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Lieutenant-Colonel James Leslie Kincaid and the Emergency Response to the 1944 Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, Southern Italy

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ABSTRACT
The 1944 eruption of Vesuvius occurred at the height of the Second World War. A successful emergency relief operation was launched by the Allied Control Commission and was led by an American officer, Lt. Col. (James) Leslie Kincaid. In this paper we both describe the operation and evaluate its effectiveness pointing out, inter alia: the importance of well-trained and experienced personnel; the need for expertise across a wide range of specialisms; the ability to both empathise with victims, but at the same time lead and strongly direct a successful military operation and work harmoniously and effectively with allies.

The most recent eruption of Vesuvius occurred in March 1944, and given the exigencies of war, it is remarkable that its chronology and volcanological characteristics are so well known. Knowledge of the eruption is almost entirely due to the diligence and devotion to science of Professor Giuseppe Imbò, who was at the time the Director of the *Reale Osservatorio Vesuviano.*[1] In the years immediately following the Second World War several lengthy papers were published by Imbò and his colleagues and, although knowledge of the 1944 eruption has been further advanced by more recent research, his papers published in the 1940s and early 1950s

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[1]Roberto Scandone, 'Giuseppe Imbò: Volcanologist in difficult times', *Volcano News* 15, (1983), no page numbers.

remain the basis of all subsequent eruption narratives with a chronology of events given in Appendix 1.[2]

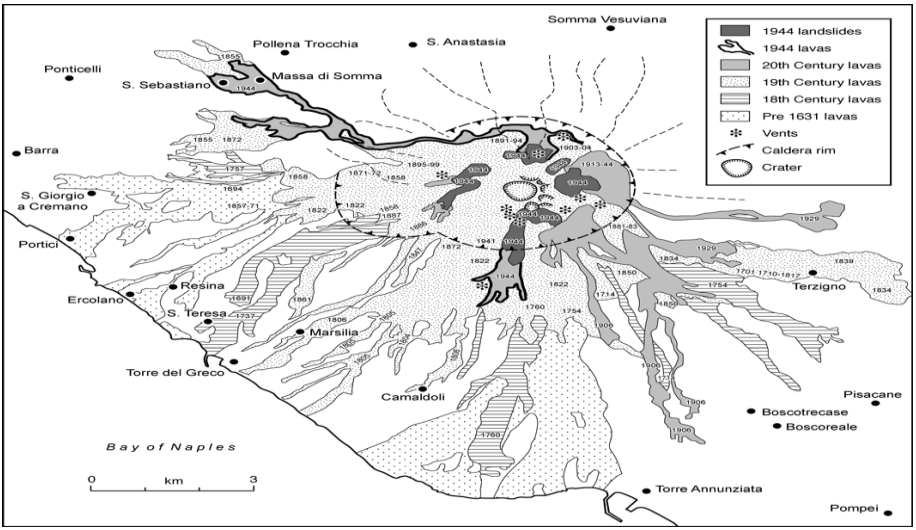

Figure 1: Geological map of Vesuvius, showing the course of the 1944 eruption.[3]

[2]Giuseppe Imbò, 'L'attività eruttiva vesuviana e relative osservazioni nel corso dell'intervallo interuttivo 1906-1944 ed in particolare del parossismo del Marzo 1944', *Annali Osservatorio Vesuviano* V (1949), pp. 185-380; Giuseppe Imbò, 'Sismicità del parossismo vesuviano del marzo 1944', *Annali Osservatorio Vesuviano* VI, I (1955), pp. 59-268; Roberto Scandone, Lisetta Giacomelli and Paolo Gasparini, 'Mount Vesuvius: 2000 years of volcanological observations', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 58 (1993), pp. 5-25; Benedetto de Vivo, Roberto Scandone and Raffaello Trigila, 'Recent volcanological researches on Vesuvius', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 58 (1993), pp. 1- 3; P. Fulignati, P. Marianelli, N. Métrich, R. Santacroce, R. and A. Sbrana, 'Towards a reconstruction of the magmatic feeding system of the 1944 eruption of Mt. Vesuvius', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 133 (2004), pp. 13-22; Paul Cole and Claudio Scarpati, 'The 1944 eruption of Vesuvius, Italy: Combining contemporary accounts and field studies for a new volcanological reconstruction', *Geological Magazine* 147, 3 (2010), pp. 391- 415.

[3]From David K. Chester, Angus M. Duncan, Philip Wetton and Roswitha Wetton, Journal *of Historical Geography* 33, Fig. 1 (2007), pp. 172, Copyright permission Elsevier.

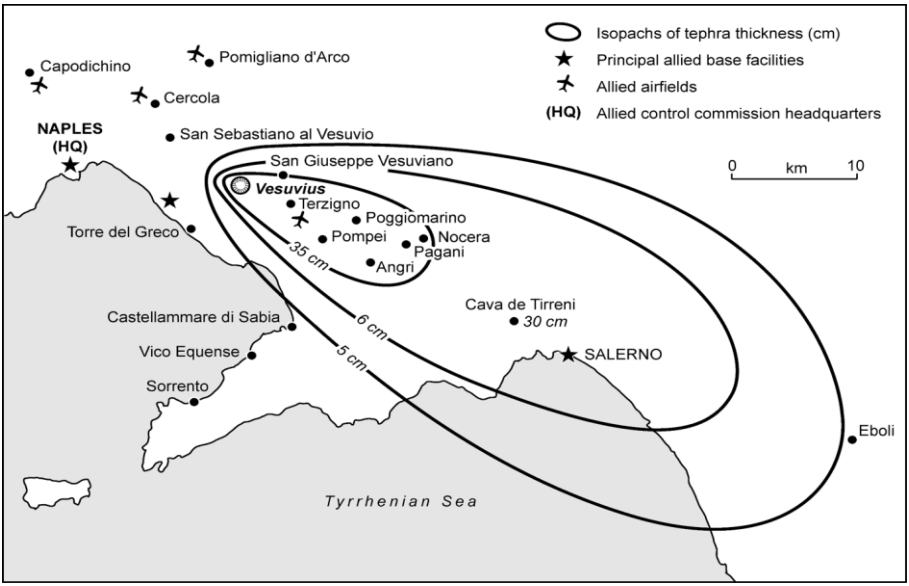

Figure 2: Isopachs of Tephra (Ash) Distribution.[4]

Until the 2000s the ways in which people living on the slopes of Vesuvius coped with the effects of the 1944 eruption had not been fully reported. Information was limited to newspaper accounts, a contemporary report by H. Bentley and J. R. Gregory, published privately and only available to researchers visiting archives in the U.S.A., U.K. or Italy, and an Italian work of 1994 entitled *Vesuvio 1944: Le ultima eruzione*.[5] *Vesuvio 1944*, published locally, uses additional archive material from Italy, includes some excellent photographs from British and American sources and successfully builds upon Bentley and Gregory's pioneering account.

