

AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

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TRANSLATION NO.VII/21.

O P E R A T I O N

'S E A - L I O N'

(Invasion of Britain)

Translations of 12 Top-Secret directives
for the above operation, signed by HITLER,
KEITEL and JODL in July, August,
September and October, 1940.

TRANSLATED BY:

Air Ministry, A.H.B.6.
28.2.1947.

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O.K.W.

Fuehrers Headquarters

2.7.1940

THE WAR AGAINST ENGLAND

The Fuehrer and Supreme Commander has decided:

- (1) That a landing in England is possible, providing that air superiority can be attained, and certain other necessary conditions fulfilled. The date of commencement is still undecided. All preparations to be begun immediately.
- (2) The Commands of the three Services are to supply the following information:
 - (a) Army. (1) Estimates of the strength of the British forces, of losses, and of the extent to which the British Army will have been re-equipped a month or so hence.
(2) An appreciation of the operational strength of our coastal batteries, and their capacity to provide additional protection for our shipping against British naval forces.
 - (b) Navy. (1) Survey of possible landing points for strong Army forces, (25-40 divisions), and estimate of strength of English coastal defences.
(2) Indication of sea routes over which our forces can be transported with the maximum safety. In selecting landing areas, it must be remembered that landings on a broad front will facilitate subsequent deep penetration.
(3) Data on shipping available, with probable date on which this could be ready
 - (c) Air Force. An estimate of the chances of attaining air supremacy, and figures showing the relative strengths of the G.A.F. and R.A.F.
To what extent can the landing be supported by a parachute attack? (Highest priority to be given to the production of transport aircraft)
- (3) The Commands of the three services should co-operate in evolving a plan for the transport of the maximum number of troops with the minimum of shipping and aircraft space.

The invading forces must be highly mechanised and numerically superior to the opposing armies.
- (4) All preparations must be undertaken on the basis that the invasion is still only a plan, and has not yet been decided upon. Knowledge of preparations must be restricted to those immediately concerned.

(Sgd.) KEITEL.

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Chief W.F.A.

12.7.1940.

FIRST DELIBERATIONS REGARDING A LANDING IN ENGLAND

('Sea-Lion')

I. General

The landing will be difficult.

Reasons: (a) England is in command of the seas

Therefore a landing will only be possible on the South coast on the Channel where we can substitute our lack of sea supremacy by air supremacy and where the sea crossing is short.

(b) Recognising this situation England has so arranged the bulk of her land forces that they can be quickly thrown against German troops which land.

(c) The readiness of our shipping in the French harbours is known to the enemy. A strategic surprise therefore will not be achieved.

The landing must therefore be completed in the form of a powerful large scale crossing, in which the role of the artillery will fall to the Air Force, the first wave of landing troops must be very strong and a sea lane completely secure from attack must be established to the bridgehead.

II. The Organisation of the Command and of Preparations

Supreme Command by the Fuehrer.

Army, Navy and Air Force under their Commanders in Chief, OKH will presumably detail one army group for all operations on the English mainland, and, according to its requirements and wishes will deal directly with the OKM in the matter of supplying of further units and maintenance. (Similar to the Heimatstab of Group XXI). The 3 Commanders in Chief must therefore be in the vicinity of the Fuehrer's HQ.

Ob.d.H.	Giessen
Ob.d.L.	in the vicinity of Ziegenberg
Ob.d.M.	in Wildungen

Signals communications for these command posts are laid and ready.

III. Preparations

(a) OKM must determine in the first place how much shipping space it can prepare for the first crossing, for which ferry boats, small boats, motor boats and lights are more important than large seagoing ships. It will be necessary to land simultaneously in 7 different places between Dover and Bournemouth combat troops of 7 divisions, the necessary A.A. artillery for the protection of the disembarkation, as well as munitions, food and fuel. OKM is to determine the embarkation harbours. The disembarkation points must be chosen by OKM in conjunction with OKH after study of nautical and tactical factors. From a tactical point of view it would be desirable to keep these 7 landing points continually in action following the first crossing. It is an essential condition

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that the Navy will be able to lay and protect a wide mine barrier on the left flank between Alderney and Portland (100 km), and on the right flank between Calais and Ramsgate (50 km). In spite of this right hand boundary, it should remain possible to use Dunkirk and Ostend as embarkation harbours if necessary.

