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Directorate of History
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CANCELLED

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Further Material Relative to Canadian Participation
in Operation "ABERCROMBIE", 22 Apr 42, and to Projects
for Cross-Channel Raiding by Canadian Troops, September
1941 - April 1942.

1. This Report is additional to Report No. 81, which dealt at length with Operation "ABERCROMBIE", the first raiding operation in which Canadian troops actually crossed the English Channel. It will be recalled that in this operation a force of 50 men of the Carleton and York Regiment was embarked to participate in an attack on the French coast in the HARDELOT area near BOULOGNE, but that the Canadian party, due to an unfortunate combination of circumstances, was never landed.

2. This Report also presents material relative to the possibility of cross-Channel raids as discussed during the period between the move of 1 Cdn Corps to the South Coast in the autumn of 1941 and the inception of Operation "ABERCROMBIE". This material, as well as that relating to "ABERCROMBIE", has become available as the result of the transfer of a number of MOST SECRET files from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps to the Records Office at ACTON.

PROJECTS FOR RAIDS FOLLOWING MOVE OF CANADIAN CORPS TO SUSSEX

3. The movement of Cdn Corps (now 1 Cdn Corps) from SURREY into SUSSEX, and its assumption of a coastal role, are described in Report No. 58. It will be recalled that Cdn Corps took over command of its new area from 4 Corps on 17 Nov 41, and that 2 Cdn Div had been in SUSSEX since mid-October.

4. As soon as the move into SUSSEX was determined upon, the possibility of Canadian troops participating in raids directed against the enemy-occupied coast of France was considered by British and Canadian authorities. On 6 Sep 41 Lt.-Gen. B.C.T. Paget, then G.O.C.-in-C. South Eastern Command (now G.O.C.-in-C. Home Forces) visited Lt.-Gen. A.G.L. McNaughton (then G.O.C. Cdn Corps) at his headquarters, and a discussion took place on the question of cross-Channel raids during the coming winter. General Paget stated that the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee had agreed that such raids might be carried out by forward Divisions, and full co-operation had been promised by the Director of Combined Operations (then Admiral Sir Roger Keyes). General Paget felt that these raids would contribute to the maintenance of an offensive spirit; and General McNaughton said that he welcomed the idea, but "considered it essential that each raid must have a clearly defined object and must be carefully planned down to the last detail".

5. It was explained that, "as a first step", a series of courses for junior officers and N.C.Os. were being arranged at CHICHESTER HARBOUR. Vacancies would be allotted to 1 and 2 Cdn Divs on the course beginning about 20 Sep 41.

6. General Paget explained that it was proposed that the raids should be made against the sector of the coast from exclusive DIEPPE to inclusive OSTEND, and that Cdn Corps would be responsible for the sector from exclusive DIEPPE to inclusive BOULOGNE, 12 Corps taking the remainder. General Paget said that it was proposed that raiding parties would consist of from 10 to 20 all ranks, led by junior officers. (Memorandum of discussion by Lt.-Col. G.G. Simonds, A/B.G.S., Cdn Corps, 8 Sep 41: file Ops 3-3-5 vol. II, from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, now at ACTON.)

7. The training of small detachments of units of Cdn Corps at CHICHESTER HARBOUR (H.M.S. "NORTHNEY") duly took place, and is briefly referred to in Reports Nos. 58 (para. 86) and 70 (para. 12).

8. As a result of the discussion with General Paget, H.Q. Cdn Corps issued on 13 Sep 41 a "Most Secret" letter to G.O.Cs. 1 and 2 Cdn Divs, incorporating the information given above.

9. This letter, incidentally, drew a comment from Major-General V.W. Odium (then commanding 2 Cdn Div), who wrote to General McNaughton on 17 Sep that he had read it "with surprise and disappointment". General Odium's objection was based on the limitation in the size of raiding parties, and he wrote, "If I were allowed a free hand I would use not less than a brigade group, and I would leave a mark which would be remembered". He considered that the enterprises foreshadowed in the letter from Corps Headquarters "would be a complete waste of time". It was explained by General McNaughton in reply (24 Sep 41), that the restrictions on numbers had been "decided by the authorities who are competent to judge requirements and to take a decision in these matters", and that while larger operations might be possible later, in the meantime it would be necessary "to adhere strictly" to the instructions already issued.

