

SRH-037

REPORTS  
RECEIVED BY U. S. WAR DEPARTMENT  
ON USE OF ULTRA IN THE  
EUROPEAN THEATER, WORLD WAR II

DECLASSIFIED per Sec. 3, E. O. 12065  
by Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

WRW Date: JULY 3, 1979

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SRH-037A

VOLUME, SECURITY, USE AND DISSEMINATION  
OF SIGINT AT BRITISH FIELD COMMANDS  
By BRIGADIER E. T. WILLIAMS  
5 October 1945

DECLASSIFIED per Sec. 3, E. O. 12065  
by Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

*[Signature]*  
Date *July 3 1981*

This note on the use of Ultra is written from the point of view of a British consumer. It should not be necessary to stress the value of the material in shaping the general Intelligence of the war. Yet it should be emphasised from the outset that the material was dangerously valuable not only because we might lose it but also because it seemed the answer to an Intelligence Officer's prayer. Yet by providing this answer it was liable to save the recipient from doing Intelligence. Instead of being the best, it tended to become the only, source. There was a tendency at all times to await the next message and, often, to be fascinated by the authenticity of the information into failing to think whether it was significant at the particular level at which it was being considered. To be "Flivo-minded" at an Army HQ was permissible: at an Army Group it was to forget one's proper function. Probably essential wood was ignored because of the variety of interesting trees on view. The information purveyed was so remarkable that it tended, particularly if one were tired or overbusy, to engulf not only all other sources but that very commonsense which forms the basis of Intelligence. It was important, therefore, always to remind oneself that although the German sending his message was normally speaking the truth as he knew it, it was not necessarily true in relation to the situation as a whole. Moreover, wide-embracing as the material undoubtedly was, there were in it many gaps. Further, despite the amazing speed with which we received it, it was, of course, usually out of date. The fact that it was more up-to-date than almost any other source tended to make one forget this time lag. At an Army HQ we maintained, however, that during battle we had not done our day's work properly unless we had beaten the Ultra, unless we knew what was happening and could appreciate what would happen before it could arrive. This did not mean that we were not glad of its arrival, for at best it showed that we were wrong, usually it enabled us to tidy up loose ends, and at worst we tumbled into bed with a smug

confirmation. In a planning period between battles its value was more obvious. Other sources tended to dry up, in the Mediterranean anyway. And one had, too, the opportunity to study it in relation to context so much better than during a fast-moving battle such as desert warfare produced. And when we came home to prepare for "Overlord" there were several among us - and the writer in particular - who looked very warily at the large number of agents' reports pouring across from Western Europe. We were unpractised in the handling of information from agents: a few Arabs, a collection of low grade Italians, an excited civilian, had been our normal experience. To come to England to receive avalanches of agents' reports, even to find them being examined and evaluated expertly, gave one disquiet. That the experts were experts was never in doubt; their work was admirable, but did that make the reports true? We needed another check, a proven yardstick, and there were but two available to us. The first was air photography (but the camera never tells the whole truth), the second was Ultra. Certain reports had been accepted not without dubiety but because nobody had been dogmatic enough (and quite rightly) to say that they were unacceptable. For example, it was difficult to accept the identifications of the supposedly resuscitated 10 Panzer and 164 Divisions. Were we to disregard the slender evidence which had led to their being put back on the map; or were we to adopt that naughty device, the last refuge of third-rate Intelligence, the worst case? In fact we plunged, and abandoned these spectral formations. With what pleasure it may be imagined did we receive an Ultra sanction for our boldness. Far more important, however, was the steadily growing realisation that the picture built up by the experts from the multitude of reports was tuning comfortably into the pattern emerging from Ultra. Further, Ultra played a more positive part in the formulation of the plan of invasion, in that late reports of changed enemy dispositions in the Cotentin peninsula enabled us to re-allot

the dropping zones of the American airborne troops: one of the most contributive elements in the overall scheme. Thereafter Ultra, tuned to other sources (and it is unusable else) gave us a pattern which one could give to a commander with assurance.

Before touching on the technique of handling this material, first must be recorded the tremendous contribution which this source made to the position of Intelligence in the Army. What we should have done without it is idle to linger over, yet it must be made quite clear that Ultra and Ultra only put Intelligence on the map. This does not denigrate at all the role of, for example, "Y", particularly in desert warfare, nor is it intended to remove any of the emphasis laid above upon the necessity for treating Ultra as one source among several. From 1939 to 1942 Intelligence was the Cinderella of the Staff and information about the enemy was frequently treated as interesting rather than valuable. Of course this attitude varied according to the commander. Yet the story of the short but drastically successful battle at Alam Halfa may point the moral best. "The brave but battered Eighth Army" was holding an improvised line at El Alamein. A new commander arrived in the desert. It became obvious from Ultra that Rommel intended his final drive to Alexandria in the full moon of August by a sweep through the Southern flank. The Army Commander accepted the evidence and made his arrangements. Believing that the confidence of his men was the prerequisite of victory, he told them with remarkable assurance how the enemy was going to be defeated. The enemy attack was delayed and the usual jokes were made about the "crystal-gazers". A day or two later everything happened according to plan. The morale emerging from the promise so positively fulfilled formed the psychological background conditioning the victory which was to follow. Thereafter Intelligence came into its own. This is not to suggest that it did not play an important part before. Indeed the enemy offensive of the previous May beginning at Gazala had been foreshadowed in an

appreciation well before the event which was based almost wholly on Ultra material. We had had good Intelligence before; henceforward we were going to use it.

