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## In Their Words Historical Traces of Operation Husky

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# In Their Words

## Historical Traces of Operation Husky

### Summary of “A” Squadron, 4th Canadian Reconnaissance Regiment (4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards) Operations of 5 August, 1943.

At 2200 hours 4 Aug 43 orders were given for a force comprising elements of 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, 12th Tank Regiment, and this unit to capture the approaches to ADERNO [Adrano], lying north of the REGALBUTO—ADERNO road, and astride the TROINA road from the line of the river Disottaditroina to the river Simeto.

This unit moved to an assembly point below REGALBUTO (H5493) where unit orders were given at 0340 hours 5 Aug 43. The plan was for this unit to recce lines of advance for the tanks and infantry to the high ground dominating the river Simeto. Upon capture of this feature (H6897 and H6997) the unit was to recce the DEMAZZO plain and SIMETO river for exploitation possibilities. Forming up place - river bed H6497; 2 Troop left, 3 Troop right, 1 and 4 Troops reserve; one sec anti-tank guns with each forward troop; Start time 0600 hours.

The route from REGALBUTO northeast to the forming up place along the railway line and across the SALSO river and improvised road, went through vicious difficulties for both tracks and wheels. It called for

the greatest driving skill to negotiate them in darkness.

2 Troop was first across the start line, good progress was made as harassing fire was light and no substantial resistance was encountered until the Troop reached the immediate area of the objective. One despatch rider was shot and captured when caught between the supporting anti-tank guns and the forward wave of carriers. Harder fighting developed as closer search disclosed many snipers and machine gun posts remaining on the high ground to our left flank after our forward elements had gone through.

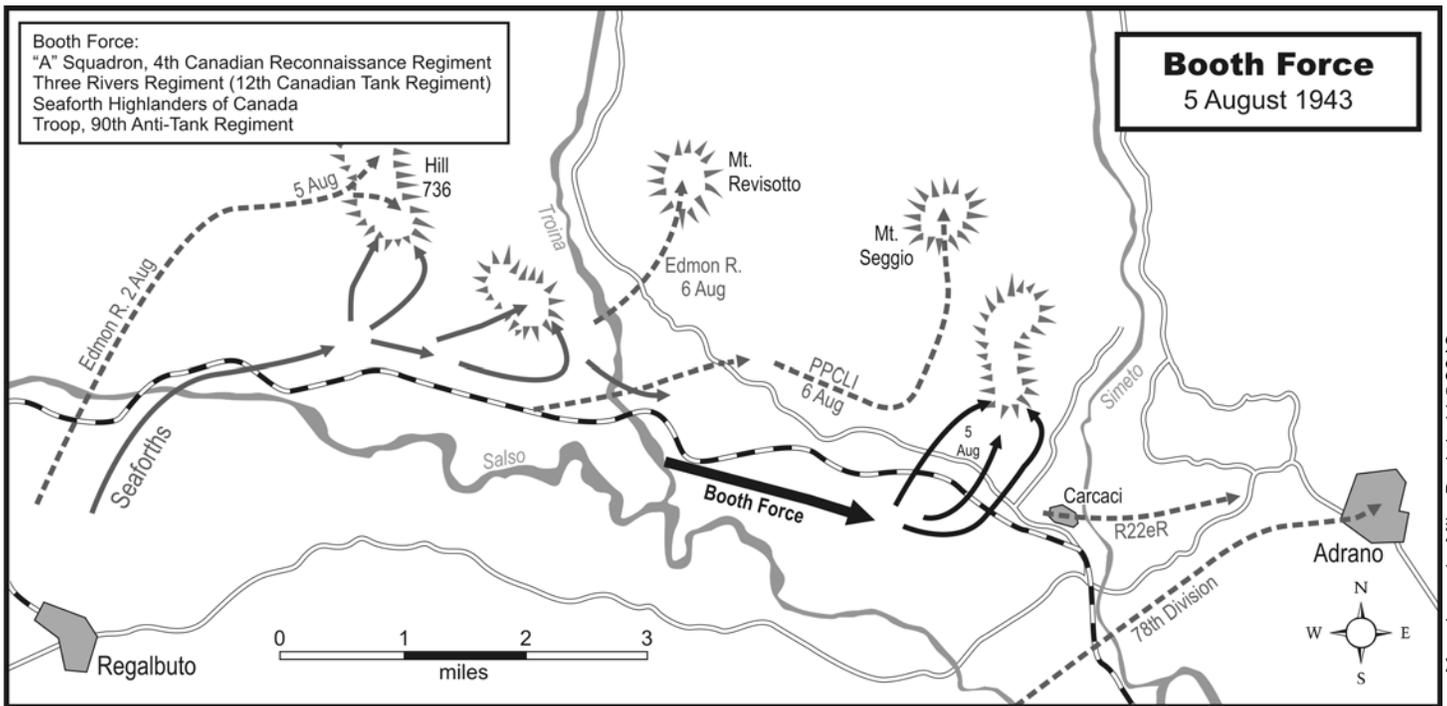
By 0740 hours “2 Troop” carrier sections had found good ground on the lower slopes of the objective, to the south and southwest and dug in under mortar and machine gun fire. A patrol was also sent south to CARCACI, where Troops had been observed, with orders to hold fire until definite identification was made. The troop commander felt this might be the left flank of 78th Division although the report early that morning indicated they were astride the road a few miles east of REGALBUTO. Our patrol made contact and it proved to be in

