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Directorate of History  
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Canadian Corps Exercise "HARE"

**DECLASSIFIED**  
Authority: DHD 3-3  
by COE for GHQ/NDHQ  
Date: NOV 13 1986

Canadian Military Headquarters,  
8 Cockspur Street, S.W. 1,  
London, ENGLAND.

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Historical Section,  
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National Defence Headquarters,  
Ottawa, CANADA.

1. A further report is presented. This deals with the Canadian Corps Exercise known by the code-name "HARE", which took place on 9-11 April 1941. I was present in the area of the exercise on 10-11 April.

#### PLAN OF THE EXERCISE

2. The documents on this exercise are to be found in C.M.H.Q. file 2/Exercises/5.

3. The object was "to exercise 1 Cdn Div in carrying out its operational counter-attack role". The theoretical situation as sketched was in general similar to those in "FOX" and "DOG" (see my Reports Nos. 11 and 13 respectively). It was again assumed that an enemy invasion was being attempted, and that the enemy's main efforts were being directed against the DOVER Peninsula and the coast between LITTLEHAMPTON and SEAFORD. By 1800 hrs on 8 Apr the enemy had overrun the DOVER-FOLKESTONE and LITTLEHAMPTON-SHOREHAM areas, and had taken ANGMERING and SOMPTING; and fighting was in progress about CISCURRY RING. The enemy was well established on the DOWNS east of the River ADUR; and there were reports of fighting at DEVILS DYKE and PATCHAM, with armoured fighting



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vehicles involved. BRIGHTON was still holding, but the enemy were in NEWHAVEN and SEAFORD.

4. The troops taking part in the exercise were a skeleton Corps Headquarters; the First Canadian Division; and a considerable force of Corps Troops, including THE ROYAL MONTREAL REGIMENT (M.G.), the 11th Army Field Regiment, the 1st Medium Regiment, and the 12th Light A.A. Regiment (a British unit). The Close Support Bomber Control, Cdn Corps, and No. 400 Squadron (A/C), R.C.A.F., were also involved.

5. At 0800 hrs on 9 April, the R.M.R. (M.G.) were ordered to the LIMPSFIELD area to act under 1 Cdn Div. At 1530 hrs Cdn Corps was placed under South-Eastern Command; and at 2000 hrs it was ordered to move 1 Cdn Div to a concentration area (GROOMBRIDGE - MAYFIELD - NUTLEY - FOREST ROW) preparatory to operating to the southward.

6. At 2100 hrs a conference was held at H.Q. Cdn Corps. It was then stated that the enemy's advanced troops were on the general line ANGMERING - FINDON - STEYNING - HURSTPIERPOINT - EAST CHILLINGTON - LEWES - SOUTH EASE - TARRING NEVILLE - LITTLINGTON - EAST DEAN. 38 Div and 1 Armd Div were operating W. of R. OUSE under 4 Corps; 2 Cdn Div, under S.E. Command, was being ordered to concentrate W. of HORSHAM. (See Umpires' instructions for the exercise.)

7. At this time, 1 Cdn Div was ordered (a) to secure the line of the OUSE from ISFIELD to STONEHAM FM (i.e., the reach immediately N. of LEWES), facing west as soon as possible; and (b) to strengthen 55 Div on the high ground BEDDINGHAM HILL - FIRLE BEACON - BOSTAL HILL (i.e., the summit of the SOUTH DOWNS looking towards NEWHAVEN) before daylight. It was further ordered to concentrate the Division in the area mentioned above (para. 5) preparatory to destroying the enemy in the region ALFAISTON - CUCKMERE HAVEN - BISHOPSTONE HALL - I FORD FM and restoring the beach defences from the OUSE to SEAFORD.



8. 11 A Fd Regt and 1 Med Regt were ordered by Corps to concentrate in rear of 1 Cdn Div and act under its command.

9. The R.C.A.F. instructions for this exercise comprehended the use of the C.S.B.C. and three Bomber Squadrons (represented by Lysander army-co-operation aircraft) under Cdn Corps. On both 10 and 11 April, three planes were detailed to work from GATWICK in close support, and 400 Sqn (less six planes) from ODIHAM to engage in tactical reconnaissance from the enemy's side. On 11 April, three planes from GATWICK were to do contact work with our own troops.

