

VOL. 4-A JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1944 OPERATIONAL GROUPS

OPERATIONAL GROUPSSUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of Operational Groups Dispatched | 8 |
| Casualties | 3 |

RESUME OF INDIVIDUAL GROUPSPercy Red

Dispatched on 31 July/1 August to the Haute Vienne area of France to coordinate activities of the Maquis in resistance work. Returned to England on 10 September 1944.

Donald

Dispatched on 5/6 August to Landivisiau in Brittany to preserve fixed installations in this area from destruction by the enemy as they withdrew. Returned to England 19 August 1944.

Antagonist

Dispatched on 13/14 August to the Haute Vienne area of France, to provide necessary medical facilities were available. Returned to England on 3 September 1944.

Percy Pink

Dispatched on the night of 11/12 August to the Dordogne Department of France to assist the Maquis in harassing the enemy and carrying out attacks on communication facilities. Returned to England on 10 October 1944.

Patrick

Dispatched on 14/15 and 15/16 August to the Indre Department of France to protect a power station from destruction by the enemy. Returned to England on 13 September 1944.

Lindsay

Dispatched on the night of 16/17 and 17/18 August to the Cantal Department of France to protect a hydro-electric plant at La Truyere. Returned to England on 20 September 1944.

Christopher

Dispatched on 3/4 September to the Poitiers area of France to harass and attempt to destroy retreating enemy units. Returned to England on 22 September 1944.

Adrian

Dispatched on 9/10 September to the Cote d'Or area of France to slow down and harass the enemy columns moving through the Dijon area. Returned to England on 20 September 1944.

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UNIFORM WORN

Jump Boots
 Socks
 Underwear
 OD Shirt
 Field Pants
 Sweater
 M1943 field jacket
 Steel Helmet

EQUIPMENT CARRIED BY ALL MEN

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Web Belt | Identification Tags |
| Canteen | Toilet Paper |
| Pistol 45 pouch, 21 rounds 3 magazine | Rubbers (12) |
| Pocket Knife | Grease paint |
| 6 Grenades | Gloves (optional) |
| First Aid Packet | Jungle Pack (medical) |
| Notebook & eversharp pencil | Athletic supporter |
| Flashlight (pin point) | Toilet articles, razor, soap, towel, toothbrush, toothpowder, comb. |
| Sleeping Bag cover | |
| Sewing Kit | Entrenching tool |
| 2 pr socks | Two rolls tape |
| Packet of salt or salt pills | 9 lbs prepared charges |
| Matches (waterproof case) | Field Cap |
| Watches | Gas Mask container |
| Lensatic Compass | Escape kit |
| Rations D | |
| Cough Drops | |
| Cigarettes | |

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EQUIPMENT CARRIED BY OFFICERS

Carbine
Binoculars
Map Protractor and case
Whistle
Smatchette

EQUIPMENT CARRIED BY ENLISTED MENSergeant

Carbine
Binoculars
Whistle
Spare parts
T/5 TSMG Gunner and T/5 M-1 Gunner
Wire Cutter

T/5

Carbine and Bren Gun

EQUIPMENT CARRIED BY RADIO OPERATOR

Carbine
Radios - packaged

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OPERATIONSOPERATION PERCY RED

Operation Percy Red was the first Operational Group to be dispatched to France from the UK.

Members of Group

The members of Group Percy Red were as follows:

Captain William F. Larson, Inf, code name "Leander" (58)

Captain (then 1st Lieutenant) Reider J. Grunseth, Inf,
code name "Gerbert" (59)

S/Sgt John Halvorsen (60)

S/Sgt Knut Joa (61)

T/3 Fred Johnson (62)

Cpl Olaf Aanonsen (63)

Cpl Kai O.C. Johanson (64)

Cpl Karl Larsen (65)

T/5 Sverre Aanonsen (66)

T/5 Olav Eide (67)

T/5 Arne Herstad (68)

T/5 Louis D. Brie (69)

T/5 Marinus D. Myrland, second W/T operator, code name
"Mateo" (70)

T/5 Alk Paulson (71)

T/5 Oddberg Stiansen (72)

T/5 Otto Twingley (73)

Pfc Delphis Bonin (74)

Pvt Leif Eide, first W/T operator, code name "Edgar" (75)

(58) War Diary Vol 11 p.693; (59) p.694 (60) p.697 (61) p.698
(62) p.699 (63) p.690 (64) p.691 (65) p.692 (66) p.695
(67) p.696 (68) p.697 (69) p.698 (70) p.699 (71) p.700 (72)p.701
(73) p.702 (74) p.703 (75) p.704.