When one talks in this note of the consumer one is referring to the Intelligence staff in receipt of Ultra material. There was a further consumer: the Commander and his Chief of Staff. Here of course the situation could hardly have been better. The Commander was made immediately aware of the value of the material to him in securing that economy of effort and casualties for which he was to become famous. The Chief of Staff had been that very DMI who had prepared the paper about the May offensive. It remained only for Ultra to continue - and for the Intelligence Staff to keep its head, to realise its role was to explain what the enemy was doing and not to suggest how to defeat him.

In those days very few people had access to this invaluable material and we may seriously doubt whether the widespread indoctrination of 1944 was really necessary. It is probably fair to say that the vast number of its recipients were so frightened of losing what even to them was obviously an immense strategic asset that we got away without its loss. Whether it was necessary to frighten quite so many people is open to doubt. On the other hand it was far better to explain the nature of the material than to pretend it was something else. Once you began to pretend that it was an agent, not only was the story highly unconvincing to those who bothered to think about it (there were surprisingly few who did), but it entailed a lessening of security in discussing it. What an agent says becomes gossip: to explain the nature of Ultra was to slam a door on this approach to the problem. One of the weaknesses throughout was the notion of sending Ultra to commanders instead of to their staffs. At Eighth Army HQ the G.1 and G.2 Intelligence lived alone in a truck. That made it possible to keep the material, from the working man's point of view, in safe hands. Thereafter the rule was

practised that nobody else saw the material naked. (There was one exception - the Chief of Staff, and because he had been in Intelligence). The Commander always received a verbal appreciation from his Intelligence Officers which summed up all the material available; it was then pointed out to him, if he wished to make use more publicly of certain items of information, that their derivation forbade it. This convention was acceptable to him and, despite the immense degree to which he took his troops into his confidence, the material was never in danger. When he was in doubt he asked his experts. That is what they were for. There were two other types of occasion when the material had to be handled in discussion. The first was at the nightly conference with the Desert Air Force, which also had a restricted number of recipients, and its handling of the stuff in relation to aerial activity was hedged with sensible restrictions which never really impeded operations. The second was a trickier proposition. Experienced Intelligence Officers at Corps were not likely to believe for very long that the fact that Intelligence at Army had the habit of being right was necessarily due to the intellectual capabilities of the officers on the Army staff. Anyone with a brain in his head (and we made a point of insisting on that class of person as G.2 "I" of Corps) speedily recognised that Army had got something up its sleeve. Moreover, the Corps Commander had to receive the same appreciation from the Army Commander as, with proper safeguards, he had received from his own "I" staff. Nothing breaks down the confidence of a Corps Commander in his "I" staff more than if he thinks that by by-passing them he can get something better at Army. There were two alternatives: either to indoctrinate the G.2 "I" of Corps, which was forbidden; or to practice the polite convention that the Intelligence Staff at Army had a habit of making the correct appreciation by virtue of some remarkable element in their glandular make-up. In fact we



hedged between these two alternatives by admitting, when taxed with it, that there was indeed something up our sleeve yet continuing to filter it down only in the form of an appreciation, at the same time making it clear to the G.2 "I" at Corps when we knew something as distinct from when we only thought something. It was a difficult game to play; it depended upon the confidence in the G.2 "I" at Corps (and they were all handpicked) and upon a rigid discipline in controlling one's wish to be helpful with the very pressing realisation that to be too helpful on one occasion might mean that one would never be able to be so helpful again. As operations progressed this working confidence was reinforced by the fact that sometimes the G.2 "I" at Corps had himself been at Army, where he had been indoctrinated. On arriving at Corps he ceased to receive the material but he knew what was going on and respected a convention the necessity for which was so evident to him. 30 Corps was the spearhead almost throughout the campaign after Alamein, and for most of that time the G.2 "I" had previously been G.2 "I" at Army. That made it easy: but it is not recommended that the G.2 "I" at Corps should be shown the material. It is in the nature of human kind that security usually has one gap. A man usually has one confidant. Far better that the subterfuge practice should be in the control of the G.1 "I" at Army, who knows all too well the thinness of the ice upon which he is skating, and has a confidant in his G.2.

Next the question of Intelligence Summaries. Here in the Eighth Army we learnt, it is contended, the trick, the technique of unobtrusive salesmanship in the form of appreciations. Ultra was the background to these appreciations, it coloured the whole essay and there were many occasions when some apparently futile prisoner formed an all too convenient peg on which to hang an

essential explanation. There was a daily struggle not to stretch the pretence too far. The very casualness of the style in which these pieces of journalism were produced may, looking back upon them, have been a safeguard. That was not the original intention. Rather was it an attempt to break away from an "I" jargon which had grown up, into a conversational approach which would get the essential guts of the matter across to the reader. On the other hand the very fact that we did not appear, because of this free and easy style, to be covering up something may have covered it more readily. What one had to guard against the whole time was the fact that the Ultra might be wrong, that by starting to sell a wrong doctrine one was risking the whole theology. When in doubt one had to play safe, but as time went on one got to know that particular enemy so well (for the African campaign was but a frontier incident which enabled us to train an Army) that one got a very good feel when the Ultra wasn't going to come true. Moreover, the peculiar conditions of the desert made security, except from the point of view of the carriage of paper, very much easier than anywhere else. The danger, therefore, was that SLU/SCU itself might be captured. It was one of the G.I "I"'s responsibilities to keep an eye always cocked to that danger. Very much the same general procedure went on in Sicily and Italy, without the danger of capture being so great.

