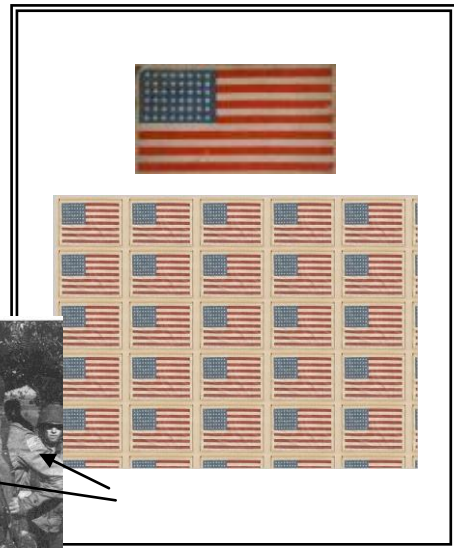
Operation Torch was notable for the long approach voyages. Troops came straight from the United States and Great Britain to the beaches.

The Soviet Union had pressed the United States and Britain to start operations in Europe and open a second front to reduce the pressure of German forces on the Soviet troops. While the American commanders favored Operation Sledgehammer, landing in Occupied Europe as soon as possible, the British commanders believed that such a course would end in disaster. An attack on French North Africa was proposed instead, which would clear the Axis Powers from North Africa, improve naval control of the Mediterranean Sea and prepare for an invasion of Southern Europe in 1943. American President Franklin D. Roosevelt suspected the African operation would rule out an invasion of Europe in 1943 but agreed to support British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Churchill and his military advisers were concerned to remove the Vichy French authorities from the territories they controlled on the North African coast before they fell into German hands.

There were many differences of opinion about timing, landing locations and the perceived reaction of the Vichy French forces to American as opposed to British forces. The American belief that they were so beloved by the French while the British were so hated as to make the essential difference between welcome and resistance in North Africa had already caused unnecessary complications in the tactical planning (in that the landings had to appear to be all-American).

But the French desire, on the one hand to avoid retribution at the hands of the Germans if the landings proved a failure, and on the other to play an important part in their own liberation should they succeed, complicated the situation immeasurably more. Churchill, however, accepted that TORCH was an American run project and he telegraphed President Roosevelt; 'In the whole of TORCH, military and political, I certainly consider myself your lieutenant, asking only to put my viewpoint plainly before you.'

This is a 48 star United States flag imprinted en masse on a treated cloth armband issued to US invasion troops for the invasion of North Africa. The flags were issued in the hope that the French military would recognize the Americans as liberators rather than enemies. The American flag, about 3 inches by 5 inches, was also worn by British forces to appease the French.



Maj. Gen. Terry de la Mesa Allen, commander of the 1st Infantry Division, is shown with his staff in November 1942. (Source: Nation Archives)

Here the armband is framed with a broadside titled "Proclamation" featuring crossed American flags at top. Broadside is split into 2 languages - French on left and Arabic on right with bottom of broadside signed in type by Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Lt. Gen. who was commanding the Theater of Operations. Broadside framed with original flag armband used during Operation Torch.

The Allied plan for TORCH involved concentric attacks. Gen. Sir Harold R. L. Alexander, British Commander in Chief in the Middle East, was to strike west from Egypt with the British Eighth Army under Lt. Gen. Bernard L. Montgomery, while a combined Anglo-American force was to invade French North Africa and hit the enemy's rear. General Eisenhower was to command the invasion forces, and the British Eighth Army also was to come under his command when the two forces eventually converged on Tunisia. The Allies planned three simultaneous landings: one outside the Strait of Gibraltar near Casablanca, Morocco, and two inside the Strait in Algeria near Oran and Algiers. When these landings

had been successfully accomplished, additional troops were to land near the eastern border of Algeria and move rapidly into Tunisia, presumably before the Germans could block the move.

Throughout the first three years of the war Britain learned many painful lessons about amphibious landings notably from Dieppe. The plan for the invasion of North Africa identified the first three assault locations as Philippeville and Bone, Casablanca, and Oran and Algiers. However, limited resources and the Americans' inability to supply sufficient ships for the landings, threatened to restrict the assault to Philippeville and Bone in the east of Algeria. Washington however took the view that the landings in Morocco should go ahead at the cost of all others, except Oran. This effectively removed the option of capturing Tunis with the aim of denying it to the Axis forces. Tunis was vital in restricting the Axis supply lines. If it fell to Rommel, the Axis forces would soon out-supply and outgun the Allies on both fronts. On the 5th of September 1942 the final compromise was reached after much negotiation for three landings at Casablanca, Algiers and Oran.

- **Preliminary contact**

To gauge the feeling of the Vichy French forces, Murphy was appointed to the American consulate in Algeria. His covert mission was to determine the mood of the French forces and to make contact with elements that might support an Allied invasion. He succeeded in contacting several French officers, including General Charles Mast, the French commander-in-chief in Algiers. These officers were willing to support the Allies, but asked for a clandestine conference with a senior Allied General in Algeria. Major-General Mark W. Clark, one of Eisenhower's senior commanders, was dispatched to Cherchell in Algeria aboard HMS Seraph, a British submarine passing itself off as a US one, and met with these Vichy French officers on 21 October 1942. Fortuitously, Admiral Darlan, Marshal Petain's deputy, was visiting his sick son in Algiers, and was persuaded to order a ceasefire. The Germans swiftly sent troops to Tunisia, and the Allied advance bogged down with the rains of early winter.



Although the Vichy government repudiated Darlan's ceasefire, Hitler was furious and invaded the Unoccupied Zone of France. A German force had orders to seize the French fleet at Toulon, but the French activated a well-prepared plan and the fleet was scuttled by its crews in the nick of time. Here damaged and sunk cruisers and destroyers can be seen through the smoke of burning heavy cruisers.

The Allies also succeeded, with resistance help, in slipping French General Henri Giraud out of Vichy France on Seraph, intending to offer him the post of commander in chief of French forces in North Africa after the invasion. However, Giraud would take no position lower than commander in chief of all the invading forces, a job already given to Eisenhower. When he was refused, he decided to remain 'a spectator in this affair.

- **Naval Planning & Preparations**

The landing of 70,000 men between Casablanca and Algiers required a lot of transports and warships. Six pre- and four attack convoys with a total of 250 vessels from Britain went out into the sea, four more convoys with a total of 136 ships directly from the United States. For the escorts, which were concerned for the security of the convoys, this was a heavy responsibility. Including the artillery support and the

command ships for *Operation Torch*, there were 6 battleships, 5 fleet carriers, 7 escort carriers, 15 cruisers, 81 destroyers and 38 escort vessels of different types involved. Unfortunately, most of the aircraft carriers and escort vessels had to be withdrawn from the *Battle of the Atlantic*, where they were bitterly missed in the following months.

Vice-Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay had been responsible for the naval side of contingency planning for 'Sledgehammer,' the 1942 plan for limited re-entry to Continental Europe, and he had participated in a two-day tri-service study period on the operational problems of a large-scale opposed landing on the Cotentin peninsula (Normandy). It was Ramsay who took up the awesome responsibility of organizing and running the vast naval movements required for TORCH.