10. On the night of 28-29 Sep 41, Lieut. J.H. Gowan (Seaforth of C.) was present as a spectator during a small raid known as Operation "CHOPPER", directed against ST. VAAST and COURSEULLES (in the CHERBOURG Peninsula) by detachments of 1 Commando. Mr. Gowan went ashore with one of the Commando parties which, however, spent only a short time on the beach and suffered some casualties. (Report of Lieut. Gowan, 8 Oct 41) **SECRET**

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ABORTIVE PROPOSALS FOR MINOR RAIDS **NOV 13 1986**

11. During the autumn and winter, 1941-42, hopes were entertained that Cdn Corps would be able to mount and execute minor operations against the French coast, but these hopes were entirely disappointed. South Eastern Command issued instructions governing training for and execution of such raids (23 Oct 41); it was proposed to use NEWHAVEN as a base for raids by troops of Cdn Corps, if naval facilities could be made available there (Lt.-Gen. Montgomery, G.O.C.-in-C., South Eastern Command, to G.H.Q. Home Forces, 27 Nov 41); and plans for two minor operations known by the code names "BARITONE" and "CRUPPER", at first planned for British troops, were taken over with a view to execution by Canadians. On 29 Nov 41 General Montgomery told Major-General Pearkes (then A/G.O.C., Cdn Corps) that it was proposed that Cdn Corps should alternate each month with 12 Corps in carrying out raids. "Our first enterprises will be carried out by 2 Cdn Div during the month of December. In February 1 Cdn Div will have its turn." (General Pearkes to Brigadier Simonds, 29 Nov 41.)

12. Nothing concrete came of any of these projects. It was proposed that "BARITONE" and "CRUPPER" should be carried out between 21 and 25 Dec 41 by 2 Cdn Div; but this project was

abandoned, as no assault landing craft were available. It was again proposed that these operations should be carried out between 16 and 20 Jan 42, but again A.L.Cs. were lacking. These operations were then proposed for a third period, this time 14-19 Feb 42; but the necessary craft were still not forthcoming.

13. All the documents referred to in paras. 6-12, above, are to be found on Most Secret file Ops 3-3-5 Vol. II, mentioned in para. 6.

ATTEMPTS TO ARRANGE RAIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADIAN TROOPS

14. Following these disappointments, General Crerar, who was detailed temporarily to command Cdn Corps during the absence of General McNaughton on sick leave (see Report No. 65), made a further attempt to obtain for the troops of the Corps the opportunities which had so far escaped them. On 5 Feb 42 he addressed to General Montgomery a letter which is worth quoting in full:

GOC.1-0-2
PA. 1-0-2

PERSONAL AND SECRET

5 February, 1942.

Dear General:

The static situation in which the Canadian Corps has found itself for the last year or more is not of its own choosing, nor at the desire of the Canadian Government. As you know, the Prime Minister and other members of the Canadian Cabinet have stated publicly that there is no restriction placed by the Canadian Government on the employment of the Canadian Forces now in the United Kingdom in respect to any theatre of operations. But, as you are also aware, this continued lack of active participation in operations provides neither pride nor pleasure to the officers and other ranks of the Canadian Army.

As I have been rather in the middle of discussions concerning "higher policy" during the last couple of years, I am conversant with the reasons which have led to the continued retention of the Canadian Corps in the Home Forces and require no additional arguments to convince me that this policy has been the sound one to maintain. At the same time, I also realize that, however sound the past and present military role of the Canadian Corps may have been, as the months go by and opportunities fail to materialize in which the officers and men of my present command can match their skill and courage against the enemy, the more difficult it will be to maintain in them the desired keenness and morale.

