No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando

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No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando was a commando unit of the British Army during the Second World War. The first No. 10 Commando was proposed in August 1940, using volunteers from Northern Command, however there was such a poor response that No. 10 Commando was disbanded and the men that had volunteered were posted to other commando units.

In early 1942 the commando was raised again, this time as No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando. By the end of the war the commando had become the largest commando in the British Army and included volunteers from France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Denmark, Poland and Yugoslavia. There was another group of volunteers in X Troop which contained enemy aliens, Germans and Austrians who had escaped from Nazi Germany. Men from the No. 10 Commando served in the Mediterranean, Scandinavia, Burma and Western Europe during the Second World War, mostly in small numbers attached to other formations, never as a complete unit.

No. 8 French Troop
The No 8 French Troop was formed in 1943 from 45 men of the disbanded 2nd Naval Infantry Battalion which had been stationed in the Lebanon and men who had been interned and released in Spain. The two French troops were combined under command of Kieffer and called the 1er Battaillon de Fusiliers Marins Commandos ("1st Naval Rifles Commando Battalion").[121]

Operations

The men from No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando were usually attached to other units who used their knowledge of the area of operations and the language to their advantage as interpreters and interrogators.

The first action men from the Commando took part in was the Raid on Dieppe (Operation Jubilee) on 19 August 1942.[20] Men from No. 3 ("British") Troop were tasked with gathering German documents from the town hall and distribute French Francs to the local French resistance. The No. 1 (French) Troop were attached to No. 3 and No. 4 Commando, to act as interpreters, gather information, and also to persuade Frenchmen to return with them and enlist in the Free French forces.[21] The men attached to No. 4 Commando assisted them in the capture of the Hess gun battery.

Most of the men from No. 3 Commando were captured during the landings. The men from No. 10 Commando / No. 3 Troop had one killed and two captured and never heard of again.[21] Among the Frenchmen of No. 10 Commando / No. 7 Troop captured were Sergeant Major Montailleur and Corporal Cesar. Montailleur was executed under the Commando Order issued by Adolf Hitler, but Cesar managed to persuade the Germans he was a French Canadian and eventually escaped and returned to England.

1943

In early 1943, No. 5 Norwegian Troop worked with No. 12 and No. 14 Commando raiding the Norwegian coast from their base in Lerwick in the Shetland Islands[21] and No. 3 Troop were involved in the Sicily landings (Operation Husky) attached to No. 40 (Royal Marine) Commando and No. 41 (Royal Marine) Commando and later the landings on mainland Italy.[22]

Starting in September a series of raids were carried out, by men from the two French troops and No. 3 Troop, on the French and Low Countries coastlines. These raids under the code names of Operation Hardtack and Operation Tarbrush were for beach reconnaissance, for the purpose of bringing back photographs and examples of mines and obstacles that had been laid.[23] In one of these raids Hungarian born Lieutenant George Lane (real name Dyuri Lányi) was captured and taken to see Field Marshal Erwin Rommel to be questioned, Lane believed he was not executed under the Commando Order because of his meeting with Rommel.[24] In total 12 men were reported missing during the Hardtack raids and only five were later accounted for.[25] The commando also took over responsibility for small scale parachute operations together with 4 (PARA) Troop, No. 12 Commando in September.[25] In November No. 4 Belgian and No. 6 Polish Troops joined the 2nd Special Service Brigade in Italy.[26] Notably the Poles captured a German occupied village alone when the 2/6th Battalion Queen's Regiment failed to reach a rendezvous on time.[27] Later in the year No. 2
Dutch Troop was sent to the Far East to work with No. 44 (Royal Marine) Commando and No. 5 Commando behind the Japanese lines in the Arakan in Burma.  

1944

In January 1944 the Belgian No. 4 Troop and the Yugoslav No. 7 Troop attached to the 2nd Special Service Brigade were sent to the Adriatic to assist the Yugoslav Partisans. Political differences in the Yugoslav troop and hostility from the partisans led to its disbandment. No. 4 Troop then worked with the Vis Motor Gun Boat flotilla boarding enemy shipping. In April 1944, the commando lost No. 6 Polish Troop which was transferred to the II Polish Corps and later took part in the Polish assault on Monte Cassino.