More than a decade ago, the present authors completed a study of the 1944 eruption, which was based on an investigation of archival sources, accounts provided by surviving

[4]Based on: R. Scandone, F. Iannone, F. and G. Mastrolorenzo, 'Stima dei Parametri Dinamici dell'eruzione dell 1944 del Vesuvio', *Bolletino Gruppo Nazionale di Vulcanologia* 2 (1986), pp. 487-512; Chester et al., *Journal of Historical Geography* 33, pp. 172; and additional cartography for this paper.

[5]H. Bentley and J. R. Gregory, *Final Report on the Vesuvius Emergency Operation,* (Headquarters, Naples Province: Allied Control Commission, 1944); Angelo Pesce and Giuseppe Rolandi, *Vesuvio 1944: L' ultima eruzione*, (Private Publication: San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, 1994); Angelo Pesce and Giuseppe Rolandi, Vesuvio 1944: *L' ultima eruzione,* (San Sebastiano al Vesuvio: Private Publication, 2000, 2nd ed.).

military personnel involved in the emergency operation, and information compiled from the town councils (*comuni)* of the settlements that were affected.[6] Recently, further archival research has allowed the authors to assess the damage caused by the eruption and to reconstruct the responses to it.

Figure 3: Lt. Colonel (James) Leslie Kincaid.[7]

During this research a further story of exceptional leadership emerged – that of American Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel (James) Leslie Kincaid, who commanded the allied emergency operation both during and immediately after the eruption. In March 1944 Kincaid was a 59 year old reserve officer who had no previous knowledge of volcanic eruptions, but possessed a rare combination of extensive military experience, highly relevant civilian management expertise, and well-honed leadership skills. In common with many older American military administrators including his

[6]David K. Chester, Angus M. Duncan, Philip Wetton and Roswitha Wetton, 'Responses of the Anglo-American military authorities to the March 1944 eruption of Vesuvius, Southern Italy', *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007), pp. 168-196; David Chester and Angus Duncan, 'Escape from Vesuvius', *History Today* 59, 8 2009), pp. 43-49.

[7]James Leslie Kincaid (1884-1973) as photographed in 1939. Reproduced by permission of Syracuse University Libraries.

deputy Major Harry Hershenson, Kincaid had attended the School of Military Government at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.[8] Modelled on the politico-military courses the British War Office held at the *Intelligence Training Centre* at the University of Cambridge, the *School of Military Government* was set up in Charlottesville late in 1941 immediately following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and by May 1942 was training its first intake of students. Courses ran for four months, included older reserve officers such as Kincaid and Hershenson, and concentrated on the future administration of Germany, Italy and Japan, with experts seconded from the military, government service and academia. Syllabi were strongly influenced by the *Field Manual for Military Government (FM27-5)*, which was largely based on the lessons that had been learnt during the American occupation of the Rhineland in 1918.[9]

Following the successful invasion of Sicily in 1943, it soon became clear that *FM27-5* was not a particularly helpful guide because it assumed peaceful conditions similar to those that were faced in Germany in the years immediately following World War I, whereas in Sicily and later in mainland Italy, war was still actively being waged, and there was also a pressing need to eliminate the *fascist* legacy. In December 1943 *FM27-5* was revised to make all actions of military government subordinate to the overall war aims of defeating the enemy, establishing a new government without *fascist* taint, and police action to maintain law and order and establish control over organised crime, including the black market.[10] As will be seen, the efforts to control organised crime and the black market were largely unsuccessful.[11] Although the revised version of *FM27-5* defined the context under which Kincaid was required to operate, he never used its more draconian powers.

Following guerrilla action by partisans, Naples fell to the allies on 1 October 1943, but by March 1944 the situation there was far from being militarily or administratively secure. Retreating German forces had destroyed much of the urban fabric of Naples. By March while there was no immediate threat of starvation or prospect of major epidemics, an estimated 800,000 people still depended on the Allies for their day-to-day survival, and a crime-syndicate dominated black-market controlled most aspects

[8]See Appendix 2 for summary biographic details of the key actors in the 1944 events.
[9]Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *American experience in military government in World War II,* (New York: Rinehart, 1948); Earl F. Ziemke, *The U.S. Army in the occupation of Germany, 1944-1946*, (Washington DC: Center of Military History, United States Army,1975).
[10]George C. S. Benson and Maurice Neufeld, 'American military government in Italy', in Carl Joachim Friedrich (ed.), *American experience in military government in World War II*, (New York: Rinehart, 1948), pp. 111-147.
[11]Norman Lewis, *Naples 44: An Intelligence Officer in the Italian Labyrinth*, (London: Eland. 2002).

of food and welfare distribution.[12] March 1944 was a difficult time in the Italian campaign because the Allied advance had been halted well to the north of Vesuvius at Monte Cassino and Anzio, and wounded soldiers plus refugees flooded into Naples and the other towns and villages of the region.

