



Joint Power Projection: OPERATION TORCH

U.S. Army

Troops in assault boat preparing to land in North Africa.

By JOHN GORDON IV

Operation Torch was the first major Allied land-sea-air offensive in the European theater during World War II. Although it occurred more than fifty years ago, the operation offers valuable insights on forcible entry and deploying forces to distant areas of operation. Indeed, in many ways Torch is a classic example of joint power projection.

In the future, the Armed Forces may have to rapidly deploy great distances by air and sea to conduct forcible entries in austere environments. Initial entry forces may be heavily outnumbered and operate far from secure bases. That type of situation is much closer to Torch than it is to the military planning of the Cold War. Consider these aspects of Torch:

▼ The forces sent to North Africa made long distance deployments; the Western Task Force

which assaulted Morocco deployed directly from Norfolk, Virginia, to the objective.

▼ Forcible entry was required to establish a lodgement.

▼ Torch was a joint operation requiring close cooperation between the Army and the Navy in an era when interaction between the two services was uncommon.

▼ Torch required close cooperation between British and American and land, sea, and air forces which constituted the first major combined Anglo-American offensive of World War II.

▼ The Navy initially controlled virtually all air assets, but provisions were made to rapidly transition the preponderance of air operations to land-based Army air power.

▼ Like most forcible entry situations, Torch was a risky operation (opposing Vichy French forces had powerful land, sea, and air capabilities, and the Allies came ashore far from supporting friendly bases).

The principle lesson of Torch is how a joint operation was planned and conducted to master the challenges of a complex long distance projection of power. This article focuses on the Army-Navy team that assaulted French Morocco. In geographical terms, Operation Torch stretched from southern Morocco to the center of Algeria. However the Algerian force was a combined effort and raises considerations that go beyond the scope of this article.

Torch occurred in November 1942 and was the first Anglo-American land, sea, and air offensive of World War II. Conceived as a means of opening a land front against Axis forces in Europe, Torch had profound strategic and political implications. Politics were especially important and influenced the campaign plan. The Allies wanted to storm ashore in Morocco and Algeria, hopefully without Vichy French opposition, and rapidly advance to the rear of Rommel's Panzer army, thus ending nearly three years of fighting in North Africa.¹ Under ideal circumstances the Allies hoped that the French would greet the Allies with open arms. But if the French resisted, U.S. and British forces had

to be prepared to defeat them—thereby risking alienation from the local population as well as the military establishment of an ally.

Strategically, Torch would likely cause the redeployment of Axis units from a hard-pressed Soviet army, meet Roosevelt's demand that U.S. ground forces enter the war in Europe by the end of 1942, and place major Anglo-American forces on fascist Italy's doorstep.²

The Concept

Torch was conceived in the summer of 1942. The operation was a compromise solution to diverging American and British views of the war. General George C. Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, had pushed for a cross-Channel attack. The British, on the other hand, reasoned that Allied resources to take on the Germans in France were lacking and

that it was more feasible to conduct an offensive in North Africa.³

In late July 1942 an Anglo-American decision was reached to land in Morocco and Algeria, rapidly advance into Tunisia, and to take the German Army Group, Africa, from the rear. From that point on detailed preparations began. On July 25 the code name Torch was officially adopted.⁴

The objective of the operation was to gain control of North Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea in coordination with Allied units in Egypt. The critical initial phase required simultaneously seizing ports from southern Morocco to the middle of Algeria. Close coordination among both American and British land, sea, and air forces would be necessary.

Will Vichy Fight?

As Allied preparation for Torch began, planners had to consider possible French resistance. After France fell in June 1940, her colonies had opted to either join the Allies under de Gaulle and Free France or remain loyal to the pro-Axis regime at Vichy. Unfortunately, military governments in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia were all openly pro-Vichy.

The 1940 Axis armistice allowed Vichy to maintain a force of roughly 55,000 in Morocco which included 160 light tanks and 80 armored cars, plus anti-aircraft and field artillery. Many of the troops were French, while others were drawn from the colonies. French units were scattered about the country with the greatest concentrations near the capital of Rabat and the larger ports.⁵ Complementing these ground units were French naval and air forces. Roughly 160 aircraft were available in Morocco, including Dewoitine 520 fighters, considered superior to Grumman Wildcats on U.S. carriers.⁶ The great port of Casablanca sheltered one light cruiser, three large destroyers, seven other destroyers, and a number of submarines. Also, the incomplete battleship *Jean Bart* lay in the harbor and, though immobile, it had an operational turret with four 15-inch guns. Coastal artillery covered all the major ports. Casablanca was so well defended that a direct attempt to seize this key harbor was judged impossible.⁷

The French were capable of serious resistance. Officially, French leaders in Morocco

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were pledged to support Vichy and defend Morocco against any attacker. The French navy in particular could be expected to resist any British attack. Memories of the devastating British attack in 1940 on French ships at Mers-el-Kebir still lingered.⁸ But covertly, many French military and civilian leaders in North Africa were conspiring against the Axis. These brave Frenchmen realized that the only chance of liberating their country was through an Allied victory. Cautiously, the British and Americans brought selected French leaders into their plan in the hope that at the critical moment in the invasion the pro-Allied leaders would seize control of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, thereby holding resistance to a minimum.⁹

In July 1940 the British, fearing that Hitler would force France to turn over its fleet to the Axis, demanded that French ships in Algeria and Senegal be scuttled or sail out of port to join the Royal Navy. When French commanders refused the British attacked and inflicted heavy losses on the French navy.

