

# World War II - Montaretto - Ginny Mission II - Ameglia

22-26 March 1944

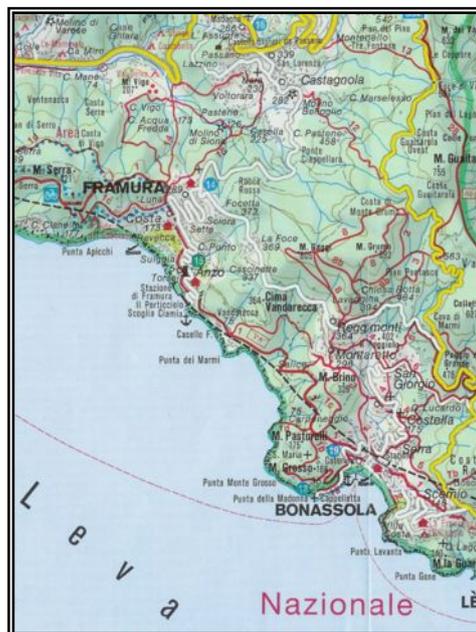


On the night of 22 March 1944, two officers and thirteen Italian-American soldiers of the 2677th Special Reconnaissance Battalion of the Armed Forces of the United States of America travelled by MTB from Bastia, Corsica to the stretch of coastline located between Bonassola and Framura, about 35 miles North-West of La Spezia. The mission was to blow up a nearby railway tunnel. At that time the Genova to La Spezia railway line was being used to re-supply German troops fighting at Monte Cassino and Anzio, some 250 miles away. Throughout the operation all troops were in uniform and not wearing civilian clothes.

Unfortunately, the Germans had realised the vulnerability of the railway tunnel entrances and had set up stout well-manned defences with no obvious weak points. The American soldiers attempted to evade capture but were eventually apprehended on the morning of 24 March 1944 by a mixed formation comprising soldiers of the fascist Socialist Republic of Italy and German troops. All 15 soldiers were taken to nearby La Spezia, where the German 135<sup>th</sup> Fortress Brigade had its headquarters, and were interrogated by two officers from German naval intelligence.

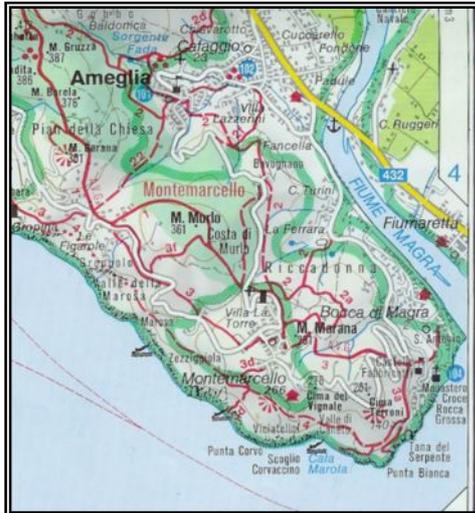
During questioning, one of the soldiers revealed the purpose of the mission. On 24 March the 135<sup>th</sup> Fortress Brigade reported the capture to the 75<sup>th</sup> German Army Corps. On the morning of March 25 the Brigade received a telegram signed by General Dostler (head of the 75th German Army Corps) which demanded that the prisoners be shot immediately. The officers who had interrogated the prisoners and the 135<sup>th</sup> Fortress Brigade Commander, Colonel Almers, requested a stay of execution, but on the afternoon of 25 March the HQ of the 75<sup>th</sup> Corps ordered the prisoners to be shot before 7am the following morning.

During the night of Saturday 25 March 1944 officers of the 135<sup>th</sup> Fortress Brigade and the German Navy twice tried to have the order to execute the men rescinded but were unsuccessful. Hence the soldiers (who had been taken from La Spezia to the remote cliff top location of Punta Bianca near Bocca di Magra) were shot at dawn on the morning of 26 March 1944. None had been tried by a court. The order to shoot them contravened international conventions and was the sole responsibility of General Anton Dostler,



commander of the 75<sup>th</sup> German Army Corps. Dostler's subordinate, Alexander Prince of Dohna-Schlobitten, who refused to sign the execution order, was dismissed from the Wehrmacht for insubordination and political unreliability. (Alexander was a German aristocrat who died on 24 January 1997 at the age of 97).

General Dostler was brought to trial before an American Military Commission at the Palace of Justice in Rome on 8 October 1945, and proceedings concluded on 12 October. His defence was that he had simply obeyed Hitler's orders, issued 18 October 1942, to shoot all commandos caught without first bringing them to trial. He said that if he had behaved differently he would have risked being brought before a German court martial.



Anton Dostler was convicted of war crimes and was shot at Aversa (located 15km North of Naples) at 8am on 1 December 1945. He is buried in the Pomezia war cemetery, Italy.

Colonel Almers (commander of the 135<sup>th</sup> Fortress Brigade) who was apprehended by the Allies at the end of the war, escaped captivity and was never recaptured.

In 1990, the town of Ameglia in Northern Italy placed a plaque in the main town square commemorating members of the OSS Ginny Mission murdered by Germans. They also placed bronze markers at Punta Bianca where the team had been executed after capture, and at Ferrara where they are buried.

To commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mission, the American OSS Society and the Comune of Ameglia placed a commemorative plaque at Punta Bianca and erected a formal monument at Bocca di Magra.

The mission represented a tragic waste of heroic and talented military personnel who must have known from the start that their chances of success and survival were perilously slim.



Monument Position: N44.05650 E009.97245  
 Punta Bianca: N44.03605 E009.97747

[Hyperlink: Execution of Anton Dostler at Aversa](#)

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