It is worth remarking at this point the value of the immense hard work which went into the collection and breaking of double playfair traffic which perhaps only twice throughout the whole Mediterranean campaign (at least until January 1944) produced an operational dividend. First, when we had lost 21 Panzer Division before the Gazala battle; next, just before we invaded Sicily the news that the Germans had gone to the wrong side of the island. It is suggested from the consumer angle that these two dividends

rewarded the tenacity of those who stuck to that particular task and the apparently fruitless days which were often passed by double playfair cyptographers.

Mention of "Y" brings out one interesting psychological point in relation to security. Before one became an Ultra reader one safeguarded "Y" to the top of one's bent. Unconsciously, after Ultra indoctrination, one's attitude towards security of "Y" became more slipshod. It never became an open source but somehow there was a feeling that one was protecting Ultra by being less guarded about Yorker, a silly reaction maybe, yet undoubtedly a common one. And there is no doubt about it that Yorker was discussed all too freely in the desert and sometimes not handled as skilfully by the consumer as it should have been. Willingness to achieve a tactical success or, more usually, to protect one's troops from attack, tended to give Yorker an unnecessary publicity. This note is devoted mainly to Ultra, but the time ought not to pass without reference to the part Yorker played in making the rounder pattern which Ultra could not achieve; frequently, and in battle usually, replacing it, and in general building up a day-to-day knowledge of the enemy which enabled us to handle Ultra with more confidence, and to be prepared to say that Ultra was not true (a very important psychological step in dealing with such material). Here a point may well be made which in the opinion of the writer is extremely important. In the early days in the desert the "Y" people worked behind closed tentflaps. The aim was pure cryptography. The contribution was therefore lessened. We changed this by insisting that the "Y" people knew the whole shape of the battle and not merely the enemy's wireless layout. The consumer was forcing his needs upon the producer and his results were twofold. First on morale: it is undoubtedly true that once the "Y" sections were brought into the family spirit of the Army the quality of their work improved. As a minor reflection of the Commander's doctrine that a civilian

army of newspaper readers must be told the form, the G.I. "I" made it his business that the "Y" sections were told everything (except the Ultra). Secondly, by this highly successful interchange the "Y" Sections speedily recognised that a half-broken message might well be a better help than a fully broken message, the value of which had been made by a moving battle merely historical. The improvement, then, came in both quality and speed. Perfect Intelligence in war must of necessity be out-of-date and therefore cease to be perfect. We deal with partial and outmoded sources from which we attempt to compose an intelligible appreciation having regard for the rules of evidence and our soldierly training and which we must be prepared instantly to revise as new evidence emerges. We deal not with the true but with the likely. Speed is therefore of the essence of the matter. We could not wait too long while the "Y" Sections made up their mind. The danger, of course, of this approach was to flurry the "Y" Sections and to make their work slipshod and more imperfect. It rested with the head W/T "I" officer to guard against this and to rein in the tendency of I(a) to want to make the "Y" mean something which fitted in with a preconception.

On returning to England this attempt by the consumer to help the producer to give the consumer more was once more attempted, but on a higher plane. Certain things had to be changed, and when it was found that the "Y" Sections deployed on the South coast were securing their identifications from agents' reports and a call-sign was being allotted a divisional identification without W/T "I" evidence, I(s) had at once to be told that it was not its responsibility to make quite so many out of two and two. On the other hand it was obvious that if the people producing Ultra at the Park could be told what was happening to it at the other end, it might once again assist their morale (particularly when they were sending a message into the blue which

presaged danger to Allied forces); secondly, it might assist in the allocation of priorities in the sending of important messages. In any case their kind of work was less likely to be led astray by preconceptions than the more subjective work of field Y. Intelligence Officers at B.P. were therefore briefed before D-Day, and thereafter we made it our business in Normandy to send a daily Isum from 21 Army Group saying what we thought was happening in front of us and in general attempting in a friendly and unofficial fashion to keep the Park aware of what we were trying to do. The whole series of signals was conversational. One felt one was talking to friends, and from that feeling of gratitude which we hoped was reflected in the casually worded terms sent to the Park emerged, at least from the point of view of one consumer, a belief that because of them he was getting better service. That was not his deliberate aim but that seemed to be the result. The people at the other end knew what was worrying him, knew what was wanted, and there seemed no hesitation in the answer. The chain of command after the crossing of the Seine meant that this habit could reflect only events in the North; but every attempt was made to continue it with a clear realisation between the producer and the customer that it was unofficial. If it did no other good it enabled the consumer to let down his back hair at times of strain.

At Army Group it was easier to keep and index the material from the point of view of security, although, of course, the volume of traffic compared with what an Army received meant that it was an arduous task. It may be averred that too many people had access to the material, yet it is difficult to see readily which officer one could have omitted. It was the function of the Intelligence Staff at Army Group to inform the Commander (and the Tactical Air Force Commander on the land battle) and to provide guidance to the Army HQ staffs. Practice in the

technique of handling Ultra enabled us to nurse the Armies under command in the use of the material, to see which background guidance ought to go forward, to look up back references and consolidate scraps, and in general to attempt to form a firm basis of knowledge, a corpus of doctrine on which the Armies might draw. Regular visits to Armies were essential. The "link" was useful but it was but a shorthand requiring amplification which only the personal visit could give. This lesson may scarcely be over emphasised and it was by no means only the Army staff which benefitted. The existence of Tactical Headquarters for the C-in-C necessitated the keeping of a senior officer and SLU/SCU station there and since it was the same Commander, no difficulty arose in his handling of the material to which he was now well accustomed and of which he made such invaluable use. He knew he was getting the goods and he had no intention of losing them. That he did not waste them the history of the campaign makes self-evident.

