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Combined Operations Training, 1st Canadian Corps.

1. This Report summarizes the programme of training in combined operations conducted by formations of 1 Cdn Corps during the winter of 1942-43. This has been the most extensive programme of the sort yet attempted within the Canadian Army Overseas, and has affected a larger body of troops than that involved in the training preceding the DIEPPE operation of 19 Aug 42. All the infantry brigades of 1 Cdn Div, other troops of the same division, and a considerable number of units of 3 Cdn Div, took part. Most of the training was conducted at the Combined Training Centres in Scotland which are operated under the direction of the Chief of Combined Operations.
2. An important pictorial record of this training has been made by Lieut. W.A. Ogilvie, a Canadian War Artist attached to C.M.H.Q., who was present at the Combined Training Centre, INVERARAY, during the training of 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes there. Mr. Ogilvie made a large group of admirably vigorous watercolour and other drawings dealing with this training, and at the moment of writing he is engaged in developing some of this material in LONDON. Attached as Appendix "A" is an account written by Mr. Ogilvie of the training of 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes as he saw it. The pictures resulting from his stay at INVERARAY are considered to be the most interesting single group yet produced by any Canadian War Artist overseas, and have very material historical value as a record of training methods, equipment and general background.

INCEPTION OF THE PROGRAMME

3. The first instruction concerning the programme of combined training was issued from Adv. H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps on 2 Nov 42 (C.M.H.Q. file 2/COMB OPS/1). This instruction announced that arrangements had been made for combined training for four brigades (1, 2, 3 and 7 Cdn Inf Bdes), with projected arrangements for two more (8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes). It stated also that training had been arranged for "Beach Organizations" for both "maintenance" and temporary beaches; for the training of divisional and corps troops, "to practise drivers in driving on and off craft and appropriate general instruction"; while special courses had been arranged in engineer training for officers and N.C.Os., planning for Cs.R.E. and field company commanders, beach organization, the work of Forward Observation Officers (R.C.A.), beach signal work, and the waterproofing of vehicles.
4. It was anticipated at this time that the infantry brigade training would begin on 27 Nov 42 with the arrival of the advanced party of 1 Cdn Inf Bde at C.T.C., INVERARAY, and that 1, 2 and 7 Cdn Inf Bdes would be trained at this centre, while 3 Cdn Inf Bde would be trained at TOWARD. It was hoped that the training of all four brigades might be completed by 15 Jan 43. It was further suggested that 8 and 9 Cdn Inf Bdes, although details were not yet settled, would train in the south with Force J, under Captain J. Hughes-Hallett, D.S.O., R.N., operating from the ISLE OF WIGHT.

5. The programme was not carried out exactly as planned. A revised schedule of training was published on 21 Nov 42, and constant further revisions proved necessary; the training, in consequence, lasted through most of the month of March. The postponements which took place were in part at least the result of the necessity for suspending training at the C.T.Cs. in order to make possible the proper maintenance and repair of landing craft used at these establishments.

TRAINING OF 1ST CANADIAN DIVISION

6. All the infantry brigades of 1 Cdn Div were put through the combined training programme as planned, though as just noted there were many delays. In the beginning, preparatory training was carried out; during the week ending 28 Nov 42, units carried out tactical exercises with troops in combined operations on the platoon and company level, and practised night landings using "mock-up" L.C.As. (General Report from First Cdn Army, C.M.H.Q. file 4/PROGRESS/11). Large-scale training in Scotland began in December. 1 Cdn Inf Bde spent the period from 16 to 31 Dec at the C.T.C., INVERARAY, training in "wet and miserable" weather (War Diary, H.Q. 1 Cdn Inf Bde, Dec 42). The brigade was accompanied by one battery of 1 Cdn A.Tk Regt and one of 2 Cdn L.A.A. Regt, R.C.E. detachments, two Beach Signals detachments, and one Field Ambulance (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 19 Dec 42).

