

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

OPERATION FORTITUDE: THE ALLIED D-DAY DECEPTION CAMPAIGN AND MEDIA
USE

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THE BACHELORS DEGREE OF ARTS

BY

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For my grandfather, and all others who served

Abstract

Throughout the Second World War, the Allies focused much of their war effort on Operation Fortitude, a campaign strictly for the purpose of misinforming the Axis Powers. One extensive use of misinformation came before and after the assault on Normandy in June of 1944, more popularly known as D-Day. The Allies' goal was to make the Germans believe the attack would be coming at Pas de Calais, much further east and closer to England. The Allies used a number of different strategies to accomplish this, including extensively bombing the Calais area, using General George Patton as a commander "decoy," and even creating a fake invasion force. This paper examines how the media was used to carry misinformation. The Allies used both newspapers and radio broadcasts to influence the Germans into believing an attack would be coming at Calais, not Normandy. By withholding the secret details of the invasion, the American public was also led to believe an attack was coming at Calais. I argue, although double-agents were also an important way to transmit false information, without the use of media an effective campaign would have been much more difficult.

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Operation Fortitude: Introduction and Background

My grandmother told me a story when I was very young about one of my grandfather's friends who fought in France in 1944. My grandfather's friend, John Larson, was part of a tank crew. During his service in France, a German unit hit his tank with an explosive (my grandma thought it was a bazooka but wasn't entirely sure) and destroyed it. John, hurt but able to move, scrambled out with one other survivor. John and the other soldier crawled quickly in the huge tank tracks the vehicle had left in the ground. Amazingly, they hid well enough from the Germans and made it back to safety, where they ran into another American unit. John is still alive today, but my grandma said due to the incident, he had always struggled with his hearing. I was never able to speak with John about the incident. My grandmother said John was very reserved about his personal experiences of service and rarely talked about it. Nevertheless, hearing this as a young man skyrocketed my interest in the Second World War.

Long before John and hundreds of thousands of Allied soldiers entered France, the Allied invasion and its success were much in question. Indeed, unknown to many soldiers on the ground at the time, the assault "was preceded by years of planning and preparation...and it was the dramatic high point of the war."¹ Both the Allies and Axis powers used deception before D-Day, especially the British. The invasion of Dieppe had taught the Allies numerous lessons, including the necessity for protection of classified information and the use of deception. As Sun Tzu said, "All war is based on deception...Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active,

¹ James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War II* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2001), 310.

inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him.”² However, the invasion of France was an entirely new animal. The decision to open a second front through France was made at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943. Up until this point, the Russians had been doing all of the fighting on the eastern front, which Stalin was never shy of letting the Allies know. The Allies would now be going into the German’s backyard, facing very strong defensive fortifications. Considering the potent defenses, the Allies decided a deception campaign was needed.

According to the original OVERLORD plan in July of 1943, “taking beach and air and naval considerations together, it appears that either the Pas de Calais area or the Caen-Cotentin (Normandy) area is the most suitable for the initial main landing.”³ Eventually, the Allies chose Pas de Calais as the “fake” attack location because it was the focal point of German defenses. Calais was also the closest part of France to England and expansion after the invasion would prove more difficult compared to Normandy. Normandy was a weaker defended area and allowed for unfavorable counterattacks by the Germans. In addition, Calais offered excellent air cover options for the Germans and grand possibilities of strategic development. It was, as Roger F. Hesketh said, “a priceless gift: a cover objective which possessed all the more obvious attractions for an assault landing.”⁴ Hesketh’s book, *Fortitude: the D-day Deception Campaign*, is the best source to use when discussing D-Day deception. Hesketh was the quiet genius behind Fortitude. He was part of “Operations B” of the Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander

² Philip Gerard, *Secret Soldiers: the Story of World War Two’s Heroic Army of Deception* (New York: Dutton, 2002), 5.

³ Mark A. Stoler and Melanie S. Gustafson, eds., *Major Problems in the History of World War II* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 118.

⁴ Roger F. Hesketh, *Fortitude: the D-Day Deception Campaign* (New York: Overlook Press, 2000), 8.

(COSSAC) and he dealt with all parts of the deceptive operation, especially regarding controlled leakage. He can be considered a primary source. Hesketh argues throughout his book that captured double-agents were the key to success of Operation Fortitude, and provides a detailed analysis of deception operations with those agents. He was not allowed to publish his book until 1976, mainly because of governmental regulations regarding the protection of secret identities of those involved in the deception campaign. Hesketh, who interviewed several former officers from the German Command personally, concludes interviews and captured documents have clearly revealed the success of the deception campaign. The book is extremely detailed, covering every aspect imaginable about the use of deception during Operation Fortitude. However, the media is not mentioned extensively, likely due to Hesketh's detailed focus on the double-agents he worked with on a daily basis.

Choosing Calais as the fake invasion allowed the real landings at Normandy to come as a surprise. There was potential for the Germans to be fooled into believing the Normandy attack was a feint, designed to draw resources away from Calais. As Hesketh points out, German double-agents continually informed the German Command of detailed information regarding Allied plans. Furthermore, Normandy was much further east and would be a longer trip for an invasion force compared to Calais. In the end, going about the invasion in this manner made the most logical and strategic sense for the Allies.

The Allies then came up with Operation Fortitude. It called for two separate areas for the possibility of a fake invasion: Fortitude North and Fortitude South. The North called for a deception campaign with the "real" invasion taking place via Norway, while the South called for the "real" invasion to come at Calais. For the sake of this paper, the focus is on Fortitude South.

Although the North operation influenced German decisions before June 6th, it was the South operation that proved most successful. As part of Fortitude South, the Allies created “Appendix Y” on November 29, 1943. The plan contained three goals the Allies hoped to obtain before the real D-Day invasion would begin.

1) To induce the German Command that the main assault and follow-up will be in or east of the Pas de Calais area, thereby encouraging to maintain or increase the strength of his air and ground forces and of his fortifications there at the expense of other areas, particular of the Caen area. 2) To keep the enemy in doubt as to the date and time of the actual assault. 3) During and after the assault to contain the largest number possible German ground or air forces in or east of the Pas de Calais for at least 14 days.⁵

As seen from these documents, the Allies considered it essential to reduce German forces in the Normandy area before and after the main assault. Between July 1943 and the targeted time of spring 1944, the Allies felt “therefore, every effort must be made to dissipate and divert German formations, lower their fighting efficiency and disrupt communications.”⁶ Operation Fortitude would serve as an essential insurance policy for the Allies. The more troops they could convince Hitler to draw away from the Normandy area, the better chance of success. Furthermore, not facing the strongest German units would mean more Allied lives saved. As another Appendix Y document stated in late 1943, “from now onwards, every practical method of achieving this end must be employed. This condition, above all others, will dictate the date by which the amphibious assault can be launched.”⁷ The Allies decided to carry out the deception in a variety of ways, including broadcast and newspapers.