Another strategic consideration was possible action by Spain. Neutral since the start of the war, the Franco regime had earlier considered openly joining with the Axis. But the Allies were of two minds: Britain thought that Spain would remain quiescent while the United States was unsure. America feared that Germany might renew pressure on Spain, and noted that a division of Spanish volunteers was fighting on the Russian front. So unsure was America of Spain's intentions that several U.S. divisions were retained near the border between French and Spanish Morocco following the end of Vichy resistance.¹⁰

Joint Planning

Torch was the largest joint amphibious operation undertaken up to that time. Thus it was in many ways a watershed event for both the Army and the Navy. The number of issues that had to be considered and resolved was enormous. The two services had never conducted an operation like this. Prior to World War II interaction between them was infrequent. While lack of familiarity in each other's procedures did hinder preparations for Torch, the professionalism of key

leaders and staffs of both services overcame this handicap. The major concern was command and control.

While it seems strange today—in an age of JTFs—there was no unity of command prior to the departure of the Western Task Force. The key operational Navy commander was Rear Admiral Henry Kent Hewitt, Commander Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet, with headquarters in Norfolk. Hewitt, who was to figure prominently in Mediterranean amphibious operations, was designated to command Western Naval Task Force on October 10. His naval force would transport and support the Army in assaulting Morocco.¹¹ The assault force would be led by Major General George S. Patton, Jr., who was designated the Army Western Task Force commander. After receiving his mission on July 30, Patton immediately began to plan the seizure of the French colony, assuming that Casablanca would be the key objective.¹²

Hewitt and Patton had separate commands, with the former reporting to Commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, while the latter was directly subordinate to General Dwight D. Eisenhower who was the Allied Expeditionary Force Commander (controlling the entire Torch operation, from Morocco to Algeria). In conformity with late-1930s Marine Corps amphibious doctrine, it was decided that once the Task Force sailed all Army and Navy forces would come under naval command. Hewitt would be in command until Patton could deploy ashore and announce that he was ready to assume the lead role. Then Hewitt would become, in today's parlance, a supporting commander.¹³ Once the assault phase was complete, it was planned that certain Navy ships would be released from the Western Task Force and revert to control of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet; other ships would remain off North Africa to support Army operations ashore.

The Army had little amphibious doctrine to guide its planning for the assault. As a result, amphibious doctrine and techniques pioneered by the Marines in the 1930s and codified following several years of exercises near Puerto Rico were adopted by the Army. Even prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, certain Army units had undergone some amphibious training. The 3^d Infantry Division had developed a training program with the 2^d Marine Division on the west coast, and the 1st Infantry Division had

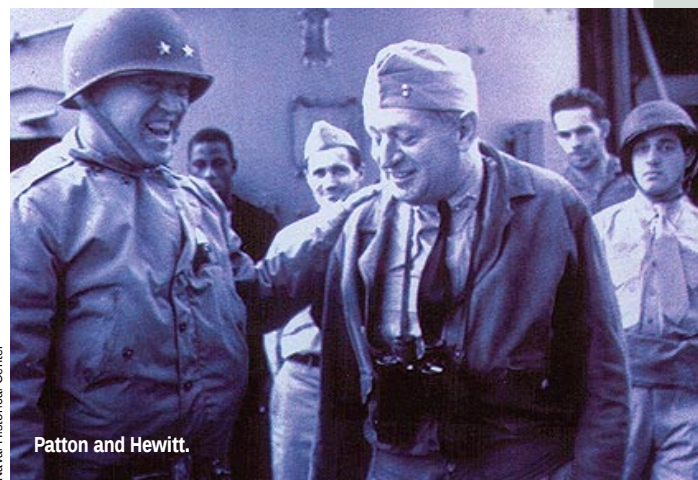
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conducted amphibious training on the east coast with 1st Marine Division. This was fortuitous because by the time serious planning for Torch began in the summer of 1942, the Marines were almost fully committed in southwest Pacific. The amphibious assault phase of Torch was conducted exclusively by Army troops.¹⁴

