

Operation Market Garden was the code name for an unsuccessful Allied attack on German forces in the Netherlands during World War II (1939-1945). The September 1944 operation was a massive assault that combined Allied airborne troops and armored infantry with close air support. The British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery planned and coordinated the attack—the largest airborne assault in history. The goal of Operation Market Garden was to secure a series of bridges across the Netherlands, opening northern Germany to the Allies. The most important of these bridges crossed the lower Rhine River at Arnhem. Operation Market Garden is often remembered as the Battle of Arnhem.

The *Market*, or airborne, phase of the operation included around 35,000 American, British, and Polish paratroopers and glider-borne infantry dropped in several waves. On Sept. 17, 1944, the first wave of about 20,000 troops—along with vast amounts of supplies, vehicles, and artillery—was dropped behind German lines. American troops landed near Eindhoven, Veghel, Grave, and Nijmegen, while the British and Polish forces were concentrated around Arnhem. The airborne phase sought to open and secure a 64-mile (103-kilometer) route through which the ground phase—*Garden*—would pass. The combined forces would then drive into Germany. The ground phase consisted of many thousands of troops and about 20,000 vehicles from the British 2nd Army.

From the beginning, Operation Market Garden failed to meet its objectives. The airborne soldiers were scattered and lacked communication, and difficulties securing the bridges delayed the arrival of ground forces. German resistance was much stronger than the Allies had anticipated. In addition, bad weather limited Allied air support and delayed the delivery of additional airborne troops to Arnhem. For more than a week, the airborne units fought to stay alive and hold the bridges, while the Allied ground units fought desperately to reach them. By September 25, Allied leaders decided to end the operation and evacuate as many troops as possible.

Operation Market Garden was a failure. Of the 10,000 British and Polish troops isolated at Arnhem, more than 1,400 were killed and 6,000 were taken prisoner. The Americans suffered nearly 4,000 casualties, while the British ground forces sustained another 5,000 killed,

wounded, and missing. German casualties totaled between 4,000 and 10,000, but they held onto the Rhine crossing at Arnhem.

Fighting in the Netherlands dragged on for the rest of World War II, resulting in the deaths of thousands more military personnel and Dutch civilians. Arnhem was not liberated until April 14, 1945, and the German forces in the Netherlands did not surrender until May 5. Germany itself surrendered two days later, ending the war in Europe.

Historians have written a number of books about Operation Market Garden. The attack has also been the subject of the motion pictures *Theirs Is Glory*(1946) and *A Bridge Too Far* (1977).

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