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Operations OG Percy Red (Cont'd)Area to Which Dispatched

Operational Group Percy Red was dispatched on the night of 31 July/1 August to the Department of Haute Vienne in Central France.

Background of Resistance in Area

The group was to be dispatched to an area where a strong Maquis organization existed under the leadership of Hamlet, an organizer sent out by SF HQ. This Maquis had under its control approximately 5,000 Frenchmen, some with previous military experience and some with many months experience employing guerrilla tactics against the Germans. A large supply of stores had been dropped to this area since D-day and the Maquis were, therefore, fairly well-armed.

The group had, up to this time, successfully carried out attacks against railroads, roads, and telecommunications in the area - also destroying two large bridges. As a result, they had been subject to frequent attacks by the Germans.

The general region of France to which the group was to be sent was under command of the Delege Militaire Regional known as Ellipse. There were also two Jedburgh teams working in the general neighborhood - Jedburghs Hugh and Hamish (76). An SAS party was believed to be in the vicinity, too, and in contact with Hamlet.

Purpose of Mission

OG Percy Red was sent to act as a highly-trained military cadre for the Maquis, and would assist them in the following tasks:

- a. Repelling enemy attacks.
- b. Organizing and carrying out attacks - especially on the Montauban/Brive/Limoges/Vierzon railway lines.

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c. Organizing and carrying out attacks on the wolfram mines located at Puy-les-Vignes, near St Leonard-de-noblat and Vaulry near Cleux.

d. Providing additional W/T communication between EMFFI and the Maquis.

The group was instructed to cooperate in all undertakings with Hamlet, but it would remain under the command of EMFFI Headquarters.

Method of Dropping and Reception Committee

The group was to be dropped to a reception committee organized by Hamlet. In the event that the group missed this committee upon arrival, instructions were given to the group to take cover and delegate one officer to go to a specified address where contact with Hamlet could be established.

Method

The group was to go to the field in four aircraft. One section was to be dispatched initially, with the second section following later subject to developments.

Communications

Each section of OG Percy Red was to be dispatched with one W/T set. However, they were instructed to use Hamlet's W/T setup while in the Maquis area. If the group was on the move or on distant operations, the No 1 W/T operator for the group was to contact headquarters. If the group should be sent out in two sections, one operator was to go with each section, and both were to contact headquarters.

Relations with Other Allied Units

Several Jedburgh teams were known to be operating in the vicinity where OG Percy Red was to be sent. These teams were also assisting in organizing resistance and it was possible that the groups would come into contact with them.

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Operations. OG Percy Red. (Cont'd)Allied Forces. If Overrun

If overrun by Allied Forces, the group was to report to the headquarters of the nearest Allied unit and ask for the intelligence officer. Through this officer, the men would ask to be put in contact with the nearest SF Staff. This Staff would identify the group and pass them back to SF HQ.

Action. If Captured

The group took no cover story with it to the field. If taken prisoner, therefore, the men would be treated as soldiers in uniform performing ordinary military duties. Every established law of warfare would apply to them. Therefore, they would give their names, ranks, and serial numbers only.

Information Provided to Team

The following informing was provided to the group before it was dispatched to the field:

- a. Resistance organizations in Haute Vienne.
- b. Topography of the area with special emphasis on the Montauban/Brive/Limoges/Vierzon Railway and the wolfram mines at St Leonard de Noblat.

Finance

Each officer in the group took 100,000 French francs and 50 American dollars. Each enlisted man took 50,000 French francs and 50 American dollars.

First Word from the Field

The following undated W/T message from Gerbert to Lieutenant-Colonel Obolensky informed headquarters of the safe arrival of the group:

"Plane safe but dispatching rotten. Up to two kilometers away. Leg bags failed four dropping off."

Dispatching of Additional Personnel

After the death of Captain Larson, 1st Lieutenant Blair

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Operations, OG Percy Red (Cont'd)

Jones, SC (7) was dispatched to assist Captain Grunseth with the group's operations. Notice of his safe arrival was received at headquarters on 28 August.

Report of Group upon Return from Field

In an interview with Captain Grunseth on 13 September 1944, the following information was obtained regarding the mission of Operational Group Percy Red.

