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JEDBURGH

Operations, Team AlastairTEAM ALASTAIR

Jedburgh team Alastair was the forty-sixth Jedburgh team to be dispatched to France from the United Kingdom.

Members of Team

Major O. H. Brown (British), code name "Kent"

Captain (then Lieutenant) R. Maître (French), code name "Donegall"

Sergeant G. N. Smith (British), code name "Lincoln"

Area to Which Dispatched

Team Alastair was dispatched on the night of 24/25 August to the Vosges region of France.

Purpose of Mission

Team Alastair was being dispatched to assist in the organization of the FFI; to provide additional means of delivering stores to the FFI; and to provide an additional link between London and the FFI groups. They were to contact Planete upon arriving in the field.

First Word from the Field

The following A/T message dated 1 September was the first word from Alastair after arrival in the field:

"Regret silence. Contacted Planete. Morale good. Arms nil. Plan as follows...can take over department with sufficient arms. Send 3 aircraft to 14 grounds 1 night. Names of grounds to follow."

Summary of Messages Exchanged

1 September From Alastair ()

"Give signal for general rising. Tell Sarco work through FFI."

1 September From Alastair ()

"Will seen Planete about 59 men."

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"Send 59 men on ground Rotation. At same time send arms to all other grounds."

4 September From Alastair

"Send arms. Tomorrow will liberate whole department, destroy escaping Boche. Send 1 Vickers to each ground."

4 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"Ask American army to supply you with arms and ammunition taken from the enemy."

4 September From Alastair ()

"Daylight operation already agreed by Planete on 5 grounds and number of planes agreed. Must take plane Wednesday 6 September. We will take over department on Thursday. Please advise action taken."

5 September From Alastair ()

"If you did not intend to give us any support why did you send us. There are no Americans here so can get no arms at all. For Gods sake do something."

6 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"Due to circumstances and reasons beyond our control it is impossible to send you operations at present. Planete was notified. Operations still on programme but we do not know when they will take place. Sorry."

7 September From Alastair ()

"Whole department ready. Will now fight without arms. 25,000 organized army."

9 September From Alastair ()

"Situation very difficult. Have lost everything except what we stand up in. Boche burnt farm in which was all our stuff. Hun very active. Maquis have not enough arms to defend themselves with. Please send at least something now."

10 September From Alastair ()

"Trains of tanks signalled line Epinal St Die today or tomorrow. Send aircraft. Boche in possession of ground Chatilain."

() C-3789/3 4 Sep 44
() C-6459 4 Sep 44
() C-3901/32 5 Sep 44
() C-4088/24 7 Sep 44
() C-4383/27 10 Sep 44

() C-3792/6 4 Sep 44
() C-3788/19 4 Sep 44
() C-6488 6 Sep 44
() C-4297/27 9 Sep 44

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"Urgent from American Army. Request that bridges Moselle between Charmes and Epinal inclusive be preserved."

11 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"Good news. Starting Tuesday night for you and Rotation 3 airplanes on each of following grounds - Fleche, Coupole, Berlingot, Baraque, Siecle, Restaurant, Anatomie, Seltimbanque, Crevasse, Barbiche, Donon and Mirliton. Having some equipment for you sent from ME65. Take good note of Chatelain. Send us urgent coordinates asked for in our last message. Doing our damned best to help you."

12 September From Alastair ()

"Area full of Boche, especially Remiremont. Tanks and vehicles well camouflaged under trees on road station to town. Please bomb."

13 September From Alastair ()

"Send arms for grounds mentioned as soon as possible. Use BBC phrase Sottise. Will send coordinate soon other grounds as soon as possible. Liaison difficult confined to walking. Boche everywhere. May be contemplating defense of Moyelle between Epinal and Bussang. Beware Ack Ack Epinal and arches. Do not send equipment yet. All we want is uniform, walking kit, musette bag, boots, sleeping bag, carbines, automatics, knives and ammo."

15 September From Alastair ()

"Grounds for which you wanted coordinates are reserved for Alsace. We do not know them. Ground Rotation is compromised. Send arms urgently ground Perfecture."

16 September From Alastair ()

"Hold up operations Chatelain until confirmed. Germans attacking them tomorrow. Aircraft would be useful."

