Operation Jedburgh: Creation of Operation Jedburgh and the Jedburgh Team’s Efforts during D-Day

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The German invasion of France sparked a new type of war for Europe—one focused on covert operations and guerilla warfare. The French Resistance led the way in this new style of fighting, and the United States quickly offered its assistance to the partisan groups through the efforts of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The resulting cooperation effort, named Operation Jedburgh, and the teams involved, containing numerous OSS officers, played a very important role in the efforts to free France before, during, and after D-Day.

After attacking on May 10, 1940, Germany quickly defeated France, thus initiating the rise of the French Resistance.\(^1\) A letter from Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew told the French ambassador that, while America would not acknowledge the legitimacy of the Vichy French government, the U.S. government would continue to support the French people.\(^2\) Grew declared the unshaken loyalty to the French people was due to their support of the values of “liberty, equality and fraternity….their common faith in democratic institutions and in their like devotion to the cause of human freedom.”\(^3\) Numerous French men and women during the occupation

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\(^3\) Cordell Hull, The Secretary of State to the Chargé in France (Matthews), October 25, 1940, in U.S. Department of State’s *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 580-581. Secretary of State Cordell Hull clearly states the Roosevelt administrations opinion of the Franco-German armistice in a telegram to the French Chargé where he wrote, “Any agreement entered into between France and Germany which partook of the character above-mentioned would most definitely wreck the traditional friendship between the French and American peoples.” However, the Grew letter clarified that the U.S. government still extended support to the Frenchmen still waging war with Germany. Both letters mentioned here were dedicated to the situation of the French government’s hold on its colonies abroad, but the policy held for both the colonies and the nation itself. Grew makes it clear that he considers the French people allies of the United States, although he feels the armistice with Germany is negatively affecting the French government itself. See Joseph C. Grew, Joseph C. Grew to Gaston Henry-Haye, April 13, 1942, http://www.ibiblio.org (Accessed April 28, 2010).
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quickly established the “Free French” or “Maquis” a resistance group in France.\(^4\) In November 1941, in an attempt to support the efforts of the Maquis, President Roosevelt declared that the United States would extend the Lend-Lease aid to territory the Maquis liberated from German control.\(^5\) Once the United States declared war with Germany on December 11, 1941, the U.S. government began to take a more active role in the assisting the Free French.\(^6\)

When World War II began, Britain dominated the intelligence and covert operations community; so, unsurprisingly, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was the first man to suggest using the occupied peoples in Europe as members of a guerilla war against Germany.\(^7\) He hoped this strategy would occupy the enemy’s soldiers by forcing them to “engage in counter-guerrilla operations far from the front lines.”\(^8\) The Allied guerrilla forces would also “sabotage railways and ambush enemy columns, delaying reinforcements from reaching the front and improving the prospect for Allied victory and a reduction in Allied casualties.”\(^9\) Colonel William Donovan, head of the OSS and desiring to assist the British, began sending weapons to the Maquis.\(^10\)

By the time the United States became involved with the Free French, Dwight Eisenhower was already planning Operation Overlord, the invasion of France by allied forces at Normandy


\(^5\) Peace and War, 109; Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 271.


\(^9\) Irwin, The Secret History, xix.

\(^10\) Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272.
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on June 6, 1944.\textsuperscript{11} Eisenhower was primarily concerned with ensuring that Operation Overlord was successful, and he understood that, for everything to go well, the military needed “very badly the support of the Resistance Groups in France.”\textsuperscript{12} In response to this need for cooperation between the Allied forces and the Resistance groups, the OSS offered covert aid to the French Resistance forces, a move, which, with the assistance of Britain’s Special Operations Executive (SOE), culminated in the Jedburgh operations.\textsuperscript{13} The SOE first proposed the concept of the Jedburghs in 1942, and the OSS swiftly agreed to assist with developing teams of operatives.\textsuperscript{14}

The primary goal of the Jedburghs was to aid partisan teams in organizing their forces and executing sabotage missions.\textsuperscript{15} The original plan was to develop “a mobile tactical reserve, a ‘flying squad’ of small teams of military personnel, to be inserted deep inside enemy-occupied territory to assist with the organization of armed resistance in specific areas, or to perform predetermined (military) tasks.”\textsuperscript{16} The plan initially included only two men per team, a radio officer, and an officer who spoke French, but changed in December 1942 to include a French officer to act as a guide and liaison with local groups.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, the result was that the Jedburghs were a group of three-man teams instead of two.\textsuperscript{18}