This time the Navy got it right. Ramsay planned everything while Cunningham gave him direction and the authority required to get things done. Certain prerequisites were laid down. Only troops trained in landings would go ashore. Only sailors trained in operating landing craft would carry the troops and their equipment ashore and only craft suitable for the purpose would be used. The Allies had the equipment, techniques and training to rehearse for the eventual invasion of Europe but this was, for the moment, a distant prospect. Most of these issues had been addressed prior to the war. However, they would however be fully implemented for the first time in TORCH.

The Naval Task forces were:

Western Naval Task Force: All United States Navy vessels. 3 battleships, 5 carriers, 7 cruisers, 38 destroyers, 8 fleet minesweepers, five tankers commanded by Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt with an accompanying Assault Force of 91 vessels including 23 'combat loaders' same as LSIs.

Central Naval Task Force: Under Commodore T H Troubridge with the *Largs*, 2 carriers, 2 cruisers, 2 anti-aircraft ships, thirteen destroyers, six corvettes, eight minesweepers and various ancillary craft as well as the landing force.

Eastern Task Force: Under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough with the *Bulolo*, 2 aircraft carriers, 3 cruisers, 3 anti-aircraft ships, a gun monitor, 13 destroyers, 3 submarines, 3 sloops, seven minesweepers and seven corvettes. As well as the landing forces.

All three Naval Task Forces were under the direct command of Admiral Cunningham.

- Landing Operations - Battle Map of Operation Torch



The Allies planned a three-pronged amphibious landing to seize the key ports and airports of Morocco and Algeria simultaneously, targeting Casablanca, Oran and Algiers. Successful completion of these operations was to be followed by an advance eastwards into Tunisia.

The Western Task Force (aimed at Casablanca) comprised American units, with Major General George Patton in command and Rear Admiral Henry K. Hewitt heading the naval operations. This Western Task Force consisted of the U.S. 2nd Armored Division, the U.S. 3rd and 9th Infantry Divisions—35,000 troops in all. They were transported directly from the United States in the first of a new series of UG convoys providing logistic support for the North African campaign.

The Center Task Force, aimed at Oran, included the US 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, US 1st Infantry Division including **Sergeant Charles Schuch**, and the US 1st Armored Division—18,500 troops. They sailed from Britain and were commanded by Major-General Lloyd Fredendall, the naval forces being commanded by Commodore Thomas Troubridge.

The Eastern Task force, aimed at Algiers, was commanded by Lieutenant-General Kenneth Anderson and consisted of two brigades from British 78th and the US 34th Infantry Divisions and two British Commando units—No.1 and No. 6 Commandos; in all a total of 20,000 troops. During the period of the amphibious landings the force was to be commanded by U.S. Major-General Charles W. Ryder, commander of 34th Division, because it was felt that a U.S.-led invasion would be more acceptable to the French defenders than one led by the British. Naval forces which were commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough.

All these commanders reported directly to Eisenhower.

- **Air Support**

The Air operations were divided into two areas:

Eastern Air Command: Everything east of Cape Tenez in Algeria, with British aircraft commanded by Air Marshal Sir William Welsh operating under the air and naval liaison system.

Western Air Command: Everything west of Cape Tenez in Algeria. All American aircraft under Major-General James Doolittle. Under direct command of General Patton.

- **The Axis Forces** 

On November 6, the German Navy expected enemy landings at first at Tripoli and Benghazi, with the second possibility at Sicily, Sardinia or Italy and at least at French North Africa.

There were available nine submarines in the Western Mediterranean and 10 S-Boats (MTB) on Sicily. The Italian Navy had 26 submarines south of Sardinia, 20 MAS (MTB) at Cape Bone (Tunisia), light cruisers and destroyers at Palermo and Naples. Because of the missing of air cover it was not planned to use Italian capital ships.

Although the Germans had reacted very quickly to the *Torch landings*, and indeed seized *El Aouina airfield* outside Tunis on the 9th, the Allies continued to underestimate the German build-up in Tunisia throughout the early days. Thus by mid-November the Axis had landed some 5,000 troops, whereas by the end of the month there were no less than 15,500 troops with 130 tanks under the command of *General Nehring*, the sometimes commander of the *Afrika Korps*, including some of the German's latest model, the Tiger Tank.

Additional, during the early days of the campaign the Axis air forces retained air superiority. Allied airfields were far from the front, and for the most part were not all-weather, which meant that when the winter rains came at the end of November they would become virtually inoperable. The Axis, on the other hand, had good airfields close to the front, with the added capability of being able to fly sorties from Sardinia, Pantellaria and Greece, as well as relatively easy lines of communications from Sicily and Italy.

OPERATION TORCH – BLOW BY BLOW

Final operational orders were issued between the 3rd and 20th October 1942 in eight parts for the naval operation:

Ton 1 - issued 3rd October. Outlined the strategic plan.

Ton 2 - issued 8th October, detailed the routing and scheduling of convoys, escort and task forces outwards from Britain and the forward assembly area on the Bay of Algiers.

Ton 3 - issued 8th October, detailed the tactical instructions for the landings.

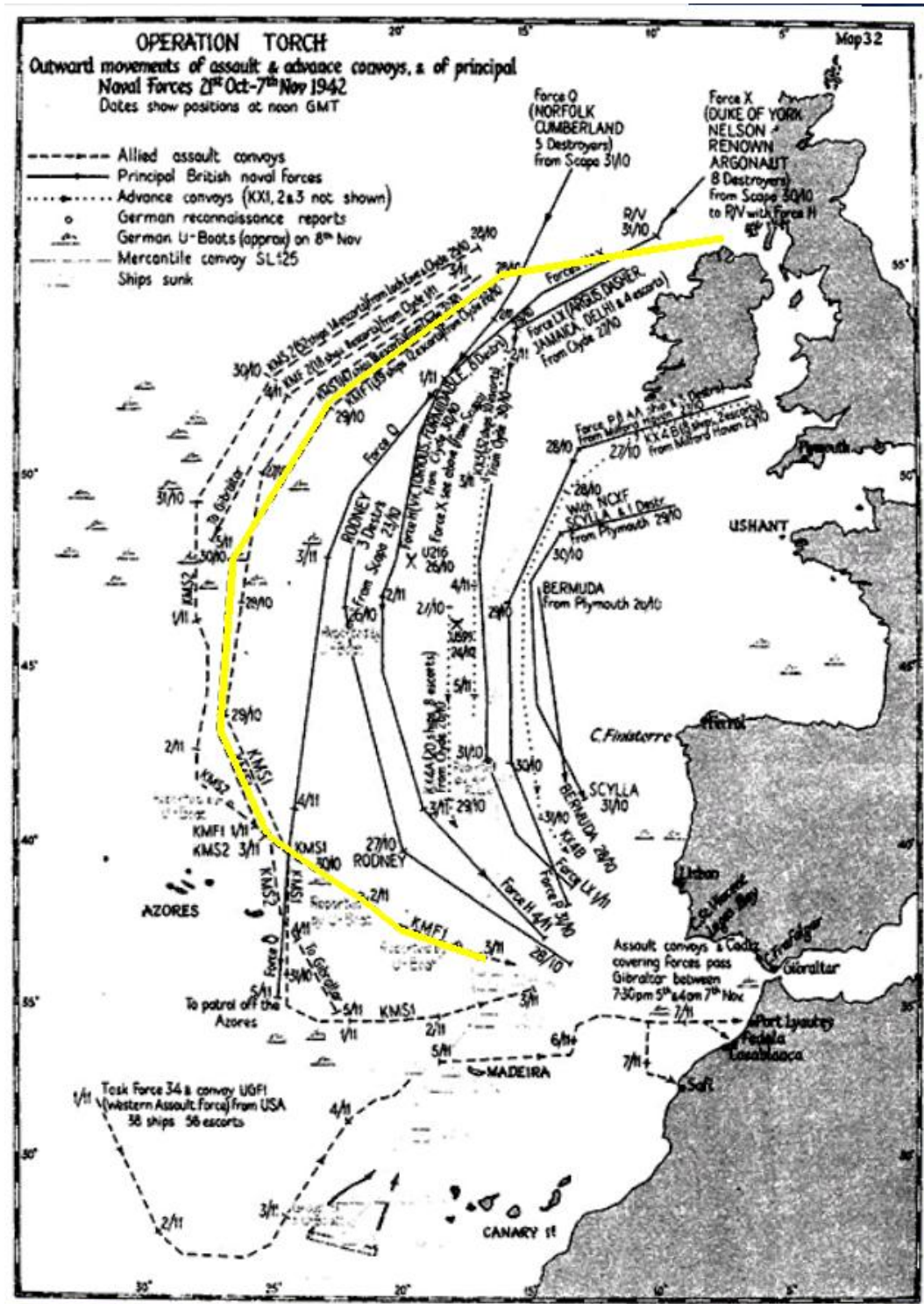
Ton 4 - issued 8th October, detailed submarine screens to cover the landings.

