

On the night of 9<sup>th</sup> July, the United States 7<sup>th</sup> army<sup>10</sup>, under the command of General George S. Patton, and the English 8<sup>th</sup> army commanded by General Bernard Law Montgomery, on board approximately 3000 crafts, set sail from the Tunisian ports for Sicily (the two armies are part of the XV Group of armed forces commanded by General Alexander). The defense of Sicily is assigned to the Italian 6<sup>th</sup> army of General Alfredo Guzzoni which numbers experienced German back-up troops in its ranks.

During the night, airborne troops are parachuted over the South-Eastern part of the island where the Anglo-American landings are expected to take place, but the raging wind which reaches force 7, the poor visibility and the lack of experience in night jumps almost totally nullify this first airborne attempt at attack.



13400 paratroopers under the American Colonel James M. Gavin, commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> para troop division, end up scattered over a vast area making the manoeuvre of little effect. At the same time, the ships carrying the landing troops are making difficult headway encountering a raging wind and a rough sea which severely try the allies' resistance.

## An outline of the landings

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The allied assault on the island (operation "Husky") starts at the first light of dawn on 10<sup>th</sup> July, at 4.45 hours: 160,000 men with 600 tanks land on the South-Eastern coast of Sicily, the Americans of the 7<sup>th</sup>

army in the Gulf of Gela (between Licata and Scoglitti), the English of Montgomery's 8<sup>th</sup>

army in the Gulf of Syracuse, between Syracuse and Pachino. The landings are carried out without too much difficulty thanks to the precise and intense covering fire from the ships and because the defenders are not expecting landings in such weather conditions (in actual fact no less than 200 vehicles are put out of action through the violent undertow) : during operations, Anglo-American fighter planes take off from Malta and Pantelleria and fly in formation to repulse any Axis counter-attacks. Whereas the English 8<sup>th</sup>

army encounters practically no resistance and its units march into Syracuse during the night, the Americans of the 1<sup>st</sup>

division and the Rangers, after taking Gela at about 8.00 hours meet with strong counter-attacks from the Hermann Goring German division and the Livorno Italian division. The fighting finally ends at 14.00 hours on the 12<sup>th</sup>

July, with the retreat of the Italian-Germans. The Americans capture 18,000 prisoners, but their dead and wounded number around a thousand men.

The capture of Sicily by the Allies takes 39 days, ending on 17<sup>th</sup> August of 1943 with the occupation of Messina and the retreat of the Italian-German troops to Calabria.

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