

= Operation Zeppelin ( deception plan ) =

Operation Zeppelin ( along with its follow up subsidiaries , Vendetta and Turpitude ) was a major military deception operation run by the British during the Second World War . It formed part of Operation Bodyguard , the cover plan for the invasion of Normandy in 1944 , and was intended to mislead German intelligence as to the Allied invasion plans in the Mediterranean theatre that year . The operation was planned by ' A ' Force and implemented by means of visual deception and misinformation .

Zeppelin was executed in five phases between February and July 1944 . The story behind each stage developed various invasion threats against Greece , Albania , Croatia , Turkey , Bulgaria and France . The latter portions of the operation received their own codenames . Vendetta referred to a threat toward Southern France close to D @-@ Day whilst Turpitude was the codename for the final stage of Zeppelin , an overland threat to Greece and Bulgaria .

It is unclear how much impact Zeppelin had on German response in the region , though the aims of the deception were achieved ( tying up German defensive forces in the Mediterranean beyond D @-@ Day ) . Post @-@ war analysis of German intelligence documents indicated that they did overstate Allied forces in the way Zeppelin intended . However , the German high command did not come to expect a major invasion in the Balkans .

= = Background = =

In preparation for the 1944 invasion of Normandy , the Allied nations conducted a complex series of deceptions under the codename Bodyguard . This was a large strategic plan with the aim of misleading the German high command as to Allied intentions in 1944 . Whilst the main focus of Bodyguard was on the invasion of Western France , additional plans supported operations in the Mediterranean and Scandinavia .

In 1941 , ' A ' Force ( the Cairo @-@ based department responsible for deception operations in the North Africa ) had begun an operation , codenamed Cascade , to inflate the number of troops in the region by creating fictional divisions . By 1943 the use of notional formations had proved a useful part of deception operations , and the practice formed the basis for key parts of Bodyguard . The Allies invaded Italy in September 1943 and by the end of the year had occupied most of the south of the country . Thirty @-@ eight divisions were deployed across the Mediterranean theatre , mostly in Italy with some in North Africa .

The various deceptions to fulfil the Mediterranean portion of Bodyguard were given the codename Zeppelin , with follow up subsidiaries called Vendetta and Turpitude . Its initial overall aims were to tie down German defensive forces in the region , but without suggesting too great a threat to Southern France ( until the Allies had decided whether or not to conduct landings there ) .

Planning for the operation was begun by ' A ' Force in January 1944 . The deception required an increase in the fictional troops that Operation Cascade had created . Operation Wantage succeeded from Cascade on 6 February with the aim over inflating Allied troops by thirty percent .

= = Operation = =

Zeppelin , and its constituent plans Vendetta and Turpitude , focused on tying down German resources in Southern France and The Balkans . Its aim was , during early 1944 , to distract attention from a potential Allied invasion of Southern France ( Operation Dragoon ) by creating a fictional threat against Crete and Croatia . It also intended to tie up troops in the Eastern Mediterranean so they would not be re @-@ deployed to France during the Allied campaign . Zeppelin 's " story " would be that the notional British Twelfth Army were preparing for an amphibious landing , from North Africa into The Balkans , supported by a Russian overland invasion into Albania and Polish forces staged out of Italy .

Zeppelin was put across through various means . Double agents relayed messages about troop movements , dummy formations and radio traffic were created and searches were conducted for

local guides and maps , as would be made in preparation for a real invasion . Nearly 600 messages were sent through agents , who were used extensively and at considerable risk of exposure . Dummy formations were created in Italy and Libya , Colonel Victor Jones began depicting both an Armoured and Airborne divisions near Tobruk for the first stage of the operation .

The first stage of Zeppelin commenced on 8 February , with threats to Greece and Crete . A provisional date for the supposed invasion was set at 29 March ( to take advantage of the full moon ) . On 10 March the operation moved to a second stage , where the fictional operation was delayed until April and May to join up with a supposed Russian invasion of Bulgaria . Stage two was communicated through an sub @-@ plan called Dungloe , involving double agents back in England . The story passed to the Germans was that radio messages would inform friendly leaders in Yugoslavia of the intended invasion dates and any delays .