As recently as January 1944, the administration of occupied areas had been reformed and an *Allied Control Commission* (ACC) assumed sole responsibility for the liberated areas of southern Italy. The senior British officer, Lt. General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane, was the Chief Commissioner of the ACC (see Appendix 2). The ACC was structured into regions, which were themselves sub-divided into provinces and in March 1944 the Commissioner of the Naples Province was Lt. Col. Kincaid, and his immediate superior was the Regional Commissioner Lt. Col. Charles Poletti (see Appendix 2).[13] As the appendix shows, the life of James Leslie Kincaid is well documented in files compiled by archivists at Syracuse University, and the New York Military Museum and Veterans' Research Center. By March 1944 Kincaid had already demonstrated many of the personal qualities which would ensure that his command of the emergency would be successful. As Provincial Commissioner he was fortunate in that the talented team he commanded, and his style of leadership avoided many of the pitfalls that were endemic within the ACC. Politically the ACC has been pilloried for not fully purging the country of *fascism* and instead supported a system of government that left many of the country's ills intact, especially unstable government and the persistence of organised crime. In addition, and of greater relevance to the volcanic emergency, ACC personnel have often been disparaged as comprising a mixture of over-aged ineffective senior commanders and junior officers who were the poorer products of Officer Training Units.[14] This was not the case with Kincaid's command (as can be seen in Appendix 2). In addition, there was often intra-allied criticism with American officers expressing the opinion, for instance, that the British were over-represented at senior levels within the chain of command. This was a consequence of the practice whereby an officer's rank reflected the importance of the appointment rather than his seniority and/or efficiency.

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[12]Charles R. S. Harris, *Allied Military Administration of Italy,* (London, HMSO, 1957); Norman Lewis, *Jackdaw Cake: An autobiography*, (Hamilton: London, 1985); Kenneth V. Smith, *Naples-Foggia. Brief histories of the U.S. Army in World War II*, (Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1992), vol. 8.

[13]The city of Naples and its port remained under the direct control of the *Allied Military Government* (AMG).

[14]Maurice F. Neufeld, 'The Failure of the AMG in Italy', *Public Administration Review* 6, 2 (1946), pp. 137-148; Richard Lamb, *War in Italy 1943-1945: A Brutal Story*, (London: John Murray, 1993); Isobel Williams, *Allies and Italians under occupation: Sicily and Southern Italy 1943-45*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

On the British side many questions were raised over the style of command exercised by the Regional Commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Poletti, Kincaid's immediate superior. Neither issue had an adverse effect on the emergency operation with Kincaid maintaining firm personal control of his command. Apart from a 'duty visit', Poletti had no active involvement in the events that followed the eruption.[15] At the provincial level all the key officers were American, and Kincaid managed to foster excellent relationships with his British allies.[16] In fact an appendix added to Bentley and Gregory's report contains a letter of appreciation sent to Kincaid from a senior British officer.[17]

Four features characterised the successful emergency response:

1. Accurate information based on reconnaissance and clear scientific advice.
2. The ability to deploy large numbers of troops who had clearly defined
3. Contingency plans should the eruption take an unexpected course.
4. Provision of aid in the immediate aftermath of the eruption.

These are considered in turn below.

The provision of accurate information[18]

From the beginning of the eruption Kincaid's planning was based on accurate information. On Saturday afternoon (18 March), he convened a staff meeting to discuss the eruption and early on the 19 March ordered Lt. Colonel Guy Warren (see Appendix 2), and Capt. John Lummus to reconnoitre the area above Torre del Greco and Torre Annunziate and report on the situation (see Figure 1 for locations). Warren and Lummus had to abandon their transport because of falls of tephra (volcanic ash) that had been deposited by winds coming from the north north-east. Proceeding on foot, they found that the southern lava flow was advancing at a rate of about 300 metres/hour. They reasoned that if this rate continued, then Torre del Greco would be engulfed in less than 15 hours. A similar mission was undertaken by Kincaid and Lt. Col. John Warner. They climbed the mountain in order to observe the northern lava flow, which they believed was threatening the town of Cercola, see Figures 1 & 2, and at 10.00 am they recorded that the flow was circa 150 metres wide, 4 to 5 metres thick, and had already slowed to circa 6 metres/hour. They concluded that San Sebastiano, rather than Cercola, was immediately at risk.

[15]David K. Chester, Angus M. Duncan *et al.,* 'Responses of the Anglo-American military authorities', pp. 181-2.
[16]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 26-28.
[17]Ibid., pp. 26-28 and Appendix.
[18]Many of the details in this section are from: Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 5-27.

Kincaid kept abreast of developments in San Sebastiano and Massa di Somma by locating his headquarters near to the flow-front on the metal bridge that connected the two towns and later, after the bridge had been destroyed by lava, he requisitioned the town hall (*Municipio*) in Cercola and made this his forward base. During the eruption Kincaid was supplied with information both by Professor Imbò and by his own subordinates: especially Warren, who commanded the San Giuseppe to San Giorgio sector; and Cantor, who was in charge of an area from Portici to Terzigno. On the 22 March, when communications to the east and southeast flanks were severely impeded by thick tephra deposition, Kincaid's devolution of command to trusted senior officers meant that firm control over the emergency operation was maintained.

In early March 1944 Professor Imbò had no transport, no photographic film, nor even alcohol to preserve his seismological charts. Much of the *Reale Osservatorio Vesuviana* had also been requisitioned by meteorology staff of the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), with Imbò and his wife, who was a research assistant, and a single seismograph accommodated in a basement room. Once the eruption began, the professor's essential role as a conduit of scientific knowledge was acknowledged. The professor received a limited stock of film, supplies of alcohol and a staff car. He was soon supplying vital information to the allies.[19]

Deployment of Personnel

A frequent complaint made of the allied war effort in Italy was that there were too many non-combatant military personnel, with the ACC in particular being perceived as chronically overstaffed. Harold Macmillan, at the time Churchill's personal representative in Italy, estimated that in 1944 some 1,400 officers and a total of 4,000 allied personnel were employed in administering those parts of Italy under ACC control. Macmillan believed this to be excessive especially when compared with the staffing levels adopted in countries under British colonial administration.[20] In fact it soon became apparent to Lt. Col. Kincaid that he did not have enough personnel under his command to mount an effective emergency response and, in addition to deploying his entire provincial staff, had to request the temporary attachment of a further 89 American and British officers. Following the eruption, a total of 65 officers

[19]Elena Cubellis and Giuseppe Luongo, 'L' eruzione del marzo 1944', in Giuseppe Luongo (ed.), *Mons Vesuvius: Sfide e catastofi trap aura e scienza,* (Napoli: Stagioni d' Italia), pp. 273-294; William Hoffer, *Volcano: The search for Vesuvius,* (New York: Summit Books, 1982), pp. 177-180; Roberto Scandone et al., 'Mount Vesuvius: 2000 years of volcanological observations', pp. 5-25.