10. It will be noted that this exercise served to accustom the Canadian troops to still another sector of their potential area of operations in this country. "FOX" dealt with operations towards FOLKESTONE, and "DOG" with operations towards CHICHESTER and BOGNOR REGIS; "HARE" brought the troops into the NEWHAVEN sector. Three of the areas regarded as probable zones of enemy attack in the event of invasion have thus been covered in these exercises. (On the role of the Canadian Corps in such a contingency, see the remarks of the Corps Commander summarized in my Report No. 11.)

#### VISIT TO AREA OF OPERATIONS

11. In company with Major J.E. GANONG (G.S.O. 2, (M.T.), C.M.H.Q.) I left the Sun Life Building at 1000 hrs on 10 April to visit the area where the exercise was in progress.

12. Driving south through EDENBRIDGE, we made our first contact with troops taking part in the exercise in the vicinity of HARTFIELD, where about 1130 hrs we overtook the WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT. This unit, belonging to 3 Cdn Inf Bde, was moving forward in motor-coaches provided by a Troop-Carrying Company, identified by its vehicle number as a British R.A.S.C unit. Moving on through ASHDOWN FOREST, we saw some minor traffic difficulties arising from the fact that British formations were moving simultaneously, and passed the halted guns of 1 Fd Regt., R.C.A. We continued south through



MANESFIELD and UCKFIELD; and at the OLD SHIP INN near PLASHETT WOOD we found the Headquarters of 4 Recce Bn and got some information on the state of the exercise from this unit's officers. 2 Cdn Inf Bde, we found, was holding the summit of the DOWNS on the line BEDDINGHAM HILL - FIRLE BEACON - ALFRISTON, with the SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA and PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY in line and the EDMONTON REGIMENT in reserve. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, somewhere in the back area, was to move up and deliver an attack at dawn. The Recce Bn was watching the right flank of the Division, with patrols thrown out west of the OUSE. The Headquarters of the Reconnaissance Group (commanded by G.C. 4 Recce Bn) was at LITTLE HORSTED. This group was composed of the Recce Bn and the R.M.R. (M.G.), and one anti-tank battery.

13. Para. 4 of Appendix "A" (below) indicates that 2 Cdn Inf Bde did not actually succeed in carrying out the orders given it (as per para. 7 above) to reinforce the troops on the DOWNS before daylight. First light at this time was 0500 hrs or a little earlier. It must be remarked that the time allowed for this movement was very short.

14. We had lunch in LEWES and then drove on through BEDDINGHAM, beyond which we found elements of the EDMONTON REGT developing an attack on this village. We turned north through GLYNDE, and found that the bridge here had been pronounced bombed out, and was denied to the troops participating in the exercise until repaired. As we moved on from this point we saw Engineers arriving to take up this task. At LAUGHTON we found an advanced party of the 48TH HIGHLANDERS (1 Cdn Inf Bde), and heard that this unit had left its station at KINGSWOOD at midnight and had moved to WYCH CROSS, south of FOREST ROW, on the western edge of the divisional concentration area. Pushing on via SHORTGATE we met the ROYAL CANADIAN REGIMENT (of the same brigade) advancing. At EAST HOATHLY we found H.Q., 1 Cdn Div, established in the village hall.



15. Here we were permitted to read the Division's operation orders. These were to the effect that 1 Cdn Inf Bde was to deliver its attack the following morning at a zero hour tentatively fixed at 0445 hrs. The brigade's assembly area was to be BENTLEY WOOD - EAST HOATHLY - STONE CROSS - LAUGHTON LODGE; it was to be in this area by 1800 hrs, and we had just seen elements of it entering this area with plenty of time to spare. It was to march in to its forming-up place (which was ALCISTON - ALFRISTON) as soon as it was dark. The attack was to be supported by the 1st and 3rd Field, 11th Army Field and 1st Medium Regiments, R.C.A. (The report on the exercise - see below, para. 25 - notes that the three field regts. were to lay down a barrage, and the medium regt. to "cover the exposed flank".) 3 Cdn Inf Bde, in reserve, was to be in its assembly area by 0500 hrs on 11 Apr.

16. On leaving EAST HOATHLY we observed a Lysander aircraft flying low and evidently closely observing the assembly area of 1 Cdn Inf Bde. This we assumed to be one of the planes from ODIHAM engaged in "Tac R" from the enemy's side (para. 8 above). We returned to LAUGHTON (again passing the R.C.R.) and continued via HOLMES HILL and CHALVINGTON (in the vicinity of which we passed 2 Fd Regt, R.C.A.) and on through RIPE. Beyond this village we came upon the R.M.R. (M.G.) or a considerable part of it, halted by the roadside on either side of the railway crossing near BUSHY LODGE.