Ton 5-8, were issued over the remaining period and dealt with various redeployments and convoy arrangements to follow once the initial lodgments had been won.



- The Convoys

To ensure the ships arrived on time in the assembly area at Gibraltar Admiral Ramsay, the author of the plan, issued Ton 2 with carefully calculated tables of convoy routes complete with lettered routing positions. **Charles Schuch** was in Convoy KMF-1 and followed the route shown below in yellow.



The first convoys left the Clyde on 2nd October. The first troop convoy left on 22nd October with others following on 26th October and 1st November. The last convoy was due in Gibraltar on the 4th November. The covering warships left their respective bases between the 20th and 30th October. The concern over U boat attacks didn't materialize since their command in Germany failed to realize the significance of the convoys despite spotting two leaving their bases. At this critical time in the Mediterranean U-Boats had been drawn away and were engaging a convoy, SL 125, en route from Sierra Leone to Britain.... so they too missed the naval build-up. Some historians have suggested the timing of this trade convoy was an intentional tactical diversion to prevent submarine attacks on the loaded troop transports.



OPERATION TORCH task force sails toward North Africa - at the time the greatest movement of ships and men by sea in history. The convoy stretched for 25 miles. November 1, 1942.

While most of the German U-boat commanders were chasing a diversion, this convoy had its share of stree as described by an early radar engineer aboard the converted Polish troopship Batory:

We were intercepted by German subs. A few ships in our convoy were sunk, including the cargo ship containing ALL of our battalion's trucks and communication gear. We were to land without one telephone, switchboard, wire, or vehicle. We had our radios and radar aboard "Batory", and more fortunately, many ingenious men (a good many from the Bell telephone company), who scrounged and made do with civilian and enemy wire and equipment.

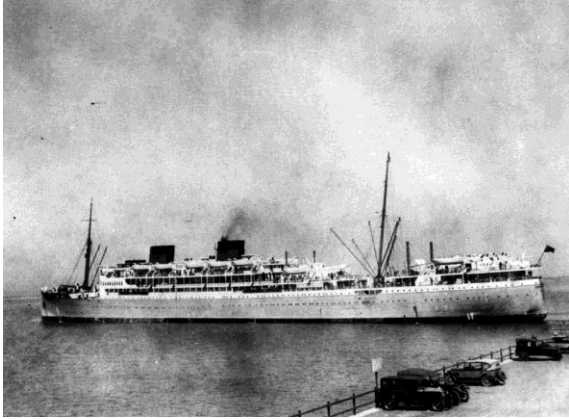
After that sub attack, every distant lightning storm or dark cloud (once even the rising moon) started rumors of another attack. Some men wore their life jackets night and day, and some slept on deck in the cold Atlantic air. About the only real diversion (other than rehearsals for what was to come) was the continual high stakes poker games.

**Convoy KMF-1 Departs Clyde on 26 October 1942 - Arrives Oran on November 7-8, 1942 -
40 merchants and 39 Escorts**

Vessel	Pdt.	Tons	Built	Known Cargo	Known Notes
ABERDEEN					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
ACHATES					ESCORT 04/11 - 08/11
ALMAACK (Amer)	74	9,902	1940		ALGIERS
AMAZON					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
ANTELOPE					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
AWATEA (Br)	92	13,482	1936		ALGIERS
BATORY (Pol)	51	14,287	1936		
BICESTER					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
BITER					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
BLYSKAWICA					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
BRAMHAM					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
BROKE					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
CATHAY (Br)	94	15,225	1925		ALGIERS
CLARE					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
COWDRAY					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
DEMPO (Du)	104	17,024	1931		ALGIERS
DERBYSHIRE (Br)	44	11,660	1935		
DUCHESS OF BEDFORD (Br)	33	20,123	1928	3044 TROOPS – 1 st and 2 nd Battalion, 16 th Infantry, 1 st Division	ORAN
DURBAN CASTLE (Br)	32	17,388	1938		ORAN
ENCHANTRESS					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
ETTRICK (Br)	64	11,279	1938	1760 TROOPS	ALGIERS
EXCELLER (Amer)	84	6,597	1941		ALGIERS
EXE					ESCORT 26/10 - 07/11
HARTLAND					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
HMS BITER (Br)	63	8,200	1941		
HMS BULOLO (Br)	61	6,267	1938		ALGIERS
HMS GLENGYLE (Br)	41	9,919	1939		
HMS KEREN (Br)	91	9,890	1930	MT, 1161 TROOPS	ALGIERS
HMS LARGS (Br)	31	4,504	1938		
HMS PRINSES BEATRIX (Br)	53	4,135	1939		
HMS QUEEN EMMA (Br)	52	4,135	1939		
HMS ROYAL SCOTSMAN (Br)	23	3,244	1936		ALGIERS
HMS ROYAL ULSTERMAN (Br)	24	3,244	1936		ALGIERS
HMS SHEFFIELD (Br)	62	9,100	1937		
HMS ULSTER MONARCH (Br)	54	3,791	1929		ALGIERS
IBIS					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
JAMAICA					ESCORT 04/11 - 07/11
KARANJA (Br)	101	9,891	1931		ALGIERS
LAMERTON					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
LEEDSTOWN (Amer)	73	9,135	1933		ALGIERS
LETITIA (Br)	12	13,595	1925		
LLANGIBBY CASTLE (Br)	43	11,951	1929	1646 TROOPSMT, 62 TONS STORES	ORAN

