

= 1st SAS Brigade =

The 1st Special Air Service Brigade (1st SAS) was a fictional brigade during the Second World War . It was first formed in Cairo in 1941 , as part of a deception by Brigadier Dudley Clarke , to play on Italian fears of airborne attacks . Clarke used documents , photographs , news reports and even fake SAS soldiers to plant information about the brigade ? he even named the Cairo @-@ based deception department , ' A ' Force , to bolster evidence of their existence .

In the summer of 1941 , when David Stirling was pitching his idea for a dedicated airborne commando unit (which later evolved into the Special Air Service) he obtained Clarke 's support partly by promising to use the SAS name . From late 1942 , Clarke used the 1st SAS in his major order of battle deception (codenamed Operation Cascade) . The brigade formed part of the fictional 4th Airborne Division ; between then and the end of the war it was used to mislead Axis commanders about the strength of Allied forces in North Africa , and as part of several specific tactical deceptions .

= = Formation = =

In late 1940 the Allies recovered the journal of an Italian officer during an operation at Sidi Barrani . The diary referred to fears of British paratroopers being landed to the Italian rear . At the time the Allies had no airborne troops in the North African region . Dudley Clarke , in charge of military deception in the region , decided to play on these fears by creating a fictional airborne unit . Clarke began Operation Abeam in January 1941 by creating a paper trail for the 1st SAS Brigade . The fictional unit was supposedly training for special missions in Transjordan . Clarke established their existence using documentary and physical subterfuge . Photographs of parachutists were printed in local papers , documents were planted with the enemy , Allied airmen were warned to look out for gliders (Victor Jones mocked up some dummies to support the story) , and a section of desert was cordoned off for " training " . To aid the rumours , two soldiers were dressed in 1st SAS uniforms and wandered around the Allied @-@ held cities of Cairo , Port Said , and Alexandria , where they were briefed to hint at missions in Crete or Libya .

By March , Clarke 's deception operations had grown and it was decided to create a formal department . He chose the name Advanced Headquarters ' A ' Force - the ' A ' being a subtle reference to airborne - in the hope that it would help support the existence of paratroopers in the area (as well as hide the true purpose of the department) . Clarke continued actively promoting the existence of 1st SAS until around June 1941 , and it appears that Axis commanders accepted the brigade as real . Clarke had created the unit with no specific aims , although it did mean that the enemy command had to factor the existence of airborne troops into any battle plan . However , Abeam and the 1st SAS represented his first attempt at inflating the apparent strength of Allied forces , a tactic he would use significantly over the rest of the war . The brigade occasionally featured in Clarke 's tactical deceptions ; such as a March 1941 threat to Axis supply lines near Tripoli .

= = = Stirling 's SAS = = =

In May 1941 , David Stirling , an injured British forces Commando in the North Africa theatre , proposed the idea of small airborne special forces units to operate behind enemy lines . Whilst lobbying for support within Middle East Command it came to Clarke 's attention , who offered his backing provided the force could also be used to help his own deception schemes .

The name SAS came mainly from the fact I was anxious to get the full co @-@ operation of a very ingenious individual called Dudley Clark [e] , who was responsible for running a deception operation in Cairo ... Clark [e] was quite an influential chap and promised to give me all the help he could if I would use the name of his bogus brigade of parachutists , which is the Special Air Service , the SAS

Stirling 's plan received approval in the summer of 1941 and the unit was designated " L "

Detachment , Special Air Service . The name was intended to add further evidence of an airborne presence , specifically 1st SAS , in the region .

= = 4th Airborne = =

Through 1941 and 1942 , 1st SAS formed part of Clarke 's overall strategy to deceive the Axis about the strength of Allied forces in the region . In early 1942 , this ad hoc situation was formalised as Operation Cascade ; an entire fictional order of battle featuring numerous units .

By late 1942 , the Allies had begun to train a number of real airborne units in the North African theatre . Clarke created the fictional 4th Airborne Division out of several units , both real and fictional , including 1st SAS . Under the umbrella of Cascade , the aim was to mislead the Axis that paratroopers , most of whom were still training , posed a realistic threat . The 4th Airborne were utilised in a number of specific operational deceptions over the next few years (including Operation Zeppelin and Operation Barclay) , most often to threaten fictional invasions as a distraction from real Allied operations .