

MEMORANDUM FOR Faculty Advisor, Group M09, Fort Bliss, TX 79908

SUBJECT: Operation Overlord

1. Thesis Statement. Deception and secrecy ensured Operation Overlord success.
2. Discussion. The invasion of France was an extremely difficult undertaking conducted by the Allies and the results were nothing short of monumental and heroic. Invading France was the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany and brought World War II to an end.
3. Conclusion. D-Day efforts were significantly enhanced by an Allied deception campaign which prevented German knowledge of the exact date, time, and place of the invasion which hastened a quicker end to Nazi Germany and of World War II itself.
4. Counterpoint. Lack of German manpower, equipment, and leader cooperation, not their enemy's deception and secrecy was the key to Allied success at Normandy.
5. Haines Award. We do not request that the Haines Award Selection Board consider this paper for the General Haines Award for Excellence in research. *Writing Research Papers*, Tenth Edition by James D. Lester, is the guide used in the preparation of this research paper.



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Operation Overlord

by

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Base Group M09

18 March 2005

Outline

Thesis: Deception and secrecy ensured Operation Overlord success.

I. Introduction:

A. Good morning/afternoon SGM Adams, fellow M09 classmates. My name is MSG Burd, A Co, USASMA.

B. For approximately the next twenty-five minutes, my classmates and I will deliver an unclassified information briefing.

II. Body:

A. The Misinformation Campaign. (MSG Burd)

B. Overall impact of deception and secrecy on Operation Overlord. (MSG Przybyszewski)

C. Airborne operations. (MSG Lawson)

D. The invasion of France. (MSG Gurrola)

E. Counterpoint. The success of Operation Overlord was due to shortcomings of the German defense. (SGM Lyons)

III. Closing:

A. Summary.

B. Question/Answer session.

C. Conclusion.

Outline

Thesis: The misinformation campaign executed by the Allies prior to the Normandy invasion was critical to the outcome of D-Day.

I. Introduction:

A. Good morning/afternoon SGM Adams, fellow M09 classmates. My name is MSG Burd, A Co, USASMA.

B. For approximately the next five minutes, I will deliver an unclassified information briefing.

II. Body:

A. Planning the invasion.

B. Operation Fortitude.

III. Closing:

A. Summary.

B. Question/Answer session.

C. Conclusion.

Outline

Thesis: Deception and secrecy of Operation Overlord were the key factors not only during the initial invasion, but influenced the entire operation.

I. Introduction:

- A. Greeting - Good morning SGM Adams and fellow classmates M09. My name is MSG Slawomir Przybyszewski and I am a senior instructor of an NCO School.
- B. This is an unclassified information briefing.
- C. Purpose and Scope – The subject of this briefing is impact of deception and secrecy on Normandy Operation. The purpose is to give you a general understanding how initial deception and secrecy of Operation Overlord influenced the entire Normandy war theater. It is also to underscore the importance of deception in any other mission. I will explain how the deception influenced the Operation in days after assault on beaches of Normandy.
- D. Outline of Procedure – during my 5 minutes briefing I will discuss the German assumptions, their troops' deployment, and how it interfere with mission of allied forces. I'll refer to slide show.

II. Body:

- A. German assumptions of Allies operation before landing and perception of the operation during first two weeks of fights.
- B. German force deployment.
- C. Consequences of unfavorable German troop's location (e.g. movement limitations because of Allies air supremacy).
- D. Advantages of German confusion for Allied mission in Normandy.

III. Closing:

- A. Summary – In summary, for approximately the last 5-minutes I have discussed the impact of deception on allied forces operation in Normandy and display possible outcomes of appropriate use of German forces.
- B. Questions?

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C. In conclusion the knowledge I delivered may help you with understanding the decisive role of deception and secrecy in Normandy Operation as well as any other should you take part in.

Outline

Thesis: Our element of surprise was the means of our arrival into Normandy, done by air during hours of limited visibility. Rehearsals and detailed preparations were done to ensure that everyone knew the mission.

I. Introduction:

A. Greeting - SGM Adams and fellow classmates M09, good morning. My name is MSG Cliff Lawson and for approximately the next 5-minutes I will be giving you an unclassified information brief on the Airborne Operations during WWII.

B. Type and classification of briefing – this is an unclassified information brief

C. Purpose and Scope – The purpose of this brief is to give you a general understanding of the units that participated in the airborne assault (Operation Overlord) beginning the liberation of France. I will discuss the American and allied forces training and preparations, give a brief overview of the equipment and personnel, discuss in detail the airborne units chief objectives during the airborne assault Operation Overlord.

D. Outline of Procedure – during my briefing I will discuss the mission background, training and preparation, initial unit involvement, airborne assault, summary, questions, and conclusion

II. Body:

A. Explain the training and preparation required to conduct the airborne operations.

B. General overview of the equipment used, and number of personnel.

C. Discuss in detail by unit (82nd, 101st, 325th GIF, and the British 6th Airborne) chief objectives.

D. Identify and explain the drop zone planned locations versus actual, impact the weather had on the operation, significance of the airborne assault and the outcome.

III. Closing:

A. Summary – In summary, for approximately the last 5-minutes I have discussed the training and preparation, general overview of equipment and personnel, initial airborne units involved, the airborne assault objectives of the individual unit's and the outcome of Operation Overlord.

B. Questions?

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C. Conclusion – In closing with this brief that you have received on the initial airborne operations into Occupied France you should have a better understanding of not only the assault of our forces but the overall mission. As future CSM it will give us a better understanding of the sacrifices made during the airborne operations to liberate Occupied France beginning the demise of Nazi Germany.