By the time of the D Day landings the commando had lost the Yugoslav, Polish troops and the two French troops were attached to No. 4 Commando in the 1st Special Service Brigade and landed on Sword Beach. No. 3 Troop was divided by sections between the other eight commando units involved in the landings.

Commandos engaged in house to house fighting with the Germans at Riva Bella, near Ouistreham

The French troops of 185 men in total landed on the left flank of Sword Beach during the second wave, of these only 144 managed to reach the assembly point half a mile inland. Their objective was the Riva Bella Casino in Ouistreham. When they reached the casino the lightly armed French commandos were unable to break into the fortified building and called upon a Sherman tank to assist and soon captured the position. In another sector of the landings Working Corporal Peter Master of No. 3 Troop attached to No. 6 Commando was ordered to walk down the main street of what seemed a deserted village. The intention was to draw fire and identify where the Germans were hiding. By the night of D Day 1st Special Service Brigade, including No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando elements had crossed the River Orne and were dug in guarding the left flank of the 6th Airborne Division.

For the next three months No. 3 Troop carried out patrols in advance of the British lines. These patrols were not without loss. The troop commander Captain Bryan Hylton-Jones was captured trying to lead resistance fighters through the lines. Some of the men captured would become prisoners of war while others were never heard of again. Hylton-Jones was later released from captivity by No. 46 (Royal Marine) Commando when they captured a German field hospital at Pont-l'Évêque.

By the time the Allies reached the River Seine the original 185 French troops, had been reduced to only 40 unwounded. The numbers in the French ranks were quickly filled by men
who had started training as a new No. 7 French Troop using the number left vacant when the
Yugoslav troop was disbanded.\[34\]

In mid 1944 No. 2 Dutch Troop returned to Europe their first mission on the European
mainland was Operation Market Garden 17 September 1944. The troop was divided between
the three parachute divisions, 12 men were assigned to 1st British Airborne Division, 11 were
assigned to 82nd Airborne Division, Five were assigned to 101st Airborne Division and three
were assigned to 1st Airborne Corps headquarters. Another five were assigned to 52nd
(Lowland) Division, which was to have been flown into the area when Deelen Airport was
captured, eventually they ended up in the Staff of 1st British Airborne Corps.\[35\]

The Belgian No. 4 Troop had returned to England in June and were selected to capture the
French island of Yeu only to find during a reconnaissance that the Germans had already left.
They moved to the European mainland and were attached to the 4th Commando Brigade for
the amphibious assault on the island of Walcheren (Operation Infatuate).\[36\]

The assault on Walcheren saw the largest concentration of No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando
men since their formation parade in 1943. Under command Lieutenant Colonel Laycock the
commando was deployed; Headquarters and a section from No. 3 Troop and No. 2 Dutch
Troop with Headquarters 4th Commando Brigade. The French No. 2 and No. 8 troops with a
section from No. 2 Dutch Troop with No. 4 Commando. While with No. 41 (Royal Marine)
Commando were No. 4 Belgian and No. 5 Norwegian Troops.\[37\]\[38\] In December the new
No. 7 French Troop having completed training joined the other two French Troops still
serving with No.4 Commando.\[39\]

1945

In January to March the three French troops carried out raids on the island of Schouwen-
Duiveland to prevent the Germans using the Island to mount operations against Antwerp.\[39\]
In February the Norwegian High Command requested No. 5 Norwegian Troop take part in
the Liberation of Norway. The troop was transferred to the Norwegian Army at the end of
April and then flown to Sweden dressed as civilians to join the Free Norwegian Brigade
which was ready to cross the border if the German garrison refused to surrender.\[40\]

The next major operation involving men from No. 10 (Inter-Allied) Commando was the
crossing of the River Rhine (Operation Plunder) and then crossing the River Weser. The main
commando force was 1st Commando Brigade with men from No. 3 Troop attached.\[41\]

Also in 1945 two new Belgian troops had gone through the commando school and now
formed No. 9 and No. 10 Troops. Together with No. 4 Troop they came under command 80th
Anti-Aircraft Brigade to provide local security. No. 10 Belgian Troop went onto liberate
Neuengamme concentration camp.\[42\]