There were a number of differences in how the Army and Marines approached amphibious assaults. Based on experience gained in the late 1930s, the Marines called for troops to go ashore with relatively light personal loads. The Army, on the other hand, needed well equipped troops for the uncertain assault phase of an operation, and tended to load more equipment on the men. The Marines also had learned from exercises that personnel had to be dedicated to unload supplies and equipment from landing craft once they reached shore. Marine divisions, therefore, included Pioneer Battalions whose primary job was to manage the beach and prevent landing craft from stacking up while waiting to unload. Army divisions lacked organic units for this task.¹⁵

The coordination and control of naval gunfire and air support by Army troops was also in its infancy during Torch. There was relatively little training in this area, although since the main objectives and French defenses would be within sight of the coast, it may have been assumed that observers on ships would be able to direct fire on the enemy. The Navy did provide spotter teams that would go ashore, and battleships and cruisers had seaplanes that could provide observation.¹⁶

Amphibious training for the force began in June 1942. Originally it was planned that large scale landings would be rehearsed on the North Carolina coast. But the summer of 1942 was a very dangerous time off the east coast—German U-boats were inflicting heavy losses on coastal shipping. Therefore amphibious training was moved to safer waters in Chesapeake Bay. During the summer Army units boarded transports in Norfolk to practice landings; assault training proceeded up to regimental level. As loading plans for the actual operation firmed up, efforts were made to embark Army units aboard the same transports on which they had trained.¹⁷



Naval Historical Center

To Seize Morocco

The success of Torch depended on the capture of a number of key ports, from Morocco to Algeria. Planners had to assume that the French would fight, so a forcible entry was required. The issues presented to the Army-Navy planners included:

▼ The need to simultaneously seize multiple beachheads: the sites were Safi in the south, Fedala just north of Casablanca, and Port Lyautey north of the capital of Rabat. Safi would serve primarily as an unloading point for the 2^d Armored Division which would dash north to assist in the attack on Casablanca. Port Lyautey's airfield was envisioned as the initial location for Army fighters that would fly ashore from a Navy aircraft carrier. Fedala would be the jumping off point for the advance toward the main prize in Morocco—namely, Casablanca.

▼ Air support during the first few critical days would have to come exclusively from the carriers. The nearest Allied air base was the small field at Gibraltar. That base would, however, be fully committed to supporting the landings in Algeria. Once the airfield at Port Lyautey came into American hands, over 70 P-40 fighters embarked on a small carrier would be flown by Army pilots to that site in order to relieve some of the burden from the Navy.

▼ It was hoped that a major attack would not be required against Casablanca or the capital of Rabat. The plan called for Casablanca to be encircled by forces from Fedala and Safi. Once Port Lyautey was secured, Army units would push south toward Rabat. Other Army units, plus carrier air, would block any French forces from the inland cities of Fez and Marrakech that might attempt to advance toward the coast.

▼ As previously mentioned, the Allied hope was that the French would not resist. For that reason the rules of engagement had to be written to

minimize the possibility of Allied forces firing on the French until it was apparent that fighting was unavoidable. There would be no pre-assault bombing or naval bombardment. A system was devised to allow any unit to announce it was in danger. A unit that was being fired on could announce "batter up," which meant it was preparing to return fire in self defense. Only the task force or attack group commanders, however, could initiate the general engagement of French forces. That command was "play ball."¹⁸

Considerable forces were allocated. Western Naval Task Force (or Task Force 34, Atlantic Fleet) was divided into Northern, Center, and Southern Attack Groups which corresponded to the landing objectives. Major naval units included one fleet and four escort carriers. Embarked were 103 Navy fighters, 36 dive bombers, and 26 torpedo bombers, plus 76 Army fighters. There were also three battleships, seven heavy and light cruisers, 38 destroyers, four submarines, 30 troop transports, plus numerous support vessels such as tankers, tugs, and minesweepers.¹⁹

Army forces included Force X on the Southern Attack Group, with an immediate objective of Safi and over 6,400 troops of the 47th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, and elements of the 2^d Armored Division plus support units; Force Y embarked on the Center Attack Group, with an immediate objective of Fedala and some 19,300 troops of the 3^d Infantry Division, including elements of the 2^d Armored Division and support units; and Force Z loaded in the Northern Attack Group, with an immediate objective of Port Lyautey and just over 9,000 troops of the 9th Infantry Division, plus a battalion of tanks and supporting elements.²⁰

Tanks were included in each landing. Due to a lack of specialized tank landing craft (which became common later in the war), heavier medium tanks of the 2^d Armored Division would have to be landed on piers, hence the desire to quickly seize the port at Safi. General Patton planned to go ashore at Fedala to be close to the main drive on Casablanca.