Outline

Thesis: Assault on the beaches of Normandy.

I. Introduction:

A. Greeting - SGM Adams and fellow classmates M09, good morning. My name is MSG George Gurrola and for approximately the next 5-minutes I will be giving you an unclassified information brief on the assault on the beaches of Normandy during WWII.

B. Type and classification of briefing – this is an unclassified information brief

C. Purpose and Scope – The purpose of this brief is to give you a general understanding of the units that participated on the assault that was the beginning of the liberation of France. I will discuss the American and allied forces and the sequence of events from the rally point in the English Channel up to the individual unit's initial objectives during the beach assault.

D. Outline of Procedure – during my briefing I will discuss the mission, geographical location/overview, phases of the operation for each unit, assault objectives, summary, questions, and conclusion

II. Body:

A. Explain the overall mission of the units that participated on the beach assault of Normandy.

B. General overview of the geographical area of operation, from the rally point in the English Channel up to their objectives on the beaches of Normandy.

C. Discuss the phases of the operation in general terms to understand better the overall objective. Each unit had a different role and mission but the objective was to liberate France.

D. Explain the beaches (Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword) and the units (1st ID, 4th ID, 29th ID, 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions, British 3rd ID and 50th ID, and the Canadian 3rd ID) and their respective missions during Operation Overlord.

III. Closing:

A. Summary – In summary, for approximately the last 5-minutes I have discussed the American and allied forces and the sequence of events from the rally point in the English Channel up to the individual unit's initial objectives during the beach assault.



B. Questions?

C. Conclusion – In closing with this brief that you have received on the assaults beaches of Normandy you should have a better understanding of not only the assault of our forces but the overall mission. As future CSM it will give us a better understanding of the importance during this operation and the sacrifice that our comrades faced when our nation called on them. I hope that each and every one of you gets the opportunity to visit this historic site in northern France.

Outline

Thesis: Lack of German manpower, equipment, and leader cooperation, not their enemy's deception and secrecy was the key to Allied success at Normandy.

I. Introduction:

A. Greeting. Good morning, SGM Adams and M09, I am SGM Lyons of USASMA Class 55.

B. Type and Classification of Briefing. For approximately the next five minutes I will be giving you an unclassified information briefing.

C. Purpose and Scope. The purpose of this brief is to provide a counterpoint to my groups theory of the battle of Normandy. I will show that the overwhelming success of "Operation Overlord" was due to shortcomings of the German defense.

D. Outline or Procedure. During my brief, I will discuss the lack of a unified plan of action, strategy failure, and improperly used forces on the Germans part, much of which can be attributed to a failure of intelligence.

II. Body:

A. Hitler and his top commanders disagreed on the defense strategy, which weakened their response.

B. Strategic failure went unrecognized by some for too long.

C. The failure and lack of cooperation in strategy resulted in improperly used troops.

D. Much of this can be attributed to a deliberate intelligence overestimate of allied forces available in England.

III. Closing.

A. In summary, during the past approximately five minutes, I have discussed the Germans lack of a unified plan of action, strategy failure, improperly used forces, and intelligence failures to show that "Operation Overlord" could have been repulsed by the Nazis even though Allied deception and secrecy went as planned.

B. Are there any questions?

C. If there are no further questions, _____ will follow me.

Deception and secrecy ensured Operation Overlord success. All of Europe was aware that the Anglo-American armies were preparing to invade the continent. What only a few top Allied leaders knew was when and where they would do so. An absolute prerequisite of Operation Overlord was to achieve surprise (Ambrose 39). The actual invasion, scheduled, as Churchill said, “mainly by the moon and the weather,” did not take place until June 6, 1944. The Germans, deceived by elaborate stratagems, did not expect an attack in Normandy (Blum 691-694).

Behind the astonishing success of D-Day was the most sophisticated deception scheme ever devised. Operation BODYGUARD, the Allied strategic deception plan for the Normandy landings, was one of the most successful operations in the history of warfare. The BODYGUARD deception plan was used to help force and exploit gaps in the German defenses, paving the way for the historic success of the actual invasion. Its codename was FORTITUDE, and its objective was to persuade the enemy that the long-awaited landings would take place in the Pas de Calais, and that any attack in Normandy would be nothing more than a diversionary feint that could be safely ignored. So effective was this scheme that, for six weeks after the landings, Hitler still believed that the main attack was to come in the Pas de Calais (MacDonald 132). Strategic deception is now recognized as an essential component of any major military undertaking, and without exception the textbooks agree that the ingenious scheme, dreamed up to mislead the enemy over the long-expected invasion of Europe in 1944, was the most successful ever executed (Hesketh x).

The decision to invade France in 1944 was made at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943. FORTITUDE was the cover plan carried out in support of the invasion. The objects of this cover plan thereafter became and remained:

- (a) To induce the German Command to believe that the main assault and follow-up would 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 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 land and air forces in or east of the Pas de Calais for at least fourteen days (Hesketh 11-12).

The result would be that Hitler would keep his best units in readiness stationed in and around Calais, hopefully until the end of July, while the fate of the war was being decided in Normandy.

It was agreed, however, to appoint the British LTG Frederic Morgan as Chief of General Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC) designate to make a detailed plan for a full-scale assault on Occupied France. Morgan's scheme for an attack through Normandy beginning on 1 May 1944, codename 'OVERLORD', was approved at the planning conference held in August 1943 in Quebec. In December that year GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed as the leader of Allied Expeditionary Force. The COSSAC assault plan was developed by Eisenhower and Montgomery as they both agreed that the plan was too weak.

