

= Operation Ferdinand =

Operation Ferdinand was a military deception employed by the Allies during the Second World War . It formed part of Operation Bodyguard , a major strategic deception intended to misdirect and confuse German high command about Allied invasion plans during 1944 . Ferdinand consisted of strategic and tactical deceptions intended to draw attention away from the Operation Dragoon landing areas in southern France by threatening an invasion of Genoa in Italy . Planned by Eugene Sweeney in June and July 1944 and operated until early September , it has been described as " quite the most successful of ' A ' Force 's strategic deceptions " . It helped the Allies achieve complete tactical surprise in their landings and pinned down German troops in the Genoa region until late July .

= = Background = =

Operation Ferdinand formed part of Operation Bodyguard , a broad strategic military deception intended to confuse the Axis high command as to Allied intentions during the lead @-@ up to the Normandy landings . During early 1944 the main thrust of deceptions in the Middle Eastern theatre were contained under Operation Zeppelin (including its sub @-@ plan Vendetta) , which developed threats against Greece and Southern France , and Operation Royal Flush , which ran political deceptions against Spain and Turkey . On 14 June the Allies committed to a landing in Southern France , codenamed Operation Dragoon (formerly Anvil) . Royal Flush and Zeppelin were scaled back , to tone down the threat to France , and it was decided a new plan (Ferdinand) was required to cover the intended invasion .

The Allied nations invaded Italy in September 1943 and by mid @-@ 1944 had pushed the Germans back to the Gothic Line in the North of the country . Ferdinand was intended to develop a threat against Genoa , as part of an expected Allied assault on the Gothic Line in August / September 1944 . German forces in the French Riviera (originally threatened by Vendetta) were to be put at relative ease , but not left feeling too secure lest they be moved to re @-@ inforce Normandy . Planning for the operation was handled by ' A ' Force ; the department in charge of deception in the Middle East . A large part of the operation planning was handed to Major Eugene J Sweeney , an Irish @-@ American career officer who had joined the department in late 1943 with the express task of learning the arts of deception before the war ended . Working out of Algiers , at Advanced HQ (West) , Sweeney helped implement several deceptions . The most notable of these was Operation Oakfield , the cover plan for Operation Shingle and the Battle of Anzio .

John Bevan , head of the London Controlling Section , met with Colonel Dudley Clarke (head of ' A ' Force) in Algiers in early June to decide on the outline for Ferdinand . After four days he returned to London leaving ' A ' Force to work on the draft . On 4 July the draft was approved by Field Marshall Henry Wilson , Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean theatre . In July , Seventh Army HQ (the army group due to be used for Dragoon) moved from Algeria to Naples . Sweeney moved with them , as the head of the newly formed No. 2 Tac HQ , and tasked by Colonel Clarke to focus entirely on planning for Ferdinand . Sweeney worked on the plan until its final form on 28 July . Despite not being completed until the end of the month Ferdinand went into effect as soon as the first draft was approved .

= = Operation = =

Ferdinand was a complex plan , involving misinformation and extensive physical deception . The underlying plot was the Allied forces had been surprised to find the Germans had not moved forces from the Mediterranean to re @-@ inforce Normandy . Therefore , plans to invade southern France and the Balkans were looking less appealing . Instead the Allied commanders had decided to focus all of their resources on the Italian campaign . The real force assigned to Dragoon , the US VI Corps , would land in Genoa . Meanwhile , notional formations , such as the Seventh Army and the British 5th Airborne Division would support pushes along the Italian front and threaten targets in the

Balkans . Ferdinand also recycled some of Zeppelin 's threats against Turkey with the fictional British Ninth and Twelfth Armies .

The key to Ferdinand was the threat to Genoa . Intelligence intercepts showed that the Abwehr (German military intelligence) listed it as one of the main areas they expected an Allied attack . It was not possible to hide the buildup of naval and amphibious forces in the region , which were easily accessible to German aerial reconnaissance . German commanders identified both Genoa and southern France as the only logical targets , so the task for Allied double agents was to convince them that the former was the true goal . The deception was maintained on the invasion date itself , with a tactical deception . The Dragoon fleet travelled on a course toward Genoa until late at night on 14 August , when they turned west toward their real target .

The Ferdinand threat was continued until 8 September , to support the Allied efforts in France and Italy . It was ' A ' Force 's last major operation , a brief follow up called Braintree was designed but never implemented because the overall Bodyguard strategy had been mothballed in late August .

= = Related operations = =

At the same time as Ferdinand , Tac HQ ran Otterington . This deception built a threat against Rimini in the east of Italy , in support of Alexander 's proposed assault on the centre of the Gothic Line . It developed a pincer movement , in tandem with Ferdinand 's threat to the west . However , once Otterington had gotten underway , with a major buildup of dummy armour , Alexander changed his plans and decided to push against Rimini . Clarke hastily implemented Ulster , a double bluff in which Otterington was revealed as a sham in the hope it would distract attention from that sector .

= = Impact = =

Ferdinand successfully led Fremde Heere West (German military intelligence for the Western Front , also referred to as FHW) to expect a landing in Genoa . In late July and early August the buildup of forces in Italy made it clear that a seaborne invasion was imminent , and the deception was successful in creating this as a realistic threat to Genoa . As a result , the Dragoon landings achieved complete tactical surprise . In his history of British wartime intelligence , historian Michael Howard calls it the " most successful of ' A ' Force 's strategic operations " . However , Howard states that the overwhelming force used for Operation Dragoon meant that the element of surprise was less important than on D @-@ Day .