7. The next complete infantry brigade did not move to Scotland until February. 2 Cdn Inf Bde proceeded to INVERARAY on 14 Feb, and there carried out the programme described by Mr. Ogilvie in Appendix "A". 3 Fd Coy, R.C.E., and certain other units accompanied it. Early in March 2 Cdn Inf Bde returned to England and was replaced at INVERARAY by 3 Cdn Inf Bde, as described by Mr. Ogilvie. 4 Fd Coy, R.C.E., and 9 Fd Amb, R.C.A.M.C., and evidently certain other units, proceeded to INVERARAY at the same time (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 20 Mar 43).

8. The G.O.C. 1 Cdn Div (Major-General H.L.N. Salmon) visited all three of his brigades during their training at INVERARAY (War Diary, "G", H.Q. 1 Cdn Div, 18 Dec, 24 Feb, 14 Mar).

9. The combined operations training programme prevented 1 Cdn Div from taking part in the important G.H.Q. exercise known as "SPARTAN" (see subsequent report). During this exercise, 1 Cdn Div (less the troops in the North) "assumed Corps' responsibility by taking over the Corps front in an anti-raid role" (War Diary, "G", H.Q. 1 Cdn Div, 3 Mar 43).

10. In addition to the units already mentioned, three companies of the 1 Cdn Div machine-gun unit, the Saskatoon Light Infantry (MG), trained in Scotland during January (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 23 Jan 43).

TRAINING OF 3RD CANADIAN DIVISION

11. The training programme for 3 Cdn Div was somewhat abridged, and 7 Cdn Inf Bde, which it had been proposed to train in Scotland, has not undergone this training to the time of writing, although the brigade's beach "brick" trained in Scotland during December (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 12 Dec 42). On 13 Mar 43 G.H.Q. Home Forces notified C.M.H.Q. that "as a result of recent changes in priority" the training of 3 Cdn Div which had been scheduled to begin at C.T.Cs. on 25 Mar was "postponed indefinitely" (C.M.H. file 2/COMBINED OPS/1/2).

12. Nevertheless, units of 3 Cdn Div have had considerable training in combined operations as a result of this programme. During the last week of November, 1942, the battalions of 8 Cdn Inf Bde had three days L.S.I. and L.C.P. training each. This was carried out in the south, the units moving to SOUTHAMPTON, where three L.S.Is. were available, embarking on these, and carrying out night assault landings in L.C.Ps. on beaches in the vicinity of the Solent. The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, the Regiment de la Chaudiere, and the North Shore Regiment successively underwent this training (War Diary, H.Q. 8 Cdn Inf Bde, Nov 42). The Q.O.R. of C. had previously had the benefit of combined operations exercises at WARSASH, in the same area, on 5 to 7 Nov (War Diary, 1 Bn, Q.O.R. of C., Nov 42). In December this form of training was extended to the units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde, the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, and the North Nova Scotia Highlanders in succession proceeding to SOUTHAMPTON for L.S.I. training (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 12 Dec 42; War Diary, H.L.I. of C., Dec 42).

13. The units of 9 Cdn Inf Bde in succession subsequently underwent a special programme of training in Scotland, at the C.T.C., DORLIN. The H.L.I. of C. was the first to move thither, entraining on 15 Dec 42. Few naval craft were available for training at DORLIN, and the programme carried out was in the main one of Assault Training, with emphasis on hardening (War Diary, H.L.I. of C., Dec 42). The H.L.I. of C. completed their training at DORLIN on 4 Jan 43, and were immediately replaced there by the North N.S. Highrs. This unit returned thence on 27 Jan, and the S.D. & G. Highrs. immediately took its place to carry out a similar programme of hardening training (War Diary, "G", H.Q. 3 Cdn Div, Jan 43). This unit returned from Scotland on 18 Feb (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 20 Feb 43). Numerous references to this Assault Training programme will be found in C.M.H.Q. file 2/COMB OPS/1. The general assumption behind it was that "important elements of 1 Cdn Corps, specially constituted for the purpose" had been assigned "the task of landing along a portion of an enemy occupied and defended coast, with the object of advancing with all speed to capture an important post and airfield some twenty miles away" (Letter ASSAULT/5-1-5/TRG from Adv H.Q. 1 Cdn Corps, 4 Dec 42).