MALCOLM					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
MARNIX VAN ST ALDEGONDE (Du)	103	19,355	1930		ALGIERS
MONARCH OF BERMUDA (Br)	42	22,424	1931	2683 TROOPS	ORAN
MOOLTAN (Br)	14	20,952	1923	3608 TROOPS	VIA CLYDE
NIEUW ZEELAND (Du)	13	11,069	1928	1933 TROOPS	
ORBITA (Br)	11	15,495	1915	2000 TROOPS	
OTRANTO (Br)	82	20,026	1925		ALGIERS
PALOMARES					ESCORT 04/11 - 08/11
POZARICA					ESCORT 04/11 - 07/11
REINA DEL PACIFICO (Br)	21	17,702	1931	2500 TROOPS	ORAN
ROTHER					ESCORT 26/10 - 07/11
SHEFFIELD					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
SOBIESKI (Pol)	93	11,030	1939		ALGIERS
SPEY					ESCORT 26/10 - 07/11
STRATHNAVER (Br)	81	22,283	1931	3179 TROOPS	ALGIERS
SWALE					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
TAY					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
TEGELBERG (Du)	22	14,150	1937	3200 TROOPS	
USS SAMUEL CHASE (Amer)	71	10,812	1941		ALGIERS
USS THOMAS STONE (Amer)	72	10,210	1941	MT, 1449 TROOPS	ALGIERSDAMAGED BY A/C CTL AT ALGIERS
VANOC					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
VELOX					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
VERITY					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
VICEROY OF INDIA (Br)	102	19,627	1929	2800 TROOPS	ALGIERS
WALNEY					ESCORT 26/10 - 08/11
WARWICK CASTLE (Br)	34	20,107	1930	3rd Battalion, 16 th Infantry, 1 st Division	ORAN (This was Charlie's ship)
WESTCOTT					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
WHEATLAND					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
WILTON					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
WINCHESTER CASTLE (Br)	83	20,012	1930		ALGIERS
WISHART					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
WIVERN					ESCORT 04/11 - 06/11
WRESTLER					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11
ZETLAND					ESCORT 06/11 - 08/11

HMS Warwick Castle



She made her maiden voyage on the 30th of January 1931 and in 1938 underwent the same extensive modernization as that of her sister Winchester Castle at Harland and Wolff. She was taken over for trooping duties in the September of 1939.

She was named after the Warwick Castle, probably the finest example of a medieval castle in England. The site was fortified by William the Conquer and was many years the home of the Earls of Warwick.



Name	Warwick Castle
Type:	Troop transport
Tonnage	20,107 tons
Completed	1930 - Harland & Wolff Ltd, Belfast
Owner	Union-Castle Mail SS Co Ltd, London
Homeport	London
Date of attack	14 Nov 1942 Nationality:  British



With Allied convoys at sea, sailors could be told their destination. Here Rear Admiral Sir Harold Burrough explains forthcoming operations to officers and men aboard his flagship, HMS Bulolo.

On 1st November 1942, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, reached the fortress of Gibraltar in the cruiser *Scylla*. Four days later, Cunningham was joined by his Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had flown from England in a B-17 bomber through fog and rain. The Expeditionary Force headquarters, complete with joint Navy/Air Force operations room, were located in the old tunnels built into the Rock itself. They were airless, dank and dripping but completely immune to any bombardment. Only three days remained until the Allies launched the largest combined amphibious operation in the history of the warfare. Eisenhower considered the operation to be 'an undertaking of a quite desperate nature.' Patton agreed as he called it, "as desperate a venture as has anyone ever been undertaken by any force in the world's history."

As some 340 ships converged on Gibraltar the Allies had one last vain attempt to persuade the Vichy French to join the Allies or at least not interfere with the landings. On the 5th November the whole operation hung in the balance as the entire force passed through the Straits of Gibraltar in just 33 hours. This involved the smaller vessels diverting to Gibraltar and refueling which demanded a flexible and fast refueling program.

On 7th November R.A.F. reconnaissance patrols commenced along a line between the east coast of Spain and the Bonifacio Strait (Between Sardinia and Corsica) in order to detect any threatening moves by the Italian fleet; and north and west of Dakar in French West Africa to give early warning of any northward move towards Admiral Hewitt's task force by French warships. All the while Coastal Command aircraft were flying anti-U-boat operations and reconnaissance sorties over Italian and French naval bases.



Intelligence officers study reconnaissance photos taken by *Ranger* pilots during OPERATION TORCH. *USS Ranger*, November, 1942.



Sailors remove their mattresses to reduce the chances of fire during the anticipated conflict in North Africa (OPERATION TORCH). Note that the paint has also been stripped from the bulkheads. *USS Ranger*, November 1, 1942.

On 8 November 1942, one hundred twenty-five thousand soldiers, sailors, and airmen from British, American and Free French units invaded French North Africa under Gen. Eisenhower's command.



Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat fighter taking off from USS Ranger (CV-4) supporting the Operation Torch invasion of Morocco, 8 November 1942.

The Torch landings were opposed by Vichy French forces numbering 120,000 in French North Africa. They were mostly native rank and file with French Officers supported by 500 aircraft and a sizeable Naval fleet at Toulon. Their army and air force both suffered from obsolete equipment but the Navy posed a great threat in the collective mind of the Allied commanders. Its firepower could wreak havoc on any landing it chose to oppose. The Italian fleet also presented a threat but it suffered from low morale, irresolute leadership and a lack of fuel oil. Finally there was the Luftwaffe in Italy and North Africa which had the potential to inflict serious damage. Up to the 7th November the German Naval High Command still believed the TORCH armada was a Malta-bound convoy.

On the morning of November 8, 1942, a force of over 70,000 American and British soldiers went ashore on the coast of Vichy French North-West Africa, and a period of close Anglo-American co-operation began. Altogether over 500 ships had carried and guarded the assault force: 102 of them crossing the Atlantic from America; the remainder sailing in two convoys - one fast and one slow - from Britain. The Allied convoys came together at prearranged locations guided by infra-red signal beams from Royal Navy submarines. They all arrived at their destinations within a few hours of each other and a pattern of smooth timing and organization had been set.

Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel (LCVP) aka: Higgins Boats

The LCVP, served as a tug, liberty boat, water ambulance, ferry, carrying of troops/vehicle to the beach, and as a lifeboat:

There were few amphibious operations in the last years of World War II in which LCVPs did not take a major part. The LCVP was designed to beach, lower a ramp, discharge men and cargo, retract, and return to its transport. The crew consisted of a coxswain, engineer, and two deck hands (bowman and sternman).

The design on the LCVP is credited to Mr. Andrew Higgins of Higgins Industries, Inc., New Orleans. Mr. Higgins designed both high speed patrol craft and landing craft of various types. It was Mr. Higgins landing craft though, that made the many African and D-Day landings possible in both theatres of WW II.

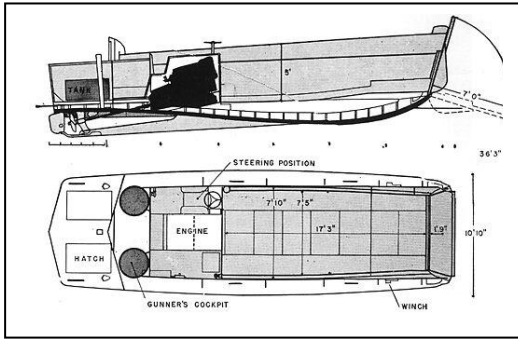
The LCVP itself was based on a design Mr. Higgins had perfected in the 1930's. His Eureka model work boat was intended for use in the shallow swamps and bayous of Louisiana. The boat could operate in 18 inches of water while running over vegetation and debris without any damage. Special design features of the hull kept aerated water under the bow reducing friction and swept objects away from the boat preventing fouling of the propeller. With the addition of the bow ramp, the LCVP was complete.

