

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Born: October 14, 1890 in Denison, TX
Died: March 28, 1969 in Washington, D.C.

As Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces in World War II, Eisenhower's list of duties included: the buildup of American forces, the invasion of North Africa, the invasion of Sicily, and the invasion of Italy. None of these operations were easy to coordinate or setup, especially by Eisenhower who had never experienced any of the political maneuvering that so often accompanies battlefield tactics. However, Eisenhower used every defeat and every victory over the course of the three Mediterranean invasions to gain knowledge that would help in the coming invasion of Europe.

Appointed as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) Eisenhower was tasked with organizing, coordinating, and executing Operation OVERLORD, the invasion of Northern France. Unfortunately for Eisenhower, there was a general lack of agreement between the different Allied commanders over which strategies should be employed during the invasion of France, and subsequently, Germany. Using his diplomatic and military skills, Eisenhower was able to work around any misunderstandings he encountered.

Eisenhower's main strategy for the Invasion of France was to employ a large front consisting of two army groups – right and left. The emphasis for the left army group was to advance and capture strategic ports and threaten the Ruhr industrial valley of Germany. Meanwhile, the right army group was to move west and south and link up with forces attacking northward from a second invasion in Southern France. The main objective was to defeat all German forces west of the Rhine, set up logistical bases and find river crossings in preparation for the final thrust into Germany, and to effect an envelopment of the Ruhr valley. This was in complete contrast to General Montgomery who favored a more pin-point attack system that would have seen British forces advancing well ahead of American forces.

Eisenhower believed that a strong-front-type of warfare (A.K.A Broad front strategy) was best because it would allow him to maintain a steady advance across France. This strategy would bring all the Allied military power to bear on Germany at one time, and because he felt a broad front was most likely to find and exploit weaknesses in the German defenses. Eisenhower's decision was met with resistance from many other Generals, but he stuck to it and eventually won the day.

When the Battle of the Bulge developed Eisenhower saw the German breakthrough as both a setback and an opportunity to destroy the German Army. He said, "The present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not of disaster. There will be only cheerful faces at this table." Eisenhower's strategy for the Battle of the Bulge first included moving the 1st and 9th American armies from Bradley's 12th Army group into Montgomery's 21st Army Group. Second, Eisenhower required Patton to bring his 3rd Army north to counter-attack the German flanks while Montgomery attacked from the north to create a pincer movement that would cut off all German forces in the Bulge. Unfortunately, Montgomery's attack in the north came too late and Patton's advance from the south was too slow. Many German forces were able to withdraw back through the salient and survive to fight another day, albeit without many of their tanks and heavy weapons which they had to leave behind.



George S. Patton

Born: 11 November 1885 in San Gabriel, CA

Died: 21 December 1945 in Heidelberg, Germany

George Patton Jr. was born 11 November, 1885. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1909 and began his military career as a U.S. Army Lieutenant. In 1916, his first campaign would take him to the American southwest to fight in the Mexican Punitive Expedition under the command of General John J. (Blackjack) Pershing.

By the time America entered WWI Patton was ready for action. General Pershing promoted Patton to Captain and placed him in a command position in the U.S. Army Tank Corps which was part of the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF). After two more promotions Lieutenant Colonel Patton took command of the U.S. Tank Corps, and led the offensive into Battle of Saint-Mihiel. There Patton was wounded and received the Purple Heart. For his services in the Meuse-Argonne operations, Patton received the Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor.

During the interwar period Colonel Patton tried desperately to find allocations to build an armored American force. He would have no luck until the German blitzkrieg began in Europe in 1939. Patton was promoted to Brigadier General, and just months later promoted to Major General, and placed as commanding General of the 2nd Armored Division.

Major General Patton now commanded the Western Task Force of the U.S. Army. He would land them in Morocco in North Africa. After the humiliating defeat of the II Corps at Kasserine Pass, Patton was once again promoted and took command of II Corps as Lieutenant General Patton. With each successful victory in North Africa the legacy of Patton began to grow. He was then placed in command of the Seventh Army and the invasion of Sicily. LTG Patton would liberate Sicily, but due to an infamous field hospital incident Patton would be left out of the Normandy invasion although he still proved to be an invaluable asset. The German high command was sure that Patton would lead the assault, so in Operation FORTITUDE LTG Patton acted as a decoy to the main operation, OVERLORD. After the invasion Patton was given command of the Third Army and in Operation COBRA, Patton led the breakout that covered six hundred miles.

On 16 December, 1944 twenty-nine German Divisions (approximately 250,000 men) led by Field Marshall Gerd Von Rundstedt attacked the Allied front lines in Belgium, Luxemburg, and northeastern France in the Ardennes offensive, better known as the Battle of the Bulge. The next morning General Eisenhower held a meeting to which LTG Patton arrived late, when he entered he said, "What do you do when you catch a monkey hanging by its tail... you cut off its balls and that is what I am going to do with Rundstedt." LTG Patton was asked if could turn his army around and attack the German lines that had bulged around the city of Bastogne. In an amazing tactical and logistical move, Patton moved the Third Army into an offensive position and attacked the German line. On the 26 December elements of the 37th Tank Battalion, 4th Division broke through the lines and ended the siege of Bastogne. On the 1st of January, Patton attacked north, linking the British and American forces. Finally, on the 7th Hitler withdrew his forces, ending the last German offensive.