14. Certain other units of 3 Cdn Div also engaged in special training. The Pioneer Company of the division's machine-gun unit, the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG), went to Scotland for training, as did 300 all ranks of 8 Cdn Inf Bde (General Report from First Cdn Army, weeks ending 2 Jan and 9 Jan 43). At the same time 6 and 16 Fd Coys, R.C.E., proceeded for training to the C.T.C. at TROON, where they remained for some time (General Report from First Cdn Army, weeks ending 9 Jan and 16 Jan 43). Selected personnel of 3 Cdn Div R.C.E. had previously engaged in combined operations training at POOLE (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 19 Dec 42).

OTHER COMBINED TRAINING

15. Certain other special training should be noticed. Driver training was carried on on a large scale; late in December, for instance, drivers of all arms of 1 Cdn Div were training in Scotland, the work concentrating on driving on and off landing craft of various sorts. This training was extended to certain drivers of 2 Cdn Div (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 26 Dec 42). Artillery drivers of 3 Cdn Div had previously had four days L.C.T. training (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 30 Nov 42). During the week ending 23 Jan 43 there was further driver training for 3 Cdn Div R.C.A. at the C.T.C., ROTHESAY.

16. Certain Corps and Army units also underwent combined training during this period. 13 Cdn Army Fd Coy, R.C.E., trained in Scotland in combination with the 7 Cdn Inf Bde "B" Brick (Beach Organization) (General Report from First Cdn Army, week ending 12 Dec 42). Subsequently, 12 Cdn Army Fd Coy, R.C.E., proceeded to the C.T.C. at TOWARD (9 Jan 43) and trained there for some time (General Report from First Cdn Army, weeks ending 9 and 16 Jan 43). During the week ending 19 Dec 43, selected personnel of 1 Cdn Corps Tps R.C.A.S.C. underwent training in Scotland (General Report from First Cdn Army).

17. There was also some combined operations training by Canadian armoured forces at the C.T.C., POOLE; two squadrons of 14 Cdn Army Tk Regt (1 Cdn Army Tk Bde) trained here during the week ending 23 Jan 43 (General Report from First Cdn Army).

18. Considerable attention was also given to instruction in the planning of combined operations. Combined Operations Planning Courses were held at the C.T.C., LARGS, for the staffs of both 1 Cdn Div and 3 Cdn Div, the G.O.C. 1 Cdn Div with his senior staff officers attending from 28 Dec 42 to 3 Jan 43, and the G.O.C. 3 Cdn Div (Major-General R.F.L. Keller) with his senior staff officers going to LARGS for a similar course on 11 Dec 42 (War Diaries, "G", H.Q. 1 Cdn Div, Dec 42 and Jan 43, and "G", H.Q. 3 Cdn Div, Dec 42). Brigade Planning Courses were also held; for example, during the week ending 2 Jan 43, the commander and staff of 2 Cdn Inf Bde took such a course at one of the C.T.Cs. (General Report from First Cdn Army).

GENERAL

19. The above account is necessarily incomplete, particularly with respect to the training of sub-units. The files used are not wholly satisfactory sources, and no consolidated list of sub-units actually trained appears to be available. The general course of the programme, however, is outlined to the extent likely to be required by the Official Historian.

20. It is unnecessary to comment on the value of training of the sort that has been described from the point of view of the morale of the troops. Combined operations training is obviously extremely valuable in this respect. Its strenuous and unusual nature, and the fact that it involves a change of scene, combined with the further fact that it is invariably interpreted as holding out the hope of active employment at an early date, makes it an extremely popular activity. There is no doubt that the programme of combined operations training, while increasing the efficiency of the formations concerned with a view to their employment in any amphibious offensive operations which may be projected, has made an important contribution to the maintenance of the spirit of the troops involved.

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9 Apr 43

Historical Officer.

Combined Operations Training.

1. In accordance with instructions I reported to H.Q. 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade on 13 Feb 43 and was attached to Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry during their period of training in Combined Operations at INVERARAY which lasted until 4 Mar 43. Subsequently I was attached to the Royal 22nd Regiment, 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade from 4 March to 20 March. Being primarily concerned with the pictorial possibilities offered by this training, these observations were made with the object of giving me a better technical understanding of what occurred in subjects selected for paintings and drawings. The notes therefore are very general in character and deal with a visual rather than a strictly operational aspect of the training.