About 0130 hours in the morning on 1 August, the group was dropped in the Haute Vienne area of France. It was beautiful moonlight. Four plane loads took off, but only one plane found the dropping zone and dropped its load. Two plane loads were dropped the next night. The last plane dropped on 5 August. All members of the group had jumped at least 12 times before. For some this was the thirteenth jump.

Captain Grunseth was in the plane that dropped the first night with 4 others, namely, T/5 Arne Herstad, Coporal Kai O.C. Johanson, Pfc Delphis Bonin, and T/3 Fred Johnson. They were dropped to a reception committee organized by Hamlet.

The committee had things well organized, but the dropping was not very satisfactory. Captain Grunseth dropped 500 yards from the dropping area and he was the closest one. The other members dropped in creeks or woods. It took four hours for the group to reassemble. This was due in part to everyone being extremely cautious about answering signals because no one knew whether Germans were in the area or not. Later they learned that although there were no Germans in the immediate vicinity, there was a garrison of some 200 only about 10 miles away. It was believed that they were unaware of their dropping.

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Operations OG Percy Red (Cont'd)

As soon as the group was assembled they were taken to a farm which the Maquis had arranged for them. The Maquis in this area were somewhat disorganized at this time because a German unit had just been through and the Maquis had engaged them in a pitched battle. This had proved almost disastrous for the Maquis. Within a week, however, the group was reorganized and operating smoothly.

The terrain in this area was rolling and wooded, which afforded the best conditions for Maquis operations. The group received excellent cooperation from the Maquis. They supplied them with intelligence, transportation, and generally assisted them in carrying out their mission.

The group was sent into this area to block the national highway and the railways, and to destroy a wolfram mine near St Leonard de Noblat. They were to harass the Germans in every possible way, and with the help of the Maquis, carry out demolitions wherever it would hinder the enemy's advance.

The group remained at the farm house for several hours while their equipment was collected. While here a message was sent to headquarters informing them of their safe arrival, but stating they had no contact with any of the other plane loads.

The next few days were spent looking over the area and waiting for the other plane loads to arrive. When their full complement of 16 men and 2 W/T operators had arrived, they moved to a location between Sussec and La Crouillet.

They set up their headquarters at Sussec, which was the center of Maquis activities. It was about 50 miles from where they had dropped. At Sussec they learned that a German armored train was going to attempt to open the railway south

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Operations. OG Percy Red. (Cont'd)

of Limoges. Up to that time the Maquis had succeeded in keeping the line out most of the time. Next morning the group located the train and followed it trying to find a good spot to attack it. When the train stopped at St Germaine, they planted demolitions ahead along the track. The train was traveling only about four or five miles an hour with a man stationed in front on lookout for sabotage. There were 50 Germans aboard. When it approached the spot where the demolitions had been set up, the train stopped dead. Electric wires lying across the track had been unnoticed by the group. These the Germans got out and cut.

A few SAS men, who had joined the group about three days previously, had set themselves up at one end of the train with the OGs further down the road. It was a fairly wooded spot. It was about eight o'clock in the morning. They had spent the whole night waiting for the train to come. While the train was stopped, German sentries were posted about the area. One sentry came face to face with an SAS man. He started to shoot the German but was stopped by a Maquis, as it had been agreed to have no gunfire until the demolitions had exploded. Naturally the German gave the alarm immediately, so when the group did start firing they were faced with German machine gun fire. The firing wasn't too accurate because they couldn't locate the OGs exact position. At this point four of the group, Stiansen, Paulson, Olaf Eide, Twingley, stood up thus exposing themselves entirely and fired at the enemy with Bren guns. This threw the Germans completely off guard and probably saved the lives of the whole group.

Two of the SAS men were captured, and the remaining few withdrew. This left one flank entirely open, so the OGs decided

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Operations, OG Percy Reg. (Cont'd).

to withdraw, too, blowing up the whole track as they did. It was now about 9:30 in the morning. The ambush hadn't proved successful, but the railway wasn't opened. The train stopped about ten yards short of the last charge so it wasn't damaged. However, flying steel and debris probably got some of the Germans. After this ambush the Germans returned to Limoges and never attempted to open the railway again.

When the group was reassembled it was discovered that two men were missing, Captain Larson and one enlisted man. The sergeant turned up later, but Captain Larson was killed by a grenade, it was thought. He was given a very impressive funeral by the Maquis and buried in a chateau. The French people brought masses of flowers and are now caring for his grave.

