D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion

Mary Kathryn Barbier

Praeger Security International

D-DAY DECEPTION

D-DAY DECEPTION

Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion

Mary Kathryn Barbier

PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Barbier, Mary.
D-day deception : Operation Fortitude and the Normandy invasion / Mary Kathryn Barbier.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978–0–275–99479–2 (alk. paper)
1. Operation Fortitude. 2. World War, 1939–1945—Campaigns—France—Normandy. 3. World War, 1939–1945—Deception. 4. Normandy (France)—History. I. Title.
D756.5.N6B347 2007
940.54'21421—dc22 2007027854

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2007027854
ISBN-13: 978–0–275–99479–2

First published in 2007

Praeger Security International, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The author gratefully acknowledges permission to reprint portions of this book that first appeared in "Deception and the Planning of D-Day," *The Normandy Campaign 1944: Sixty Years On* (Routledge, 2006).

Contents

Acknowledgments

This project would have not been successful had it not been for the help and support of so many people. First, let me thank Dr. Andrew Wiest, my first mentor, for suggesting that I investigate Operation Fortitude. He patiently guided my steps and helped me to organize my ideas and conclusions throughout every stage of this project. Second, I would like to thank my other mentor Dennis Showalter, who has read many versions of this manuscript and who provided numerous useful suggestions, all of which helped make the manuscript better. This manuscript would not have seen the light of day without Andy and Dennis.

Special thanks go to Dr. G.D. Sheffield and Dr. Nigel de Lee who suggested several valuable avenues of research and identified the availability of important interviews at the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archives. I conducted research in several archives in the United Kingdom and the United States. The staff at the Imperial War Museum was always helpful and patient. It was a pleasure to arrive each day and find the requested materials waiting for me. Equally, the staff at The National Archives, formerly the Public Record Office, was efficient, professional, and helpful. I would also like to thank Seb Cox at the Air Historical Branch Library and the archivists at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, the Beinecke Library at Yale University, and at the Library of Congress. I would like especially to thank Mitchell Yokelson at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Mitch made my research at the National Archives easy.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge an important group who provided me with funding that enabled me to conduct additional research and to make revisions

to the original manuscript. I would like to thank Professors Paul Kennedy, John Lewis Gaddis, and Theodore Bromund of International Security Studies (ISS) at Yale University for awarding me a two-year postdoctoral fellowship. Their belief in and encouragement of my project was immensely beneficial. In addition, through their efforts, I also received additional funding from Smith Richardson Foundation. The Smith Richardson Fellowship financed an additional trip to the archives in England, which facilitated the final substantive revisions.

I gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint portions of this book that first appeared in "Deception and the Planning of D-Day," *The Normandy Campaign 1944: Sixty Years On,* Routledge, 2006.

I would like to thank my colleagues at Mississippi State University for their support and advice and my editors, Elizabeth Demers, for her belief in this project, and Haylee Schwenk, for her valuable help in the final stages of production. I would also like to thank my family who believed in me. Without them, I could not have accomplished all that I have. Special thanks to Dr. David I. Hall, who pushed me to finish the manuscript and who helped me to have confidence in myself when I was overwhelmed by this whole process.

1

Setting the Stage

> Returned to-day from my long trip. I saw a lot and was very satisfied with the progress that has been made. I think for certain that we'll win the defensive battle in the West, provided only that a little more time remains for preparations. . . . In the West: I believe we'll be able to beat off the assault.
>
> —German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, January 19, 1944[1]

D-Day, June 6, 1944, marked the day on which British and American forces launched a major amphibious assault against German troops stationed in northern France. Following massive naval bombardment and airborne attacks along the coast, Allied soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy signaling the commencement of Operation Overlord. The invasion of Normandy was, however, a long time in coming. The June 1940 forced evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from Dunkirk had made the British more determined than ever to defeat their German enemy. After fighting the Germans with little help for almost two years, the British gained an unexpected ally in the Soviet Union. On July 19, 1941, approximately one month after the Germans invaded the U.S.S.R., Josef Stalin made his first request for the British to establish a second front by attacking the Germans in western Europe. Although they immediately began shipping supplies to the Soviets, the British did not consider it possible to establish a second front in 1941. The United States' entry into the war in early December did not make the immediate establishment of a second front any more feasible. Neither Britain nor the United States had the forces available to launch a major offensive in late 1941 or early 1942.[2] Consequently, because he was unwilling to approve an operation when the forces necessary for success were unavailable, Winston Churchill reasserted Britain's strategy to attack the "periphery of Hitler's empire."

As the German offensive in the Soviet Union continued, Stalin renewed his requests for an Allied attack in the West to draw enemy forces from the Eastern

Front. Thus began a series of debates between American and British military and political leaders over their future war strategy and the establishment of a second front. Churchill walked a fine line during this time. Although he remained committed to the invasion of Europe, he did not believe that British or American forces were ready for such a major undertaking. While Allied military leaders drew up plans for Operation Sledgehammer, a small scale invasion of France to be carried out in the fall of 1942, and while Stalin continued to push for Allied action in 1942, Churchill approached President Franklin D. Roosevelt with the possibility of invading North Africa that year.[3] Finding an unexpected ally in Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's most trusted advisor, Churchill argued convincingly that the inequality of troop strength between the Allies and the Germans made a 1942 cross-Channel invasion impossible.

Persuaded by Churchill and Hopkins, Roosevelt insisted that Allied forces mount an alternative offensive in 1942; therefore, the president presented several options to his Joint Chiefs of Staff. Included among the options was Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. Although he strongly supported mounting a cross-Channel invasion as soon as possible, General George C. Marshall, Roosevelt's Chief of Staff, reluctantly endorsed the North African operation. Both Churchill and Roosevelt agreed that the North Africa campaign would constitute the main Allied offensive in 1942, but it would not be the only one. The belief that the possession of a port was essential to a successful landing along the French coast prompted the British to authorize a raid by British and Canadian forces against Dieppe, a German-held French port. Numerous problems plagued the raid, and casualties were high. The British and Canadian failure to launch a successful raid against Dieppe in August 1942 reinforced Churchill's fears about a major cross-Channel attack and his belief in amassing an overwhelming force before attempting to invade France. In addition, the disaster at Dieppe would later bolster British demands for a cover plan to mask the real invasion when the time came.

