



**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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STRATEGIC DECEPTION: OPERATION FORTITUDE

BY

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ABSTRACT

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The Allied leaders decided to conduct the cross-channel invasion of Hitler's Fortress Europe in the first half of 1944 during the Tehran Conference held in November 1943. To support this invasion they also decided to implement a comprehensive deception campaign given the cover name BODYGUARD. The goal of BODYGUARD was to deceive Hitler and his senior military commanders about the location and timing of Allied offensive actions. Under the BODYGUARD umbrella, operation FORTITUDE was specifically designed to support the invasion of Normandy.

FORTITUDE consisted of two primary operations. FORTITUDE-NORTH was designed to convince the Germans that the Allied invasion in 1944 would come through Norway and Sweden vice France. FORTITUDE-SOUTH was developed to convince Hitler and his staff that the primary invasion site in France would be Pas de Calais and other potential invasion sites, such as Normandy, were only diversions.

The BODYGUARD and associated FORTITUDE operations were quite successful in fixing German forces, causing reserves to be committed piecemeal and basically paralyzing Hitler's decision making ability during the time of the Normandy landings and for weeks afterwards. The principles of current joint deception doctrine were applicable and utilized by the deception planners of General Eisenhower's staff long before the current Joint doctrine (Joint Publication 3-58, Joint Doctrine for Military Deception) was ever written.

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STRATEGIC DECEPTION: OPERATION FORTITUDE

The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know where I intend to give battle he must prepare in a great many places. And when he prepares in a great many places, those I have to fight in any one place will be few...And when he prepares everywhere he will be weak everywhere.

—Sun Tzu

STRATEGIC SITUATION

The tide had changed in Europe and by the fall of 1943 Germany was losing the war. The rapid successes that Hitler had enjoyed during the early years of World War Two were now a thing of the past. Army Group Africa had surrendered, the Germans had lost the initiative in Russia, had been forced from Sicily and were decisively engaged in Italy.

To decide the future of the war in Europe, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Stalin met at Tehran in late November 1943. The purpose of their meeting was to ensure the proper coordination and synchronization of the major Allied operations they would conduct against the Nazis in 1944. The American position at the meeting was to rapidly invade northern France with a supporting attack into the French Riviera. The British were not directly opposed to the cross-channel attack but wanted to first strengthen the ongoing Italian campaign and conduct supporting operations through the Balkans. The Soviet position was crystal-clear: Stalin needed the additional front opened in France to remove pressure from his forces engaged on the Eastern Front and his future plans for the Balkans did not include the presence of British and American forces. After much debate, Stalin sided with Roosevelt and the three eventually came to agreement that the focus of effort for the first half of 1944 would be OPERATION OVERLORD, a cross-channel invasion of Hitler's "Fortress Europe."¹

Immediately following the decision to conduct OVERLORD, Churchill began to brief and sell his plan of deception operations to confuse the Nazis and ensure surprise for the Allied landings at Normandy (NEPTUNE). British planners had been developing the deception plan since the summer of 1943 and were waiting for the leaders' concurrence at the Tehran Conference in order to complete and begin implementation of the plan. OPERATION JAEL, the British deception operation being conducted at the time, was expanded and renamed OPERATION BODYGUARD. BODYGUARD became the umbrella cover name for a whole series of deception operations designed to deliberately deceive Hitler and the German Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht—OKW) as to the true intentions and objectives of Allied operations throughout 1944. Churchill had been heard to say "In wartime truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."² While the

Allied leaders all agreed to participate in and share information in support of the deception operation, Churchill did not really trust Stalin. It would turn out that only limited sharing and coordination was actually accomplished between London and Moscow.³

OPERATION BODYGUARD

The Allied leaders had decided to conduct an invasion of France sometime in 1944 during the Casablanca Conference held in January 1943. In April of 1943, British Lieutenant General Fredrick E. Morgan was assigned as the Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander designate (COSSAC). On 26 April 1943 he was tasked to begin the planning for what was to become OPERATION OVERLORD, the cross channel attack into France. Explicit in his tasking was the requirement to plan for deception. The OVERLORD plan was completed by General Morgan and his staff in July 1943 and submitted for review. It was at this point that work began in earnest on the OVERLORD deception plan by the OPS-B group under British Lieutenant Colonel John Jervis-Reed. OPB-B would later become known as the Committee of Special Means (CSM) with Special Means activities under the direction of British Colonel Roger F. Hesketh. In January 1944, the COSSAC staff was absorbed in to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEP) as General Eisenhower took command. Relationships were formalized between SHAEF Ops-B/CSM, British Intelligence (MI-5 and MI-6), American Joint Security Control (JSC), the XX-committee (double-cross committee) and the London Controlling Section (LCS). The XX-committee's purpose was to review what truthful elements of friendly information could be leaked to the Germans in order to develop and maintain double agent creditability. The committee consisted of representatives of interested parties from British and US intelligence, state and military departments. Churchill established the LCS in 1941 as an element of the British Joint Planning Staff to exercise control over and assist in the implementation of strategic and operational deception operations. The LCS was under the direction of British Colonel John Bevan and provided the conduit for information exchange between all Allied government agencies involved in deception planning and execution while at the same time approving and coordinating their activities.⁴