⁵ Stoler and Gustafson, 120; Mary K. Barbier, “The D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion,” *Mississippi State University* 59 (1999): 4, 13.

⁶ Stoler and Gustafson, 120.

⁷ Stokesbury, 313.

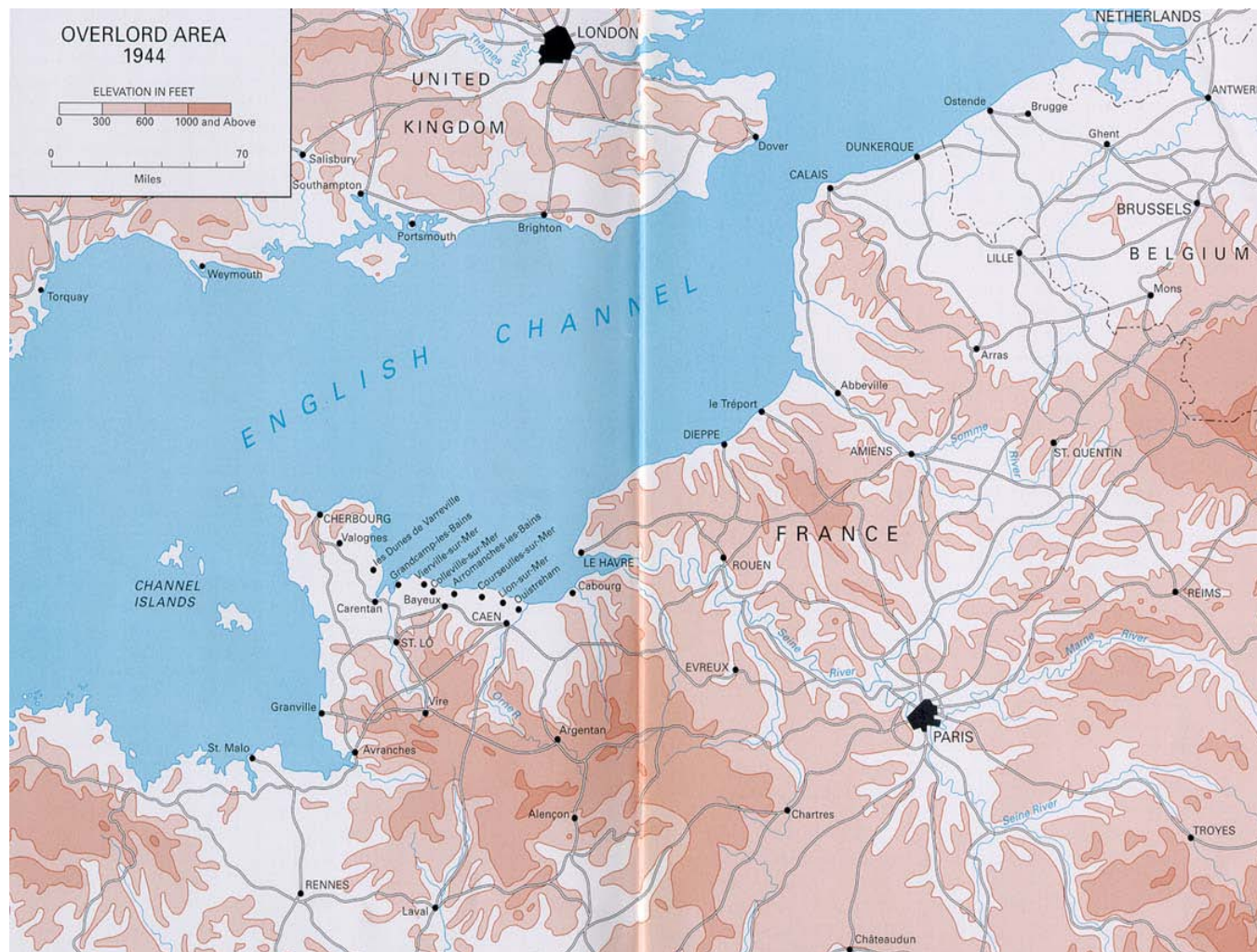


Figure 1. Map of France. Calais is located top right, closest to Britain. Normandy area is on the shores of Caen. Source: <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/normandy/nor-pam.htm> (accessed 5/12/10).

A few other secondary sources explain the use of deception in relation to D-Day. Philip Gerard's *Secret Soldiers: the Story of World War II's Heroic Army of Deception*, is another book that discusses Operation Fortitude. Gerard focuses on specific Allied members who were an influential part of deception throughout the entire war, particularly of the Army's 23rd Headquarters Special Troops⁸. The 23rd used sound effects, camouflage, and radio to mislead the Germans about Allied plans and concealed Allied troop movements during the invasion of France. Included are veteran's recollections, memoirs, published works, and views on army life and combat. Gerard also focuses on overall deception tactics and how they became successful, especially before the Normandy landings. Gerard argues that through the use of deception, the 23rd saved countless American lives. He also points out, at the time of writing in 2002, the information was top-secret and recently declassified.

J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann's *The American G.I. in Europe in World War II: D-Day: Storming Ashore*, offers an excellent overall perspective about D-Day itself. According to the authors, their goal was to present the reader with a point of view of war from those who were there.⁹ A variety of different veteran accounts is mixed in with important but minimal background information, which allows the action of this book to unfold in veteran's words. The book discussed in detail some of the most important aspects of D-Day, such as the 101st Airborne Division, the landings at Utah and Omaha beach, and the deception campaign. Published in 2009, it is also one of the more recent books on D-Day. Further, it is one of the few secondary

⁸ Philip Gerard, *Secret Soldiers: the Story of World War Two's Heroic Army of Deception* (New York: Dutton, 2002), 5.

⁹ J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, *The American GI in Europe in World War II: D-Day: Storming Ashore* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2009).

sources that have entire chapters relating to the deception campaign and newspapers and broadcasts.

Anthony C. Brown's *Bodyguard of Lies* details the elaborate Allied deception campaign throughout the Second World War, including Operation Fortitude.¹⁰ A long time journalist and historian, Brown's book, along with Hesketh's, was one of the first to be published regarding the deception used by the Allies in 1975. Brown specifically focuses on Allied and German code breaking, but also mentions uses of double-agents, the media and specific crucial military operations. Brown decided on the title for the book after Winston Churchill said "in wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Brown argues that without the implementation of code breaking, the deception campaign at D-Day and throughout the war would not have been possible.

