

World War II Spy Kit: The Great Nazi Intelligence Coup

Historical Background:

This project included a fictitious scenario depicting an enemy agent's acquisition of critical military information from the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), General Eisenhower's headquarters for commanding the combined Anglo-American forces against Nazi Germany in Northwest Europe in 1944-45. To develop this scenario we should ask the question: what intelligence coup by the Germans would have enabled them to inflict maximum damage on the Allied military effort in Europe during World War II? The Library staff believes that if the Germans could have covertly acquired the plans for Operation OVERLORD, including deception plans and simultaneously learned of ULTRA, the name given to intelligence acquired by the Americans and British from intercepting and decoding German military messages, the enemy could have done great damage to Allied military operations. The results might have been as follows:

1. The Germans learn of the Allied plan to launch a major amphibious assault on specified beaches on the Normandy coast during the late spring of 1944.
2. German forces are secretly deployed in order to stack the defenses overwhelmingly along these beaches.
3. German Intelligence learns of the ULTRA system so German military codes are secretly changed, rendering ULTRA worthless.
4. The Germans engage in their own deceptions to encourage the Allies to believe the Germans are planning for an Allied assault at Pas-de-Calais and fuel these deceptions by sending messages which the Allies are allowed to intercept.
5. The Anglo-American assault is launched on June 6, 1944, as planned, on the Normandy beaches, meeting unexpectedly heavy resistance and is defeated disastrously with heavy losses.
6. The opening of the second front in Europe is delayed indefinitely. The Germans bring into operation during the summer of 1944, the guided V-1 and V-2 missiles, which make the rebuilding of decimated invasion forces infinitely difficult.
7. The Germans then shift massive forces to the Eastern front, launch a major offensive against the Russian forces, inflicting huge losses. Joseph Stalin, under tremendous pressure within the Kremlin because of these setbacks and incensed because of the failure of the Americans and British to establish a beachhead on the French coast, makes peace with Germany. Germany then can concentrate on making Fortress Europe virtually impregnable.
8. Eventually, the Allies do defeat Germany but not before England is devastated with a barrage of V-1 and V-2 rockets. More resources are poured into the Manhattan Project,

which then is able to speed up its scheduled production of the atomic bomb. In the summer of 1945, the first atomic bombs fall on Germany instead of Japan. Germany then surrenders but only after the country is in total ruins and much of Europe, including Italy and France, is totally impoverished and is left teetering on the brink of communist domination.

INTRODUCTION:

Before moving into the scenario let us first look briefly at Operation OVERLORD and at ULTRA to understand their significance. OVERLORD was the code name for the largest of a series of amphibious operations launched by the United States and Great Britain against the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) during World War II. It was the Allies' supreme effort in Western Europe to defeat Germany by striking directly at her forces.

THE DILEMMA OF A CROSS-CHANNEL INVASION:

Plans for possible Anglo-American military collaboration against Germany were laid at least a year or more before the United States became directly involved in the War in December, 1941. From the time the British forces were evacuated from the clutches of the German Army at Dunkirk, France, in May, 1940, British and American planners contemplated a future cross-channel attack on the German forces with many of these planners believing such an attack to be essential to victory over Germany. During the years 1942-43 planning went on as American forces were built up in Great Britain and as the United States, Great Britain and Russia waged war on Germany on other fronts. Russia bore the brunt of the ground military action during these years and consequently suffered heavy casualties. It should not be surprising to note that Russian ruler Joseph Stalin urged the United States and Great Britain to relieve some of the pressure by opening another front against Germany in Western Europe.

After considerable deliberation and after much pressure from Stalin, the British and United States in November 1943 formally committed themselves to launching Operation OVERLORD in 1944. Even before that time, the organization known as COSSAC (Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander ETO [designated] and his invasion planning staff) had developed a plan calling for an Allied assault on selected beaches on the coast of Normandy in France. This plan was approved by the Anglo-American Combined Chiefs of Staff and during the early months of 1944 the logistics and other details necessary for implementation were worked out.

PLANNING OPERATION OVERLORD:

Throughout their elaborate planning, the Allied leaders knew that launching the attack would not be easy. The Germans fortified the European coasts from the Franco-Spanish border to Norway and made plans to defeat any assault at the beaches. Consequently,

the Americans and British had to keep the enemy guessing where and when the attack would come so that Germany would keep its forces spread out. The Normandy coast was the assault target but the Allies devised elaborate deception plans intended to make the Germans believe the assault would come at the narrow point in the English Channel at Pas-de-Calais, France or elsewhere. The deception plans called for feinting actions aimed at Norway and other places to divert enemy attention from the assault area. Finally, a ghost army of 50 divisions and a million men under the command of General George Patton was created on paper and in the message traffic to also keep the enemy off balance.

INTELLIGENCE:

The Allies were assisted in their deception plans by ULTRA, the name given to the intelligence obtained by the British from intercepting, decoding, and reading German enciphered radio communications. Early in the war, British intelligence broke the German military codes and the Allies relied heavily on this intelligence information. By reading intercepted German messages during the spring of 1944, the Allies knew their deception plans were justified as they were informed on German uncertainty as to where the expected Allied assault would land.

SECURITY:

Security was absolutely essential to the success of OVERLORD since the Allies depended on surprise and deception as important elements of the operation. If the Germans had learned of the locations and approximate date of the assaults on the Normandy beaches, they could have strengthened defenses there, increasing their chances of defeating the invasion. If the enemy found out about the Allies' ULTRA capability, they would have quickly changed their codes, rendering this intelligence system worthless. Thus strict security measures were imposed as plans for the invasion developed. Documents pertaining to invasion plans were highly security-classified and access to these was limited to a selected number of people with a clearly designated need to know. Such invasion documents were slugged with the control marking BIGOT, which indicated, even more than the classification marks TOP SECRET or SECRET, the restricted nature of the information.

Tight censorship on correspondence, including diplomatic correspondence, was imposed. Civilians were prohibited from entering the southern beach areas of England where the invasion forces were gathering. General Eisenhower issued strict orders for his commanders to keep their mouths shut about invasion plans. Violation of the orders, even inadvertently, by any American officer resulted in a swift reduction in rank and a trip back to the United States in disgrace with the officer's military career probably ruined.

THE ALLIES PREVAIL:

The results of Operation OVERLORD are now history. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, an invasion force of over 156,000 Americans, British, Canadians, and other nationalities successfully landed at five beaches code named OMAHA, UTAH, GOLD, JUNO, and SWORD. United States forces landing on OMAHA beach encountered the stiffest resistance and the outcome there remained in doubt for several hours. Casualties for the day for all Allied forces probably totaled between 9,000 and 10,000 with perhaps 3,000 killed. Many of the losses were at OMAHA beach. These totals are rough estimates and an accurate record of D-Day casualties may not exist.

The invasion force established itself in Normandy and eventually broke out of the Normandy hedgerow country and launched offensives, which pushed the Germans out of France. The Allied drive continued but met intense German resistance in the Huertgen Forest where United States forces suffered heavy casualties while fighting under extremely difficult conditions. Then, in December, the Germans launched a major offensive which also inflicted heavy losses on American forces in what has become known as the Battle of the Bulge. After stopping the German offensive in the Ardennes, Allied forces resumed offensive operations and after experiencing much harder fighting and suffering many more casualties, Allied forces crossed into Germany and fought their way to a meeting with the Russian forces on the Elbe River in April 1945.