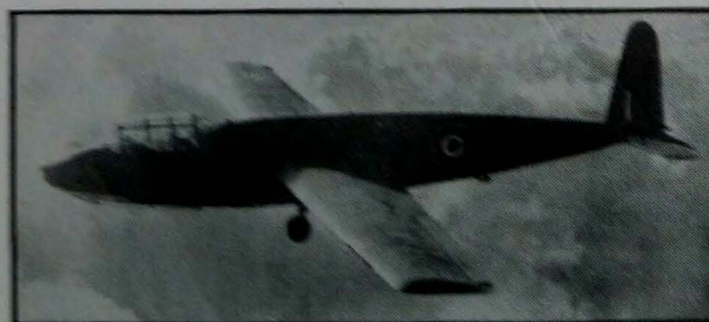


THE SECOND WORLD WAR
1939–1945
ARMY

AIRBORNE FORCES

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL T.B.H. OTWAY DSO

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THE SECOND WORLD WAR
1939—1945
ARMY

AIRBORNE FORCES

COMPILED BY
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL T. B. H. OTWAY, D.S.O.,
The Royal Ulster Rifles.

CONFIDENTIAL



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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR AIRBORNE AND TROOP CARRIER UNITS—SUPREME HEADQUARTERS, ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

OPERATION
NUMBER

MEMORANDUM
12

13th March, 1944
(amended 8th June, 1944,
and 4th November, 1944).

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR AIRBORNE AND TROOP CARRIER UNITS

- SECTION I LIAISON.
- SECTION II STAFF PROCEDURE.
- SECTION III OPERATING PROCEDURE.
- SECTION IV JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES OF AIRBORNE AND TROOP CARRIER COMMANDERS.
- SECTION V RESPONSIBILITIES OF TROOP CARRIER UNITS.
- SECTION VI RESPONSIBILITIES OF AIRBORNE UNITS.
- ANNEXURE I SCHEDULE OF PLANNING FOR AIRBORNE OPERATIONS.
- ANNEXURE II NAVIGATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF PATHFINDER UNITS.

1. Object

The object of this memorandum is to provide a common basis upon which the training and operations of allied airborne and troop carrier units can be conducted, and to define the responsibilities of the First Allied Airborne Army and the Airborne and Troop Carrier commanders.

SECTION I

LIAISON

2. General

Upon receipt of directives or orders to participate in training or combat missions, the commanding officers of the airborne and troop carrier units concerned will immediately exchange experienced and competent liaison officers to act as advisors and co-ordinators on all matters of common interest. Such exchange of liaison officers will prevail through all echelons as soon as assignments are issued down through the commands.

3. Duties

Duties of the liaison officer will be :—

- (1) To represent his unit commander at the Headquarters to which he is assigned.
- (2) To act as advisor to the commanding officer to whom he is assigned on matters pertaining to his own command.

- (3) To co-ordinate all matters involving dual responsibility such as—
- (a) Joint staff meetings.
 - (b) Joint briefings.
 - (c) Availability of equipment.
 - (d) Provision and implementation of plans, marshalling, and parking and loading diagrams.
 - (e) Examination of all parallel orders to insure complete agreement of plans and arrangements.
 - (f) Procurement of equipment and facilities belonging to his own command which are required by the command to which he is assigned.
 - (g) In the case of lower echelons, to act as airfield co-ordinator in conjunction with his opposite number.
 - (h) Preparation of joint reports.

SECTION II

STAFF PROCEDURE

4. Planning

(a) The sequence of planning and detail of matters requiring decision are set out in the SCHEDULE OF PLANNING attached at Annexure I.

This Schedule will be adhered to throughout all stages of planning.

(b) At the earliest possible date after receipt of directives or orders to participate in joint training or combat missions, the commanding officers involved will meet in a joint planning conference, accompanied by such staff officers, unit commanders and liaison officers as are necessary, and will arrive at complete agreement on all matter pertaining to the mission and its accomplishment.

5. Air Movement Table

The issuance of the completed Air Movement Table with the associated assignments of transporting and transported units to airfields must be accomplished at this stage in order that detailed planning and arrangements of lower echelons may be completed at the earliest possible date.