The failure at Dieppe did not, however, cause a postponement of Operation Torch. In November 1942, British and American forces landed in North Africa. Although the campaign lasted until May 1943, it did not satisfy Stalin's demands for a second front. Allied leaders had not, however, abandoned the idea of invading France. They prepared plans for Operation Roundup, a cross-Channel invasion, which they slated for implementation in 1943. Churchill had committed himself to a second front in 1943, but he remained unconvinced that the operation would be feasible even then.[4]

In January 1943 Churchill, Roosevelt, and their military and political advisors met in Casablanca to discuss the direction of the war. The defeat of German forces in North Africa and in the Soviet Union had weakened the enemy's position, which Churchill had previously claimed was a condition necessary for the launching of a second front offensive. A few months earlier, although he had suggested to Stalin that the Western Allies would invade France in 1943, the British prime minister did not make a firm commitment to the operation. During the Casablanca Conference, however, the British proposed the invasion of Sicily, instead of France, as the major Allied offensive in 1943. Their proposal presented a serious challenge for Churchill

and his advisors, who had to convince their American counterparts that Operation Husky would not interfere with the promised second front. Although Marshall, in particular, needed convincing, Churchill's fears that a cross-Channel operation in 1943 would end in disaster remained. Despite Marshall's objections, Roosevelt accepted Churchill's arguments that it was important to build on the momentum that Allied forces had in the Mediterranean, that the defeat of the Italians would open the area to Allied shipping, and that control of the region would facilitate an expansion of the air offensive against Germany.

Following the Casablanca Conference, Allied troops under General Dwight D. Eisenhower's command began preparations for the invasion of Sicily. On July 10, 1943, Allied forces landed on Sicily and began a campaign that quickly resulted in control of the island. After much debate, Allied leaders decided on July 20 that the next logical step was to take the offensive to the Italian mainland. On September 3, 1943, as the British Eighth Army landed in Italy, the Italian government concluded negotiations that resulted in the transfer of its navy, merchant marine, and air force to the Allies and in Italy becoming a "cobelligerent against Germany." On September 9 American troops landed at Salerno. Although Allied forces no longer faced Italian troops, the fight for Italy did not prove to be an easy one. Because of the staunch German resistance, by late 1943 the Allies had only advanced seventy miles north of Salerno and were still eighty miles from Rome. Allied troops finally took Rome on June 5, 1944, the day before the commencement of the Normandy invasion.[5]

Throughout the summer and fall of 1943, as Allied troops fought first in Sicily and then in Italy, military leaders worked on a plan for the invasion of France. As the campaign in Italy continued and demanded more and more resources, Stalin's vision of a second front in 1943 became increasingly unlikely. Although Stalin fumed about the delay, Churchill, Roosevelt, and their military advisors remained committed to the invasion of France. In November 1943 at Teheran, Churchill and Roosevelt renewed their pledge to Stalin and promised to launch Operation Overlord in early May 1944. Conditions in Italy and shortages of landing craft, however, delayed the invasion until early June 1944.[6]

Although American and British military and political leaders had debated the second front issue for several years, they had to accept the invasion of France as a way to placate Stalin, but more importantly, as a way to bring the war to Germany and defeat to Adolf Hitler. Unfortunately, based on preparations underway in the United Kingdom, the Germans had concluded that the enemy would land a large number of troops in northwest France in the summer of 1944. The Germans also realized that weather conditions would limit when the invasion could occur.[7] Fearing that the establishment of beachheads along the French coast would be difficult, if not impossible, because enemy forces would greatly outnumber the invading troops, Allied planners, particularly the British, concluded early on that Operation Overlord needed an insurance policy. They had to keep the Germans from moving reinforcements into Normandy for as long as possible both before and after the commencement of the invasion. First, Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan, then

Colonel John Bevan and the London Controlling Section (LCS), worked on a deception plan, eventually called Operation Fortitude, which they hoped would increase the odds of Overlord's success. The British were not new to the use of deception plans. They had used them with varying degrees of success since early in the war, particularly when launching an operation in which their forces were greatly outnumbered. By falsifying the picture of their preparations, they hoped that the enemy would make specific mistakes that would help their military operation. The British successfully developed a strategy for disguising military intentions that a staff, which had the confidence of the commander in the field, could plan and implement using specially trained and equipped forces.

Early in the war, the British had established a network of organizations that contributed to the creation and implementation of deception plans designed to help the military engage the enemy in battle. The Double Cross or Twenty (XX) Committee, a branch of MI 5, the British security service, had the responsibility of running captured enemy agents who became double agents. Beginning in 1941, three MI 5 operatives—Lieutenant Colonel T.A. Robertson, Captain J.C. Masterman, and J.A. Marriott—with the help of a team of case officers "looked after" the double agents and utilized them as a useful means of communicating information, or misinformation, to the enemy. Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) provided information based on intercepted radio transmissions, particularly after cryptanalysts at Bletchley Park broke the Germans' Enigma cipher in December 1941. Although the Double Cross Committee, along with a group called the W Board, provided the double agents with information and misinformation, neither organization determined British "deception policy." That job initially fell to the Joint Inter-Service Security Board, which the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee created in February 1940, but the British had been implementing deceptions even earlier. Between 1939 and 1941 General Sir Archibald Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, created "A" Force, a special deception section run by Lieutenant Colonel Dudley Clarke. Because of his successes in the Middle East, the Chiefs of Staff solicited suggestions from Clarke. Following recommendations made by Clarke in October 1941, the Chiefs of Staff approved the formation of the London Controlling Section (LCS), which assumed control over the establishment of deception policy and the development of deception plans for particular operations.[8] Two organizations provided an important connection between "A" Force and the LCS. The Middle East Intelligence Centre (MEIC), which began operating in Cairo in June 1939, "co-ordinate[d] and furnish[ed] intelligence both for GHQ Middle East and for the Joint Intelligence Committee in London." By November 1940 the Combined Bureau Middle East (CBME) joined the MEIC in Cairo. The CBME was the "centre of all cryptanalytic activity, directly linked with the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park."[9]