In the winter of 1943-44 Hitler was faced with very real threats from the Russians in the east, the Allies attacking from the south through Italy and significant Allied forces positioned in Great Britain. BODYGUARD's intent was to add to these real threats a mix of false threats that included an Allied invasion of Norway, attacks across the Black Sea into Rumania and into the Balkans, an invasion of the French Riviera, attacks into the Bordeaux region of France and a main Allied effort of an invasion into Pas de Calais. Key to Allied success in France was getting

Hitler to perceive and respond to the crafted threats while simultaneously concealing the real threat of OVERLORD and the associated Allied invasion of Normandy.⁵

BODYGUARD and supporting plans consisted of five main strategic themes all designed to prevent the build-up and reinforcement of Nazi forces and defenses in France in general and specifically within the Normandy area. These five main themes/lies were:⁶

1. That the Allies firmly believed they could eliminate Germany's warfighting ability through heavy bombing alone (OPERATION POINTBLANK). Allied priority was to be given to the production and movement of heavy bombers and crews to Britain and the Mediterranean. This would significantly slow the buildup of ground formations and supplies in the United Kingdom. Therefore, if required, a ground invasion of Europe could not be conducted prior to mid-July of 1944. However, sufficient forces would be maintained in Britain to exploit a collapse or significant weakening of the German coastal garrisons.

2. That to gain access to Germany, the Allies would attack in the spring of 1944 via Norway. Initially, the Allies would attack and free Norway while diplomatically securing basing rights in neutral Sweden and ideally convince Sweden to join the Allied war effort. Once sufficient combat power was built-up, the ports and airfields of Norway and Sweden would then be used to launch an attack to free Denmark and from there, on to Berlin (OPERATION FORTITUDE-NORTH).

3. That the Allies intended to improve support to on-going operations in Italy and the Eastern Front by launching supporting attacks against the Balkans. These attacks would come in May or June of 1944 by the British into Greece and by a combined British-Russian assault into Romania to threaten the oil fields at Ploesti (OPERATION ZEPPELIN).

4. That Russia would not launch a major summer offensive in the Eastern Front until July 1944. This was intended to fix forces on the Eastern front and create additional strategic uncertainty for Hitler about German force allocation and realignment.

5. That the British and Americans believed that "Fortress Europe" was so well defended that it would take at least 50 Allied divisions to assault it. It would take the Allies until mid-July 1944 (at the earliest) to train, transport and ready 50 divisions and the necessary naval forces in Britain for such an assault to be successful. When the attack did come, it would be from the vicinity of Dover into the Pas de Calais area of France (FORTITUDE-SOUTH).

In total, OPERATION BODYGUARD would consist of more than 35 subordinate plans and operations all focused on the common goal of paralyzing the ability of the Germans to react to Allied actions in a decisive and effective manner. The goal sought and achieved was to paint credible threats from all sides of the Reich such that Hitler could not reinforce at any one point

without accepting risk in another area. The most important, elaborate and successful of these operations were FORTITUDE-NORTH and FORTITUDE-SOUTH.⁷

OPERATION FORTITUDE

The FORTITUDE series of operations had three primary objectives:

1. Deceive the Germans about the timing and location of the Allied invasion and make them believe that Norway was the initial target of any invasion from the United Kingdom.
2. When it was impossible to hide the buildup of forces in Southern England, convince the Germans that the invasion site was to be the Pas de Calais area.
3. Once forces began landing at Normandy, convince the Germans that the Normandy landing was a deception.

FORTITUDE-NORTH would orient on accomplishing objective 1 while FORTITUDE-SOUTH would focus on satisfying objectives 2 and 3.⁸

Current joint doctrine states that to be effective any deception story must be believable, verifiable, executable and consistent. In examining FORTITUDE we find that all these criteria were met.⁹

Believability was probably one of the easiest criteria to satisfy. In 1940 before the Germans moved into France, they first overran Denmark and Norway. The German invasion of Norway was based in part on the lessons learned during WWI and the fact that Hitler had become convinced that access to Norway and its North Sea ports were key to defeating the British. Since the Allies and Germans had already fought in Norway, it was reasonable to expect that they could do so again. Were the Allies successful in establishing bases in southern Norway and Sweden, defending Fortress Europe from an Allied invasion from the north would prove to be extremely difficult. Further assisting the Allied effort was the belief held by Hitler and Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, Commander-in Chief West (OB West), that if the Allies did opt for an invasion of France, the invasion location would be one closest to the coast of England. They concluded that the Allies would focus on reducing lines of communication, lessening amphibious assault distance and dramatically enhancing the ability of ground based aircraft to support the assault.¹⁰

The story was verifiable to the Germans because they were receiving their information on the pending FORTITUDE operations through several independent and trusted intelligence sources. Had there been simply a single source, the information could have been easily discounted. But when the best German human intelligence (HUMINT) agents, signals intelligence (SIGINT) reports produced by the German Y-Service (radio signal interception and

cryptanalysis units) and Luftwaffe photography were all reflecting the same story, it was hard to refute.

