

1943 - 1944

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QUICKSILVER I

FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY GROUP

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Overview

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QUICKSILVER I: FIRST U.S. ARMY GROUP

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. It was divided into Fortitude North and South. One of Fortitude South's sub-plans was codenamed Quicksilver, which was also broken into six sub-plans. Quicksilver I established a phantom First United States Army Group, commonly referred to as FUSAG.

An ULTRA decrypt of January 10, 1944, showed that the Nazis had discovered the existence in England of both an American-led First Army Group and a British-led 21st Army Group. At that time, the First was small, but real and under the command of General Omar Bradley. Therefore, it was not difficult to lead the Nazis to believe that FUSAG was growing in size and preparing to strike.

FUSAG's objective was to fool German intelligence into believing the landings would occur at Pas-de-Calais, France in mid-July, 1944, rather than the real invasion site at the beaches of Normandy, France in early June. To do this, a small group of real FUSAG soldiers simulated all the aspects of about a million soldiers preparing to invade Calais from Dover, England. This meant tent cities were created all over eastern England to look like the facilities required for 50 divisions: mess halls, hospitals, ammo depots, sewage treatment farms, and fuel depots, trucks, tanks, ships, docks, etc.

To give credibility to the deception, the men of FUSAG would even wear different shoulder insignia patches and uniforms to impersonate different divisions and then go places where they knew spying eyes or press would be watching and reporting. Fake wedding announcements were even sent to the papers to "validate" that a man from a phony division was in a certain area.

If all went as planned, the Nazis would falsely conclude that the June invasion at Normandy was just a small diversion to pull German troops away from a larger main invasion yet to come at Calais.

FUSAG's most notable leader was U.S. General George Patton.

Because of his reputation as a tough and tried military leader, Hitler expected General Patton to lead troops in the main invasion. Additionally, the press followed Patton everywhere because of his flair for the dramatic and loose lips. This made him a perfect diversion for the Allies' strategic deception plan. In one instance, a captured Nazi commander was being exchanged back to Germany, so on his way home he was wined and dined one evening by Patton himself. In talking to other Allied officers at dinner, Patton "let slip" bits of information about FUSAG and Calais. As planned, the Nazi commander repeated all he had overheard at his debriefing back in Germany. Nazi high command was more convinced than ever that FUSAG was planning an invasion at Calais.