Wavell put Clarke to work immediately upon his arrival in Cairo. Clarke's first job was to build up the number of forces available to Wavell by notionally suggesting the existence of new formations. By increasing the size of Wavell's force, Clarke hoped to accomplish two objectives. He hoped to deter an enemy attack, and he wanted to use

deception to help Wavell's upcoming offensive. "A" Force initiated its first plan in November 1940. Wavell, who was planning an attack on Italian forces at Sidi Barrani in Egyptian territory, saw the need for a cover plan. "A" Force planted misinformation with identified Axis sources in Cairo and through diplomatic channels and instituted administrative measures consistent with the impending embarkation of a large force. In addition, "A" Force used dummy radio traffic to simulate the withdrawal of British forces from the Western Desert. Although the British achieved surprise when they attacked Italian forces on December 9, 1940, the existing evidence does not prove that it resulted from the cover operation.[10]

"A" Force launched a second deception, Camilla, a few months later to cover the British assault on Italian East Africa. The deception included supplying British units with maps and guides to British Somaliland, the radio transmission of deceptive information, the circulation of rumors in Cairo, the leakage of information, and the misplacement of certain documents that pertained to the impending British offensive. Although Camilla was instrumental in enabling British forces to achieve complete surprise when they launched their offensive against Italian East Africa, not all of "A" Force's deception plans had the desired effect. Despite its early successes, it took time for "A" Force to create a well-organized, effective deceptive operation. In 1941, after successfully implementing Camilla, "A" Force experienced a series of setbacks. The simulation of an attack against the enemy's lines of communication between Tripoli and El Agheila had no effect on Axis operations. After the fall of Crete to the Germans in May 1941, "A" Force attempted to discourage a German assault on Cyprus by "inflating the notional size of the garrison." "A" Force also initiated a complete visual deception program that included camps, divisional signs, and transport for viewing by enemy agents and air reconnaissance, the issuing of movement and administrative orders, and the flooding of the airwaves with radio signals. Allied officials in Cairo conveniently "lost" the defense plan for Cyprus. "A" Force's efforts to protect Cyprus proved unnecessary. Documents captured by the British a short time later indicated that the Germans did not have plans to invade the island.[11]

Both the Cyprus operation and Crusader, which the British launched a month later, demonstrated deficiencies in British intelligence gathering and counterintelligence work. "A" Force tried to mask a British offensive in the Western Desert by suggesting an imminent assault to keep German forces on the defensive for four months. On three separate occasions the British "notionally mounted and stood down" the attack. By the time they launched Crusader in November 1941, the British Eighth Army exhibited a "combination of high morale and overconfidence." Although the British had good intelligence on which to rely when planning Crusader, the offensive did not proceed as envisioned. The British had placed too much faith on their own intelligence in 1941. Even though they were good at intelligence gathering, the British were not, in 1941, good at operations.[12]

Despite its setbacks, "A" Force's responsibilities increased, resulting in the creation of a separate organization to handle tactical deception in the field. Two developments late in 1941 provided more avenues for the designing and implementing of future

deception operations. The first was the creation of the London Controlling Section (LCS), the organization that acquired the task of developing deception plans. Second, in December 1941, "A" Force and other British deception groups received an important boost when cryptanalysts at Bletchley Park broke the Abwehr Enigma cipher. Consequently, the deception planners had access to German intelligence when planning future deception operations.

In the spring of 1942, a combined effort by the LCS and "A" Force resulted in the development of a cover plan for the British attack on Madagascar. The deception implied that the British would land in the Dodecanese Islands. The placement of enemy defenses indicated that the deception apparently contributed to the German conclusion that the Dodecanese Islands were threatened. Because the Germans had placed their garrisons in Leros and Rhodes on alert, British troops met no opposition when they landed on the beaches of Madagascar. A second threat to the Dodecanese Islands during the summer did not, however, achieve the desired result. During the spring of 1942, the LCS instituted a second deception operation in an attempt to persuade the Germans to reinforce Norway. Although they placed their forces in southern Norway on maximum alert during the first two weeks of May, the Germans did not increase the number of formations in the Scandinavian country.[13]

While the British took a serious approach to the use of deception operations in the Mediterranean Theater, the system apparently broke down with regard to the August 1942 Dieppe raid, which was in fact the second assault planned against the French port. For several reasons, the British cancelled the original operation, Rutter, on July 7, 1942. The troops who had been trained for the raid were reassigned to various postings around the United Kingdom, and British military officials briefly debated the wisdom of remounting the cancelled assault. Despite strong opposition and lack of consensus, Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten decided to proceed with the raid against Dieppe. He failed, however, to consult security experts, and his use of deception included releasing his plans to the Germans. Mountbatten had suggested the Dieppe raid would constitute part of a deception to hide the actual targets of the operation—St. Nazaire, Alderney, and Boulogne. The fact remains that the assault was launched against Dieppe and had disastrous results. The failure of Mountbatten to consult the experts for the creation of a cover plan, among other equally important factors, doomed the raid to failure. The disaster at Dieppe reinforced the growing perception within the British intelligence and military community that adequate use of intelligence and deceptive means was crucial.[14]

