

OPERATION QUICKSILVER MAY AND JUNE 1944

"All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when we are able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must appear inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near." Sun Tze 771-256 BC

Operation Bodyguard was the codename given to the overall deception strategy in preparation for **Operation Overlord**, the invasion of western Europe in 1944 which culminated in **Operation Neptune**, the Normandy Landings on D-Day, 6th June.

The single, most important part of Operation Bodyguard was **Operation Fortitude**, the largest, most elaborate, most carefully planned, most vital, and most successful of all Allied deception operations. It was pursued in utmost secrecy.

Fortitude was divided in two parts. **Fortitude North** simulated a massive assault on Norway. **Fortitude South** simulated a massive attack on the Pas-de-Calais, which the Germans thought was the most likely location for an assault being the closest point to England. Both required the realistic presence of phantom field armies, presenting a genuine threat. The First United States Army Group (FUSAG), a phantom army, was at the centre of the deception, led by General Patton, with double agents convincing German High command that it would lead the main assault. And that the Normandy invasion force was a feint, with the main invasion taking place six weeks afterwards at Pas de Calais. Furthermore, this had to disguise the mustering of massive troops number and equipment in the south of England. Visible preparations had to be seen in Eastern England where there was "neglect of concealment", whereas in the leafy lanes and fields of Hampshire there was a maximum concealment area. For any deception to work there had to be perfect security along the south coast of England. A coastal strip was "closed" from April 1 1944.



The six principal elements in the Fortitude South deception were codenamed **Quicksilver**.

Operation Quicksilver

Quicksilver I – fiction that main Allied assault would be directed at the Pas-de-Calais several weeks after the Normandy landings

Quicksilver II - radio deception through simulated radio traffic

Quicksilver III – display of landing craft around the east and south-east coast of England

Quicksilver IV – bombing of the Pas de Calais beaches and of communications in the area to suggest imminent assault

Quicksilver V – increase activity in Dover to suggest embarkation preparations.

Quicksilver VI – misleading and protective lighting schemes along the South Coast

Woolverstone had a part to play in Operation Quicksilver: Quicksilver III.

The idea was to construct a fleet of dummy landing craft which would be moored along the South-East and East coast. Woolverstone, Cat House hard, had been constructed two years previously. Access to the River Orwell and with a heavily wooded fringe was an ideal location for the secret construction of dummy landing craft.

SUBJECT: Dummy Craft Indication
HQ Home Forces
TOP SECRET
21 Army Gp/00/061/3/GK

1. The following is the proposed layout of dummy craft in Eastern and South Eastern Comds.

SERIAL	PLACE	QUANTITY OF CRAFT	SUGGESTED STORAGE PLACE	LAUNCHING HARD	AREA OF BERTHING
1	YARMOUTH ref OS 1 to Mile sheet	50 67	FITCHERS QUAY 966256 and Rly Yard 966256	FITCHERS QUAY and Rly Yard	BREYDON WATERS
2	LOWESTOFT ref OS 1 to 1 mile sheet 77	20	CHAMBERS YARD	CHAMBERS YARD	WATER 962105-966105
3	WALDRINGFIELD R. DEBEN ref OS 1 to 1 mile sheet 67	66	WALDRINGFIELD	WALDRINGFIELD R. DEBEN	
4	WOOLVERSTONE CAT HOUSE R. ORWELL ref OS 1 to 1 mile sheet 67	70	WOOLVERSTONE PK.	CAT HOUSE WOOLVERSTONE FIN MILL	R. ORWELL
5	DOVER ref OS 1 to 1 mile sheet 117A	40	To be found by SBDO	BEACH 760950 Hard below Castle	DOVER HARBOUR
6	FOLKESTONE ref OS 1 to 1 mile sheet 117A	20	To be found by SBDO	BEACH to EAST of Fish Market. Hard at Pier	FOLKESTONE HARBOUR

2. The above details have been drawn up as the result of a recon carried out by this HQ in conjunction with Naval officers in command of the areas concerned, as well as the Comd regts. Whilst the berthing areas might be slightly amended to conform with revised Naval berthing plans, the above are sufficiently firm for planning purposes. It is requested that this HQ may be informed as soon as possible as to the final craft storage areas for each launching site in order that the delivery of craft may commence as soon as possible.

3. The following data is given to assist in the selection of storage areas:
1 Bigtop occupies 100 square yards. Craft cannot be stored one on top of the other. If possible they should be stored in separate groups in order to facilitate assembly.

4. Please acknowledge receipt of the attached AP A16.

HQ 21 Army Group.
No 1 AFHQ
LONDON W1
2 April 44.

(SGN) D.I. Strangeways Lt Col
(For General C-in C)

To be successful, this part of the deception plan had to demonstrate that the means existed to carry assault troops from FUSAG to the Pas de Calais. Abundant signs of Landing Craft in the quiet rivers and estuaries of the East Coast would support this idea. As would the appearance of mustering points and encampments.

This deception programme, Operation Quicksilver, was masterminded by Colonel David Strangeways, DSO OBE.

Much of the information we have on Operation Quicksilver III comes from the experiences of a young Naval officer, **Peter Tooley**, who was tasked with the building and launching of Bigbobs from Cathouse hard, Woolverstone, onto the Orwell. His book, Operation Quicksilver (1988), takes the reader through the genesis of the plan, the secret trials and mounting the deception itself.

TOP SECRET
Appendix 'A'
"BIGBOB" - PHASE PROGRAMME

	Number to be launched each day						Sailing movements of real LCTs				
	Yarmouth	Lowestoft	River Deben	River Orwell	Dover	Folkestone	BUILD UP	Yarh/Lowestoft	Yarh/Deben	Deben/Dover	Dover/Folkin
May	20	4					4				
	21	4					8				
	22	4	4				16	4	4		
	23	4	4				24	4	4		
	24	1	4	4			32	3	4	4	5
	25	4	3	4	5		52	3	3	4	
	26	4	3	1	4		63	1	4	4	5
	27	4	1	4	4	5	80	4	4	1	5
	28	1	4	1	4	5	97	1	4	4	4
	29	4	1	4	4	4	113		1	4	5
	30	4	1	1	4	5	126		1	4	5
	31	4	1	4	4	5	147		1	3	5
June	1	4	1	3	1	5	159		1	3	1
	2	3	1	3	4	2	217	3	3	1	4
	3	1	3	3	1		183	2	3	4	4
	4	2	2	3	4	4	198		1	4	4
	5	1	1	1	4	4	206	2	3	4	
	6	1	2	3	4	1	215	3	3	4	
	7	1	3	3	4	1	225	1	3	1	5
	8	1	1	3	1	5	233	1	3	4	2
	9	1	1	3	4	1	241	1	2	4	
	10	1	1	3	4	1	248		1	4	
	11	1	1	1	4	1	252		1	3	
	12	1	1	1	3	1	255		1	1	
Total	149	20	59	63	46	18	255				



Sub-Lieutenant Peter Tooley RNVR