2. I reported to H.Q. 2 Cdn Inf Bde at 1130 hrs Saturday, 13 Feb 43. The brigade moved the following morning, Sunday, 14 Feb for the Combined Training Centre, INVERARAY, where they were to undergo a period of training in Combined Operations. I was attached to the P.P.C.L.I. and moved with the battalion from Battalion Headquarters at 1245 hrs for EASTBOURNE STATION where we entrained. Battalion vehicles which were necessarily restricted in number had already been loaded on to flat cars. Officers and men had been issued with a haversack ration for three meals. En route there was one stop at LEICESTER where at 1915 hrs troops were quickly and efficiently served with hot tea. On arrival at GOUROCK, 0900 hrs, the P.P.C.L.I. immediately detrained and were marched by companies on to the "Maid of Orleans" which also served as transport for the Edmonton Regiment; the Seaforths embarking on the "St. Sorell".

3. Weather conditions were cold with a driving wind and sleet. Troops were kept below decks during the trip to INVERARAY where both ships arrived at 1430 hrs. At this time it was low tide so that the troops were taken off by drifters to the pier and immediately marched to their respective camps, the P.P.C.L.I. to Dukes Camp, the Edmonton to Snira and the Seaforths to Castle Camp. These camps are pleasantly situated near the mouth of the river Aray; here about twenty yards wide. The river is noted as one of the finest salmon fishing streams in Scotland and it is evident that considerable care has been expended on it. In places the bed of the stream has been flagged and much work has been done to shore up the side to prevent undercutting. There are numerous warning signs regarding any attempts to fish it. Nearby is the Duke of Argyle's castle, a stone structure impressive in mass, but of indeterminate architectural origin. A dominating part of the landscape is DUN NA CUAICHE rising from the north bank of the river to some 750 feet and on top of which is preserved one of the old watchtowers which served as a lookout and refuge for the Campbells during the earlier days of Clan warfare.

4. Castle Camp is about half a mile from INVERARAY, a typical Scottish fishing village situated at the north end of LOCH FYNE. Lying in NEWTON BAY were three L.S.Is. H.M.S. "St. Helier", H.M.S. "Brigadier" and H.M.S. "Duke of Argyle". Off Admiral Beach were moored flotillas of small landing craft of various types while L.C.Ts. were anchored between Admiral and R.E. beaches. Moored to one side of the pier itself were numerous other types of landing craft, mainly L.C.As., L.C.Ps. and L.C.Ms.

5. Training was most concentrated and began as far as the infantry battalions were concerned with exercises from dummies on land. The early stages of training took place during the day so as to familiarize troops with landing exercises which would subsequently take place at night. Included in the training were rope climbing and cliff scaling also practice on scramble nets progressing to dummy L.C.A. and wire crossing.

Scramble Nets.

6. Four scramble nets are erected on an open space of ground. These are constructed of steel frames, some twenty to thirty feet high and approximately fifteen feet in width from which rope nets are hung and secured. Usually companies were detailed for this work during a morning or afternoon period, the men going up and over in platoons under the direction of their individual platoon commanders. Actually climbing this net seemed to present more difficulties than one slung from the side of a ship for one had little purchase for the feet on the practice nets, whereas the side of the ship helped in this respect. In battle order and carrying weapons slung it required a good deal of strength, particularly in the arms. Instructors were careful to point out that the horizontal bar in the net was for use of the feet only and should never be used as a grip for the hands; the vertical being used for the latter purpose. The reason being that should one's grip slip on the vertical rope there was always a chance for recovery. Certainly the practice on these nets gave one confidence when later it was necessary to board and disembark by this means in complete darkness from L.C.Is.

Dummy L.C.As. and Wire Crossing.