Most secondary sources conclude Operation Fortitude was a necessary step in order for success of the Normandy landings. If not implemented, the German force at Normandy could have been much stronger, causing more American lives. Historians, however, do differ on which aspect of Operation Fortitude was most successful, as seen in Hesketh's view of double-agents. There is a limited history of the use of newspapers and broadcasts regarding Operation Fortitude. Secondary sources, at most, give a few pages or a chapter to the topic.

General George S. Patton's Role

General George S. Patton had been inactive in 1943 after his controversial slapping incidents. Facing a tough decision and public outcry for his removal, Dwight D. Eisenhower relieved Patton of his command in the fall of 1943 but held onto him for use in the European

¹⁰ Anthony C. Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (New York: Harper Press, 1975).

theater. As part of Fortitude South, Eisenhower used Patton as commander of the First United States Army Group (FUSAG) instead of sending him back to the states, a fictitious force placed at Dover in southeast England. Because of his combat experience, leadership, and strong reputation among the Germans, Patton proved to be a good choice. Due to his reputation for “daring and brilliant unorthodoxy...they were certain he would be leading the main invasion.”¹¹ FUSAG did include real units, but mainly consisted of camouflaged dummy landing craft and tanks. Eisenhower also made FUSAG, on paper, larger than General Montgomery’s 21st Army Group through double-agent and wireless radio traffic. Considering the commander, the location and size of FUSAG, it no doubt was implemented to deceive the Germans.



Figure 2. A dummy Sherman tank placed at Dover. Source: GeneralPatton.org, Date unknown. http://www.generalpatton.org/D-Day/Patton_Dday.htm (accessed 5/1/10).

¹¹ Gerard, 474; Martin Blumenson, *Patton: The Man Behind the Legend, 1885-1945* (New York: William and Morrow Co., 1985), 214.

The newspapers had always followed Patton around relentlessly, another reason why he was chosen for this position. Of the Allied generals, Patton appeared most frequently in the press. As soon as the Germans learned of Patton's command, they became extremely concerned with Patton and his movements. German spies and British papers began to report his comings and goings around England.¹² German spies continually reported intense activity around Dover, including new construction, troop movements, increased train traffic and the like. Reporters noted Patton's presence at the Savy Hotel, headquarters for American newspapers. Indeed, as Brown states, there was little done to conceal Patton's activities.¹³ This appeared to work, as reports of overnight troop movements north from Normandy were detected by the Allies multiple times. One of the greatest successes of Operation Fortitude can be attributed to Patton. During his months in southeast England, Patton's presence helped convince the Germans that the allied invasion would come via Calais.¹⁴ Eisenhower used Patton's visibility and reputation to strengthen Fortitude South.

A Time of Censorship

A key element in the Allied plan of deception was that they had virtual control of the media. Obviously, due to the low technology of media during the time it was much easier to censor than in wars afterwards. After analyzing primary documents from 1942 to 1944, it is clear to this author censorship was an important issue in protecting the secret invasion plans. In a March 12th, 1942 press release from the Office of Censorship (U.S.), taking detailed pictures

¹² "D-Day: Three Unique Perspectives," *GeneralPatton.org*, under "What Was General Patton Doing on D-Day?" http://www.generalpatton.org/D-Day/Patton_Dday.htm, (accessed 5/1/10).

¹³ Brown, 475.

¹⁴ Kaufmann and Kaufmann, 370.

was addressed. Byron Price, director of the Office of Censorship, stated “The government has no intention of discouraging picture taking...but there are many good photographic subjects besides fortifications, airports, troop transports and equipment of the armed forces.”¹⁵ Due to these restrictions, pictures often appeared in the paper very discretely, as the one below does. The headline shows Allied forces preparing for invasion but never mentions any specific location in England or the units involved.

¹⁵“Office of Censorship Press Release,” Fredrick S. Siebert Papers: 1934-1951, 4 archive boxes, Wisconsin Historical Society.



THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 1944

Allied Forces in the United Kingdom Making Ready for D-



George W. Vincent, Poplar Bluff, Mo., tossing a grenade from his General Sherman tank during the invasion of Normandy. (The New York Times photo by Signal Corps)



The "Hawala Boys," a squad of our tank maintenance men, parade at a firing range where the British Eighth Army once trained.



Home Guard, formed to meet any invasion attempt by the enemy in the early days of the war, to assist in the coming assault against the Nazis.



King George inspecting tank crews during a tour of the invasion area.

AYS 'AA' ISLES must be killed before invasion can be launched. Divers of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, which the new front will exist (has called the British Government to offer the role that is possible to

Figure 3. Photographs by *the New York Times*, May 14, 1944 (Accessed 5/5/10).

This picture shows troops preparing for the invasion of France, but does not include the date or location of such an attack, which was kept confidential by the Office of Censorship and newspaper reporters themselves. It is clear, even so, an Allied offensive was coming soon.

Another press release, even before the Dieppe invasion, in June 1942 issued to newspapers across the country indicated German radio had talked at great length of the “invincibility” of the German positions along the European coast. The broadcast also said “that such offensive actions would be defeated with a tragic loss for the U.S.” The release encouraged reporters to ignore the German propaganda and not have it influence their reporting.¹⁶ From this date on, a series of confidential reports and press releases was issued monthly to newspaper and radio communicators across the country, summarizing the most recent Nazi propaganda attacks against the U.S. It seemed like an attempt by the Office of Censorship to reinforce the importance of taking Nazi Propaganda with a grain of salt. Once the invasion plans were coordinated, it was evident that the Office of Censorship’s restrictions continually increased. In another release sent to media outlets in December 1943, the information stated “a general needs to know the strength of his opponent: how many men, guns, ships, planes there are in each theater of war. The Nazis and the Japs want to know these things about our forces.”¹⁷ On January 6th, 1944 one of the releases was reprinted by the American Newspapers Publishers Association. The release indicated troop identification should not be made public, which was to be a continuing request of the Office of Censorship.¹⁸ Even though the Allies controlled this, they

¹⁶ “Office of Censorship Press Release,” Joseph Helfert Papers: 1940-1946, 3 archive boxes, Wisconsin Historical Society.

¹⁷ “Office of Censorship Press Release,” Siebert Papers.