The Crossing

Western Task Force embarked the Army forces in Norfolk, with several ships arriving at the last minute which complicated loading. On October 23 most of Task Force 34

departed from Hampton Roads. Patton was aboard the cruiser *USS Augusta*, the flagship. To deceive Axis agents or U-boats outside the harbor the task force initially turned southeast, ostensibly to conduct exercises in the Caribbean. Although the transports left from Norfolk, the carrier force and certain surface units came from other east coast ports. Linkups were performed in the mid-Atlantic.²¹

The task force route took it south of the Azores. Fortunately, no Axis submarines spotted the convoy en route. This was at least partly due to the fact that north of the Western Task Force's route a savage battle was underway in the North Atlantic in which convoy SC 107 lost 15 of its 42 ships.²² The U-boats were preoccupied. By November 6 the task force approached the Moroccan coast. At this point the weather took a turn for the worse. Hewitt studied forecasts received from Washington, London, and the task force itself. It was decided to go with the November 8 D-Day, despite risks of a heavy surf along the Moroccan coast.²³ On the morning of November 7 Task Force 34 split into three attack forces. That night Hewitt told Patton that the Navy would be in position the following morning to conduct the assault. All was now ready. The biggest question was whether the French would fight.

Landing

In the early morning hours of November 8 certain French military who were aware of the Allied plan tried to assume control in Morocco. An unfortunate series of mishaps and errors led to the arrest of pro-Allied leaders. The result was that the French, led primarily by the navy, elected to resist the landings. Thus began four days of fighting between American and Vichy forces.

The Southern Attack Group was the most successful. Since the main objective was to seize the port at Safi, the Army and Navy had devised a scheme to take it in a *coup de main*. At 0445 hours two World War I destroyers, *USS Bernadou* and *USS Cole*, each loaded with 200 soldiers, sailed directly into the port and debarked troops, thereby preventing damage to the facilities.²⁴ But French resistance began prior to the seizure

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First Army P-40 taking off from *USS Chenango* for Morocco.

of the harbor. At 0430 coast artillery began firing on the ships offshore. The availability of naval gunfire support was critical. At 0438 hours Admiral Davidson, Southern Attack Group Commander, signalled "play ball" and Navy ships immediately engaged the French. In the first minutes of the exchange the battleship *USS New York* placed a 1,600 lb. 14-inch projectile on the fire control tower of the main coastal defense battery near Safi, effectively silencing the site. More Army troops stormed ashore north of the harbor and began to fan out into Safi while simultaneously overrunning artillery positions. While French aircraft did not attack, Navy fighters from an escort carrier were overhead. By mid-afternoon the city was secured and the 2^d Armored Division began to land. The Southern Attack Group had accomplished its mission.²⁵

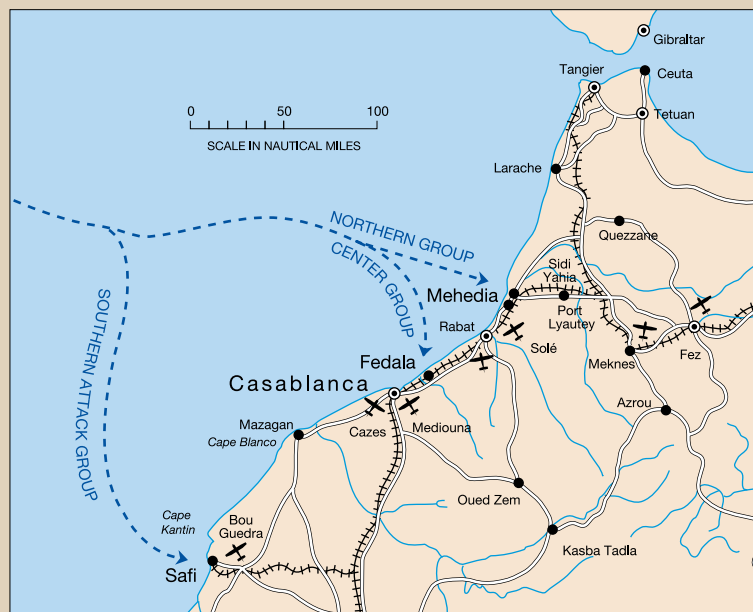
French resistance in the north was more determined and effective than at Safi. Initially, the assault went well. Army forces landed north and south of the Wadi Sebou River and advanced on Port Lyautey and the nearby airfield. Casualties on both sides mounted as the Army hit effective resistance during the drive toward the city and airfield. French armored reinforcements from Rabat were defeated by blocking Army units working in conjunction with naval gunfire and air support from carriers. By the morning of November 10 French opposition began to collapse. In a manner similar to the taking of

the port at Safi, the destroyer *USS Dallas* boldly sailed up the Wadi Sebou and debarked troops near the airfield. Naval gunfire and bombing drove off more French troops approaching from Rabat and Meknes, thus isolating the battlefield and allowing the Army to take the airfield. The battleship *USS Texas*, for example, dispersed a French column with long range 14-inch shell fire. By 1030 hours the first Army P-40s from *USS Chenango* landed at the airfield. The most severe fighting took place in the vicinity of the old Kasba. French troops within the fort repulsed several infantry assaults. Finally, Navy dive bombers attacked the fort, and shortly after the French surrendered. By the afternoon of November 10 the area around Port Lyautey was firmly in American hands.²⁶