fact a company of the London Irish, 78th Division, which had reached CARCACI almost simultaneously with our arrival 700 yards to their north.

One squadron tanks carrying one company infantry had advanced behind the two reconnaissance troops. No real resistance was met by 3 Troop on the right due to the junction between 2 Troop and 78th Division. 3 Troop was able to move left and engage the enemy previously mentioned on the high ground north of the TROINA road. One section of 1 Troop assisted in this fighting as the enemy, who were apparently being reinforced possessed heavy fire power in machine guns and Mortars. Many casualties were inflicted on the enemy who, it was later established, included a number of paratroops.

On the basis of 2 Troop reports the tanks effectively shelled the objective at 0830 hours. The tanks also supported the 3 Troop fighting with their guns.

Liaison was kept with the London Irish whose observation post in CARCACI gave observation along the east slopes of our objective. The enemy was moving to the top of the feature and his strength was judged to be one strong company. At 1015 hours he made a strong effort to drive us from our positions and cut the road between the Canadians and British.



Map drawn by Mike Bechthold ©2013

Up to 40/50 of the enemy exposed themselves at one time to our fire. Thanks to our good positions, our strong fire power and support from the 3 inch mortars of the London Irish, his attack failed. The enemy was driven back over the ridge and it was judged that 2 Troop could then have taken the objective. However, the infantry and tanks were moving up and the tanks had been given a free hand to shell the hill. 2 Troop therefore held their ground and exchanged light fire with snipers, a few of whom again got on the crest and forward slopes of the feature. At about 1400 hours the tanks and infantry assaulted the height and occupied it with negligible difficulty. They had already occupied the high ground to the west, covered by 3 Troop.

The enemy mortar fire brought down on the positions of the squadron during the forenoon was as usual heavy and accurate. The anti-tank section behind 2 Troop was driven from its position which offered little cover, with two serious casualties who were removed by 2 Troop. One proved fatal. The mortars were silenced by 1100 hours and did not show up seriously again until the

objective was taken, when tanks and infantry suffered a heavy barrage.

By 1400 hours 1 Troop was under way on the unit's second task of reconnoitering for exploitation information. The road through the DIMAZZO plain and also the surrounding flats were extremely open. It seemed foolhardy to put vehicles on ground so very exposed to heavy weapons on the ADERNO side of the SIMETO river. The commanders of 1 and 2 Troops made a dismounted recce of the east side of the captured height with a view to working through to the north of the plain. However the ground was very difficult and cut by natural obstacles which were proof even against carriers. This recce also found that the enemy driven from PERRIATO height had retired up the valley in sizable numbers and apparently in some disorder. It was decided that 1 Troop would remain forward and discover what it could towards carrying out its task.

At 1730 hours, 1 Troop provoked the enemy into disclosing a gun position. The plan was to deliberately draw fire by exposing the armoured car section

on the plain. This had early success. The patrol came under heavy anti-tank gun fire and manoeuvred back to cover while the enemy was kept out of action by fire from the support cars. The gun position was pinpointed at M.R.691967. A 6-pounder anti-tank gun under command, quickly engaged the target and scored two direct hits. It was later confirmed that one shot had pierced the plate and put the crew out of action. The other hit disabled the gun itself.

This unit and 2nd Brigade Infantry and the tanks maintained patrols to cover the captured area until the Royal 22e Régiment came forward late at night and exploited beyond the position then established.

