

Report on Operation "GRANDFATHER I"
25th - 28th August 1944
TOP SECRET

(Ref Maps	1/25,000 Sheets	124 IV NE/BIS
	1/100,000 Sheets	109, 110, 111, 124, 125

1. INTRODUCTORY.

The operation can be considered the sequel to Operation Decompose II which was carried out on 2 August 1944, during which the garrisons of KORCULA Town and OREBIC sustained casualties to personnel, guns and equipment.

The operation was a combined operation involving British Naval, RAF and Army units from the Garrison of VIS and was planned and executed from there.

KORCULA is the most strongly defended German occupied Island on the DALMATIAN Coast. The defences together with those of OREBIC command the vital coastal sea route through the narrow channel separating the PELJESAC Peninsula and KORCULA Island.

The Garrison of KORCULA island number 1600-1700 (BAF Daily Summary No. 53). The troops are disposed in three areas of KORCULA Town, POSTRANA and PUPNAT, the strongest being the PUPNAT Garrison, which numbers 800 to 900 with three Field Guns (believed to be 75mm). These guns were known to have shelled the LOVISTE Area on 16 August.

The OREBIC Garrison numbers 600 to 800 with about ten guns of various calibres (for detailed dispositions seen VIS Intelligence Summary No. 111 dated 8 August 1944). It is believed that some of there were put out of action as a result of Operation Decompose II.

The enemy was known to patrol strongly at intervals of 3 or 4 days from OREBIC to LOVISTE.

A patrol of about 40 visited LOVISTE on 10 August when Lieutenant Evans and a Naval Officer were carrying out a Recce there and another also about 40 strong was ambushed by the Partisan 1st Dalmatian Brigade from VIS on 15 August when 10 Germans were killed and 22 were taken prisoner. Major Winterbottom, commander of 476 Bty, and a mixed

recce party of gunners, infantry, sappers and naval personnel were present on this occasion.

The PUPNAT Garrison hold hill top positions strongly defended by wire and mines centred around the village of that name. The village itself, the gun positions, HQ area dumps etc are on low ground and cannot be observed except from the German positions.

2. Object

To cause casualties and damage to Garrison of PUPNAT with Artillery fire.

3. Plan

To land a Bty of 25pdrs and a troop of 75mm's at the Western end of PELJESAC Peninsula with ground, air and sea protection and to shell the PUPNAT positions from 06:00hrs to 12:00hrs on D-Day.

(For details of Plan and Forces taking part see Operation Order)

The operation order was deviated from in the following respects only:

- a) para 5
 - i) OP Parties left on D-4 and not D-3
 - ii) Due to the availability of two LCI's it was not necessary to tranship the covering troops in LCA's and send them on the SMRSKA Cove on HVAR Island. They remained in their LCI's which had the necessary speed to get them the JEZDIJA Cove on time.
- b) No mention is made of USSOG which took part with one group and were allotted a diversionary role as stated later.
- c) para 18. Due to the threat of guns at SUCURAJ on HVAR Island it was decided to clear all craft from JEZDIJA to the COVES in 4488 and 4587 where they would be out of observation from HVAR, if not out of range, and to re-embark the covering force from LOVISTE with the remainder. In fact the guns at HVAR never opened fire and it may be assumed they were still the 105mm guns as originally supposed.

4. Log

HQ Log at Appendix II

5. Preparation

a) Recces

The gun position area and Western end of PELJESAC Peninsula had been recced in connection with this project by:

Lieutenant EVANS RA and Lieutenant TALBOT RN - 9 to 11 August

Major WINTERBOTTOM RA (476 Bty)

Lieutenant IDLE RA (476 Bty)

Lieutenant WHYTE (11 Troop RSR)

Captain BARTON (2 HLI)

Flying Officer HARVEY (RAF Regt)

And also a number of their officers in connection with other projects and was well known.

The target area was also well known. Recces has been carried out by three OP officers who observed during the operation.

Lieutenant ("Z" OP) 11 Troop, E Bty, RSR over a lengthy period of June and July.

Captain McLeod Carey ("E" OP) 476 Bty, from 18 to 23 July.

Captain Wilson ("P" OP) 476 Bty, from 13 to 17 July.

