

---

# The Round Tablette

*Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)*

---

October 2010

24:02                      Volume 19   Number 2

Published by WW II History Roundtable

Edited by Connie Harris

[www.mn-ww2roundtable.org](http://www.mn-ww2roundtable.org)

---

Thursday, 14 October, 2010

**Welcome to the October session of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Roundtable.** Tonight we welcome author David Colley and veterans of the US Seventh Army.

The evening's discussion focuses on the Allied campaign in southern France which has largely been ignored because of its placement between two other campaigns, Italy and Normandy. Controversy also swirls around its significance in the overall Allied strategy and whether it was truly needed or just diminished the strength of other efforts in Italy and northern France.

When Eisenhower left the Mediterranean Theater to take charge of the overall Allied Expeditionary forces at Normandy, Lieutenant General Jacob Devers became the Deputy Theater Commander under its new chief British General Sir Henry Maitland. While in the Mediterranean, Devers pushed for preparations for ANVIL the invasion of southern France. Because of the Normandy invasion and the demands of the Pacific for amphibious vessels ANVIL was canceled in April 1944. Devers would not allow ANVIL to die and refused to re-allocate supplies and equipment already gathered for the invasion. Revived and renamed DRAGOON on June 24, the invasion took place on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

Although not as large as the Normandy forces, General Devers had much to work with in the invasion, General Alexander Patch's 7<sup>th</sup> Army consisting of the US VI Corps under the command of General Lucian Truscott along with the US 3<sup>rd</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, and 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions and seven French divisions. These were all well-seasoned veterans of North Africa, Sicily and the Italian campaigns. All the commanders in the south of France did not want a re-run of the Italian campaign at Anzio, or the two-month stalemate in Normandy.

After the initial landings in the south, Truscott and the other commanders moved quickly out of the beachhead wanting to prevent another Anzio disaster. Finding limited German resistance, American and French forces were able to quickly take the ports of Toulon and Marseilles. Once the ports were secure for the trickle of supplies Truscott's VI Army Corps moved north linking up with other DRAGOON units. Even so, throughout their movements North, logistics and supplies, especially of fuel would be a constant problem.

The rapid retreat of the *Wehrmacht's* Nineteenth Army resulted in swift gains for the DRAGOON forces and they dashed northward to take Lyon. Within a month of the initial landings Patch's 7<sup>th</sup> Army advanced almost 400 miles up the Rhone River Valley to link up with the Third Army to create a solid wall of Allied forces from Antwerp to the Swiss border.

At that juncture, the forces were reorganized into the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group under

---

**WWII History Round Table on DVD!!! Programs \$10 + tax & shipping**

Order online at: [www.barros.us/online-store.cfm](http://www.barros.us/online-store.cfm) or contact Rob at (763) 639-3399

the command of Devers. Eisenhower also decided to make the Allies' main effort in the North with British General's Bernard Montgomery's forces, while Devers, at the extreme south would have to make do with what he had.

October 1944 proved to be a difficult month for Devers 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group with a slow advance through the Vosges Mountains and continuing supply shortages. However, in November, they made the most significant gain along the Allied lines in Western Europe by taking Strasbourg on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. Even with the continued success of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group, in December, Eisenhower, once again, decided to have his main efforts in the North with secondary attacks in the South. Would a more southern strategy have ended the war earlier? Maybe southern France was Europe's "soft underbelly" that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wished Italy had been. More analysis of DRAGOON could provide the answer to this question.

### Further Readings:

Keith Bonn, *When the Odds were Even: The Vosges Mountains Campaign, October 1944 – January 1945* (New York: Presidio Press, 2006)

Hugh M. Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993).

David Colley, *Decision at Strasbourg: Ike's Strategic Mistake to Halt the Sixth Army Group at the Rhine in 1944* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008).

Jeff Danby, *Day of the Panzers: A Story of American Heroism and Sacrifice in Southern France* (Havertown, PA: Casemate Press, 2008)

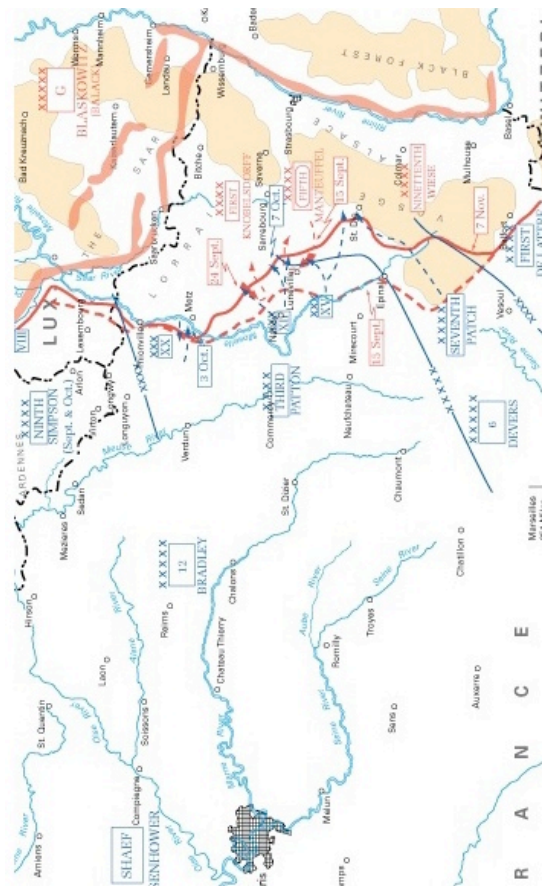
Franz Steidl, *Lost Battalions: Going for Broke in the Vosges, Autumn, 1944* (New York: Presidio

Press, 2000)

Harry Yeide & Mark Stout, *First to the Rhine: The 6<sup>th</sup> Army Group in World War II* ( St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007)

### Round Table Schedule 2010-2011

Oct. 14, Rhone Valley Campaign  
Oct. 28, MIA Recovery Operations  
Nov. 11, HCD Lecture: Yalta Conference  
Dec. 12, Pearl Harbor  
Jan. 13, 2011 Eastern Front Tank Battles  
Feb. 10, Relief of the Philippines  
Mar. 10, Coast Guard Role In Naval Ops  
Apr. 14, Battle of Cassino  
May 12, Bombers Over Germany



**WWII History Round Table on DVD!!!Programs \$10 + tax & shipping**

Order online at: [www.barros.us/online-store.cfm](http://www.barros.us/online-store.cfm) or contact Rob at (763) 639-3399