

Exercise Talbot

Group Leader Ken Maryan Green kept a series of documents relating to this 1943 Exercise which give insights into how the Special Duties Network operated and would have operated in the event of a German attack.

The Exercise ran from 2pm on Saturday 11 Dec until 8am on Monday 13 Dec. It involved four different named networks, Ormskirk, Bowland, Cheviot and Blidworth. The diary of Royal Signals Sergeant Alf Ellis has mention of Cheviot in relation to two Suffolk sites. Two sources had given Bowland as the name for the Norfolk network. Assuming a north to south listing, this meant that the codename for Lincolnshire was Ormskirk, with Blidworth for Essex. These identifications are further confirmed by the fictional invasion sites listed in the Opening Narrative document, with these stretching from the Wash to South Essex. Oddly there were also documents in Ken Maryan Green's collection relating to Chiswell and in particular Chiswell III (or 3) transmitting to Chiswell, suggesting this was the name of the Network in use.

All messages were to be transmitted in cipher, that is converted into code first. The Instations were to operate signal watches with personnel on duty continuously from midday to midnight. After this they would only be available to receive messages for 10 minutes from every hour or half hour.

The information about the stand down message for the exercise also confirms that Instations were able to communicate to Outstations and they in turn to the Suboutstations.

The documents should of course have been destroyed according to these instructions. Thank goodness they were not.

The officer's signature is that of Major PRA Forbes, the commanding officer of Special Duties at Coleshill House.

The Opening Narrative indicates that by this stage there was no expectation of a true German invasion. Instead the networks were preparing for a possible large scale raid, intended to disrupt the invasion preparations of the allied nations.

S E C R E T
Serial 1

S.D. EX "TALBOT" - 11-13 Dec 45.

GEN INSTRS

Ref Map:- $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1 Mile, Sheet 9

OBJECT

1. (a) To test all S.D. personnel in their anti-raid role.
- (b) To test S.D. Communications.

DURATION

2. Ex commences 1400 hrs 11 Dec and closes 0800 hrs 13 Dec. IN Stas will however clear all messages, irrespective of the closing time of the ex.

SCOPE

3. Ex "TALBOT" involves the following stas:-
 - (a) IN Stas:- ORMSKIRK
BOWLAND
CHEVIOT
BLIDWORTH
working as they would during an invasion of the BRITISH ISLES.
 - (b) All OUT and Sub-OUT Stas dependent on the IN Stas listed above.
4. "ACTION STATIONS" will be presumed to have been given during the night 10-11 Dec.

MESSAGES

5. (a) Groups are responsible for originating their own messages, based on the Opening Narrative and Special Idea in Serials 2 and 3.
- (b) There is no limit to the number of messages that may be passed, but each OUT Sta should pass at least 15 messages, and each Sub-OUT at least 8, during the ex.

CIPHER

6. All messages will be sent in cipher.

SIGNAL WATCHES

7. For the duration of the ex, IN Stas will maintain watches as under:-
 - (a) Continuous watch from mid-day to midnight.
 - (b) 10-minute watch at every hour and half hour from midnight to mid-day.

Stas/

Serial 1
Cont.

Stas may transmit at will at any time during the signal watches.

8. If for any reason it should become necessary to stop the ex before the time given for the closing down, the code words "TALBOT FINIS" will be sent by IN Stas to all OUT Stas, who will repeat the message to Sub-OUT Stas.

SECURITY

9. (a) All ex messages will commence with the code word "TALBOT".
(b) All copies of this ex will be destroyed by fire after the ex, and a certificate to this effect rendered to this office by 22 Dec 43.

19 Nov 43
C/o G.P.O. HIGHWORTH
Nr. Swindon (Wilts).

PAH Gohs Maj G.S.
--- H.Q. Auxiliary Units.

Serial 2.

OPENING NARRATIVE

1. During the month of Nov, the grouping of the Second Front forces was taking place on the EAST and S.E. coasts of ENGLAND.
2. Supplies and material of all sorts were being concentrated near the ports, where a considerable movement of barge traffic and landing craft for men and tanks was in progress.
3. The enemy had become aware of our preparations, as was evident from a very considerable increase in his aircraft movements.
4. Towards the end of Nov, minor air-raids had taken place on ports on the EAST and SOUTH coasts, and hit-and-run attacks by E-boats on barge concentrations were experienced at several points.
5. By the beginning of Dec, indications were received of preparations by the enemy for launching a sea and air-borne raid against our coasts, with the objects of:-
 - (a) Delaying our preparations.
 - (b) Gaining information and identifying formations.
6. G.H.Q. appreciated that, owing to the considerable strength of our forces on the S.E. coast, raids were more likely to be expected against our comparatively light forces concentrated on the EAST coast.

Serial 3.

SPECIAL IDEA

1. During the night 10/11 Dec, Raid "ACTION STATIONS" were ordered by G.H.Q., following landings which had been effected by the enemy as under:-
 - (a) Sea-borne
 - (i) WELLS-next-the-SEA G 3862.
 - (ii) Between CLEY-next-the-SEA G 5163, and CROMER G 8860.
 - (iii) Between HAPFISBURG G 8549, and HORSEY G 9341
 - (iv) GREAT YARMOUTH G 92.
 - (v) Beaches SOUTH of LOWESTOFT G 91.
 - (vi) SOUTHWOLD M 9694
 - (vii) Between THORPENESS M 9378, and ALDEBURGH M 9374.
 - (viii) Between R. ORE M 86, and R. ORWELL M 75.
 - (ix) FELIXSTOWE M 7653.
 - (x) Between R. ORWELL M 75 and R. STOUR M 65
 - (xi) HARWICH M 6850
 - (xii) CLACTON-on-SEA M 6333
 - (xiii) DENGIE FLATS M 42
 - (xiv) SOUTHEND-on-SEA M 3304.

(b) Air-borne/

Serial 3
Cont:

(b) Air-borne

- (i) ANMER G 2048
- (ii) AYLHAM G 6545
- (iii) EDGEFIELD G 5552
- (iv) GREAT BRAXTED M 3133.

2. The strength of the enemy forces was unknown, but they seemed to be composed of small parties. It was thought that the air-borne landings had been instructed to carry out a sabotage role of:-

- (a) Blowing bridges.
- (b) Attacking grounded aircraft.
- (c) Destroying material in Administrative Areas.
- (d) Attacking R.D.F. Stas.

3. By mid-day 11 Dec, the raid appeared to have been partially successful and an initial advance had been made, but it was thought that it was on a scale which would limit its operations to a period of 48 hours.