7. Wooden dummies which are replicas, in dimension and general structure, of an L.C.A. are used in the first stages of this training. These dummies, three in number, are built at the bottom of a forward slope, the upper part of the slope itself at a distance of thirty yards or so from the dummies being wired with concertina. The men are instructed in the method of loading a craft; the importance of the various individuals in sections taking their proper places and how and in what order these sections moved out on beaching. Wire parties usually consisting of three men rush from the craft immediately the door or ramp goes down and under covering fire (generally from a Bren gunner in the forward turret) make for the wire carrying three rolls of chicken or rabbit wire. One method is for two men to carry one roll while the third follows up carrying the other. The rolls are then thrown over the barbed wire and gaps cut, if necessary, by the wire cutters. Having prepared the gaps the wire party take up positions so as to give covering fire for the sections to follow. A further advance in this training is made when similar exercises are carried out from moored L.C.As. Three of these craft were moored on the shore of a small loch, LOCH DUBH. Here procedure was similar except that the men became familiar with the craft itself though these were earlier models of L.C.As.

8. Progressing from this stage men are loaded into beached craft which go offshore some distance, turn about and come in for the practice assault landings. These assaults were carried out both by platoons and companies as a preparation for similar operations at night. In the final stages loading of craft usually took place from an L.S.I. Troops were taken out to the L.S.I. by drifters, going aboard the mother ship up the scramble nets. The various platoons were all given serial numbers and remained below decks. An orders group is held with

all Navy and Army officers concerned present, also all coxswains of craft, at which time an explanatory lecture is given by the M.L.O. (Military Landing Officer) and all platoon and company commanders are introduced to their naval opposite numbers. Platoon and other commanders now return to their formations below deck and just previous to zero hour the M.L.O. gives a talk over the ship's loudspeaker with a general explanation of how serials will move, the necessity for no lights and a strict observance of silence, etc. At zero hour all lights are extinguished, serial numbers are called by the M.L.O. at which signal platoons move to their boat stations guided by a naval rating. The men then go over the side down the scramble nets into their respective craft. On occasion the landing craft themselves were winched up to deck levels by specially constructed davits made of structural steel.

9. Serials called, the platoons come up from below, cross by a small platform into the craft which are then lowered into the water. It was carefully explained to the troops that the craft would be dropped when about two or three feet above the water. This was done in order to avoid danger of capsizing in a rough sea or swell should one end of the craft be water-borne earlier than the other. The L.C.As. move off as soon as loaded and assemble in whatever formation is decided in order to approach the beach for the assault landing. At this stage and before landing the coxswain or other naval O.C. of the craft is in full command. An interesting point arose in this training due to the reorganization of the infantry platoon. The L.C.As. were designed to carry the former establishment and now of course, with an overflow, arrangement must be made to accommodate the extra men, so that a full platoon is not necessarily embarked in one craft.

Artillery.

10. The loading of artillery into L.C.Ts. presented various problems. Field artillery was loaded by driving fully limbered into the craft, when the limber and gun were man-handled by the crews and turned about. The quads (tractors) were driven out and then backed in once more, so that when limbered up, all was in readiness to move out immediately on beaching. As far as L.A.A. (Bofors) was concerned this procedure could not be adopted because of the length of the gun and carriage. This necessitated first unlimbering on the beach, man-handling the gun backward into the craft and finally backing the tractor in when the gun was limbered up once more. In all instances of man-handling guns including anti-tank it was necessary for gun crews to team up and haul in with tow ropes. At this early stage of the training loading took place in daylight from Admiral beach. The L.C.Ts. then proceeding to other beaches such as ARDNO where the artillery unloaded, went through such exercises as their battery commanders had arranged, these usually of short duration so that a return to the craft and a further practice in loading and unloading could be gone through.

11. All of this training led up to night operations. Conditions varied considerably from nights which were fairly clear to on occasion, moonlit conditions, but mostly visibility was poor with driving rain. Beach conditions varied also from rocky surfaces which meant hard work in man-handling the guns to surfaces of comparative smoothness. The backing of vehicles up the ramp and into the craft was directed usually by the troop sergeant using a series of hand signals. This required some skill on the part of the driver and at night, with no lights allowed, he had to rely on signals which were given by means of a hand torch. Much importance, as in all of these operations, was attached to the time element and it was surprising how quickly

and skillfully the crews handled their guns after so short a period of training.