(b) The installation of coastal batteries

The organisation of both Army and Naval artillery must be in the hands of the Navy, with the possible exception of those batteries whose sole function is to bombard the English mainland (K 5 and K 12). These remain under the Army. The distribution of the coastal batteries must be such that all embarkation harbours are secured against enemy naval combat forces. A number of the heaviest of these batteries (40 and 38 cm) (at first 7) opposite the Straits of Dover must be built under concrete so that they will withstand the heaviest air attacks and thereby exercise unceasing control over the Straits of Dover.

- (c) It is the task of the Army to prepare the Operations Plan after the landing points have been determined by the Navy. The armament and formation of the first landing wave will depend on the type and size of the shipping made available. The Jagd and Kampfgruppen are to be instructed to work in closest cooperation with the individual crossing points. A.A. protection of the embarkation harbours is the responsibility of the competent Luftflotten; that of the landing points will be the responsibility of the competent Army Commander until a unified Command is set up on the English mainland.

IV. The Carrying out of the Project

(1) The project must be preceded by

- (a) the subjection, actual and as regards morale, of the British Air Force, to such an extent that it is no longer capable of effective resistance.
 - (b) The destruction of all Naval Forces stationed on the English south coast.
 - (c) The creation of sea lanes free of mines.
 - (d) The securing of our flanks by mine barriers.
 - (e) Projects for the tying down of English Naval Forces by the Italians, both in the North Sea and in the Mediterranean.
- (2) The troops destined for the first crossing will necessarily be stationed in the vicinity of their embarkation harbours for some considerable time before the arrival of the ships.
- (3) The Navy must make proposals for the guiding of shipping into the embarkation harbours.

It is certain that the ships, - possibly totalling 800 craft of 500 tons must be collected gradually on the French coast and there dispersed as widely as possible.

The enemy can only be surprised as to the exact time at which the embarkation and crossing commence.

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(4) Crossing and Landing

The day is the safest time for embarkation, as our air supremacy and strong A.A. defences can only avail us then. The crossing is to be made in such a manner that by daybreak the transport ships arrive simultaneously at all points on the English mainland.

An essential condition for success is favourable weather which will allow the smallest ships to make the crossing and permit the operation of the Air Force and of parachute and airborne troops. The Air Force is to make suggestions for the operation of these troops.

The crossing and disembarkation will take place.

(a) under the protection of the whole Air Force

whose task will be

all this to prevent the intervention of the enemy Air Force, and to attack the enemy Naval Forces far away from the crossing points, to overcome coastal defences which can operate against the landing points, to break the resistance of the enemy ground troops and to annihilate reserves, to destroy the most important lines of transport necessary for bringing up of reinforcements.

(b) under the protection of the mine barrier

on the flanks, and of the U-boats and guardships which will be ready for operation.

(c) under the protection of the far-reaching coastal batteries,

and of the long distance artillery which will reach well over the Straits of Dover (K 5 and K 12) and of heavy naval guns.

(5) Whether all crossing points will be maintained in the further progress of operations cannot be foreseen.

(6) For signals communications between France and the English coast, in addition to W/T, cables with which 2 telephone lines can be laid through the Straits of Dover, are available and decimeter-wireless with which one can speak on quite short waves without fear of interception.

V. Besides these general principles regarding the carrying out of a large scale landing, many tactical and technical questions will arise. The data necessary for their solution must be gathered as soon as possible.

(a) OKW will draft a directive regarding preparations and execution of the landing, and detailing commanders for the operation.

(b) OKM will produce a survey of the type and size of shipping available, and its loading possibilities.

(c) OKM will indicate those points at which embarkation and landing can take place and with what types of ships.

(d) The plans of operations will be evolved, the invasion troops organized and dispersed at the various points of embarkation. The chain of command will be settled and shipping allocated.

/ (e)

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- (e) The Army, Navy and Air Force Commanders will prepare the crossing of the first wave.
- (f) OKH will attend to preparations for subsequent landings and to the provision of reinforcements.
- (g) In order to give rapid support at any threatened invasion points, a strong reserve of transport planes must be held in readiness by the Air Force.

(Sgd.) JODL.

Agreed: (Sgd.) KEITEL.

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Fuehrer's Headquarters

16.7.1940

The Fuehrer and Supreme Commander
of the Wehrmacht.

Preparations for the invasion of England.

