80th Infantry (Reserve) Division (United Kingdom) =

The 80th Infantry (Reserve) Division was an infantry division of the British Army formed at the beginning of 1943 , during the Second World War . For the twenty months that the division existed , it was a training formation . Army recruits that had been assigned to the division and fully trained were allocated to formations fighting overseas . Notably , the division was used as a source of reinforcements for the 21st Army Group , which was fighting in Normandy . After all available troops left the United Kingdom for France , the division was disbanded .

A phantom 80th Infantry Division was formed in the division 's place to aid the Operation Fortitude deception effort that supported the invasion of France . This division was part of the notional British Fourth Army , which was portrayed as part of the threatened Allied landing at the Pas de Calais . The overall deception plan was successful , and affected the German response to the Allied invasion . The phantom division was " disbanded " towards the end of the war .

= Divisional history = =

= = Training formation = = =

During the Second World War , the divisions of the British Army were divided between " Higher Establishment " and " Lower Establishment " formations . The former were intended for deployment overseas and combat , whereas the latter were strictly for home defence in a static role . During the winter of 1942 ? 43 , three " Lower Establishment " divisions were renamed " Reserve Divisions " . On 1 January 1943 , these three were supplemented by the raising of a new reserve division , the 80th Infantry , placed under the command of Major @-@ General Lionel Howard Cox . The four reserve divisions were used as training units . Soldiers who had completed their corps training were assigned to these divisions . The soldiers were given five weeks of additional training at the section , platoon and company level , before undertaking a final three @-@ day exercise . Troops would then be ready to be sent overseas to join other formations . Training was handled in this manner to relieve the " Higher Establishment " divisions from being milked for replacements for other units and to allow them to intensively train without the interruption of having to handle new recruits .

During its existence , the 80th Division was assigned to Western Command . The division was spread out across Western Command 's area of responsibility with at least one battalion based in Bowerham Barracks , Lancaster , Lancashire and another based around Shropshire . The Imperial War Museum comments that the division insignia of a troopship was derived from " one of the prime functions of the Division [that being] to find drafts for overseas postings " . The design included " two long and prominent bow waves from the ship " , which resulted in the troops giving it the nickname the " torpedoed troopship " . The insignia was only worn by the permanent members of the division .

On 30 June 1944 , the four training divisions had a combined total of 22 @,@ 355 men . Of this number , only 1 @,@ 100 were immediately available as replacements for the 21st Army Group . The remaining 21 @,@ 255 men were considered ineligible at that time for service abroad , for medical reasons , or for not being fully fit or fully trained , or for other reasons . Over the following six months , up to 75 per cent of these men would be deployed to reinforce 21st Army Group following the completion of their training and certification of fitness . Stephen Hart comments that , by September , the 21st Army Group " had bled Home Forces dry of draftable riflemen " after the losses suffered during the Normandy Campaign , leaving the army in Britain , with the exception of the 52nd (Lowland) Infantry Division , with just " young lads , old men , and the unfit " . On 1 September 1944 , the division was disbanded . Cox took command of the 38th Infantry (Reserve) Division , which took over the role of the 80th Division .

= = Deception formation = = =

The creation of the fictitious division arose from an actual reorganization of British forces . During 1944 , the British Army was facing a manpower crisis as it did not have enough men to replace the losses to front line infantry . While efforts were made to address this (such as transferring men from the Royal Artillery and Royal Air Force to be retrained as infantry) , the War Office began disbanding divisions to downsize the army so as to transfer men to other units to help keep those as close to full strength as possible . The War Office decided to disband several " Lower Establishment " divisions , which included the 80th Infantry (Reserve) Division .

The Fortitude deception staff seized upon this opportunity to retain the division as a phantom unit . A cover story was established to explain the change in the division 's status . It was claimed that with the war nearing an end , several Territorial Army divisions would revert to their peacetime recruiting role and release their equipment and resources to other units . For the 80th , this was the 38th Division . With the transfer of equipment , the 80th was notionally raised to the " Higher Establishment " , readied for war , and joined the phantom VII Corps that was part of the notional British Fourth Army . The phantom 80th , retaining the insignia of the real division , was supposedly based in Canterbury and composed of the 50th , 208th and 211th brigades .

The notional Fourth Army was part of Operation Bodyguard , the codename for the deception plan designed to protect Operation Overlord . Initially , the Fourth Army was part of Fortitude North . This plan aimed to make the Germans believe that the notional 250 @,@ 000 @-@ strong Fourth Army , based in Scotland , would assault Norway . The deception plan aimed to keep the German garrison of nearly half a million men stationed in Norway to resist such an attack . Following the invasion of Normandy , the Fourth Army was " transferred " south to reinforce the First United States Army Group (FUSAG) , another fictitious formation . Fortitude South aimed to convince the Germans that FUSAG had 500 @,@ 000 men in more than fifty divisions and would launch the main Allied invasion in the Pas de Calais , 45 days after the Normandy landings . The goal of the operation was to persuade the Germans not to move the 18 divisions of the 15th Army to Normandy . VII Corps was notionally transferred south , as part of Fourth Army , to join FUSAG . Following this move , the newly created fictitious 80th Infantry Division was assigned to the imaginary Corps . To aid in the deception , signallers from the 61st Infantry Division maintained wireless traffic , to give the Germans the impression of an actual 80th Division . In addition , Juan Pujol García , the British double agent known as Garbo who played a vital role in Fortitude , reported to the Germans that the 80th Division was undertaking assault training .

Fortitude South has been credited with ensuring the German 15th Army was not deployed against the Allied invasion force too soon and ensuring the success of Operation Overlord . Gerhard Weinberg stated that the Germans " readily accepted the existence and location " of FUSAG , believed the threat to the Pas de Calais was real and " it was only at the end of July " that they realized a second assault was not coming ; " by that time , it was too late to move reinforcements " . However , Mary Barbier wrote " it is time to consider that the importance of the deception has been overrated " . She argues that 15th Army was largely immobile and not combat @-@ ready , that despite the deception numerous German divisions ? including the 1st SS Panzer Division , which was held in reserve behind the 15th Army ? from across Europe were transferred to Normandy to repel the invasion , and that the Germans had realized as early as May that a real threat to Normandy existed . Barbier further commented that while the Germans believed the deception due to " preconceived ideas about the importance of the Pas De Calais " , the Allied staff had overestimated the effectiveness of the deception after the 15th Army 's inaction because they held a " preconceived notion of what FORTITUDE would accomplish " . Following the Battle of Normandy , the phantom 80th Division was " transferred " around the east coast of England , moving back and forth between VII Corps and the equally bogus II Corps . The division was eventually " disbanded " in April 1945 .

= = General officer commanding = =

= = Order of Battle = =