Armoured, with 2 machine guns in ring mountings aft, and the LCVP was conned from a position on the port quarter, forward of the engine compartment. On transports the LCVP could be carried on deck or in single to three-tier davits; the LCVP could be launched when loaded, but only from

Troops and ammunition being brought ashore from LCAs (landing craft assault) at Arzeau in Algeria during Operation 'Torch', November 1942.



appropriate davits. Their use in beaching was simplified by the late stages of the war: driven hard ashore, they would be nudged off the beach by trucks. Between 1942 and 1945, some 23,358 LCVPs were built.



**SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE HIGGINS INDUSTRIES
36-FOOT LCVP**

Construction Material: Wood (oak, pine and mahogany)
 Displacement: 15,000 Pounds (light)
 Length: 36-Feet, 3-Inches
 Beam: 10-Feet, 10-Inches
 Draft: 3-Feet Aft and 2-Feet, 2-Inches Forward
 Speed: 12 Knots
 Armament: Two .30-Caliber Machine Guns
 Crew: Three - Coxswain, Engineer and Crewman
 Capacity: 36 Troops with gear and equipment, or 6,000 pound vehicle, or 8,100 pounds of Cargo
 Power Plant: Gray 225-HP Diesel Engine

Boat Team Leader (Officer) M-1 Carbine, 6 Coloured Smoke Grenades 1 Frag Grenade, 1 SCR 536 Radio		Rifle Team (5 Men) 1, 2 & 3 M-1 Garand M7 Grenade Launcher, 1 Smoke Grenade 1 Frag Grenade, 12 Anti Tank Rifle Grenades 4 & 5 M-1 Garand 2 Smoke Grenades, 5 Frag Grenades, M-1938 Wire cutters	Wire Cutting Team (4 Men) 1 - 4 M-1 Garand, 1 Smoke Grenade, 2 Bangalore Torpedo 2 M-1938 Wire cutters, 2 Large Searchnose Wire cutters
Heavy Machine Gun Team (6 Men) 1 Tripod, .45 Pistol 2 M-1917A1 HMG, M-1 Carbine 3 Water Chest, Ammo Box, Spare Parts Kit, M-1 Carbine 4 & 5 2 Ammo Boxes, M-1 Carbine 6 2 Ammo Boxes, M-1 Carbine, Binoculars		81 mm Mortar Team (8 Men) 1 Observer: Sight, Binoculars, Compass, Flashlight, 5 Mortar Rnds, M-1 Carbine, Sound Powered Phone. 2 Gunner: Bipod, M-1 Carbine, Sound Powered Phone. 3 Asst Gunner: Mortar Tube with aiming stakes in it, M-1 Carbine 4 Baseplate M-1 Carbine 5 M-1 Carbine, 7 Mortar Rnds, 400 yds Phone wire. 6, 7 & 8 M-1 Garand, 7 Mortar Rnds	
Assistant Boat Team Leader (NCO) M-1 Garand 2 Smoke Grenades, 8 Frag Grenades		Demolition Team (5 Men) M-1 Garand, 50'Primacord, at least 4 detonators, 2 Frag Grenades, 1 Smoke Grenade, 6 Blocks 1/2lb TNT, 7 Pack Charges, 2 Fuse Lighters, 3 Pole Charges, Demo Kit with Crimpers, Knife, Tape and cord,	
Basic Ammo Loads M-1 Rifle = 176 Rounds (80 in Belt + 96 in two Bandoleers)		Basic Ammo Loads M-1 Carbine = 75 Rounds (5 Magazines) .45 Pistol = 3 Magazines	

SUPPORT BOAT TEAM

Boat Team Leader (Officer) M-1 Carbine, 6 Coloured Smoke Grenades 1 Frag Grenade, 1 SCR 536 Radio		Rifle Team (5 Men) 1 & 2 M-1 Garand 1 Coloured Smoke Grenade, 2 Frag Grenades Wire cutters 3 M-1 Garand 1 Smoke Grenade, 2 Frag Grenades M7 Grenade Launcher, 10 Smoke Rifle Grenades 4 & 5 M-1 Garand 1 Coloured Smoke Grenade, 2 Frag Grenades 1 Bangalore Torpedo	60 mm Mortar Team (4 Men) 1 Observer: Sight, Cleaning Staff, Binoculars, Compass, Flashlight, 12 Mortar Rounds, M-1 Carbine, 2 Gunner: Mortar, .45 Pistol, 5 Mortar Rounds 3 Asst Gunner: 12 Mortar Rounds, M-1 Carbine 4 Ammo Carrier: 12 Mortar Rounds, M-1 Carbine
Wire Cutting Team (4 Men) 1 - 4 M-1 Garand 1 Smoke Grenade, 2 Bangalore Torpedo 2 Wire cutters, 2 Large Searchnose Wire cutters		Bazooka Team (4 Men) 1 & 3 Rocketeer: Bazooka M1A1, M-1 Carbine, 8 Rocket in Bag 2 & 4 Loader: M-1 Garand, 12 Rockets in Bags	
BAR Team (4 Men) 1 & 3 BAR Gunner BAR Belt (13 Magazines), BAR Spare Part Kit 2 & 4 Asst Gunner M-1 Garand BAR Belt (13 Magazines) Ammunition Bag (32 M1 Clips)		Flame-thrower Team (2 Men) 1 Operator: Flame-thrower, .45 Pistol 2 Assistant: 5 Gallon Fuel Refill, Nitrogen tank and Wrenches M-1 Garand, 4 Smoke Grenades, 6 Frag Grenades	
Basic Ammo Loads M-1 Rifle = 176 Rounds (80 in Belt + 96 in two Bandoleers)		Basic Ammo Loads M-1 Carbine = 75 Rounds (5 Magazines) .45 Pistol = 3 Magazines	

ASSAULT BOAT TEAM

November 8, 1942 - Casablanca – The Western Task Force

The Western Task Force landed before daybreak on 8 November 1942, at three points in Morocco: Safi (Operation Blackstone), Fedala (Operation Brushwood the largest landing with 19,000 men), and Mehdiya-Port Lyautey (Operation Goalpost). Because it was hoped that the French would not resist, there were no preliminary bombardments. This proved to be a costly error as French defenses took a toll of American landing forces.



On the night of 7 November pro-Allied General Antoine Béthouart attempted a coup d'etat against the French command in Morocco, so that he could surrender to the Allies the next day. His forces surrounded the villa of General Charles Noguès, the Vichy-loyal high commissioner.

However, Noguès telephoned loyal forces, who stopped the coup. In addition, the coup attempt alerted Noguès to the impending Allied invasion, and he immediately bolstered French coastal defenses.

At Safi, the landings were mostly successful. The landings were begun without covering fire, in the hope that the French would not resist at all. However, once French coastal batteries opened fire, Allied warships returned fire. By the time Allied commanding General Harmon arrived, French snipers had pinned the assault troops (most of whom were in combat for the first time) on Safi's beaches. Most of the landings occurred behind schedule. Carrier aircraft destroyed a French truck convoy bringing reinforcements to the beach defenses.

Safi surrendered on the afternoon of 8 November. By 10 November, the remaining defenders were pinned down, and the bulk of Harmon's forces raced to join the siege of Casablanca.

At Port-Lyautey, the landing troops were uncertain of their position, and the second wave was delayed. This gave the French defenders time to organize resistance, and the remaining landings were conducted under artillery bombardment. With the assistance of air support from the carriers, the troops pushed ahead, and the objectives were captured.

