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QUICKSILVER II

WIRELESS

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Overview



QUICKSILVER II: WIRELESS

Operation Fortitude was a major piece of Operation Bodyguard. It was a deception plan aimed at misleading the German high command about the Overlord invasion. One of several Fortitude sub-plans was codenamed Quicksilver, which was also broken into six sub-plans. While Quicksilver I established the backstory of a small unit called the First United States Army Group (FUSAG) that pretended to be upwards of a million troops, Quicksilver II dealt with the need for wireless radio deception.

For the enemy to perceive FUSAG as real, it would require radio traffic that reflected its assembly and movements around its locations in south-east England. Allied planners knew that German spies would be watching and listening for radio transmissions in order to gather and report information to the Abwehr. Therefore, Quicksilver II's signal corps wanted to make sure the Abwehr got it all wrong.

The Nazis would be gathering their intelligence information from three main sources: wireless (radio) intercept, aerial reconnaissance and agents' reports. The Nazis controlled the entire coastline of western Europe and believed that they could tap into Allied wireless traffic with ease. Therefore, the Allies planned to turn those wireless intercepts into a tool to plant deception.

Sending planned fake telegraph and radio signals for the Nazis to intercept allowed the Allies to create fictitious divisions and made it seem that they had much more strength than they really did. To make the supposed FUSAG invasion at Calais believable, the signal corps filled the radio airwaves with exactly the same messages that would accompany all those divisions moving into place around Dover, England, and preparing to invade. Some messages were sent in cipher, some not. The signal corps fed

German intelligence a combination of true and false information about troop movements, causing the Germans to deduce an order of battle which suggested an invasion at the Pas-de-Calais instead of Normandy. The fictitious divisions created for this deception were supplied with real radio units, which maintained a flow of messages consistent with the deception.

Another factor that gave credibility to the radio traffic regarding FUSAG was that it was mixed in with real messages about real troops moving into place in south-western England and preparing for the real invasion.

The 5th Wireless Group used devices that played back previously recorded messages that were broadcast on a radio system that allowed one specially equipped truck to transmit six different signals, simulating a divisional-sized unit. For example, the 5th Wireless Group was able to recreate what seemed like troops practicing an amphibious landing by studying the real thing, writing a script, and then recreating and recording the messages themselves. When the "show" was broadcast over the radio waves, the enemy could not tell the difference. Using this technique, this small group of soldiers could mimic the radio traffic of a corps of 45,000.

Simultaneously, the 3103rd Signal Service Battalion was the American part of the signal corps concerned with large scale strategic deception. It was composed of 17 radio teams in 13 different locations in south-east England, working together to simulate the various notional units supposedly waiting to invade at Calais. They were able to reproduce the radio traffic in real time to mimic any American unit from division size up, doing any type of training or maneuvering. The 3103rd sent an average of 230 phony messages a day.