17. We now returned to GLYNDE, where (about 1600 hrs) we found 3 Fd Coy, R.C.E., at work replacing the supposedly bombed bridge with a small box girder bridge located immediately to the west. Brigadier HERTZBERG (Chief Engineer, Canadian Corps) was watching, and Major-General Pearkes arrived shortly after us. An Engineer umpire (Major FRASER) told me that the job was proceeding rather too slowly. On this matter, see Appendix "A", para. 12.

18. Driving back to Laughton, we found that the 48TH HIGHLANDERS had arrived, and we had some conversation with several officers, including Major J.S.P. ARMSTRONG. We then returned to LEWES, and



visited the H.Q. of the directing staff of the exercise in the Crown Hotel. Brigadier DEMPSEY (B.G.S., Ops) was acting as Director in the absence of the Corps Commander. Lt. RANKIN (L.O.) gave us further information on the state of the exercise, and suggested that if we were in the vicinity of HIGH AND OVER (on the ALFRISTON - SEAFORD road) at about 0545 hrs the next morning we would get a good view of the attack.

19. With this in view, we drove back through BEDDINGHAM to reconnoitre the ground. Driving past FIRLE PARK and through ALFRISTON with the great mass of the DOWNS on our right, we followed the road up on to the ridge at HIGH AND OVER, a point which commands a magnificent view. We then dropped down into SEAFORD, and drove on along the Channel coast through NEWHAVEN and PEACEHAVEN to ROTTINGDEAN.

#### THE CHANNEL COAST

20. This was my first glimpse of the coast of the Channel in this war. Needless to say, it bears many marks of the anxiety in which England has lived during the past year. Dannert wire is almost everywhere, and machine-gun posts of various types and degrees of strength (some of them very carefully concealed) are numerous. Where there are high cliffs these preparations are somewhat less in evidence; but wherever landing operations would appear to be practicable every possible precaution has been taken. Along the seafront of the large town of BRIGHTON wire is continuous and there are section posts at short intervals; and I was told that the BRIGHTON piers have been cut.

21. BRIGHTON, where we had dinner, gives the impression of trying to keep up some slight appearance of gaiety in spite of these handicaps and the existence of a curfew regulation requiring all unauthorized persons to be off the front by 2230 hrs.

22. We slept at a small hotel in ROTTINGDEAN, and our sleep was several times disturbed - once by the local warning siren (which



appeared to be located immediately outside our window) sounding the "all clear", and on earlier occasions by the sound of bombs, none of which however appeared to fall very close. We were told that BRIGHTON had lately had considerable bombing. The absence of anti-aircraft fire was in notable contrast with the situation in LONDON.

23. Our hotel, as a result of war conditions, had no staff on duty at night, and thanks to this fact we missed the attack. We had borrowed an alarm-clock and undertaken to wake our driver. We duly rose at 0500 hrs, but the room in which we had been told the driver would sleep was empty, and we could only assume that he had absented himself. By the time we found out the truth - which was that the hotel had moved him to another room without informing us - it was too late to see anything of the operations. We then returned to LONDON.

#### LESSONS OF THE EXERCISE

24. On 15 April Major Ganong and I, doing as we had done in earlier exercises, proceeded to H.Q. 1 Cdn Div to attend the conference on "HARE". The Corps Commander was still indisposed, and General PEARKES did not wish this conference to be attended by any officers not holding lieutenant-colonel appointments or above; in consequence, I am unable to report upon it. Representations have since been made to Corps H.Q., pointing out that it is desirable, for the work of their respective branches, that an officer of the Military Training branch, and the Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., should be permitted to attend such conferences.

25. I obtained a copy of the notes for this conference, and this is attached hereto as Appendix "A". More recently the report of the exercise has come to hand. This document, which is undated and unsigned, will be found in C.M.H.Q. file 2/Exercises/5. Copies of such reports are, moreover, now being forwarded to N.D.H.Q. This report is somewhat fuller than those on the earlier exercises.



26. There appears to be no need of reproducing at length the conclusions of this report on the lessons of the exercise, as the report itself will be available to the future historian. The following points, however, are noted.