Making the deception appear executable would prove to be more difficult and would require a variety of deception tools and techniques. Fake units, choreographed communications, radar manipulation and scripted HUMINT reporting all served to create, at least within Abwehr (the German General Staff military secret intelligence and counter-espionage service) reporting channels and Hitler's mind, a strong and ready Allied force capable of conducting the types of operations suggested by FORTITUDE information.

Lastly, the FORTITUDE stories maintained their consistency throughout the many months of telling largely due to the centralized control exercised by the CSM and LCS.

FORTITUDE-NORTH

German Admiral Wolfgang Wegener had written an essay after WWI that blamed Germany's defeat in that war on Britain's capability to control the North Sea and bottle up the German fleet. Hitler read Admiral Wegener's essay and became obsessed with maintaining control of Scandinavia.¹¹ The goal of FORTITUDE-NORTH was to convince the Fuehrer and the German OKW that the initial Allied offensive in the west would be to invade and free Norway from German occupation. Once this intermediate objective was obtained, the Allies would then secure ports and airfields in southern Sweden by convincing Sweden to join the war effort on the side of the Allies. Having gained the basing and staging rights the Allies required in Sweden, they would then launch their next assault into Denmark. Following the liberation of Denmark, the Allies would then begin the drive for Berlin. This plan was, in many ways, almost the reverse of WESERUEBUNG, the German operation in the spring of 1940 to invade Denmark and Norway. The Allied plan called for utilizing two invasion sites within Norway. The southern landing at Stavanger would be a British/US effort to seize airfields for land-based fighters to utilize while combat forces were built up to six divisions within 3 months. A combined British/Russian assault would also occur at Narvik to secure rail and roadway lines of communication within northern Sweden.¹²

For FORTITUDE-NORTH to be successful the footprint and signatures of a real invasion force of army size would have to be created since there were no "real" forces available. It was also realized that the geographic location of Scotland would make it very difficult for German aerial reconnaissance to observe the Norway invasion force. Therefore, the Allies placed heavy reliance upon the German Y-service intercept operations and Special Means spies to receive and deliver the message. Special Means specifically meant the use of German spies who were

caught early in the war and convinced to work as double agents or whose role/identity was assumed by British intelligence. (While Special Means has also been used by some to refer to covert methods in general, in this paper its use will mean double agent HUMINT reporting.) In order to make this work, detailed HUMINT reports and wireless traffic would have to be scripted, transmitted, collected and sent back to the Abwehr.¹³

A first step was to choose the commander of the invasion force. For this role British General Sir Andrew Thorne was selected. Thorne had previously served as a military attaché officer in Berlin so his name was well known within the German officer corps and would lend credibility to the story. For his deputy (and the one who would end up doing most of the day-to-day work) Colonel R. M. MacLeod, a decorated British WWI veteran was picked. While MacLeod was disappointed about being assigned to a fictitious command instead of a combat command, he dutifully departed London for Scotland to create the Fourth Army, headquartered in Edinburgh Castle.¹⁴

The Fourth Army consisted of the British VII Corps (fictitious) at Dundee, the British II Corps (fictitious) at Sterling and the US XV Corps (real) in Northern Ireland. The US XV Corps consisted of the 2nd, 5th and 8th Infantry divisions and was training for its role as a follow-on force for the Normandy invasion, but its wireless traffic would reflect preparations for participation in the Stavanger attack. The British II Corps was to lead the Stavanger assault and consisted of the real British 55th Division, 113th Infantry Brigade and the fictitious 58th Infantry Division that would make the initial assault. The British VII Corps would make the attack on Narvik and consisted of the fictitious US 55th Division with 3 US Ranger battalions from Iceland and the real British 52nd Lowland Division with a real Norwegian Brigade that would lead the Narvik assault.¹⁵

Now that the Fourth Army had structure, it needed to be brought to life. Colonel MacLeod assembled his staff and requested numerous officers and radio operators from SHAEF in order to make this happen. Once the personnel had arrived, been sworn to secrecy, briefed on the overall plan and understood their role in making FORTITUDE-NORTH a success, they were sent out across Scotland. Headquarters communications teams were established at the proper locations and a low level cipher system was utilized to encrypt scripted communications between the headquarters units and their subordinates. Support and service support units were also created in addition to the primary HQ units to handle all the routine needs of the Fourth Army and create a more complete and believable picture for the German Y-service. MacLeod created over time a phantom army of over 250,000 personnel with their own tactical airforce and over 250 armored vehicles.¹⁶