The main American objective in Morocco was the great port of Casablanca. Unfortunately a direct assault on the city was impossible—there were too many coastal defense guns, including the 15-inch weapons of the battleship *Jean Bart*, in the immediate vicinity of the harbor. Therefore, the assault force had to come ashore north of Casablanca at the small port city of Fedala. Once a lodgement at Fedala was secured, an overland advance on Casablanca would begin. A major threat was the French fleet at Casablanca. Based less than 15 miles from the landing beaches were a light cruiser, three large destroyer leaders, seven other destroyers, gunboats, and 11 submarines.²⁷ If the French ships sortied, they would only be minutes from the landing beaches. For that reason the Navy placed its most powerful ships in the Center Attack Group. As opposed to the pre-World War I battleships at Safi and Port Lyautey, Center Force's *USS Massachusetts* was a new ship armed with nine 16-inch guns. Heavy cruisers armed with 8-inch guns, including *USS Augusta* with Hewitt and Patton aboard, plus light cruisers and destroyers were available to either provide gunfire support for the Army or engage the French navy. Farther offshore *USS Ranger*, the only American fleet carrier in Torch, was ready.

As at Safi and Port Lyautey, the French in the Casablanca-Fedala area elected to resist the landing. Coastal defense guns fired on U.S. ships near the Fedala beaches, prompting a vigorous reply from the fleet. Army units found surf conditions very poor

Operation Torch: Western Task Force (November 1942)



Source: Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 2, *Operations in North African Waters, October 1942–June 1943* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950), pp. 52–53.

in the Fedala area; many landing craft were beached and wrecked, slowing down subsequent waves of troops and supplies. By mid-morning, despite the fact that French resistance in the Fedala area had been largely overcome, the landing was far behind schedule. Meanwhile, a major naval battle was taking place.²⁸

At first light *Ranger* had planes over Casablanca awaiting a French response. Before 0700 hours seaplanes were under attack by French fighters. Minutes later French coastal batteries and *Jean Bart* opened fire on American ships which initiated the naval battle of Casablanca that lasted the balance of the morning.²⁹ French surface ships and submarines sortied from Casablanca and headed toward the transport area off Fedala, all the while under fire from Center Attack Group's ships and *Ranger*'s aircraft. Several U.S. vessels were hit by fire from shore guns and ships. But the French got by far the worst of the engagement. By early afternoon two French destroyers had been sunk, others were so severely damaged that they would sink later, and the cruiser *Primauguet* was

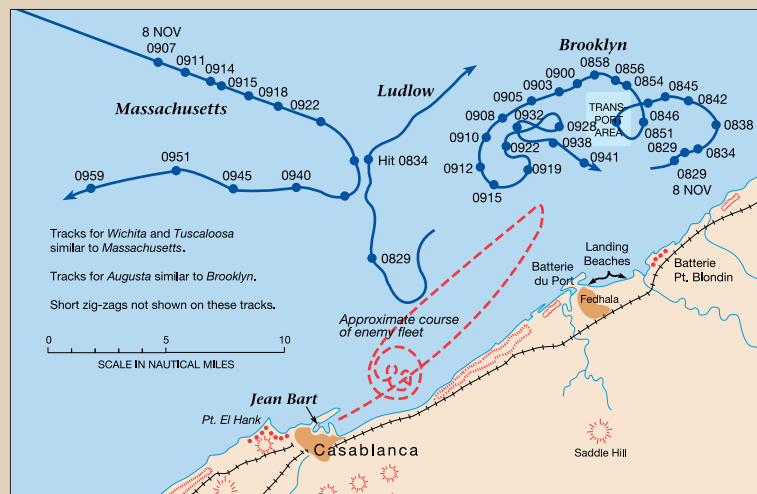
driven ashore. Additionally, *Jean Bart*'s main battery was temporarily out of action following several hits from *USS Massachusetts*. Overhead there were numerous dogfights between French and U.S. Navy planes. Navy dive bombers sank three French submarines in the port and later completed disabling a battleship. The threat of enemy surface attack was eliminated. Throughout the battle Patton was on the bridge of *USS Augusta* with Hewitt. The French naval attack had delayed the general's plans to move ashore. By early afternoon Patton and his staff reached Fedala and the next day, November 9, he assumed overall command of the Moroccan portion of Torch from Hewitt—a smooth transition of command no doubt facilitated by the time the two officers had spent together over the previous several weeks.³⁰