Despite the Dieppe fiasco, the British continued to devise and implement cover plans for the Mediterranean Theater. In August 1942, "A" Force and the LCS initiated a deception operation designed to mask the invasion of North Africa (Operation Torch), which Allied officials planned for November. The plan had several interconnected operations. According to the first scheme, the Allies planned to launch major operations against northern France in the fall of 1942 in order to tie down the large German force located there. To mask the concentration of personnel and shipping for Torch, the second plan implied preparations for an attack on Norway. The goal of the third operation was "to allay Vichy suspicions" and to

conceal the final destination of the invasion force by suggesting a threat to Sicily and southern Italy. The final part of the plan implied the reinforcement of Malta to conceal the buildup of forces on Gibraltar. The overall operation had varying degrees of success. Although they maintained their force in northern France, the Germans never seriously considered the area threatened. The threat to Norway was moderately successful. In addition to declaring the Trodheim-Narvik area protected and the Swedish-Norwegian border a prohibited zone, the Germans expected an attack by ten Allied divisions. The lack of an attempt to intercept the Allied convoys entering the Mediterranean and the lack of preparations by the Vichy and the Germans indicated that they did not expect an attack against Northern Africa. Finally, according to German appreciations, they expected the Allies "to relieve Malta," but they "were otherwise undecided as to whether the assault was to be made on Sicily, Tripoli or even Crete."[15] In addition to the cover plan for Torch, the British also implemented a deceptive cover for the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. Churchill suggested that the cover plan contributed to the British success at El Alamein. Following the lead of their allies, the Americans carried out some minor deception experiments in the Battle of Tunisia with varying degrees of success.[16]

By the summer of 1942, the Americans had not, however, had the same sort of practice with developing and implementing cover plans as the British had. In fact, since Operation Torch was the first Allied campaign in which the Americans had participated, they had not had the opportunity to institute the necessary organizations in time to have gained experience that was comparable to that of the British. Consequently, as the Allies began preparations for the cross-Channel invasion during the summer of 1943, the British took the lead in determining the deception strategy for the Allied effort and in developing the cover plan that would subsequently be implemented. Initially, only a few Americans participated, and generally, they were "students or members of a joint staff under British command."[17]

The LCS initiated several other major deceptions during 1943, both with and without help from "A" Force. Between March and July 1943, the LCS implemented the Barclay deception that they designed to cover the invasion of Sicily. Barclay had several goals that included threats to "pin down enemy forces in the south of France and the Balkan peninsula; to weaken the garrison of Sicily and retard its reinforcement, especially by German troops; and to reduce to a minimum air and naval attacks on the shipping being assembled for the assault on Sicily from Britain, North Africa and Egypt."[18] According to the deception, if the Allies attacked Sicily, it would be a diversion to draw Axis forces from other, more important areas. Barclay also simulated preparations for Allied attacks against Sardinia, Corsica, and the southern Balkans. The plan suggested first that the assault, which the Allies would only launch when no moon was visible, would come in late June, and then that the Allies had postponed the attack for four weeks. Evaluating Barclay after Allied troops had landed in Sicily, the LCS concluded that the deception had been a success for several reasons. First, the Germans had sent reinforcements to the Balkans.

Second, the Axis divided its reserves in Italy between Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily. Finally, information obtained from captured documents and prisoners suggested that Axis forces had been surprised both by the date and by the scale of the Allies' attack.[19]

After Allied leaders had decided to invade Italy in early September, the LCS and "A" Force implemented a supporting deception that continued the threats to Sardinia and Corsica. In addition, the plan indicated a possible Allied landing at Crotone, which is located on Italy's heel. Allied forces successfully landed in Italy on September 3 and 9. After the landings, the LCS concluded that, because of the limited amount of time for implementation, the deception had not been as successful as the previous one. According to the LCS, "nevertheless, some degree of surprise was obtained and opposition during the early stages was confined to that of a single German division. Later information indicated that a German division had been moved from the west coast to the heel shortly before the Salerno attack."[20]

In addition to implementing deception plans to provide cover for the invasions of Sicily and Italy, Allied officials decide to initiate a series of deceptions designed to suggest the possibility of a large-scale cross-Channel invasion in 1943. The deception, Operation Cockade, which fell under the direction of Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan, Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander (Designate), otherwise known as COSSAC, included deceptions aimed at three different locations, all of which commenced during the summer of 1943 and culminated in September. Operation Starkey indicated an amphibious threat by British troops to the Pas de Calais area; Operation Wadham suggested an assault against Brittany by American forces; and Operation Tindall intimated a British assault against Norway to seize the port and airfields at Stavanger.[21]

G-3 Operations of General Jacob L. Devers's command received the responsibility of implementing Wadham. By displaying dummy landing craft, dummy aircraft, and real gliders, along with the transfer of false information by double agents and the flying of aircraft into enemy radar range, G-3 attempted to suggest the placement of an American amphibious force in Southwest England. No real troops were involved in the implementation of Wadham. Despite American efforts, the Germans did not reinforce northwest France. They did, however, maintain twelve divisions in Norway during Operation Tindall. Hitler's preoccupation with Norway persuaded him to consider any threat to the country seriously. Consequently, he generally maintained a particular troop level there throughout the war.[22]

Although Wadham and Tindall were purely deception operations, Starkey united deception with a "large scale movement exercise by the Army, combined with actual sea and air operations to simulate a real intention to carry out a cross-Channel operation."[23] Of the three threats, the LCS considered the one to the Pas de Calais to be the most important. The shortage of landing craft, however, made it unlikely that the Germans considered the threat to be anything other than a large raid. Although it elicited a few minor German responses, Cockade failed to achieve its objectives. Despite its failure, Cockade proved useful. It provided the LCS with

experience in creating a deceptive threat to Norway, and it demonstrated a German sensitivity with regard to the Pas de Calais.[24]