The wireless transmissions of the Fourth Army began on 22 March 1944 and by 6 April the whole network was active. British Brigadier Richard Barker, a Home Forces communication officer on the SHAFE staff, predicted that the German Y-Service with their sensitive receiving and direction finding equipment would quickly identify and fix the Fourth Army. Coincidental or not, a Messerschmitt fighter strafed Edinburgh Castle three days after MacLeod's group began transmitting. Luckily no one was hurt during the Fourth Army's only combat encounter.¹⁷

The Royal Navy supported FORTITUDE-NORTH beginning in early April 1944 with the creation of naval assault forces "W" and "V." The scripted wireless traffic of these forces reflected that they had in excess of 35 ships each and were engaged in embarkation and debarkation exercises. Toward the end of April and into early May real shipping was brought into the wide Firth of Forth on the East Coast of Scotland. While the Royal Air Force maintained a Combat Air Patrol (CAP) over these real ships, they would occasionally allow high flying Luftwaffe reconnaissance flights in to photograph the armada forming below.¹⁸

In addition to the scripted wireless traffic being broadcast by MacLeod's team and the Royal Navy, extensive use of Special Means was also employed to supply necessary information to the Germans. Mutt and Jeff were the code names assigned to two former German spies who were caught in Scotland in 1941 and who would play key roles in the Norway deception. The LCS provided scripted HUMINT reports that the agents in turn provided back to their Abwehr controllers. Hitler himself would read these reports on occasion when they contained particularly significant information. Special Means was used extensively to provide information that would be unavailable through wireless intercept or to confirm information sent by scripted traffic. Details such as unit patches/ designations, the coming and goings of high ranking visitors, unit movements/displacements, the mood of the local populace and observation of military exercises were all suitable topics for Special Means.¹⁹

On the diplomatic side, PLAN GRAFFHAM began in late March 1944 with the recall to London of Victor Mallet, the British minister in Stockholm. The LCS plan to support the FORTITUDE-NORTH deception consisted of creating a diplomatic crisis between Sweden and the Allies by expanding the list of current requests that the Allies were making on the neutral government of Sweden. These additional demands included:²⁰

1. The right of Allied aircraft to land at Swedish airfields and refuel after combat operations.
2. Permission to send British experts to consult Swedish counterparts about the transportation of supplies between Norway and Sweden, should the Germans vacate Norway.
3. The right of the Allies to conduct survey and reconnaissance flights over Sweden.

Naturally, Sweden rejected the demands at first as was expected and desired. Mallet had been told by the LCS to drag out the negotiations and make them last as long as possible. Information about the negotiations was conveyed to the Abwehr through a variety of means. These means included a German spy in Stockholm with access to a Swedish intelligence officer (who was unknowingly fed information by the LCS), bureaucratic/social gossip and newspaper stories and editorials. The LCS even played economic games with Sweden. This economic activity began with speeches made by U.S. Congressmen that stressed US resolve to deal severely with any neutral countries supporting Germany's war efforts. At this time Sweden was supplying Germany with iron ore, ball bearings and machine tools, all items that the Allies demanded an embargo be imposed on. The Allies then deliberately tampered with Stockholm's stock market to run up the price of Norwegian securities to further indicate investor speculation on the imminent invasion and freeing of Norway.²¹

The deception of FORTITUDE-NORTH was a complete success in tying up 27 German divisions for the defense of Norway and Denmark. Hitler not only prevented forces from leaving Norway to go to France, he reinforced Norway! By the late spring of 1944 in Norway alone there were as many as 13 army divisions, 90,000 naval personnel, 60,000 air personnel, 6,000 SS and 12,000 paramilitary forces. With the threat of invasion never fully removed, the majority of these forces would find themselves still in Norway at the end of the war. One can only conjecture the number of Allied (and German) lives saved by making these forces unavailable for combat in France or Germany.²²

FORTITUDE-SOUTH

The crown jewel of the BODYGUARD deception effort was FORTITUDE-SOUTH which had two roles to play, first to support the Normandy landings and then to support post D-Day operations in France. The pre D-Day efforts were focused on convincing Hitler, the OKW and OB-West that the invasion site in France would be the Pas de Calais area and that the invasion was set for a date 45 days later than the actual D-Day set for NEPTUNE. Clearly the reason for the location deception was to cause the Germans to devote resources of men, equipment and fortifications to beaches that the Allies had no intention of assaulting. The D+45 date was used for two reasons, first was to help gain surprise for the actual NEPTUNE landings and to support the second part of the deception.²³

The second part of the FORTITUDE-SOUTH story was to convince Hitler and the OKW that the landings at Normandy were themselves a deception. This Normandy deception, as the story goes, was designed to draw German forces and attention away from the Pas de Calais

area where the Allies "true" main effort or Schwerpunkt would occur. In reality, the Allies needed to maintain this German belief for as long as possible to enable the buildup of sufficient combat power ashore to breakout of the Normandy beachhead area without having to fight the preponderance of the German forces in France first.²⁴