6. Planning and Conference Centre

A combined planning and conference centre will be established with the necessary communications to units concerned.

7. Forms

(a) Common forms for air movement tables, loading tables, and load manifests will be employed. Additional forms for internal and domestic procedures may be used at the discretion of the Formation Unit commanders concerned.

(b) Standard Forms to be employed are listed below :—

- (1) Form A .. Air Movement Table.
- (2) Form B .. (Parachutes)—Load Manifest for Parachute Units.
- (3) Form B .. (Glider)—Load Manifest for Glider Units.

(c) An inspection form listing the points to be checked will be posted in each airplane.

SECTION III

OPERATING PROCEDURE

8. Airfield Organization

(a) An airfield command post, plainly marked, will be established at each airfield for the use of the commanders involved. It will normally be in close proximity to the flying control building. Both liaison officers and two air force despatch riders will be located at this command post.

(b) The command post will be connected by telephone with the troop billeting areas, the loading areas, the traffic control officer, and the airfield Private Branch Exchange.

(c) The command post will be provided from air force sources with a radio equipped vehicle, tuned on flying control channels, for the use of the troop carrier commander or his liaison officer.

9. Loading of Aircraft

(a) The troop carrier unit commander will provide the airborne unit commander, through the liaison officer, with a parking diagram of all aircraft, including gliders, which will show by number the location of aircraft and the sequence of take-off.

(b) All aircraft, including gliders, will be numbered on both sides of the fuselage.

(c) Guides will be provided from airborne units and will be posted at a convenient place, on or near each airfield, under the control of the airborne liaison officer, to direct each truck-load of airborne troops to its respective aircraft. Each truck will be numbered to correspond with the aircraft for which it is intended.

(d) A reserve of planes and gliders will be maintained at each airfield. Priority allotment will be made by the airborne liaison officer. The time of take-off of allotted reserve aircraft is dependent on the situation at the moment and is the responsibility of the troop carrier unit commander.

10. Tug Glider Marshalling

(a) Airfields from which gliders will be launched will be predesignated and will be equipped with additional working and marshalling areas.

(b) Marshalling and take-off procedures will be standardized for all airfields in order to provide for complete interchangeability of equipment and crews.

11. Despatching Arrangements

(a) Each airfield will adopt the standard dispatching system outlined in the following paragraphs :—

(b) *Para-dropping operations*

- (1) The Control Officer will be positioned to the port side and forward of the aircraft so as to be plainly visible to the pilot. The Control Officer will give executive signals to the pilot to taxi and take-off. Light or flag signals will be given by day and light signals by night (white—taxi, green—take-off, red—stop).

- (2) An Assistant Control Officer will be stationed along the runway at a position estimated to be that at which the aircraft will become airborne. The Assistant Control Officer will signal to the Control Officer by white light as each aircraft becomes airborne.

(c) Glider operations

- (1) The Control Officer and Assistant Control Officer will be stationed as for para-dropping operations and will use the same signals.
- (2) The Assistant Control Officer will have telephone communication with the Control Officer and the Control Officer with the airfield command post.
- (3) A towmaster will be stationed at the position of glider "hook-up." He will signal to the Control Officer by pre-arranged flag signal or white light as each glider is prepared for take off. As soon as the runway is clear the Control Officer will give the white signal to taxi forward. The towmaster will give a green signal to the Control Officer when the rope slack has been taken up. When the Control Officer has received this green signal from the towmaster and the signal from the Assistant Control Officer that the preceding combination has become airborne, he will give the green signal to the pilot to take-off. Thereafter the Control Officer stands clear and moves to the next combination, takes up position, and repeats the process.

(d) All Control Officers will be operationally qualified officers. They will be furnished with the necessary enlisted or other rank assistants.

12. Pathfinding and Navigation

Navigation and pathfinding activities will be in accordance with Annexure II to this memorandum.

13. Formation

(a) Standard formations are prescribed in order to expedite training and to simplify procedures. However, it is recognized that special situations may demand a variation from the standard. Such variations will be mutually agreed to by airborne and troop carrier commanders concerned and approved by the next higher headquarters.

