

Description: This is a SHAEF report outlining Plan Mespot (the name was soon changed to Operation Fortitude). The Commander of SHAEF was Dwight D. Eisenhower, who just reported to the job on January 15, 1944.

Date on document: January 17, 1944

Located at the Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas

Box 60: SHAEF Office of Secretary, General Staff: Records 1943-1945 File 381: Fortitude Volume I, Operation Fortitude [1011-1150]

(IKEducation scan #183-186)

RUSSIA in the spring with the immediate object of opening a supply route through Northern NORWAY to SWEDEN, thereafter enlisting the active co-operation of SWEDEN for the establishment of air bases in Southern SWEDEN to cover an assault on DENMARK from the UNITED KINGDOM in the summer.

c. That a large scale cross-Channel operation with a minimum force of fifty divisions and with craft and shipping for twelve divisions would be carried out in late summer.

3. Plan 'BODYGUARD' also indicated that a tactical cover plan designed to deceive the enemy as to the timing, direction and weight of 'NEPTUNE' should be executed when the imminence of cross-Channel operations indicated that invasion was likely to take place before late summer.

4. Within the framework of 'BODYGUARD', Plan 'MESPOT' outlines the cover and deception policy for North-West EUROPE, based on the following assumptions:-

a. That the target date for 'NEPTUNE' will be 1st June, 1944.

b. That NO real operations, other than 'RANKIN', will be carried out in NORWAY before D day 'NEPTUNE'.

c. That Operation 'ANVIL' will be a threat and not be carried out against opposition.

OBJECT

5. To induce the enemy to make faulty dispositions in North-West EUROPE before and after the 'NEPTUNE' assault, thus:-

a. Reducing the rate and weight of reinforcement of the target area.

b. Inducing him to expend his available effort on fortifications in areas other than the target area.

c. Lowering his vigilance in FRANCE during the build-up of the 'NEPTUNE' forces in the UNITED KINGDOM.

d. Retaining forces in areas other than the target area after the 'NEPTUNE' assault.

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CONSIDERATIONSAREAS

6. Plan 'BOLYGJARD' indicates SCANDINAVIA as the most suitable area against which to maintain a long-term threat, Northern NORWAY being an intermediate objective to the establishment of air bases in Southern SWEDEN. As SWEDEN would be unlikely to concede her Southern airfields to the Allies with GERMANY still in occupation of Southern NORWAY, and as an assault on DENMARK demands the prior occupation of the BLAVANGER - OSLO area, the target for a deceptive operation should be extended to include this area.

7. As the 'NEPTUNE' preparations proceed, the scale of the threat against NORWAY will decrease and the character and location of the 'NEPTUNE' forces will demand a plausible cover area as far removed as possible from the real target area. The FAS DE CALAIS is the area which best fulfills the conditions of plausibility.

TIMING

8. Climatic conditions do not normally allow operations in Southern NORWAY before 1st April, and in Northern NORWAY before 1st May. As it would take at least three months to occupy Southern NORWAY and to establish air bases in Southern SWEDEN, the enemy would expect us to assault NORWAY as early as possible if DENMARK were to be invaded in the same year. Furthermore, to contain GERMAN forces in SCANDINAVIA, a threat should be fully developed about one month before the target date of 'NEPTUNE'. It would further assist 'NEPTUNE' to maintain a continuous threat until about D plus 21 of 'NEPTUNE'.

9. The SCANDINAVIAN threat should therefore be mounted with a target date of 'NEPTUNE' D minus 30 and be maintained until about 'NEPTUNE' D plus 21.

10. It would be plausible for the enemy to believe that the hazards of a cross-Channel operation demand the maximum assistance from all other fronts and in particular from the RUSSIAN front. As the enemy might well be led to believe that large enough forces cannot be assembled in the UNITED KINGDOM in time to take advantage of the RUSSIAN winter offensive, the cross-Channel operation should be timed to take advantage of the summer offensive. Climatic conditions on the Southern RUSSIAN front allow this offensive to start early in May and be extended to the whole front by the end of May. The enemy should be led to believe that we intend to allow this offensive to develop for six weeks until about 15th July, 1944, before launching large-scale cross-Channel operations.

11. By 'NEPTUNE' D minus 30, the movement and administrative preparations and the concentration of air forces will be nearly complete, and the concentration of craft and shipping will be between 70 and 80 per cent complete for Operation 'NEPTUNE'. Although the GERMAN Command would not necessarily expect immediate invasion by such a force against their present scale of resistance, the preparations, and the type and location of the forces will begin to threaten the 'NEPTUNE' area unless preparations for the concentration of similar forces are made in EAST and South-East ENGLAND. In order, however, to minimize our state of preparedness as a whole, the preparations in the EAST and South-East should indicate a target date of 15th July, 1944.