[20]Harold Macmillan, *War Diaries: Politics and War in the Mediterranean January 1943-May 1944,* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 352-3.

were named for special commendation, together with 45 non-commissioned officers and 11 United States Red Cross nurses.[21] At the height of the eruption even these enhanced numbers proved insufficient and, through Captain Arthur Carter his liaison officer at the Royal Air Force (RAF) base in Portici (Fig. 1), Lt. Col. Kincaid was forced to request additional help from Group Captain Stuart Culley the officer commanding this facility. Culley willingly supplied troops and much needed transport.[22]

Throughout the eruption small detachments of soldiers and officials were billeted in towns and villages in the region affected, both to react to local needs and report on the eruption to Kincaid.[23] On two occasions far higher concentrations of troops and much more elaborate organisation of human resources were required. The first occurred at the climax of the eruption, between 20-24 March (See Appendix 1). At 10.30 am on the 20 March, Kincaid was forced to promise transport to the people of San Sebastiano and Massa di Somma should the need for evacuation arise and by 11.00 am 15 trucks were on standby, together with detachments of *Carabinieri* (Italian para-military police) and RAF/USAAF personnel.[24] Evacuation soon commenced, but by nightfall the decision had been taken that Cercola was also threatened. On 21 March even more troops and *Carabinieri* were required, together with a further 200 trucks. Food distribution centres for evacuees were established, with several of these being operated by the American Red Cross.

On 22 March, wind-driven explosive plumes 2 to 4 kms in height caused tephra to fall on the east and southeast flanks of the volcano (See Appendix 1 Phase 2) and destroyed a large number of American aircraft at Poggiomarino airfield.[25] It is fortunate that the USAAF personnel had no need for assistance in vacating their base

[21]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report,* Appendix.
[22]Ibid., pp. 26-27.
[23]Pesce and Rolandi, *Vesuvio 1944*, pp. 70.
[24]Royal Air Force Museum, Hendon London, Report on the eruption of Vesuvius March 1944, effect in respect of certain Royal Air Force Units, and the action taken by the Royal Air Force, in manuscript; James Troy Johnson, History of the 316th Fighter Squadron 1942-1945, http://www.bytebabble.com/JTJ-website/index.html Accessed 1 June 2021.
[25]Poggiomarino is also referred to as Terzigno or Vesuvius airfield. 88 B25 Mitchell bombers were badly damaged, but there is considerable doubt in the records about whether 14 were eventually repaired. Poggiomarino airfield was never used again and the total loss is estimated at $US 25 million. Maxwell Air Force Base Alabama, Air Historical Research Agency Archive, Robert F. Mc Rae, *Vesuvius and the 340th*. Available online from the 57th Bomb Wing Association website, http://57thbombwing.com/340th_History/340th_Diary/15_March1944.pdf Accessed 1 June 2021.

because Kincaid's command was still heavily involved in evacuating people and salvaging materials from Massa di Somma, San Sebastiano and Cercola. Around lunchtime the northern flow halted, but almost immediately reports were passed to headquarters at Cercola that the southern flow was advancing again. The rapid re-deployment of troops and transport was required to enable 250 people to be evacuated to Castellammare di Stabia, south-south-east of Torre Annunziata.

On 23 March, Kincaid concluded that Cercola was no longer in danger, and gave its people permission to return to their homes and again provided transport. During this phase of the emergency, and despite two thirds of San Sebastiano being destroyed, Kincaid's command had managed to supervise the evacuation of around 7,000 people from Cercola, between 1,500 and 1,800 from San Sebastiano, slightly fewer than 2,000 from Massa di Somma, and more than 750 who were threatened by the southern flow.[26] The vast majority of evacuees were accommodated with families and friends in nearby villages, leaving the ACC to find limited additional accommodation. Overall evacuation was a great success, the only loss of life being the possible suicide of a man from San Sebastiano who suffered severe clinical depression following the destruction of his home, and the report of the death of two children killed by the explosion of a tanker that came into contact with the active lava flow.[27]

A second episode in which a greater concentration of human and non-human resources was required was during and after Phase 3 of the eruption (see Appendix 1), when a thick blanket of tephra covered the south-eastern and eastern flanks of the volcano.[25] On 22 and 23 March Kincaid became increasingly concerned about the towns of Poggiomarino, San Giuseppe and Terzigno where the living conditions of the people were rapidly deteriorating to a level that had not been seen since the final days before liberation. Accounts from service personnel show that these and other towns were almost cut off by drifts of tephra, and at the RAF base in Portici orders were given for supplies of food, water and fuel to be covered over to prevent contamination.[28] The area to the east and southeast of Vesuvius was termed the 'dust

[26]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 14, 18; F. Marciano, A. Casale and F. Cordella, *Cenni di storia Civile e Religiona*, (Massa di Somma: Edizioni Comune, 1998).

[27]A total of 24 people were killed by volcanic ash - induced roof collapse in the Terzigno, Pagani and Nocera areas during Phase 3 of the eruption. A further two deaths occurred, when 2 children were killed by an explosion when a tanker came into contact with the active lava of the northern flow of Phase One of the eruption. Elena Cubellis, Aldo Marturano and Lucia Pappalardo Cubellis, 'The last Vesuvius eruption in March 1944', pp. 95-121.

[28]Bishop (Lieutenant) Michael Mann, personal communication, 13 March 2005; Polly Powers-Stramm, 'My favorite veteran recalls Mount Vesuvius erupting', *Savannah Morning News*, November 10.

bowl' by allied troops and Kincaid had only 38 officers and 37 enlisted men in the towns and villages within this area, but in the days that followed additional personnel and material resources flowed into this region. Bulldozers and 30 trucks were deployed to clear drifts of tephra, some of which were more than 1.2 m deep.[29]

Contingency Plans

One notable feature of the emergency was the development of contingency plans should the eruption have taken an unexpected and more serious course. Although it is not possible to determine whether prompted by Kincaid or acting on his own initiative, within the British archives there are a number of telegrams signed by the Chief Commissioner of the ACC, Lieutenant-General Mason-Macfarlane to his superiors.[30] These telegrams include not only accounts of the measures being undertaken by Kincaid's command, and reports about the manner in which the eruption was developing, but also show wider concerns. One telegram from Mason-Macfarlane, to Lieutenant-General James Gammell - Chief of Staff to the Commander of the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations - reveals that plans were drawn up to allow civilian refugees to be evacuated to Sicily by rail and sea should the eruption have become more serious.[31] It is clear from this telegram that there had been an earlier exchange of correspondence, which has not survived in the archives, beginning as early as the 19 March. Arrangements had been made in Sicily to receive refugees, and Mason-Macfarlane was concerned that no ships had yet arrived in Naples. Pesce and Rolandi do mention the names of the ships that would have been used, implying that planning had reached an advanced stage.[32] An operation of this scale would have placed a severe strain on allied logistical capabilities, and more particularly on Kincaid's command.[33] It is fortunate that the plan was never implemented.

