



# We Move Only Forward: Canada, the United States, and the First Special Service Force, 1942-1944

*James A. Woods*

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In the summer of 1942, six months after the American entry into the Second World War, the Canadian Army authorized the movement of nearly seven hundred soldiers to the United States for training as part of the First Special Service Force. From that summer until disbandment, Canadian and American soldiers served in a completely integrated military formation, a "North American" force that was without parallel in the history of either nation - even though the Force often proved a frustrating exercise in military cooperation. From the Aleutian Islands to the wartorn hills of Italy, from the Anzio Beachhead to the liberation of Rome and the invasion of Southern France, the First Special Service Force distinguished itself in combat and is today remembered as a proudly shared inheritance of two North American nations. We Move Only Forward presents the history of the Force from a Canadian perspective, focusing on the efforts taken in Ottawa, Washington and overseas to maintain a Canadian presence in the Force. This book traces the course of a complicated relationship between the First Special Service Force and those military bureaucracies. Set against a background of success in the field, difficulties arising from cooperation between unequal partners led to a gradual erosion of the unit's elite character, ending in December 1944, when the Force was disbanded and the Canadian element was quietly withdrawn.



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