19 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"Sending ops on Anatomie, Barbiche, Berlingot and Baraque tonight. We do not know when General LeClerc enter your district. Will not be able to serve Chatelain and Lorgnette for they are not home yet. Again get in touch with Rotation urgent."

19 September From Alastair ()

"Urgent send arms for 400 men to Chatelain and for 600 men to Lorgnette immediately. Will then liberate valley Remiremont-Jarmenil. Please advise us when General LeClerc will enter this district. Will attack 24 hours before."

() C-1167	11 Sep 44	() C-1111	11 Sep 44
() C-4574/72	12 Sep 44	() C-4682/42	13 Sep 44
() C-4862/80	15 Sep 44	() C-41/10	16 Sep 44
() C-2325	19 Sep 44	() C-237/26	19 Sep 44

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19 September From Alastair ()

"Many Russians among defending troops. Will surrender to Americans but not to French troops. Can you drop leaflets telling them to do so.

20 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"All set to drop leaflets on Russians. Give us exact position where these would do most good."

24 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"Jed team Jacob reduced to Captain Gough. Is in northeast of St Die with Maximum, chief ops region. Have no news for over a week from them as region is infested with Boche. Maquis there are small groups of 200. Jed Jim is in your area at the mill at Eloyes."

25 September From SFHQ to Alastair ()

"Carry on which Captain Banbury since mission looks good. As long as you feel you can be real help to him, carry on Oliver."

26 September From Alastair ()

"Resistance east of area Epinal with exception of possible Rorpy. 600 in area Salles believed to be in A/T communication with London. Please communicate the following orders - first, that they recruit 50 men capable of guiding Allied armies to German border; second, that they split group into dispositions of 30; third, that they do not attack until ordered to do so. Our work now finished. Intend return London immediately."

Report of Team Upon Return from the Field - 24 August to 26 September

Mission. To contact Colonel Maximum and work under his orders with the maquis in the area northeast of St. Die and possibly in Alsace.

Briefing. We were originally alerted on 8 August and arrived in London on 11 August where we were handed over to Lieutenant Westin, our briefing officer. He, in his turn, handed us over to Lieutenant Deranger who gave us a very full briefing on the area of St. Die and descriptions of the various maquis whom we were likely to meet in that area and their state of armament which was virtually nil. We were also given the password,

() C-243/12 19 Sep 44 () C-2512 20 Sep 44
() A-79 24 Sep 44 () A-91 25 Sep 44
() A-244/38 26 Sep 44 () War Diary, Vol 3, p

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should we be, by any chance, dropped away from the reception committee.

We were first alerted to go on 12 August but just as we were getting into the car the operation was cancelled for that night. We actually did not get away until 24 August having managed to get one foot in the plane on 23 August. The reason for our delay was given as two-fold:-

(1) That Jedburgh team Jacob, who was supposed to be laying on a reception for us had encountered trouble and were, in fact, having a battle on our proposed dropping ground. (

(2) That, as yet, the chiefs in the region had not agreed on the date of our arrival nor given us a dropping point. We received no further briefing, either as to change of dropping ground or change of mission, and on the morning of 23 August I went over to EMFFI Headquarters where I discovered that we had a completely new dropping ground 30 kilometres to the west of the one on which we were previously to have been dropped. As it took me the best part of two hours to glean even this meagre information I had no time to check up on where our mission had been changed to, and proceeded to the aerodrome (Harrington). The only personnel whose names we were given on the other side were (a) Planete, the D.M.G. of the area, and (b) Colonel Maximum, whose job was not given us.

Dispatch and Arrival. We took off from Harrington aerodrome at 2059 hours on 24 August, after a false start on the 23rd. Before departure we had agreed with the pilot the order of dropping which was as follows:

1st Run: Containers, 3 members of the team and 2 personal packages.

2nd Run: Remainder of the packages.

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The navigator then showed us the route we were to follow and the ground on which we would be dropped, and informed us that we should be dropped at 1010 hours. The dispatcher then went over the whole of the drill with us and we were eventually airborne in great spirits.

The pilot arrived over the dropping area at exactly the time he said he would, saw the lights straight away, and we commenced dropping on the first run.

