

GREATEST AIRBORNE OPERATIONS

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It was H-hour. Assembled at several airfields in Britain, nearly fifteen-hundred aircraft, troop carriers and tug-planes, and several hundred gliders, made up the impressive armada of the first Allied airborne Army. No less important than the airborne invasion on D-Day was the operation now under way. The plan was to get behind the water defences in Holland, roll up the German right flank, open the gateway to West Phalia and so put the Allied Armies well on the road to Berlin. The men of this hand-picked force, paratroops and glider-borne, knew the tremendous hazards lying before them. Their success on D-Day gave them complete confidence. Within a few seconds of each other the huge gliders became airborne. The most modern of all military tactics would soon justify itself again.

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Leaving the English coast behind the sky-fleet roared its way over the North Sea. Here was the answer to the Siegfried Line and every other form of static defence behind which the enemy imagined himself safe from attack. This too was the answer to the big scale inundations, the traditional way of defending Holland from invasion, the intensive bombing of enemy airfields shortly before this airborne operation was one reason why few German fighters attacked the sky-fleet of the Allies. Ninety-eight per cent of the airborne Army was safely landed on Dutch soil. The Nazis were taken completely by surprise. ... Very skilfully the pilots put the gliders down as close together as possible.

(37) Meanwhile in the liberated Dutch towns people watched more waves of the airborne army.

(4 out) A troop carrier returning empty to Britain had engine trouble, crash landed, hit a wrecked German tank and caught fire. The crew managed to escape.

Now came the paratroops, jumping in rapid succession in order to be close together when they came to earth. That part of the operation also was a complete success.

(53 in tow) The spearhead of the Allied armies is across the Rhine. The skill and pluck of the airborne forces has considerably shortened the war.