As England, in spite of the hopelessness of her military position, has so far shown herself unwilling to come to any compromise, I have therefore decided to begin preparations for, and if necessary to carry out an invasion of England.

This operation is dictated by the necessity of eliminating Great Britain as a basis from which the war against Germany can be fought, and if necessary, the island will be occupied.

I therefore issue the following orders:

1. The landing operation must be a surprise crossing on a broad front extending approximately from Ramsgate to a point West of the Isle of Wight. Elements of the Air Force will do the work of the artillery and elements of the Navy the work of engineers. I ask each of the fighting services to consider the advantage from their respective point of view of preliminary operations such as the occupation of the Isle of Wight or the Duchy of Cornwall prior to the full scale invasion, and to inform me of the result of their deliberations. I shall be responsible for the final decision.

The preparations for the large scale invasion must be concluded by the middle of August.

2. The following preparations must be undertaken to make a landing in England possible:-

- (a) The British Air Force must be eliminated to such an extent that it will be incapable of putting up any substantial opposition to the invading troops.
- (b) The sea routes must be cleared of mines.
- (c) Both flanks of the Straits of Dover and the western approaches to the Channel, approximately on a line from Alderney to Portland, must be so heavily mined as to be completely inaccessible.
- (d) Heavy coastal guns must dominate and protect the entire coastal front area.
- (e) It is desirable that the English fleets both in the North Sea and in the Mediterranean should be pinned down, (by the Italians in the latter instance), shortly before the crossing takes place; with this aim in view, the naval forces at present in British harbours and coastal waters, should be attacked from the air and by torpedoes.

3. Organization of Commands and of the preparations.

The Commanders in Chief of the respective branches of the Armed Forces will lead their forces, under my orders. The Army, Navy and Air Force General Staffs should be within an area of no more than 50 kms. from my Head Quarters (Ziegenberg) by the 1st August. I suggest that the Army and Naval General Staffs establish their Headquarters at Giessen.

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The C.-in-C. of the Army will nominate one Army Group to lead the invasion force.

The invasion will be referred to by the code name "Seelowe".

During the period of preparation and execution of the landings, the armed forces will carry out the following measures:

(a) Army:

Will draft a plan for the crossing and operations of the first wave of the invading force. The necessary Flak batteries will remain under the command of the individual army units until such time as their tasks can be divided into the following groups: support and protection of the land troops, protection of the disembarkation ports, and protection after their occupation of air bases. The Army will allocate landing craft to the individual units and determine, in conjunction with the Navy, the points at which the embarkation and the landings will take place.

(b) Navy:

Will provide and safeguard the invasion fleet and direct it to the individual points of embarkation. As far as possible, ships belonging to defeated nations are to be used.

Together with aircraft patrols, the Navy will provide adequate protection on both flanks during the entire Channel crossing. An order on the allocation of the commands during the crossing will follow in due course. The Navy will further supervise the establishment of coastal batteries, and will be responsible for the organisation of all coastal guns.

The largest possible number of heavy guns must be installed as soon as possible to safeguard the crossing and to cover both flanks against enemy interference from the sea. For this purpose, A.A. guns mounted on railway bogies (supplemented by all available captured guns) with railway turn tables will be used. The Todt organization will be entrusted with the technical side of the organization.

(c) The Air Force:

Will prevent all enemy air attacks, and will destroy coastal defences covering the landing points, break the initial resistance of the enemy land forces, and annihilate reserves behind the front. The accomplishment of these tasks will require the closest cooperation between all individual units of the air force and the invading army units. In addition, roads used for troop movements will be attacked and approaching enemy naval vessels engaged before they can reach the embarkation and landing points.

I invite suggestions concerning the use of parachute and airborne troops, and in particular as to whether it would be advisable to keep the parachute and airborne troops in reserve for use only in case of necessity.

4. The necessary preparations for the installation of signals communications between France and England are being undertaken by the Signals Corps. The armoured under-sea cables are to be laid in cooperation with the Navy.