Following Cockade, Devers ordered his new permanent Cover and Deception officer to study the results of the operation and make recommendations for improvements to facilitate American participation in future deception endeavors. In the study, the officer recommended that the general ask the War Department "to activate, equip and train a field deception unit capable of simulating one corps, consisting of one infantry and one armored division, by means of prefabricated portable dummies together with the appropriate radio communication." On January 20, 1944, the 23rd Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops, Army, was activated. By March 1, 1944, the War Department activated a sonic unit, which was attached to the 23rd.[25]

The American 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, which was an unorthodox unit, included 82 officers and 1,023 enlisted men, many of whom were artists, actors, engineers, designers, advertising layout men, electronic wizards, writers, architects, and special-effects experts. It was, however, some time before these units could play an active role in Allied deception operations. When it took to the field, the 23rd, instead of avoiding enemy fire, invited it. Their mission was to divert enemy attention and to protect the lives of the combat troops on the front lines. The men of the 23rd "never wore their own sleeve insignia, camouflaged their vehicles with the markings of other outfits, operated at night and in strict secrecy, and were under orders never to divulge the nature of their mission even to superior officers in their own army."[26] Although they did not participate in the cover plan for Operation Overlord, a small part of the 23rd landed in Normandy shortly after the invasion began; the rest arrived over the next few weeks. The men of the 23rd "served under fire with four armies in five European countries during five major campaigns from D-Day until the end of the war."[27] While the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops did not provide cover for the Normandy invasion, another American unit, the 3103rd Signal Service Battalion, did participate in that deception, but because of the nature of the invasion's cover plan, final decisions were not made until the eve of implementation. In fact, the LCS continually reassessed and made changes to the plan after its commencement.

Despite the mixed results of the deception plans developed and implemented by the LCS, British military leaders believed that a cover plan for Operation Overlord was essential. Drawing on their own experiences, as well as those of "A" Force, members of the LCS went to work on a plan in the fall of 1943. The LCS created the Fortitude deception plan that Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) accepted and helped to implement. Fortitude was by far the most ambitious plan created by the LCS during the war. Because Fortitude was much more complex than most realize, the following discussion presents a detailed examination of Fortitude from the planning stage through its conclusion in the fall of 1944. Particular attention is paid to the previously neglected Fortitude North. In addition to examining the operation from the Allied perspective, the discussion examines the German responses before, during, and after D-Day, June 6, 1944. After

exploring numerous primary sources, particularly the Wingate and Hesketh reports and Ultra intercepts, this work concludes with an analysis of Fortitude's contribution to the Allies' victory in Normandy, as well as an examination of reasons, other than the deception, that explain the Germans' behavior toward Normandy during this period.

2

Devising a Plan

> Truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.
>
> —British Prime Minister Winston Churchill[1]

It is not difficult to understand why the Allied leaders believed that it was necessary to devise and implement a deception plan to cover their upcoming invasion of the coast of northwestern Europe. They had implemented some successful deceptive measures during the North African and Italian campaigns. The assault on northern France in late spring 1944 would be the largest amphibious operation ever attempted by Allied forces. In addition, the Allies would launch an assault against a strongly defended coastline in an area where the Germans were building the infamous Atlantic Wall. As the Allies defeated German troops in North Africa and then slowly advanced northward up the Italian peninsula, the enemy's "sole remaining hope" lay "in defeating the Allied invasion in the West."[2] The Germans expected the Allies to launch an assault against France in late spring 1944. They were, however, uncertain about the location and the time of the impending Allied invasion. Therefore, the Allied leaders, taking into consideration the heated debates that had occurred over the opening of a Second Front, as well as continuing British concerns over the possibility of Operation Overlord's success, chose to create a cover plan, which was originally called Torrent, then Mespot, and, finally, Fortitude.[3]

Although Fortitude represented a deception, rather than a real invasion, Allied planners, who experienced difficulties similar to those encountered when they devised Overlord, spent over six months constructing a scheme that went through numerous revisions before the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved it.

> In terms of scale, the Fortitude deception was the largest of which we have knowledge. After all, what were they trying to disguise? They were trying to disguise movement of 3000 ships in a very small area of sea. The movement of 3000 ships into a funnel of

> sea about at its greatest 100 miles long and 20 or 30 miles wide. And these ships had to move from identifiable ports through confined waters to a single concentration area in a highly compressed space of time. They were also for example trying to disguise the movements of 13,000 aircraft. It was the largest invasion force that has ever been assembled in the history of amphibious operations.[4]

Creating a cover plan for the "largest invasion force" proved a daunting task, especially in light of the failed Cockade project from the summer of 1943, but the British approached Fortitude with vigor. Initially it was a British plan, but the Americans ultimately became "full partners" in its execution.[5]

In April 1943 the Combined Chiefs of Staff ordered Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Morgan, the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Command designate (COSSAC), to ready Overlord plans. After he and his staff completed their assignment and submitted it to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in mid-July, Morgan began constructing an invasion cover plan. In designing the deception, Morgan had to consider certain security factors—communications restrictions, particularly after the Overlord briefing of troops, and frontier closings in England, Scotland, and Wales. Colonel John Bevan, head of the London Controlling Section (LCS), argued against closing the frontiers too soon because it might alert the enemy to the time of the invasion more than the leakage of information after troop briefings.[6] In presenting his thoughts about strategic deception plans for Overlord to Morgan, Bevan noted that he hoped for tactical, not strategic, surprise. Morgan received Bevan's plan on July 14, but disagreed with it. Although he voiced legitimate concerns about the Bevan plan, Morgan's alternative proved to be unrealistic. Morgan did stress, however, that the Allies would be unable to keep the buildup of troops a secret until D-Day. Consequently, he believed that they had to suggest another assault or assaults.[7]

Morgan and others had a high opinion of the German Intelligence Service; therefore, they believed that they had to deceive the Germans in three separate ways—intelligence, air reconnaissance, and spies. According to Sir Ronald Wingate, another member of the LCS, "this automatically implied an extensive program of visual misdirection," which created a major problem for the Allies. The main concern for the Allied commanders remained Operation Overlord, which received priority over any available supplies. Providing troops, armaments, equipment, landing craft, and other supplies for Overlord took precedence over making them available for other operations, including the cover plan. As a result, the planners decided to coordinate planning of Overlord and the cover plan to enable the sharing of physical supplies whenever possible. Other obstacles, such as the failure of Allied officials to agree upon an overall strategic deception policy, hindered the development of a cover plan for Overlord. Not until the Teheran Conference in November 1943 did Allied leaders agree on an overall policy of strategic deception.

