

TOP-SECRET

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**Paul Middleton**

COMMANDER ASSAULT FORCE 'O'

WESTER

NAVAL TASK FORCE

**TOP  
SECRET**

OPERATION PLAN

NEPTUNE

**Operation Plan  
Neptune**

**Part Three**

The story of

Short Title:  
ONWEST/O

**SS Empire Anvil**



# **TOP SECRET - OPERATION PLAN NEPTUNE PART THREE**

**Published by  
Paul Middleton**

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## **FACTS ABOUT THIS BOOK**

**This Part Three contains facsimiles of 58 pages**

**Annex E Gunfire Support Plan**

**Annex F Smoke Plane**

**Annex G Air Plan**

The copy of Operation Plan Neptune contains 247 pages of typewritten text. The fore-edge is punched at the top and bottom and fits on to two thick metal prongs which are fixed to a thick black, coated cardboard cover. The back cover is missing.

All the pages are brittle and faded with age.

The Plan was in the possession of Marcus Jefferson Geerts, 1st Mate on the *SS Empire Anvil* and passed into the Geerts' Family Archives. For details of his career and *SS Empire Anvil*, see the end of the book.

## FOREWORD

OPERATION NEPTUNE was the naval Channel crossing phase of Operation Overlord, the code-name given to the Allied invasion of France. An armada of 4,000 vessels transported the Allied invasion forces to Normandy Beach on D-day, June 6, 1944, and the *SS Empire Anvil* was part of that armada.

Admiral Bertram Ramsay, the Allied naval commander in chief, signed the orders for Operation Neptune, calling it *“probably the largest and most complicated operation ever undertaken”*. Ramsay also wrote that *“the object of Operation Neptune is to carry out an operation from the United Kingdom to secure a lodgement on the continent from which further offensive operations can be developed”*.

Admiral Ramsey’s plan assumed the huge aerial power of the Allies would nullify any German attack from the air. His armada therefore would be headed by 287 mine sweepers to clear the way for the 138 warships to follow. These would bombard the German beach defences. The convoy of 4,000 troop carriers would then sail from southern English ports protected by frigates and corvettes.

*Paul Middleton 2013*

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OPERATION NEPTUNE ORDER No. BB-44

WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE

ASSAULT FORCE "O" (TASK FORCE ONE TWO FOUR)

*U.S.S. ANCON*, FLAGSHIP PORTLAND DORSET

20 May 1944 1200

# Chapter 1

## Annex E Gunfire Support Plan

11thPHIB/44-3(1)(a)  
Serial: 00681

TOP SECRET - NEPTUNE

WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE  
ASSAULT FORCE "C"  
(TASK FORCE ONE TWO FOUR)  
U.S.S. ANCON, Flagship,  
PORTLAND, DORSET,  
20 May 1944: 1200.

### ANNEX E TO OPERATION ORDER BB-44 GUNFIRE SUPPORT PLAN

#### TASK ORGANIZATION

- (a) Fire Support Group ONE - Rear Admiral Bryant  
(11) USS TELLAS  
(12) HMS GLASGOW  
(13) USS SATTERLEE  
(14) USS HOGGOK  
(15) USS CARMICK  
(16) HMS TALLYBONT
- (b) Fire Support Group TWO - Captain Richards  
(21) USS ARKANSAS  
(22) FS MONTCAIM  
(23) FS GEORGES LEYGUES  
(24) USS ENDICOTT  
(25) USS DOYLE  
(26) HMS TANATSIDE  
(27) HMS MELBROOK
- (c) Fire Support Group THREE - Captain Sanders.  
(31) USS FRANKFORD  
(32) USS BALDWIN  
(33) USS THOMPSON  
(34) USS HARDING
- (d) Fire Support Group FOUR - Captain Sabin  
(41) Control Unit - Captain Sabin.  
LCH 520 1 LCH  
(42) ICG(L) Unit - Lieutenant Golders  
ICG(L) 424, 426, 449, 687, 811 5 ICG(L)s  
(43) ICT(R) Unit - Lieutenant Carr  
ICT(R) 366, 423, 447, 450, 452, 464, 473, 482, 483 9 ICT(R)s  
(44) ICT(A) Unit - Lieutenant Morris  
ICT(A) 2008, 2037, 2043, 2124, 2227, 2228, 2273, 2275 8 ICT(A)s  
ICT(HE) 2049, 2050, 2075, 2229, 2287, 2307, 2339, 2425 8 ICT(HE)s  
(45) ICF Unit - Lieutenant Cameron  
ICF 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12. 7 ICFs
- (e) Fire Support Group FIVE -  
(51) ICT 206, 209, 213, 276, 293 carrying 62 SP FA Bn. 5 ICTs  
(52) ICT 29, 197, 207, 332, 364 carrying 58 SP FA Bn. 5 ICTs