The dropping did not take place quite as scheduled. Captain Maitre, who was No. 1, unfortunately hesitated because he said he saw the containers going past the hole just as the dispatcher said "Go"! The dispatcher then gave him three more "Gos", which I do not think he heard as it was not until I gave him a kick that he really realized he had to go, and then jumped. This meant that it was impossible to jump more than Captain Maitre and Sergeant Smith on the first run, and I was held back for the second run. This, unfortunately, caused me to have a very bad drop. The pilot, believing that he only had packages left in the plane, came down to what must have been about 400 feet and did not de-accelerate at all in dropping, the result being that I got a considerable buffeting, both feet in the rigging lines, and took a number of panels out of the chute. One of the maquis who was running to assist me, at the last moment, in order to avoid me, lay flat on his stomach, whereupon I sat rather heavily on him, saving myself a considerable amount of discomfort, but rendering him unconscious for two days.

The plane only managed to get 3 other packages out with me and eventually dropped the whole of the load in four sticks. I would like here to express our gratitude for (a) the excellent

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way in which we were treated at the aerodrome, and (b) the excellence of the crew on the operation. We all had complete confidence in the dispatcher and the pilot dropped his load in four runs and each time came straight over the lights and dropped the first package dead over the center light. The result of this was that everything in the plane was found in a circle of 250 yards diameter.

Reception. The reception was about the most frightening thing that one could ever experience. As I started my descent, I noticed little lights all over the place and a noise which I am sure could be heard at least a kilometer away. It turned out that we had been received by a reception committee of 500 men, which was a maquis which had only been mobilized the night before in the expectancy of receiving sufficient arms for the whole group on the night we were dropped. All that they actually received was the contents of the 12 containers in our plane which was a ridiculous load -- 8 containers of sabotage equipment and 4 containers of arms. This situation was for all a pretty poor start as they had been led to expect by the BBC message that there would be two aircraft arriving that night on that ground which they confidentially expected would be full of arms, and to receive 8 containers of sabotage equipment which, to say the least, were only a damn nuisance, and only 4 containers of arms, did not increase their confidence in the people who were coming to help them. What happened to the second plane which was supposed to drop on our ground I do not know. It left 6 minutes before us with a French officer on board and 12 containers; but if it did arrive anywhere, it certainly did not arrive on our ground. However, a plane did arrive which dropped 10 SAS who were supposed to have been

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dropped on a ground 25 kilometers away. It was also supposed to have dropped 24 containers for the maquis, but these were not dropped.

Immediately after landing we were taken to a nearby farm where we were given something to eat and drink. Here we met a Commandant Etienne who turned out to be the Adjutant to Commandant Didier, who was the departmental chief. The only reason for his presence on the ground was that, being a new maquis, he wanted to see that they did not make a complete bungle of the thing.

When all the containers had been collected and put into two trucks, we proceeded with them and the maquis to a nearby wood, having asked Etienne to put us in touch with the Departmental Chief at the earliest opportunity. In conversation with Etienne we discovered that team Jacob had already gone off with Colonel Maximum on the mission for which we had originally been briefed. He also told us that the whole department was in process of being organized into fighting groups and, having lost our original mission we decided that the best plan was to work with the Departmental Chief. I would like to state here that it would have helped us considerably had we been told by London that Commandant Didier and Commandant Etienne did, in fact, exist.

Accomplishment of Task. At 7 o'clock on 25 August we were contacted by the leader of the maquis to which we had been dropped. We changed into civilian clothes and were transported in an open truck with no papers into the town of Rambervilliers where we were divided into two, Captain Maitre staying at one house and Sergeant Smith and myself at another, where we were to await a liaison with Commandant Didier. This time we were slightly handicapped as, owing to my dropping accident, I

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was unable to walk for the first two days.

This maquis to which we had been dropped, and who were doing liaison duties for us, were extremely careless, and as there were quite a large number of collaborators in the town, including one in the house next door to us and one in the house opposite, I was not at all happy about our position and on the second day I insisted that we were moved somewhere else, as quite a lot of people were beginning to know of our presence even if they did not know who we were.

