

AT THE BEACHES

At Omaha beach, the Germans had just moved in a first rate division a few days before. The short bombardment by the battleships, cruisers and destroyers failed to "soften up" the well entrenched enemy which also withstood the spectacular rocket fire from the LCT(R)s. Also because of the heavy cloud cover, the Air Force air bombardment early in the morning was largely ineffective. Half of the B-17s returned from the beaches with their bombs because they could not properly identify their targets and were afraid of hitting our troops.

Therefore as could be expected, the armored LCT(A)s, unexpectedly joined in the Western sector by the LCTs carrying DD tanks onto the beach at H-Hour, were under heavy artillery and mortar fire. The second wave of LCTs coming in at H+60 did not fare much better. At H+120 the situation was not much improved and did not improve until much later in the day. Some action reports indicate hostile fire until 1600 and 1700.

Another problem soon developed. A tide which would rise almost 18 feet by noon would flood the area of the beach that had been planted with obstacles. Now the LCTs had to force their way through the obstacles, many tipped with teller mines. According to the plan, this was not supposed to happen. The teams of Army Engineers and Navy Combat Demolition teams brought across the channel by the LCT(A)s were supposed to have enough time to clear 16 marked lanes into the beach. Instead of finding the beach somewhat cleared of hostile fire by the pre H-Hour bombardments, bombs and rocket fire, the teams found themselves under devastating accurate artillery, machine gun and sniper fire. The teams took heavy casualties. The Navy teams, a total of 175 men, suffered a 52% casualty count--31 killed and 60 wounded. As a result only 5 lanes out of the 16 planned were cleared in the time allotted, and many LCTs suffered damages from being forced to ram their way through the obstacles and mines.

THE STORM AND AFTER

Another chapter needs to be written by someone on the effects of the storm on June 19. There should be a report on how many LCTs were driven to the beach and damaged; how many had to be returned to the UK for repairs and how many were repaired on the beach.

Also it is known that many were able to keep on with the ship to shore transfers. On June 16, LCDR Leide of Flotilla 12 took a task group of 47 LCTs to Gold Beach to assist in ship to shore activity there.

Flotilla Organization for Normandy Operation

Flotilla 4--Commander, LT Louis E. Hubbard

LCTs—002,003,443,447,456,457,458,459,474,475,476,486,489,495,497,487,510,511,515,516,517,518, 519,520,522,524,525,526,527,528,529,530,531,532,533,534

Flotilla 12—Commander, LCDR William Leide

Group Commanders: LT D. A. de la Houssaye, LT Melvin E. Wierenga, LT Dean L. Rockwell.

LCTs—535,536,569,570,571,572,573,586,587,588,589,590,591,589,599,600,601,602,603,612,613,614, 615,622.

Flotilla 17—Commander, Group 50, R. Craig Fabian

LCTs—580,585,585,592,593,594,595,596,597,616,617,618,619,620,621,651,662,663,664,703,704,705, 706,707,765,768,710,763,764,765,766,775,776,777,778,779,780,805,809,810,811,812,851,852,853,854, 855

Flotilla 18—Commander, LCDR A. Hayes

LCTs:—07,18,20,22,25,27,29,30,80,147,149,153,193,197,199,200,201,202,206,207,209,213,214,244,271,276, 293,294,305,332,364,413,415,431,434,460

Flotilla 19—Commander, LCDR Pruet

LCTs—206, 538, 542, 546, 547

Flotilla 26—Commander, LCDR William Leide

LCTs—654,655,657,658,659,665,666,667,711,712,713,714,715,767,768,769,813,814,815,856

Gunfire Support Group

Group Commander, CAPT Lorenzo Sabin

LCT(A) Group Commander, LT Robert Morris

Omaha Group Commander, Lt(jg) Donald Sandie Utah Group Commander, Lt(jg) Irving Kramer

LCT(A)s:—2008,2037,2043,2049,2050,2124,2227,2228,2229,2273,2275,2282,2287,2301,2307,2309, 2310,2339,2402,2425 2454,24789,2488.