On the evening of 5 June the Germans became confused as they had heard the BBC broadcast two lines from Paul Verlaine's poem 'Chanson d'Automne' and correctly identified them as the signal to the French Resistance that the invasion was imminent; yet the weather was so bad that such an attack seemed inconceivable. Rommel certainly thought so, for he decided to take leave to visit his wife. Moreover, the Allied invasion came at a moment when most of the senior German commanders were absent from their posts. In addition to Rommel, both the Seventh Army commander, Dollman, and the 1st SS Panzer Corps commander, Dietrich, were

away from Normandy. FORTITUDE, a massive deception plan was working. By 0300 on June 6 the Seventh Army Chief of Staff, Generalmajor Max Pesmel, had correctly diagnosed that a major invasion had commenced and was concerted in the Caen and Carentan areas. The German Supreme Command in the West, at Field Marshal Gerard Rundstedt's OB West in Paris and at Rommel's Army Group B in La Roche Guyon, was not convinced that this was anything more than the adversary operation long expected in Seventh Army's area prior main effort against the Fifteenth German Army in the Pas de Calais. News of the Allied landings was passed to Hitler's OKW but critical hours were lost when Hitler's Chief of Operations, General Alfred Jodl refused to awaken him. Hitler did not learn of the invasion until midday on 6 June.

At noon on D-Day FORTITUDE deceptionists received a healthy boost from an unexpected source – Foreign Army West, Colonel Alexis von Roenne's intelligence branch in the OKW. In his bulletin to the fuehrer, von Roenne painted an Allied strategic picture that dovetailed precisely with Hitler's own views: "While the Anglo-Saxon landing on the coast of Normandy represent large scale operations, the forces employed comprise only relatively small portion of the available enemy divisions. Of the 90 [divisions] in southern England only 1 to 10, including airborne troops, appear to be participating so far." Von Roenne concluded his D-Day assessment by declaring: "This suggests that the enemy is planning a further large-scale operation in the Channel area, which one would expect to be aimed at the Pas de Calais."

For the Germans, D-Day ended as it had begun – in confusion and uncertainty. German broadcast commentators provided tangible evidence that Adolf Hitler and his high command had swallowed the Bodyguard bait: that Normandy was but a large-scale diversion. LTG Kurt Ditmar, a foremost Reich military analyst, said: "It may be taken for granted that the size of

Montgomery's forces already operating in Normandy coast are only a fraction of the Allied divisions held in reserve in England."

The key to success of Operation in Normandy was to keep the first-rate Fifteenth Army, and reserves of Seventh Army still away from the landing theater in Normandy.

Although BODYGUARD had been highly instrumental in catching the Wehrmacht off guard, the Germans were resisting in most locales with typical tenacity. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, who had returned from his home in Herrlingen, Ulm, had in northern France nearly 1 million men and some 1,500 panzers. If he could concentrate forces to mount a full-blooded counterattack, the invaders might be hurled back into sea.

On 7 June the Allies learned that the Panzer Lehr, 12th SS, and 21st Panzer Division were released to Rommel and they were already pushing up toward the Normandy front. Other German formations, including paratroop and panzer, were heading toward the beachhead from Brittany and central France. An all-out effort was launched by the Allies to halt the flow toward the battleground of these German reinforcements. BODYGUARD connivances were employed to slow down them as well. In the dark hours of 7 June, Erwin Rommel's HQ received an urgent bulletin from the field saying that three hundred Allied transport planes had dropped hundred of paratroopers about seven miles east of Saint-Lo. Rommel immediately sent orders for units, which were on the way from Brittany to Omaha Beach, to rush instead to the drop site and wipe out the Allied paratroop force. After losing 48 hours in their trek to Omaha, they discovered that the large parachute force was actually a few score Titanic rubber dummies that that had been dropped by three transports, not 300 of them. It was another achievement of the deception operation which prevented Germans from strengthening forces resisted to the landing. Thanks to Operation FORTITUDE the German units were spread from Belgium to southern France with its

biggest concentration in area of most expected landing operation – Pas de Calais. Even under normal conditions, it would take a week to reach Normandy. But stalled repeatedly by the heavy blows they were receiving, it would take three weeks for the trek. The only reinforcements available to Rommel that could reach Normandy in time to have an impact on the raging battle were forces of Fifteenth Army basing along Pas de Calais.

Consequently, Allied deceptionists spun a web of machinations that were intended to be viewed by the Wehrmacht as identical to the genuine activities conducted just prior to the Normandy operation.

Colonel John Turner's camouflage magicians discreetly illuminated with dim lights the ports of southern England to convey to Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircrafts that ships were being combat-loaded at night. To mask these nonexistent troop embarkation operations from prying Luftwaffe eyes in daylight, ships laid thick smokescreens along Dover coast. Minesweepers, escorted by PT boats, churned out of harbors and went through the motions of clearing paths through the minefields in front of Calais and Boulogne.

To enforce these deceptions, Brutus, one of the Double-Cross' first violins, radioed an urgent signal to an Abwehr controller in Paris. He said that he had seen "with my own eyes the Army Group Patton embarking" in south-eastern England. Patton had at least 50 divisions in his force, Brutus added, with five of them being airborne.

Early on the morning of June 9 both von Rundstedt and Rommel desperately were pleading with General Jodl for the fuehrer to release the Fifteenth Army sitting idle in the Pas de Calais. It would be never clear who issued the order, but the Fifteenth Army was turned over to Rommel, and elements began rolling toward Normandy that same afternoon.

In the meantime, in support of Brutus' message on the previous day, Garbo dispatched a lengthy summary of Allied intentions to General Erich Kuhlenthal, the Abwehr official in Madrid. That note reported a large concentration of U.S. armor still being held in the area of Liverpool, 35 divisions awaiting orders in Scottish lowlands and elements of about 20 divisions traveled by train 15 miles south of York.