After the securing of the Fedala beachheads, the Army prepared to advance south toward Casablanca. Meanwhile, elements of the 2^d Armored Division were pushing north to join in the encirclement and possible attack on Casablanca. With over 5,000 French troops in or near the city, and reinforcements on the way from farther inland, there was the potential for a stiff fight near the heavily populated port. Fortunately, negotiations between the Americans and the French resulted in a general cease fire in Morocco on the morning of November 11. Temporary enemies would become our allies. The main foe now became German U-boats. On the evening of November 11 several enemy subs slipped among the transports off Fedala and sank four—several of which were still loaded with over 90 percent of their supplies.³¹ That so many ships were exposed to attack was a direct consequence of the delays in unloading imposed by the shortage of landing craft and a lack of sufficient troops to unload boats—a valuable lesson the Army absorbed prior to the Sicilian and Italian landings. Nevertheless, by that day it could be said that Morocco was secured.

The Lessons

In that this was the first Army-Navy amphibious operation since the Spanish-American War, the invasion of Morocco went amazingly well. Certainly the inexperienced Army and Navy forces that took part in Torch were fortunate that the French did not put up a protracted resistance. Nevertheless,

Battle of Casablanca: Morning Engagement (Phase I)



Source: Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 2, *Operations in North African Waters, October 1942–June 1943* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950), p. 102.

extract forces from a collapsing lodgement area. Strategically, it would have been an enormous setback if the first offensive in the European theater had ended in defeat. Future U.S. early entry operations could be placed in similar must win situations. In Morocco, Army forces had to come ashore in heavy seas, under fire, against an enemy who could mount effective opposition on land, at sea, and in the air. It required domination of the sea, local air superiority, effective fire support, and overwhelming ground forces to ensure success at each of the three landing sites.

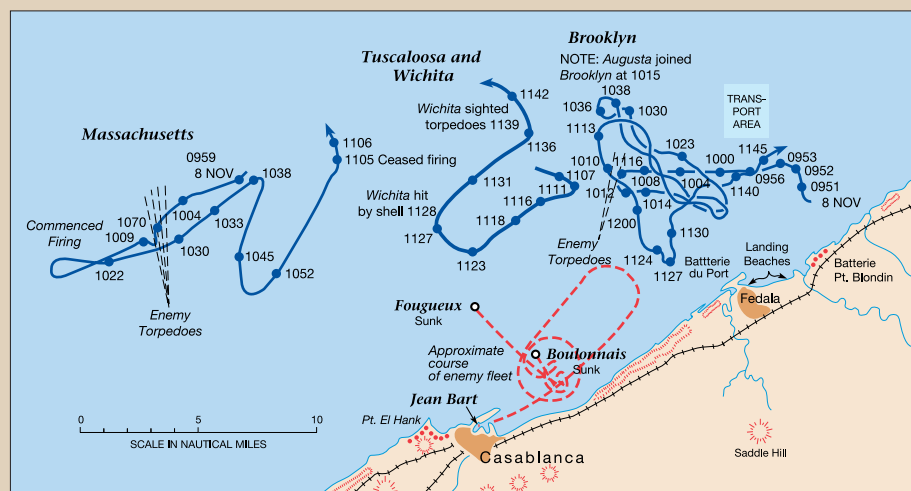
▼ Forcible entry required that overwhelming fire support be immediately available. At all three landing sites the French had powerful coast defense weapons and quickly engaged landing forces and ships offshore. It was due to the fact that massive firepower was immediately available in the form of naval gunfire and aircraft waiting on station that French weaponry was suppressed so quickly. Large caliber gunfire from battleships and cruisers was particularly effective. Today's precision weapons could replace the massive deluge of 14-, 8-, and 6-inch shells needed in 1942.

▼ There was a transition of air power from afloat to ashore. Due to the great distance from friendly bases all aircraft were initially carrier based. Planes from *Ranger* and three smaller carriers were a decisive element in the success of the invasion of Morocco. Navy aircraft performed all the air superiority, close air support, and interdiction missions for the first two and a half days of the operation. And the planners had provided for a transition of air power. The 76 Army P-40s flown ashore from an escort carrier represented a well planned shift of the air effort. In modern terms, we could say the role of the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) changed from Navy to the Army. This was an innovative decision for 1942—but a technique we should be prepared to use in future joint force projection missions.

▼ Joint training contributed significantly to the success of Torch.

While there were gaps in the joint training of the Army-Navy force that deployed to Morocco, pre-invasion rehearsals and exercises held in Virginia were invaluable in what was not an era of regular Army-Navy training. A few months of pre-deployment exercises went a long way to make Torch successful. We should note that today Army-Navy training is still an infrequent event.