Like FORTITUDE-NORTH, a creditable, believable and executable force and operational plan would have to be created. Then details of this force and plan would have to be subtly "provided" to Hitler and his staff whereby they could arrive at the logical conclusion that the Allies would assault the Atlantic Wall at Pas de Calais. Getting Hitler and Field Marshal von Rundstedt to believe that the invasion would occur in Pas de Calais proved to be easy as it played to their preconceived inclinations. They thought the Allies would choose the area closest to Britain in order to minimize sea transit time and enable the greatest use of land based air to support the assault. Additionally, a Pas de Calais beachhead would provide for the shortest path to liberate Paris and advance to Berlin.²⁵

The biggest challenge would be to create a credible and believable force to threaten Pas de Calais without compromising the forces being built-up and trained to support NEPTUNE. This challenge fell predominately to British officers Colonel Hesketh and Lieutenant Colonel Jervis-Reid of the SHAEF deception staff/CSM and Colonel Bevan of the LCS. Their first step in creating an invasion force would be to obtain a suitable commander. US Army Major General George S. Patton was selected for this unique and important position. Patton was an excellent choice because he had a solid reputation within the German officer corps based upon his performance in support of OPERATION TORCH in North Africa and in Sicily. To the Germans, it made perfect sense that General Patton would be the Allies' choice to lead the invasion force into France.²⁶

Patton's invasion force would be the First United States Army Group (FUSAG). All efforts to create and support the maintenance of the illusion of FUSAG were put under the additional cover name of QUICKSILVER. Under QUICKSILVER, FUSAG comprised over a million men spread out over southeastern England. These men were organized in two armies, the First Canadian Army and the Third US Army. The First Canadian Army consisted of the Canadian II Corps with associated 2nd Infantry and 4th Armored Divisions and the US VIII Corps with associated 28th, 79th and 83rd Infantry Divisions. The Third US Army consisted of the XX Armored Corps consisting of 4th, 5th and 6th US Armored Divisions and XII Corps consisting of 35th & 80th US Infantry Divisions and the 7th US Armored Division. The Headquarters of FUSAG was located in Wentworth.²⁷

While FORTITUDE-NORTH only had to represent a single army of three corps in hard to reach Scotland, FORTITUDE-SOUTH had to create the appearance of eleven divisions, four corps headquarters, FUSAG headquarters and the associated supporting air, naval and logistics forces in southeastern England. Once again scripted wireless radio traffic and double agent reports would play a major part in the deception operation, but due to the scope of the effort and proximity to the German held coast, additional methods would also be required.

As mentioned above, General Patton was assigned to lead FUSAG. Additional real officers were assigned to lead fictitious units. This was done because it was well known that German intelligence service maintained files with the biographies and (when known) the assignments of senior Allied military officers. Had a group of new, unrecognized generals and admirals suddenly appeared to lead the supreme Allied effort, the German leadership would likely have quickly deduced the hoax causing the whole FORTITUDE effort to be for naught.²⁸

Since the area of southeastern England was observable by German naval, air and coastal units, physical deception would be required to tell a convincing story. Large tent cities were constructed in open fields. While no one lived there, the cook stoves were kept burning and smoking. Dirt roads leading to nowhere were built into the woods, but from the air these same roads looked to lead to concealed ammunition dumps, headquarters or staging areas. Inflatable rubber equipment was also used extensively. Entire battalions of blow-up tanks, guns and trucks staged in assembly-like areas appeared quite real from thousands of feet in the air. The same could be said about fleets of landing craft anchored in several harbors and inlets. Upon closer scrutiny the observer would learn that these same landing craft were mock-ups made of wood and canvas floating on old oil drums. A fake oil refining and storage facility was constructed near Dover that was both bombed and shelled on several occasions by the Germans who believed that it was real.²⁹

Night presented unique challenges to the physical deception artist. Recordings were made of aircraft engines and played over loudspeakers. Automobile headlights were rigged on carts and run up and down fake runways at night to simulate planes taking-off and landing for the benefit of Luftwaffe reconnaissance planes flying high over head. Special lights called "Q-lights" were used to delineate these airfields that during the day had "real" looking planes made of nothing but canvas and tubing. As many as 65 Q-light deceptions were created representing airfields, ports and assembly areas to both provide evidence of FUSAG activity and to draw German bombers away from the real NEPTUNE staging areas. Flares and fires would be lit in these areas after the Germans bombed them to help convey the message of a successful strike.³⁰

Extensive use of LCS Special Means conveyed the story of FORTITUDE-SOUTH. Since this operation was deemed key to the success of OVERLORD, the most trusted agents (trusted by both the Allies and by the Germans) were used to tell the QUICKSILVER and larger FORTITUDE-SOUTH story. Agents around the globe in places like London, New York City, Stockholm, Lisbon and Istanbul reported a steady stream of LCS scripted information back to their German controllers. This information included US troop movements, Allied orders of battle (to include FUSAG), senior military leader sightings, Allied intentions leaked at cocktail parties and even things such as large orders for Michelin Map 51 (a tourist map of the Pas de Calais area). The XX-Committee would provide factual information to be included with carefully crafted false information to enhance the creditability of the information's source. Often they would script the information such that two or more Special Means agents would confirm each others' stories with the Germans believing that the agents did not know each other and were hundreds or even thousands of miles apart. Agents GARBO and BRUTUS were two such agents that proved critical to the telling of the FORTITUDE-SOUTH tale in a manner that Hitler, the Abwehr, and OKW staff found quite convincing.³¹