The same day von Roenne severely criticized the release of the Fifteenth Army for the Normandy front, stressing that he had high-grade information that the enemy was about to launch a large-scale operation from southern England.

The Fuehrer at his midnight conference on June 9 – 10, perhaps influenced by the FORTITUDE ploys of the past three days, ordered the Fifteenth Army to halt its move to Normandy and to remain in the Pas de Calais. Presence of the powerful Army in counter-operation might tip the scales in favor of the Germans. When Field marshals von Rundstedt and Rommel received Hitler's order before dawn, each knew that the Battle of Normandy – and perhaps the war – had been lost.

A distraught Erwin Rommel confided to his wife in a letter that he was losing the equivalent of a regiment a day. Gasoline, oil, and ammunition storages began to plague him. Because of BODYGUARD intrigues, most of these battlefield necessities were stored in the Pas de Calais.

The frustration among German commanders grew with every day. Hitler and his OKW still succumbed to Allied deception operation. Rundstedt and Blumentritt said that after about a fortnight they came to conclusion that the expected second landing east of the Seine was not coming, but Hitler's headquarters were still convinced it was, and were reluctant to let them

move forces westward to Normandy from the Calais area. Nor they were allowed to reshuffle their forces in Normandy as they wished.

On July 24, with a large beachhead area secure, the Normandy campaign officially ended. Operation Cobra would be next.

Ultra intercepts made known that Field Marshal von Kluge had felt convinced that the British at Caen would make the looming maximum effort to break out of Normandy, and he deployed most of his panzer formations in that sector, some 50 miles east of where Cobra would strike. Allied deceptionists reinforced von Kluge's tactical viewpoint by a series of ploys. British and American warships were sent into the waters of Le Havre, east of Caen. As anticipated, this maneuver was promptly reported to German intelligence. The Allies also greatly increased air reconnaissance in the vicinity of Caen, a telltale factor also noted by the Wehrmacht. A rash of French underground sabotage actions suddenly erupted along the northern coast of France, and German intelligence was fed clues that indicated large Allied airborne force were preparing to land behind German lines near Caen.

Seventy-two hours after the Cobra rocket swooshed through the huge gap in the German lines, a cohesive front no longer existed in Normandy. Early in the morning of July 29, von Kluge was on the telephone to General Jodl at Wolfsschanze crying "everything here is one hell of mass."

That afternoon Adolf Hitler finally realized that the Patton-McNair-deWitt army group in southern England was a monumental fraud and that no more Channel landing would be made by the Allies. FORTITUDE had finally worn thin. So, nearly eight weeks after D-Day, Hitler authorized von Kluge to pull divisions from Fifteenth Army in the Pas de Calais and rush them to help stem the American tidal wave. It was too little and too late.

Operation FORTITUDE had three main divisions: FORTITUDE NORTH was the threat of a Norway invasion with a follow-up assault of Germany through Denmark. FORTITUDE SOUTH was a fictitious invasion effort directed against coastal Belgium and northern France in the Pas de Calais area. FORTITUDE SOUTH II was radio deception after D-Day to convince the Germans that June 6 was only a feint and that the real invasion was yet to come.

FORTITUDE NORTH threatened a notional combined Anglo-American and Russian invasion of Norway (Hesketh 63). It served to fix the strong German forces to the north, and divert both attention and resources away from the actual landings. The German garrison in Norway was indeed quite powerful. One hundred and fifty thousand of the 464,000 German troops stationed in Norway were surplus, held up away from France under the threat of this notional northern invasion (Hunt 46). Also fixed in place were a Panzer division, a large air force, and over 1,500 coastal defense guns (Brown 462).

FORTITUDE SOUTH dealt with invading across the Pas de Calais. The German High Command deemed it unlikely that a massive sea-borne invasion force would cross anywhere except the shortest possible route, that being the 22 miles of water known as Pas de Calais, or the Straits of Dover. It was therefore logical to assume that Hitler would concentrate his defensive efforts in this area. If he could be convinced that this was the actual invasion site, dual benefits would be derived: (1) powerful defensive resources would be fixed there, away from the actual invasion; (2) the actual invasion could be masked as a diversion (Haswell 34).

The creation of First US Army Group (FUSAG), code named QUICKSILVER, was no small effort. It was the largest, most elaborate, most carefully-planned, most vital, and most successful of all the Allied deception operations. It made full use of the years of experience gained in every branch of the deceptive art -- visual deception and misdirection, the deployment

of dummy landing craft, aircraft, and paratroops fake lighting schemes, radio deception, sonic devices, and ultimately a whole fictitious army group (Daniel 226). It consisted of 50 divisions totaling over one million men. While General Montgomery's 21st Army Group and General Bradley's 12th were massing in southern England for the actual invasion, the Germans were led to believe that a third huge force was assembling for an attack against Calais. This played right into Hitler's hands. Since he believed a cross-channel attack would occur at the narrowest point, he stationed his strongest Western force there, the 15th Army (Brown 461). The objective of QUICKSILVER was to keep threatening Calais with FUSAG thereby passing the Normandy attack off as a diversion, and fixing the 15th in place well north of the actual invasion.

The success of FORTITUDE SOUTH was overwhelming. The Germans did not shift any of the 18 divisions of their 15th Army during the week of June 6, 1944, as the Allies secured their beachhead and broke out to sweep across Europe (Hunt 45).

