

TOP SECRET

HEADQUARTERS 517TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY CT
APO 758, U. S. ARMY

Copy #27

11 August 1944

1. The following general considerations should be noted in the operation now being undertaken.

a. For most of us this is our first combat jump. Consequently some may be a little apprehensive. Remember that the advantage is with the attacker, as the enemy does not know exactly how or when he is going to be struck. Particularly in an airborne operation in which we land in his rear areas where his CP's, lines of communication and supply echelons are set-up, will our activities give him grave concern. The enemy consequently will be a lot more apprehensive than we are. That the enemy will react to our landing by movement of forces towards our area should be expected within a few hours. However by that time we expect to be pretty well set for him and deal out a lot of punishment. It must be remembered also that he will be engaged at many other points by other airborne units and the large scale attack by the amphibious landing. There can be no doubt of the success of this operation if we use our heads and keep our confidence, work quickly but smoothly and act aggressively using good tactics and security measures.

2. As it will be dark when we first land it will be difficult to see what is going on around us. Therefore, we must not start firing promiscuously at any thing that moves. You must be certain it is the enemy before you fire. After the first unit lands many of our men will be moving around the area, some already in assembly or moving to assembly positions and others recovering bundles. Don't fire first and find it is one of your own men later. Weapons, on landing, should be loaded and locked, and fired only on orders of an officer or in case of emergency. The sound of enemy weapons is known to you and should disclose the location of enemy forces if present. Enemy flares may be fired around the area to give the appearance of enemy strength and to cause us to be alarmed. Remember that more casualties can be caused by some of our own men getting trigger happy than from enemy fire. It is possible that your stick may land some distance from the DZ. Your action in this case should be considered. The general idea is to move to your Battalion assembly area and if the Battalion has already left for its objective join them there. If this is impossible join up with friendly troops preferably of this unit and assist them in accomplishing their mission. In either case do as much damage as possible on the way, for example a staff car or a truck load of Germans may be driving along the road unaware of your presence in the area. In case no officers are present with your group the senior NCO should be prepared to take over. All men will be issued instructions regarding the terrain, objectives, important towns, streams etc., and also a map in the escape kit. Remember that a few men can create a hell of a lot of trouble if they happen to be in the right place.

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3. Due to lack of transport in landing and the difficulties of supply, don't expect an easy time. However, I am confident that this outfit can take care of itself in any situation that may arise. May success reward our efforts, and good hunting to each and every one of you.

R. D. Graves

R. D. GRAVES,
Lt. Col., 517th Pzcht Inf
Commanding.

*This is the message that was read to each man
before he jumped in Southern France. 15 Aug 44.*

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