27. The Reconnaissance Group was assigned the task (para. 7, above) of securing the line of the OUSE. "Its task was carried out quickly and efficiently, and the river was secured during the hours of darkness."

28. With respect to the movement of 2 Inf Bde Gp to the DOWNS (paras. 7 and 13, above) it is remarked that there was barely time for this to be effected before daylight, had everything "gone without a hitch". As it was, there were "various delays, some of which were avoidable", and the Bde Gp did not get sufficient fire support on to the DOWNS "before about 0800 hrs". "In the circumstances, it is probable that the enemy would have attacked at first light and that the northern edge of the Downs would have been lost."

29. The report concludes that traffic control was well handled. With special reference to the move into the assembly area, it remarks, "There was no congestion, and, as reported by 400 Bqn. R.C.A.F. who were operating on the enemy's side, there were few, if any, good targets presented to the air." (Cf. above, para. 16.) In general, the report comments, "The control of traffic during these moves to the concentration area, and on to the assembly area showed that this operation has been mastered by the Division."

30. In this connection it is proper to remark that while in the area of operations Major Ganong and I saw nothing resembling the bad traffic-jams which have taken place in earlier exercises (see my Reports Nos. 11 and 13).

31. The following comments upon the actual attack are reproduced:

9. The Div deployed during the hours of darkness, and the units were ready in their forming-up positions by zero, which was fixed for 0445 hrs. This movement was well carried out.

10. The attack itself suffered from certain



units losing direction. Steps, thought to be adequate, had been taken to prevent this, and it is probable that it would not have occurred had the real artillery support been fired.

32. The following comments on the Reconnaissance Group, which was a new feature of this exercise, may also be quoted.

The fact that there are now two M.G. Bns in Corps Troops enables the Commander, Canadian Corps to allot an additional Bn to each division for operations. This second Bn is normally included in the Recce Gp and gives to the Divisional Commander a small mobile force which, both in time and space, can be used well ahead of the Division. It has considerable power of gaining information and of resistance, but is at present hampered by difficulty of control. Command of the group is best placed in the hands of O.C., Recce Bn.

The reference in "two M.G. Bns in Corps Troops" is <sup>presumably</sup> to the fact that THE CAMERON HIGHLANDERS OF OTTAWA (M.G.) are expected in the United Kingdom very shortly, from Iceland (cf. my Report No. 4). I understand that on the arrival of the Third Canadian Division this unit will be attached to it as divisional machine-gun battalion.

33. In the matter of air co-operation, the following points may be mentioned. As respects the use of the C.S.B.C. (see my Reports Nos. 11 and 13), "Communication worked well throughout the exercise and it was found that attacks by flights of 3 aircraft were delivered on the target at between 25 and 30 minutes from the origin of the requests at the tentacles." In the matter of the use of the yellow triangle and the T and Ball Code for contact with forward troops (see the same previous reports), "It was proved that satisfactory results cannot be produced before sunrise, either as regards contact or close support."

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

34. A large number of photographs were taken during this exercise by the photographic staff of the Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q. These are to be found in film series nos. 179, 180,



181, and 182.

35. Major Ganong has kindly read this report in draft with a view to the elimination of possible errors.

C.P.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,  
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.



(C O P Y)

EXERCISE "HARE"

NOTES FOR CONFERENCE.

1. OBJECT - Recapture SOUTH DOWNS

To accomplish this, must

- (a) secure right flank
- (b) secure northern edge of DOWNS
- (c) concentrate in safety
- (d) Attack before enemy could be reinforced or develop defences.

2. FACTORS - Time. Ground. Ammunition.

3. ACTION OF RECCE GP

Was it necessary to send RMR(MG) as well as 4 Recce Bn.

4. ATTEMPT TO SECURE NORTHERN EDGE OF DOWNS

2 Inf Bde did not actually start reinforcing the DOWNS Bn until 0715hrs and did not complete until 0930hrs.

Reasons for delay:- Slow Start

Battle procedure not followed.

Difficulties of debussing at 30

V.T.M. If whole of bde could not reach DOWNS before daybreak, might portion have been sent ahead.

Arty direct to posn of readiness.

5. INFORMATION

Vital importance of:

Gaining and passing of information not good.

Tps not tactically inquisitive.

Patrolling.

Organised observations at O.Ps to keep Div continually informed of enemy dispositions and of ground.