Between FORTITUDE NORTH and FORTITUDE SOUTH, powerful German combat forces, capable of smashing an invasion, were fixed out of place for several weeks. German forces north of the Seine, away from the actual landing sites, were actually stronger in July than they had been on D-Day, one month prior. Movements of any significance did not occur until after the Allied breakout from their beachhead, when the Battle of Normandy was already lost for the Germans (Hunt 45).

FORTITUDE SOUTH II was intended to convince the Germans that the Normandy invasion was only a diversion for the actual assault that was to take place on about D-Day + 45 at the Pas de Calais coast. It involved the wireless communications of FUSAG to support its notional order of battle. This radio traffic and order of battle were supported by over 260 dummy landing craft, meant to be "discovered" by German intelligence.

Eisenhower decided that the airborne units would go in first the night before the invasion under a full moon. Preparations began on the 2nd of June, but a powerful storm arrived on the 4th of June, causing a 24-hour postponement. Later on the 4th, a break in the weather was forecasted for the 6th - at which time Eisenhower gave the go ahead for the invasion.

Starting at around 11 PM on June 5th, approximately 13,000 American parachutists would descend upon the peninsula via hundreds of twin-engine C-47s. The C-47 was a DC-3 aircraft that held 18 parachutists (known as a "stick" to the men). At the low speed of 120 mph, the flight would take them over an hour. The parachutists were weighed down with nearly their body weight in equipment and weapons. They would be prepared as much as possible since they would be dropping behind enemy lines - cutoff from the invading force. Whatever weapons they would fight with would be carried on their backs or strapped to their harnesses. The exception to this would be the artillery battalion of twelve 75 mm howitzers which would accompany the division. Later, heavy mortars and heavier anti-tank weapons could be brought in by glider. In any case, there was no guarantee that the parachutist would form up with his unit once after he left the plane - if at all.

The planes took off and flew at 500 feet for half an hour to avoid detection by German radar. After a slight ascent to make landfall and to avoid the AAA guns, the final approach would be at 700 feet. Meteorologists had called for a calm night and nearly the entire flight was without incident. But, as the flights approached the coast of France, they encountered a cloud bank that dispersed many of the planes...only a few minutes before the drop zone. Between the chaotic mess that followed the dispersal and the enemy flak, several planes were damaged or destroyed...along with numerous injured parachutists. In addition, because of flak, many pilots increased their speed and varied their altitude dramatically. Despite these dangerous conditions,

the green light was given for the crew to jump. Aircraft speeds had reached as high as 150 mph (normal jump speed was 90 mph) - which led to numerous injuries.

At 700 feet, the descent took less than one minute. By this time, German flak artillery and AAA were shooting at anything in the sky...including the parachutists themselves. Many were hit on their way down or drowned upon landing in the flooded plains of the Douve and Merderet rivers. Although the plains were mostly only 2 to 3 feet deep, the weight of the men, in conjunction with the dragging of the parachute could easily prove fatal. In contrast, unopened chutes among the Americans were very uncommon with their static-line parachutes. In addition, the Americans carried a reserve chute just in case.

In preparation for the invasion of Normandy, there were a total of 4 ready airborne divisions in England during the spring of 1944:

U.S. 82nd (All-American)

U.S. 101st (Screaming Eagles)

British 6th

British 1st

The first three units were given the missions of securing the eastern and western flanks of the beachhead by destroying bridges and laying mines. Their main mission was to allow for the main invasion force to come ashore without the immediate threat of German flank attacks. They were tasked to destroy bridges where the enemy was likely to stage a counterattack, and to secure bridges where Allied forces were expected to immediately go on the offensive.

The US 82nd Airborne Division's mission was to protect the far right flank of the invasion in the Cotentin peninsula. It hoped to accomplish this by destroying bridges over the Douve River and by securing the Merderet River by occupying both sides. It also had the

mission to capture Ste. Mere-Eglise from the German garrison stationed there. The capture of Ste. Mere-Eglise was important because it straddled the main road between Carentan and Cherbourg.

The US 101st Airborne Division's mission was to secure four exits across the marshland near the coast for the invading US 4th Infantry Division at Utah beach. These causeways needed to be secured because on each side of the exits, it was flooded several feet deep in places. The 101st also were tasked to destroy two bridges over the Douve and to capture the La Barquette lock just north of Carentan. The lock controlled the water height of the flooded areas and it was essential that it be captured.

The British 6th Airborne Division was to land Northeast of Caen and secure the left flank of the invasion force by controlling bridges over the Orne Canal and River. The left flank of the invasion force was much more vulnerable to German armored attack since the 21st Panzer was stationed just outside of Caen and the 12th SS Panzer miles to the east. Potentially, if the Panzer Divisions were not stopped by the British 6th, they could attack Sword and the rest of the landing beaches.

Ste Mere-Eglise stood in a pivotal location between Cherbourg and Caen whose capture fell to the 82nd Airborne. Unfortunately, sections of two planeloads of parachutists (2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 505th Parachute Infantry) were dropped directly over the village. To make the decent even worse, a farmhouse had caught fire either from tracers or the preceding aerial bombardment and illuminated the entire surrounding sky - making perfect targets out of the descending paratroopers. Many were killed on their way down, at least two were drawn into the fire itself, and many more were killed by the Germans after becoming entangled in trees and roofs. The few who did make it alive to the ground were almost immediately taken prisoner.

After the initial excitement, curiously, the Germans went back to bed after the immediate threat subsided.

The commander of 3rd Battalion, 505th, Lt. Col. Ed Krause, had landed one mile west of the village and quickly began gathering stray men. Within an hour, he had managed to round up around 180 men and began heading straight into the village. As mentioned above, after all the immediate paratroopers were either killed or captured, and the fire had been put out, the German garrison went back to bed. Krause entered the town unhindered and was shown the German billets by a local Frenchman whom they ran across. 30 Germans were captured and about 10 were killed - while others fled to the nearby woods. By 6 A.M. Krause had secured the village and thus, cut off German communication and the main route between Cherbourg and the rest of the German Army.

