

## Airborne Troops

a. **ATTACK ON CRETE.** In the early stages of the war Germany tried various methods of employing air-landing troops in the Lowlands, Norway, and the Balkans. Tactics for airborne combat became more clearly defined, however, in the combined attack on Crete, which was the first airborne invasion and capture of strongly defended territory across a body of water. The pattern established then consisted of the following:

(1) Short, intensive low and medium bombing and strafing of enemy positions in the intended landing area, immediately preceding or even simultaneous with the landing of glider-borne and parachute troops.

(2) As these troops proceeded, according to plan, to disrupt communications, silence local defenses, and seize airfields or other suitable landing grounds, areas surrounding their immediate objectives were subjected to continuous bombardment.

(3) With the arrival of the airborne infantry and engineer units closely followed by heavier elements, the parachute and other shock troops were reinforced and this combined force continued the task of attacking enemy communications from the rear, drawing off reserves, and clearing the area for the armored forces which were to follow.

b. **OPERATIONS SINCE CRETE.** (1) Since the capture of Crete, increasing transport commitments on all fronts and Allied air superiority have placed almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of such large scale ventures. The Germans have, however, dropped parachutists and landed glider troops in conjunction with land operations.

(2) In Russia, the Balkans, and the December 1944 counteroffensive in the Ardennes, units varying in strength from a platoon to a battalion have been landed behind enemy lines to disrupt communications, to seize such key points as railroads, roadheads, bridges, and power stations, and to engage in other sabotage activities. When such tactics are employed, the troops, whether they are parachuted from the JU 52 or landed by the DFS 230, usually hold their positions a limited time before being relieved by advancing ground forces or attempting to work their way back to their own lines.