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In Denied Areas: Lessons from the British Special Operations Executive and Jedburghs

By Major Mark Thomas and Benjamin Jensen, PhD

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Introduction

Include subheads to help break up text.

If it is true that "if it can be seen, it can be killed," then survival in the future operating environment will be harder than ever.[2] This environment will be saturated by multi-domain sensors feeding artificial intelligence-enabled command nodes that deliver near instantaneous precision fires.[3] For an advantage in future fights, Russia and The People's Republic of China continue to invest in mass surveillance and signals intelligence (SIGINT). In response, the U.S. military has developed new operating concepts, such as the Marine Expeditionary Advanced Operating Bases and Air Force Future Operating Concept, which stress dispersion and concealment.[4] As these operating concepts are validated, questions remain on how vulnerable units will be when asked to operate independently while surrounded by the enemy's sensors.

Add source information via endnote option in Microsoft Word—all in-text citations must be superscripted using Arabic numerals and follow CMOS 18 guidance on Notes and Bibliography formatting.

Spell out acronym on first use ONLY; all subsequent usage should be acronyms (and only if the term is used more than once).

Don't use self-created acronyms, and make sure the correct acronym is used appropriately.

Use a 12-point common font like Calibri or Times New Roman.

Double-space your paper and use first line indent in paragraph structure.

While it may seem counterintuitive, some tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to increase survival in future denied areas can be found in the past. For example, the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) Section F and interallied Jedburghs of World War II successfully operated behind enemy lines in Nazi-occupied France. Section F agents infiltrated into France in 1941 to initiate contact with

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the French Resistance without any established doctrine; through trial and error, they established TTPs for surviving while surrounded by enemies. These lessons were taught to the Jedburgh teams, who infiltrated deep into France to support the allied invasion of Normandy in 1944. The Jedburghs of World War II provide a historical example of how a unit can successfully operate in a denied area, analogous to a modern police state, through proper preparation of the environment (PE) and communications security; these lessons still apply to surviving in the sensor-dominated battlefield of the future.

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The first section below analyzes the operating environment of Nazi-occupied France to establish it as a denied area saturated with human and technical sensors. The following section introduces both Section F and the Jedburghs, which were uniquely designed to operate in this area. The third and fourth sections demonstrate how Section F and the Jedburghs conducted PE and communications security (COMSEC) to enhance their survivability. These two sections demonstrate how Section F trial and error led to refined survival TTPs for the Jedburghs as supported by their compared casualty rates. While Section F suffered high casualty rates, the Jedburghs had remarkably low casualty rates because they benefited from Section F lessons learned, which are still applicable today. The practical PE and COMSEC TTPs used by the Jedburghs provide a successful and proven platform for units training to operate in future denied areas.

Section 1
The Problem: Nazi-Occupied France

After a stunning six-week victory over the French army in 1940, Germany quickly transformed France into an authoritarian police state. Northern France was directly occupied by

the Nazis while southern Vichy France was under strict German control.[5] In both areas, the Nazis quickly established a surveillance state by increasing German police, co-opting French police, restricting civil liberties, and monitoring civilian messaging.[6] A combination of specialized police, pro-state militia, and military units worked together to suppress any resistance. The French "Section des Affaires Politiques" was formed in 1941 specifically to arrest growing resistance groups known as the *Maquis*.[7] French pro-Nazi militias, such as the *Milice*, reported on French resistance and were the most despised of all. Milice officers would often join Maquis groups, posing as eager patriots while acting as double agents for the Nazis.[8] Any uncooperative French supporting the resistance was still of use to the police once they were captured and tortured until they gave up their comrades.[9] The German secret police, the Gestapo, and military police also established headquarters throughout France to better direct internal security.[10] German conventional forces stationed in France and the low countries varied throughout the occupation and reached 61 divisions totaling over 800,000 soldiers by 1944.[11] Although these units were primarily focused on external threats, they also assisted the police in larger-scale operations against the Maquis.[12] German army radio intercept companies and police radar stations employed sophisticated direction-finding (DF) equipment capable of locating unauthorized radio transmissions within 10 minutes.[13] This combination of regular and specialized security units enforced brutal and efficient control over the population.

When using uncommon and non-English words, italicize (and define, if necessary) on the first use only.

Ensure you use only one note number per citation; however, more than one citation (separate via semicolon) may be used on the note itself.