Captain Wilson in particular showed great initiative. By dressing himself up in women's clothes and joining two women gathering brushwood he penetrated to within 200 yds of PUPNAT Village. It happened to be the day on which the guns were shelling the Partisans after their ambush at LOVISTE (16 August) and he was able to see these firing and also to locate Dumps, Mortar positions, OPs, wireless sets and bring back a great deal of useful information.

To contact the Partisans and to make arrangements for Guides and preparations for the occupation and evacuation of positions, two officers, Major Turner with Partisan HQ on KORCULA Island and Lieutenant Allen with British Mission and 5 Sector HQ at LAGOSTA were sent. These left on 21 August and 14 August respectively and remained till the OPs had been safely withdrawn.

They were through by wireless on listening watch on the OP frequency throughout the operation, and after it, and were on call in case of need.

b) Training

All aspects of the operation had been rehearsed. Two full dress Shooting and Intercommunication exercises were held and loading trials were carried out.

6. Selection of D-Day

There were the usual difficulties in fixing D-Day. The first date selected was 20 August but Air Support could not be made available. Later the LCI's were taken away. The latest date it was considered possible to defer D-Day due to the moon which was at firth quarter on 27 August, was 26 August but the LCI's could not be made available till the 25 August and it would take two nights getting there. The practicability of using RCL's and LCA's was only considered but Commander Giles considered it would be too tight a fit and decided against it.

Finally, D-Day was deferred to 27th and a full programme for the last five days was prepared, and agents at LAGOSTA and KORCULA briefed accordingly.

Then on 22nd August, due to the cancellation of Operation KITCHENMAID, LCI's were produced. The date had to remain as the 27 August.

There was also a last-minute scare as to the suitability of the beach selected for the 75mm troop. A chance was taken and all turned out well.

7. Orders

Final verbal orders were given out at 11:00hrs on 23 August (written operational order already been issues) and OP parties sailed the same evening.

8. Loading conference

On the afternoon of 23 August, a loading conference was held at Navy House, KOMIZA, attended by representatives of all major units taking part. At the conference, tactical loading and the peculiar requirements of each service and branch received due consideration. It is not claimed that there is anything original in the conference but operations have been carried out without such a conference and serious difficulties are liable to occur in consequence.

9. Outward journey

Loading was carried out on 25th August. All personnel and equipment with the exception of the Advance Party loaded at RUKAVAC.

The Advance Party loaded at KOMIZA on a motor launch and later joined the convoy at RUKAVAC, before sailing, at dusk it moved off and went straight to the destination at JEZDIJA Cove.

Loading was completed without a hitch and according to schedule.

The craft of the main convoy arrived at the staging area at SCEDRO in two halves. Fast moving craft first and RCL's and LCA's later, immediately on arrival the defence of the lying up area was organised by Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. Blagden 64 HAA Regt, RA.

A most enjoyable time was spent on SCEDRO.

At 18:00hrs transhipping was carried out, gun detachments transferred to their RCL's and three convoys formed: guns destined for the beaches in the LOVISTE area, Covering Force with Force HQ for JEZDIJA, and LCA's conveying the USSOG to SMRSKA Cove (4296) on HVAR Island. The convoys moved off at dusk at which time the MGB's (Motor Gun-boats) and MTB's (Motor Torpedo-boats) took up their positions.

A fresh wind had sprung up from the NE which slowed up the craft a good deal and gave the RCL's and LCA's a rather wet passage.

The moon which set at 23:00hrs caused some misgivings as usual in the early stages. The Covering Force Convoy hugged the coast of HVAR and waited to cross to PELJESAC till the moon set. In the later stages the darkness combined with spray and the high ramp of the RCL made it difficult for them to keep in formation.

The direction of the wind made the beaching of the LCI's very tricky business but it did not impede the guns.

The Covering Party beached at 01:30hrs and the Gun Groups between 01:30 and 02:30hrs.

10. Lying-up area

The lying up area was organised for AA and ground defence as a "firm

base" and as a transmitting R/T station to VIS.

Lieutenant Mayn 64 HAA Regt, RA was in command and had three German FLAK '38 guns manned by personnel of 64 HAA Regt RA.