At 3:00 A.M., the gliders carrying heavier equipment (jeeps and antitank guns) and reinforcements began to arrive in the area. The paratroopers who had landed earlier were able to secure the immediate area for landing, but were unable to silence the German anti-aircraft. As a result, the tow planes were forced to climb and release at a higher altitude - making the gliders even more vulnerable. No one had seemed to take into account the enormous hedgerows in the countryside and factor this into the glider landings. As a result, glider casualties were extremely high as they landed. In addition, the glider troops were also lost when they landed in most cases.

Units were finding themselves scattered all over the Cotentin Peninsula. In almost every case, several hours were spent just trying to find out where they were and to find others in the same Battalion or even Regiment. In some cases, contact with other friendly units was not made for days. Commanders who had landed in the drop were forced to gather any men they could find on their way to their objective - in the dark. Teams that had formed to blow up

communication centers or bridges found themselves without the necessary equipment because either it or the men carrying it were lost. About 60 percent of the equipment dropped was either lost by falling into swamps or into enemy-controlled areas.

Of course, trees, buildings, anti-glider poles and other obstacles lent to a large number of injuries. But, many were injured from the impact of the landing itself - which resulted in usually sprains and broken legs. But, by far, the potentially most dangerous situation arose from the unexpected turbulence and the resulting dispersal of the units.

In most cases, the American objectives of the airborne units had not been secured by dawn (the time the invasion force would be coming). But, the unintended effect of the wide dispersal of the paratroopers was to lend great confusion to the German command. The German command could not determine where the Americans were concentrated (they in fact weren't) and what their objectives were to be. The French resistance had cut so many telephone lines that German HQ could not determine the full extent of the invasion. More importantly, the Germans could not determine whether or not if this airborne invasion was the real invasion or just a diversionary tactic. To add to the German confusion, all of the High German commanders were not present in the local area, but were away attending a map exercise in Rennes to the south.

Operation Overlord began with the invasion of northern France to liberate northwest Europe from Hitler's fortress. This was a success to many of the leaders that took action during WWII but to others that see the numbers of lives that were sacrificed do not believe the same. This liberation took many units to make it a success; it wouldn't have been possible without the determination of all the young men who fought for liberty.

The 4th Infantry Division (I.D.) was a regular Army division that arrived in England in January 1944 to train and prepare for the cross-channel invasion. The 4th was assigned to

conduct the initial D-Day landings on Utah Beach at the western most end of the invasion area on the Cotentin Peninsula.

The 4th I.D. had surprisingly little difficulty in the initial assault, taking only light casualties and quickly gaining a foothold. The assault forces had erroneously landed some 2,000 yards south of the intended beach, but this mistake proved valuable because much stronger German defenses were in position at the designated landing site. Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Assistant Commander of the 4th I.D., made the decision to continue the landing where it was and quickly led the forces off the beach. Roosevelt had volunteered to lead the first wave of the assault force and proved to be an inspiration to the troops on D-Day with his gallant conduct. His actions that day, improvising and leading an attack out of the unexpected locale, earned him The Medal of Honor.

After gaining control of the beaches, the 4th I.D. lead regiment crossed the flooded areas on existing causeways and moved west to establish contact with the airborne units. Follow-on forces attacked northwest to enlarge the beachhead. By dusk most of the Division had gotten ashore and pushed some 4 to 7 miles inland. The next day, the 4th I.D. broke through to Sainte-Mère-Église and relieved elements of the 82nd Airborne Division.

The 4th I.D. had been the first unit to land and cross the Normandy Beaches. It had also made the largest gains of the attacking forces on D-Day while suffering only light casualties. The seizure of the westward invasion area was crucial in the success of Operation Overlord and enabled the American forces to subsequently take the entire Cotentin Peninsula by the end of June.

The Allied assault plan designated the 1st Infantry Division (I.D.), together with the 29th Infantry Division (I.D.), plus the 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions as Force "O" for the initial

attacks on Omaha Beach. These units comprised the 1st Division for the assault. On D-Day morning, the 1st I.D. came ashore on the eastern sectors of the beach. The two Ranger battalions, formed in a provisional force, assailed the bluffs on the west end of the sector. Three companies of this Ranger force assaulted the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc, three miles west of Omaha Beach. Their assignment was to neutralize the powerful artillery guns atop the point which could give devastating fire to the invasion forces on both Omaha and Utah Beaches.

The assault units on Omaha Beach immediately ran into intense and devastating fire from the German forces on the high bluffs which dominated the entire beach. Casualties in the initial assault wave were high and it appeared the assault might flounder. Many units suffered losses of over 60% and could do nothing but seek cover. Many landing craft did not make it to their assigned beach sectors, unloading wherever they happened to land. Communication equipment had been lost or destroyed; therefore contact outside the beach was not possible. General Omar Bradley, Commander of the American assault forces, even thought of diverting follow-up units to Utah Beach. On the beach men were confused and many of the junior and senior officers had been killed or wounded, some before they loaded the LCA.

At about 1130 hours, General Bradley received a report that the deadlock had been broken and the troops were moving inland where most of the 1st I.D. had made it ashore. The "Big Red One" still had plenty of resistance to deal with but by the end of the day it had helped secure a hold on "Hitler's Fortress Europe." The devastation on "Bloody Omaha" was appalling but the 1st I.D., together with the other units on Omaha Beach, had done their job. The success of Operation Overlord had been assured.