Backed by effective security forces, the German Military Government of France, also

known as the Military Administration in France or *Militärverwaltung in Frankreich*, severely limited French civil liberties. Soon after Paris was occupied, foreigners were quickly registered and supervised.[14] Natural-born French citizens were also required to carry identification papers that could be checked at random, and a strict curfew was put in place.[15] Laws could be passed by decree without any French input, and the court system was completely pliable to the Nazis.[16] French media was censored to guard against any remotely anti-Nazi sentiment, and even listening to foreign broadcasts was punishable by death.[17] To ensure no anti-Nazi sentiments were shared between people, the authorities also opened about 350,000 letters in the mail each week.[18]

The population suffered significantly. Around half of the Jewish people living in France were systemically rounded up and sent to concentration camps, and over 700,000 young Frenchmen were forcibly recruited into the Reich's war industries.[19] Mass arrests, large-scale reprisals, and summary executions were not uncommon. Altogether, over 30,000 French civilians were executed without any due process by the end of the war.[20] Even if French civilians hated the Nazis, actively aiding the resistance or even not reporting on their activities had deadly consequences for them and their families. France's new sprawling security apparatus created a black box where the Allies were unable to effectively gather information or generate combat power from the Maquis with their existing capabilities.

[Insert Image 1 Here]

When including graphic elements such as images, figures, and tables, provide each as a separate file, indicate where in the text each should go, and label accordingly (e.g., Image 1).

Section 2
The Answer: SOE and Jedburghs

After the German Blitzkrieg expelled the British Army from the continent and forced

France to surrender in 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had limited options to regain the strategic initiative. The German military had an army that was three times the size of the British army, and it was threatening to invade.[21] To help counter the hostile German threat away from the home islands, the British fell back on a tradition of enabling resistance forces against a common enemy.[22] Classic examples of the British enabling foreign, irregular formations include fighting Napoleon alongside Spanish guerrillas and T.E. Lawrence coordinating with the Bedouins against the Ottoman Empire in World War I. However, in those cases, the British were able to establish a secure base and employ field armies to directly support their irregular partners. The powerful German army, a submarine threat, and internal security meant this was not immediately possible in occupied France after the summer of 1940. A new and unconventional organization was needed.

The SOE, tasked by Churchill in 1940 to "set Europe ablaze," established Section F to enable the French Resistance to disrupt the Nazi war machine.[23] Section F agents were task organized into groups of three consisting of an officer in command, a radio operator, and an executive officer in charge of supply.[24] These agents would infiltrate into France and organize the Maquis into resistance networks referred to as circuits. SOE Section F recruits came from a broad background, including military and civilians, most of whom had some existing ties to France.[25] Although these early agents were undoubtedly courageous, they were also inexperienced, and there was no doctrine on how to conduct these types of operations. Of roughly 400 Section F agents (the exact number is unknown) who infiltrated into France, 91 were killed while 25 were captured and later escaped—placing their total casualty rate at approximately 25

Refer to information in figures and tables in the copy just prior to where it appears. Do not say "below" as things shift during design. This is not necessary for images.

percent.[26] It should be noted that while many casualties were preventable, some were not. Operating behind enemy lines is inherently dangerous. Figure 1 shows that out of 55 Section F circuits established between May 1941 and January 1944, only 21 would survive until June 6, 1944—D-Day. As SOE casualties mounted, lessons were quickly learned and disseminated to a new American organization: the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS).

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[Insert Figure 1 Here]

Leading up to World War II, the U.S. had no organization directly tasked to gather intelligence and coordinate with resistance groups. President Franklin D. Roosevelt realized this strategic shortfall and created the OSS on June 13, 1941, which was the forerunner to modern U.S. Special Operations and the Central Intelligence Agency.[27] Early in the war, the OSS provided limited support to resistance movements in smaller theaters in North Africa, the Balkans, and Nordic countries, but its biggest contribution would be in the liberation of France.[28]

As preparations began for an invasion into France in 1943, the OSS French section and the SOE combined to form Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ) under the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), which led Operation OVERLORD.[29] One of SFHQ's main contributions to SHAEF was the Jedburgh teams, who were tasked to infiltrate deep behind German lines and coordinate the Maquis. The Jedburghs were task organized similarly to the SOE Section F teams, with of an officer in charge, an executive

Operation names are spelled in all caps (exercise names are title case).

officer, and a radio operator.[30] These combined teams had a mixture of French, British, and American soldiers specially assessed, selected, and trained for this mission. Aside from being fluent in French, Jedburgh team members were assessed on their ability to stay calm under pressure, act independently, and work with people of different backgrounds.[31] After passing assessment and selection, the Jedburghs trained on a wide variety of military tasks and learned how to survive in denied areas surrounded by the enemy. This training was directly informed by the mistakes and lessons learned from the early Section F agents.[32]

Once the Jedburghs infiltrated into France, right after D-Day, their training inspired by their SOE forerunners proved effective. Of the 273 Jedburghs who parachuted into France, 17 were killed, and two were captured and later rescued for a casualty rate of 7 percent—less than one third of the Section F casualty rate.[33] Aside from simply surviving behind enemy lines, the Jedburghs also proved incredibly effective at disrupting German forces.