Lieutenant Mayn did good work in passing sitreps through another set to his own HQ at VIS during the operation and in organising his command.

High praise is also due to the Gun Detachments for the admirable way in which they dismantled their guns and got them into action during darkness on to the surrounding hill tops, through scrub and over country that would have been difficult in daylight.

11. Advance party

The Advance Party was under command of Major Winterbottom.

12. Gun positions

The considerations governing the choice of Gun positions were:-

- i) Good landing place
- ii) Accessibility to beach or landing place
- iii) Cover from observation
- iv) Dispersion of troops
- v) That LOVISTE was known to have been registered

The positions chosen were as stated in para 7 of the Operation Order.

The most accessible positions were those selected. The gun position recce reported that there was another possible troop position about 300 yrds inland from "F" troop but that it would entail a good deal of work in the preparation of route through walls and over terraces and could have required transport to move guns and particularly ammunition; more craft would also have been required.

The position selected for "E" troop was in view from Pt 560. 455867 where it was believed that an OP was occupied.

Having in view the experience on DECOMPOSE II when a numerically superior force of Artillery was silenced in the early stages of the action, it was decided that the risk of being observed from Pt 560 was

outweighed by the advantage offered by the remaining four considerations.

The choice may have been an unfortunate one but it should be remembered that the enemy opened fire in the vicinity of "F" troop position and if both troops had been in that area they might have suffered equally heavy casualties.

13. Observation of fire

a) Air

The only OP that could see into the enemy gun position was the flying OP. A makeshift arrangement in a captured Italian light aeroplane piloted by Captain Ross, Commander 11 Troop RSR and fitted with a No. 22 Set radio and trailing aerial. The aircraft was kindly lent by the YNAL Air Force.

The experiment was a complete success and much credit is due to the enterprise and initiative shown by Captain Ross.

On each occasion when Captain Ross took to the air he silenced the enemy guns. Unfortunately due to changing atmospheric conditions the first record of Tgt P.8 (enemy guns) did not hold good later and there was a period when the enemy guns brought accurate fire to bear on "E" troop causing some casualties.

One enemy gun is believed to have been knocked out during one of the earlier concentrations about 08:40hrs.

The remaining guns were effectively silenced by one counter artillery fire during the evacuation of "E" troop and later during the withdrawal of the last section of "Z" troop (RSR) at 13:30hrs one gun only opened fire.

It can be claimed that our Arty destroyed two of the three enemy guns.

b) Ground

There were three Ground OPs located as follows-

- i) "E" Captain Mcleod Carey 476 Bty Pt 337. 498844.
- ii) "F" Captain Wilson 476 Bty Pt 337. 496871.
- iii) "Z" Lieutenant Phillips 11 Tp RSR Pt 337. 506873.

These OPs had good observation of enemy position on the hills but could not see into the PUPNAT hollow or observe the guns.

Little movement was seen in the Target Area. The three OP officers were disappointed that their services were not used to a greater extent. It is possible that the OPs were not used to a greater advantage, but ranging, particularly on the line O.T., takes time, and in fact it was never intended that deliberate ranging should be carried out on each target. The programme which it was hoped to get through did not admit of ranging and OPs should not have been under any misapprehension in this respect. Para 14 of the Operation Order states clearly the Arty policy.

OP officers also criticise the concentrations as ragged and that a good deal of the ammunition was wasted. From their positions at 90° or more to the line of fire overs at the Hill Top positions must have appeared well over. Yet from Force HQ which had a good frontal view of nearly all positions the Target Area appeared to be well covered.

Economy of ammunition was not a consideration of first importance. The Force Commander wanted to get all Target Areas covered early and this was achieved.

To the "dyed in the wool" gunner the operation may have appeared unconventional. It was unconventional, but not unsuccessful.

14) Bearing under fire

At intervals from 07:00hrs to 10:30hrs when they were ordered to take cover "E" troop came under accurate enemy shelling. All reports agreed that the conduct of the detachments was in keeping with the highest traditions on the Regt. A shell which landed within 3 yds of No. 4 wounded three of the detachment, one of them (L/Bdr Cope) fatally. The gun was maintained in action.