¹⁸ “American Newspapers Publishing Association Newsletter,” Helfert Papers.

made public such information in regards to the potential attack on Calais, such as the FUSAG or Patton's commanding role. Though both the Allies and the Germans knew details of real invasion plans would not be published, it would be hard to ignore the heightened military activity and Patton in Dover. Another censorship bulletin in January 1944 focused on the specific information about the upcoming invasion. Price gave more detailed instructions:

The coming invasion of Europe confronts voluntary censorship with its greatest single responsibility. There is no way to conceal from the enemy that an invasion is in prospect or that the British Isles will be used as a base. What we must protect at all hazards is information of the time and place of the attack, the strength of the attacking force and its technical make-up and equipment...bear in mind it is always hazardous, in correction with future operations, to mention dates, even by month or season, or to report the likelihood or desirability of a landing in one country or on particular sections of the coast.¹⁹

Clearly, the message was protection of the secret information of the real attack. Price also informed the American public in regards to the invasion of France. In late January 1944, he prepared an address which would be delivered over NBC broadcast stations, titled "Keep the Enemy Guessing." He advised Americans with whom to speak with when discussing the war and warned that German spies could be among anyone. "I want to reemphasize the dangers which arise from loose talk about military affairs...There is a special reason just now why we should be double careful. Together with the forces of our Allies, the American Navy and Army are preparing to take the offensive on the continent of Europe and break the back of the German monster...the less the enemy knows about our war plans, the less will be cost in American blood."²⁰

¹⁹ "Office of Censorship Press Release," Helfert Papers.

²⁰ "Keep the Enemy Guessing: News Release," Siebert Papers.

In yet another press release on January 26th, 1944 the Office of Censorship continued with its theme of urging the media to be careful about what they made public. “With our military situation in Europe approaching the critical stage where even an inadvertent slip, careless speculation or ill-advised comment might cost the lives of thousands of our fighting men, it becomes imperative to give not casual but most earnest and ever-present consideration to the censorship code to which newspapers have subscribed.”²¹ The code referred to in this release was the Code of Wartime Practices for the Press, which was renewed about every six months during the war. The new information added to the previous codes was especially important during the D-Day planning stage, as evident by the continuing press releases sent by the Office of Censorship. Among the variety of things journalists were not allowed to publish, without consent from the military of course, were unit identifications, addresses of service men overseas, coastal invasion forces or anti-aircraft defense details.²² There also was extensive recommendation for journalists to censor themselves while reporting.

The Anticipation of Invasion

As the Allies continued to emphasize Patton, FUSAG, and Pas de Calais, anticipation of the invasion began to increase in the newspapers. It is interesting to note that everyone seemed to know an Allied invasion was coming by early 1944, but no one knew *when* or *where* it would take place. As early as January, leading news magazines in the U.S. began speculating about the “big invasion of 1944.”²³ Newspapers were full of reports on the events from around the world,

²¹ “Office of Censorship Press Release,” Siebert Papers.

²² “Office of Censorship Press Release,” Helfert Papers.

²³ Kaufmann and Kaufmann, 370.

most notably the Allies' bombing missions against German targets in France. The anticipated invasion of France dominated the news. On February 7th, a headline in the *New York Times* read "HEAVY BOMBERS HAMMER FIVE FIELDS IN FRANCE, KEEP UP PAS DE CALAIS ATTACKS." The article explained several bombers "pounded undisclosed German targets" in the Pas de Calais area. Further, it mentioned the detailed flights of five missions and their locations, but discretely mentioned "one formation carried out the Pas de Calais attack" at the end of the article. Three days later, a headline stated "PAS DE CALAIS RIPPED," again mentioning Allied bombers hitting undisclosed targets. A very interesting part of the article stated "once again air officials declined to divulge the purpose of sending a large number of machines over Pas de Calais."²⁴ In regards to the details of the Calais missions, this became the norm. Specifics were left out by military officials, likely to increase suspicion of the Calais area.

Journalists and others were curious of the bombings and the secrecy of locations or targets hit near Calais. Specifically withholding the information made it look like something was going on, such as preparations for an attack. As Brown states, these were some of the calculated leaks to press and radio that amplified the deception. One such leak was made by Robert E. Sherwood, director of the Office of War Information's overseas operations. He made it drastically clear an invasion was coming soon in a May 1st article:

The United States inaugurated its pre-invasion broadcasts to Europe from troop-jammed Britain today with a message to the conquered people that their day of liberation is 'not far distant' and that the Germans soon will 'really learn what overwhelming force can be...' 'In this great historic year of 1944 the Allied radio will bring you tremendous news' Sherwood said. 'Russian armies attacking from the east, great Allied armies and navies attacking from the west and south will end forever the shameful chapter of Nazi tyranny.'²⁵

²⁴ "Pas de Calais Ripped," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1944.

²⁵ *The New York Times*, May 1, 1944.

Although there was no mention of the place of the attack, it was obvious from Sherwood's statement he thought it would be in 1944.

Despite the Code of Wartime Practices for the Press, it was clear the media couldn't help themselves as to the speculation about the invasion. After all, everyone knew it was coming, except for the location and date. Correspondents in England set up their own betting pool as to when the invasion would take place.²⁶ In the April 10th issue of *TIME*, the magazine speculated that if the Allied invasion did not take place in April it would seriously affect Hitler's ability to fight the war against the Soviets. The article reported he had withdrawn troops from the east to strengthen his defenses in the west, and that French civilians were being evacuated from the Calais area, a clear indication the German Command believed an attack would be coming soon. In a press conference soon after, Erwin Rommel informed the German media that tides and weather conditions would indeed favor an April invasion.²⁷ The Germans, it was reported, became increasingly tense over the speculation and mysteriousness of the potential invasion. The May 1st issue of *TIME* announced "Berlin had a profound case of the jitters," and that the Germans were desperately fishing for information.²⁸ Nevertheless, the Germans used their propaganda machine in attempts to calm their own citizens as well as intimidate the Allies. On May 27th, according to a German news service, "Eisenhower has again missed the invasion bus," because it would be another month before the weather, the moon and tide conditions would

²⁶ Kaufmann and. Kaufmann, 375.

²⁷ Ibid., 373; "World Battlefronts: Battle of Russia: Second Front Casts it Shadow," *TIME*, April 10, 1944.