The Jedburghs enabled the French Resistance to destroy over 800 strategic targets and aid in the capture of over 20,000 Germans.[34] The relatively low casualties compared to the significant damage caused, intelligence gathered, and flank areas secured made the Jedburgh operation an incredible economy of force mission. The SHAEF assessed that the French Resistance, assisted by the Jedburghs, delayed Germans from counterattacking the Normandy beachhead by a critical four weeks.[35] In a memorandum to SFHQ, Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower stated:

Long quotes must be blocked (single-spaced, no quotation marks, with tighter margins).

> I consider that the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and the continual and increasing strain placed on the German war economy and internal security services throughout occupied Europe by the organized forces of resistance, played a very considerable part in our complete and final victory.[36]

The Jedburghs, taught by the SOE, established the foundation for modern special

operations by demonstrating how a small force of highly trained soldiers can work by, with, and through an existing resistance to support common military objectives. Aside from just lineage, SOF and others in the military can still draw upon timeless lessons from the Jedburghs on how to operate successfully in denied areas.

[Insert Image 2 Here] …[manuscript continues). See the final product at www.jsou.edu/Press/PublicationDashboard/263]

Include a short biography with each submission.

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Notes

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[1] Central Intelligence Agency, *Surprise, Kill, Vanish: The Legend of the Jedburghs* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2021), https://www.cia.gov/stories/story/surprise-kill-vanish-the-legend-of-the-jedburghs/.

[2] "If it can be seen, it can be hit, if it can be hit, it can be killed" was a maxim of the Army's 1980's AirLand Battle Concept, *AirLand Battle-Future: Doctrine for the 1990's and Beyond (*Washington, D.C.: Association of the United States Army, 1990),

[3] Strategic Future Group, *The Future of the Battlefield* (National Intelligence Council, 2021).

[4] Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, *The Tentative Manual for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations 2nd Edition* (U.S. Marine Corps, 2023), Chapter 1.

[5] F.S. Wight, *Lessons from the Resistance to the German Occupation of France* (Office of Strategic Services, 1945), 3.

[6] Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

[7] Wight, *Lessons from the Resistance,* 6.

CMOS does not use "ibid"—use shortened citations instead.

[8] Wight, *Lessons from the Resistance,* 4.

[9] Mitchell Allan, *Nazi Paris: The History of an Occupation, 1940-1944* (Berghahn Books, 2008), 104.

[10] Wight, *Lessons from the Resistance,* 7.

[11] Gordon A Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1993).

[12] Henning Pieper, "The German Approach to Counterinsurgency in the Second World War," *The International History Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (June 2015).

[13] Albert Praun, *German Radio Intelligence* (Department of the Army), Appendix IV.

[14] Mitchell, *Nazi Paris*, 39.

[15] Mitchell, *Nazi Paris,* Chapter 2.

[16] Mitchell, *Nazi Paris*, 10.

[17] Mitchell, *Nazi Paris*, 29.

[18] Jackson, *Nazi Paris*, 258.

[19] Mitchell, *Nazi Paris,* 134.

[20] Mitchell, *Nazi Paris,* 160.

[21] Maurice Matloff, *The 90-Division Gamble* (Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1990), 367.

[22] M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France* (Her Majesty's Stationary Service, 1966), Chapter 1.

[23] Foot, *SOE in France*, 20.

[24] Foot, *SOE in France,* 179.

[25] Foot, *SOE in France,* Chapter III.

[26] Foot, *SOE in France*, 30, 424-425.

[27] Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Military Order: Office of Strategic Services* (The White House, June 1942), The National Archives, https://text-message.blogs.archives.gov/2021/08/24/the-creation-of-the-office-of-strategic-services-oss/#_ftn15.

[28] Serge Peter Karlow, *War Report of the OSS* (Washington D.C.: War Department, 1947), vii-xix, https://www.ossreborn.com/files/War%20Report%20of%20the%20OSS%20Volume%201.pdf.

[29] Karlow, *War Report of the OSS*, 191.

[30] Strategic Services Unit, *OSS Aid to the French Resistance* (1961), 1. OSS Collection, Container #740, National Archives, MD.

[31] Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces* (Public Affairs, 2005), 58.

[32] Karlow, *War Report of the OSS*, 209.

[33] Karlow, *War Report of the OSS,* 220.

[34] Karlow, *War Report of the OSS,* 221.

[35] Karlow, *War Report of the OSS,* 221.

[36] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Memorandum to Director OSS, UK Base* (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force Office of the Supreme Commander, 31 May 1945) in *War Report of the OSS*, 222.

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Include a URL or DOI address the first time the note is used, if possible.

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