

As Alan Moorehead eloquently said, regarding World War II, “Everything that was done with stealth and imagination was a success, while everything done by frontal attack was foredoomed to failure.” The Allies knew from past experiences that to win, they could not just muscle their way to victory. When the Allies joined the first World War, fighting occurred mostly in trenches, with no side having the upper hand. In the second World War the Axis Powers quickly manufactured new and more effective tanks, which led to dominance on the battlefield. By the early 1940s it was clear that to beat the Axis powers, the Allies would need a contrasting procedure from what they had been using. The Allies could not just attack with force, they needed to use strategy. This is how Operation Bodyguard was born.

The Allies, drawing on what they had learned in the first World War, built an innovative plan of action to help them win World War II. In the first World War, fighting against the Turks, the Allies struggled to take troops out of the area, because they were being beaten mercilessly. They invented a mechanism attached to rifles that slowly fired off rounds, to make it appear that there were still people fighting out of the trenches. By using this technique and only moving people at night, they extracted all the troops, totaling over 150,000 men. Also in World War I, James Belgrave, who was a twenty-one-year-old American lieutenant colonel, designed the haversack ruse. This is a collection of documents, some fake and some real, which, when seen by the enemy, introduces false information into their intelligence system. Having true information added made the falsification more believable. This was a very risky play, though, because they

had to give some information about what they were planning. The original ruse even included a letter from a soldier's wife and a photo of their baby. These acts of deception were inspirational. World War II leaders combined the techniques used in the previous conflict, and the Allies were able to build a near-perfect operation, Bodyguard. The Allies' careful formulation and execution paid off when Bodyguard was set into motion in the early 1940s.

The two main parts of Operation Bodyguard were Fortitude North and Fortitude South. Fortitude North's objective was to convince Hitler and the OKW that Norway was the main attack point. To the Germans, Norway was a crucial country to defend because they supplied over 70% of the iron ore to Germany and Russia. With excessive radio traffic, the Allies were able to make it seem that they had over 40 ships ready to attack. These "ships" were actually just frames of wood, covered in canvas, and floating in a harbor, tethered to each other. A BBC reporter broadcasted how he spent the day with a unit in southern Scotland. The reporter believed he was talking to joint forces preparing to attack Norway, but this was fictitious. They were actually preparing for the invasion of Normandy. One of the units in Scotland even had a new arm patch, a brilliant touch by British deception officers. There were many fake units designed to distract and to capture the Germans' attention. The Allies even tampered with the Swedish stock market to further emphasize the impending attack. Fortitude North was a great success, tying up over 170,000 Axis troops in defense of Norway.

The objective of Fortitude South was primarily to support the Normandy landings on D-Day. In particular, the Allies worked to convince the OKW that the landings in Normandy would be a feint. To accomplish this, they wanted to make it appear that their real attack point would be at Pas De Calais. The alleged attack was scheduled for 45 days after the Normandy

invasion, to delude the enemy even further. General Patton was put in command of the force “attacking” Pas De Calais, seemingly because of his skill, but in reality as a punishment for slapping a soldier suffering from PTSD. General Patton leading them also gave credibility to the stories the turned Axis spies were returning to their German handlers. The landing craft for Normandy was left uncovered and repositioned so the spying OKW would see it and think it was for Pas De Calais. The Allies even constructed glider planes to tow up over Pas de Calais to intimidate the enemy on D-Day. The Allies also bombed Pas De Calais and the surrounding area extensively. Because of the considerable false information planted by the Allies, the effort exerted into producing a believable story paid off, and the story was accepted by the Axis intelligence corps seamlessly.

The tactics and resources used in Operation Bodyguard were a mix of cutting edge technology and surprisingly low-tech deceptions. The lessons taught by the greatest military subterfuge in history continue to affect decisions made today. The United States Army realized the importance of deception enough to form a Psychological Operations branch, still active. From the study of the previous tactics in the First World War, everything was superbly planned. The strategies used in both Fortitude North and South are an attestation to the brilliant minds in charge of formulating them. Part of why NATO exists today is because of the camaraderie and alliances formed in the World Wars, as well. Recently, seeing the devastating effects of Russia’s war with Ukraine have reminded the world of NATO’s influence and the importance of allies. The most important aspect of Operation Bodyguard was Fortitude South. It was a colossal success, and was crucial to the Allies winning World War II, with D-Day as the turning point of the war. The whole of Bodyguard was like a massive haversack ruse, disrupting the foe and

rallying friends. The closeness, cleverness, and clout exhibited by the Allies in Operation Bodyguard will be referred to for centuries.

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