We moved that night to St. Benoit, and learned later the following morning that the Germans had sent a patrol to search the house. We stayed at St. Benoit for a further two days. This time we were in an unused house in the middle of the village, stuck in one room with the blackout up which we could not remove even by day because it would have shown that somebody was in occupation. At the end of this time we were anything but at the top of our form, especially since reports were coming in all the time that the Germans were reinforcing the district.

On the morning of the 5th day we were moved again, this time to a house at Moussoux, a village near Epinal, where we were at last to have contact with Commandant Didier. As a matter of interest, we had a bit of luck on this run. I had noticed that when we started there was a considerable number of German troops on the roads as we went by, and I pleaded with the driver to go as fast as he could. Just south of Rambervilliers we passed another truck and about a kilometer and a half behind that we went through a German control post. At this time we were still without papers. The truck behind us which we had passed was stopped by the control post and actually we were the last vehicle in the department

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to go through a control post unchallenged.

After our arrival on the farm at Moussoux we met Commandant Didier, Commandant Etienne and several of the leaders of the various maquis in the department. At the conference with Commandant Didier I outlined the following plan to him which he accepted:-

(1) To have a concentrated night dropping operation where we would serve 14 grounds with 3 aircraft all on the same night. The reason behind this was that the Germans had now reinforced the area quite considerably and we did not want to have dropping operations night after night and thus enable the Boche to concentrate his forces against a single maquis.

(2) Not to increase the strength of any of the present maquis and, in fact, to send back those unarmed men who could return home for the moment. All effectives were to be warned that they were to stand by and that they would be called out to the maquis according to the number of arms which were dropped on their particular ground.

(3) That, after the night dropping had taken place, the armed men should then be placed in the neighborhood of the daylight dropping points to act as a protecting body.

(4) To call for the daylight operations which had already been agreed between Planete and London.

(5) After the daylight operation, to call out all the FFI and start general guerrilla activities 48 hours after the daylight dropping.

The completion of stage (5) of the plan would have left us with an effective of 25,000 armed men. The plan as regards the 3 members of the team was to leave Captain Maitre at the farm to act as intermediary between Commandant Didier and myself.

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Sergeant Smith and myself were to be accommodated in separate farms close to each other on the edge of the forest near Elloyes. This plan, however, had to be abandoned as, during the conference, an agent liaison had warned us that the Boche were watching the area, and the evening before Sergeant Smith and I had left, somebody suddenly came in and said that the Germans were actually watching the farm itself. Under the circumstances we decided that it would be best for the 3 of us to leave as quickly as possible, and the new arrangements were that Captain Maitre should now go to the mill at Elloyes while Sergeant Smith and I still held to our original plan. Before we left the farm we had our first radio communication with London, outlining the plan we had made at the conference. During the journey from the farm to the area of Elloyes there was one incident which was a good warning to us. We had to use the bridge at Jarneuil, and as I was rather suspicious that this bridge would be guarded, and sent the guide over the bridge first and told him to return if it was not guarded. If it was guarded he was to continue on his way and we would swim across ourselves later. He came back and the four of us crossed the bridge, Captain maitre and Sergeant Smith having the radio set on their backs. We noticed a building just the other side of the bridge and I inquired of the guide what this was, and he told me that this was the local Estaminet and also informed me that the guard was inside. Just as we got to the other side of the bridge we heard somebody come down a path and a German officer with a girl friend passed 5 yards in front of us. I quote this incident mainly for the lesson that it taught us, which was never to believe anything what the members of the Resistance told us from the point of view of danger. They are so used to seeing the Germans all over the place that they forget

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that, whereas they themselves can pass without trouble, 3 odd people, none of whom have papers, one of whom cannot speak French, and two of whom have wireless sets on their backs, cannot pass quite so easily.

