

Important New Details On Dieppe Raid Revealed

Canadian Army Records Show Attack Forced Huns To Make Unwise Change

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(Written for The Canadian Press)

Ottawa, May 3, (CP)—New light is thrown on a number of aspects of the controversial Dieppe raid of August 19, 1942, in an official story of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, to be published by the Defence Department May 5.

Final Word

Two lengthy chapters of "The Canadian Army 1939-45" written by Col. Charles Stacey, director of the historical section of the general staff deal with Dieppe, probably the most-hotly debated operation of the war.

Of the 4,963 Canadians who sailed 56 officers and 851 other ranks were killed, including seven officers and 64 other ranks who died in captivity. Prisoners totalled 1,944, of whom 558 were wounded. Only 2,211 of the force returned to Britain and 589 of these were wounded, but survived. In 28 cases wounds proved fatal.

The historical division examined German, British and Canadian documents. The chapters devoted to Dieppe are, in effect, the final word.

Battleship Needed

Among important facts hitherto undisclosed or uncertain, are these eight highlight points:

1. The naval force commander, Capt. J. Hughes-Hallett, reported after the raid that in his opinion a battleship could have operated off Dieppe during the first hours of daylight and "would probably have turned the tide in our favour."

2. Throughout the whole operation, Maj.-Gen. J. H. Roberts, commander of the 2nd Canadian Division, was hampered by "limited and frequently quite inaccurate" information reaching him on the headquarters destroyer about events ashore. One "extremely exaggerated" report of successes by the Essex Scottish from Windsor, Ont., on the main beach was responsible for the general's decision to land his floating reserve, the Fusiliers Mont Royal, on the main beach. They ran into withering fire.

Surprise Element

3. After reading enemy records, it can be said "with complete certainty" that the Germans had no fore-knowledge of the Canadian operation. Also, the interception of landing craft on the left flank by German coastal ships "did not result in a general loss of the element of surprise."

4. Canadian officers did not enter the planning until after completion of the outline by Britain's combined operations headquarters and approval of the British chiefs-of-staff committee. When the Canadians did consider the outline plan, they felt it had "reasonable prospect of success" and accepted it.

5. The Germans persisted in believing the landing was the opening phase of an invasion of France and their entire Coastal Defence Army was ordered ready for action.

Unwise Deletion

6. The outline plan said that "intelligence reports indicate that Dieppe is not heavily defended." The book added: "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the planners under-estimated the influence of topography and of the defensive works known to be numerous in the target area."

7. Prior to the originally intended raid, scheduled for July 4 and cancelled due to bad weather, only to be launched quickly on August 19, the plan was materially altered, with the heavy bombing attack being deleted. "The elimination of this air bombardment removed from the plan the only element of really heavy support contained in it."

8. The raid had considerable influence on the Germans' subsequent system of defence in France. They were convinced that landings could be destroyed on the beaches and that the Allies would seek, in the initial phase of any invasion, to capture a major port.

"An uncovenanted result of the Dieppe raid was thus to warp the Germans' system of defence in north-west Europe to our advantage."

The heavy bombing attack was cancelled because the Air Force commander, Air Vice-Marshal T. L. Leigh-Mallory, was unable to guarantee the degree of accuracy which would ensure destruction of the row of houses facing the seafront. In these conditions, Gen. Roberts feared that destruction within the town would be such as to block the streets with debris and prevent the tanks from getting through to their objectives to the south.

Paramount Lesson

Elimination of the air attack left the assault backed by nothing stronger than four-inch guns of the six small destroyers and Boston medium bombers.

Col. Stacey said the paramount lesson learned was "the need for overwhelming fire support, includ-

ing close support, during the initial stages of the attack."

Col. Stacey added:

"The casualties sustained in the raid were part of the price paid for the knowledge that enabled the great operation of 1944 (the Normandy invasion) to be carried out at a cost in blood smaller than even the most optimistic ventured to hope for. . . . That much-criticized undertaking had made an essential contribution to the success of the most momentous operation of war ever attempted."

The book said that the Germans likewise took lessons from the raid and "evidence indicates that it convinced them that any attempt at invasion could be destroyed on the beaches."

"Their efforts, they decided, should be concentrated preventing landings and particularly the landing of armour. This was reflected in the arrangement of their coastal defences, which in lower Normandy were simply a thin line along the beaches, almost entirely without depth."

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