On October 16, 1942, the OSS began working with the SOE to establish the Jedburgh

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{11}] For further information surrounding Eisenhower’s work with both American and British intelligence communities in the preparations dealing directly with D-Day, see Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion.”
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] Nelson MacPherson, \textit{American Intelligence in War-Time London: The Story of the OSS} (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 82.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Irwin, \textit{The Secret History}, xviii.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272; Ford, \textit{Steel From the Sky}, 1.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] Ford, \textit{Steel From the Sky}, 1.
\item[\textsuperscript{16}] Ibid., 7. Initially, the plan was named Operation Sledgehammer and dealt solely with SOE officers, but this plan was dropped.
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] MacPherson, \textit{American Intelligence in War-Time London}, 83.
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teams. By the time the war was over, the Jedburghs had completed missions in Algiers, Holland, Belgium, and France. When they parachuted into France, where ninety-seven teams would execute ninety-three missions during Operation Overlord, the Jedburghs included eighty-nine French officers, seventeen French radio operators, forty-seven British officers, thirty-eight British radio operators, forty American officers, and thirty-seven American radio operators.

The Jedburgh teams included soldiers from a variety of nations, mainly France, Britain, and the United States. Just one-tenth of the teams actually had one member from each participating nation, but every team had one Frenchman. The Maquis were initially young men, often teenagers, who moved to the hills in an attempt to escape German labor drafts. In the Jedburgh teams, the Frenchmen were organized under General Charles de Gaulle’s Free French organization. The American Jedburghs were organized under William Donovan’s OSS, and more specifically the Special Operations branch of the agency. Once they entered France, Donovan ordered the teams to report directly to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). Jedburgh members from Britain were organized under Special Operations Executive (SOE). Other groups also assisted, including the British and French Special Air Service (SAS) and the American Operational Groups. The men were military officers and

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19 Ford, Steel From the Sky, 7.
21 Ibid., 26; Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272.
22 Irwin, The Secret History, xviii
23 Ibid.
26 Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 262; Foot, SOE in France, xviii.
27 Irwin, The Secret History, xviii; Clark, Intelligence and National Security, 11.
28 Irwin, The Secret History, xviii.
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noncommissioned officers who parachuted behind German lines.\(^{29}\) There were approximately 300 men in total and the success of the Jedburghs relied on excellent radio communication and cooperation between both the OSS and the SOE and between the Jedburghs and the French Maquis.\(^ {30}\)

Churchill and Eisenhower decided the Jedburghs would play a significant role in both the preparations for and the execution of Operation Overlord.\(^ {31}\) During Operation Overlord, the Jedburghs’ mission was to “organize, arm, and train groups of French resistance guerrillas” and then “to sever German communications and to delay the movement of enemy reinforcements to the Normandy beachhead.”\(^ {32}\) William Colby, future director of the CIA and member of Team Bruce declared that the Jedburghs’ goal was to plan “an uprising of French resistance groups so as to wreck the maximum havoc in the German rear and undermine German defense against the advancing Allied armies.”\(^ {33}\) They would do so by “stiffening the French resistance and by relaying operational directions to the partisans from Eisenhower’s headquarters.”\(^ {34}\)

The teams parachuted into France to establish connections with the local resistance and limit German capabilities to respond to the attack at Normandy.\(^ {35}\) Before every operational group entered a location, the Jedburghs would enter the area one to two months earlier to establish a base of operations.\(^ {36}\) They would then “orchestrate the sabotage and guerrilla warfare activities of … resistance groups to ensure that they complemented operation of the advancing

\(^{29}\) Ibid., xviii; For a list of members of the Jedburgh Teams who received medals or awards for actions taken during the war see “Jedburgh: Jedburgh Teams (BCRA, OSS, SOE),” Special Forces: Role of Honor, http://www.specialforcesroh.com/browse.php?mode=viewawards&sort=n&catid=42 (Accessed April 20, 2010).


\(^{31}\) Irwin, The Secret History, xix.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., xviii, 2; Clark, Intelligence and National Security, 11.


