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Diversion and Deception in Warfare

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Abstract

Military deception operations made up a large portion of the individual conflicts of World War II. During this war period Great Britain put into place operations groups to oversee the specific planning and carrying out of these deception plans. The work of Dr. Whitney T. Bendeck centers on the military deception plans employed by Great Britain during World War II, focusing on the British “A” Force. Through analyzing historical records pertaining directly to the employment of Great Britain’s deception operations, we search for mentions of the specific deception-planning department Ops B run under Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) as well as the links between the British deception group and the deception group hosted by the U.S. Currently this research is in its preliminary stages and is focused on gathering information about these deception groups and their roles in World War II. This research is being conducted in order to create a comprehensive study on military deception during World War II and the specific organizations that conducted these operations. While reports have been written about individual deception plans conducted by British deception organizations, there is not a complete compilation of these plans nor is there detailed analysis of these organizations and their connections to each other making the retrieval of pertinent documents challenging. A full conclusion has not been made yet as the gathering information and analyzing stage is still in progress; however, Dr. Bendeck will use these future findings in her comprehensive academic book about military deception.

Introduction

Dr. Whitney T. Bendeck is the author of “A” Force: The Origins of British Deception During the Second World War, which focuses on the role and impact of “A” Force on World War II. Headed by Dudley Wrangle Clarke, “A” Force is the Allied deception unit that headed, planned and carried out the many deception plans employed during World War II. Deception in this sense includes offensive and defensive tactics that convince or trick others into believing that something is what it is not. “A” Force then saw its way to maturity throughout the war, beginning with limited assistance and resources in North African deception plans to ultimately lending itself to the eventual planning of Operation Bodyguard and the Battle of Normandy, as well as other large deception tactics. “A” Force eventually grew into the leading force for deception and has subsequently set precedence for the future of military deception, impacting many deception units around the world.

Materials and Methods

In order to conduct the research, different resources were analyzed throughout the process, including:

- Scanned declassified governmental and war documents
- Dr. Whitney T. Bendeck’s book “A” Force: The Origins of British Deception During the Second World War
- Donovan and the CIA: a history of the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency by Thomas F. Troy

During certain points of the research period, some information found on the topic of deception required checking so as to ascertain its legitimacy. Because of the nature of deception, the documents needed to be determined as truthful. However, most of the documents utilized throughout the research process were written as part of the war journals countries used to document their own use of deception, making them credible and truthful. In the course of this research it was rare to encounter a falsified document. Lack of information and difficulty of uncovering and attaining information relevant to the topic also proved a challenge throughout the research process. For example, while in search of documents pertaining specifically to the U.S deception organization, Joint Security Control, few relevant sources could be acquired in the U.S archives. This was due to the fact that the body in charge of military deception during World War II was later absorbed by the CIA, leaving many of the documents regarding deception as classified information and unable to be retrieved.

Prior to her current research, Dr. Bendeck sought out various military documents from the British archives that she used in her previous book on deception during World War II and “A” Force. These documents were Joint Chiefs of Staff files as well as historical records of deception from cabinet files found in the national archives in the UK. These documents were approved and then scanned onto CD’s or into paper packets to be analyzed. The documents were sifted through by the use of keywords, including Joint Security Control, Ops B, and SHAEF. This work was done in order to discover relevant information that would reveal a link between Ops B, Joint Security Control, “A” Force, and show their involvement and growth during the war effort. In conjunction to these documents, the book Donovan and the CIA: a history of the establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency by Thomas F. Troy was analyzed in order to gain deeper insight into the relationship between the OSS (CIA) and British deception organizations.

Discussion

Due to the preliminary nature of Dr. Bendeck’s work, there is no strong conclusion that can be made at this time about this research. Throughout the research process, vague links were revealed between the various deception organizations including “A” Force, Ops B and Joint Security Control, however, there was little substantial information found thus far in the actual linkages of these organizations. This was due to difficulty attaining different sources and the lack of sources available from the US archives regarding their deception plans. Through released transcripts and war documents it can be noted that there were many administrative aspects outlined as well as some documentation on the joining of different deception organizations during the war. Dr. Bendeck has found this research very helpful and telling as she begins to write her next book and will use the results that were found from this research, as well as those not found in this research, in order to pursue different avenues to gather information to aid in the publication of another comprehensive book on military deception.

References

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