On the 22nd of March, 1945 Patton's Third Army crossed the Rhine at Oppenheim. His Third Army was halted on the 6th of May after liberating Pilsen and western Bohemia. On May 7th Nazi Germany surrendered and the war in Europe was over.

After a hunting trip in Heidelberg Germany, LTG Patton and his party were in a severe car accident when they were hit head on by a two and a half ton truck. On December 20, 1945 in his hospital bed the controversial American leader was promoted to Full General. A day later GEN Patton died in Heidelberg, Germany. Although a questioned leader, he character was spoken for when twenty-thousand soldiers volunteered to be pallbearers at his funeral. He was buried in Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial in Hamm, Luxembourg.



Bernard Law Montgomery

Born: 17 November 1887 in London, England

Died: 1976 in Alton, Hampshire

Upon his graduation from Sandhurst Military Academy in 1908, Bernard Montgomery joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. In 1908, Monty went with the 1st Battalion went to serve in India. The unit returned in 1913 in preparation for a European war. His regiment met heavy combat once inside France. On the night of 13 October 1914, during a counter-offensive Montgomery was severely wounded in the chest. He would return to action in 1916 and serve as a staff officer. He would be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the 47th Division and serve until the end of the war in late 1918.

During the years between the world wars, Montgomery would see personal success and tragedy. He would marry Elizabeth Carver in 1927, and hold her in her death in 1937. He dealt with his heartbreak by immediately submersing himself in work. Due to his military successes in the Middle East he was promoted to Major General in 1939, and put in command of the British 3rd Division. Then once again war broke out in Europe. He would take his division to France to fight in the “phony war”. Montgomery proved valuable to Britain by saving over 330,000 thousand men of the British Expeditionary Force by successfully evacuating the soldiers from Dunkirk, France back to England. In 1940, Montgomery was promoted to Lieutenant General, and in 1941 received command of the 12th Corps. General Montgomery was a soldiers’, soldier. He made it his mission to visit all of his soldiers on the ground, and provide them with information to help them understand why they were there and what they were doing.

General Montgomery’s finest moment came in North Africa in 1942. Montgomery, also known as “Monty” took command of the British 8th Army. He irritated some of his fellow commanders by taking command three days premature to his orders. On the 3rd of November, 1942 after twelve days of bitter fighting, Montgomery defeated Field Marshall Rommel at El Alamein. From here Monty went on to Operation HUSKY, (the invasion of Sicily). This is where the tensions between U.S. commanders and Montgomery would begin. Montgomery helped take Sicily, and his 8th Army assisted in the invasion of mainland Italy until he was relieved on 23 December 1943. He would be reassigned to the 21st Group at Normandy.

After the successful completion of Operation OVERLORD, Montgomery spoke out about his desire to command of all ground forces. This command was given to General Eisenhower, which had been discussed prior to the D-Day invasion. To compensate Monty’s ego, Winston Churchill promoted him to Field Marshall. At this point Montgomery was able to convince Eisenhower to use his Airborne plan to take Arnhem. Operation MARKET GARDEN was a disaster. The operation was poorly planned, and may have been too bold for the Allied forces were quickly and brutally defeated. The whole 1st Airborne Division was lost. From here Montgomery’s 12th Group was instructed to take Antwerp so that the port there could be opened.

On December 16, 1944 the German Army using twenty-nine divisions consisting of 250,000 men broke through the American lines in the Ardennes Forest. A meeting was called by General Eisenhower to create a plan to stop the Ardennes Offensive or more commonly referred to as the Battle of the Bulge. Montgomery was to take his 12th Group along with the 1st and 9th American Armies (against all recommendations of General Bradley) and consolidate forces to create a stable defensive line that can begin a counter-offensive. Field Marshall did an exceptional job of fulfilling this mission. He was able to restore his units and create a coherent battle with logical battle plans. His refusal to engage with German forces premature stopped the breakthrough in the north. On January 1st, 1945 Montgomery was given orders to attack south and link up with Patton’s Third Army. Montgomery disregarded these orders until the 3rd because of a bad snowstorm. Eventually he fulfilled the mission and assisted the counter-offensive through the Ardennes.

In March of 1945 Montgomery advanced the 12th Group over the Rhine and took up strategic positions to protect Denmark from the Red Army. On the 4th of May 1945 Field Marshall Montgomery accepted the surrender of German forces in Northern Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands.