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5. I hereby order the Commanders in Chiefs to provide me with the following information:

- (a) The plans drawn up by the Navy and Air Force for providing the basic conditions necessary for the Channel crossing (sec (2) Supra).
- (b) A detailed survey of the location of the Naval coastal batteries.
- (c) An estimate of the shipping space necessary and of the methods of preparation and equipment. Will civilian authorities be asked to cooperate? (Navy)
- (d) The organization of air defence in the areas in which the invading troops and vehicles are concentrated, (Air Force)
- (e) The plan for the Army crossing and operations, the organization and equipment of the first wave,
- (f) Details of measures planned by the Navy and Air Force for the execution of the crossing itself, its protection, and the support of the landing operations,
- (g) Suggestions concerning the use of parachute and airborne troops, and as the organization of the Flak artillery, once the spear-head troops have advanced sufficiently on English soil to permit their use (Air Force)
- (h) Location of Army and Naval Headquarters.
- (i) Are the Army Navy and Air Force Commanders of the opinion that the invasion should be preceded by a preliminary small-scale landing?

(Sgd.) HITLER.

(Initialled.) KEITEL and JOEL

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Fuehrer's Headquarters

30.7.1940

To: C.-in-C. Air Force

The Fuehrer orders that all preparations for the opening of a large scale air offensive against Britain be made immediately, so that operations can begin within 12 hours after the Fuehrer's order is issued.

(Sgd.) JODL.

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O.K.W.

Fuehrer's Headquarters

1.8.1940

Operation 'Sea-Lion'

The C.-in-C. Navy having reported on July 31st that the necessary preparations for 'Sea-Lion' could not be completed before September 15th, The Fuehrer has ordered:-

- (1) Preparations for 'Sea-Lion' are to be continued, and completed by the Army and Air Force by September 15th.
- (2) 8 or 14 days after the launching of the air offensive against Britain, scheduled to begin on approximately August 5th, the Fuehrer will decide whether the invasion will take place this year or not; his decision will depend largely on the outcome of the air offensive.
- (3) Should the decision be taken not to attempt the operation in September, preparations are to be continued, but not to the extent of damaging our economy through the tying up of our inland shipping system.
- (4) In spite of the Navy's warning that they can only guarantee the defence of a narrow strip of coast (as far West as Eastbourne), preparations are to be continued for the attack on a broad basis as originally planned.
- (5) The instructions given in the order of July 16th regarding the location of Headquarters Staffs remain in force, but their move to the proximity of the Fuehrer's Headquarters will not take place until immediately prior to the commencement of the operation.

(Sgd.) KEITTEL

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O.K.W.

Fuehrer's Headquarters

7.8.1940

Measures to be taken to deceive the enemy

Object.

No matter whether, or when our armies land in England, a constant strain must be imposed on the British population and armed forces. It is important to produce the illusion that the main German landings will take place on the East coast of England, and that a subsidiary landing in Eire is being prepared. The enemy must be led to believe that we consider the Channel defences too strong to attempt a landing there.

Action to be taken.

Our propaganda reports will only be believed and cause the enemy to adopt counter-measures, if they are substantiated by British reports on our activities. The following measures must therefore be adopted:-

- (1) Our troop concentrations, supply shipments, etc., must be extended beyond their present location to include preparations in Norway and Denmark, (to give the idea that a landing is intended in Eastern England), the Netherlands, (Landing North of the Thames Estuary), and the Bay of Biscay, (landing in Eire). Once these preparations have begun, certain areas must be closed to the civilian population to give them added authenticity. Personnel engaged on these measures, must, with the exception of a few officers, not be told of their true purpose.
- (2) The High Commands of the Three Services will therefore undertake the necessary measures, and carry out movements and attacks in accordance with the above aim. Reports on progress and further plans should be submitted by August 20th.

(Sgd.) KEITTEL.

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O.K.W.

Fuehrer's Headquarters

12.8.1940

(Extract)

On the assumption that,

- (a) 'Sea-Lion' does not take place this year, and
- (b) that the Italian Offensive against the Suez Canal fails, or suffers further postponement, it is possible that the Fuehrer will consider sending German forces to Africa to reinforce the Italians.

(Sgd.) JOEL.

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Chief of Wehrmacht

Berlin

Operations Staff

13.8.40.

Situation Report

(1) The landing-operation must on no account fail, as any such failure would have far-reaching political consequences.

(2) In order to avoid as far as humanly possible any mishap, I am in agreement with the Army High Command that the following conditions must be fulfilled:

(a) We must set foot simultaneously at points along the coast between Folkestone and Brighton.

(b) 10 divisions must be landed within 4 days.

(c) In the next 4 days at least 3 fully equipped divisions must be landed in the Dover area, the forces further west being reinforced by parachute landings.