R.C.A.M.C.

12. On 10 Mar 43 I went on board His Majesty's Hospital Carrier "ST. ANDREW" in order to make drawings and sketches of an exercise in which wounded were to be evacuated from SALMON BEACH and brought out to the hospital carrier by landing craft. The 9th Field Ambulance, R.C.A.M.C., 3rd Infantry Brigade were engaged in this exercise. Duties which normally would be carried out by the R.A.M.C. were taken over by R.C.A.M.C. personnel for purposes of training. The latter, for instance, provided a party of twenty to act as stretcher bearers aboard ship and also a party of nineteen O.Rs. to form a beach dressing station. Casualties were picked up by section stretcher bearers and brought to the beach dressing station where they were loaded into L.C.As. The men acted as casualties and these, including badly wounded and shocked cases, were brought alongside the "ST. ANDREW" in an L.C.A. or other type of landing craft and various methods of taking wounded aboard were used, the Neil-Robertson stretcher being one while a box-type of carrier containing the patient and stretcher was another. A less secure method was that of passing loops about the four handles of the stretcher, and, as in the two former instances, hauling away by block and tackle from a davit.

13. Casualties were received at the boat deck by stretcher bearers who carried them down a specially constructed, gently sloping, ramp which led from this deck over one of the hatchways to the lower deck. Painted signs gave directions to the various wards. The first was the reception ward. This reception ward was formerly a lounge and now, stripped, had a series of benches on the starboard side where walking wounded were attended to and labelled. Down its length were three built-up wooden box-like structures about the width of a stretcher and approximately 3½ feet high. Stretcher bearers placed their stretchers on to the boxes which were provided with steam heat by a series of pipes so that the casualty, if suffering from extreme cold or shock, would be kept reasonably warm during a diagnosis. This was done by a M.O. assisted by a Staff-Sergeant, a sister and four orderlies. The casualty having been given any necessary injections was labelled and removed by the stretcher bearers to the various casualty wards. These were excellently equipped with a cheerful atmosphere. On board also was a small operating room. The "ST. ANDREW" was previously a Channel Island steamer and her conversion into a hospital carrier appeared to be a most efficient and ingenious piece of design.

Engineers.

14. Engineers carried out their normal role of bridge building, demolitions, etc., and an interesting operation which included the construction of a "fish quay" for landing of vehicles from an L.C.T., such a structure being necessary where beach or shore conditions made it impossible to beach the craft and drive the vehicles directly ashore. This operation was carried out by No.4 Field Company, R.C.E.

15. On Sunday, 14 March, I visited R.E. beach where the engineers had assembled a three-pier pontoon raft on which they then erected a specially adapted Bailey bridge super-structure. The "long landing bay" was then loaded and the raft towed to the head of a pier upon which sheer legs had been erected, by which means the long bay was to be hauled into position on the pier. The raft was anchored off the pier and the long landing bay drawn up by block and tackle. This formed a bridge from the pontoon raft to the pier. An L.C.T. with vehicles aboard was then navigated

into position so that its ramp when lowered was supported by the Bailey bridge. The vehicle was then driven off down the ramp on to the pontoon raft and up the landing bay to the pier.

16. The culminating point in all of this training for each of the two brigades was reached in two schemes, "DALMALLY" and "EAGLE". Generally speaking these exercises were designed so that the brigade would function as a whole in combined operations under conditions of both day and night. Assault landings had to be made in order to establish bridgeheads. Certain objectives such as airfields were to be captured. Engineers were engaged in demolition and bridging operations. Field, Light A.A. and anti-tank artillery were landed from L.C.Ts. and given supporting roles. A certain amount of air co-operation was provided by bombing attacks, dropping of flares at night and the laying of smoke-screens while assault landings were taking place. An outstanding feature of all of this training was the morale of the troops. During a concentrated and continuous period of day and night training, often under difficult conditions and at times with little sleep, the good spirits and keen enthusiasm displayed was quite marked.

W.A. Ogilvie

(W.A. Ogilvie) Lieut.