

47 Royal Marine Commando

Brian Ching – Wolkreig 08

Tasked with securing Port-en-Bessin on the western flank of Gold Beach, the 47 Royal Marine Commandos left England on its' two transports on June 6th. The final assault would be aboard LCAs, but the troops would enjoy some bit of comfort at least part of the journey across the choppy channel. While every facet of the invasion plan was important, Lieutenant-Colonel C.F. Phillips and his men understood the critical nature of their mission. Securing the port would provide the terminus of the Pipeline Under the Ocean (P.L.U.T.O.) and would literally fuel the breakout after the initial invasion.



The final beach assault was devastating as the German artillery destroyed much of the support planned from the RMASG Centaurs. In addition, the commandos lost several of their LCAs which were either destroyed or capsized in the heavy surf. The heavy fire forced LTC Phillips to land further away from the objective than originally planned.

Once on the beach, LTC Phillips decided to take a long overland approach to the port and his troops began the trek towards the ridge near Escures. There, they would spend the night regrouping and preparing for the assault on the port in the morning.



LTC Phillips surveyed his unit during the night. Although scattered during the landings, he was able to assemble A, B and Z troops of commandos and a mortar section. He would also be joined by one of the surviving Centaur platoons from the 1st RMASG as well as a couple of AVREs borrowed from the 82nd Squadron, 6th Assault Regiment Royal Engineers.

The morning calm was broken by gunfire from the LCG(L)s supported by the heavier guns of the cruiser HMS Orion . The naval guns were able to suppress the heavily fortified guns surrounding the town. However, the commandos were surprised by 2 Flak ships that had entered the port during the night. Assisted by boarding parties from the HMS Ursa and the Polish ship Krakowiak the Flak ships were silenced and the assault completed. With the port secured, the PLUTO could be completed and the logistics for the push inland established.



Despite the difficulties, the 47 Commandos distinguished themselves at Port-en-Bessin. the military historian, Major General Julian Thompson, wrote: 'In my opinion the operation by 47 RM Commando at Port-en-Bessin was one of the great feats of arms of any unit, Royal Marines, Army, Navy or Air Force of any nation in the Second World War'.