A second example of contingency planning occurred towards the end of the eruption. On 24 March officers at the RAF base in Portici became concerned that heavy falls of tephra were about to make roads to the base impassable and the possibility of a second

[29]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 26; Pesce and Rolandi, *Vesuvio 1944*, pp. 70, 182.
[30]UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA) WO 204/2225/121623, Lieutenant General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane, Chief Commissioner, telegrams to his superior, 1944, telegrams 2481,2526,2584,2493.
[31]Lieutenant-General James Gammell (1892-1975). At the time of the eruption the Commander of the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations was General Sir Henry Maitland-Wilson (1881-1964), who had succeeded General Dwight Eisenhower in January 1944; TNA WO 204/2225/121623, telegram 2493.
[32]Angelo Pesce and Giuseppe Rolandi, *Vesuvio 1944: L' ultima eruzione,* (San Sebastiano al Vesuvio: Private Publication, 2000), 2nd ed.
[33]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

evacuation by sea was investigated.[34] Timely action by Kincaid and his team, who began to clear roads using bulldozers and manual labour, meant that once again evacuation was not required.

Post-eruption responses[35]

Most reconstruction occurred after January 1946, when the area was once more under full Italian sovereignty, but the initial stages were under ACC control and took place whilst Kincaid was still in command. Again, the results are impressive. In the towns of San Sebastiano and Massa di Somma, tents were supplied for the homeless, water and food were provided and the Italian authorities were encouraged to classify buildings into two categories: those that were only fit for demolition; and those that could be repaired.[36] Officers of the ACC initiated some rehabilitation in Massa di Somma and San Sebastiano, and these settlements shared schemes of financial aid and medical support with the badly affected towns located on the east and southeast flanks of the volcano. From 27 March and even before the close of the eruption, an ACC financial team under Major Rogers had decided how much aid was required and specialist troops under the command of Captain Mackenzie gave advice on matters concerning sanitation and hygiene.[37]

For the 'dust bowl towns' of the south-eastern and eastern flanks, intervention by the ACC was urgently required. Blankets of tephra had virtually cut off many settlements and servicemen have left vivid accounts of the severity of the conditions facing military personnel and the civil population alike.[38] As already mentioned, in the towns of Poggiomarino, San Giuseppe and Terzigno, Kincaid's command acted quickly to restore communications by means of the rapid re-deployment of troops and earth-moving equipment, but following the emergency even more aid was forthcoming. A major problem in the 'dust bowl' was that drifts of tephra had destroyed crops and the population faced the prospect of eventual starvation. The ACC quickly assessed

[34]Archives and Records Management Syracuse University Library, Information file on James Leslie Kincaid; New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center Saratoga Springs, Information file on James Leslie Kincaid.

[35]There are many photographs of the 'clean up' operation within archive collections and a large number are reproduced by Angelo Pesce and Giuseppe Rolandi in their book. Reference should also be made to: Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University, Melvin C. Shaffer Collection https://www.smu.edu/Libraries/digitalcollections/mcs Accessed 14 June 2021.

[36]Pesce and Rolandi, *Vesuvio 1944*, pp. 72.

[37]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 21, 24, 26.

[38]Bishop (Lieutenant) Michael Mann, personal communication, 13 March 2005; Polly Powers-Stramm, 'My favorite veteran recalls Mount Vesuvius erupting', *Savannah Morning News*, November 10.

the situation and calculated that food was required for around 20,000 people, that there was a particular requirement for green vegetables, and that without forage many farm animals would die. Transport of food from Naples had to be arranged and in each *comune* (local authority area), Kincaid established a relief organisation to ensure fair distribution. Sometime later, agricultural experts were brought in to advise on land restoration and re-planting. Seeds were imported and supplied to farmers and land was restored by deep-digging in order to bring topsoil to the surface. It was found that with careful management a fertile soil could be produced and normal cropping was usually resumed within two years.[39]

Evaluation

Following the eruption Kincaid received many honours, and several of his key staff were also decorated. Kincaid's deputy, Major Hershenson for example, was awarded the army Legion of Merit, and he was also decorated by the Pope. The appendix of Bentley and Gregory's report also contains letters of commendation to Kincaid from, amongst others: the Head of the Italian Government (Marshall Badoglio); his superiors within the ACC; several *sindaci* (mayors), and clergy of the towns affected.

Although there has been some criticism that Kincaid's team could have used weather forecasts more effectively, it is difficult to find any further fault with the operation.[40] In March 1944 weather data were collected at Capodichino airfield near to Naples and during the climax of the eruption on 21 and 22 March (Appendix 1 – **Phase 2**), it is clear that no simple correlation was present between conditions near to sea-level and those found at heights of 2 to 4 km, which caused tephra to be deposited on the south-eastern and southern flanks of the volcano. On 21 and 22 March a complex frontal system passed over Vesuvius from the northwest, and although weather data from Capodichino and other stations were used to produce aviation forecasts, they were not used by Professor Imbó, or Kincaid and his staff, to predict those sectors which would have been affected by tephra fall.[41]

Kincaid and his officers moved quickly in response to the threat posed by the eruption by using all the military and civilian resources they could muster. The efficiency and effectiveness of the response was due to two additional factors. First, the ACC comprised experienced service personnel who were on active service and were accustomed to uncertainty, rapidly changing situations, and having to improvise and act decisively to implement orders in a highly disciplined manner. All these military

[39]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 23-24.