DISPOSITION OF FORCES

12. A total of about sixty-two divisions would be required for the deceptive operations; that is, two to Northern NORWAY, ten to Southern NORWAY and fifty to the English-Channel operation.

13. At the present rate of build-up in the UNITED KINGDOM there would only be about fifty-three divisions, with craft and shipping for twelve available for operations by 15th July, 1944. We should, therefore, induce the enemy to believe that the deficiency of about nine divisions will be made up from the USA during the operation. At the same time, in order to emphasize a later target date of 15th July, 1944, we should minimize the state of preparedness of the 'NEPTUNE' forces by misleading the enemy about their state of training, organization, equipment and their location.

STORY 'A'From now until the 'NEPTUNE' assault

14. The enemy should be induced to believe that the Allies will carry out the following operations in North-West EUROPE in 1944.

OCCUPATION OPERATIONS

15. From 1st February, 1944, balanced forces are being held in readiness to occupy any part of North-West EUROPE in the event of GERMAN withdrawal or collapse.

SOUTHERN NORWAY

16. With a target date of 1st May, 1944, an operation will be mounted from the MERSEY and Humber and the ports to the NORTH to invade Southern NORWAY. The assault will be made in the STAVANGER area by one infantry division and one regimental combat team supported by parachute troops and commandos, followed up by one infantry division.

17. The force will be built up to a total of ten divisions within three months, a proportion of this force being mountain trained. An advance to OSLO will be made along the coast by a series of mutually supporting land and amphibious operations, involving the use of landing craft sufficient to lift one brigade group.

18. Allied naval forces will escort the convoys and support the assault and subsequent amphibious operations. The assault will be supported by carrier-borne aircraft. Long range fighters will be flown in from the UNITED KINGDOM as soon as airfields are captured.

NORTHERN NORWAY

19. With a target date of 1st May, 1944, an operation will be mounted by US, BRITISH and RUSSIAN forces against Northern NORWAY to open road and railway communications with SWEDEN. The operation will be supported by ANGLO-AMERICAN naval forces, including aircraft carriers.

DENMARK

20. As soon as the Allies are firmly established in Southern NORWAY with Allied air forces operating from there and Southern SWEDEN, an assault will be launched on DENMARK.

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21. On or about 1st May, 1944, the enemy should be led to believe that both SCANDINAVIAN operations have been postponed, but that the forces are held in readiness to be launched at short notice.

PAS DE CALAIS

22. With a target date of 15th July, 1944, a cross-Channel operation will be carried out by a total force of fifty divisions with craft and shipping for twelve divisions. The assault will be made in the PAS DE CALAIS area by seven divisions, two EAST and five SOUTH of CAP GRIS NEZ. The follow-up and immediate build-up will be a further five divisions. The force will be built up to the total of fifty divisions at the rate of about three divisions per day.

23. The first phase of the operation will be the establishment of a bridgehead which must include the major part of ANTWERP and the communication centre of BRUSSELS. From this bridgehead large-scale operations will be conducted against the MEUSE with the final object of occupying GERMANY.

24. The operation will be mounted as follows:-

- Two assault and one follow-up divisions from the WASH to DEAL.
- Five assault divisions from the SOUTH coast.
- Two follow-up divisions from BRISTOL CHANNEL.
- One build-up division from the Humber and TYNE.
- One build-up division from the MERSEY and GLYDE.

SOUTH OF FRANCE

25. With a target date 15th July, 1944, an amphibious operation will be launched from bases in CORSICA and the MEDITERRANEAN, against the area TOULON - MARSEILLES with the primary object of introducing FRENCH forces into FRANCE.

STORY 'B'

'NEPTUNE' D day to D plus 21

26. After D day of 'NEPTUNE' until about D plus 21, the enemy should be induced to believe subsequent operations will be carried out as given below.

PAS DE CALAIS (Maintenance of the threat)

27. A force of one assault, one follow-up and four build-up divisions is assembled in and behind the THAMES Estuary and the South-East coast ports to carry out a subsidiary operation in the PAS DE CALAIS area with object of drawing GERMAN forces away from the MAIN target area.

SOUTH OF FRANCE

28. The assault on the SOUTH coast of FRANCE will be made any time after 'NEPTUNE' D day.

SCANDINAVIA

29. The postponed operations in NORWAY and SWEDEN (see STORY 'A'), will be carried out as soon as sufficient shipping is available from 'NEPTUNE', the assault on DENMARK being postponed until spring 1945.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ALLOCATION OF TASKS

30. The allocation of tasks for the implementation of the Occupation, SCANDINAVIAN and PAS DE CALAIS operations is at Appendix 'A'.

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