The British 50th Infantry Division was given the task of assaulting Gold Beach on the morning of 6 June 1944. Primary objectives of the unit for D-Day were to cut the Caen-Bayeux

highway, capture the small port of Arromanches, link-up with the Americans from Omaha Beach to the west, and hook-up with the Canadians to the east as they pushed inland from Juno Beach. Another extremely important objective was the seizure of the coastal battery at Longues.

On D-Day morning, initial waves of the British 50th Infantry Division (I.D.) touched down at approximately 0725 hours, the appointed H-Hour for Gold Beach. The tide had already covered many of the outer beach obstacles and several of the initial landing craft struck mines that were attached to them. Hostile fire hampered demolition personnel as they worked to clear the barriers, but the landings continued in force. Fortunately, pre-invasion bombardment on Gold Beach had wrought great damage on many of the German strong points and the troops were able to gain a quick foothold. Savage fighting ensued near the villages of La Riviere and Le Hamel, but by mid-afternoon the British were pushing toward the south and gaining ground toward Bayeux. The 155mm guns of the Longues battery had been put out of action in a fierce duel with a cruiser while British troops eliminated resistance in that sector.

By nightfall on 6 June, approximately 25,000 troops had landed on Gold Beach. The British 50th I.D. had made impressive gains and forged a beachhead nearly 6 miles deep. The unit had also made contact with the Canadians from Juno Beach and found itself poised to take Bayeux. British casualties on Gold Beach were approximately 400 by the end of the day.

Operation OVERLORD called for the Canadian 3rd Infantry Division (I.D.) to be the assault division on Juno Beach, the 6-mile long beach that lay between Gold and Sword Beaches. H-Hour at Juno was set for 0745 hours which would give the landing craft enough clearance to make it in on the rising tide. Juno Beach had been divided into two main sectors. D-Day objects for the Canadians were to cut the Caen-Bayeux road, seize the airport west of Caen, and make contact with forces from both Sword and Gold Beaches.

Actual landings began at 0755 hours due in part to rough seas. The Canadians faced a tough ride in and the delay gave the tide extra time to move further in. Coxswains had to steer their landing craft through the partially obscured German obstacles and many hit mines that exploded, taking a heavy toll on the attackers. Approximately 30% of the landing craft at Juno were destroyed or damaged. Many of the first wave units took heavy casualties from enfilading fire on the beaches. They were hit hard and one company sustained more than 50% casualties. Determination and resilience carried the Canadians forward and by the middle of the day, units had secured the coastal towns of Bernieres and Saint-Aubin. By late afternoon, armored units forced their way to the Caen-Bayeux road, securing one of the Canadians most important objectives.

The fighting on Juno had been extremely tough, but the hard-charging Canadians pushed their way through. By nightfall a link-up to the west with the British 50th I.D. had been achieved. There was still a 2-mile gap to the east in the direction of Sword Beach however and elements of the German 21st Panzer Division advanced in this area before being beaten back. By this time, the Allies had secured themselves a small, but solid foothold in Normandy. D-day losses on Juno Beach amounted to approximately 1200 out of the 21,000 plus that landed there on the 6th of June.

The British 3rd Infantry Division (I.D.) was given the task of attacking Sword Beach, the five-mile stretch of beach that ran eastward from town of Lion-sur-Mer to the city of Ouistreham. This area was studded with vacation homes and dwellings located behind a large seawall. Nine miles behind Sword Beach lay the important city of Caen, a primary objective of the Allied Forces. All of the major roads in this sector of the invasion front ran through Caen, making the city a key for both the Allies and the Germans. Also, the River Orne and Caen Canal

ran southward from the eastern edge of the sector. Two strategically important bridges over these waterways were to be taken by units from the British 6th Airborne Division. Link-up with the airborne troopers was another primary objective of the 3rd I.D.

The units from the 3rd I.D. with attached British and French commandos, touched down on Sword Beach at 0725 hours on the morning of 6 June. Scattered resistance met the troops as they came ashore. In some sectors the fire was intense; in others it was more moderate. Quick advances were made inland by 1300 hours. Later in the afternoon, units from the 21st Panzer Division, one of the few German panzer divisions in the invasion area, launched counterattacks against the 3rd. The Germans were eventually able to penetrate to the beach but were quickly beaten back with anti-tank weapons, air strikes, and Allied tanks.

By the end of the day, approximately 29,000 troops had made it ashore on Sword Beach with the cost of 630 casualties. The link-up with the 6th Airborne had solidified the eastern flank of the invasion area, although the important city of Caen was still in German hands. The town fell in early July, after an extensive and costly campaign.

Roosevelt, Marshall, Eisenhower, Churchill, and Montgomery were masters in communication who bonded a coalition into an extraordinary Allied force. The planning that the staff had prepared, failed to see many of the circumstances that occur on the battlefield but it was still a masterpiece that led the Commanders on the ground to adapt and overcome challenges that were anticipated during all the preparation. In the end, it was the infantrymen who were heroes and who rose to every challenge that lay ahead of them, setting aside fear and fatigue. Their success was second to none.

Although deception and secrecy played an important part in the success of Operation Overlord, other factors directly affecting the German defenses became the real key to Allied

success. German forces in the field suffered from a distinct disadvantage in numbers, conflicting strategies with their leaders, and poor planning for defending invasion.