No. 1 detachment commanded by Sgt Jarvis was described as "a picture of parade ground gun drill". Sgt Jarvis himself though severely wounded in the head and shoulder continued to command his gun in action and was with difficulty persuaded to leave it when the order was given to take cover.

Other gun numbers continued in action though wounded. The Reverend J. C. Hill at one period served as an ammunition No. 1 on the guns.

Lieutenant Idle, the GPO, though wounded, continued to perform his duties. Sgt Upton, the acting Troop BSM, also set a high example.

15) Covering force

Composition:-

Commander: Lieutenant Colonel Makeig Jones 2 HLI
"B" Coy. 2 HLI
2825 Fd Sqn RAF Regt

Due to difficulties in beaching the LCI troops were not fully assembled and ready to move off from the beach until about 03:00hrs.

Most of the men had a wet landing.

The covering force had an uneventful task but performed their duties entirely adequately.

16) AA Protection

At SCEDRO by three FLAK '38, supplemented by .50cal Brownings from RSR whilst the latter were still there.

At gun positions by eight .50cal Brownings. The allotment of these was three at each of the 25pdr Troops and two guns at the 75mm Troop. At each position one gun remained on board an RCL.

Two guns only had the light mountings, the remaining three guns which were mounted on land, again had difficulty in manhandling their heavy mountings.

The guns at "E" Troop position experienced some fairly heavy shelling and suffered casualties. Four men were wounded, of whom one subsequently died of his wounds. Two of the remaining three had light wounds only.

Lieutenant Howell and three ORs of "C" Bty RSR did good work in securing one of the RCL's which was cut adrift during the shelling.

17) Royal Navy

The Navy played so large a part in the operation and in the preliminary planning that the little that can be said in this report seems an inadequate tribute.

Contact with the Naval Commander, Lieutenant-Commander Giles RN, was maintained throughout the operation by a No.22 Set and a Gunner officer working on the Operational link to the Naval commander's motor launch. The primary object of this link was contact with the RAF Fighter Controller but the means of direct communication between Naval and Military Commanders was most valuable.

There were a number of sets on the Motor Launch including Naval Link with Lieutenant Webb RNR, (Naval Liaison Officer with Force HQ) the RAF V.H.F. set and other Naval sets. When the ship's set was sending on W/T the No.22 set could not receive but could transmit. This may have been due to the nearness of the Naval frequency (2780k/cs). When the Diesel motors of the Motor Launch were operating, VIS and LAGOSTA became "strength three" otherwise there was no interference or difficulty and all stations could be heard "strength five", with the exception of "E" and "F" OPs which, due to screening and only 16ft aeriels, could only be heard "strength three or four".

One of the LCI's was placed at the disposal of the SMO as a dressing station and the remaining LCA's were made available when required to evacuate wounded to it.

18) RAF

The RAF provided cover at call and fighter cover for the flying OP when in the air. They also carried out some of the most spectacular strafing of enemy gun positions with six RP Hurricanes. The pilots came right down and there can be no doubt as to the accuracy of their bombing.

It was found that the softening effect of Arty on AA defences combined with the accuracy and destructive effect of RP Hurricanes can produce completely successful results against enemy gun positions. The moral

effect of RP aircraft is tremendous.

In the early stages, due to a change in frequency since departure, the Fighter Controller was not in communication. The mistake was discovered and corrected.

Up to date photographic cover, fully annotated should be in position of the ALO before sailing.

19) Propaganda

The Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) sent over their loudspeaker launch to RACISTE (E4689) and gave a broadcast during a pre-arranged pause in the firing programme.

It is probable that the distance and screening effect of the hills made the broadcast inaudible to the bulk of the garrison (our OPs heard nothing) but confirmation has been received from deserters that some heard.

During the shooting two Italians and seven Germans gave themselves up to the Partisans.

20) Diversions

A group of the USSOG under Major Urban was landed at SMRSKA Cove on HVAR and moved into positions from which they could observe the enemy OP at OBLINA (V5398) and cover the road leading West.

Their job was to create a diversion in case the guns began shooting at our force on PELJESAC. They ascertained from civilians that the guns were 105mm's and could not reach LOVISTE from their current position and considered that their role could best be carried out by covering the road leading west rather than disclosing their positions and drawing fire.