[40]David Chester, Angus Duncan, Philip Wetton and Roswitha Wetton, 'Responses of the Anglo-American military authorities', pp. 183-195.

[41]Weather forecasting was at the time the responsibility of the allied military authorities, not Professor Imbò.

virtues were successfully exploited by Kincaid. As senior representative of the occupying powers and using the provisions of the revised *Field Manual for Military Government*, Kincaid could have forced the population to comply with his orders but there is no evidence that this was ever required. In fact, his orders were fully discussed and agreed with the *sindaci* and other officials before they were implemented.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, anti-social behaviour, panic and crime do not usually occur during and immediately following catastrophes. Studies of disasters have shown that the presence, or absence, of anti-social behaviour usually depends upon whether it is endemic within a given society before it is affected by a disastrous event.[42] Naples and the region of Vesuvius have well deserved reputations for lawlessness, but in 1944 crime was externalised and largely involved trading in contraband allied stores and war *materiel*.[43] It was also organised in part by crime syndicates, and there was no evidence of increased crime in the villages affected by the eruption, either during or immediately following the eruption, a feature that greatly assisted Kincaid and his staff in successfully responding to the eruption. In fact, testimony to the contrary points to increased community solidarity within village communities, which were at the time populated by a relatively small number of extended families.[44]

Secondly, the characteristics of the particular eruption allowed Kincaid's approach to succeed. Kincaid was fortunate that the eruption developed slowly and affected only a limited area, so giving the ACC time to plan palliative measures and put them in place. Though it cannot detract from its success, Kincaid's approach should not be viewed as a model of how to respond to a future eruption. Next time Vesuvius erupts the situation will probably be very different, since the 1944 eruption may well have marked the termination of a distinct cycle of volcanic activity. Although there is still debate, it is generally accepted by Italian volcanologists, that the next eruption is likely to mark both the onset of a new cycle and will be more violent.[45] A large explosive

[42]Christopher Dibben and David Chester, 'Human vulnerability in volcanic environments: The case of Furnas, São Miguel, Açores', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 92 (1999), pp. 33-150 (also see references)

[43]David K. Chester, Christopher J.L. Dibben and Angus M. Duncan, 'Volcanic hazard assessment in western Europe', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 115 (2002), pp. 411- 435; Norman Lewis, *Jackdaw Cake: An autobiography*, pp. 153, 202.

[44]Bentley and Gregory, *Final Report*, pp. 25-27.

[45]F. Barberi, C. Macedonia, M.T. Pareschi and R. Santacroce, 'Mapping the tephra fallout risk: An example from Vesuvius (Italy)', *Nature* 344 (1990), pp.142-144; Anon, *Dipartimento dell Protezione Civile, Pianificazione Nazionale d'Emergenza dell'Area Vesuviana,* (Naples: Prefettura di Napoli, 1995).

event, similar to that of 1631, is often invoked as the most likely future scenario.[46] This would affect a far larger population than was the case in 1944 and it is estimated that more than 700,000 people could be at risk. Details of current emergency plans are complex but are based on a twin-track approach of pre-eruption evacuation of entire villages to other parts of Italy, and a long-term goal to use financial incentives to reduce population numbers.[47]

Responding to civil emergencies is a task occupation forces may be called upon to carry out from time to time, hopefully without jeopardising military effectiveness. Several features of the response to the 1944 eruption are of more general military significance. By March 1944 the people of southern Italy were broadly sympathetic to the allied cause, yet the only Italian personnel used were limited numbers of *Carabinieri* and fire-fighters, because as a matter of policy the allies were unwilling to use other indigenous forces which were thought to be too closely associated with Mussolini's *Fascist* regime.[48] This meant that, although the effects of the emergency were spatially restricted in extent, affecting only a few settlements, and limited numbers of people, Kincaid had to deploy large numbers of service personnel successfully to respond to the disaster. Overstretch could have occurred if evacuation to other parts of Italy had been required. This eventuality would have meant, either that combat troops would have had to be deployed away from the front possibly putting the campaign at risk or prolonging it, or else the policy regarding *fascist* taint would have had to have been changed. As occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq show, questions over how much trust to place in - and autonomy to give to - local forces may be complicated by uncertainties over conflicting loyalties.

A second feature of more general significance concerns the number of specialists that are required when an occupation force takes full responsibility for a society. The 1944 emergency demanded, *inter alia*, finance experts, medical staff, agronomists, logistical specialists and security personnel and it is notable that many officers, including Col. Kincaid, had gained their experience in civilian occupations (see Appendix 2). The Vesuvius emergency response highlights the vital roles played by experienced older

[46]Mauro Rosi, Claudia Principe and Raffaella Vecci, 'The 1631 Vesuvius eruption. A reconstruction based on historical and stratigraphic data', Journal *of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 58 (1993), pp. 151-182; Alwyn Scarth, *Vesuvius A Biography*, (Harpenden: Terra, 2009), pp. 133-172.

[47]David K. Chester, Christopher J.L. Dibben and Angus M. Duncan, 'Volcanic hazard assessment in western Europe', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 115 (2002), pp. 411-435; Alwyn Scarth, *Vesuvius A Biography*, pp. 295-301.

[48]John Lada 1976, *Preventive Medicine in World War II. Volume VIII Civil Affairs/Military Government Public Health Activities,* (Washington DC: Medical Department United States Army, Office of the Surgeon General Department of the Army, 1976).

officers, reservists with specialist skills and with training in military government and operations.

Finally, a senior officer commanding an allied as opposed to a single nation occupation force has to possess personal qualities that facilitate efficient and harmonious joint action. In Lieutenant Colonel Kincaid the ACC possessed such an officer and, moreover, one who had been decorated by the British 1918, and one who was shown great respect and trust by all his subordinates, regardless of nationality. The 1944 Vesuvius emergency emphasises the point that appointments to such commands require as much care as appointments to combat units.

Appendix 1: Chronology of the 1944 Eruption

See Figures 1 and 2 for locations.

Phase 1 involved lava effusion from Saturday 18 March through to Tuesday 21 March.

Weather: 18 March 18°C, wind 24-32 km/hr from the east north-east and cloudy. Photographs show clear conditions.19 March. 20 March 15°C, winds 15-23 km/hr from the west, low cloud base and intermittent rain. 21 March 11°C, winds 15-23 km/hr from the south. Intermittent rain and snow at high altitudes.