When preparing for the Normandy invasion Germany had several manpower disadvantages. In late spring of 1944, the German Army had 314 divisions 47 of which were armored, plus 66 divisions of their various allies. Of these, 215 were engaged on the Eastern Front and another 96 divided between the Balkans, Scandinavia and Italy. Between April and December 1943, Hitler had transferred twenty-seven first-rate divisions from France to other fronts. This left only 61 divisions, 11 armored, in France and only 38 infantry and 10 armored near the coast to defend against the Allied assault. To make matters worse the Allies enjoyed overwhelming air power and had little to worry about from the German Navy. The Luftwaffe in France mustered only 160 serviceable aircraft and Kriegsmarine only a few destroyers E-boats and U-boats in the channel. The Wehrmacht and Waffen SS best units were being consumed at an appalling rate on the Russian front. Across Europe 900,000 Germans were struggling to combat the Allied air war manning observation posts, radar stations and gun batteries. Along the Atlantic seawall, much of the defenses consisted of little more than light static outposts with routine patrols. Upon arriving in the area in late 1944 Field Marshal Erwin Rommel also discovered the coast was very poorly fortified due to years of neglect except for the fortified ports and estuaries.

Strategy conflicts of their leaders for the defense of Western Europe also hindered the German effort to repel the invasion forces. Because there was no single supreme German commander in the west, there was no unified plan to defend an invasion.

Field Marshal Rommel and his Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt had very different views on how to repel the invaders, especially concerning the use of the

panzer divisions. Having gained experience in North Africa against the Western Alliance, Rommel concluded a need to destroy the invasion on the beaches. He had witnessed their air superiority and seemingly endless material reserves as well as skillful command capability. He had also seen the Americans mature rapidly after the battle at Kasserine.

Of greatest concern to Rommel was the placement of the mobile reserves of panzer and panzer-grenadier divisions that would form the counter-attack forces. He desired the armored reserves delegated to him and moved to tactical assembly areas behind the most threatened zones. Based on previous experience he concluded the first 24 hours of the invasion would be decisive and he could not afford delay in the deployment of those forces. Any enemy toehold on the European coastline could be consolidated with Allied combat power far exceeding his buildup capability, particularly if they properly used their air power.

Field Marshal von Runstedt however, endorsed the strategy of flexible defense preferred by his Panzer Group West commander, General Geyr von Scheppenberg. He wanted his armored divisions grouped back from the coast to counter-attack the Allies as they advanced inland. Twice before the Allies had seen amphibious invasions turn into delayed and stalemated battles by German operational skill.

Hitler saw the advantages of both courses of action but, never decided which he preferred. Consequently, Runstedt and Rommel prepared each according to his own conceptions and both were dissatisfied; neither received what he considered to be complete support.

Finally, poor planning and execution resulted in wasted opportunity for the Germans. Had the invasion been repelled, it would take years for the Allies to recover and they might have even sought a peace treaty. However, multiple mistakes allowed a successful invasion that was the beginning of the end for the Third Reich.

Adolf Hitler displayed astute vision and cunning reasoning when on 3 November 1943 he signed his Fuhrer Directive Number 51. In the directive, he stated “Everything indicates that the enemy will launch an offensive against the Western Front of Europe, at the latest in the spring... I have therefore decided to reinforce its defenses... For it here that the enemy must and will attack and it is here – unless all indications are misleading – that the decisive battle against the landing forces will be fought.”

Even though Germans expected an imminent attack on the coast of France seven months before it happened they still could not adequately defend against it. Hitler, who had by 1944 delegated many of his governmental functions to others in order to have direct control over military operations, failed to make important decisions including the lack of a clear plan of defense. Although the Germans knew the vague area of attack, nearly all mistakenly expected the main thrust to come at the Pas de Calais. Hitler so convinced himself of this that six weeks after D-Day he still believed the main invasion force was yet to arrive at that port.

The deception campaign certainly played a part in Operation Overlord but given the numerous failures of the German command, success for the Allied invasion force was inevitable.

By the spring of 1944, BODYGUARD was in full swing and proving very effective. FORTITUDE NORTH kept extensive German forces in Norway poised for an attack from the fictional combined American, British, and Russian force. FORTITUDE SOUTH had Hitler aggressively bolstering Calais to defend against the anticipated FUSAG invasion north of Normandy. The results of the Normandy landings are well known. Due credit for its fantastic success must be attributed to the careful planning and execution of strategic deception. Even in the immediate aftermath of the actual invasion, FORTITUDE SOUTH II kept the powerful 15th Army fixed in the Calais area, thereby preventing them from reinforcing against the Allied

breakout, until it was much too late. The invasion force that hit the beaches of Normandy on the morning of June 6, 1944, was nothing short of awesome. In its orchestration, in execution, and in sheer magnitude, it was the mightiest assemblage of military power that history has ever known. In spite of this, the outcome was in serious doubt for many hours, and not assured for several days. This invasion has been labeled an outstanding success, but one not without cost. Thousands of men lost their lives in the first few days alone. The entire American effort was nearly pushed back into the channel at Omaha Beach. This doubt and these losses were suffered against a defense stretched very thin.

In conclusion, imagine this same invasion with the following changes to the Atlantic Wall: 150,000 additional combat troops, an accompanying air force, and a Panzer division reinforced from Norway garrisons. Rommel was not delayed in the Balkans, and he had the Panzer Lehr division, 2 SS Panzer Corps, and additional infantry corps that were diverted south prior to the invasion. The 18 divisions of the 15th Army were immediately sent from Calais to counter-attack the actual invasion at Normandy. Surely, the memory of the invasion would be quite different. Even if it still succeeded, the additional cost in Allied equipment, time, and lives would redefine the “success” of the operation.

BODYGUARD is often considered the most complex and successful deception effort in the history of warfare. It is a topic well deserving of increased attention, and its lessons and relevance should not be lost in current military planning and operations.

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