Turning back to the staff set-up at an Army Group it is worth maintaining that no senior officer should ever read naked Ultra unless he is trained in Intelligence. This goes for senior Intelligence Officers. Unless they have themselves been junior officers in Intelligence the very fascination of the material and the fact that they are less and less available for detailed work means that they are given a weapon often too big for their hand. To use the material properly the man must have the order of battle in his head. He must know his German Army as only somebody who has come up through Intelligence channels is likely to do. Otherwise Ultra should be "processed" for him. We did not practice the American habit of having a special Ultra cell in the HQ, because we believed that Ultra must be treated from the Intelligence point of view like any other source, and the special security arrangements necessary were not made to make it more true but to make it more permanent. A few officers

in 21 Army Group got together and hammered out what the Ultra meant in terms of everything else they knew. They were the same officers as edited (and often wrote) the studies and summaries based on normal sources: and so were constantly able to choose their ordinary evidence with perfect discretion, and save much time, paper, and speculation in their writings. This method of handling eased straight operational intelligence, though probably a lot of other duties gained insufficient regard because of the BGS(I)'s preoccupation with Ultra. The remedy was to have first-class officers to whom the BGS(I) could delegate, for example, C.I., or Air Photography, remembering his duty to keep them generally in the picture but leaving to them the details of their own task. He was then available to do straight Intelligence. Recommendations about how to run a H.Q. must be thought of in terms of the individual personalities involved. It happened to suit one senior Intelligence Officer to try and work this way. It is maintained that by so doing and as a result of having first class people working with him the Ultra was properly gutted. The same Chief of Staff was in the seat and that piece of good fortune enabled the proceedings.

It may be worthwhile to revert to the point mentioned earlier in this note: the different Intelligence required at different levels. It was peculiarly difficult for somebody used to an Army H.Q. to elevate his approach to that demanded at an Army Group. His interest was in the battle, his function to see beyond it. The existence of a Tactical H.Q. made the distinction easier: the senior I officer at Tac. stuck to the battle stuff, the BGS(I) at Main H.Q. tried to beat the big strategic drum. There were perhaps five obvious occasions in the campaign in the West when Armies required a clear lead from the Army Group on the enemy's strategy. These were quite apart from the routine day-to-day job of the Army Group of painting in the backcloth. The enemy build-up in Normandy was the first; the second was the realisation that the

battle not merely of Normandy but also of France itself was being fought South of the Seine (a remarkable enemy error which simplified an Allied plan made in the previous March); thirdly, the enemy's capacity to reform a crust after the Allied breakthrough to Brussels and Metz; fourthly, the enemy's ability and willingness to mount a counter-offensive in the winter of 1944; finally, the fact that the battle of the Rhine was the battle of Germany. On all these issues a clear lead was necessary at the Army Group level. And the record is not impressive, for on the third and fourth issues we were wrong. We should have avoided the exuberance of September which it was natural for Army H.Q.'s to be feeling, to take a more measured view. On the Ardennes offensive we were wrong. We argued the point in early December and decided wrongly. We gave a lead but the wrong lead. On all five issues the Ultra contribution was considerable, less so on those in which we erred. The error did not lie with the Park but rather in our attitude to the Park. We had begun to lean: that was the danger of Ultra.

One further point must be made in relation to Ultra at an Army Group as distinct from at an Army. G(R) the staff branch responsible for deception and cover plans was more dependent on Ultra than any of the rest of us. It was the only source revealing the enemy's reactions to a cover plan. Without Ultra we should never have known. In the case of "Fortitude" (the Pas de Calais cover plan) it is arguable that without Ultra confirmation that it was selling, the plan might have been dropped.

It was forbidden to discuss Ultra on the telephone overseas. This rule was daily and hourly disobeyed. Yet it is maintained that had the enemy kept a full telephone log of the conversations between various "I" officers at Shaef, Army Group and the Armies he would have been little the wiser about our sources of Intelligence, although his morale might have been enhanced by the



belief that Intelligence against him was in the hands of frivolous illiterates. If every attempt was made in Intelligence Summaries to cut down "I" jargon so far as possible, every attempt was made in telephone conversations to use a cryptic and, to the overhearer, complicated form of conversation which guaranteed communication but made little sense to anyone else. Telephone Chinese is a difficult accomplishment because it can lead to misunderstandings and irritation. Had one been able to speak freely it would have been better. Clearly that was not a risk to be taken. We broke the rules because they were unworkable. They were, like most rules about security of Ultra, drawn up so far as one could see without consultation with the consumer. The latter had to interpret them his own way. Yet if ever people realised the value of the commodity with which they were dealing it was surely the consumers. A graver risk was when non-Intelligence Officers got on the telephone. There was sense in forbidding that. Intelligence Officers with a lot of experience in this war had grown all too accustomed to flirting with somebody else's death. We have been, in fact we were, indiscreet and maybe we were lucky to get away with it. At least we did not imagine that scramblers and so forth gave us full security: we made our own arrangements. In general, one should stress the lesson that to guarantee the security of Ultra it should never go to Commanders direct nor should its security be their responsibility.

It is hoped that the rather personal nature of this note, based as it is upon one man's good fortune, at least reflects the value of the material under discussion. The way we handled it may seem to have been all too casual, our willingness sometimes to disregard it hubristic; the necessity to pretend we thought it

out for ourselves, as a cover for the source, sometimes gave us a reputation for ability which made us feel extremely dishonest. Yet it is contended that very few Armies ever went to battle better informed of their enemy, and it is recognised by those who ostensibly provided the information that they were but useful hyphens between the real producers at Bletchley Park and the real consumer, the soldier in the field whose life was made that much easier by the product.