Having arrived at our various abodes, the time pass reasonably quietly for a week as we were waiting for a reply from London as to our plans. The first answer which we received was that it was impossible to send us anything by night - in the words of the telegram - "owing to unforeseen circumstances and situations beyond our control." We then received a message to say that the daylight operations were now cancelled owing to the fact that Planete had not complied with some of the conditions under which the operations would be undertaken. By this time, the area was extremely heavily occupied by the Germans. They had stopped all civilian motor transport, it was impossible to travel by bicycle because you were merely stopped by a German soldier and the bicycle pinched, and we were therefore reduced by moving by foot, which meant that liaison with the departmental chief ceased altogether and we became completely out of touch with all the departmental chiefs. I still hoped at the time to be able to regain contact with the departmental chief and therefore for a week did nothing as regards organizing that particular area for fear of being at variance with the plans of the whole department. During this time Captain Maitre had managed to install himself in Elloyes and was taken on the strength of the village. This meant that his safety in the village was assured but, on the other hand, had the inconvenience of meaning that he could not leave the village for any considerable time, which meant that, henceforth, his only use was that of liaison, which had ceased. Sergeant Smith and I however, owing to being

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in outlying districts and also to the fact that Sergeant Smith could not speak French, were virtually in hiding. The Germans at this time started searching in various places as they had an idea that 3 of us were somewhere in the area. This meant that our method of living was to sleep at the farm, but to leave it an hour before dawn, remain in the forest during the day and return an hour after dark. At times, when we had reason to believe that the Germans were considering searching in the night as well as during the day, we had to spend the whole night out.

One incident there which happened to me was that the farmer came back from Elloyes, saying that he had heard that the Germans were thinking of searching at night and suggested that we should spend that night in a hangar full of straw in the middle of a field about 500 yards from one of the roads. We obediently got into our hangar and went up the far end and covered ourselves completely in straw. During the early part of the night I had heard convoys going down the road and at about 1 o'clock in the morning I suddenly heard the marching of feet and what must have been about 15 men stopped outside the hangar in which we were sleeping. Four of the Germans then proceeded to enter the hangar and remove straw which they passed down to the others who carted it away. We were wondering all the time whether they would remove sufficient straw so that they would eventually uncover us. However, after about 20 minutes they pushed off and left us in peace. Sergeant Smith also had several experiences much the same, probably his best being when he was stopped by a German officer and asked for a light. Fortunately, the German officer asked him in German and he managed to make signs that he could not understand him. The German then made a sign to him showing him what he wanted. He lit his cigarette with a Ronson lighter

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and all passed well. This was of no importance but it may be of interest. One night when I was in my billet asleep I had no reason to believe that the Germans were completing a search of the area but I just could not sleep during the night and I had a feeling that Sergeant Smith was in danger. This feeling became so strong that I could not stand at any longer. At 5 o'clock I got up and got hold of the farmer's son and told him to run down to the farm at which Sergeant Smith was staying and tell Sergeant Smith to take all his equipment and everything he had got and the boy would help him to clear off into the woods. Though I think the son thought I was crazy, he ran all the way there and Sergeant Smith got out of the house at 6:30 in the morning. At 7 o'clock the Germans arrived and searched the whole building, finding nothing. I mentioned this because, on four different occasions, for no reason at all, I seemed to have some sort of hunch which told me to do something, and in each case we avoided some danger.

At the time we arrived at Elloyes, there existed a maquis of roughly 400 men in the forest north of Jarneuil. This 400 consisted of 150 armed and 250 unarmed men. The Germans who, through the lack of security of the resistance throughout the department, had a pretty fair idea of (a) where all the maquis were, and (b) their approximate strength, moved another division of SS troops in, with the sole task of attacking the maquis north of Elloyes on a Saturday morning and dispersed them all. This occasion was one which is now the subject of an enquiry by the departmental chief. The head of the maquis was warned the night before these troops had moved into the area and that an attack was likely in the morning. He received a further warning in the morning that German patrols were moving up towards the forest. Upon receiving this information he took his bags,

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handed over the command to a lieutenant, and descended down to the village. His excuse for doing so was that he had a rendezvous with me, which was completely false. The maquis in their battle fought with extreme bravery but very little skill. The result of the battle was 100 Germans killed, 100 wounded. The maquis casualties were 10 killed. About 15 wounded had to be left behind, and when the maquis returned next morning found the Germans had massacred the lot. The large number of German casualties can be accounted for by the fact that Spitfires spotted the Germans moving up the side of the mountain and attacked them causing about 50 percent of the casualties.