I believe that occasions will increasingly present themselves for small raids across the Channel opposite the Army front. I consider that it would be in the general interest if a very high proportion of these prospective raids, if not the total, should be undertaken by detachments from the Canadian Corps. In this way, even if operations on a large scale continue, through force of circumstances, to be denied to the Canadian Army, an opportunity will be given to a considerable number of units to participate in actions against the enemy. In default of a reputation built up in battle the Corps undoubtedly would receive great stimulus if, in the near future, it succeeded in

making a name for itself for its raiding activities - a reputation which, incidentally, it very definitely earned for itself in the last war.

I should be glad if you would think this matter over and perhaps you would later care to discuss it with me.

(Signed) H.D.G. CRERAR

15. To this letter General Montgomery replied briefly on 8 February, to the effect that he hoped to get some A.L.Cs. in March, and that he proposed to allot some to NEWHAVEN, "so that you can run your own raiding activities from that place". He added, "Your men should be quite first class at raiding".

16. In the following month General Crerar pursued the matter further. Following discussion and correspondence with General Montgomery and General Nye (D.C.I.G.S.), a meeting took place on 1 Mar 42 between General Crerar and General Sir Alan Brooke (C.I.G.S.), who agreed as to the importance of Canadians being employed in future raids and the desirability of a discussion between General Crerar and the Director of Combined Operations on the matter. The result was a meeting at the Naval and Military Club, London, on 6 Mar 42, at which were present Generals Nye and Crerar; the Director of Combined Operations (Commodore, now Vice-Admiral, Lord Louis Mountbatten); and Brigadier Simonds.

17. Brigadier Simonds' notes of the meeting include the following paragraph:

Gen. Crerar opened the subject of raids by indicating the importance which he attached to Canadian participation now that the prospects of invasion during the early summer seemed to recede. Canadian troops had been in the U.K. - some for over two years - without having had a chance of meeting the enemy. It was galling to them to read of exploits in which, to date, they had been unable to take part and if this enforced inactivity continued it would have a serious effect on morale within the Canadian Corps. Further, in its effect on recruiting in Canada and the probable attitude of the U.S. towards sending troops to Europe, the continued inactivity of Canadian troops had far wider and more far reaching repercussions. The scheme initiated early in the winter by which forward Corps, including Canadian Corps, would organize minor raids against the French coast had failed to materialize because assault landing craft had not been made available. Gen. Crerar stated that he had the permission of Comd, S.E. Army and the C.I.G.S. to discuss with D.C.O. arrangements for a raid which would be made by Canadian troops.

18. General Nye supported General Crerar's argument. The D.C.O. then said that the proposal to use a wholly Canadian detachment for raids ran counter to the policy agreed upon with C.-in-C. Home Forces, "namely that raids would be carried out by the Special Service Brigade ("Commandos") and that Army representation would take the form of "dilution" of raiding Commandos, with a proportion of troops from the Corps of Home Forces". Nevertheless, he was willing to make an exception in favour of a purely Canadian enterprise, provided the C.-in-C. Home Forces would agree; and he was willing to employ the landing craft flotilla of the R.C.N.V.R. which had recently arrived from Canada to work with Canadian troops. He expressed the view that

the minimum strength of raiding parties should be 100, and suggested a further conference at his headquarters forthwith to discuss arrangements.

19. This further meeting took place at the D.C.O.'s office on the same day, and was attended by General Crerar, the D.C.O. himself, Brigadier Haydon (commanding the Special Service Brigade), and Brigadier Simonds. It was agreed that a Canadian detachment should be organized for Combined Operations training by 15 Mar 42.

20. Out of these arrangements grew the programme of Combined Operations training outlined in Cdn Corps Training Instruction No. 7 (16 Mar 42), which is dealt with at some length in Report No. 70, paras. 13 ff.

21. This Training Instruction was communicated to Combined Operations Headquarters, where it occasioned some slight consternation, in view of the fact that it envisaged a progressive programme of training for detachments from 2 Cdn Div, 1 Cdn Div and 3 Cdn Div in that order. Combined Operations Headquarters pointed out that they could not manage the instruction of further detachments after the one from 2 Cdn Div whose training was in progress (General Haydon to Brigadier Simonds, 11 Apr 42). In reply, Brigadier Simonds wrote in part as follows:

For security reasons, the Training Instruction was framed on the basis of a training routine for successive formations.

