

Project Green

The Redeployment of American Troops to the United States after VE Day

Shortly after the German surrender on 8 May 1945, by direction of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, there was a massive redeployment of troops from the European Theater of Operations (ETO) to the United States. A large portion of that redeployment was accomplished by unconventional means with the utilization of non traditional modes of air transportation. Eisenhower's staff acknowledged that his rotation quotas were impossible to meet with the traditional Air Transport Command (ATC) assets alone, and it was decided to employ ETO's considerable heavy bomber resources in the redeployment effort. Project Green was the result of that innovative decision by the Supreme Commander's staff. (1)

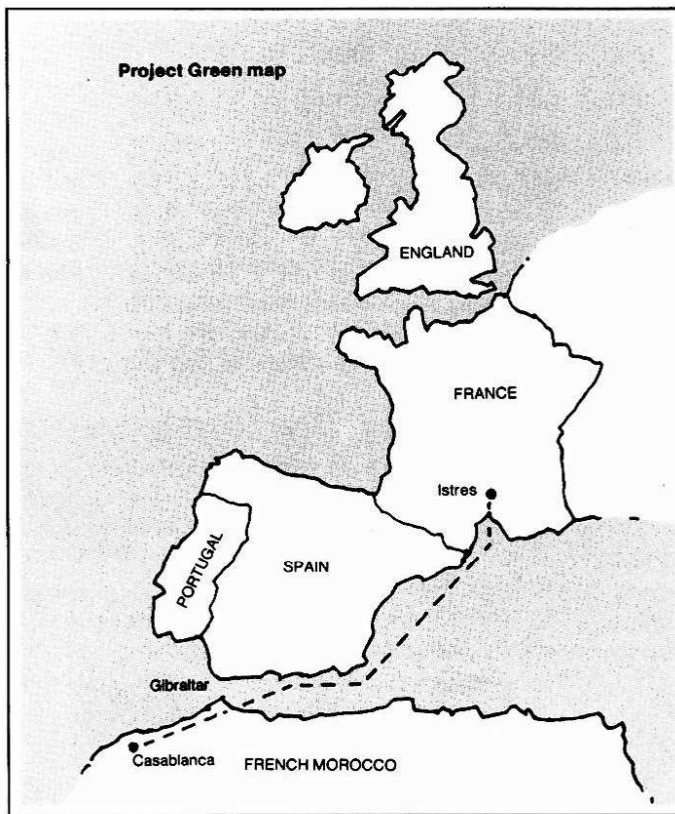
Actually, General Eisenhower and General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, had begun developing a troop deployment plan a full six months before VE Day. Anticipating an imminent German surrender, they devised a two dimensional plan for the rotation of a large number of troops from Europe. At first, General Marshall called for the redeployment of at least one and one-half million troops from Europe to the Pacific Theater. With the German capitulation in May 1945, there were approximately three million American troops scattered throughout Europe and North Africa. (2) General Marshall, shortly after VE Day, revised his redeployment figure to 408,000 troops to be transferred to the Pacific. A further review by Generals Marshall and Eisenhower revealed that there were 600,000 personnel in the European Theater eligible for rotation home for discharge under the Adjusted Service Rating system. The logistical systems of ETO, because of the enormous redeployment, accordingly, were essentially thrown into reverse.(3)

The Adjusted Service Rating, which had been in effect since September 1940, was the rigid guideline for rotation of personnel from the theaters of war to the United States and discharge. The rating called for a minimum of 85 points for enlisted soldiers for redeployment to the Zone of Interior (United States). (4)

The Army's redeployment plan was announced shortly after

VE Day, and it called for an immediate rotation of 240,000 troops to the United States. General Eisenhower directed that the redeployment would be accomplished by complete units, with a reshuffling within the Theater of those personnel who had less than 85 points.(5) Those troops remaining in ETO with fewer than the minimum points, It was added, would either serve as occupation forces or be sent to the Pacific Theater.(6)

The pressure caused by General Eisenhower's redeployment quota for June 1945, as well as subsequent monthly quotas equally large in numbers of personnel to be rotated, caused a reassessment of the existing available methods of moving such huge numbers of soldiers. Out of that reassessment, Headquarters ETO established several assembly areas throughout Europe and North Africa capable of handling up to 60,000 personnel destined for rotation to the United States. Embarkation points were created at Le Havre, Antwerp, Marseilles and Casablanca. (7)



In the wake of the establishment of the embarkation points, General Eisenhower's staff directed the extensive use of heavy bombers to move thousands of high-pointers to the United States. There they would transfer to other transportation which would take them to their new assignment in the Pacific Theater. Another method of utilizing ETO heavy bomber resources was the directive that the 40th Bombardment Wing (H) in England would provide two B- 17 groups to augment the redeployment effort. Their task was to transport troops on the first leg of their long journey back home to the embarkation point at Casablanca, Morocco. From Casablanca, it was understood that the Air Transport Command would be given the responsibility of carrying the veterans to the United States, as well as overall coordination control for the entire project. On one hand, the redeployment of over 4,000 bombers from Europe to

the Pacific, carrying high point passengers to the United States en route, would be supervised and managed by ATC. That mission was labeled Project White. On the other hand, the use of the 40th Bombardment Wing's aircraft for transportation of troops to Casablanca, was likewise placed in ATC's hands and called Project Green. (8)

Project White began without delay. Bombers flew westward