Morgan and his advisors devised a temporary solution. They separated the strategic from the tactical planning. While they continued to work on tactical aspects of the cover operation, the planners shelved the strategic planning until after the Teheran Conference.[8] Bevan devised a preliminary plan called Jael, which

he submitted to Morgan on October 8, 1943. Bevan's deception consisted of two parts. The first stage, during which the implementers would attempt to persuade the Germans to move their troops into areas other than Normandy, would end once the enemy had deduced that the main cross-Channel assault would be launched in 1944. The second part of the deception would begin at that point and conclude on D-Day. Bevan conceded that this plan contained certain weaknesses. Enemy reconnaissance flights could discover the real invasion preparations in England. The Germans could deduce a shift in emphasis from the Mediterranean to the European theater once the appointment of a Supreme Allied Commander became known and conclude that the time of the Allied assault was approaching. Allied bombing and newspaper reports could spotlight the activity in England. In addition, although Bevan's plan called for the simultaneous simulation of threats against the Axis powers from Norway to the Dardanelles, the availability of forces would limit Plan Jael.[9]

Meanwhile, Morgan, who did not agree with Jael, continued to work on his own cover plan, Torrent, also known as Appendix Y. Before submitting it to the British Chiefs of Staff, Morgan asked Brigadier Dudley Clarke, the leader of "A" Force,[10] to review Appendix Y. Clarke, responding in a letter dated October 28, advised Morgan to clarify the object of his plan. Clarke suggested, "What you really want to achieve is, of course, to make him [the enemy] dispose his forces in a way in which they can do the least harm to your operations. I therefore think that it would have been better to have started with a short appreciation as to what you really want the German High Command to *do*."[11] Clarke expressed his doubt that the original deception could be maintained after D-Day and his belief that the weakening of German forces in the invasion area should be of prime importance. He suggested a separate cover plan be devised for the post D-Day period with the object of hindering the movement of German reserves into the region. Referring to Husky (code name for the invasion of Sicily), Clarke advised that Morgan "adjust your cover plan dates to enable you to make full use of any exercises which the enemy might detect, especially if you use the device of postponing the date of the attack."[12]

On November 29, 1943, Morgan submitted Appendix Y to the British Chiefs of Staff. Because it was essential to prevent the Germans from moving ground and air forces out of the Pas de Calais area, the cover plan included the following objectives:

a. To induce the German command to believe that the main assault and the follow-up will be in or east of the Pas de Calais area, thereby encouraging the enemy to maintain or increase the strength of his air and ground forces and of his fortifications there at the expense of other areas, particularly of the Caen area.
b. To keep the enemy in doubt as to the date and time of the actual assault.
c. During and after the main assault to contain the largest possible German ground and air forces in or east of the Pas de Calais for at least fourteen days.[13]

Recognizing that the buildup of real troops would imply an assault against the Cherbourg–Caen–Le Havre area, Appendix Y called for deceptive measures, such as wireless activity, to suggest concentration of forces in southeast England, which would

indicate the Pas de Calais area as the target of an impending Allied operation. Although the majority of naval forces would be occupied with Overlord preparations, the creators of Appendix Y realized that naval forces were essential to a successful deception. Therefore, they suggested a concentration of short-range craft in the Ramsgate-Hastings area, with a follow-up force in the Thames Estuary "augmented with any available craft and dummy craft so that it represents an assault division." In addition, they devised a plan for assembling as large a concentration of shipping as possible in the Thames Estuary–Great Yarmouth area in order to suggest specifically a threat to the Pas de Calais–Belgium area.[14]

Appendix Y also suggested several methods for enhancing the size of military and air forces in southeast and east England in order to make the threat to the Pas de Calais–Belgium area more realistic. The methods included wireless deception; camouflage and concealment; preparations for troop movements and accommodations; the imposition of visitor bans and restrictions in the deception area; deceptive lighting of ports, assembly areas, and transit routes; the simulation of concentrations of antiaircraft weaponry; sabotage by resistance forces in the threatened area; and an emphasis on civil defense and citizen evacuation in southeast and east England. Morgan and his staff acknowledged the difficulty in masking the invasion preparations in southwest and south England. Concerned that enemy radar and air reconnaissance would discover the buildup of short-range aircraft, they included measures to suggest that the aircraft would provide protection for the forces assembling in southeast and east England. In addition, the aircraft would increase the number of planes available for the air campaign against the Pas de Calais region prior to and during the amphibious assault.[15]

Crucial to any deception plan was the ability to deceive the Germans as to the exact time and date of Overlord; therefore, Appendix Y included several measures to accomplish that objective. First, to prevent the Germans from discovering the embarkation of assault and follow-up forces and the transportation of buildup troops to the coast, the implementers would manipulate the wireless traffic. In addition, they would use wireless transmissions to simulate the training and preparation of the deception forces to suggest a target date after the Overlord D-Day. Second, the planners hoped to persuade the Germans, using "large scale combined exercises in the normal course of training, and maintaining active sea borne and air reconnaissance during the winter and spring," that the final invasion preparations were additional training exercises. Finally, Appendix Y suggested the increased restriction of enemy air reconnaissance over the real preparation site shortly before D-Day.[16]

