



Office of the Chancellor

Team CISA,

As we close out the academic year and you prepare for your next assignments, we also approach the anniversary of Operation OVERLORD – the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe and the largest single conventional military operation in history.

What is sometimes forgotten is that the success of D-Day depended not only on conventional military power, but also on irregular warfare.

Years before Allied forces landed in Normandy, the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) built networks capable of sabotage, intelligence collection, guerrilla warfare, and resistance operations across occupied Europe. Prior to the invasion, they delivered weapons, radios, explosives, and funding to resistance groups. In the weeks surrounding D-Day, resistance fighters sabotaged rail lines, disrupted communications, ambushed convoys, and slowed the movement of German reinforcements toward Normandy.

We are the inheritors of their legacy – and their irregular warfare mindset is what we attempted to engender in you over the last 10 months.

Among the most notable unconventional warfare formations were the multinational Jedburgh teams – small Allied elements parachuted into occupied territory to organize resistance activities and coordinate operations with advancing conventional forces. Typically composed of American, British, and French personnel, the Jedburghs reflected both the coalition nature of the war and the importance of trusted international partnerships.

The Jedburgh program had a distinctive recruiting philosophy, one that our programs today – both at Fort McNair and Fort Bragg – can claim as a heritage. Many volunteers were selected for their intellect, initiative, language skills, adaptability, and ability to operate independently in uncertain environments. Universities, military units, and allied nations all contributed personnel capable of working across cultures, building trust, and leading under difficult conditions.

We also inherit the legacy of the OSS Operational Groups (OGs), which conducted direct-action raids, demolitions, and guerrilla warfare in support of broader Allied objectives. Many members were recruited from immigrant communities in the United States, due to their language skills and cultural familiarity with occupied regions. Together, these organizations demonstrated the strategic value of irregular warfare in support of large-scale conventional operations, necessary to the success of the Normandy landings and the subsequent liberation of France.



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That legacy remains relevant.

At both Fort McNair and Fort Bragg, CISA continues to prepare leaders capable of operating in complex environments where conventional and irregular challenges intersect. The character of conflict evolves, but the requirement for adaptable leaders, trusted partnerships, and strategic thinking endures.

While we all hope operations on the scale of OVERLORD never again become necessary, I remain confident that CISA graduates will be prepared for the challenges of the future – whatever form they take.

Gregg P. Olson, Chancellor