I fully realize that we may have to disappoint 1 and 3 Cdn Divs, but it has had the effect of killing speculation and a lot of discussion over the departure of 2 Cdn Div party.

I sincerely hope however that the latter get a run for their money. Many thanks for all your assistance.

22. It had apparently been hoped to employ the 2 Cdn Div detachment in an actual operation, but as noted in Report No. 70 this did not in fact take place. (Brigadier Mann, who was at this time G.S.O.1, 2 Cdn Div, told the writer on 18 Nov 42 that if an actual raid was projected he did not know of it.)

23. During April, 1942, activity looking towards the possibility of small scale raids continued. On 4 Apr, South Eastern Command issued instructions governing such operations. The preamble to this instruction is worth quoting:

GENERAL

1. C.-in-C., Home Forces has been authorised to carry out raids on the French, Belgian and Dutch Coasts.

2. The Chief of Combined Operations, who commands all assault ships and craft, as well as the Special Service Brigade, is also empowered by the Chiefs of Staffs to carry out raids on the same frontage.

3. It has therefore been agreed that the Chief of Combined Operations will be solely responsible for co-ordinating all raids on the Coastline of Europe and that, in so doing, he ensures, with the help of G.H.Q., Home Forces, that the opportunities for carrying out small raids are fairly divided as between Special Service troops and those of Home Forces. The Chief of Combined Operations will also be responsible for arranging for, and co-ordinating, the Naval and Air support required for each raid.

24. This instruction laid down that H.Q. South Eastern Army and H.Qs. 12 and Cdn Corps might make proposals for small

scale raids for areas on the frontage from Le Treport to West Kapelle and the Middelburg peninsula.

25. H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps subsequently gave attention to the planning of raids against three alternative objectives on this coast (Memo by Brigadier Simonds, 15 Apr 42).

26. All the documents upon which paras. 14-25 (both inclusive), above, are based are to be found on file Ops 3-3-1 (Raids by Cdn Tps), from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, now at ACTON.

27. During April, however, Canadian attention was directed to the project for Operation "ABERCROMBIE", and it is now possible to throw upon the inception of Canadian participation in this minor operation some light additional to that afforded by Report No. 81. The paragraphs which follow derive from file Ops 3-3-1-1 Div ("Raids by Cdn Tps - 1 Cdn Div"), from H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, which has lately been received at ACTON. This file contains seven documents, all carbon copies, and all relating to this particular matter.

28. The material now presented serves to throw light upon the procedure by which Canadian troops are brought into such operations, and the procedure adopted within the Canadian Army Overseas when such proposals are received. It serves in particular to exemplify the manner in which the G.O.C.-in-C. First Cdn Army has examined each project personally before authorizing the employment of Canadian troops.

FIRST CANADIAN INFORMATION OF "ABERCROMBIE"

29. Apparently the Chief of Combined Operations (Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten) had a conversation on the project for a raid with a Canadian staff officer on 31 Mar 42 (see below, para. 37); but the first formal and written information of the plan received at any Canadian Headquarters arrived, it would seem, at 1945 hours on 1 Apr 42, when Brigadier G.G. Simonds (B.G.S., Cdn Corps) received the following communication from B.G.S., South Eastern Command, by the hand of a Liaison Officer :

MOST SECRET

HQ S.E. Command
1 April 1942

Dear Simonds:

B.G.S. Plans Home Forces has just rung up on the scrambler and asked the following:-

1. The C.C.O. is planning a raid about the middle of April and wishes to include 50 all ranks from Home Forces in the party. Home Forces would like you to find these 50 all ranks, provided that they are now fit and have done training with A.L.C's etc previously.
The party of 50 would only be a part of the raiding force but I understand that they would be given a separate role of their own under their own Comd.
2. The troops would have to move to a place for training on about 5 April.
3. For purposes of security, orders will go straight from C.C.O. to the unit selected, Home Forces, S.E. Comd and you being by-passed.