\(^{34}\) Irwin, The Secret History, 2.

\(^{35}\) Clark, Intelligence and National Security, 11; Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272; MacPherson, American Intelligence in War-Time London, 83.

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Allied ground forces. “Al Johnson, a member of two different OSS operational groups remembers, “[T]he advantage is that we know what to expect and where we are going to stay while in the field.” As the war continued, the Jedburghs were soon “dropping up to one hundred hybrid special forces teams into occupied France—hundreds of miles ahead of conventional ground forces.”

Operation Jedburgh had three phases. The first phase consisted of the Jedburgh teams organizing French Resistance forces in a “general sabotage programme against German military installations.” They aided the Maquis to “telephone lines, blow bridges, derail trains, sabotage factories, hit and run assaults on German columns moving towards Normandy.” The invasion started the second phase, wherefore Jedburgh teams coordinated the Maquis forces with “allied bombing, attacks against German reserves, and general guerilla warfare.” In the third phase, the military changed the original goal for the Jedburghs to a concentration on attacks against “German communications, particularly rail lines, in order to impede the immediate German reaction to the landings.”

The first team parachuted into France June 5, and six other teams followed by June 30. Four significant teams involving OSS agents and demonstrating the different types of

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41 Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272.
44 Ibid.
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Jedburgh missions are the Teams Frederick, George, Hamish, and Ian.\textsuperscript{45} Frederick, George, and Hamish entered France early in June, while Ian parachuted in the later part of June. Frederick “conducted attacks against enemy communications; Hamish interfered with troop movements, and arranged reception of supplies; Ian likewise interfered with troop movements, but was effectively uncontrolled due to wireless difficulties; George was largely thwarted by enemy action, and compromised by an enemy agent among its Resistance colleagues.”\textsuperscript{46} From July to August, the Jedburghs coordinated Maquis guerilla warfare, then from July to September they were joined by more teams containing SO men who further assisted in the effort to work with the Maquis.\textsuperscript{47}

On June 9, 1944, Team Frederick, including OSS Sergeant Robert Kehoe, British Major Adrian Wise, and French Lieutenant Paul Bloch-Auroch, parachuted into Forêt de Duault, a Forest in the north central area of France.\textsuperscript{48} Their orders were to “connect with the French Resistance and prevent German troops or supplies from getting to Normandy by blowing up bridges and railroad lines and setting up barricades and ambushed on roadways.”\textsuperscript{49} The Germans learned of their location and began threatening anyone who helped their cause, but the assistance of the local resistance group enabled them to continue hiding, and they managed to organize supply drops for the resistance and trained more than 4,000 Maquis in weapon use and demolition work.\textsuperscript{50} The Allies were able to attack the German convoys during the day, but the

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.; Beavan, \textit{Operation Jedburgh}, 205.
\textsuperscript{46} MacPherson, \textit{American Intelligence in War-Time London}, 83; Beavan, \textit{Operation Jedburgh}, 205.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Chambers II, \textit{OSS Training}, 325; Kehoe, “1944: An Allied Team with the French Resistance, 1997.” During their mission, the Jedburghs led the Resistance in battles, killing a total of 2,500 enemy soldiers, cutting the phone lines
Maquis and Jedburghs were responsible for attacking them during the night when the air force could not. Team Frederick eventually organized the Maquis along highways, roads, and bridges in order to protect them from German troops. In one of their greatest victories, during an attack on their headquarters, the Germans lost 500 men to 27 from the Maquis. Major General and Jedburgh member John Singlaub said Team Frederick was “one of the bravest, most effective Jed outfits in France.”

Team George including French Captain Philippe Ragueneau, French Second Lieutenant Christian Gay, American officer Paul Cyr and two Frenchmen, parachuted into France the same day as Team Frederick, but were not as successful. They experienced problems from the beginning when the unprepared Maquis attacked the Germans, who were warned by informants within the resistance. The Germans counterattacked forcing the Jedburghs and Maquis to retreat. One victory for Team George was that they gathered information on the German coastal defenses and Cyr relayed this information to the Allied headquarters who promptly “bombed the U-boat facilities and significantly reduced the effectiveness of German submarine operation in the Atlantic.” Team George also served as a guide and protection for General George S. Patton’s right flank and the communication and supply lines when the Third Army invaded France.