Casualties for the day other than those already mentioned were negligible. One mortar casualty in 1 Troop was the only one requiring evacuation. There were numerous vehicle casualties but they were repairable within the unit except in one case. This was a carrier which got a direct hit by mortar and after limping through the day's action spent two or three hours in workshops before it was again a runner.

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**A Humber Mk.IV armoured car of the 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards passes the wreckage of a German staff car, near Limosano, Italy, 26 October 1943.**

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A feature of the fighting was the good effect of burning out buildings and lighting the grass and brush with tracer ammunition. In a number of instances this drove out enemy who could then be picked off by ordinary small arms fire.

A novel handling of the 2-inch mortar also developed. The Commander 1 Troop Armoured Reconnaissance Car Section acted as an observation post, gave corrections by wireless telephone to Commander 2 Troop who gave corrections by flag signals to the mortar carrier. The effect was excellent. (This was the same mortar which knocked out an enemy tank crew when this unit made contact with the enemy at NISSORIA on 23 Jul 43. No.1 on the mortar is Corporal Norm Craig.

The ragged condition of the enemy when knocked off our objective



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was shown by the fact that German orders were still coming over the line telephone 15 minutes after the capture.

The action of the Squadron on this occasion was the first in which suitable country for manoeuvre had been found and that the Squadron had worked well and efficiently was

well indicated by the hearty thanks which Major Duck received from Lieutenant-Colonel Booth, officer commanding 12th Canadian Tank Regiment, under whose command the Squadron was working for the day. Lieutenant-Colonel Booth expressed a desire that a Recce Squadron work with his tanks on all possible occasions, as our vehicles were able to seek out information for the tanks and were able to get the information back in time to be of use to the tanks and also to the infantry. All members of the Squadron were well pleased with their work, since it was the first time in which they had found suitable country in which to operate and that they could operate, if the ground was suitable, was a fact that gave all a feeling of pleasure and confidence.

Editor's Note: Short forms, abbreviations and acronyms have been written out in full but the document is otherwise unchanged from the original.

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**Canadian troops pass through Regalbuto, 6 August 1943.**

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## Headquarters Royal Canadian Artillery, 1st Canadian Division

31 July 1943

Officer Commanding,  
1st Canadian Field Regiment  
2nd Canadian Field Regiment  
3rd Canadian Field Regiment  
7 Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery  
1st Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment  
2nd Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment

### MEMO TO COMMANDING OFFICERS

Recent employment of field and field and medium artillery on a Divisional basis has brought forward many complimentary remarks for the "Gunners" from all quarters. I would like Commanding Officers to assure that all ranks Royal Canadian Artillery

and Royal Artillery know that their support has been timely and effective and is greatly appreciated by the Infantry.

Referring particularly to the concentrations and barrages prior to

the capture of AGIRA, Commander 30 Corps and General Officer Command 1s Canadian Division have both expressed their admiration of our application of fire under somewhat difficult circumstances. I would like all ranks to know that I am highly pleased, not only with the fire on large scale, but also with the countless spirited independent actions conducted by observation posts, also the efforts put forward by Signal personnel, Drivers and Gunners which on many occasions required great resourcefulness and bravery.

The action of the anti-tank and light anti-aircraft batteries has also been highly commendable and they have both required the confidence of the Formations of which they are presently under command.

Much still remains to be done to improve drill for deployment, etc., and I would like to stress once again the great need for Gunners to increase the volume of Counter Battery and tactical information to be passed back to this Headquarters. Our responsibilities do not end with firing guns and every counter measure which lies within our resources must be effectively used.

[signed]

(A. Bruce Matthews) Brigadier,  
Commander, Royal Artillery  
1st Canadian Division

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**A 25-pounder gun of the 7th Battery, 2nd Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery in action near Nissoria, Sicily in July 1943.**

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## **Text of President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill's message to the Italian people Delivered 16th July 1943**

At this moment the combined armed forces of the United States, Great Britain, and Canada under the command of General Eisenhower and his deputy, General Alexander, are carrying the war deep into the territory of your country. This is the direct consequence of the shameful leadership to which you have been subjected by Mussolini and his Fascist regime. Mussolini carried you into this war as the satellite of a brutal destroyer of peoples and liberties.

Mussolini plunged you into a war which he thought Hitler had already won. In spite of Italy's great vulnerability to attack by air and sea, your Fascist leaders sent your sons, your ships, your air forces, to distant battlefields to aid Germany in her attempt to conquer England, Russia and the world.