At Fedala, weather disrupted the landings. The landing beaches again came under French fire after daybreak. Patton landed at 08:00, and the beachheads were secured later in the day. The Americans surrounded the port of Casablanca by 10 November, and the city surrendered an hour before the final assault was due to take place.

Casablanca was the principal French Atlantic naval base after German occupation of the European coast. The Naval Battle of Casablanca resulted from a sortie of French cruisers, destroyers, and submarines to oppose the landings. A cruiser, six destroyers, and six submarines were destroyed by American gunfire and aircraft. The unfinished battleship Jean Bart, which was docked and immobile, fired on the landing force with her one working gun turret until disabled by American gunfire. Two American destroyers were damaged.

November 8, 1942 - Algiers – The Eastern Task Force

The invasion was led by the U.S. 34th Infantry with one brigade of the British 78th, the other acting as reserve. Major-General Charles W. Ryder, commander of the 34th, was given explicit command of the first wave, since it was believed that the French would react more favorably to an American commander than a British one. The landings were split between three beaches—two west of Algiers and one east. Some landings went to the wrong beaches, but this was immaterial since there was practically no French opposition; coastal batteries had been neutralized by French resistance. One French commander openly welcomed the Allies.

The only fighting took place in the port of Algiers itself, where in Operation Terminal two British destroyers attempted to land a party of U.S. Rangers directly onto the dock, in order to prevent the French destroying port facilities and scuttling ships. Heavy artillery fire prevented one from landing, and drove the other from the docks after a few hours, leaving 250 of the infantry behind. As reported by Commander Anthony Kimmins in his BBC broadcast that night,

"while approaching the harbour that morning, Bulolo had been heavily dive-bombed by Hun aircraft. A near miss had thrown the telegraph indicators from the bridge to the engine room out of action. As there had been no occasion to use the telegraph between then and coming into harbour there was no reason to suspect they had been damaged. Now, as the captain rang down 'Stop - Half astern - Full astern' the engineers below were blissfully unaware that they had been given any orders. Luckily a sandbank and some rafts broke the impact but Bulolo hit the concrete jetty a tremendous crack before finally coming to rest."

Apparently the dent in the jetty wall is still there today!

November 8, 1942 – Oran – Central Task Force

The Oran landings were directed by Commodore T. H. Troubridge, R.N., Major-General Llyod R. Fredenhall and Major-General James Doolittle (Commanding the Allied Western Air Command) on the British ship *Largs*. The landings were supported by a battleship, three carriers, an anti-aircraft ship and nine destroyers acting as a covering force in the event of Italian Navy interference. The bulk of the invading force would be made up of members of the **1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One**, a unit very different from the similarly named 1st Armored



Division, with whom they would cooperate closely on this operation and later in the fighting in Tunisia. The **1st Infantry** was a regular army unit led by two of the most flamboyant American military leaders to emerge during the war, its commander Maj. Gen. Terry de la Mesa Allen, a close friend of both Eisenhower and Patton; and his deputy, Brig.Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr.,



the son of the 26th president, a writer, an explorer, a World War I hero, and a gregarious man much like his father. He claimed that every soldier in the division knew his voice. One night while standing with Maj. Gen. Omar Bradley beside a road where a blacked-out convoy was moving by, he proved it by shouting: "Hey, what outfit is that?" Out of the dark came the immediate response: "Company C of the eighteenth Infantry, General Roosevelt."

Both Allen and Roosevelt were skilled at motivating their soldiers, but neither was a strict disciplinarian of the kind that an infantry outfit probably needs, at least as deputy commander. The flavor of their leadership was perhaps summed up in the general instructions Allen gave as the division prepared to go into combat: "Nothing in Hell must stop the 1st Division."

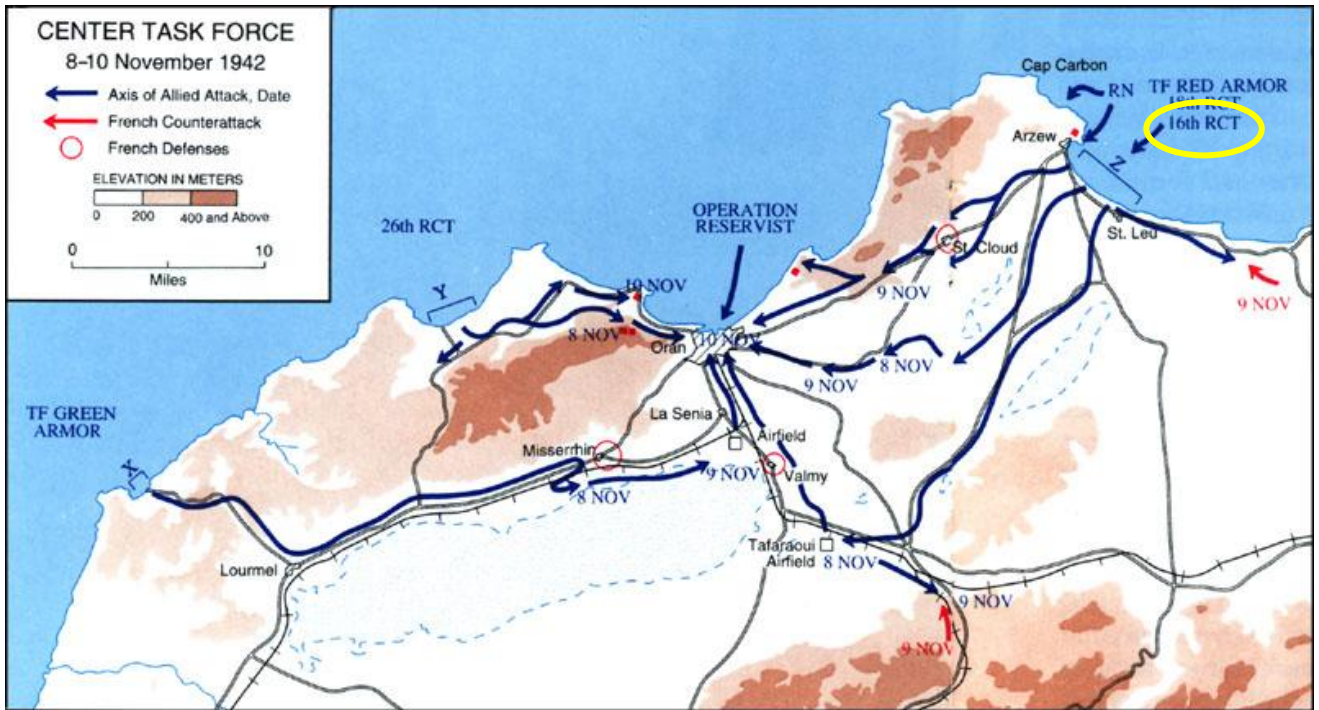
The **1st Infantry**, along with the 1st Armored Combat Command B, would land at Arzew, a small city with a good port about 25 miles east of Oran, and on beaches west of Oran. Then they would assault the primary target in a pincer movement.