Battle of Casablanca: Morning Engagement (Phase II)

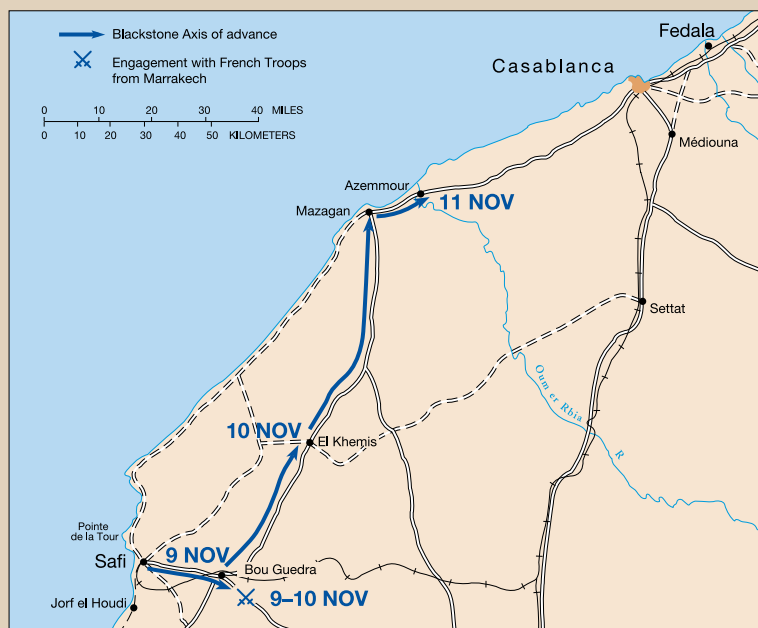


Source: Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 2, *Operations in North African Waters, October 1942–June 1943* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950), p. 103.

it was a tribute to Hewitt, Patton, and their staffs that such a complex operation was executed so well. Looking back there are important lessons to be drawn from Operation Torch.

▼ Winning the early entry battle is essential. The riskiest part was the initial assault. The United States could not afford a defeat at that point. Tactically, it would have proved difficult to

Advance from Safi (November 9–11, 1942)



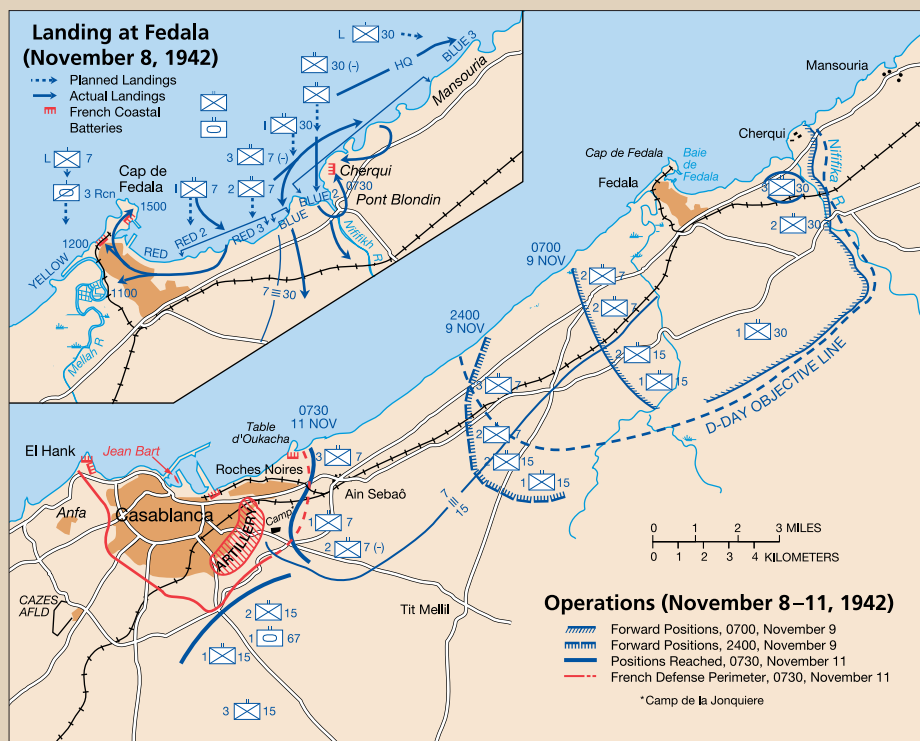
Source: George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West. The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. United States Army in World War II* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), p. 112.

▼ The planners were restricted in selecting objectives—they had to go for ports right away. The lack of an adequate over-the-shore capability forced planners to target ports for quick seizure. Had the Vichy troops been more determined, had the Navy not been able to quickly suppress their defenses, or had the enemy been better alerted, the fights for Safi, Fedala, and Port Lyautey could have been much more costly. A shortage of landing craft (and many of which were destroyed in rough seas on November 8) led to delays in unloading transports—ships that then became U-boat targets. Being able to initially enter away from heavily defended points such as airfields or ports, rapidly disembark personnel and equipment, and then quickly disperse strategic lift, should be a goal for U.S. joint forces in a forcible entry, whether the troops are landing by air or sea.