In order to arrange this and all details, an officer from the selected unit should report to Major Lovatt at the G.C.O.'s office, Richmond Terrace, LONDON, on Friday 3 April anytime after 0930 hrs.

4. Will you please telephone to me to say whether your Corps Commander agrees to the above?

Please destroy this when the party has been selected.

Yours ever

(Signed) M. Chilton

CORPS AND ARMY COMMANDERS' APPROVAL

30. At this time Lt.-Gen. Crerar, A/G.O.C., Cdn Corps, was in LONDON for conferences at C.M.H.Q. At 1955 hours Brigadier Simonds forwarded to him the letter from SECO, with a covering note beginning as follows:

1. I have no information further to that given in attached. I recommend we take advantage of this offer otherwise we will be side-tracked from similar projects in the future. I further recommend party should come from 1 Cdn Div in view of other activities of 2 Cdn Div.

(Copy on file undated, but must be 1 Apr 42).

31. This communication was received by General Crerar at the Dorchester Hotel, LONDON, and at 2330 hours, 1 Apr 42, he wrote as follows to General McNaughton, who had lately returned from Canada :

Army Commander:

I am definitely in favour, in principle, of 1st Cdn Div providing the personnel for this raid - several hundred all ranks of this formation having completed the course at "NORTHNEY". The details of the project can only be communicated verbally - and acceptance, or otherwise, of the responsibility should be settled tomorrow.

General Crerar sent the correspondence to General McNaughton by a Liaison Officer, and requested that he should communicate his views and decisions to B.G.S., Cdn Corps.

32. These letters were delivered to General McNaughton at Headley Court, LEATHERHEAD, on the morning of 2 Apr 42. A G.S.O.II of General McNaughton's staff (name not given on copy), noted on General Crerar's letter, "This project was discussed briefly by me with Lord Mountbatten, yesterday".

33. At 0940 hours on 2 Apr 42, General McNaughton endorsed General Crerar's letter, "Participation in this operation by 1 Cdn Div approved". This decision was notified by General McNaughton to Brigadier Simonds by telephone at 0942 hours. Brigadier Simonds told General McNaughton that he had prepared and would at once despatch a letter to General Pearkes, G.O.C. 1 Cdn Div. This letter, he explained, suggested that, in view of the short time allowed, the detachment should be drawn from one or at most two units in preference to attempting to organize a representative group. To this General McNaughton agreed. (Note of telephone messages by Brigadier Simonds).

34. At 0945 hours, Brigadier Simonds spoke to Brigadier Chilton at SECO and informed him that both General McNaughton and General Crerar had accepted the "invitation issued last night". He then sent off his letter to General Pearkes by hand of a Liaison Officer. (Notes by Brigadier Simonds.) Brigadier Simonds had previously, on the evening of 1 Apr, informed Brigadier Chilton that he would be unable to give a definite answer until late that night, but that he had every reason to believe the Corps Commander would accept the offer. Brigadier Chilton agreed that an answer early on 2 Apr would be satisfactory. (Note by Brigadier Simonds, 2105 hours, 1 Apr 42.) Immediately afterwards, Brigadier Simonds had telephoned General Pearkes and referred tentatively to the possibility of employment for 50 trained men in the next few days. (Note by Brigadier Simonds, 2115 hours, 1 Apr 42.)

35. The letter now despatched by Brigadier Simonds to General Pearkes was marked "Most Secret and Personal". It was dated 1 Apr 42 and left Advanced H.Q. Cdn Corps at 1000 hours on 2 Apr 42. It communicated the information received from SECO and added that this should be made known only to officers essentially concerned, and that "training with commandos" should be used for cover.

36. From this point onwards the matter developed in the manner described in Report No. 81. Shortly after the events therein related, the Combined Operations activity of 1 Cdn Corps began to centre upon the much larger project of the raid on DIEPPE.

CORRECTION

37. In para. 6 of Report No. 81, for "3 Jul 42", read "3 Apr 42".

(C.P. Stacey) Major,
Historical Officer,
Canadian Military Headquarters.