²⁸ Ibid., 373; "World: When?" *TIME*, April 10, 1944.

favor an invasion from England. The Germans concluded, very incorrectly, that Eisenhower had not completed his invasion preparations.²⁹

The Calais region became a very familiar topic to American and British readers, as well as the Germans. Articles mentioning the bombing of Calais, as well as other areas of France, became a daily occurrence. A May 2nd *London Times* article reported that a night assault on the Calais area was “the 14th by the 8th Air Force in 15 days alone.” This is what the Allies had hoped regarding the campaign. Their air campaign was designed to physically disrupt German anti-invasion resources but also serve as a deception mechanism. Two-thirds of the bombs dropped outside of the invasion area, Normandy, were an attempt to persuade the Germans the most heavily-bombed area would be the logical place for the attack. The most bombs before June 6th, indeed, were dropped on the Calais area.³⁰ Hanson W. Baldwin, the *New York Times*’ chief military correspondent, wrote a striking column about the upcoming invasion on May 1st. He said the invasion, “so long anticipated and so long prepared, is now at last just around the corner.” He continued “where and when it will come the Germans will in due course find out; that it is coming there now seems no longer much doubt...all signs indicate that D-Day in Western Europe is as certain as anything human can be.” Baldwin’s next statement really proved his knowledge of the Allies deception aspirations, almost to the point where it could have been censored. Baldwin mentioned the elements of bad weather and postponements of the invasion up until the current point. He concluded “an amphibious invasion was only possible if a majority of German divisions were engaged in fighting on the Russian front, or were tied down in Italy, the

²⁹ *The London Times*, May 27, 1944.

³⁰ Stokesbury, 321.

Balkans or elsewhere.”³¹ This was, in a nutshell, exactly what the Allies wanted to happen before the D-Day invasion. These statements increased German tensions as to when the attack would come. It was clear an attack was expected soon, even to the American public. The *London Times* reported German worries again on May 18th. The article stated “The German high command is making desperate efforts to bring its defenses in the Reich as well as in France...to maximum strength for the Allied invasion, which according to Rommel will begin at any moment now.”³²

There were countless other examples that showed the attack was going to come at Calais. The *Kenosha Evening News*' main headline on May 1st read “AMERICAN BOMBERS BATTER SECRET TARGETS IN PRE-INVASION OFFENSIVE; INVASION FEVER MOUNTS AS ALLIES WARN TIME IS SHORT.” Although not discussed in detail, Fortitude North had some effects on the Germans as well. The *Akron Beach Journal* (OH) reported on May 6th “GERMANS FEAR SMASH AT NORTH WALL; RUSH 80,000 TO NORWAY AND DENMARK.” *The San Antonio Evening News* on May 9th reported that all London newspapers began publishing full details of weather in the straits of Dover, “across from which many observers have predicted the main invasion will be launched.”³³ On May 23rd, “U.S. PLANES BLAST KIEL AND PAS DE CALAIS in *the London Times*. On May 24th, “BOMBINGS IN INVASION AREA MOUNT AGAIN.” The article also mentioned a third straight night of bombing by a major attacking force. Interestingly, it mentions Normandy as being hit, a rarity throughout the months previous to the attacks.³⁴ A May 27th *New York Times* headline read

³¹ *The New York Times*, May 1, 1944.

³² *The London Times*, May 18, 1944.

³³ “UPI Stories from around the World,” Helfert Papers.

³⁴ *The New York Times*, May 24, 1944.

“BRITISH WIN PRAISE FROM EISENHOWER: ALLIED COMMANDER INSPECTS IMPERIAL ARMY; FINDS IT FIT, READY FOR INVASION.” Of course, there was no mention of where this force was located, besides “somewhere in England.”³⁵ At this point, the newspapers seemed to be more comfortable in attempting to define the specific area, much to chagrin of the Office of Censorship from there continuous requests of censorship practices to reporters. During the first week of June, newspapers around the world continued with invasion warnings. The newspapers reported a great deal of unusual activity in Western Europe and the arrival of American forces in the outskirts of Rome as June 6th approached. Another picture below illustrates the anticipation and secrecy behind the attacks.

³⁵ *The New York Times*, May 27, 1944.

Footsteps: On the March in the United Kingdom for the Coming



Quartermaster battalion waiting at a pier for shipment to a new station.



Our glider troops of an airborne unit on parade at an airfield.

YES BERLIN
By the Associated Press
STOCKHOLM, Sweden, May 7 (AP)—At least 1,000 persons were killed in today's American bombing of Berlin, a dispatch from the German capital said tonight. The western and northwestern districts of the city were reported bombed heavily.

Reports From Berlin Say 1,000 Died in Bombing
German accounts said bad weather grounded defense planes, forcing reliance on anti-aircraft guns alone.
The attack was described as of the same scale as that of April 26. "Several thousand incendiary bombs" clouded the city, the dispatches said. The Luftwaffe headquarters described these conditions as ideal for bombing.

striking into Yugoslavia bombed the Belgrade-Panovo bridge on the only rail artery open to Belgrade on the Balkan Great Express Highway route. The 800-foot bridge carries the rail line over the Tarna River, a 100-foot and a half from the Danube.
The big bombers and their Mustang and Lightning escorts hitting Belgrade halted enemy fighters, but results of the air fight were unascertained immediately.
The battered railroad yards at Belgrade, site the headquarters for the main lines throughout the Balkans, including the double track to the Plava oil fields. It is estimated that 20 per cent of Belgrade's supplies in the German transport over this route.
The continued bombing of Balkan targets came after a record week ended yesterday in which the Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force bombers pummed down the impressive total of 10,000 tons of bombs in 248 sorties that cost the Allies only twenty-one heavy bombers. The First Tactical Air Force during the same week

Ousted Britons Helped By American Army Fund
By Staff
LONDON, May 7.—American Army authorities in Britain have established a fund to alleviate distress among 3,000 persons evacuated from a southwestern area last December to provide battle practice facilities for United States troops.
A committee appointed by the regional command and headed by the chairman of the county council has been quietly investigating applications for assistance.
While United States troops do not provide 100,000 calories, the United States Army would contribute a substantial sum for cases where need was greatest.

JEAN GABIN'S FILMS BARRED IN FRANCE
Vichy Issues Another Order Aiding German Industry
By Staff
PARIS, May 7.—The Vichy government has placed a ban on all films featuring Jean Gabin, French cinema star who went to the United States in 1941. No reason was given, but presumably M. Gabin is considered an expatriate de Chautau. One result of the ban will be to reduce still further the number of French films shown—to the greater advantage of the German cinema industry.
Vichy's bans are sometimes surprising. Football games, boxing bouts, horse racing, and theatrical and musical shows all are encouraged, but to speak of the national

battery, the...
Dear Les
Romance
comes out
to those
who

Figure 4. Photographs by the New York Times (the headline finishes "Coming Invasion"), May 8, 1944 (accessed 5/1/10).