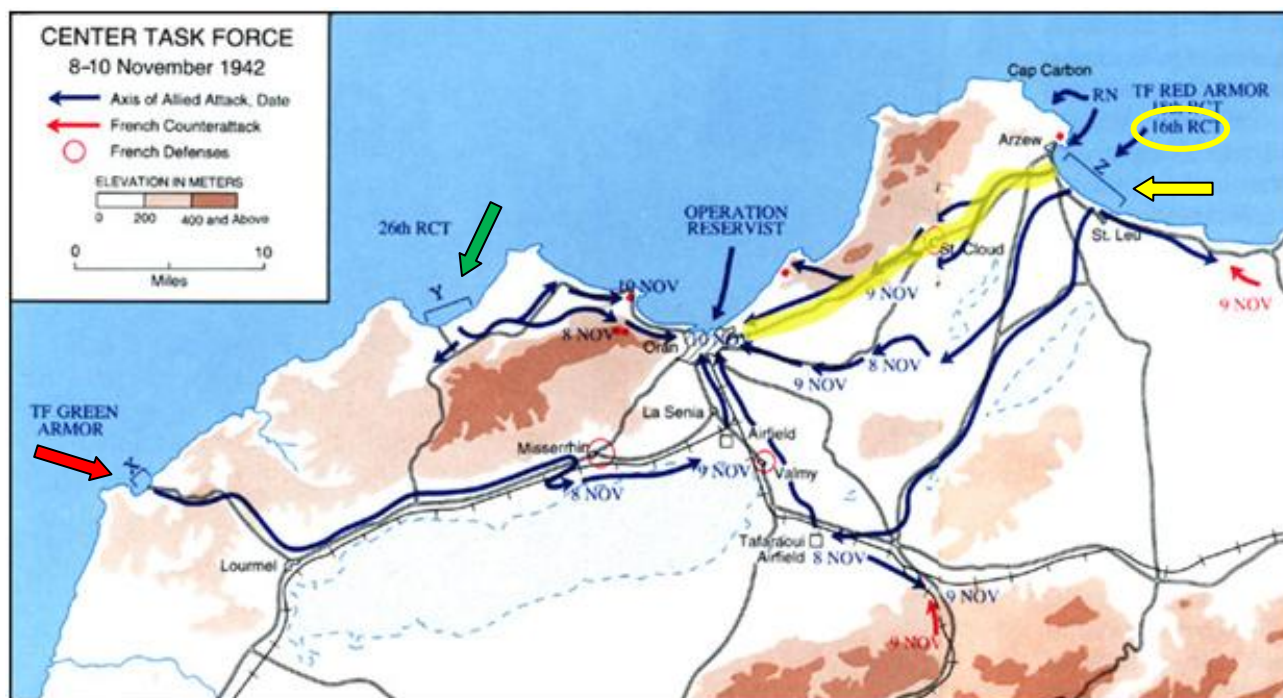
In the early hours of 8th November the weather at Oran was calm with good visibility. However, the westerly winds were having a disconcerting effect on the landings.



Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa

The Center Task Force was split between three beaches, two west of Oran and one east. **Charles Schuch** was in the eastern group landing near Arzew. Landings at the westernmost beach were delayed because of a French convoy which appeared while the minesweepers were clearing a path. Some delay and confusion, and damage to landing ships, was caused by the unexpected shallowness of water and sandbars; although periscope observations had been carried out, no reconnaissance parties had been landed on the beaches to determine local conditions. This was in contrast to later amphibious assaults, such as Operation Overlord, in which considerable weight was given to pre-invasion reconnaissance.





➔ X Sector, some 30 miles west of Oran was delayed by a French convoy getting in the way of the minesweepers clearing the path for the landing forces of Task Force Green comprising 2250 soldiers, plus tanks and trucks of the American 1st Armored Division with a navy escort. The landings began half an hour late because of the French convoy and went in at 0130 hours. The unexpected shallowness of the beaches resulted in damage to ten of the thirteen assault wave landing craft which left only three operational. Through the same 50 yard wide stretch of sandy cove over 3000 soldiers came through over the next three days along with 458 tanks and trucks.

➔ Y Sector was 20 miles closer to Oran. 5262 soldiers of the 26th Regimental Combat Team of the American 1st Infantry Division were put ashore by landing craft in the bay of Les Abdalouses. Delays were experienced caused by problems with the disembarkation landers on the *Monarch of Bermuda* and a sandbank which damaged the landing crafts' rudders and propellers as they bludgeoned their way through it. A northerly swell caused grief as many craft broached on top of the bar. Most of these delays could have been avoided if Headquarters had allowed beach reconnaissance parties instead of submarine periscope observations.

➔ East of Oran was Z Sector. The landings here comprised 10,472 soldiers of the 1st US Ranger Battalion, the 16th and 18th Regimental Combat Teams of the 1st Infantry Division and the Western Column of Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division. The assault wave went ashore at 0016 hours from 68 landing craft on beaches Green, White and Red south of Arzew, a little port beneath a rocky headland and overlooked by the Fort de le Pointe.



The early stages of the landings, in the predawn darkness before the shooting started, went reasonably well. Even though the weather forecast the previous evening called for heavy seas along the coast, the surf turned out to be much calmer than normal. Many of the troops were able to land and take up positions onshore before their presence was detected.

Still, at this early stage in the war, everyone was inexperienced in such a landing. Understandably, many things went wrong and a number of men died before a single shot was fired. Transport ships had difficulty finding their proper places off the beaches; inexperienced coxswains got lost and landed troops on the wrong beaches; landing craft broke up on the shore; army troops moved swiftly inland instead of helping to unload the landing craft; French guns blasted the invasion beaches and targeted the ships offshore; men who were supposed to have landed in the dark did not make it to shore until well after dawn, when the shooting had started.

American troops climb into assault landing...



As men climbed down into their landing craft from the deck of one ship, the cargo net broke loose, throwing those on the net into the water. Heavily laden with weapons, backpacks, and ammunition, they drowned. Others perished a few feet from safety when they were thrown into the sea as their landing craft approached the beaches.



At Oran, as at Algiers, the landings were bloodily repulsed at the centre when HMS *Walney* and *Heartland*, flying under dual flags, attempted to land US Rangers in the harbor at Oran. They broke through the harbor boom at 0310, but the *Walney* was reduced to a flaming hulk by a French sloop and crossfire after which three French destroyers put to sea in an attempt to engage the powerful covering force near the landings. Two of them quickly succumbed to the accurate fire of *HMS Aurora*. The sloop responsible for the sinking of

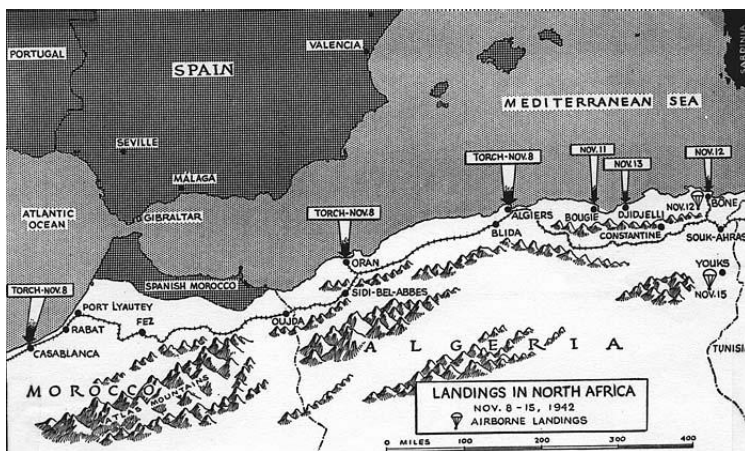


HMS *Walney*, attacked the shipping off Y Sector but was sunk by *HMS Brilliant*. The remaining destroyer sortied out the following day with a second destroyer and were both driven ashore after being engaged by the *Aurora* and *Jamaica*.