/s/ E. T. WILLIAMS  
Brigadier

5 October 1945

ULTRA REPRESENTATIVES WITH U.S.  
ARMY GROUPS : REPORTS

(PRO 31/20)

These copies of papers from U.S. Archives  
were presented by Mr Ernest L. Bell III.

August 1979

524-0237

ULTRA REPRESENTATIVES WITH U.S. ARMY  
GROUPS: REPORTS

Reference

PRO 31/20

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not to be  
used.

PRO 31/20	Date	Description
1	[1945]	Memorandum by Col. A. McCormack and list of reports (PRO31/20/2-10 below)
2	1945 May 23	Twelfth Army Group: Lt. Col. Murnane and Lt. Col Orr
3	1945 May 21	First U.S. Army: Lt. Col. A.G. Rosengarten
4	1945 May 27	Ditto: Maj. W.D. Hohenthal, Jr.
5	1945 May 28	Third U.S. Army: Capt. G.C. Church
6	1945 May 27	Ninth U.S. Army: Maj. L.E. Becker (includes "Notes on the Enemy" as an example of how ULTRA intelligence was disseminated)
7	1945 May 19	Sixth Army Group: Maj.W.W. Gardner
8	1945 May 26	Ditto: F.K. Richardson, 1st Lt.
9	1945 May 12	Seventh U.S. Army: Maj.D.S. Bussey (2 copies)
10	1945 May 23	Fifteenth U.S. Army: Capt. W.T. Capnahan
11	[1945]	List of reports (PRO31/20/12-24 below)
12	1945 May 12	SHAEF Air Intelligence: Lieut. Col. E.K. Thompson
13	1945 May 16	First Allied Airborne Army: Maj. L.J. Neilson, Jr.
14	1945 May 1	Special Adviser on Tactical Air Force: Maj. L.A. Buck
15	1945 June 7	First Tactical Air Force (Provisional): Lt. Col. L. L. Pood (2 copies)
16	[1945]	Eighth Air Force: Maj. A.E.M. Talbert
17	1945 June 11	Ninth Air Force: R.S. Whitlow, 1st Lt. and Maj. E.D. Hitchcock
18	[1945]	IX Tactical Air Command: Lt. Col. J.D. Fellers
19	1945 May 30	Ditto: R.S. Morris, Jr. 1st Lt.

Reference

PRO 31/20

This margin  
not to be  
used.

PRO 31/20	Date	Description
20	1945 May 30	XIX Tactical Air Command: Maj. H.M. Grove
21	1945 May 17	XXIX Tactical Air Command: Lt. Col. J.W. Griggs
22	1945 May 25	Ditto: Capt.L. Van Norden
23	1945 May 16	XII Tactical Air Command: Maj. L.J. Neilsen, Jr.
24	1945 May 17	ETOUSA, Com.Z. SHAEF Rear G-2, and Ambassador R.D. Murphy (U.S. Political Advisor: SHAEF): Capt. E.H. Kellogg

SRH-037 B

THE USE OF "U" IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND  
NORTHWEST AFRICAN THEATERS OF WAR

BY GROUP CAPTAIN R. H. HUMPHREYS

October 1945

DECLASSIFIED per Sec. 3, E. O. 12065  
by Director, NSA/Chief, CSS

WRW

Date: 43 1979

THE USE OF "U" IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND  
NORTHWEST AFRICAN THEATRES OF WAR

MIDDLE EAST - WESTERN DESERT (1941)

1. "U" was first made available to Middle East Command of the Royal Air Force in February 1941, by direct (Special) Signals link from EP. Although I was at no time on the Staff of HQ. M.E., I acquired an adequate insight into the methods under which it was used operationally in the Mediterranean by contact with the C.I.O. (G/C Paynter), and with the Head of the Heliopolis Bureau (Lt.Col.Jacob) as well as by visits to the Command, in 1942. - Close contact was particularly necessary, because a direct "U" service had not, prior to that, been available to Commands; I initiated this as Head of the "U" Air Intelligence Section at EP. Until some experience had accumulated, it was decided to limit the service to Command Headquarters.

2. At that time, far and away the greater part of the material dealt with was G.A.F. material. Security restrictions on the use to which the Intelligence obtained was put operationally were rigid, so that, unless there was corroboration from other sources, no specific operational ACTION was taken on any specific piece of "U" intelligence, exploitation being confined to the study of G.A.F. capabilities and intentions, on a longer term basis.

3. The picture it was possible to obtain on this basis, however, was most complete, and since - at that stage of the War - "The intentions of the German Air Force were the intentions of the German Armed Forces as a whole" this picture gave a reliable clue to the overall plans of the German High Command in any particular Theatre.

4. With the dispatch of a British Air Force to Greece, and in view of the imminence of German intervention there, a limited service to A.O.C.Greece was started, limited in the sense that only subjects of special importance were covered, as comprehensive appreciations. A service to R.A.F. Headquarters, Western Desert, and - a little later - to HQ. 201 Group, R.A.F., at Alexandria (mainly engaged on anti-shipping operations), was also initiated from EP. about that time.