(b) Parachute dropping formation

- (1) BRITISH aircraft, by day, will fly in a column of 3 ship Vs. BRITISH aircraft, by night, will fly by single ships on concentrated accurate timing.

- (2) AMERICAN aircraft will fly 3 ship Vs. in V, day and night.

(c) Jump altitudes will be not less than 400 feet by day and 500 feet by night above the highest terrain in the drop zone. During the drop, the C-47 aircraft will fly in the "tail-up" position.

(d) Glider tug formation

- (1) BRITISH combinations, by day, will fly in 3 "streams" aircraft line astern. BRITISH combinations, by night, will fly in single units on concentrated accurate timing.

- (2) AMERICAN combinations will fly in a column of two to four units echeloned to the right or left, both day and night.

14. Troop Procedure aboard aircraft, including Signals

(a) *C.47 type troop carrier*

- (1) Twenty (20) minutes from the D.Z. (dropping zone), pilot will alert the jump-master/(U.S.)/stick-commander (BR), who will make an initial check of men and equipment.
- (2) Four (4) minutes from the D.Z., pilot will turn on RED light.
- (3) When over the D.Z. with the aircraft in the proper attitude the pilot will turn on the GREEN light as the "go" signal. The flashing on of the GREEN light is a command to "go" at that instant.
- (4) The jump will be made on the green light unless some condition in the aircraft precludes a safe exit.
- (5) Prior to take-off, the jump-master (U.S.)/stick-commander (BR) will instruct the crewchief (U.S.)/bomb-aimer or navigator (BR) in the correct procedure for the release of the parapacks. When the red light is flashed on, the crewchief (U.S.)/bomb-aimer or navigator (BR) will take his position forward of the door, wearing his interphone helmet, so as to provide alternative means of communication in the event of failure of the green light.

(b) *BRITISH bomber type troop carrier.*—For troops jumping from BRITISH bomber type aircraft there will be a 20 minute warning as in 14 (a) (1) above. A final warning will be given when there are five minutes to go. The red light will be turned on fifteen (15) seconds before reaching the D.Z. Troops will jump upon the green light being turned on.

15. Procedure for Signalling to Glider

(a) Ten (10) minutes warning of cast-off will be given to the glider pilot by the tug pilot.

(b) Command to cast off will be given by the tug pilot when at appropriate position on the approach leg.

(c) Warning and order to cast off will be given over the intercom system and confirmed by Aldis lamp. In the absence of intercom facilities, complete reliance will be placed in the Aldis lamp.

(d) If, in the opinion of the tug pilot, the glider pilot has not released when he should have done so, the tug pilot will release the glider so that it will land in the landing area.

SECTION IV

JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES OF AIRBORNE AND TROOP CARRIER COMMANDERS

16. General

Unit commanders will be jointly responsible for reaching complete agreement and understanding on all points contained in the Planning Schedule (Annexure I) and will issue the necessary orders in such detail as to enable commanders of lower units to proceed to training and arrangements with the fullest understanding of the problems involved.

17. Requirements

Commanding officers of units on battalion and group level will require that :—

- (a) Pilots and troop commanders understand and prepare the appropriate parts of all forms.
- (b) Each pilot signs his copy of Form B and has it available upon the arrival of the airborne troops. Each troop commander will have his copy of the form completed upon arrival at the aircraft and will compare with the pilot for correctness of assignment.
- (c) Pilot and jump-master (U.S.)/stick-commander (BR) carry out the prescribed inspection of aircraft and equipment and complete Form B by signing in the proper place certifying that the inspection has been made.
- (d) Upon completion of the Form B, two copies are left with the Airborne Liaison Officer, one for air records, and one for ground records. Additional copies will be furnished as required by higher headquarters in each situation. One copy will be retained by the troop commander in order that he may make a check of his personnel after landing on the D.Z. or L.Z.

SECTION V

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TROOP CARRIER COMMANDER

18. Troop Carrier Commanders

A troop carrier commander will be responsible for the execution of all items contained in the check list of the planning Schedule (Annexure I attached), in so far as they apply to his level. He will reach a complete agreement with his opposite airborne commander on all matters.