About 40 men took part in the ambush, including Maquis. They used Bren guns, Thompson sub-machine guns and rifles. Later on in Limoges, the SAS men who had been captured were found. When the Germans questioned them, they reported that there were American troops and French troops in the area. This probably accounted in large measure for the German retreat immediately after the encounter.

After the ambush the group continued to follow the train as it returned to Limoges. About a day later they received word that 2,000 Germans were moving north out of Limoges. The Maquis were not equipped to try to stop them here, so the OGs set out for St Leonard, where there was a bridge the Germans would have to cross. Outside of St Leonard they located 200 Germans guarding a wolfram mine. The bridge, however, was inside the city. They had received varying reports that it was guarded by Germans, then by French, so they sent a

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Operations, OG Percy Red. (Cont'd)

reconnaissance group in to look over the setup.

Jedburgh Team Lee (28) was now working with the group. Captain Charles Brown, Cav, (29) was a member of this team. They had joined the group the day after the ambush. Captain Brown, a few Maquis, and a few OGs went into the town and found four French civilians guarding the bridge. They arranged for them to leave the town with their families, and the whole group moved in. There were no Germans there at all. They started placing demolitions around the bridge immediately upon their arrival, but it was extremely difficult because two men were compelled to climb down into the river bed. In case of attack, it would have meant sure capture or death for these two men. Corporal Sverre Aannonsen and Corporal Arne Hersted volunteered for this hazardous task.

The bridge was constructed of railway ties in such a manner as to make it difficult to place demolitions. It took about an hour and a half to complete the job, but a German garrison a mile away evidently did not get word of it as the group was not attacked. The whole town was warned of the placing of the charges. It was a very successful job. The whole bridge was pulled down. The explosion occurred about 6:15 in the morning and the windows of many houses in the city were broken. Nevertheless, the French civilians all came out and cheered the OGs wildly.

On 14 August, having completed the destruction of the bridge at St Leonard, the group moved out. They later learned that 2,000 Germans were just moving out of Limoges when the bridge was blown. This naturally delayed their advance. In addition, the Maquis blocked the roads they were using and held them in Limoges. After the group had left St Leonard,

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Operations, OG Percy Red, (Cont'd)

200 Germans moved into the city and warned the Maquis that if the bridge were blown again, the whole town would be burned.

At this point, the OGs began to lay plans to take the German garrison at Limoges. They requested air support from London and received confirmation. However, 24 hours before the attack was to begin Hamlet received a message from the German general at Limoges saying he would like to arrange surrender terms. Consequently, Captain Brown, Captain Vigny, French, and Hamlet held a conference with him and complete surrender terms were arranged. While arrangements were being made, however, the Germans received orders to move at any cost. The general returned to the garrison after the meeting and was never heard from again.

The Germans retreated by a road that had been left unguarded. However, the Maquis attacked the group and captured 300 Germans. It was feared that another attack might be forthcoming at Limoges, so the group blasted the national highway about 35 kilometers south of Limoges. The local population assisted them in making a tank ditch across the highway. They still had a supply of mines. With these the surrounding terrain was mined and trees were cut down and booby trapped. All the side roads were booby trapped, too. A railroad bridge was blown to block another road. This then protected Limoges from troops moving from the south and there was no indication of troops from the north. Three days were spent in fortifying the city in this manner.

Hamlet decided to move with the group to Limoges now. They arrived in time to celebrate the city's liberation. There were 5,000 Maquis in this area equipped with one Bren gun for

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Operations, OG Percy Red. (Cont'd)

every four men. It was believed to be the best armed Maquis in the whole of France.

The Germans were heading north from Bordeaux attempting to get out by cutting north of Le Blanc. They succeeded in retaking Chateauroux from the FFI at this time. The group then decided to move to Chazelle and do what it could to hinder this movement. For this, it obtained two German gasoline trucks and a good supply of gasoline. Heretofore, it had been using old French trucks, which had proved very unsatisfactory.

Upon arriving at Chazelle, the group found the local Maquis bitter and not very pleased to welcome them. This Maquis had never received any supplies from the Allies, which accounted for this feeling. The supplies they had were obtained from containers dropped in the area evidently by mistake. The OGs remained at Chazelle for two days trying to locate the Germans. When reports were received from various cities of the presence of Germans the men would set out, but wherever they went they found no Germans at all. It was evident from this that Maquis intelligence in this area was not always accurate.