300 times, cutting the railway lines 200 times thus causing 40 trains to wreck, ambushed 50 German convoys, captured 200 vehicles, and destroyed 50,000 liters of fuel. See Ford, Steel From the Sky, 83, 88.
53 Ford, Steel From the Sky, 86.
56 Chambers II, OSS Training, 328; Ford, Steel From the Sky, 66.
57 Chambers II, OSS Training, 328. The Maquis were able to kill around three hundred Germans, but when they began retreating, they lost both ground and most of their ammunition. See Ford, Steel From the Sky, 67.
58 Chambers II, OSS Training, 328. There were other victories, although none were as large as the other Jedburgh teams experienced. Team George focused on smaller operations. Due to the problem of German informants within the Resistance, the Jedburghs had to work with only the Maquis they could trust, thus limiting their capabilities. See Ford, Steel From the Sky, 70.
59 Chamber II, OSS Training, 328.
Team Hamish received orders to help Team Hugh complete its missions and entered France June 6, 1944 near Belabre, France. The team members were American Lieutenant Robert M. Anstett; French Lieutenant Rene Schmitt, and American Sergeant Lee J. Watters. Team Hamish moved to the southeastern part of Indre and Cher on June 8, while Team Hugh continued to work in the western half of the area. Although Watters had been injured during the drop into France, he worked from headquarters while Schmitt and Anstett began organizing volunteers into three companies. One of their first significant attacks on German forces was on August 20, when the Germans attempted to evacuate Chateauroux and the team moved the Maquis westward to block the roads leading out of the area. From August 21 to 24, they killed more than 300 enemy soldiers while protecting the road leading to La Chatre from German forces and pushed the Germans backwards. Because Teams Hugh and Hamish were still overwhelmed by the necessary work, a new Jedburgh Team, Ivor, was sent to the east in an attempt to ease the burden.

Team Ian, the third team to be parachuted into the Poitou-Charente area, included American Major John Gildee, American Operator Sergeant Lucien Bourgoin, and French Lieutenant Alexander Desfarges. They entered France June 20, and was the last of the initial drops. Team Ian moved to the west with the goal of sabotaging the Niort-Poitiers railway and organizing the Resistance groups in a location where they had been more or less inactive.

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59 Team Hugh was responsible for arranging a plan to arm and train the Maquis, a huge responsibility since there were more than 3,000 Maquis in the area. Ford, Steel From the Sky, 33, 34.
60 Ibid., 34.
61 Ibid., 36
62 Ibid., 37.
63 Ibid., 38.
64 Ibid., 37.
65 Ibid., 47; Colin Beavan, Operation Jedburgh: D-Day and America’s First Shadow War (New York: Viking, 2006), 154.
66 Ford, Steel From the Sky, 34; Beavan, Operation Jedburgh, 154.
67 Ford, Steel From the Sky, 34; Beavan, Operation Jedburgh, 154.
initially focused on gathering men and supplies, but by July 14, they had cleared the area sufficiently enough of German troops that they could travel openly.\textsuperscript{68} Early in August, Team Ian and several Marqui officers traveling with them ran into a German battalion at Pleuville, and Burgoin and one of the Maquis were killed in the resulting firefight.\textsuperscript{69} Afterwards, Team Ian launched numerous attacks against German forces.\textsuperscript{70} They successfully drove the German forces out of the area and The two remaining members of the team, Gildee and Desfarges received orders to report to their individual offices (OSS for Gildee, and the French military for Desfarges), and the Team ended its operations on September 15.\textsuperscript{71}

Overall, the Jedburgh teams were very successful, and can be considered a great accomplishment for the OSS and its Special Operations branch.\textsuperscript{72} Despite the fact that the Germans sent several thousand soldiers to fight the Jedburghs and the Resistance, the Jedburghs proved helpful by gathering “tactical intelligence.”\textsuperscript{73} One of their greatest victories was against the 2\textsuperscript{nd} SS Panzer Division, which delayed the arrival of the reinforcements of tanks that Rommel had expected.\textsuperscript{74} In fact, the tanks did not arrive until seventeen days after the landing at Normandy.\textsuperscript{75} According to SHAEF, the “over-all action of the Resistance” hindered the arrival of German reinforcements at Normandy for an average of two days.\textsuperscript{76} The Resistance groups began attacking them from behind and provided information on the German movements, while keeping the Germans from destroying the bridges as they retreated from the Allied forces at

