

Excerpts from:

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## What was General Patton doing on D-Day?

### Operation Quicksilver

On June 6 1944, Patton was sitting on the shores of England at the head of a fake army. He was part of the largest and most successful deception operation of World War II. Operation Quicksilver was part of a larger deception plan called Operation Fortitude South/Operation Bodyguard. The plan was used to cloak the build up of the Allied Army and disguise the destination of the invasion.



*LTG Patton address 5th ID Northern Ireland, 30th March 1944.*

Credit: The General George Patton Museum

## What were the Allies trying to hide from the Germans?

The largest invasion ever planned; the risky and dangerous invasion of Normandy, France.



*The invasion at Normandy.*

Credit: National Archives

## How did this deception work?

General Patton was removed from command in Sicily and secretly brought to England. General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied forces, had two jobs for Patton to do. Eisenhower had selected Patton to command the Third Army, which was still in the United States. He was to make the Third Army combat ready for deployment in France after the invasion. Patton's command of the Third Army was kept secret. Eisenhower also wanted General Patton to be the commander of the First United States Army Group (FUSAG), a fictitious army built to fool the Germans.



*Patch for FUSAG.*

General Patton got this job for a number of reasons. Even though FUSAG was fake, the commander had to be real.

First, the Germans knew that only Eisenhower's best commander would be in charge of the invasion into France. Eisenhower knew the German Army was very impressed with Patton as a leader. He counted on their respect for Patton as a commander to fool them into thinking that Patton was leading an invasion into Pas de Calais, France.

Second, Patton was very famous. Newspapers, magazines and radio shows always reported Patton's actions, whether he was greeting American troops or British nobility. Patton was always in headlines so the German Army 'knew' what Patton was doing. This included the ['Affair at Knutsford'](#).

Third, the Germans expected an attack in Pas de Calais. It was the shortest distance to England. It had a good port so tanks could be easily unloaded. It was also the location of the German V-1 and V-2 rocket program that was terrorizing the civilian population in England. To convince the Germans that the attack to Pas de Calais was real, the Allies heavily bombed the city before D-Day.

## **The Third Army**

Patton was given command of the Third Army on January 26, 1944. At that time, most of the Third Army was in the United States and was preparing to move to England. The role of the Third Army was to punch a hole through the German lines after the invasion of Normandy was successful. Patton had less than six months to get the Third Army ready to invade France. Patton had a list of jobs to do. He had to establish the headquarters and supervise staff plans for training the Third Army in England so they would be ready to fight in France. He had to check that all his commanders were capable. He had to make sure that the supply and service systems were efficient so the Third Army could run smoothly. The Third Army included Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Airborne and Air Force.

In the meantime, he had make sure that everyone believed he was the commander of FUSAG and preparing for the invasion of Pas de Calais as part of Operation Fortitude South.