The Allies even used a German prisoner of war (POW) to help convey the FORTITUDE-SOUTH deception. German General Hans Cramer, a veteran of the Afrika Korps, was being held in a British POW camp in Wales. When General Cramer's health started to fail the Allies decided to repatriate him to Germany with the assistance of the Swedish Red Cross. On the drive from the camp to London, the conversation between his two escort officers, both of who were CSM officers, led Gen. Cramer to think that he was being driven through the FUSAG area in southeastern England towards London. On the drive they passed many large concentrations of troops, tanks, airplanes and supplies. Actually Cramer had been brought along a route that took him through the assembly areas and airfields of the NEPTUNE invasion forces staging in south central England. What enabled General Cramer to be deceived was the fact that all signs reflecting road and town names had been removed back in 1940 under fear of a German invasion. Upon arriving in London, General Cramer met and dined with General Patton and many of his subordinate FUSAG corps and division commanders. During the dinner several references to Pas de Calais were slipped by a few of the guests. Cramer made an immediate call on Hitler when he returned to Germany. He reported to the Fuehrer how he had seen with his own eyes and heard firsthand of the extensive FUSAG preparations to invade Pas de Calais.³²

Germany's ability to intercept and direction find Allied communications was also exploited heavily to convey the FORTITUDE-SOUTH deception. A large volume of scripted

radio traffic was sent between the FUSAG headquarters and its subordinate corps and divisions. Everything from readiness reports, unit movements, exercise participation, supply problems down to and including emergency leave and pay problems for individuals were scripted, encrypted (in an easily broken code) and transmitted. Additionally, Military Police nets were established to report not only problems with drunken soldiers in coastal towns but also large convoy movements at night. By carefully selecting which Y-Service receiving sites to take out by Allied bombing missions and which to leave functional, the Allies were able to control to some degree what signals the Germans could intercept and direction find. The same was done for the German radar sites, intentionally leaving 16 sites out of 92. These 16 sites would play a crucial role in tracking a ghost fleet on its way to Pas de Calais on 6 June and days later. This ghost fleet and airforce would be created with a combination of chaff and a unique device code-named MOONSHINE. MOONSHINE equipment was designed and built to receive German radar pulses, amplify them and then retransmit them back to the radar receiver presenting a much larger ship or formation.³³

The Allies also used bombers and selective targeting to help in the deception effort. QUICKSILVER-IV called for extensive bombing of targets within the Pas de Calais area with special emphasis to be placed on the railroad and road networks in an effort to isolate the area. The Allied goal was to make it difficult for German forces to get out of Pas de Calais to reinforce Normandy. It was hoped that the Germans would believe that this was being done to prepare the area for invasion and to prevent the Pas de Calais area from being easily reinforced.³⁴

While many of FORTITUDE-SOUTH deceptions had been going on for months, some had been designed and saved for use on D-Day in direct support of the NEPTUNE landings. Operations GLIMMER and TAXABLE utilized balloon mounted MOONSHINE equipment. These balloons were then in turn mounted to ships and barges rigged for towing. In the early morning hours of 6 June these two ghost assault forces made their way towards the French coast. GLIMMER actually consisted of eight boats and headed towards Boulogne while TAXABLE consisted of six boats bound for Cap d'Antifer. In addition to the MOONSHINE being towed by the two ghost fleets, WINDOW (chaff) was dropped overhead of both flotillas. The combination of the chaff and MOONSHINE radar repeater/amplifiers gave the appearance to the operators of the few remaining German coastal radar sites of two large fleets moving with air cover to the Pas de Calais area. WINDOW clouds also were used to create the illusion of large bomber formations headed to Germany to draw fighters away from the Allied gliders and transports headed to Normandy. Just before dawn additional aircraft were brought in to lay down a heavy smoke screen between the ghost fleets and the shore. Under Operation

TITANIC, numerous rubber dummy paratroopers (half size but complete with uniforms and helmets) were assembled and fitted with pyrotechnics and electrical devices that emitted flashes and reports upon striking the ground. Real paratroopers (three men per team) jumped in with the rubber dummies and activated additional devices on the ground to further create the sounds and smells of battle. During early morning hours of 6 June, hundreds of these TITANIC dummies and support teams were dropped behind the Normandy beaches from the Cherbourg peninsula eastward for sixty miles, all designed to confuse the Germans as to where the real airborne landings were occurring.³⁵

