

MILITARY DECEPTIONS THROUGHOUT HISTORY – TROJAN HORSE TO GHOST ARMY

Are there any Veterans in the audience? (I raise my hand)

Thank you for your service.

Did any of you have a security clearance while in the service? (raise my hand)

Military security has always been vital to enabling success in a conflict or war. Allowing the enemy to prepare for an encounter would be a sure obstacle to success.

The history of keeping enemies unsure, misinformed, or completely misled goes back to some of the earliest recorded history of armed conflict. One of the largest, and most complex of these efforts during World War II was the operation called Fortitude, the subject of today's presentation. The Ghost Army was the main effort in the operation. Fortitude required complete secrecy and the use of embedded double-agents, misinformation, and reinforcement of any indication that the enemy had accepted the ideas presented. It was part of a broader effort called Operation Bodyguard, designed to conceal the timing, location, and scale of the invasion of western Europe. Bodyguard connected stories that threatened several regions and forced Germany to consider dangers beyond Normandy. The plan sought not only surprise before D Day but also continued hesitation after the first landings. It treated deception as a campaign rather than a single trick. The result was not certainty but managed uncertainty. Germany could not ignore Normandy, yet could not confidently abandon other threatened regions. That divided attention was useful because reserves, transport, and command focus were all limited resources. To return to the historic military secrets of warfare, let's get back to the Trojan Horse.

One of the earliest examples of a military secret is the Trojan Horse. To this day, a Trojan Horse is a term used to describe a devious way of gaining entrance to a secure area. It is applied to software hacks that can take over a user's computer system or even a website. It often appears innocent or even useful, but letting it in can be disastrous. While the existence of the actual Trojan Horse is debatable, or mythical, it is mentioned in Virgil's Aeneid where he recounts how, after a ten-year struggle against the Trojans, the Greeks built the horse and, after putting a group of warriors including Odysseus inside, left it outside the gates of Troy. The Greeks then boarded their ships and sailed away, seemingly abandoning the Battle.

The Trojans took the horse into the city as a trophy signifying their victory.

That night, the Greek army sailed back to the city, the men in the horse then opened the gates and the Greek army entered and ended the war victoriously.

Another early historic resource for military secrecy and deception is Sun Tzu's The Art of War. The saying "Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer" has been used throughout history and is popular even today. Spies, double agents, and moles, are just a few examples of deceptive means of gaining a close-up picture of the enemy.

In modern times, the arts of deception, misinformation, and diversion have become monumental in effort and effect. World War Two provides huge examples of military projects designed to mislead the enemy.

THE COSTS OF WORLD WAR II

The total financial cost of World War II is estimated at \$4.8 trillion in today's dollars, which translates to roughly \$82,051 per U.S. taxpayer and about \$11.8 million per American life lost during the conflict (405,399 U.S. service members). For the United States, defense spending in 1945 alone comprised about 40% of GDP, reflecting the unprecedented mobilization of the economy for war production. Daily expenditures averaged \$3.3 billion per day over the four years of U.S. involvement.

World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, with estimated total deaths ranging from 70 to 85 million people worldwide, including both military personnel and civilians.

Beyond immediate costs, World War II reshaped the global order. The United States emerged as a global superpower, establishing permanent military commitments, overseas bases, and initiating the nuclear arms race. In summary, the cost of World War II encompasses trillions of dollars in expenditure, tens of millions of deaths, and widespread destruction, leaving a legacy that continues to influence global politics, economics, and military strategy today.

SECRECY AND DECEPTION

Ranging in size and scope from Project Mincemeat, which involved the use a corpse in a rubber raft that was ostensibly a government agent who had survived the sinking of a ship, to operations Fortitude and The Ghost Army which were vital to the success of D-Day, the invasion of occupied France which turned the tide for the Allies against the Germans.