Radio served as an important medium for the Allies to implement their deception campaign as well. Once the Allies selected Normandy as the invasion area, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast an appeal for postcards and photographs from families who had taken vacations in France. Thirty-thousand arrived within days of the first broadcast and eventually 10 million pictures were collected.³⁶ The photographs and postcards provided valuable topographical details, which a special team at Oxford University used to draw maps with astonishing accuracy.³⁷ Although the Allies had general maps of France already, the specific pictures gave crucial geographic details the Allies could use. Eisenhower also issued a number of broadcasts, later reprinted in the papers, about what the French Resistance and what French citizens should expect with the upcoming invasion. Eisenhower, in a broadcast on May 21st, asked underground armies to look for specifics about troop movements and strength. The broadcast clearly stirred some alarm in the German Command. In a May 22nd headline, the *New York Times* reported “PROPOGANDA MINISTER WARNS OF TERRIBLE NAZI REPRISALS IF FRENCH HELP THE ALLIES.” The article reported that Philippe Henroit, Vichy Minister of Information, broadcast a warning to the French. He said “consider carefully before you listen to General Eisenhower. The Allied invasion is a gamble, and its success is a very open question.” The article ended saying German planes swept over Scotland and England after Eisenhower’s original broadcast, according to the Associated Press.³⁸ Indeed, the Allied invasion was a gamble and was in question in late May.

³⁶ John Man, *The D-Day Atlas: the Definitive Account of the Allied Invasion of Normandy* (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁸ *The New York Times*, May 22, 1944.

Eisenhower delivered another operation order, the third in a matter of a week, on May 24th. He again stressed the importance of military intelligence and how vital detailed information could be. He gave detailed instructions on how to calculate the strength and positions of enemy forces, and how to report them accurately and effectively. The next day, a naval correspondent of the German Transocean News Agency said “Eisenhower has already appealed to the inhabitants of France, Belgium, and Holland, asking their active support and propagating sabotage. This seems to indicate that D-Day is imminent.”³⁹ On May 28th, in the fourth broadcast to the French underground, Eisenhower asked civilians to clear the roads for Allied troops after the invasion. He advised the French to “forestall the Germans from using civilians as a blockade,” as the Germans had before during the war in 1940. He continued, “do not let the Germans entice you onto the road. It is there the greatest danger lies. They will as always use you for their own purpose.”⁴⁰

Another red flag, which the Germans should have or did use to anticipate the time of the invasion, was the halt on traffic and civilian movement in England. A May 26th article reported Britain citizens were cancelling their holiday plans due to “stern warnings that train service is subject to stoppage without notice as the hour of the invasion in Europe nears.” The article also reported that Henrich Himmler, German Gestapo chief, had suddenly left France. The explanation given was that Himmler was attempting to counteract the broadcasts by Eisenhower mentioned above, showing that the broadcasts did have an impact on how the Germans

³⁹ *The New York Times*, May 25, 1944.

⁴⁰ *The New York Times*, May 29, 1944.

conducted themselves.⁴¹ Perhaps, the Germans thought, with the Gestapo chief in France, the underground would be intimidated not to act.

Broadcasts such as these continued until June 6th. Along with the Eisenhower broadcasts, arrangements had to be made in regards to the execution of sabotage plans by coded messages over the BBC. The Allies came up with an elaborate, coded system to notify the underground specifically when the invasion would come. According to Martin Gilbert, leaders were told to listen to the BBC broadcasts on the 1st, 2nd, 15th, and 16th of each month. If the invasion was imminent, they would hear a “preparatory” code message in regular news stories. Some of the codes in different regions included “it is hot in Suez” or “the dice are on the carpet.”⁴² The former instructed the French to destroy cable and phone lines, the latter an order to destroy train and railway lines. The BBC instructed the French underground throughout France to prevent the Germans from bringing in reinforcements during the invasion.⁴³ It appears that this was done both in the Calais area and the Normandy area before the actual invasion took place.

The Allies also had a specific broadcast plan in regards to the real invasion. A May 1944 report by William S. Paley, colonel under Eisenhower in the Office of War Information in the Psychological unit, sent plans for two broadcasts to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force. The report indicated one broadcast was designed for “psychological warfare,” most likely referencing a broadcast for the Germans regarding the Calais region. The

⁴¹ *The New York Times*, May 26, 1944.

⁴² Martin Gilbert, *D-Day* (New Jersey: J. Wiley and Sons, 2004), 121.

⁴³ Gilbert, 122.

second was for the domestic audiences in Great Britain, the U.S., and Canada. It is noted in the report:

so that on D-day the peoples of occupied western Europe are not misled by rumors of false statements made by the enemy, and so that they will not act prematurely, it is of utmost importance that they shall receive, as quickly as possible, our official statement of military operations, as well as instructions from the Supreme Commander and from the heads of the governments on how they shall conduct themselves.⁴⁴

The report went on to say prior to the D-Day broadcast going on air, a ten minute alerting period over the facilities of the BBC will contain announcements, including one from Eisenhower, and special broadcasts to follow in English, French, Danish, Dutch, and Norwegian. The report had the full outline of how the broadcasts would be formatted, but with no specific content or dialogue. It is not clear whether this was in reference to Eisenhower's four broadcasts to the French resistance as stated earlier, or for a closer date in the first week in June. Nevertheless, this report shows the importance of the broadcast media to the Allies.

German Estimations via Deception

Because there appeared to be numerous invasion possibilities (i.e. Calais, Normandy and Norway) Hitler had to spread his defenses around. The Germans were making every effort to estimate where and when the attack would come. Nevertheless, Hitler gambled and in 1943 he thought it would come at Calais. The area around Calais was the focal point of German strength, and in 1944 the greatest concentration of German armor in the west.⁴⁵ The top two German generals, Rommel and Gerd von Rundstedt, agreed with Hitler on the Allied main assault at Calais. However, they differed greatly on how to deter the Allied invasion. Rommel wanted to

⁴⁴ Paley, William S., *Plan for D-Day Broadcast* (Washington, D.C.: Psychological Warfare Division of the Allied Expeditionary Force, May 19, 1944), Wisconsin Historical Society.