The eruption started at 16.30 on 18 March, when lava spilled over the crater rim and headed towards San Sebastiano. Lava also flowed south towards Cappella Nuovo, near to Torre del Greco. Initially the flows travelled at around 300 metres/hr, but as they advanced, they slowed to about 100 metres/hr. The southern flow, which was initially perceived to be a threat to Torre del Greco, did not extend beyond 3 km. The northern flow entered a valley known as the *Atrio del Cavallo*, before flowing through a notch in the caldera wall and heading towards the towns of San Sebastiano, Massa di Somma and Cercola. The lava flow reached San Sebastiano at 03.00 on 21 March and began slowly to engulf the town, the bridge between San Sebastiano and Massa being carried away at 03.30. At 13.00 the lava spreading through San Sebastiano and Massa was travelling at between 500 and 1000 metres/hr. Though the activity during this first phase was predominantly effusive, more explosive activity also generated tephra (volcanic ash). On 19 March observers could not access the southern lava flow by vehicle from the observatory because of the thickness of tephra in this sector.

Phase 2 involved vigorous fire fountain events from the late afternoon of Tuesday 21 March through to Wednesday 22 March.

Weather: 22 March 13°C, winds 15-23 km/hr from the south, intermittent rain implied by photographic evidence (Mc Rae, 1944). Winds at height were from the northwest.

In the late afternoon (circa 17.00) on 21 March, a fire fountain began in the main crater. It is likely that this generated a convective column reaching a height of around 7,000 m by 17.30. In total there were 8 episodes of fire fountaining that had a duration of between 18 and 40 minutes. These fountains generated tephra, which was deposited principally on the south and east sectors of the mountain. On the morning of 22 March, the weather was poor, but Professor Imbò climbed the volcano to observe the lava and, though the flows were still moving, increased activity from the summit crater suggested that the eruption was moving to an explosive stage and that effusive activity was likely to decline. The northern lava flow approaching Cercola slowed and came to a standstill on the afternoon of the 22 March, but the southern flow was still active

and perceived to be threatening Camaldoli near to Torre del Greco. The final fire fountain at 07.30 on the 22 March was the most impressive and reached a height of 1 km. An American airman, Sergeant Robert McRae describes black blocks up to the size of footballs dropping on the airfield at Terzigno.

Phase 3 involved more sustained explosive activity which began during 22 March and continued through to Thursday 23 March.

Weather: 23 March 9°C, wind 15-23 km/hr from the north and northeast, dense plume to the south and southeast.

This explosive phase is considered to have involved a mixture of magmatic and phreatomagmatic activity and was accompanied by seismicity. During the evening of the 22 March there was vigorous explosive activity, and a large eruptive column (greater than 8-10 kms above the crater) developed which was accompanied by an electrical storm and seismic activity. The main issue now was tephra and not lava. Though there was light tephra fall in Portici on the west flank, winds deposited lapilli and ash along a dispersal axis to the southeast; Terzigno, Pompei and Poggiomarino being particularly badly affected. There was around 15 cms of tephra on the Naples/Pompei Autostrada between Torre del Greco and Salerno and ash was deposited as far away as Albania, some 500 kms distant. The tephra from this phase caused widespread disruption and almost all the fatalities attributed to the eruption. It is clear from contemporary photographs, that the column partially collapsed on several occasions and produced small pyroclastic flows which, because of their size and location, caused no damage.

Phase 4 activity declined to intermittent vulcanian explosions (Thursday 23 – Thursday 30 March).

Weather: 24 March 13°C, wind 15-23 km/hr from the north northwest and clear.
25 March 7°C, wind 33-41 km/hr from the north northeast, thick clouds.
26 March 9°C, wind 33-41 km/hr from the north northeast, generally clear.
27 March 16°C, wind 24-32 km/hr from the north northeast. Overcast conditions according to Pesce and Rolandi (1994).

Activity waned during this phase with the eruptive vent becoming periodically blocked by wall collapses that were cleared by explosions. Activity became increasingly restricted to the crater area and the eruption ended on 30 March. In total some 35-40 million cubic metres of magma (dense rock equivalent D.R.E.) had been erupted, in less than 12 days.

The chronology above is based on Giuseppe Imbò, 'L'attività eruttiva vesuviana e relative osservazioni nel corso dell'intervallo interuttivo 1906-1944 ed in particolare del parossismo del Marzo 1944', *Annali Osservatorio Vesuviano* V (1949), pp. 185-380; Giuseppe Imbò, *Sismicità del parossismo vesuviano del marzo 1944, Annali Osservatorio Vesuviano* VI, I (1955), pp. 59-268; Angelo Pesce and Giuseppe Rolandi, *Vesuvio 1944: L' ultima eruzione*, (San Sebastiano al Vesuvio: Private Publication 2000, second edition); Roberto Scandone, Lisetta Giacomelli and Paolo Gasparini, 'Mount Vesuvius: 2000 years of volcanological observations', *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 58 (1993), pp. 5-25; Chris Kilburn and Bill McGuire, *Italian Volcanoes,* (Harpenden: Terra, 2001), pp. 52-54; John Guest, Paul Cole, Angus Duncan and David Chester, *Volcanoes of Southern Italy,* (London: The Geological Society, 2003), pp. 52-54; Robert F. McRae, *War Diary of the 340th Bombardment Group March 1944: Vesuvius and the 340th A diary of the 340th by Sergeant McRae*, (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air Historical Research Agency Archive, 2013), pp. 6; Elena Cubellis, Aldo Marturano and Lucia Pappalardo, 'The last Vesuvius eruption in March 1944: reconstruction of the eruptive dynamic and its impact on the environment and people through witness reports and volcanological evidence', *Natural Hazards* 82 (2016), pp. 95-121.