Throughout the 9th November the French and Allied forces lobbed fire between the taskforce and the coast while French troops stoutly defended the approached to Oran. Aircraft from *HMS Furious* consisting of Seafires, Albacores and Sea Hurricanes, attacked two airfields destroying 70 aircraft. At noon that day Task Force Red from the beaches took Tafaraoui and 28 British and American Spitfires flew in shortly afterwards. The French Air Force attacked the last four aircraft with Dewoitine DW 250 fighters, shooting down one Spitfire for the loss of three aircraft. It was not until 1600 that the armour of Task Force Green from X Sector beaches fought through to take the second airfield at La Senia.



Airborne landings

Torch was the first major airborne assault carried out by the United States. The U.S. 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment flew all the way from Britain, over Spain, intending to drop near Oran and capture airfields at Tafraoui and La Senia respectively fifteen and five miles south of Oran. The operation was marked by weather, navigational and communication problems. Poor weather over Spain and the extreme range caused widespread scattering and forced thirty of the thirty-seven aircraft to land in the dry salt lake to the west of the objective. Nevertheless, both airports were captured.



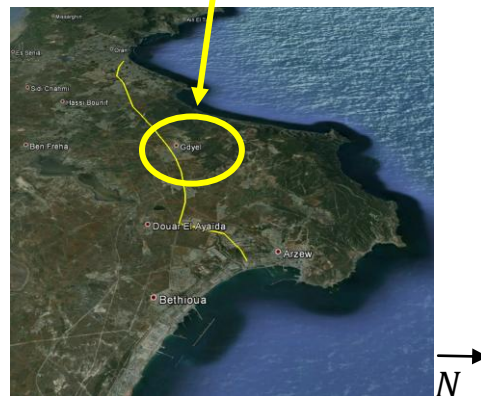
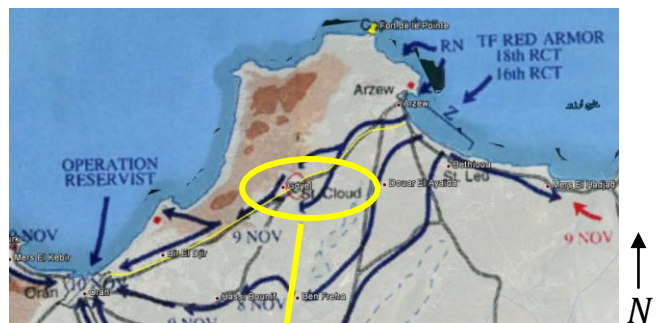
The 1st Infantry Moves to Oran

By the time the paratroops had begun to sort themselves out, men and equipment were streaming ashore at Arzew and at beaches west of Oran. As soon as the light tanks were ashore, the 1st Armored Division formed a flying column and raced toward Tafaraoui airfield on a road that looped down to the south of Oran.

To the west paratroopers, emerging from the mud of the Sebkra onto a hard surface road, intercepted a radio message which reported that forces had taken Tafaraoui.

The battle for Oran itself was far from over, however. Allen's 1st Infantry Division ran into unexpectedly stiff resistance at St. Cloud, a little town southeast of Oran, as his infantry moved on Oran after landing at Arzew. By 9:00 A.M., one battalion found itself in a bruising battle for the town, taking heavy casualties. A second battalion joined the battle, but at midnight they were still bogged down. The regiment's third battalion arrived during the night. The town was hit by a 15-minute artillery barrage and then, at 7:00 A.M. on 9 November, the three battalions attacked, only to be thrown back.

Allen, who had been occupied several miles away, hurried to the scene. The regimental commander had already asked for a barrage by all of the division's available artillery to prepare for another assault at 2:30 P.M. Allen looked over the situation and noted that there were many civilians, including hundreds of women and children, trapped in the town. He canceled the barrage. "We don't need the damned place anyway," he said. He ordered the regimental commander to leave one battalion to pin down the defenders in St. Cloud and then send the other two battalions around the town, to the north and south, toward Oran. He also ordered that all movements be made in the dark. This was the beginning of a technique the 1st Division used effectively on a number of occasions later in the war: While the enemy hunkered down for the night, the Big Red One moved or struck in the dark.



The night marches which the 16th and 18th Infantry, reinforced, had to make in order to arrive at the designated sectors of the line of departure had already begun, but they required successful and energetic action by troops who were nearing exhaustion. After weeks on shipboard, they had been on the alert or in motion for forty-eight hours. Exact directions had to be sent forward to the leading elements. In the case of the 3^d Battalion, 16th Infantry, the orders directed that it return to the 16th Infantry's zone by shifting southward over a lateral route connecting the road between Arcole and Oran

with that between Fleurus and Oran. The **3d Battalion, 16th Infantry**, had already succeeded in slipping past the French forces in Arcole without arousing more than an outpost near a farm along the route, despite the hampering effect of a considerable number of French prisoners. The unit had actually arrived at the city limits and was preparing, in the absence of any opposition, for missions within Oran when an officer from division headquarters arrived with the formal orders directing it to shift to the south and there go into regimental reserve. Colonel Cheadle had to follow an instruction which involved forfeiting advantages already in hand. The battalion (Maj. Frederick W. Gibb) was compelled to pull back and march down a road actually nearer the city than that envisaged in the field order. In consequence, the **3d Battalion, 16th Infantry**, soon found itself squarely between the 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry, and a sizable French force just as a sharp fire fight broke out. It was pinned down as most of the crossfire passed overhead.

By daybreak, 10 November, Oran was completely enveloped by forces which, although at varying distances from the city's limits, were closing in for concentric attack. All sides of the city seemed likely to be penetrated before the end of the day. If the defenders could hold out long enough, a relief force might break through the surrounding cordon, but otherwise the city was bound to capitulate. The ring of encircling American troops had not succeeded in attaining positions for the simultaneous attack at 0715 as planned on the previous evening, but they would be ready later in the day. It took a bombardment of the coastal batteries by *Rodney*, *Aurora* and *Jamaica* to bring about the final surrender of Oran to the Allies.

Operation Torch was the first large-scale amphibious landing under hostile fire. Despite resistance by the French, the landings were successful and all of North Africa west of Algiers was in Allied hands within three days.



Maj. Gen. Lloyd R. Fredendall's Center Task Force in Oran, Algeria during Operation Torch, November 1942.





One hundred twenty-five thousand soldiers, sailors, and airmen participated in the operation, 82,600 of them U.S. Army personnel. Ninety-six percent of the 1,469 casualties were American, with the Army losing 526 killed, 837 wounded, and 41 missing. Casualties varied considerably among the three task forces. Eastern Task Force lost the fewest Americans killed in action, 108, Western Task Force, with four times as many American troops, lost 142 killed; **Center Task Force** lost almost twice as many killed, 276, inflated by an ill-fated British-sponsored mission at Oran.

It was now November 10, 1942. Morocco and Algeria were secured. While **Charles Schuch** survived live combat during the Operation TORCH invasion, the real test for the entire **1st Infantry Division** was yet to play out. The 1st would be relieved on May 7, 1943, after their successful drive into Tunisia but only with significant losses, gut wrenching battles and hand-to-hand combat for which **Charles Schuch** would be awarded the Silver Star for Valor.