The party was in communication with the Intermediate station at SCEDRO by wireless.

21) Administration

The occupants of LCIs are a mixed collection of units and there was a period, in this case about 30 hours during which they had to be

administered on their craft. Difficulties of feeding a number of parties from a small galley arise and there are other minor disciplinary and administrative problems.

It is considered that before embarkation if possible, an OC Ship and staff should be appointed to organise centralised cooking and the general administrative wellbeing of all personnel.

For gun detachments cooking can usually be centralised. The 24 hour ration pack should be held as an emergency reserve only.

Disembarkation could be carried out more quickly in a more orderly manner if a MLO, fully briefed by signal as regards to timings and details of personnel arriving, were to contact the OC Shop on arrival and arrange disembarkation.

22) Medical

Regimental Aid Post (RAP) established for covering force in area of "Pass". An Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) was established on an LCI under Major Irvine, DADMS VIS with Captain Kieft, RMO 111 Field Regt RA. Evacuation to the CLI was by LCA.

Major Irvine was most enthusiastic in his praise of the assistance given him by the Navy.

23) Intercommunications

Intercommunication was chiefly by wireless.

Apart from ships' wireless there were the following nets:

- Main Operational Net
- RSR Net
- Covering Force Net
- 64 HAA Net
- USSOG Net
- RAF Fighter Controller Net

There were also small local Nets between OP Officers and their sets and between Troop positions operated by No. 38 Set and between infantry subunits by Walkie Talkie sets.

The suggestion has been made that the Operational Net was overloaded. For normal Arty purposes it might be necessary to have separate Nets for fire orders and command but for the operation fire orders were reduced to a minimum. Except for two slight hitches - one where control closed down and arranged by another set at "F" Troop position to assume control, and the other when the set at 11 Troop RSR, in the later stages was badly tuned and could receive but could not be heard, the net worked perfectly, and the single net made it possible for the commander to be fully in the picture throughout.

Where dependence is on wireless, as it had to be almost entirely on this operation, due to the distances and the time factor, a very high standard of performance in operating their sets and in signal procedure is demanded of the signal personnel.

This high standard has been achieved. The work of the wireless personnel on this and other operations has been quite excellent.

Another suggestion has been that control at Force HQ could be better exercised through signal personnel operating the sets. From experience gained it cannot be too emphatically stated that this is not the case. For high pressure work of this sort Officer to Officer conversations are essential.

The line communications in the gun areas were less successful.

24) Security

Complete surprise in spite of extensive recces and preparations in the area was achieved. The standard of security amongst local Partisans was again proved to be high.

25) Partisan assistance

As was the case of DECOMPOSE II, the Partisan organisation on KORKULA Island was most helpful and efficient. A motor boat was placed at the disposal of Major Turner to get the OP Parties in and out, guides, rowing boats, meals etc were provided and every possible assistance was given.

26) Results

Message from British Mission VIS dated 30 August 1944:-

“Two different reports stat damage to PUPNAT considerable. Three howitzers destroyed and a number of bunkers. Two lorries with Hun dead and wounded sent to KORCULA”.

Message from Captain Cook dated 6 September 1944:-

“Can now confirm positively that three 75mm guns belonging to 3 Troop I Abteilung have been destroyed. There were many casualties on the Troop position at PUPNAT. One civilian killed”.

OPs report:-

“Number of direct hits on bunkers and sandbagged shelters. Direct hit by RP Hurricanes during first sortee on mortar. Direct hit by RP Hurricanes on what appeared to be a dump.

The second sortee of RP Hurricanes at 14:00hrs claimed two direct hits on guns.

A large number of fires and dense columns of smoke continued to rise from the target area throughout the day and during the following day. These were largely caused by bush fires but other fires must have contributed.

The following deserters left during the shelling and joined the Partisans:

- 7 Germans
- 1 Slovene
- 2 Italians”

27) Allied casualties

111 Field Regt

Officers	1	Wounded
Other Ranks	1	Killed
	1	Seriously wounded
	6	Slightly wounded and admitted to hospital

"C" Bty RSR

Other Ranks

- 1 Died of wounds
- 1 Severely wounded
- 1 Slightly wounded and admitted to hospital