To start, let's examine Project Mincemeat, which was a part of the larger Operation Barclay. The project was started as an idea in a memo written by British Rear Admiral John Godfrey, the director of Naval Intelligence, and his assistant Lieutenant Ian Fleming. Prime Minister Winston Churchill approved the plan, as did General

Eisenhower. The plan began by obtaining the body of Glyndwr Michael, a British vagabond who had died from accidental poisoning. They dressed his body as an officer of the Royal Marines and placed items with him that identified him as Captain/acting Major William Martin. The documents included correspondence between two British Generals suggesting that the Royal Marines and allies would invade Greece and Sardinia, with the actual target, Sicily, merely a feint. The body was taken by submarine to the coast of Spain and released close to shore where it was recovered by a Spanish fisherman, who turned the body and documents over to the Spanish Government. The Spanish were supposedly neutral, but they shared the information with German intelligence before returning the documents to Belgium. The British intercepted messages showing that the ruse succeeded. Sicily was liberated more quickly than anticipated, with lower losses than expected.

THE BEGINNING OF FORTITUDE AND THE GHOST ARMY

The self-proclaimed initiator of the idea that became Operation Fortitude was Ralph Ingersoll, a well-known journalist and author. His accomplishments included being editor of the New Yorker, general manager of Time Magazine, and helping launch Life magazine. He met face-to-face with Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill and visited the White House with FDR. When the war broke out, Ingersoll was drafted and earned promotion from being a private to becoming a staff officer. He was stationed in the Operations branch of army headquarters in London. It was here that he became involved with Operation Fortitude. The basic idea was to deceive the Germans into believing that the invasion of France by the Allies would be at the Pas-de-Calais rather than Normandy, and that Normandy was a deception. Ingersoll later wrote that he presented the idea of manufacturing a battalion that could appear to be an entire corps of armor and/or infantry. The battalion was made up by the merger of four existing Companies, a Camouflage Engineering company, two Signal Companies, and a Combat Engineer company. This, plus a headquarters company comprised over eleven hundred personnel. They would emulate approximately thirty thousand men for the deception. The camouflage company would be basic to creating fake vehicles and artillery. The other companies would serve as headquarters, radio communications, support, and sound effects to mimic a large military group. The need to keep the huge operation secret was vital, and secrecy was getting more and more complex.

THE CODE TALKERS

One of the U.S. Army's greatest assets for secrecy involved the use of regular radios among combat units. Often referred to as Walkie Talkies, these simple radios could

easily be monitored by the enemy and the information used to plan attacks or defend against an attack. To get around this weakness, the Army devised a plan that provided a completely unbreakable method of communications over the standard issue radios. The U.S. military turned to an unexpected source to create an unbreakable code. The Navajo people spoke a complex language that few outsiders understood. A group of Navajo soldiers were recruited to develop a code based on the Navajo language. Some of the terms developed include calling a submarine a silver fish, a dive-bomber a chicken hawk, a fighter plane a humming bird, and a patrol plane a crow. The result was a complex code that could not be solved by the enemy. The Navajo Code Talkers and their unbreakable code helped defeat the enemy and enable fast and efficient communications among combat units.

THE ENIGMA MACHINE

The Enigma machine was a keyboard operated encoding device with a row of lights at the top. It was widely available and used for commercial, diplomatic, and military communications. Nazi Germany used it in all branches of their military for even top secret messages. By entering a key word at the top of the machine, any keyboard input would be encoded with the code appearing in the lights adjacent to letters at the top of the machine. Entering the cyphertext would decode it into the original message. All that is needed is the key word and any user can decipher the coded message.

Despite the complexity, Enigma contained design issues that left patterns in the cyphertext. Poland first cracked the machine in 1932 and could read messages prior to the end of the war. They shared the results with the Allies and shortened the war and may have affected the outcome. The Allies used the project which was called Ultra and used it to predict enemy action.