19. Group and Squadron Commanders

Commanding officers of groups and squadrons will be responsible for :—

- (a) Taping of doorway and projections.
- (b) Proper functioning of lights, accessories, bundle or bomb racks, radio, Rebecca/Eureka intercom, visual signals, etc.
- (c) Providing all airforce accessories and special equipment required by an airborne unit for a particular operation, e.g., Rebecca/Eureka equipment.
- (d) Providing emergency equipment including air/sea rescue equipment.
- (e) Conducting air/sea rescue drills and ditching procedure.
- (f) Completion of all forms applicable to their units.

20. Prior to Emplaning

(a) The first pilot will accompany the jumpmaster (U.S.)/stick-commander (BR) in the inspection of the aircraft as outlined on the aircraft inspection card posted in the aircraft. He will also be present during the loading of the containers.

(b) The crew chief (U.S.)/bomb-aimer or navigator (BR) will check the correct functioning of the container release mechanism and will be present when the containers are loaded by the parachute troops, to ensure correct loading. He will receive detailed instructions from the jumpmaster (U.S.)/stick-commander (BR) regarding the time of release of the containers.

(c) The pilot will make final mechanical check of the aircraft thirty (30) minutes prior to time of emplaning.

(d) The pilot will immediately advise his commanding officer and the airborne liaison officer if his aircraft will not be able to take off on schedule, and will assist in the transfer of the load to the spare aircraft assigned.

21. During the Drop

(a) The pilot will maintain the prescribed altitude, attitude and speed prescribed for each type of aircraft.

(b) The pilot in C-47 aircraft/bomb-aimer in BRITISH bomber type aircraft will give the warning and jump signals.

(c) The crew chief (U.S.)/bomb-aimer or navigator (BR) will comply with instructions concerning the release of containers and will determine that containers have been released. He will notify the pilot when all men have jumped and when the containers have been dropped. The pilot will then release the automatic salvo switch.

(d) The crew chief (U.S.)/bomb-aimer or navigator (BR) assisted by the radio operator or other designated crew member will pull in static lines and will turn them and any equipment left in the aircraft over to the parachute unit upon landing.

22. Gliders

The loading, inspection and handling of gliders will be accomplished as outlined for the airplane in so far as it applies.

SECTION VI

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AIRBORNE COMMANDER

23. Airborne Commanders

The airborne commander will be responsible for the execution of all items contained in the check list of the Planning Schedule (Annexure I attached) in so far as they apply to his level. He will reach complete agreement with his opposite troop carrier commander on all matters.

24. Parachute Battalion Commanders

Commanding officers of parachute battalions will be responsible for :—

- (a) Packing of equipment containers, and loading to prevent incorrect distribution of weight and improper balance of the aircraft.
- (b) Loading of the aircraft and container racks in the presence of the pilot and crew chief (U.S.) bomb-aimer or navigator (BR).
- (c) Completion of airborne portion of Form B—(Parachute).
- (d) Procuring and fitting of parachutes for both troops and containers.
- (e) Briefing of parachute troops.
- (f) Movement of troops to take-off airfields.

25. Glider Unit Commanders

Commanding officers of Glider units will be responsible for :—

- (a) Preparation of loads for gliders in accordance with approved published practices.
- (b) Loading of gliders in the presence of the glider crew.
- (c) Completion of the Form B—(Glider).
- (d) Briefing of glider troops.
- (e) Movement of troops to take-off airfields.

By command of General Eisenhower.

S.H.A.E.F. Op Memo No. 12
dated 13th March 1944
(issued 4th November 1944)

SCHEDULE OF PLANNING FOR AIRBORNE OPERATION

A.1

INITIAL PLANNING CONFERENCE

by F.A.A.A. with Airborne and Air Commanders involved.

