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QUICKSILVER III, V, VI

PHYSICAL DECEPTION

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Overview



QUICKSILVER III, V, & VI

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 III, V, and VI dealt with the need for FUSAG's physical deception.

Several types of physical deception were used around the coast of Dover, England where FUSAG was supposed to be assembling and preparing to invade Calais, France. Dummy assault landing craft were known as wetbobs, while dummy tank landing craft were known as bigbobs. Two hundred and fifty-five of these dummies were built and displayed along the coast.

In an attempt to keep the fake landing craft a secret, they were built at Folkestone Harbor (near Dover) behind huge canvases that were hung across the streets while the men built the dummies on the beach. Civilians were not allowed near the harbor. Once the dummies had been floated, they were moored in position in the harbor, as if they were real. Soldiers of Quicksilver III would then have to maintain their condition each day, mending joints, tightening canvas and reattaching floatation drums. If all went as planned, spying Nazi flights could not get close enough to see that none of this was real.

However, the dummy landing crafts could not deceive alone. That would be like having a bunch of cars with no gas stations or roads; the enemy would quickly catch on to the ruse. Harbors (embarkation slipways from which the notional troops would board) were constructed to go alongside the dummy landing crafts to help complete the illusion. Additionally, fake troop camps, a fake dock

facility and oil storage complex was built near Dover. It was all much the same as building a set for a play or movie. Upon the dock's completion, an inspection was held by King George VI and General Montgomery. General Eisenhower also spoke at the affair, honoring the "engineers and contraction foremen." This was, of course, a staged event to take photos which were given to the newspapers and therefore leaked to the enemy.

The soldiers of Quicksilver V created the appearance of extra wireless (radio) stations and extra tunnel construction that would be consistent with all the new troops that had moved to the Dover area.

Fake runways were constructed with fake aircraft. Sound tracks blared forth the noise of aircraft engines revving, presumably prior to takeoff—just for the ears of enemy spies who might be nearby. At night, salvaged automobile headlights mounted on wheels were dragged up and down the fake airfields, conveying the impression that planes were landing and taking off.

Tanks, artillery, and trucks made of inflatable rubber were used in all the areas where Patton's huge army should have been amassing and preparing to invade Calais.

Quicksilver VI set up and maintained night lighting to simulate the troop activity that would be occurring at night where dummy landing craft and air craft were situated. Simulated beach lighting and vehicle lights suggested round the clock business in the Dover area. At the same time, deceptive lighting schemes were used to camouflage the real Allied ports in southwestern England. When actual bombs were fired at dummy areas, oil drums were lit to complete the illusion that real equipment had been hit.