The third stage of Zeppelin involved a delay until 21 May , on the basis that the Russians had asked for them to be synchronised with their own invasion plans . This ran from 21 April until 9 May , when a major revision to the plans ( stage four ) was introduced . The Twelfth Army and Polish forces would land in Albania and Croatia , bypassing Greece due to mutiny within Allied Greek forces in Africa , with an invasion set in June . A major invasion of Southern France was also added , codenamed Vendetta .

= = = Vendetta = = =

The Allies had already decided to mount an invasion of southern France ( Dragoon ) , which occurred in August 1944 . Vendetta 's story was agreed in the first week of May and deception work started on 9 May . Its aim was to detain German forces in Southern France for up to twenty five days following the Normandy landings . The plan threatened a landing near Sete ( chosen for its distance from the Dragoon landing site ) by the US Seventh Army , consisting of fictional divisions , and some French units . Vendetta was supported by a diplomatic deception , Operation Royal Flush , which requested support from the Spanish government to allow injured soldiers to be evacuated following an invasion .

For Vendetta , stores were stockpiled in Algerian ports and Allied troops were given maps for the supposed landing zones . A naval exercise , involving sixty ships , was run between 9 and 11 June which included embarking thousands of men and vehicles from the US 91st Infantry Division . On 11 June , the Algerian borders were closed , a natural precursor to invasion .

The deception could not be maintained for long . The British carriers Indomitable and Victorious , that had formed a key part of the naval deception , left for the Indian Ocean . Meanwhile the 91st left to deploy in Italy . From 24 June the Allies began to wind down Vendetta with the story that due to German forces remaining in the south of France ( rather than moving to Normandy ) that the invasion had been delayed .

= = = Turpitude = = =

The final phase of Zeppelin was codenamed Turpitude , the story for which was an overland invasion of Greece by British troops via Turkey and the Soviet Union via Bulgaria . It was planned in the most part by ' A ' Force 's Michael Crichton in Cairo . Deception efforts for Turpitude were focused in Syria , and around the ports of Tripoli and Lattakia . The Allies hoped to indicate a spoiling attack against the island of Rhodes before the main attack against Salonika . Turpitude finished on 26 June and Zeppelin officially came to a close on 6 July 1944 .

Turpitude was communicated through visual deceptions in Syria by all three armed forces . The RAF flew reconnaissance flights across the supposed targets , whilst the Navy set up major facilities in the Syrian coastal ports ( anti @-@ aircraft guns , search lights and other efforts that might hide major activity ) . Along the Turkish border the British Ninth Army ( the small force protecting Syria ) , the 31st Indian Armoured Division and 20th Armoured Division ( a fictional division , really the dummy tanks of Jones ' 24th Armoured Brigade ) put on a show of readiness . Political deception , via Royal Flush , was also used to hint heavily at Allied actions in the region .

= = Impact = =

The Allies considered Zeppelin to have achieved its main objective of tying down German forces in the region until after the invasion of Normandy , although it did not appear to convince German high command that major Allied landings would occur in the Mediterranean . Instead , Zeppelin helped the Allies achieve their objective by convincing the Germans of the threat of small invasions , stopping them from removing the defensive forces . According to Jacob Field , the operation successfully detained 25 divisions in defensive positions in the region .

The operation did affect German analysis of Allied troop strength . In early 1944 the Allies had 38 divisions in the region , but the German battle plan identified up to 71 . Whether directly related to Zeppelin or not , German forces remained in the Mediterranean throughout May 1944 , and so were not available to reinforce Normandy in June .

With Vendetta the Allies may have oversold the deception . Vendetta 's various deceptions , coupled with political overtures in Spain ( Operation Royal Flush ) , created what German intelligence called " wealth of alarming reports " . However , these were assessed as deceptive in nature probably due to their volume . In mid @-@ June the German command decided that although the Allies had enough troops in North Africa to effect an invasion they lacked the landing craft to actually undertake the operation . Despite this , the reports had held enough credibility in late May and early June that , on the eve of the Normandy Landings , German divisions were deploying in defensive positions along the southern coast . Troops did not begin moving north until June and July .

Turpitude had an impact in Turkey , with reports in early June of discussion within the country 's political and military spheres . On 10 June , the German ambassador to Turkey reported that the government were concerned about the possibility of the Allies using the country as a staging ground . The ambassador 's report , which included details of Allied military build up in the area , was treated with scepticism by German high command who were unable to verify some of the information . However , the German intelligence apparatus issued warnings of probable Allied operations in the region , and requested " exceptional vigilance " from forces stationed there .