This association with the designs of Nazi-Controlled Germany was unworthy of Italy's ancient traditions of freedom and culture-traditions to which the peoples of America and Britain owe so much.

Your soldiers have fought *not* in the interests of Italy but for Nazi Germany, they have fought courageously, but they have been betrayed and abandoned by the Germans on the Russian front and on every battlefield in Africa from El Alamein to Cape Bon.

Today Germany's hopes for world conquest have been blasted on all fronts. The skies over Italy are

dominated by the vast air armadas of the United States and Great Britain. Italy's sea coasts are threatened by the greatest accumulation of British and Allied sea power ever concentrated in the Mediterranean.

The forces now opposed to you are pledged to destroy the power of Nazi Germany--power which had ruthlessly been used to inflict slavery, destruction and death on all those who refuse to recognize the Germans as the master race.

The sole hope for Italy's survival lies in honourable capitulation to the overwhelming power of the military forces of the United Nations.

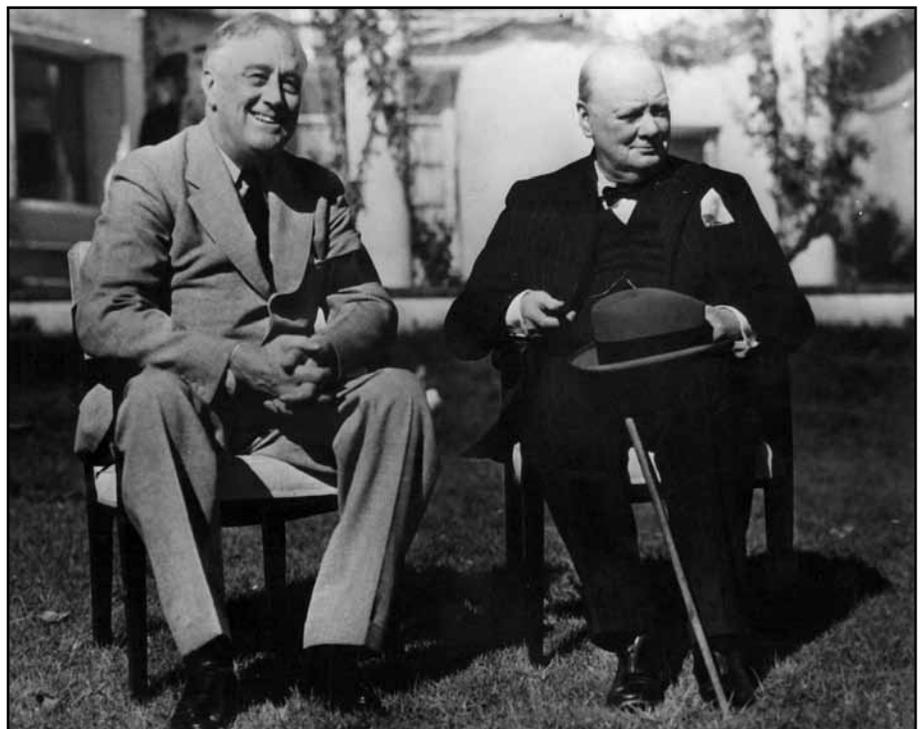
If you continue to tolerate the Fascist regime which serves the evil power of the Nazis, you must suffer the consequences of your own choice. We take *no* satisfaction in invading Italian soil and bringing the tragic

devastation of war home to the Italian people. But we are determined to destroy the false leaders and their doctrines which have brought Italy to her present position.

Every moment that you resist the combined forces of the United Nations--every drop of blood that you sacrifice--can serve only one purpose: to give the Fascist and Nazi leaders a little more time to escape from the inevitable consequences of their own crimes.

All your interests and all your traditions have been betrayed by Germany and your own false and corrupt leaders; it is only by disavowing both that a reconstituted Italy can hope to occupy a respected place in the family of European Nations.

The time has now come for you, the Italian people, to consult your own self-respect and your own interests and your own desire for a restoration of national dignity, security and peace. The time has come for to decide whether Italians shall die for Mussolini and Hitler---or live for Italy for civilization.



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**President Franklin D. Roosevelt and  
Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill at  
the Casablanca Conference, January  
1943.**

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**Lieutenant-Colonel B.M. Hoffmeister, commanding officer of the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, leads his battalion up a Sicilian hill, August 1943.**

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