\textsuperscript{68} Ford, \textit{Steel From the Sky}, 34, 48.
\textsuperscript{70} Ford, \textit{Steel From the Sky}, 34; Beavan, \textit{Operation Jedburgh}, 154.
\textsuperscript{71} Ford, \textit{Steel From the Sky}, 34, 49-50; Beavan, \textit{Operation Jedburgh}, 154.
\textsuperscript{73} Bruce and Lankford, \textit{OSS Against the Reich}, 206; Chambers II, \textit{OSS Training}, 325.
\textsuperscript{74} Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 272; Chambers II, \textit{OSS Training}, 325
\textsuperscript{76} Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272.
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Normandy. In a letter to Colin Gubbins, Deputy Director of SOE, Eisenhower remarked, “I consider that the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and the continual and increasing strain placed on the German war economy and internal security services throughout occupied Europe by the organized forces of resistance, played a very considerable part in our final and complete victory.” He went on to commend the intelligence groups for the “excellent work carried out in training, documenting, briefing and dispatching agents.”

The British were impressed with how much the OSS accomplished after D-Day, and the SOE and OSS developed “valuable links for future Anglo-American cooperation.” Within the Jedburghs, no single nation dominated control over the operation, and they developed methods of working with one another on an even keel. This cooperation would play a vital role in the covert warfare that would take place throughout the rest of the war, and, although President Truman closed the OSS offices after the war was over, the connections developed here between Britain and the United States would play an important role in future CIA operations. The French Resistance also played a significant role in the smooth completion of Operation Overlord.

The cooperation effort between the French Maquis, Britain’s SOE, and the United States’ OSS resulted in Operation Jedburgh, which played a very important role in the efforts to free France.

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77 Ibid.
78 Dwight D. Eisenhower, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Colin Gubbins, May 31, 1945; Foot, *SOE in France*, 387; Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272. WWII historian Stephen Ambrose theorized that the inability to penetrate Germany itself was evidence to the important of the French, Belgian, and Dutch resistance movements. He writes, “One reason that the offensive came to an abrupt halt in September, 1944, was that as soon as the Allies reached the German frontier, such local sources of information dried up. Similarly, once they had retreated within their own borders, the Germans possessed secure telephone lines and could dispense with the radio.” Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 272.
80 Bruce and Lankford, *OSS Against the Reich*, 206.
81 Ford, *Steel From the Sky*, 1.
82 Bruce and Lankford, *OSS Against the Reich*, 206;
83 Ambrose, “Eisenhower, the Intelligence Community, and the D-Day Invasion,” 271.
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during Operation Overlord. The Jedburgh Teams contributed to the cooperation efforts between Allied forces and the Maquis, prepared the resistance forces for fighting and fought alongside them in several missions, and complicated German efforts “to establish set defenses against the conventional military forces in what amounted to a tactical, rather than strategic role.”\textsuperscript{84} Once the military operations on D-Day were complete, the goal was for the Jedburghs to “move with the advancing armies, and attempt to inform commanders of resistance group capabilities.”\textsuperscript{85} The Jedburghs were successful, overall, and even teams like George who experienced problems managed to accomplish a great deal. During the efforts to organize and complete the Jedburgh operations, the OSS and SOE set the parameters for future cooperation efforts, and eventually the Jedburghs were the inspiration for the U.S. Army Special Forces (the Green Berets), Britain’s SAS, and France’s Premier Régiment Parachutiste d’Infanterie de Marine.\textsuperscript{86} The Jedburgh Teams were beneficial both during Operation Overlord and after, and, because they worked with the Maquis to hold off German reinforcements and sabotage German communications and transport capabilities, the Allied forces accomplished more than they might have without the Jedburgh Teams and the French Resistance. Bibliography

Primary Resources


\textsuperscript{84} MacPherson, \textit{American Intelligence in War-Time London}, 83
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{86} Irwin, \textit{The Secret History}, xviii.
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Secondary Resources