D-DAY

Pas de Calais is in the far north of France and very close to England. It would appear to be a logical site for the Allies to initiate the D-Day landings. The landings would actually take place near Caen in Normandy, which is much further from England. Operation Fortitude was vital in keeping the Nazis from putting all their defenses at the Normandy beaches. It was necessary for the Allies to show the Nazis that the Pas de Calais could or would be the actual destination.

OPERATION FORTITUDE

Prior to the D-Day landings in Normandy, the Allies had been devising and implementing a vast and very complex operation of deception, misdirection, illusions and fabrication to mislead the Nazis about when and where the invasion would take place,

It was obvious to all that the Allies would invade Europe from England and that the invasion would be via the English Channel. The possibilities of exactly where the landings would take place was a definite variable involving possibilities of Normandy, the Pas de Calais, or even the Netherlands or Belgium. Operation Fortitude used controlled agents, radio traffic, physical decoys, bombing of the areas, and creation of a phantom First United States Army Group under the command of General George S. Patton. The goal was to convince, or at least cause the Germans to consider, the possibility that the invasion would take place at the Pas de Calais.

The Dover Strait is the shortest route from England into France and would be well within the range of Allied fighter planes and bombers. This fact was the basis of the formation of the "Ghost Army" near the Dover Strait. The Ghost Army consisted of a unit of over a thousand men capable of impersonating one or two armored or infantry divisions, which was actually more than thirty times larger than the group assembled. They pretended to be deployed and replaced at reasonable intervals to hide that.

One of the biggest efforts involved the creation of an armored division of dummy tanks, trucks, personnel carriers, dummy troops, artillery, and communications centers. Included were many of what would appear to be landing craft for carrying troops ashore. This operation was called Fortitude South. This was realistic enough to convince anyone observing from a distance, or from an airplane, that the army unit was real. Radio messages, and fabricated intelligence reports from double-agent Juan Pujol Garcia, known as Garbo, who led the Nazis to believe that he had a network of agents providing him with a true picture of the invasion preparations. By mixing his reports with true data that was mostly public knowledge anyway, he encouraged the idea that the Pas de Calais was the true invasion site. On D-Day, he told the enemy that Normandy was just a diversion and that Calais was still the target. The axis military kept some of their forces deployed there, which were then not able to confront the allies at Normandy.

When D-Day began, the Ghost Army was deployed to France with their dummy tanks and other equipment. The dummy tanks were put over actual jeeps or other transport and were used to deceive the enemy into believing they were real. This caused the enemy to prepare and divert forces from actual allied units. Many of the operators of the dummy equipment were often in direct confrontation with real enemy forces. They drove east from Paris on the blacked-out roads in a convoy of trucks, half-tracks, and jeeps. On September 15, 1944, the men and equipment of Twenty-third Headquarters Special Troops were moving into position along the Moselle River, just across the river

from the German lines. They were to perform a vital but dangerous mission called Operation Bettembourg which called upon them to put on a show for the German army.

They were to appear to be reinforcing a weak point in the line by pretending to be the Sixth Armored Division with tanks, artillery, and squads of infantry. If the Germans saw through the ploy, the unit had no weapons heavier than fifty caliber machine guns. Everything depended on playing the part convincingly. Otherwise, the Germans could easily break through the line and attack Patton's forces from the rear. The unit was comprised of actors, artists, and builders. After the war, some became famous like Bill Blass, the fashion designer; painter and sculptor Ellsworth Kelly; and artist Arthur Singer. Thirty years after the war, their stories were kept secret.

THE IMPACT OF OPERATION FORTITUDE

The end result of project Fortitude is historically considered a success in that it prevented the Germans from concentrating all their forces at Normandy and causing deployment of forces to deal with the Ghost Army which was moving around to represent an ongoing threat. The forces that remained across from Pas-de-Calais because of the Ghost Army represented significant reduction of forces deployed at Normandy. The D-Day landing was still extremely difficult and costly, but could have been much worse.

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