⁴⁵ Stokesbury, 310.

concentrate reserve troops forward on the invasion beaches and hoped to defeat the Allies as they came ashore. He felt moving reserves extensively would be next to impossible because of Allied air supremacy over the *Luftwaffe*. Rommel believed the first day of the invasion would be most important, and felt that if the battle was not fought and won on that day, the Germans could not win at all.⁴⁶ Von Rundstedt argued that one could not concentrate troops forward if the attack location was not exactly determined, which is what the Germans faced. If they followed Rommel's strategy and met the attack in the wrong place, it would be a major set-back for the Germans. Von Rundstedt wanted the reserves to be able to move forward, and the most logical and conventional thing to do was to keep them back and well in hand until the landing was thoroughly underway. The reserves could then be committed for a "climactic battle" that would destroy the Allies (or so he thought). It is interesting to analyze each viewpoint because there are correct assumptions in both viewpoints, as well as incorrect assumptions. Taking these German points of view, Operation Fortitude had an impact on where the Germans believed the invasion would come.

Like journalists and the American public, Hitler sensed a strong likelihood of a cross-channel attack, which he thought would come in the spring of 1944 or even later. The Germans had decrypted Allied signals and seen that Patton was the commander of the fictitious army based at Dover.⁴⁷ As Hitler said himself in March of 1944, "it is evident that a...landing in the west will and must come. How and where it will come no one knows. Equally, no type of speculation on the topic is possible. Whatever concentrations of shipping exist, they cannot and

⁴⁶ Stokesbury, 312-313.

⁴⁷ Gilbert, 70.

must not be taken as any evidence or any indication that the choice has fallen on any one sector.”⁴⁸ He went on to say the Allied landing operation must under no circumstances be allowed to last longer than a matter of hours, or at most days. While Hitler’s statement was a smart one, it did not represent what he was truly thinking. Fooling the Germans and Hitler was not an easy task. However, Fortitude’s success was partially measured by the German estimate of Allied strength, particularly the publicized FUSAG at Dover. The Allies often intercepted messages from the Axis in order to analyze how well their deception was working. One such radio message on May 30th came from Baron Hiroshi Oshima, the Japanese military representative to Berlin. In the message, it confirmed Hitler was convinced the main thrust would take place against Calais.⁴⁹ Such messages were important in analyzing the Allied deception effort.

By mid-May, the Germans believed the Allied invasion force included 89 divisions, when it really had 47. Once the landings began at Normandy on June 6th, Hitler and his generals were convinced the invasion was a feint. The invasion force was simply not big enough. This relates back to Eisenhower’s decision to make FUSAG as big as Montgomery’s 21st. Hitler, therefore, hesitated to commit his full resources to the bridgehead. Nineteen divisions awaited an attack at Calais that was never going to come.⁵⁰ It is difficult to imagine that the Normandy landings weren’t the real thing, especially with headlines such as “INVASION ON,” “FRANCE INVADED,” “BEACHHEAD WON,” and “CONTINENT INVADED: FDR CALLS NATION

⁴⁸ Brown, 425.

⁴⁹ Kaufmann and Kaufmann, 97.

⁵⁰ Gilbert, 164.

TO PRAYER TONIGHT,” on June 6th late edition newspapers throughout the United States.⁵¹

At the same time, it shows the Allied deception plan was extremely successful. The bombing campaign on the Calais area had achieved an undoubted success. An August 7th Berlin broadcast highlighted the deception, saying “large scale operations by the Allies need no longer be reckoned with, a German military spokesman declared today. The intentions of the Allies are now quite clear, and that is an advantage to the Germans. It is always easier to plan counter measures when the opponents’ objectives is apparent.”⁵² However, as Hesketh points out, it would have been much easier for the Germans to plan their counter measures if the Allies’ objectives had been known two months earlier in June, when the real invasion began. Of course the Germans knew of Allied intentions in August: by this time, the Allies had extensively penetrated multiple Nazi lines in France. They were well on their way to Berlin. Even a few months after the invasion, it was evident that the Germans had made a huge mistake. In a column titled “Deception Aided Allies: Feints off the Pas de Calais Area Kept Foe from Freeing 15th Army,” Baldwin argued the German intelligence calculations were erroneous:

They apparently believed for some time that the Bay of Seine landings did not represent the main Allied effort; they continued to expect until late July, or perhaps even until early August a strong landing in the Pas de Calais area...But the 15th army was immobilized during the crisis by the Germans’ own ill-founded fears, by the power of a name—Patton... We nurtured the idea that a landing was to be made in the Pas de Calais region.⁵³

German commanders greeted the Normandy landings as *an invasion*, not *the invasion*. What’s even worse for the Germans is that the 15th Army, their most powerful unit was still waiting at

⁵¹ “UPI Stories from around the World,” Helfert Papers.

⁵² Hesketh, 286.

⁵³ *The New York Times*, September 1, 1944.

Calais three months into the Allied advance. Amazingly, FUSAG continued to exist on paper until October 1944.

Close Calls

As seen from the Office of Censorship's requirements, there was tight control of what was being published to the American public, as well what was available to German eyes.⁵⁴ Even though only high military officials had knowledge of the real attack, there were several close calls, some involving the reporters, which could have blown the Allies' cover. On June 3rd, as part of one original date set for the invasion, troops were in route when it was called off due to bad weather. News agencies received an Associated Press message reading "Flash, Eisenhower's Headquarters Announces Allied Landings in France." The message reached news bureaus at 4:39 p.m. eastern time. The news spread and within minutes loudspeakers at ballparks were playing the message publicly. Within two minutes of the original message, the news media received an urgent message to kill the story. A young woman named Joan Ellis in the London AP office had been working with a strip of practice tape and didn't realize the teletype machine was connected. The next morning, headlines explained the false invasion report, which mystified readers and likely the Germans as well.⁵⁵ This could have really hurt the Allies, especially since troops were in route and it was so close to the revised date of June 6th. Thousands of people were being

⁵⁴ The Office of Censorship encouraged all journalists to voluntarily censor (as seen in this paper) their own work inside the U.S. for protection of American forces overseas. It implemented mandatory censorship of information crossing the nation's borders. Price, the director of the AP before the war, delegated release of information to "appropriate authorities," meaning those directly involved. These included anyone from combat commanders to governmental heads. This kept the Office of Censorship out of numerous controversies, such as the famous Patton slapping incident. Reporters filed requests to print that story and Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, gave his approval. From *Secrets of Victory: the Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio during WWII* by Michael S. Sweeny.

⁵⁵ Kaufmann and Kaufmann, 153-154.

informed that the invasion had begun. This also shows the newspapers had prepared statements or announcements for the real invasion once it began, as seen in the Paley report.

Another occasion involved Major General Henry J. F. Miller of the 9th Air Force Service Command, a good friend of Eisenhower's. He casually mentioned date details about the invasion at a Claridge Hotel cocktail party in May. He began talking about his difficulties in getting supplies but added that "his problems would end after D-Day," which he declared "on my honor the invasion will come before June 15." He even offered to take bets when challenged about the date. Eisenhower got wind of it and immediately removed Miller from his post, demoting him to a lieutenant colonel. He was sent back to the States.⁵⁶ Luckily for the Allies, according to TIME on June 19th, 1944, the disclosure of the case was held without leak until the week of June 19th.