5. Fusion of "U" and "Y" Intelligence, the possibilities of which had been the subject of keen study at EP. by the R.A.F. "Y" and "U" Air Intelligence Sections, had by then begun to take shape. Again for Security reasons, such

fusion was restricted to BP. and Cairo (Middle East Bureau, Heliopolis, and NOT HQ. R.A.F., M.E.). The co-ordinated collation of "U" and "Y" was by then producing fairly substantial pictures of G.A.F. activity, of the greatest use for background and Intelligence assessment purposes. Opportunities of tactical application arose under secure conditions, and were taken, with good results, on an increasing scale. (The interception of German Bomber and Reconnaissance aircraft was successfully arranged for as a result of intelligence obtained from "Y" plus "U", or from "U" plus an acceptable corroborative alibi from "Y").

#### AXIS SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE

6. Similarly, direct operational application became possible in 1941, of intelligence on enemy shipping (Trans-Mediterranean convoys) from "U" (G.A.F. and Italian Naval) sources. BP. "U" Air Intelligence collated all the information reaching the Station and furnished comprehensive shipping intelligence to HQ. R.A.F., M.E., to 201 Group R.A.F. and to the Royal Navy (C.O.I.S.) at Alexandria, and also to V.A. and A.O.C. Malta. This, in co-ordination as far as Naval addressees were concerned, with intelligence going from Admiralty over Naval channels. Operational application took the form of orientation of air reconnaissance against ships or convoys, and the information supplied permitted the establishment of an order of priority for the attack of convoys of greater or lesser importance, as revealed by "U". In the over-riding interests of "U" Security, offensive action was NOT taken against any such shipping targets UNLESS there was clearly a second source (such as Air - or Naval Reconnaissance -, "Y" or other sources) which had corroborated.

7. Air reconnaissance for a ship or convoy known to be on passage from "U" sources was not laid on in specific terms of a search for such movement; recon sorties were dispatched to cover the sea areas involved; fairly precise courses having been reported by "U" for the whole passage, recon sorties were organised with cross-over points allowing for particularly full cover of crucial areas. This, to avoid too blatant a change in the pattern of reconnaissance searches, which might have compromised source.

8. Discrimination was exercised by the "U" Air Intelligence Section at BP. in the amount and detail of information signalled to various addressees. R.A.F., M.E. and C.O.I.S. Alexandria, received fuller information than 201



Group or Malta, although the service to the latter developed, as experience was gained, to a fuller basis.

GREECE AND CRETE

9. The invasion of Greece by the Germans, G.A.F. preparations for which had become clear from "U" months before, produced a greater volume of "U" Intelligence of specific interest to the British Army, and a direct service was then initiated from EP. to G.O.C. Greece, in co-ordination with the service to A.O.C. Greece.

10. During the Greek campaign and indeed, before this started, the "U" Air Intelligence Section at EP. had discerned a German intention to stage a large scale airborne operation involving a sea crossing, based in the Balkans. By a process of deduction at first, subsequently backed by more concrete indications from "U" sources, it was possible to fix Crete as the objective of this operation, and several papers on the subject were produced, with a circulation limited to the Directors of Intelligence of the Service Departments in Whitehall and C.S.S. It was clear that the operation was timed to take place as soon after the over-running of Greece as possible, and when later "U" gave the precise date and full plan of operation, details were communicated to Cairo. As much use as possible, consistent with security, was made of this intelligence in preparing the defence of the Island, but the danger of giving complete information to G.O.C. Crete, in his exposed position, presented a grave problem. On the Prime Minister's decision, the EP. "U" Air Intelligence Section produced a paper purporting to be a compendium of German documents obtained through Secret Service channels from General Headquarters at Athens, the summary being couched in terms consistent with such an "alibi". This was then signalled to G.O.C. Crete over a special link, using "One-Time-Pad" Cypher procedure. The full and detailed knowledge available to the defence of the Island certainly contributed in a large measure towards making the operation a very much more costly one to the enemy than he had bargained for, costly both in terms of casualties and in terms of time.

10. The cost in time was particularly damaging to the enemy because he was unable to get off the mark sufficiently quickly in organising G.A.F. intervention in Syria and Irak, where Rashid Ali had then begun to give trouble. Fairly detailed knowledge of German intentions in connection with the Rashid Ali rising, and of German transactions with General Dentz in Syria, had also

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become available from "U" and allied sources, as I might mention in passing.

#### THE G.A.F. BUILD-UP IN ITALY

11. Intelligence continued to become available from "U" on an increasing scale as the German Air Force developed its build-up in the Mediterranean. The reinforcement of that Theatre by Fliegerkorps X from Norway was first foreshadowed by a few scraps of information which came into BP. The incident is of particular interest because it proved the over-riding importance of a clearing-house for ALL G.A.F. Intelligence, dealing with the digestion and collation of such intelligence on a central basis. Speaking from memory, the first indication that something untoward was happening in connection with Fliegerkorps X, was a "U" message from which it was apparent that in a reshuffle of W/T, point-to-point Call-Signs in the Luftflotte 5 (Norway) complex, Fliegerkorps X was to figure less largely than before. The next scrap, about a week or ten days later, was the presence of elements of Fliegerkorps X's Staff at Munich, indicated by contacts with Luftgau VII. It was appreciated at the time that the two items of intelligence together portended the move of Fliegerkorps X from Norway to Luftgau VII area, OR TO AN AREA SERVED BY LUFTGAU VII. This might be France (where Luftflotte 3 was fully deployed at the time); it could not be the Balkans because VIENNA was the clearing-house for that Theatre. Munich, on the other hand, had been identified as the rear base for G.A.F. elements in the Western Desert; it would also be ideally situated for any units going to Italy. When, again a week or ten days later, Call-Signs from one or two apparently Fliegerkorps X aircraft were reported by "Y" in the Mediterranean, the picture was complete and the Corps' destination clear. It was considered that the G.A.F. would hardly contemplate basing a substantial Bomber force, such as was contained in Fliegerkorps X, in the Western Desert, and conclusions were:

- (a) the base area would be Italy (including Sicily),
- (b) the intention: to step up the anti-shipping effort in the Mediterranean in general and in the Sicilian Straits in particular, as well as the development of Long-Range Bomber support to the Africa Corps.