▼ Forcible entry is perhaps the most intense kind of joint operation. The Army could not have entered Morocco without the Navy's transport and firepower capabilities. Air superiority, initially all naval, was absolutely essential. The enemy had potent naval assets that had to be defeated—by the Navy. Yet in retrospect, it was the Army that had to actually seize the objectives, provide for sustained air power ashore, and ultimately compel the French to accept an armistice. The capabilities of land, sea, and air forces had to be carefully orchestrated, especially since the enemy was, at least on paper, numerically equal or in some areas superior. It was the overall capability of the joint force that resulted in the timely accomplishment of the mission—plus unwillingness on the part of the French to prolong the fight. In Morocco the pre-planned transition of command from Admiral Hewitt to General Patton was conducted very smoothly.

▼ Striking the enemy deep pays off. As the Army focused on defeating the French in close combat, Navy planes ranged far inland to interdict enemy reinforcements trying to move toward the coast. French troops moving north on the coastal road from Rabat to Port Lyautey were disrupted by naval gunfire well south of where Army troops were fighting to take the city's critical airfield. Other airfields were attacked deep inland to prevent bombing of landing areas. Aircraft were the only means of striking deep. With the target location techniques and

The Capture of Casablanca



Source: George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West. The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. United States Army in World War II* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), map. 2

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French battleship
Jean Bart in
Casablanca showing
bomb damage.

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long range weapons available today, all components are able to effectively engage the enemy at great depths.

Technology has changed a good deal since 1942. Precision strike technologies replace the massive, bludgeoning naval gunfire of World War II. Over the shore logistics is much improved. Sensor and reconnaissance assets would amaze the commanders of 1942. In addition, the services have come a long way in codifying joint doctrine and procedures, and they exercise together before being thrown together in combat. Nevertheless, Torch still offers many examples of the kinds of things that a joint force must do to make an operation successful.

Probably the most difficult mission that the Armed Forces will be called upon to perform in the future is a long distance, forcible entry operation against a competent opponent. That is exactly what happened in Torch. Our predecessors of fifty years ago did an excellent job in planning and executing a very complex operation that worked. Studying Torch and similar operations can help us in looking to the future of joint and combined warfare.

JFQ

NOTES

¹ Martin Blumenson et al., *Command Decisions* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1960), pp. 173–86.

² Norman Gelb, *Desperate Venture* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), pp. 76–83.

³ Blumenson, *Command Decisions*, pp. 186–88; Gelb, *Desperate Venture*, pp. 51–54.

⁴ George Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West. The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. United States Army in World War II* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), pp. 13–14.

⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *The French Navy in World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press), p. 228.

⁸ In July 1940 the British, fearing that Germany would force France to turn over its fleet, demanded that French naval units in Algeria and Senegal scuttle or sail out of port to join the Royal Navy. When French commanders refused the British attacked and inflicted heavy losses.

⁹ Gelb, *Desperate Venture*, pp. 141–65. Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 77–84.

¹⁰ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, p. 26.

¹¹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Operations in North African Waters* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), pp. 21–26.

¹² Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 33–40.

¹³ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 44–46; Morison, *Operations*, pp. 23–28.

¹⁴ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 164–67; also see Walter Karig, *Battle Report: The Atlantic War* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1946), pp. 164–67.

¹⁵ Morison, *Operations*, p. 27.

¹⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, p. 61; Morison, *Operations*, p. 30.

¹⁷ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 60–67; Morison, *Operations*, pp. 23–33.

¹⁸ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, p. 45.

¹⁹ Morison, *Operations*, pp. 34–40.

²⁰ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 101, 122, 151.

²¹ Morison, *Operations*, pp. 43–44.

²² John Costello and Terry Hughes, *The Battle of the Atlantic* (New York: Dial Press, 1977).

²³ Morison, *Operations*, pp. 49–51.

²⁴ By contrast the attempt to seize Oran, Algeria, was a disaster. Two British cutters with nearly 400 troops from the 1st Armored Division entered the harbor. The French bitterly opposed the attack and both small ships were sunk. The Royal Navy lost 113 dead and the U.S. Army 189; Allied survivors were held prisoner by the French until the cease fire.

²⁵ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 97–115; Karig, *Battle Report*, pp. 191–200; Morison, *Operations*, pp. 135–56.

²⁶ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 147–70; Karig, *Battle Report*, pp. 191–200; Morison, *Operations*, pp. 115–34.

²⁷ Auphan, *The French Navy*, p. 228.

²⁸ Morison, *Operations*, pp. 55–87.

²⁹ Auphan, *The French Navy*, pp. 230–37; Morison, *Operations*, pp. 88–114.

³⁰ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, p. 137.

³¹ Howe, *Northwest Africa*, pp. 174–76; Morison, *Operations*, pp. 167–74.