6. CONCENTRATION & ASSEMBLY

(a) Generally very satisfactory. One or two minor cases of speeding. Debussing and fwd move performed efficiently.

(b) 2 Inf Bde carried out quick deviation round rd block without delaying the coln but no attempt made to repair damage and block not reported.

(c) If a new area is entered in the dark, the hour of first light must be used to conceal men and vehicles before hostile aircraft arrive.

(d) Use of camouflage nets; must break outline of vehicle and cast a different shadow.

(e) Tracks into Sides must be controlled otherwise become traps;

(f) Failure to establish traffic control past convoys when halted still general weakness. There were a few instances of cutting in and double banking.



7. FALSE REPORTS - BEDDINGHAM attack launched on false report and without verification.
8. GROUND SELECTED FOR THE ATTACK
  - (a) Shortest route, protected on left flank and defiladed from right beyond DENTON HILL but extremely difficult country.
  - (b) Alternative route from FIRLE BEACON. Better though longer approaches. Might be more strongly defended.
9. NATURE OF ARTY SUPPORT.
  - (a) Barrage uses large amount of amn; if [in?] fact 1st, 2nd lines and Corps dumps used. Some amn bound to be wasted.
  - (b) Barrage takes long time to prepare. The 8 hours allowed after receipt of orders by C.R.A. proved insufficient. All guns were in posn but barrage arrangements were not complete. 2 to 3 hours required by fd regts from time tracings arrive.
  - (c) BMRA working in crowded room under great difficulty.
  - (d) Had accurate information about the enemy been available in time, concentration might have achieved the object and enabled the Div to attack on a wider front with smaller expenditure of amn.
10. INFANTRY

Orders must get down to pl and sec comds.  
Start Line must be clear.  
Use of compass.  
Formations during the attack, keep control as long as possible.  
Objectives must be known and dispositions on arrival.  
Use of carriers.  
Danger of losing [losing?] the barrage.  
Reporting progress and signals to aircraft.
11. MG.

Daylight recce of posns to be occupied by night essential.  
Water.
12. ENGRS

7½ hrs elapsed before new bridge at GLYNDE was ready.  
Traffic must be diverted well back. A.A. protection.  
All work is against time.  
Bridging lorries close to site and not concealed.  
Screens to hinder observation. Stores in open.
13. AIR
  - (a) Cannot produce any results either recce of enemy, contact with own tps or close support bombing before sunrise.
  - (b) Arrangements must be made to deliver Tac.R. reports promptly. Areas to be photographed must be defined accurately. Several copies will be required.
  - (c) Displaying of indicators, personnel and unit.
14. SIGNALS
  - (a) Volume of traffic to be sent by D.R. bound to be heavy. As far as possible, D.Rs should run on properly drawn up schedule. Special D.R. being reserved for really urgent messages. No unnecessary addressees should be included on distribution lists.
  - (b) Signalmasters MUST keep staffs informed of NON delivery of messages.
  - (c) Signal security.



15. CONCEALMENT.

Vehicles assembled in a quarry were very visible against white background.

Camp fires were very pronounced in some areas.

Regular form of windbreaks and movement of men, vehicles on skyline would have given posn away.

16. BATTLE DISCIPLINE

(a) Very considerable improvement necessary if heavy casualties are to be avoided. A man's chances of survival on the battlefield will largely depend on the standard of personal efficiency he has reached before the battle.

Junior Officers and N.C.Os show a serious lack of sense of responsibility and lack of control. Senior officers must exercise more supervision on the ground.

Keep the best qualities of the citizen of civilian soldier, discard those NOW that do not tend to military efficiency.

(b) Duty roster - must be drawn up and enforced.

In many cases all ranks were awake at the same time; there were cases where all were asleep.

Sentries (air and ground) must be detailed with officer and/or N.C.O. i/c and proper reliefs provided. Sleep and meals must be controlled.

An enemy patrol could have immobilized vehicles, etc.

General alertness required.

17. STAFF DUTIES

Reliefs

Location states

Keep orders short.

18. TRAINING

(a) Arty - Weekly preparations of programmes for barrages and concentrations always against time.

Preparation of amn by night.

(b) Inf - Following a barrage.

Observation

Patrols.

(c) M.G. - Night occupation and sustained fire programme.

(d) All Arms - Traffic control when convoy halted.

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