SUCCESS

The success or failure of the FORTITUDE operations is best viewed from the German perspective. Field Marshal von Rundstedt conducted his own analysis of the situation on 29 May utilizing all the intelligence available and his personal observation that the Allies had dropped twice as many bombs on the Pas de Calais area than they had in the Normandy area. He concluded and reported back to the OKW his reaffirmation that the Allied main effort would be against the Pas de Calais area. Through MAGIC (the US efforts to intercept and break messages in Japanese code) we know that on 30 May Hitler reported to the Japanese Ambassador General Hiroshi Baron Oshima that the Allies had staged over ninety divisions, to include eight airborne divisions in Great Britain. Hitler also stated that while the Allies might conduct elaborate feints against Normandy or the Netherlands, the Allied main effort would still be against Pas de Calais.³⁶

Not all believed the FORTITUDE story. Rommel had done his own analysis and now believed that the Allies would land in Normandy. In late May, Rommel reported back to Berlin that "From the Allied point of view the number one objective is to get firmly ashore...This is improbable on the Pas de Calais coast, which is strongly defended, but is possible on the Normandy coast which is barely fortified." He had noticed that German reconnaissance flights were periodically allowed over southeastern England but were fiercely driven off when they approached southern England. Rommel requested the immediate movement of the 12th SS Panzer, Panzer Lehr, and 21st Panzer divisions along with a brigade of the 24th Nebelwerfer (six-barreled 300mm rocket launchers) to be moved from reserve areas in the rear to forward positions to support Normandy. Luckily for the Allies, von Rundstedt and Hitler still believed the FORTITUDE story and his request was denied.³⁷

While Rommel had deduced the true invasion site, neither he nor the rest of the German leadership knew when the invasion would occur. On 5 June, Rommel left his headquarters to

go home for his wife's birthday on 6 June and then travel to Adlerhorst to personally ask Hitler to release the three Panzer divisions to beef up the Normandy sector. Von Rundstedt clearly did not know when NEPTUNE would launch stating on 5 June in his daily report to the OKW and in comments to his son at lunch that "there is no immediate prospect for the invasion." Additionally on the fifth of June, late in the day nearly all the generals and colonels from the German units in the Normandy sector departed the area for a war game set to commence on 6 June in Rennes. Ironically, the scenario for the war game was "Enemy invasion of Normandy preceded by paratroop drops."³⁸

The German leaders were in disagreement on the best method for conducting the defense of France. Since the exact landing points were unknown, von Rundstedt believed in maintaining a large central reserve well back from the coast that could be dispatched to the invasion site once it had been defined. Rommel, on the other hand, knew that the invasion force would have to be defeated on the beaches. Rommel also understood from his experience in North Africa that Allied air superiority would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for German reserve forces to move forward during daylight hours. He strongly believed that the reserve forces must be dispersed forward. Rommel hoped to convince Hitler on this point when they met. FORTITUDE played against this German friction point with great success causing the German reserve forces to be frequently redirected and committed to battle in a piecemeal fashion.³⁹

The NEPTUNE assaults hit Normandy on the morning of 6 June 1944 but the FORTITUDE efforts had worked so well that it was truly believed by Hitler and the OKW staff that this was the diversionary attack they had long expected. Hitler therefore denied several different requests for use of units in the Brittany sector to reinforce Normandy on D-Day and the days following.⁴⁰

FORTITUDE continued to be so successful that on 12 June Hitler still did not believe the Normandy operation was the Allied main effort. However, he was getting tired of waiting for it. In an attempt to spur the Allies into action and launch their Schwerpunkt against his prepared defenses in Pas de Calais, he brought out the V-1 "Buzz Bombs." On the night of 12/13 June, nineteen V-1s were launched from prepared positions in the Pas de Calais area toward Britain where four landed in London proper. While the V-1 attacks would have some Londoners calling for an attack into Pas de Calais area, the main result was tying up Allied air assets attempting intercept and shoot down the V-1s. These aircraft and crews would have been used to support the fight in France had they not been committed to flying V-1 CAP.⁴¹

On the 20 June the Russians launched their summer offensive and broke through the Smolensk-Minsk road line. This hole in the Eastern Front captured both Hitler's attention and

diverted any additional reinforcements that von Rundstedt hoped to obtain. By this time von Rundstedt had come to the conclusion that Normandy was in fact the main effort and he asked permission to commit the majority of the Fifteenth Army's divisions to the Normandy sector of operations. The OKW denied this request because they were still receiving indications that convinced both the OKW staff and Hitler that there would be a second large-scale assault. Therefore, it was necessary to maintain the forces in Pas de Calais. FORTITUDE-SOUTH was still playing strong!⁴²

Hitler published a directive to his commanders on 8 July that read in part: "The enemy has succeeded in landing in Normandy and in seizing with astounding speed the Contentin Peninsula...In spite of the attendant risks, the enemy will probably attempt a second landing in the 15th Army's sector..."⁴³ While FORTITUDE would continue to operate until the spring of 1945, the influence it would play in both the Allied and German decision-making would lessen as the Germans fell back to defend the Fatherland. FORTITUDE had accomplished its primary objectives of allowing the Allies to land, establish a beachhead, build up the beachhead and break out of it while keeping significant German forces uncommitted in northern France, Denmark and Norway.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Joint publication 3-58 JOINT DOCTRINE FOR MILITARY DECEPTION states that the principles of military deception are:

Focus: The deception must target the adversary decision-maker,

Objective: The objective of the deception must be to cause an adversary to take (or not take) specific actions.

