

Robert F. Houlihan

Robert F. Houlihan graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1941. His goal was to be a lawyer practicing in Lexington, Ky. He participated in ROTC in both high school and college. Even before Pearl Harbor, Robert saw the writing on the wall: "it was obvious to me there was going to be a big war"

Houlihan was first stationed at Fort Benning, Ga., where he received training in small unit tactics and became a weapons specialist. After training, he was placed in the 26th Infantry Division, which was assigned to observe and defend the coast of New England against German attack.

Houlihan was then moved to Camp Carson, Co., after the army became aware that he had taken several classes in Classical Greek while attending UK. He was sent to a Greek battalion of 12,000 men and officers. Houlihan quickly advanced to the rank of captain and was chosen by O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services) for special duty. The dangerous nature of O.S.S. missions made this a volunteer duty only. The British, who had experience in the field of covert operations expected 45% of volunteers would be killed.

Houlihan was put into what was called an "operational group". It was a group of special units each trained and designed to work behind enemy lines, aiding resistance groups and performing sabotage. Houlihan was sent to Yugoslavia.

Most of the missions of Houlihan's group were small attacks designed to frustrate the enemy, such as blowing up bridges and amphibious hit and runs. These missions were extremely dangerous.

He saw direct action in the Solta Attack, March 18-19, 1944. This raid was part of a larger scale deception to avert attention of the German command from the impending invasion of France.