(d) No British naval forces must be present on the South Coast, including Portsmouth.

(e) The striking power of the enemy Air Force must have been eliminated.

I believe that the Air Force can achieve conditions (d) and (e). In a week's time we shall be certain of this.

If however the Navy, and here the position must be clarified, is unable to fulfil conditions (a), (b), and (c), an invasion of Britain would be an act of desperation by no means justified in the present situation.

(3) England can be brought to her knees by other means. In this connection, closer co-operation than hitherto will be essential between the Axis powers. The following alternatives are available:-

(a) The air war against Southern England can be continued until its economic elimination is complete. The so far inactive Italian units must help in this.

(b) Intensification of submarine warfare from French bases, with the assistance of half the Italian submarine fleet.

(c) The conquest of Egypt, if necessary with German help.

(d) The conquest of Gibraltar, with the help of Italy and Spain.

(e) All operations not essentially directed against the British, and which could easily be undertaken once England has fallen, must be avoided. (e.g. the attack on Yugoslavia).

Our operations should be directed not against individual military objectives but towards the achievement of final victory. England's resistance must be broken before next spring, if not by an invasion, then by other means.

/ We

We are now entering on the decisive phase of the war against England. The Italians have shown themselves willing to participate in the attacks against England, mainly because they appreciate that only a part of their forces can operate effectively in their own theatre of war. In my opinion, the Duce could be made to understand that we are fighting this war together, and not on parallel lines. Only thus can final victory be rapidly achieved.

(Sgd.) JODL.

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O.K.W.

Fuehrer's Headquarters

16.8.1940

'Sea - Lion'

(1) On August 15th, the following decisions were made by the Fuehrer.

(a) Preparations for the operation to take place on September 15th are to be continued. Final orders will not be given until the situation is clear.

(b) Preparations for a landing in Lyme Bay are to be abandoned, on account of the inadequate protection available in that area.

Shipping is to be held in readiness along the coast between Ostend and Le Havre, thus avoiding congestion in the ports nearest to the enemy coast, and confusing the enemy as to our exact intentions.

(c) Dispositions should be taken in such manner as not to exclude the possibility of an attack on a narrow front, should this be ordered at the last minute, and to leave open the possibility of a single landing in the Brighton area.

(2) Suggestions are also invited as to the possible employment of parachute and airborne troops.

(Sgd.) KEITTEL.

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O.K.W.

Fuehrer's Headquarters

3.9.1940

'Sea - Lion'

- (1) The earliest day for the sailing of the invasion fleet has been fixed as September 20th, and that of the landing for September 21st.
- (2) Orders for the launching of the attack will be given on 'D. Day minus 10', presumably therefore on September 11th.
- (3) Final Commands will be given at the latest on 'D. Day minus 3' at mid-day.
- (4) All preparations must remain liable to cancellation 24 hours before 'zero hour'.

(Initialled)

KEITEL and JOEL.

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O.K.W.

Berlin

14.9.1940

(Extract)

At the conference of Supreme Commanders held to-day, the following decisions were reached by the Fuehrer:

(1) 'Sea-Lion'

The attack will be further postponed. New orders will be issued on September 17th. All preparations to be continued.

(Initialled)

KEITEL and JOEL

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O.K.W.

Fuehrer's Headquarters

12.10.1940

(1) The Fuehrer has decided that from now on until the Spring, preparations for 'Sea-Lion' shall be continued solely for the purpose of maintaining political and military pressure on England.

Should the invasion be reconsidered in the Spring or early Summer of 1941, orders for a renewal of operational readiness will be issued later. In the meantime military conditions for a late invasion are to be improved.

(2) All measures taken to reduce present operational readiness must be in conformity with the following principles:-

(a) The British must continue to believe that we are preparing an attack on a broad front.

(b) At the same time, however, our war economy must be relieved of some of the present heavy strain placed upon it by our invasion preparations.

(3) In particular, as regards

(a) The Army, the formations allocated for 'Sea-Lion' can now be released for other duties or for employment on other fronts. We must however avoid any noticeable reduction in the forces in coastal areas.

(b) The Navy must take all measures to release personnel and shipping space, particularly tugs and fishing craft, for other tasks. All movements of shipping in connection with the dispersal must be carried out unobtrusively and spread over a considerable period of time.

(Sgd.) KEITEL.

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