- (a) General plan of whole operation
- (b) Mission of the airborne units to include general destination date and approximate hour of landing.
- (c) Command and composition of airborne units.
- (d) Command of and composition and equipment of Air Force units to provide lift.
- (e) Operational control.
- (f) Outline plan for supply and resupply.
- (g) Air support plan for convoy and for ground operations.
- (h) Airfields available for operation and route limitations.
- (i) Plan for co-ordination with other forces.
- (j) Cover plan.
- (k) Security plan.
- (l) Planning and responsibility for rehearsal.
- (m) Intelligence and sources of intelligence including photographs, maps, models and priorities for obtaining them.
- (n) Signals and communications arrangements.
- (o) Special equipment and administration arrangements including air/sea rescue equipment.
- (p) Navigational aids.
- (q) Arrangements for altering or cancelling operation.

ISSUANCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF A PLANNING STUDY BY F.A.A.A.

DIRECTIVE FROM S.H.A.E.F.

CONFERENCE F.A.A.A. WITH APPROPRIATE ARMY GROUP ON OUTLINE PLAN

B.1

INITIAL STUDIES — AIRBORNE COMMANDER

- (a) Mission and plan of action of Unit upon landing.
- (b) Strength and composition of Unit.
- (c) Equipment and weapons to be taken within weight limitations.
- (d) Composition and equipment of all subordinate Units and their commitment priority.
- (e) Lift requirements of subordinate Units.
- (f) Training and rehearsal requirements.
- (g) Supply and resupply requirements.
- (h) Amphibious lift requirements.
- (j) Intelligence requirements, reconnaissance.
- (k) Movements and bivouac requirements.

B.2

INITIAL STUDIES — TROOP CARRIER COMMANDER

- (a) Availability and status of aircraft, equipment and crews.
- (b) Condition and equipment of available airfields.
- (c) Intelligence information and further intelligence requirements, reconnaissance.
- (d) Meteorological astronomical information.
- (e) Restrictions imposed by plans for co-ordinating with other Services.
- (f) Tentative flight plans.
- (g) Air support plan and requirements.
- (h) Arrangements at departure airfields to include traffic control and service facilities.
- (j) Provision of pathfinder aircraft to include system for marking landing and dropping grounds.

C.1

CONFERENCE BETWEEN THE AIRBORNE AND TROOP CARRIER COMMANDER

- (a) Number and types of available aircraft.
- (b) Load capacity of each type of aircraft.
- (c) Definite selection of L.Zs and D.Zs.
- (d) Pathfinder methods and requirements.
- (e) Size and shape of aerial formations.
- (f) Order of arrival at D.Zs and L.Zs.
- (g) Air Movement Tables.
- (h) Allotment of aircraft and airfields to each Airborne Unit.
- (j) Communications arrangements in departure areas.
- (k) Supply and resupply plans.
- (l) Plans for movements to and billeting at airfields.
- (m) Plans for loading to include parking diagrams, timing, and motor transport traffic control.
- (n) Disposition of glider pilots, parachutes and containers after landing in combat zone.
- (o) Training and rehearsals.
- (p) Briefing arrangements.
- (q) Reconnaissance arrangements.
- (r) Signals arrangements.
- (s) Security arrangements.

D.1

PLANS AND ORDERS OF AIRBORNE COMMANDER

- (a) Training programme.
- (b) Rehearsal plans.
- (c) Initiation of steps necessary to obtain special equipment required.
- (d) Movement to departure bases and occupation of base bivouacs.
- (e) Loading plans.
- (f) Air Movement Table.
- (g) Field orders for operation to be conducted immediately upon landing.
- (h) Supply and resupply plan.
- (j) Final briefing, issue counter sign, exact destination made known to all ranks.

D.2

PLANS AND ORDERS OF TROOP CARRIER COMMANDER

- (a) Training programme.
- (b) Rehearsal programme.
- (c) Procurement of rehearsal facilities.
- (d) Procurement of additional service facilities.
- (e) Loading plans.
- (f) Movement Table.
- (g) Intelligence.
- (h) Flight plan.
- (j) Preliminary briefing of key personnel.
- (k) Traffic control, air and ground.
- (l) Plan for servicing and replacement.
- (m) Field Orders.
- (n) Security arrangements.
- (o) Final briefing.
- (p) Forced landing and air/sea rescue procedure.
- (q) Escape procedure.