



Omaha Beach: A Flawed Victory

Adrian R. Lewis

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The Allied victory at Omaha Beach was a costly one. A direct infantry assault against a defense that was years in the making, undertaken in daylight following a mere thirty-minute bombardment, the attack had neither the advantage of tactical surprise nor that of overwhelming firepower. American forces were forced to improvise under enemy fire, and although they were ultimately victorious, they suffered devastating casualties.

Why did the Allies embark on an attack with so many disadvantages? Making extensive use of primary sources, Adrian Lewis traces the development of the doctrine behind the plan for the invasion of Normandy to explain why the battles for the beaches were fought as they were.

Although blame for the Omaha Beach disaster has traditionally been placed on tactical leaders at the battle site, Lewis argues that the real responsibility lay at the higher levels of operations and strategy planning. Ignoring lessons learned in the Mediterranean and Pacific theaters, British and American military leaders employed a hybrid doctrine of amphibious warfare at Normandy, one that failed to maximize the advantages of either British or U.S. doctrine. Had Allied forces at the other landing sites faced German forces of the quality and quantity of those at Omaha Beach, Lewis says, they too would have suffered heavy casualties and faced the prospect of defeat.

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