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JOINT WAR PLANS COMMITTEE

EMPLOYMENT OF AIRBORNE UNITS IN  
OPERATIONS AGAINST JAPAN

DECLASSIFIED PURSUANT  
TO JCS 927/495-1

Date: 30 Oct 67

Note by the Secretaries

1. The enclosed report was prepared by the Joint War Plans Committee on its own initiative. Conclusions are set forth herein on page 3.
2. Representatives of S&P Group, OPD, were consulted in the preparation of this report.
3. It is recommended herein that the Joint Staff Planners note the enclosed report and forward copies to theater planning agencies.

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C. C. GOODE,

Joint Secretariat.

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E N C L O S U R E

EMPLOYMENT OF AIRBORNE UNITS IN  
OPERATIONS AGAINST JAPAN

Report by the Joint War Plans Committee

1. Detailed study of the Japanese homeland indicates that airborne units, particularly parachute elements, may be advantageously employed to facilitate the defeat of the Japanese.

2. The islands of Japan consist in the main of rugged mountains, although there are numerous coastal plains of varying size. Practically all centers of population and industry lie in these plains. Overland communications between these plains are restricted in most instances to narrow, easily defended corridors. Some of the coastal plains can be approached readily from seaward; others, particularly those on the margins of the Inland Sea, are protected by nature against amphibious assaults. These aspects of the terrain, which make access to many areas difficult either by land or by sea, indicate that vertical envelopments may often be highly desirable during the campaign in Japan.

3. Some examples of objectives in Japan proper against which airborne troops could be used effectively are:

a. The promontory points which guard the entrance to Sagami and Tokyo Bays and Ise Bay (Nagoya).

b. The exits from Ariake, Miyakonojo, Makurozaki, Kushikino and Miyazaki Plains in southern Kyushu and the Kanto Plain in Honshu (in conjunction with armored forces).

c. Mountain passes, tunnels and communication lines at the exits of the above plains.

d. The seizure of strategic localities, particularly subsequent to CORONET, in which the initial operation would be

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the capture by airborne units of one or more airfields, enabling the rapid reinforcement of the airborne units by air-transported forces.

e. Other strategic localities in which resistance has become so disorganized after CORONET that rapid seizure by airborne forces would be profitable.

4. Since OLYMPIC and CORONET will secure airfields within close range of objectives mentioned above, the employment of airborne units should be feasible. The use of gliders should be limited to the transport of essential equipment which cannot be readily landed by parachute but is essential to ground combat prior to any reinforcement of airborne units by air or ground transport. Because of the heavy requirements of air combat units for airfields in the forward areas the demands for airfield space for airborne units must be kept to a minimum. Under these conditions extensive use of gliders will probably be impossible. Also only a limited number are present in the Pacific and shipping space is not available for the transport of large numbers of these aircraft.

5. There are one airborne division and one parachute RCT in the Pacific. The Strategic Reserve in the U.S. will contain one or two airborne divisions. One of the missions of this reserve will be to furnish additional units to the Pacific Theater should they be required. However, if additional airborne units are moved to the Pacific prior to 1 June 1946, they must replace units now scheduled for redeployment. The other mission of the strategic reserve will be to provide for contingencies in other areas than the Pacific, and, as such, airborne troops are a proper component of this force, particularly since they can be rapidly moved by air. This will be especially important while redeployment is making huge demands upon shipping.

6. Experience has shown that it is highly desirable for airborne units to have heavier artillery than the 75 mm. pack howitzer. In this connection recoilless weapons were employed with considerable success by airborne units in the crossing of the Rhine and subsequent operations in Europe.

7. Although air transport has been employed for strategical movement of ground units, particularly in the China and India-Burma Theaters, the maximum capabilities of the employment of air-transported troops in conjunction with airborne troops in major assaults has not yet been realized in this war, with the exception of the Markham Valley operations in New Guinea in 1943. It is believed that the campaign in Japan should be examined thoroughly for suitable opportunities for the employment of airborne and air-transported troops.

#### CONCLUSIONS

8. It is concluded that:

a. Future planning for operations in Japan, particularly after initial lodgements have been secured, should contemplate extensive employment of available airborne units, especially parachute troops, against areas not readily accessible to amphibious or overland assaults.

b. Airborne units should be available in the Strategic Reserve for employment in the Pacific, to meet possible requests by CINCAFPAC, or for employment in an emergency in other theaters, especially while redeployment is making large demands upon shipping.

c. If any airborne units are moved to the Pacific prior to 1 June 1946, they must replace, due to shipping conditions, units now scheduled for redeployment to that theater.

d. Certain units should be trained for transport by air.

RECOMMENDATION

9. That the Joint Staff Planners note this report and forward copies of this study to CINCAFPAC and CINCPAC planning agencies.