
The Round Tablette

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

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Welcome to the April meeting of the Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Lieutenant Colonel Will Irwin (Ret.), author of *The Jedburghs* and *Abundance of Valor*. He will discuss the little known story of the special forces units, known as the Jedburghs (Jeds), who parachuted behind enemy lines to support partisans in France just after the Normandy invasion.

If there was ever a World War II topic primed for the silver screen the story of the Jedburghs would be it. Unfortunately most of what they did was classified until the 1980s, so their story has not yet captured the attention of a Hollywood screenwriter.

The term Jedburghs probably came from the town of the same name in Scotland where the men did paramilitary training. The three man teams consisted of a commander, an executive officer, and a radio operator. Personnel for the teams came from British Special Operations Executive (SOE), the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and the Free French Bureau *Central de Renseignements et d'Action*, along with a smattering of Dutch, Belgians, and Canadians. They were not spies; the teams parachuted behind the lines in battle dress uniforms with special insignia on their arms, and therefore, they would be prisoners of war if captured and not shot as spies. Despite the

“rules,” the Germans did kill some Jedburghs outright, which was considered a war crime. Some units did take the risk of going in without wearing uniforms. Team Augustus (Mjr. John H. Bonsall, Capt. Jean Delwiche (Fr) and TSgt Roger E. Cote) wore civilian clothes in an attempt to move across enemy lines and were captured and executed by German troops on 30 August 1944. The French citizens found their military identifications and buried them in the town cemetery.

The first Jedburgh teams were parachuted behind German lines a few days after D-Day in June 1944. Even the insertions could be dangerous and some teams were down a man because of injuries from the landings. Once behind enemy lines the Jedburghs's purpose was to rendezvous with the French resistance groups, known as the Maquis. Not only would the Jeds be liaisons between the Allied armies and the Maquis, but they also engaged in guerrilla warfare, sabotage, ambushes, blowing up bridges, gathering intelligence. With no real hope of reinforcements or supplies, the Jeds had to be intelligent, cunning, and strong. The teams also became diplomats and settled dispute between the Maquis groups that had different political affiliations and agendas. Jedburgh units were able to make them focus on the task at hand, defeating the Germans.

After the Germans were defeated, the Jeds faded into their respective societies and became teachers, farmers, doctors and professors. Some of the French Jedburghs went on to use their skills in French Indo-

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China to maintain their colonial stronghold there. Like other military units though the Jedburghs have had reunions, but since there were only three hundred their numbers have dwindled substantially over the years. The techniques used by the Jeds laid the groundwork for the operations conducted by special forces units today.

Further Reading:

Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France, 1944* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006).

Will Irwin, *Abundance of Valor: Resistance, Survival, and Liberation: 1944-45* (New York: Presidio Press, 2010).

Colin Beavan, *Operation Jedburgh: D-Day and America's First Shadow War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

Paul Gaujac, *Special Forces in the Invasion of France* (Paris, France: Histoire & Collections, 1999).

Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2005).

Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of World War II's OSS* (Yucca Valley, CA: Citadel Press, 2006).

S. J. Lewis, *Jedburgh team operations in support of the 12th Army Group*, <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/resources/csi/Lewis/Lewis.asp>

Announcements:

Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - May 15, 2012 Guerrilla Warfare in the Western Theater www.tccwrt.com - 612-724-3849

St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - Apr. 23, 2012 "Guns of Gettysburg"- Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268

Rochester WWII History Round Table – May 14, 2012 Pacific Submarine War, 507-280-9970; www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org

Fort Snelling Civil War Symposium Apr. 14, 2012, <http://www.tccwrt.com/symposium.html> or tccwrt@yahoo.com

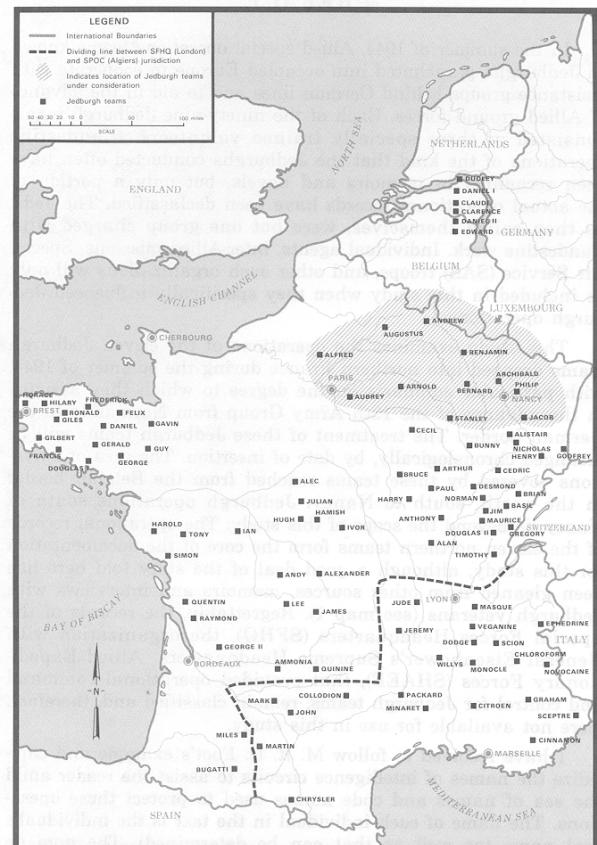
Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
Air Show - Eden Prairie - July, 14-15, 2012; <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100
Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717
CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafmn.org or Bill at 952-201-8400
Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.com

Round Table Schedule 2012

May10 Battle of Leyte Gulf

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton coldpatton@yahoo.com

This is our 25th Year!



Map 1. Jedburgh teams in France, June–September 1944

If you liked tonight's program, view our prior programs: [ADVANCE ACROSS FRANCE \(OCT. 2001\)](#), [OSS-OG D-14 \(Jan. 1991, 5:4\)](#) or [3 Years in the OSS \(Nov. 1992 6:2\)](#) You may order these tonight for delivery next month by seeing Rob at the desk, or online at: www.barros.us/online-store.cfm or contact Rob at (763) 639-3399