Appendix 2: Brief Biographies of Lieutenant Colonel Kincaid & Associates

Key People and Dates	Key Events
(James) Leslie Kincaid[49]	
1884	Born Syracuse, New York State
Professional career from 1908	In 1908 Kincaid graduated in law from Syracuse University and was admitted to the New York Bar in 1909. Before the First World War Kincaid practised as a lawyer and also served as a member of the Assembly of New York State (1915-16). From 1919 Kincaid changed direction and became a successful and wealthy business executive. His career focusing on the hospitality industry and, amongst other executive positions, he served as President of the American Hotels Corporation for many years. At its most successful, the Corporation directed the operation of some 50 hotels in North America, Canada and Panama. Kincaid's success and considerable wealth allowed him to acquire residences in New York City, Idle Isle Alexander Bay (Thousand Islands, New York) and Captiva Island in Florida.
Military Service 1904-1953	In 1904 Kincaid enlisted as a private soldier, he was later commissioned, and in 1916 served on the Mexican border. In 1917 he was Director of the *Federal Registration Draft Board* for New York and later Major (Judge Advocate) of the 27 Division. When posted to France, Kincaid now a Lieutenant Colonel, accepted a reduction in rank to Major in order to secure a combat command. For a successful attack on the Hindenburg line in 1918, he was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Service Cross (D.S.C.), the equally meritorious British Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) and was also decorated by

[49]David K. Chester, Angus M. Duncan, Philip Wetton and Roswitha Wetton, 'Responses of the Anglo-American military authorities to the March 1944 eruption of Vesuvius, Southern Italy', *Journal of Historical Geography* 33 (2007), pp.181; Archives and Records Management Syracuse University Library, Information file on James Leslie Kincaid; New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center Saratoga Springs, Information file on James Leslie Kincaid.

the French, Belgium, Italian and New York State governments. He was commended by General Pershing.

Between the wars Kincaid continued to serve in the New York National Guard, in 1921 being promoted Adjutant General with the substantive rank of Brigadier General.

In World War II Kincaid was again called to service, but with reduced rank. This time he was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army of the United States. He was trained in the *School of Military Government* at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and later served as Provincial Commissioner (Naples Province) of the Allied Control Commission (ACC) from September 1943 to July 1944. Towards the end of the war, Kincaid was involved in logistical planning, and ended his service in Europe by administering commandeered hotels on the French Riviera.

Kincaid was finally released from service in 1953 in the rank of Brigadier General (Army of the United States) and Major General in the New York National Guard.

1944-1953	For his service he was decorated by the Italians; made an honorary citizen of Naples and in 1953 was personally commended by the U.S. Army Chief of Staff. There were also more specific commendations following the eruption of March 1944, which are mentioned in the text.
1973	Died - Captiva, Florida.

Kincaid's Principal Associates:

Sir (Frank) Noel Mason-Macfarlane (Mason-Mac) 1889-1953[50]	Commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1909, 'Mason Mac' showed considerable ability, gallantry, leadership and independence of thought in the First World War. Decorated with the Military Cross (M.C.) and with two bars, Mason-Macfarlane subsequently attended Staff College and later the Imperial Defence College, where his intellectual ability and skills as a linguist were noted. Service followed in India, and later as a military attaché in Hungary, Austria, Switzerland and most

[50]Ewan N. Butler, *Mason-Mac, The Life of Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane,* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

	notably in Germany immediately before the Second World War. During the war, Mason-Macfarlane served in France as Director of Military Intelligence and as an operation commander during the retreat to Dunkirk, for which was awarded the D.S.O. Later he headed a military mission to Moscow, was Governor of Gibraltar and was appointed Chief Commissioner of the ACC in Italy from February 1944.
Lt. Col. Charles Poletti 1903-2002[51]	An American lawyer and politician who briefly served as Governor of New York before the Second World War. A first-generation Italian American, Poletti served in a variety of senior administrative roles during the war, first in Sicily and later on the mainland. At the time of the eruption, Poletti was a Commissioner for Region III of the ACC, that included the Naples Province, which made him Kincaid's immediate superior. He had no role in the day-to-day management of the emergency. A controversial figure whose style of command was questioned by Harold Macmillan, who was UK Minister Resident in the Mediterranean (1942-5) he succeeded Mason-Macfarlane as Chief Commissioner (ACC) from September 1944.
Lt. Col. John A Warner1886-1963[52]	Harvard graduate John Warner achieved early renown as a concert pianist, having studied in Paris, Vienna and Italy, but he also gained military experience in the National Guard and US Army (Mexican incursion of 1916). Later in a career change, between 1923 and 1943 he was Superintendent of the New York State Police and following this joined the Allied Control Commission (Naples) as Chief of Public Safety.
Lt. Col. Guy I Warren[53]	In common with Lt. Col. Warner, Warren was a public safety officer and during the emergency was responsible for the San-Giuseppe - San Giorgio sector. Later he was decorated with the

[51]Chester, Duncan *et al*., 'Responses of the Anglo-American military authorities', p. 181.

[52]Anon, 'Superintendent John Adams Warner', https://troopers.ny.gov/john-adams-warner Accessed 1 June 2021.

[53]Anon, 'Lieutenant Colonel Guy I. Warren receiving the Legion of Merit Medal, Rome, Italy, September 1945 | The Digital Collections of the National WWII Museum, https://www.ww2online.org/image/lieutenant-colonel-guy-i-warren-receiving-legion-merit-medal-rome-italy-september-1945 Accessed 1 June 2021.

	Legion of Merit Medal for his work in civilian affairs, especially in economics and supply.
Major Harry G. Hershenson 1899-1981[54]	Kincaid's deputy, Major Hershenson was from Chicago and like Kincaid was a lawyer by training and had attended the *School of Military Government*. Between late 1943 and early 1944 he proved himself to be a successful administrator of the city of Nola in Sicily, and by March 1944 was an experienced civil affairs officer. After the war he became an experienced and respected jurist.
Major Jesse E Cantor 1894-1969[55]	In common with Kincaid, a native of New York, a graduate in law from Syracuse University, and a soldier in the First World War. An excellent linguist (French, German and Italian). Between the wars Cantor was successful in business. After military service he became a district attorney and judge. During the eruption he was responsible for the Portici-Terzigno sector.

[54]Chester, Duncan *et al*., 'Responses of the Anglo-American military authorities', pp. 181, 182; Illinois Institute of Technology, Paul V. Galvin Library Archives, Information file on Harry G. Hershenson.
[55]Archives and Records Syracuse University Library, Information file on Jesse E. Cantor.