Recognizing the necessity of pinning down German forces, both ground and air, in the Pas de Calais region during and after Overlord, Morgan included a provision for the continuation of the deception threat after Allied troops sailed for Normandy. This provision called for an assault force, which included one assault division and the necessary follow-up and buildup divisions along with adequate landing craft, to be housed in the Hastings-Harwich area. The physical display would contain whatever real craft could be spared and would be supplemented by dummy landing craft. Because most of the landing craft would be fake, the plan authorized the use of false

wireless traffic to enhance the illusion that a real assault force was poised to attack the Pas de Calais. In addition to the wireless transmissions, the U.S. and British forces that were not yet earmarked for Normandy would simulate the follow-up forces.[17]

Appendix Y designated that the same command and control structure would implement Overlord and the cover operation. The plan divided the cover operation into three phases. The first, or preliminary, phase, which would end when the Rosyth force set sail, would begin immediately and include several features. The appropriate authorities would impose restrictions in the Wash-Bristol Channel area, as well as in areas where secret training was underway, in order to maintain security. Deceptive wireless activity would endeavor to accomplish the following: suggest the presence in the United Kingdom of additional forces trained for amphibious assaults and of an additional combined headquarters located in southeast England, and "conceal the true character of the amphibious training and to induce the enemy to believe that steps are being deliberately taken to conceal the concentration of aircraft in the South-East."[18] To mask the meaning of wireless silence on D-Day, implementers would impose "intermittent and varied periods of wireless silence." Deception forces would construct tented camps and deceptive lighting and magnify civil construction projects in the Thames Estuary region, including Yarmouth, to suggest the daily movement of one and a half divisions in that area. Deception forces would also assemble available short-range craft in the Ramsgate-Hastings area. Finally, while a concealment policy would be in place to mask real invasion preparations, implementers would use "judicious display" of the deception forces.[19]

The preparatory phase, which would commence at the end of the first phase, would conclude at zero hour D-Day, when the invasion forces landed on the Normandy beaches. The main aspects of the second phase included the following. First, participants would assemble dummy landing craft in the area around Yarmouth and Hastings in order to suggest that the follow-up force in the Nore (at the mouth of the Thames Estuary) was actually an assault force. A concentration of MT ships and coasters would simulate the presence of a follow-up force. Second, actual expeditionary troops in other areas would synchronize large-scale movements in southeastern and eastern England with forces not slated for immediate transfer across the channel. Third, crews would construct displays of dummy aircraft in the deception area to supplement the number of real fighter aircraft. Finally, the appropriate civil authorities would reinforce fire services and civil defense organizations and encourage voluntary civilian evacuation of the region.[20]

The final, or post-assault, phase would last until Allied troops had established a firm foothold in France. In order to perpetuate the threat to the Pas de Calais area during this period, crews would concentrate any craft not employed in the Normandy operation, along with fake craft, in the areas of the Dover and Nore commands. Troops not needed in Normandy during the first two weeks of the campaign and those not part of the expeditionary force would represent the presence of six divisions in southeast and east England. The deception implementers would use wireless and other deceptive methods to simulate any deficiency in real forces. Wireless activity,

the display of dummy aircraft, and activity by real aircraft would sustain the threat posed by short-ranged aircraft. Finally, the plan suggested the implementation of bombing raids against the Pas de Calais to suggest assault preparations.[21]

Morgan and his staff attached three annexures to Appendix Y. Annexure I, "Long-Term and Short-Term Preparations for Operation 'Overlord,'" first addressed a number of issues concerning the long-term arrangements, such as the camouflage and concealment of real invasion preparations and the discrete display of the deceptive preparations. The display of dummy craft, as well as provisions for additional troop transfer and accommodation, should suggest a concentration of forces, shipping, supplies, and craft in southeastern and eastern regions. Annexure I also proposed the utilization of written narratives for training exercises, involving all services, aimed toward the Pas de Calais. "Further, by making no effort to conceal the intensity of this training and exaggerating the scope of large scale exercises, the enemy command may gradually become accustomed to this activity and it will be difficult to distinguish between the final preparations for the operation and these training activities."[22] Although the plan indicated that the use of air and sea borne reconnaissance and raids from the United Kingdom should be spread out as evenly as possible, those in the Pas de Calais–Belgium area should occur more frequently. Annexure I included greater detail about possible civil preparations than those included in Appendix Y and advised that they be undertaken to imply that the assault on the Pas de Calais would occur twenty days after the commencement of Overlord.

The second part of Annexure I addressed the short-term preparations for Overlord. Included in this section was a provision that the lighting of "all ports, hards, transit areas, and assembly areas" in the deception area should be the same as that in other coastal areas in the United Kingdom, beginning at least three months prior to D-Day. The planners also stipulated that dummy artillery (see Figure 2.1) would be used to reinforce the antiaircraft concentrations in southeast and east England and what type of resistance activity would support the deceptive threat to the Pas de Calais. Finally, the designers of the plan provided more detail about the use of dummy aircraft to supplement the displays of fighter squadrons in the deception area.[23]

Annexure II, "Operation 'Overlord' Camouflage and Concealment," supplied clarification about concealment, in Western and Southern Commands, and display of troop preparations. It also included information about the requirements for "discreet display," which was slated for the deception area.

a. Deliberately omitting technical camouflage advice and not using the camouflage surveys and schemes which were designed for concealment.

b. Where possible, siting assembly and transit areas away from built-up and enclosed areas and by permitting a greater degree of concentration than would be acceptable if heavy air bombardment were expected.

c. Carrying out day movements, between concentration and assembly areas and by arranging halting places on routes where concealment is difficult.[24]

Figure 2.1 The planners hoped to fool German reconnaissance planes with this fake antiaircraft gun.

Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

The final provision in Annexure II suggested the implementation of "normal" camouflage and concealment by the air forces.[25]

Annexure III, "Operation 'Overlord' Information to Participating Forces and Civil Authorities," noted that the 1943 exercise called Cockade had proven that attempts to put a cover story over on the enemy provided little benefit for the operation as a whole. Harlequin and Tindall had demonstrated that soldiers form their own opinions despite what information is presented to them by their commanders. Therefore, "it is almost certain that a proportion of those engaged in any operation will not believe in the operation as we hope the Germans may." The only solution was to provide security adequate to prevent the leakage of information out of the country, especially in southeast and east England, where troops scheduled for shipment overseas at a later date and Home Forces units might be involved in perpetrating the deception. According to Annexure III, these soldiers must be convinced "that dummy equipment is part of the normal equipment of war, that it is used extensively by both sides in most operations, either to distract the enemy's attention from important targets or to misrepresent intention."[26] Therefore, security provided a key element in the success of the operation.

On November 20, 1943, as noted above, Morgan submitted Appendix Y to the British Chiefs of Staff, who withheld approval until Allied strategic policy had been determined. They did, however, approve those aspects of the plan, such as some of the camouflage measures and the introduction of periods of wireless silence, because of the length of time necessary for them to become effective.[27] Critics of Appendix Y included General Jacob L. Devers, the CG ETOUSA (European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army), Colonel John Bevan, Controlling Officer London Controlling Section, and General Bernard Montgomery's staff. Continuing to vocalize his disagreement with Appendix Y, Bevan provided three reasons for his objections. First, he stressed that acceptance of the plan should not come before the end of the Cairo Conference. Second, according to Bevan, "when in due course a tactical cover plan for Operation Overlord was prepared, there could be no question of simply adding it to the genuine plans as an appendix." Finally, because the Allied position for the post D-Day period was unclear, Bevan objected to a scheme that dictated the cover plan after the landings.[28]

Bevan was soon able to exert his influence over the development of the final cover plan for the Normandy landings. Like Morgan, however, his design evolved before he received final approval from the Combined Chiefs of Staff. From November 28 until December 1, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Premier Josef Stalin, and their advisors met in Teheran. One of the crucial debates during the conference revolved around the opening of a Second Front. By December 1 the Allied leaders had decided to launch Overlord in May 1944; the decision to postpone the assault for a month occurred later. They agreed that a separate landing in southern France to pin down German troops should occur. The Allied leaders also agreed about the necessity of a cover and deception plan for Overlord.

Bevan attended the Teheran Conference, where he discussed the Allied situation in the Mediterranean with Brigadier Dudley Clarke, "A" Force Commander. Following orders received after the conclusion of the Allied summit, Bevan and his department commenced work on an overall plan of deception for the war against Germany in 1944.[29] Before discussing the plan that was submitted a short time later, however, a brief examination of the importance of the London Controlling Section to the Allied deception effort is warranted.

****

The London Controlling Section (LCS), formed on October 9, 1941, was the brainchild of Winston Churchill. During the first year and a half of its existence, the LCS, which had a staff of three, felt its way through unknown waters. Initially, the LCS functioned as an advisory body for the deception planners in the Middle East and India, served as agents for them with the Inter Services Security Board (ISSB), and proposed cover plans for amphibious operations. The LCS began to define its functions more clearly between June 1942 and December 1943. As a result of an increase in staffing, the LCS began to formulate the primary policy of strategic deception, as well as deception plans, and to serve as the conduit through which personnel implemented cover operations. It forged close ties to the Joint Planning Staff, the

Service Ministries, the Secret Services, and the Foreign Office and provided advice about Allied deception policy for the war to the United States and Soviet Union. Negotiations among the Allies resulted in a delegation of power concerning the formation and administration of deception plans. According to Wingate, the agreement became "that the London Controlling Section was responsible for initiating policy and plans in regard to the war against German and Italy and that their counterpart in America, the Joint Security Control, for initiating plans for the war against Japan."[30]

Under the auspices of its new authority, the London Controlling Section concocted and implemented plans to cover the Allied landings in North Africa and schemes intended to limit the number of German forces opposing the Russians on the Eastern Front in 1943. As noted above, following the conclusion of the Teheran Conference, the LCS began to work on an Allied cover plan for 1944 that would include a specific plan to mask Operation Overlord. In order to construct the deception plan, the department reworked Bevan's original plan Jael and renamed it Bodyguard.[31] The process did not prove to be an easy one. The LCS faced a twofold problem. First, the plan had to convince the Germans to reorganize their forces so that few would oppose the Overlord and Anvil landings or the Soviet offensives on the Eastern Front. Second, "the tactical problem was, as soon as our preparations for Overlord and Anvil clearly indicated to the enemy our intention to take a cross-channel operation and an amphibious operation in the Western Mediterranean, to devise tactical cover plans to deceive the enemy as to the strength, objective and timing of Overlord and Anvil."[32] The theater commanders received the charge of using real activities to pin down German forces in southern Germany and northern Italy and false operations in Scandinavia and southeast Europe. This responsibility of the commanders was a carryover from Bevan's original plan. The new plan, however, contained two important features that the original one did not. First, the planners expected the enemy to conclude that the main Russian summer offensive would occur in late June and that Allied forces would not launch Overlord, a subsequent operation, until late summer. Second, the Russians would cooperate in the deceptive assault on Northern Norway (part of Fortitude North, see Chapter Three) and the coast of Bulgaria and Rumania.

Despite the difficulties involved, the London Controlling Section submitted a plan of strategic deception, Bodyguard, to the British Chiefs of Staff within three weeks and received their approval on December 25, 1943. Two days later the British Chiefs of Staff forwarded the plan to Washington for examination. After Washington accepted the plan on January 18, the Combined Chiefs of Staff voted to proceed with Bodyguard.[33] Plan Bodyguard consisted of several parts; the goal of each was to tie down German troops around Europe and to prevent their transfer to the invasion area. While the objective of Bodyguard was to focus German attention away from Normandy, only one operation, Fortitude, had a direct impact on the invasion site. Before examining Fortitude, however, a brief explanation of the entire plan is necessary.

****