Designs of Air action against Malta were also implicit in the appreciated re-deployment.

13. The substantial reinforcement of the G.A.F. in the Mediterranean did not, therefore, come as a surprise, when increased activity finally confirmed it, and the subsequent transfer to Greece of Fliegerkorps X was also reported by "U" well ahead of the actual date on which it took place, as well as the move of Luftflotte 2, with Kesselring as C-in-C German Forces in the Mediterranean, later still.

MIDDLE EAST - WESTERN DESERT (1942)

14. Meanwhile "U" had continued to produce intelligence on Fliegerfuhrer Africa, of value to both the R.A.F. and the Army, and progress was also made on obtaining "U" on the Africa Corps direct. Apart from the service to Cairo, the Desert Army and Desert Air Force received detailed reports from HP. in the "U" series, which was then rising above 100 signals a day.

15. I visited Middle East on two occasions in 1942, in May and in July, and was able to appreciate the very great value attached to the "U" service at both Army and R.A.F. Headquarters, Middle East, in Cairo, as well as by C.O.I.S. Alexandria. In Cairo, D.M.I. and C.I.O., each with a restricted number of Staff Officers, absorbed the general picture of the enemy situation as conveyed by the "U" service, and had, at all times, access to both G.O.C-in-C C.O.S. and A.O.C-in-C - S.A.S.O., in connection with "U" Intelligence. On the Air side the principal value of this Intelligence lay in providing a proper background for C.I.O. in appreciating the enemy's intentions and capabilities, and in allowing of adequate briefing of A.O.C-in-C when considering decisions of policy and strategy. This was equally true of Headquarters, Western Desert Air Force where, however, "U" Intelligence was, security permitting, put to tactical use, as well. At this latter Headquarters, only the A.O.C., S.A.S.O. and S.I.O. were in the "U" picture. The S.I.O. interpreted the information contained in HP. signals, against the background of intelligence available to him locally through "Y" and other Operational Intelligence sources, discussing this interpretation with S.A.S.O. and A.O.C., who also read the original HP. signals. In addition to spot reports, HP., in consultation with Air Ministry, periodically signalled summaries of background Intelligence derived from "U" sources, against the picture of combined Situation Reports signalled home from the Desert and Cairo (and made available to HP.). Such summaries covered either a period of general activity by the G.A.F. in the Theatre, or specific features of activity and intentions, and were designed to provide a

recapitulation of the full picture, as available at BP., because the destruction by fire of all "U" reports promptly after reading was always rigorously enforced at Advanced Headquarters in the Desert.

16. An incident during my first visit to Middle East is worthy of recalling, as showing one of the less usual possibilities of exploitation of "U" Intelligence. A.O.C. Western Desert Air Force, whom I visited at his Headquarters at Gambut, mentally registered a point in connection with G.A.F. intentions against Malta, mentioned in the course of a general Air Intelligence expose. I had told the A.O.C. that the indications were that the G.A.F. would not continue its DAY bombing of Malta from Sicilian bases, which was proving very costly for them, that they would probably confine their Air action against Malta to night blitz activity only, and that fighters, then employed on escorting day-bombers to Malta, would no longer be required there. I added that there were Me.109 F Fighters, embodying various substantial improvements over Fliegerfuehrer Africa's Me.109 E's. On my return to Cairo next day, A.O.C-in-C Middle East enquired how strong was my information on the possibilities of the calling-off of the day-bombing of Malta, and added that no day raids had, in effect, taken place there for two or three days past. He told me that the reason behind his question was a demand from A.O.C. Western Desert, just received by (special link) signal, for a diversion of Spitfires from Malta to the Western Desert, in order to meet the probable move of Me.109 F's from Sicily to Africa, and in view of the superiority of this type over Hurricanes and Tomahawks in the Desert Air Force. Spitfires were duly allocated to the Western Desert Air Force soon after this incident, which took place on the eve of the Rommel offensive ending at Alamein; by this time I had returned to BP.

17. Research work had been terminated in the meantime at BP. on a means of securing "U" Intelligence from a particular source in the Desert on a spot basis, in a simplified manner. I had studied the possibilities of organising local exploitation in Middle East of any such intelligence which might become available, during my visit there and, three weeks after my return to BP. was again sent out to Cairo to provide this service. I obtained the fullest facilities from both G.O.C. and A.O.C-in-C in Cairo and, on the basis of original material procured through Alexandria and Heliopolis, a small "hut 6" type party was provided at the Middle East Bureau at Heliopolis. Their material was dispatched to me at Headquarters Middle East, Cairo (by special arrangements, and ensuring all

security safeguards) where I took full action of the "Hut 3" type, including, of course, the Air Intelligence side. I occupied an office in a suite specially set aside for the S.L.U. at Headquarters, and, in conjunction with General Staff and Air Staff Intelligence, ran a service to the Alamein Headquarters, providing information of the highest tactical value on an hour-to-hour basis, over the S.L.U. link. This, in addition to the normal EP. service. General Auchinleck, G.O.C-in-C Middle East at the time, expressed the opinion that, had we not had the "U" service, Rommel would certainly have got through to Cairo. Having got this special service underway, two R.A.F. Intelligence Officers from EP. were sent out to Cairo to take it over from me after six weeks.