ANNEX E  
TO OPERATION ORDER BB-44  
GUNFIRE SUPPORT PLAN

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*Annex E Gunfire Support Plan: Fire Support Groups 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.*



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- (f) Fire Support Group SIX - 1st Div. Area
- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| (61) LCS(S) - from CHASE (1), HERRICO (1)     |            |
| IST374(4), ISY376(3), IST6(3)                 | 12 LCS(S)s |
| (62) LCS(S) - from CARROLL (1), JEFFERSON (1) |            |
| IST315(3), IST310(3), IST317(3), IST375(1)    | 12 LCS(S)s |

1. (a) Known Coast defenses are described in NEPTUNE Monograph, listed in Appendix 2, List of Targets and indicated on the Shore Line Sketch.
- (b) For purposes of counterbattery fire the beach and areas inland thereof are divided into Sectors of Responsibility corresponding to the 29th and 1st Division Areas as follows:

SECTOR I - From the line 506963 - 440975 east  
to the line 676906 - 656883 - 624848

SECTOR II - From Sector I east to the line 748884 -  
745852 - 761817

- (c) Shore Fire Control Parties will be provided by the Landing Force as follows:

		Approximate landing time
Force "O" SFCP 1	2nd Ranger Bn	H
SFCP 2	5th Ranger Bn	H/70
SFCP 3,4,5	1,2,3, Bns 116th Reg. Combat Team	H/30, H/30, H/57
SFCP 7,8,9	1,2,3, Bns 16th Reg. Combat Team	H/70, H/30, H/30
SFCP 11,12,13	1,2,3, Bns 18th Reg. Combat Team	H/195, H/180, H/195
Force "B" SFCP 16,17,18	1,2,3, Bns. 115th Reg. Combat Team	_____
SFCP 20,21,22	1,2,3, Bns 26th Reg. Combat Team	_____
SFCP 24	175th Reg. Combat Team	_____

- (d) Fire Support Areas are shown in Appendix 1. The KANSAS Fire Support Area is available for joint use by Forces "O" and "U". These areas will not be pre-swept and must not be used in their entirety until so directed. It is believed that the area inshore of the ten fathom curve is free of mines and this portion may be used by destroyers. Swept "boat lanes" are shown in Fire Support Area Chart.

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*Annex E Gunfire Support Plan: Fire Support Group 6.*



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WESTERN NAVAL TASK FORCE  
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- (c) High performance spotting aircraft will be available between sunrise minus 40 minutes and H plus 5 hours, and to a limited extent thereafter. When conditions permit their landing, Army observation planes (Cubs) will be used in conjunction with Shore Fire Control Parties. Arrangements for air spotting are outlined in Appendix 5.
- (f) A British Bombardment Liaison Officer will be attached to battleships and cruisers; an American Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer will be attached to each cruiser.
2. Fire Support Groups deliver scheduled pre-landing fires and support landing force during landing and the advance inland. Protect ships and craft from shore batteries, air attack, and hostile surface vessels in the vicinity of the landing operations.
3. (a) (b) Fire Support Groups ONE and TWO.

Assignment of Fire Support Areas and Sectors of Responsibility for counter-battery fire is as follows: (Fire Support Group Commanders may further subdivide counter-battery sectors.)

<u>Ship or Group</u>	<u>Initial Station</u>	<u>FS Area</u>	<u>Sector of Responsibility</u>
TEXAS	West boat lane, about 12,000 yards offshore	3	I
GLASGOW	West boat lane about 9,000 yards offshore	3	I
Destroyers, FS GROUP ONE	West boat lane, thence FS Area THREE inshore	3	I
ARKANSAS	East boat lane about 6,000 yards offshore	4	II
GEORGES LEYGUES	East boat lane about 9,000 yards offshore	4	II
MONTCAIM	East boat lane about 7,500 yards offshore	4	II
Destroyers, FS Group TWO	East boat lane, thence FS Area FOUR inshore	4	II

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*Annex E Gunfire Support Plan: Fire Support Group 6.*



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Battleships and cruisers support minesweepers by counter-battery fire as required. Destroyers proceed down boat lanes and into fire support areas maneuvering so as to maintain as heavy a volume of fire on beach targets as possible and adjusting speed so as to approach close to assault beaches as first waves beach.

Commencing at H minus 40 minutes or as soon thereafter as visibility conditions permit, deliver counter-battery, destructive and neutralizing fires on beach defenses as laid down in Appendix 3, Schedule of Fires. After H hour deliver fires called for by assigned Shore Fire Control Parties. Except as provided in Schedule of Fires, deliver counter-battery fire after H hour normally only at targets cleared by Shore Fire Control Parties. If communications fail, or in emergencies, counter-battery and close supporting fire may be delivered at the considered discretion of the Fire Support Unit Commander when it is clearly recognized that the line of fire will not endanger own forces.