During an air raid on London sometime in 1944, enemy bombs fell on the streets where an intelligence officer was carrying the real OVERLORD plans in a briefcase. The man was killed instantly and the briefcase was never found.⁵⁷ In the summer of 1943, according to the BBC, a copy of a secret OVERLORD plan blew out of a window in Norfolk House, which served as the Supreme Headquarters for the Allies at the time. The copy was later handed in by a man who said "his eyes were so bad he had no idea what it was."⁵⁸

The London Daily Telegraph crossword on May 2th, May 22nd, and May 27th contained in its answers at least three codenames related to the real D-Day invasion—Utah, Omaha, and Overlord. Utah and Omaha were two of the beaches as part of the Normandy attack and

⁵⁶ Drez, 23.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁸ "D-Day on the BBC," *The BBC*, May 14, 2004, under "Keeping D-Day Secret," http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2004/05_may/14/dday_facts.shtml (accessed May 1, 2010).

OVERLORD was the operational attack name for the entire Normandy campaign. Luckily for the Allies, the clues were not matched by German intelligence and it was concluded to be a bizarre coincidence that the names appeared in the puzzle.⁵⁹

In a very interesting and dangerous mission, Captain George Lane, commando and Special Operations Executive for the British, was captured on the shores of France on a high-priority assignment regarding mines. On May 17th, he crossed the channel near Ault, on the northeast coast. He found the Germans were fixing “teller mines” to the top of stakes. These would be submerged at high tide and would explode if they came into contact with a landing craft. Lane reported this to his advisors but was ordered to return the next night, this time with mine expert Roy Wooldridge. A German patrol boat eventually spotted the men. Lane was sent to German headquarters in France, where he faced interrogation by Rommel. The following is a portion of the conversation the two had:

LANE: Well, if the Field Marshall believed that I was a saboteur he would not have done me the honor of inviting me here.

ROMMEL: So you think that this is an invitation?

LANE: I do, sir, and I must say I am highly honored.

ROMMEL: Well what do you think he is doing? (in reference to Montgomery)

LANE: I only know what I read in the *Times*. It says he is preparing for the invasion.

ROMMEL: Do you really think there is going to be an invasion? The British will invade?

LANE: That’s what I read in the *Times*, so I believe it.

ROMMEL: Well, where do you think the invasion is coming?

LANE: I certainly don’t know, they don’t tell junior officers. But if it was up to me I would do it across the shortest possible way.⁶⁰

Shortly thereafter, Lane was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp but eventually survived to tell the story. As seen from the conversation, Lane was trying to help convince Rommel the attack

⁵⁹ Gilbert, 107; Man, 24.

⁶⁰ “Colonel George Lane,” *Telegraph.co.uk*, March 26, 2010, under “Obituaries,” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/special-forces-obituaries/7528727/Colonel-George-Lane.html>, (accessed 5/17/10).

would come at Calais, especially via the “papers.” His mention of the *Times* is very significant, because of what much people did know (outside of the military) came from the newspapers.

Finally, Lieutenant-General Lesley J. McNair, who was in charge of all FUSAG operations, was killed on a visit to Normandy in July 1944. The newspapers soon began to report McNair’s death. He was critical to the deception for Calais (in this case after the real invasion) and the Allies could waste no time in finding a replacement. The Allies quickly found a replacement for his “position.” The Germans, in the end, reported what the Allies had hoped in an intercepted message: “Lieutenant-General John L. de Witt has assumed command of the FUSAG operations in Great Britain.”⁶¹ Despite being a month past the invasion of Normandy, this showed the Germans still had a strong belief that FUSAG was real and ready to invade Calais.

Conclusion

As Eisenhower said himself in a special report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in 1946 after the war:

In any operation as large as Overlord it was palpably impossible to keep from the enemy the fact that we intended, during 1944, to launch an attack against Europe. Where, when, and in what strength the attack would be launched was another matter, and I was not without hope that he would not necessarily appreciate that our target was Normandy. We thought that to the German High Command an assault upon the Pas de Calais would be the obvious operation for the Allies to undertake. The distribution of the bombing effort was adjusted as to indicate a special interest in the Pas de Calais area.⁶²

According to Gerard, deception works best when it reinforces what the enemy already believes—what is possible and therefore likely. The Allies took advantage, considering the Germans

⁶¹ Hesketh, 269-271.

⁶² “Eisenhower Tells of Duping Foe on Time and Place of Invasion,” *The New York Times*, June 23, 1946.

believed the best route for an Allied attack was at Calais, as well as considering it to be very possible.⁶³ To fool the enemy, Gerard continues, the story must have four qualities: it must be believable, the enemy must be able to verify it, the story must be consistent with other facts that the target knows about the deceiver, and the deception plan or specific “ruse” must be executable.⁶⁴ The deception campaign against the Calais area consisted of these four characteristics. The use of newspaper and broadcast messages helped the Allies achieve the success that they did. Of course, as Hesketh advocates, no commander would ever allow specific details of an impending operation to be broadcast to the world, and any intelligent enemy would be aware of this. But the Germans were no doubt influenced by the constant bombing campaigns at Calais, Eisenhower’s broadcasts, and other media uses, including controlled leaks by the Allies.

It is truly amazing that the Allies pulled off the deception campaign the way they did. As stated in this paper, there were numerous close calls that could have revealed the detailed OVERLORD plans to the Germans. Had the Germans found out or correctly guessed the true invasion site to be Normandy, June 6, 1944 as we know it could have been drastically different. A good end comes from Sir Michael Howard, a British historian, who described the plan as “perhaps the most complex and successful operation in the entire history of war.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Philip Gerard, *Secret Soldiers: the Story of World War Two’s Heroic Army of Deception* (New York: Dutton, 2002), 78-79.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁶⁵ Gilbert, 44.

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Siebert, Fred. S., Papers: 1934-1951. 4 archive boxes. The Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

Note: Joseph Helfert was a professor of journalism and communication at the University of Illinois and Michigan State University. He taught many classes relating to the Second World War and censorship. He requested many of the press releases and similar material for his students.

Fred S. Siebert was the editor of the *Beaver Dam Daily Citizen* and an active member in his community. He also made requests for the press releases and asked many questions of the Office of Censorship in letters regarding the Code of Wartime Practices for the Press.