At the end of the fortnight it was quite obvious that liaison with the departmental chief was not going to be gained, and I decided to work out my own salvation in one particular corner. By this time we had allocated the remnants of the Maquis north of Jarneuil as follows: 40 well-armed men, lead by Lieutenant Roman, in the forest east of Elloyes, and a further 100 armed and still under the leadership of the old leader - a Commandant Achille - in the forest at Val d'Ajol, 10 kilometers south of Remiremont. I went to see both the leaders of these maquis and made the following plans with them:-

(1) That the two elements of maquis remaining-

(a) The 40, 6 kilometers, east of Elloyes, and

(b) The 100, south-east of Remiremont-

should remain in place and should receive stores for 400 at

(a) and 600 at (b).

(2) That these stores should be dropped 48 hours before the Americans tried the crossing of the Moselle.

(3) That the elements of the maquis in the should be warned that they were to report to the maquis when ordered to

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do so.

(4) That the mayor, or some other suitable leading citizen, should be detailed to warn these members of the maquis when to turn out. The plan was that the night before the general attack on the Moselle, the maquis should divide as follows:-

(a) A group of 200 to attack and take the town of Elloyes.

(b) That 400 of the maquis of Remiremont should take that town.

The remaining 400 to be divided into one group of 200, who would take a bridgehead on the Moselle at its most fordable point, and a further group of 200 should undertake general guerilla warfare throughout the remainder of the length of the Moselle between Elloyes and Remiremont. This plan, however, could not be carried out owing to the refusal of EMFFI to send us arms. We were therefore reduced to our 40 men at Elloyes with whom we first of all helped the Americans get their bridgehead with general guerilla warfare in the mountains. Once the Americans made their crossing, we used the maquis as guides and "Agents devant Renseignants." This, together with local patrol duties, was our chief task until the time I left.

Wireless report of team Alastair. Due to the fact that we were moving most of the time it was found practically impossible to keep sked times as laid down. It was impossible to use the radio at all for the first four days due to the proximity of the enemy.

I finally contacted home station on the evening sked of 31 August strength 4's. Then again the next day I contacted him. After that I did not head the home station for eighteen days. I worked all the times on the emergency frequency. A message was sent informing home station of the existing conditions.

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Next evening I contacted the home station but signal was very weak. It remained weak all the time from then onwards. Fading and interferences was the main reason for the weakness. Broadcasts were exceptionally good all the time.

The emergency was always reliable. Standard of operating from home station was poor.

Suggestions for further operations

All messages sent blind should be repeated in broadcasts.

A different type of generator for the set is needed as the existing one is far too noisy.

All radio equipment was left in Paris at H.Q. there.

W/T Equipment lost on Operations.

(1) Extra receiver complete - burnt when our equipment was 30 August.

(2) Receiver lost when accident occurred on road Vesoul - Lyon during return trip 30 August.

(3) 3 Crystals lost - frequencies unknown. 30 August.

(4) Aerial gear lost same time.

(5) Some silks lost same time.

Remainder left in Paris at H.Q.

Financial Statement

Received by Major Brown - - - - - 100,000 Frs

Expenses

handed to Maquis at Eluys - - - - -	15,000
Handed to M. Hocquant for relations	
of dead in Maquis - - - - -	10,000
Clothes and material bought at Epnal -	4,000
American uniform bought in Paris - - -	2,500
Living expenses Vosges - - - - -	11,000
Unaccounted - - - - -	7,736
Total - - - - -	50,236

Returned - - - - - 49,764

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Received by Captain Maitre - - - - - 100,000 Frs

Expenses

Given to Chief of Maquis of Rambeuillers in order to provide needs of families of maquis - - - - -	15,000
Given to M. Hocquaux (Eloyer) for family of Eloyer killed - - - - -	10,000
Living expenses during the mission - -	20,000
Given to two agents dispatched at St. Die to obtain information - - - -	10,000
Given to various persons for services rendered - - - - -	10,000
Purchases of cigarettes and soap - - -	3,000
Total - - - - -	<u>68,000</u>

Returned - - - - - 32,000

Received by Sergeant Smith - - - - - 50,000

Expenses

Gift to families of maquis killed in action - - - - -	10,000
For clothing bought - - - - -	4,800
To maquis for food - - - - -	10,000
To personal keep while away from maquis	20,000
To Frenchmen who guided and worked with me in absence of Major Brown - - -	3,000
Total - - - - -	<u>47,800</u>

Returned - - - - - 2,200