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The Legacy of Husky

History is often seen as a pointless subject of study. After all, students ask, how can the leaders and battles of nearly a century ago be relevant today? They are wrong. Every event in the past has had some impact, no matter how small, on the world today, and the lessons history provides are timeless in their utility. The case is no different with Operation Husky, the WWII operation to land Allied forces on Sicily. Through their sacrifices, their failures, and their successes, the men and women of Operation Husky left a legacy in the lessons they learned and the changes they made.

Preparation is key, and Operation Husky demonstrated why. Landing 150,000 troops on an island was difficult enough; add enemy forces guarding that island, and the task became gargantuan. To approach their daunting objective, the Allies developed a series of plans to improve their chances of success. One such plan was Operation Mincemeat, in which British intelligence planted papers on a corpse to convince German leadership an attack would come in Sardinia and Greece, not Sicily. The subsequent withdrawal of German troops and reinforcements from Sicily proved to be a major factor in ensuring the success of Operation Husky.

Operation Underworld is another example of the importance of preparation. Following WWI, most of the intelligence—maps, charts, and data—about Sicily that the US had “collected from World War I had been destroyed” (Mitchell, A., *Revealed: How the Navy made a secret deal with the mob to win WWII*, 23 December 2022). Realizing this, the Navy enlisted the help of the Mafia in New York, which gave the US valuable contacts and avenues of information

regarding Sicily. It was this ingenuitive approach that prompted the US to bring pontoon causeways, a decision which expedited the Allied landings and saved lives. Even after the invasion, mobsters acted as ambassadors to the Sicilian natives, establishing a friendly civilian population on the occupied island. The success of these plans demonstrates that preparation truly is key; only by extensively preparing for Operation Husky did the Allies ensure its success.

The Allies learned another lesson during Operation Husky: success comes from cooperation. Responsibility for the joint operation was shared by Great Britain and the United States, making cooperation between British and American forces vital. In one instance of exemplary conduct, the American leadership put aside their personal qualms with the conceited British General Montgomery and accepted his strategically sound plan to concentrate Allied efforts in southeastern Sicily, a decision which greatly reduced the risks of the operation. When the two allies did not cooperate, problems ensued. For example, US General George S. Patton and the aforementioned General Montgomery's famous rivalry "hindered collaboration among the Allies" during the campaign, culminating in an ill-planned race for Messina (Beaches of Normandy Tours, *The rivalry between Montgomery and Patton*, 2020).

British and American leadership also learned to synchronize the efforts of their military assets. British warships, for example, protected Allied landing craft from the Italian navy. American aircraft led the way in bombing Sicilian airports, ensuring Allied air superiority throughout the campaign. And American, British, and Canadian troops worked together to outflank German forces in Catania, allowing the Allies to capture the crucial port. By closely cooperating on their strategies and procedures, the Allies achieved success in Sicily in just thirty-nine days, promulgating a lesson which has remained valuable to this day: cooperate to succeed.

One of the most powerful lessons taught by Operation Husky is that success demands sacrifice. As the Allies learned, the bigger the reward is, the bigger the risk: the Allies captured Sicily and inflicted 165,000 Axis casualties, but at the heavy price of 23,000 casualties of their own. This number becomes all the more significant upon the realization that each casualty was an individual with their own life, passions, and dreams. Sgt. Thomas Sullivan, a Rhode Island resident, 2nd Lt. Ellen Ainsworth, an Army nurse, and SSgt. James Williams, an American bomber crewman, were just three of the thousands of men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for liberty. Allied success in Operation Husky depended on the brave actions of thousands of servicemen and servicewomen who put down their lives for their country, cementing a legacy of honor and valor.

In addition to casualties, the Allies took a number of strategic risks to pull off Operation Husky. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the overall commander of the operation, took a substantial risk by landing his forces “without the prospect of early seizure of a major port”, depriving Allied forces of an easy method of resupply (Ray, M. et al., *Allied invasion of Sicily*, 28 May 2023). The Allies also gambled on the success of their airborne divisions, which were tasked with protecting Allied beachheads from German counterattacks capable of dooming the operation. Finally, the Allies risked the maintenance of their armies on the effectiveness of the new DUKW amphibious trucks, which had yet to be tested in combat. These endeavors, although risky, paid off: the beachheads were secured, and the efficacy of the DUKWs ensured Allied armies were well-supplied throughout the operation.

The lessons that can be learned from Observation Husky are a major reason for its relevance in the modern world. Although these lessons tend to be based on specific examples which would likely not occur today, their core ideas remain valid. It's still important to prepare

for a task before you approach it— there’s a reason people take driver’s courses before they are allowed to drive. Cooperation plays an integral role in the workplace, in the military, and in international diplomacy. And no great accomplishment is made without a sacrifice, whether it’s made in time, energy, or resources. In other words, Operation Husky is important because it reminds us of universal truths which remain as valuable as they did nearly a century ago.

However, Operation Husky’s value does not solely lie in the lessons it can teach us; in many ways, Husky has determined the fate of the world today. Perhaps the most direct consequence of Operation Husky was the arrest and imprisonment of Benito Mussolini, the Fascist dictator of Italy. The Italian government had increasingly sought peace with the Allies after the military disasters of the North African campaign. When Operation Husky forced Mussolini to propose evacuating southern Italy, the Fascist Grand Council voted for his dismissal, and King Victor Emmanuel III promptly ordered his arrest.

The imprisonment of Mussolini was a major blow to the Axis effort in Italy, and although Hitler would later reinstate Mussolini as the ruler of “a puppet regime [...] in northern Italy”, his arrest signified a turning point in the sympathies of the Italian people (The National WWII Museum, *The Allied Campaign in Italy, 1943-45: A Timeline, Part One*, 23 May 2022). Lacking strong support from his Italian allies, Hitler was forced to retain a large force in Italy, drawing desperately-needed resources away from the Eastern Front and France. As a consequence of Operation Husky, the German efforts in the east and west were weakened, contributing to the German defeats on the Eastern Front and in France that ultimately cost them the war.

History is full of what-ifs, and it is impossible to ascertain exactly what might have happened if Operation Husky had not taken place. Nonetheless, it is clear the operation played a major role in the Allied victory in World War II. By initiating the liberation of Italy, Operation

Husky knocked out a major Axis power and forced Germany to commit troops to a new front. By pulling Axis forces away from other theaters of war, the operation aided the Soviet and Allied advances in the east and west. And by enabling the Allied victory in World War II, Operation Husky has impacted my life even today. For example, I live in a country where I have certain, unalienable rights protected by the law. I freely speak my mind without worry of being arrested. When I go outside, I don't have to worry about being deported or killed for the way I look. And when I eventually fulfill my dream of visiting Europe, I will find a land of democracy and freedom, not one of dictatorship and oppression. All of these blessings are gifts from the Americans who fought and died in Operation Husky: through their sacrifices, they ensured not only my freedom, but the freedom of millions to come. For this legacy of bravery, I am eternally grateful.

Despite its age, Operation Husky remains important to modern society. By taking to heart the lessons it divulges, we can find new solutions to modern issues. And although there's no way of knowing whether we would be living in a *Man in the High Castle*-esque world if the operation hadn't happened, it is certain Operation Husky played a role in safeguarding our freedoms. Husky reminds us that by learning from the past, we honor the sacrifices Americans have made to build the world we live in today.

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