Finally, on 27 August, the group moved to La Rochefoucauld where it received good intelligence information from the Maquis. After investigating the situation, all set out for the national highway. They encountered a great number of Germans here including a group of horse-drawn artillery. This area was very unsatisfactory for operations because the land was perfectly flat, so they moved farther south and established themselves along the highway. While waiting here many German trucks went by marked "Red Cross". The group just waited until a ten-truck troop convoy came along. Troops were

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Operations, CG Percy Red, (Cont'd)

packed solidly into these trucks, so the group decided to attack. The whole convoy was fired on - the first truck was thoroughly sprayed with gunfire. Then, to the confusion of everyone, it was discovered that about 500 yards from their position there was a small unit of Germans with machine guns. Up to now, neither group had seen the other, but now the Germans sprayed the area with machine-gun fire.

Another convoy, was coming along the road, but the group was forced to retreat. A column of Germans were sent around to try to cut it off from the rear, but the group left on guard was on the alert and all managed to withdraw. No casualties were suffered by the OGs in the encounter. This was really miraculous in view of all the firing that took place.

The group found itself getting low on gasoline. On 3 September it went to Le Blanc. From here it could work on the national highway. Germans were strong in this area and there was a group set up in a chateau nearby. When the OGs attacked this chateau they found eight Germans with one machine gun. Two of these were killed and the other six were captured. It turned out to be a motley group - one Marine, one anti-aircraft man, and some infantry men. The group had posted no guards, and it had been comparatively easy to capture them. Our men discovered the front elements of the retreat very well organized, but in the rear sections there was no organization at all. These prisoners had good stocks of cognac, cigarettes, and other supplies. These luxuries had come from the Bordeaux garrison in very unmilitary fashion. It seemed to be a case of every man for himself.

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Operations, OG Percy Red (Cont'd)

It was decided to try another ambush on the highway since they had heard that 300 German trucks were moving up. They scouted around, found a good position to set up their equipment and pulled back into the woods to wait for more information regarding the convoy. While waiting they heard a lot of commotion in the area. This turned out to be about half a German battalion combing the woods in preparation for the trucks to pass through. The OGs were forced to withdraw from their position and they went to Le Blanc.

Next day our men found a small garrison of Germans located in a small town nearby. They sought assistance from the local Maquis to attack. While making plans an American plane flew over and strafed the highway. The group signalled to the plane. The pilot recognized them and the plane continued strafing the Germans. The Germans then turned their guns on the plane and succeeded in knocking out the right motor. The pilot attempted to make a landing, but the plane got out of control as it was nearing the ground and crashed. The group was between the Germans and the plane so they prepared to be discovered as the enemy headed toward the wreck. However, the Germans were so interested in the plane itself that they by-passed the group.

Some Germans were killed in this engagement. One in particular was killed by the W/T operator who made a perfect shot from about 600 feet.

After this incident the OGs decided to withdraw east, about five miles. Lieutenant-Colonel Obolensky of Operational Group Patrick (80) was working here on the highway, so they made plans to work alternate shifts with him. Here, again, they ran into great numbers of Germans. In fact, on the way--

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to meet Lieutenant-Colonel Obolensky, they were surprised by a group of Germans. They were forced to withdraw and take to the ditches, the Germans ultimately doing the same. Later, they learned that the group had fallen back on OG Patrick with a terrible fight ensuing. This incident aroused the area to the point where no other operations could be attempted for a while.

The group got orders from London to work with Lieutenant-Colonel Obolensky so Hamlet returned to London. The group was completely exhausted. All lost considerable weight and their food was only mediocre now. While the group was resting up, Lieutenant-Colonel Obolensky received orders from London for the whole group to return. Immediately they proceeded to La Blanc where they got a C-47 which brought them back to England on the morning of 10 September.

Special commendation is due Pfc Delphis Bonin, who acted as interpreter for the group. He was cooperative and assisted the leaders immeasurably. About five days after the group landed in France, he was in a truck accident and broke his shoulder. He said nothing about it and carried on with his duties. About ten days before the team came out, he broke his hand. Again he said nothing about it but proceeded with his duties. He was popular with the French people and worked very well with them.

During the entire mission the group found Maquis intelligence very unreliable. As a result, much time had to be spent on reconnaissance.

The group received excellent cooperation in regards to supplies. Whatever requests they made were filled immediately. W/T communication was very poor. Consequently, the group worked through Hamlet's operator most of the time.

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OPERATIONAL GROUPS

Group Percy Red

Group Percy Red Leaving for Haute Vienne

FIG 1



Group Percy Red Leaving for the Haute Vienne

FIG 2