

4. The 36th and 540th had landed in North Africa as shore regiments in November 1942; the 40th had arrived in the theater with the 45th Infantry Division and lacked previous shore party experience.

5. The average strength of these Shore Parties (exclusive of the Navy Beach Battalions) was approximately 3900 officers and men. Although the composition varied in detail, the basic organization provided for a Shore Regiment, a Signal Company, an Ordnance Company (MM) (Q), an Ordnance Company (Amm), a Medical Battalion, a Quartermaster Battalion (DUKWs), and a Military Police Company. Augmentation was made for this operation by small detachments of service personnel, such as dump operating details of the various services, railway personnel, gasoline supply troops, and truck companies. The Shore Regiment consisted of slightly over 2,000 men, about 20% of whom were available for unloading boats on the beach.

6. The 7th Army plans governing the employment of Shore Parties provided:

"a. Prior to operations.

The Commanding Officer 1st Engineer Special Brigade is responsible for:

(1) The organization, training, and equipping of all beach groups incident to the operation until such time as these beach groups have been assigned to and joined the Sub-Task Forces.

(2) For the preparation of detailed plans for the operation of all beach groups (such plans to be coordinated with the indicated staff sections Force 343).

(3) Preparation of adequate plans to take over the operation of all supply activities at a date to be designated by the Commanding General, Force 343.

b. During operations.

(1) Initially, beach groups will be under direct command of Sub-Task Force Commanders, and will remain under their command until such time as all supply activities are taken over by the Commanding General, Force 343.

(2) When supply activities are taken over by the Commanding General, Force 343, the Commander 1st Engineer Special Brigade will assume command of the beach groups and all non-divisional and non-corps service units thereto attached and such other service units as are necessary and may be attached by the Commanding General, Force 343; and will be responsible for the execution of all supply plans within the theater of operations and emanating from Force 343, including the operation of ports, if any."

7. Thus, the provisions for Shore Parties in the Assault Forces included one Engineer Shore Regiment and two Combat Engineer Regiments, with a Combat Engineer Regiment of two Battalions in the Floating Reserve—the latter to be landed through a prepared beach. Each of these Shore Parties was, during the assault, responsible to the Commander of the Infantry Division to which attached. Later, these Regiments passed to the Commander of the 1st Engineer Special Brigade who was charged with the execution of all supply plans of the 7th Army from the time the Army assumed control of the situation ashore.

Execution of Plan:

8. That the 1st Engineer Brigade performed a magnificent achievement in the execution of Army Supply plans, after the establishment of the 7th Army ashore, is attested to by the supply statistics in the 7th Army's report on the Sicilian campaign. It is the assault phase of the operation, however, which most vitally affects the combat-loaded transports and it was in this phase that the grief occurred.

9. Smooth, efficient operation of the assault beaches was not accomplished until after the departure of the assault transports from the Gulf of Gela. Beginning on D day, from H hour onwards until D plus 3, beach conditions were chaotic. In the JOSS area the beach situation was rectified more promptly. Boats were arriving at all beaches in such numbers that unloading by the Shore Party was at no beach able to keep pace with the arrival of loaded boats. Many vehicles, upon being unloaded from craft, came to an end on enemy mine fields which had not been located and marked by the Shore Party prior to the arrival of motor equipment. The destruction of these vehicles, and the lack of suitable exits and proper markers to show safe routes for traffic through enemy mine fields, soon created widespread confusion as trucks became blocked on the beaches. DUKWs transiting the beach from seaward also came to grief on the beach minefields, due to

beach limits and safe landing points not being adequately marked so as to be seen from seaward by approaching craft. As boats continued to arrive on the beaches and awaited unloading by the Shore Party, the boats were soon swamped or stranded. Eventually the beaches became crowded with miscellaneous personnel standing around idle. In the absence of properly marked staging areas, troops were observed loitering about on the sand dunes awaiting instructions as to movement. Many boats retracted from the regular beaches and moved to the flanks where a clear beach space could be found, and there the boat crews unloaded their own boats. This led to scattering of Army equipment and stores, in some cases placing material on the beaches of adjacent divisions, thus rendering more difficult the task of supplying the advancing troops. Other boats, unable to obtain shore party personnel to unload them at assigned beaches, returned to their transports still loaded. This resulted in many ship commands taking men from gun crews and engineers force and placing them in the boats as working parties in order to unload boats on the beaches. Finally, the unloading situation became so critical that transports organized working parties from each ship and sent these parties ashore to unload boats and craft. Such parties varied in size from 40 to 100 officers and men. On some beaches these naval working parties were augmented by gangs of Prisoners of War which engaged voluntarily in this labor. In this manner were the combat-loaders and landing craft finally unloaded during the assault phase.

10. Dumps did not appear to be organized according to a predetermined plan. On some beaches there was a critical shortage of transportation, in spite of the thousands of vehicles being landed. Beach personnel migrated to the dumps in loaded vehicles thus depleting the party working the beaches. DUKWs were observed to move far inland well beyond beach dumps where they were diverted or came to grief through accident. Control of transportation on the beaches was totally lacking. There was a notable absence of Military Police on the beaches; these units had obviously moved inland with the troops.

11. Supplies were piled high on the beaches without any effort to accomplish segregation. Gasoline, ammunition, water, food, and assorted equipment were strewn about in a hopeless mass. No fire fighting equipment was in evidence anywhere. As enemy planes made frequent strafing attacks along these beaches, fires were of frequent occurrence.

12. The beach defenses were weak and ineffective. Barrage balloons were insufficient to cover the congested areas and anti-aircraft batteries were not only scarce and of small caliber, but lacked proper fire control.

13. At night the Shore Party personnel were not to be found; they either disappeared in fox holes and dumps, or withdrew to the hinterland. The numerous soldiers idling on beaches during the day made no effort to unload their own equipment out of boats and craft. The discipline on the beaches was of a low order.

14. As the locations of CENT beaches were shifted, the new beaches became as congested as the old. The Shore Parties became scattered and were uncertain of the location of the new beaches. Available man power was not utilized and idlers became numerous. Proper beach markers were not erected. Boats stranded after waiting hours on end to be unloaded. Labor and transportation facilities for handling cargo were lacking. Finally all unloading of the transports in the CENT area ceased until working parties sent from the ships could reach the shore and take over the job of unloading boats and craft.

15. In the DIME area the chaotic condition on D day was terminated on D plus one by the evacuation of those beaches due to the advance of the German tanks. Enemy shelling of these beaches resulted in the Engineer Regiment being called inland as support troops and the withdrawal seaward by boats of other beach personnel. The DIME beaches were at a standstill on D plus one, though some ships diverted boats to the beaches near the Acate River in order to continue unloading. As the enemy threat was overcome, the DIME situation gradually cleared up as naval working parties took over unloading of boats and craft. But the status of supplies landed was not known to the Shore Party, for on D plus 2 the following message was received from DIME Green Beach by the Transport Division Commander in the DIME area: "120955 Col. Massey QMC requests all ships operating this beach send non-perishable food supplies X Army hungry X signed Marler." This, in spite of the fact that practically all ships were completely unloaded and that hundreds of tons of food supplies were available either on Green Beach or those immediately adjacent.

16. The organization and operation of the beaches during the assault phase was one of the greatest difficulties in this operation, as it had been in the Moroccan Operation, last November. The recurring delay in getting boats unloaded after the first few hours of the assault was present