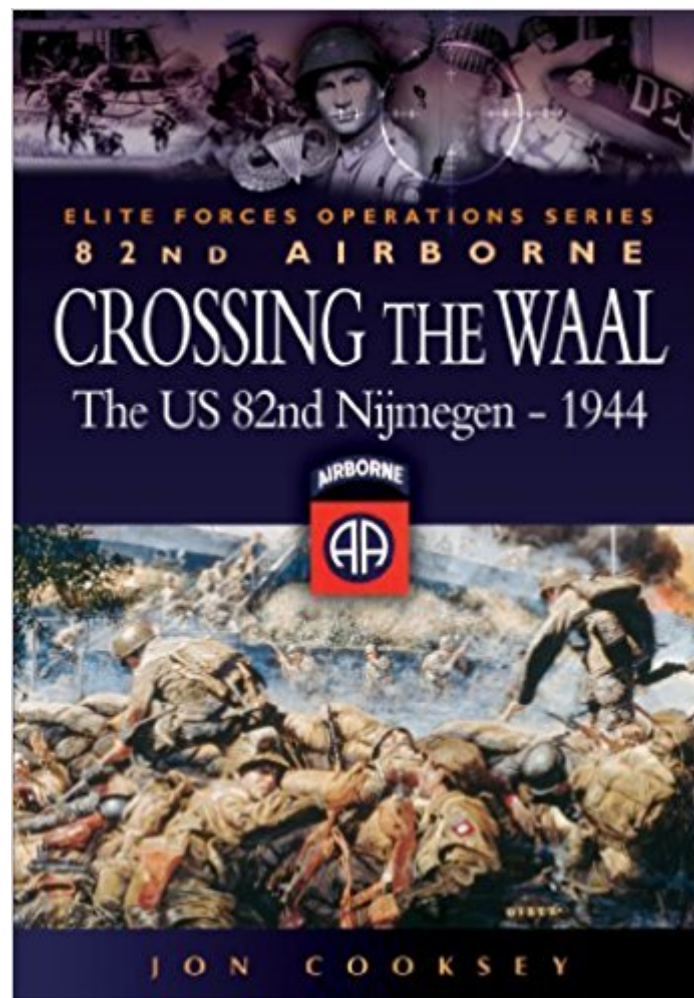




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Crossing The Waal: The U.S. 82nd Airborne Division At Nijmegen Elite Forces Operations Series



Synopsis

By the late summer of 1944 the allied drive in Western Europe was in danger of stalling as lines of communication became ever more extended. A 'back door' into the heart of Germany had to be found. In September 1944, that 'back door' led through Holland. Montgomery's plan for operation Market Garden was bold, innovative and simple. The British XXX Corps would drive 60 miles in two days, crossing river obstacles over bridges captured intact by Airborne troops dropped earlier. The British would take the last bridge, over the Rhine at Arnhem, but the rest would be the responsibility of the Americans. Brigadier General James 'Slim Jim' Gavin's 82nd Airborne had the job of taking and holding three bridges, including the road bridge over the Waal at Nijmegen. All went well until Nijmegen when the advance ground to a halt as the Germans, holding the southern approach, refused to give ground. The entire operation was now at risk. Gavin's solution was as audacious as it was dangerous. A crossing of the Waal in open boats - when they arrived - to outflank the Germans. That crossing, under murderous fire, witnessed remarkable feats of individual courage and endurance as the Americans battled to prise open the road to Arnhem trying to keep Market Garden alive.

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Jon Cooksey is a respected Military Historian and Battlefield Tour Guide.

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