Centralized Control: A deception operation must be directed and controlled by a single element.

Security: Knowledge of the intent to deceive and the execution of that intent must be denied to the adversary.

Timeliness: Deception operation requires careful timing.

Integration: Each deception must be fully integrated with the basic operation it is supporting.

OPERATION FORTITUDE exhibited all these principles.

Focus: Throughout the many months that FORTITUDE and its' supporting operations were underway the focus was always on Hitler and, to a lesser degree, the OKW and Abwehr. As long as Hitler believed the deception, and he did, the operation was a success.

Objective: The objective of FORTITUDE was initially to convince the Germans not to move additional forces into France from other theaters and then once the invasion occurred, not to immediately reinforce the Normandy beachhead with forces already in France. FORTITUDE remained focused on the objective and clearly achieved the objective.

Centralized Control: Throughout the execution of the FORTITUDE operations, centralized control was executed from the LCS working directly with the CSM section of SHAFE. Under the command of General Eisenhower, all British and American deception operations were coordinated through the LCS and the LCS promulgated the central story line.

Security: Access to FORTITUDE information was extremely limited to those with a strict need to know. Often those involved in some aspects of the deception operations were not aware of their role as such. As the invasion date neared, greater security measures were put in place to restrict the movement of personnel, mail and information. These all were necessary to protect FORTITUDE secrets while at the same time still allowing "good" information to flow to the Nazis.

Timeliness: The close working relationship between the NEPTUNE operational planners and the LCS ensured that the deception planners were well aware of the operational timelines. The LCS' sound understanding of the German intelligence system allowed them to calculate the time required for a piece of FORTITUDE information that they had created to be collected, reported, processed and then provided to the German decision-makers. FORTITUDE information was provided with sufficient timeliness to allow the enemy decision maker time to act on that information to the benefit of Allied forces.

Integration: The FORTITUDE series of plans were extremely well integrated and mutually supporting both between themselves and with the real operational plans for OVERLORD. This close integration allowed the sharing of resources between the deception planners and operations planners on the SHAFE staff and helped to provide a consistent and believable picture to the Germans even after forces began landing at Normandy. General Bradley wrote to General Eisenhower:

Operation Fortitude ...was responsible for containing a minimum of 20 divisions in the Pas de Calais during the first crucial months of the invasion. The enemy was led to believe-and reacted to-a long inventory of opportune untruths, the largest, most effective and decisive of which was that (Neptune) itself was only the prelude to a major invasion in the Pas de Calais area.... Best testimony to the effectiveness with which this mis-information influenced the enemy's

command decisions is the historic record of the enemy's committing his forces piecemeal-paralyzed into indecision in Normandy by the conviction that he had more to fear from Calais.⁴⁵

Word Count = 7,224

ENDNOTES

- ¹ William B. Breuer, Hoodwinking Hitler: The Normandy Deception (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 11.
- ² Anthony Cave Brown, Bodyguard of Lies (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 389.
- ³ Breuer, 62.
- ⁴ Roger Hesketh, FORTITUDE: The D-Day Deception Campaign (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), xi.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 368.
- ⁶ Breuer, 15.
- ⁷ Brown, 434.
- ⁸ Hesketh, 378.
- ⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-58 Joint Doctrine for Military Deception (Washington, D.C.: 1996), A-2.
- ¹⁰ T. L. Cabbage II, Anticipating OVERLORD: Intelligence and Deception, German Estimates of Allied Intentions to land Invasion Forces in Western Europe (Washington, D.C.: Defense Intelligence School, 1969), 85.
- ¹¹ Brown, 462.
- ¹² Hesketh, 376.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 63.
- ¹⁴ Brown, 464.
- ¹⁵ Hesketh, 65.
- ¹⁶ Breuer, 123.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.
- ¹⁹ Brown, 465.
- ²⁰ Hesketh, 79.
- ²¹ Breuer, 132.
- ²² Brown, 472.

- ²³ Hesketh, 374.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 384.
- ²⁵ B.H. Liddell-Hart *Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 310.
- ²⁶ Brown, 473.
- ²⁷ Hesketh, 92.
- ²⁸ Breuer, 113.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 117.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 114.
- ³¹ Hesketh, 148.
- ³² Breuer, 161.
- ³³ Ibid., 116.
- ³⁴ Hesketh, 118.
- ³⁵ Breuer, 179.
- ³⁶ Brown, 617.
- ³⁷ Breuer, 183.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 195.
- ³⁹ Charles Douglas-Home Rommel (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1973), 198.
- ⁴⁰ Cabbage, 167.
- ⁴¹ Brown, 725.
- ⁴² Cabbage, 187.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 194.
- ⁴⁴ Brown, 805.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 804.

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