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**OPERATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE LANDINGS IN THE
GULF OF SALERNO ON 9TH SEPTEMBER, 1943.**

Admiralty foreword:—

The Naval forces taking part in Operation "Avalanche" were under the general control of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.

The Naval Task Force for the operation was under the immediate command of Vice-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N., who was known as the Commander Western Naval Task Force. This Force was charged with the escort to and the landing of the Fifth Army at Salerno and with the subsequent support of this Army until it was firmly established on shore.

The Western Naval Task Force included the Northern Attack Force (Force "N") composed of British and American Ships and Craft and under the command of Commodore G. N. Oliver, R.N., and the Southern Attack Force (Force "S") composed of U.S. Ships and Craft and under the command of Rear-Admiral John L. Hall, Jr., U.S.N.

The Naval Covering Force (Force "H") was under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis, while the Naval Air Support Force (Force "V") was under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian.

The report of the Commander Western Naval Task Force on this operation will be published by the U.S. Navy Department in due course.

The following Despatch was submitted to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty on the 8th March, 1945, by Admiral of the Fleet Sir ANDREW B. CUNNINGHAM, K.T., G.C.B., D.S.O.

*Office of the Commander-in Chief,
Mediterranean Station,
Allied Force Headquarters.
8th March, 1945.*

I have the honour to forward the report of the Naval Commander Western Task Force

on the Operations in connection with the landings in the Gulf of Salerno on 9th September, 1943*.

2. Owing to the unavoidable delay in forwarding the report of the Naval Commander Western Task Force due to more urgent demands on the time and facilities of his staff, it is not my intention to do more than comment on the salient features of this operation, the more so since many of the lessons learnt have been incorporated in other operations which have been carried out subsequently in this and other theatres. Except insofar as is stated in the succeeding paragraphs, I fully concur with the suggestions and recommendations of the Force Commander, whose report is very full and covers every aspect of the operation.

Planning.

3. My detailed remarks on the planning of Operation "Avalanche" are contained in Appendix I.

4. Having decided that the mainland of Italy was to be invaded on the West coast, it was clear that the seizure and development of the port of Naples was of paramount importance, since no other port in Western Italy could maintain the Military forces which it was intended to deploy.

5. The choice for the actual point of attack lay between the Gulf of Gaeta and the Gulf of Salerno. The former had the advantage of having an open plain as its immediate hinterland and it was clear that a successful landing in this area might lead to the early capture of Naples. On the other hand, its beaches

Admiralty footnote:

* See Admiralty foreword.