Clifton Andrus

Born: 12 October 1880 in Fort Leavenworth Kansas

Died: September 1968

Major General Clifton Andrus was born on October 12, 1880 in Fort Leavenworth Kansas to parents Edwin Proctor and Marie Josephine (Birdwell) Andrus. Clifton Andrus followed in the footsteps of his father who was a colonel in the United States army. Andrus graduated from Cornell University in 1912. Following his trek through the numerous military schools he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, 4th Field Artillery. He was initially stationed in Hawaii and was present when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.



Clifton Andrus became the 1st Division's Artillery Commander in the spring of 1942. Andrus' subordinates noted that he was observant and very sharp while at the same time responded to questions and problems in a calm, collected, and cool manner – a nice change of pace from the commander he was relieving. After assuming command Andrus and the rest of the 1st Division were set about the task of preparing for Operation Torch – Invasion of North Africa.

While in Africa, Gen. Clifton Andrus proved himself to be a very valuable leader to the 1st Division. After North Africa, the Division was transferred to Sicily for their second landing against the enemy. It was here that Andrus really began to shine as a leader. At Gela and Gaza in Sicily, Andrus was reported to have calmly and coolly directed his artillery batteries personally against the ferocious counter-attacks of German Panzer Divisions. It was during these actions that Gen. Clifton Andrus earned his Distinguished Service Cross from General George Patton. Andrus' actions in and around Gela saved the lives of the men he was with, and possibly saved the entire division from destruction.

After the Normandy Invasion (D-Day), the race across France, and the bloody battle of the Hurtgen Forest the 1st Division was finally given the chance to rest. It was during this short respite that Clifton Andrus was given full command of the 1st Division on December 11th, 1944 – just five days before the German counter-offensive known as the Battle of the Bulge. The German attack plunged Andrus into his first role as Division leader, and to all accounts performed admirably. The 1st Division was stationed, at least in part, on the northern section of the Bulge, and was ordered to hold the line at all costs. Major General Clifton Andrus made this possible through his expert direction of artillery that slowed and stopped the Germans at every opportunity. As the German assault ground to a halt Maj. Gen. Andrus led the Division on a counterattack and pushed into Germany.

Major General Clifton Andrus remained the Division commander until the end of 1945 when he was transferred to other important military posts until his retirement in 1952. Maj. Gen. Clifton Andrus' knowledge of Artillery tactics saved the First Division both at Gela, Sicily, and during the Battle of the Bulge. By massing artillery on every occasion Andrus was able to destroy many of the German formations before they could breach the infantry lines.

Maj. General Clifton Andrus died in September of 1968 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. For his valor throughout his career Maj. Gen. Andrus was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Service Medal (for action around Bonn and the Ruhr River Crossing), the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Clusters (for service as the Artillery Commander), the Legion of Merit with Oak Leafs Clusters, the Soldiers Medal (for saving Private First Class Alex. Kaye from drowning), and a Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Clusters.

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt

Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt was known as the “Black Knight”. His time in the German military was filled with victorious ups and crushing downs. Rundstedt was the oldest serving officer in the German military (69 years old) in September 1944. Rundstedt had already retired and been brought back to active duty three times during WWII, when in September Hitler once again called his loyal general out of retirement. The Ardennes Offensive would be Rundstedt’s final call back from retirement.

Rundstedt always acknowledged the “strategic ineptitude” of the Allied High Command for allowing him the time in September and October of 1944 to recreate the mass confusion of the German retreat into a solid defensive line. The result of which prolonged the war through the winter and into the spring of 1945.

His return to the war is remembered as both heroic and tragic. He did give the battered German troops, who had been continuously retreating for over a month, a new hope. Conversely, this new hope only offered a temporary joy. The final German offensive was a fruitless event that prolonged the war. Even though he knew the war was lost, Rundstedt dug into the military struggle of 1944. His decision to go through with the defense cost many countrymen their lives for a hopeless battle.

Another conflicting element of Field Marshall Gerd von Rundstedt’s career was his tenuous connection to the German government. He never liked politics, especially Nazi politics. Rundstedt called the Nazi party “brown dirt”, but still loyally followed Hitler down paths he knew to be wrong. He never wavered in loyalty to Adolf Hitler- unlike Rommel who did.

The “Black Knight” followed the Prussian military code just like other famous German generals Claus von Stauffenberg, Franz Hadler, and Ludwig Beck. The difference between Rundstedt and these old Prussian generals was their willingness to sacrifice careers and sometimes lives in order to stop Hitler. Most generals acted like Rundstedt and saw that Hitler’s plans were suicidal, but followed anyway. These men did not. They served their country in order to stave off national self-destruction. They did what was in the best interests of the country, but never crossed the line to simply follow the government down roads that could only end in disaster. The black mark of Rundstedt’s career became his unwillingness to defy Hitler, and stand up for the troops he led. Each of these generals led their men brilliantly on the battlefield, but all their victories, including Rundstedt’s, turned out to be at a terrible cost in lives and prolonging the war.



Picture From: <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERrundstedt.htm>