TANATSIDE and TALYBONT remain in fire support areas until H plus one hour. MELBREAK until H plus three hours. Deliver scheduled fires and counter-battery fires as directed. At the conclusion of these periods proceed out swept channel and report to Commander Area Screen. Commander Fire Support Groups ONE and TWO assign ships to counter-battery targets within their respective sectors of responsibility.

When Fire Support Areas have been swept, fire support ships maneuver in areas as necessary to deliver fires on call and minimize danger from air attack.

(c) Fire Support Group THREE

Patrol as part of area screen until required to take up gunfire tasks at which time proceed and report as follows:

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Report to</u>	<u>Fire Support Area</u>	<u>Time</u>
BALDWIN	Com FS Group TWO	FOUR	H / 180 min.
FRANKFORD	Com FS Group ONE	THREE	H / 180 min.
THOMPSON	Com FS Group ONE	THREE	H / 180 min.
HARDING	Com FS Group TWO	FOUR	H / 12 hours.

Upon reporting establish communications with designated Shore Fire Control Party and deliver neutralizing and close supporting fires on call. Deliver counter-battery fires as directed.

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*Annex E Gunfire Support Plan: Fire Support Group 6.*



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(d) Fire Support Group FOUR  
(A1) Control Unit

Control and coordinate tasks of gunfire support craft as herein specified. Patrol in vicinity of line of departure clear of lines of fire of fire support units and assign counter-battery targets to LCG(L)s as observed. Be particularly alert to observe beach conditions and inform Force Commander and Commander Fire Support Groups ONE and TWO of needs for counter-battery and close Support Fires. Dispose LCP as considered best for protection of transport area, boat lanes and beaches. Direct LCT(R) to fire reload rockets as ordered.

(A2) LCG(L) Unit

Accompany LCT(A) - LCT(HE) wave in as close to beaches as navigational conditions permit delivering neutralizing fire on beach defenses as specified in Appendix 3. Fire on beach defenses until landing waves actually beach except when lines of fire are fouled before that time. Remain in inshore sectors of fire support areas as follows:

<u>Craft</u>	<u>FS Area</u>	<u>Counter-Battery Responsibility</u>
LCG(L) 424, 426, 449	3	Sector I
LCT(L) 687, 811	4	Sector II

Prior to H hour deliver counter-battery fire as required. After H hour deliver counter-battery fire on targets specified by Commander Gunfire Support Craft. Counter-battery fire or fire on targets of opportunity is authorized in emergencies where the LCG(L) Commander clearly recognizes own troops are not within 1,000 yards of the target.

LCG(L)s will close the beach as near as possible to deliver direct armed fire on concrete pillboxes and other beach defenses.

(A3) LCT(R) Unit

Take up position in line abreast about 2,000 yards offshore of target areas specified in schedule of fires in time to deliver rocket fire when LCT(A) - LCT(HE) wave is about 300 yards offshore and fire rocket salvos on assigned targets. As soon as rockets have been discharged, clear boat lanes and return to transport area.

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*Annex E Gunfire Support Plan: Fire Support Group 6.*



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LCT(R) 366, 423, 447, 450, 473 and 482 reload with HE rockets, LCT(R) 452, 464 and 483 with smoke rockets and HE rockets, by H+210 minutes. Discharge reload rockets at flanking areas when and as directed by Commander Gunfire Support Craft.

(44) LCT(A) Unit

Form wave in transport area and proceed beachward as directed in Attack Landing Plan, Annex E. Commencing at range of 3,000 yards about H minus 15 minutes, deliver counter-battery and neutralizing fire on pillboxes, fortified houses and beach defenses as set forth in Schedule of Fires. Disembark tanks, retract, and

assist in unloading as directed by Deputy Commanders of respective Assault Groups,

(45) LCF Unit

Patrol initially around transport area and boat lanes so as to provide maximum anti-aircraft protection to ships and craft. LCFs move in on flanks to protect boat lanes and beaches as directed by Commander Gunfire Support Craft.

(c) Fire Support Group FIVE.

Form wave in transport area. Leave transport area and proceed toward beach in line abreast between swept channels, following about 200 yards astern of LCT(R)s. Commence firing approximately 8,000 yards range from beach about H minus 30 minutes and deliver neutralizing fire on areas on and behind beaches as provided in Schedule of Fires. Cease fire at H minus 5 minutes, turn, clear boat lanes, and return to seaward. Land embarked artillery as directed in Attack Landing Plan.

(f) Fire Support Group SIX

Units (61) and (62) proceed as directed by Commander Assault Groups O-1 and O-2 respectively. LCS(S) are to rendezvous with LCTs carrying DD tanks, accompany them to the launching position, and then load DD tanks into the beach. LCS(S) not required for loading

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*Annex E Gunfire Support Plan: Fire Support Group 6.*