#### OPERATION TORCH

18. On my return to U.K. (September, 1942) I took over the post of Chief Air Intelligence Officer at the Headquarters (the formation of which was then being completed) of General Eisenhower's Allied Force. Working under the general direction of the A.C. of S., G-2, AFHQ., at Norfolk House in London, the day-to-day and long-term appreciation (based mainly on "U") of G.A.F. intentions in the Mediterranean Theatre - including Planners' requirements - and a sharp look-out for any indications of knowledge the enemy might have gained of our own intentions in that Theatre, were my particular functions. At the same time I made all preparations for the future efficient and secure exploitation of "U" Air Intelligence in the Theatre. Apart from organising the Intelligence Branch of Eastern Air Command, Royal Air Force (Air Marshal Welsh), and making all arrangements with Air Ministry for the provision of an adequate "Y" service in North Africa, these preparations entailed:-

- (a) Arrangements for the closest co-operation between Army and Naval Intelligence and my own Branch at Allied Force Headquarters, under A.C. of S., G-2.
- (b) Arrangements for adequate handling of "U" Intelligence at Headquarters XIIth Air Force, USAAC (General Doolittle) who, on the planned deployment, were to become established at Oran, whilst AFHQ. settled at Algiers.

- (c) Similar arrangements in the case of Eastern Air Command, Royal Air Force. (On a smaller scale, because their Headquarters were to be at Algiers, near AFHQ).
- (d) Preliminary provision of similar arrangements in the case of 242 Group R.A.F., the Close-Support Force which was to operate under E.A.C., in Eastern Algeria and Tunisia.
- (e) Arrangements to ensure a constant flow of all intelligence to and from AFHQ, by S.L.U. in the case of "U" Intelligence, and by other channels in the case of general and combat Intelligence.

19. At AFHQ. I had three officers on my staff, handling "U" material. One of them had had considerable experience of it at Air Ministry(A.I.3.(b)), one other had been a Station Intelligence Officer in Fighter Command, R.A.F., and required indoctrination. The third was a "Y-U" fusion officer, from BP. Two other officers, who were on my staff at the time, and who were to be Senior Intelligence Officers at Headquarters Eastern Air Command and Headquarters 242 Group, were also detailed for the handling of "U".

20. As regards the other Services, and apart, of course, from the A.C.of S., G-2 himself (Brigadier Mockler-Ferryman), some four officers of the Army Operational Intelligence Section, and the Naval S.O.I. and S.O.Y. were "U" indoctrinated. At Headquarters XIIth Air Force the A.C.of S., A-2 and one other officer were indoctrinated.

21. So much for Intelligence circles. The Allied Commander-in-Chief, his Chief of Staff, the Deputy Chief of Staff, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air, the A.C.of S., G-3, the Chief Signals Officer and the Signals Intelligence Officer, received indoctrination at AFHQ. On the Naval side, the Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, his Chief of Staff and the S.O.O. On the Air side, the A.O.C., E.A.C., his S.A.S.O. and G/C Ops., as well as the Commanding General XIIth Air Force, his Chief of Staff and the A.C.of S., A-3. On the R.A.F. side, the O.C. "Y" Units destined for North Africa, was also in the picture.

22. S.L.U. facilities comprised four units, the principal one of which was to serve AFHQ., two others, the forces landing at Oran and Casablanca, and the last, the forces destined to push east towards Tunisia.

23. During the pre-D-Day period at Norfolk House full "U" cover was available on the G.A.F. in the Mediterranean, and told us precisely how little

information on our TORCH plan was available to the enemy. That we had some important intentions in the Mediterranean was patent to him from his Secret Service Reports, including information on our Air build-up at Gibraltar, and also of increased Naval preparations at that port. It was patent to us, however, thanks to "U", that the enemy mis-appreciated the purport of our preparations and was hesitating between forecasting an operation to reinforce Malta on a very large scale, alternatively a landing in Tripolitania, and alternatively again, the relief of Tobruk. The deployment of his Air Forces, including the basing of short range forces (Ju.87's and fighters) in Sicily and Sardinia, confirmed that he had no inkling of our intention to land well west of the Sicilian Straits. In sum, the enemy's planned reactions to all the intelligence he was receiving, were limited to a strengthening of his potential effort against shipping proceeding through "Bomb Alley". Although part of our assault convoy was spotted by reconnaissance aircraft in the Atlantic, over a thousand ships passed through the Straits of Gibraltar shortly before D-Day and proceeded to their destinations in Algeria without interference by the enemy Air Forces.

24. At the end of October 1942 the advanced element of AFHQ. opened at Gibraltar. The Intelligence side of the staff comprised the A.C.of S., G-2, with half a dozen Staff Officers (two of whom were "U" indoctrinated), Naval S.O.I. and S.O.Y., and myself with three officers, all "U" indoctrinated. My staff was joined at Gibraltar by an officer from the XIIIth Air Force who, at my request, had been attached to me to act as my deputy. He also received "U" indoctrination and was, more particularly, to look after XIIIth Air Force interests in my central Air Intelligence organisation at AFHQ. Intelligence requirements of the Allied-Commander-in-Chief and of the Air and Naval Commanders on the spot during the final preparatory stages and the assault stage, were met at Gibraltar, information from "U" combined with that coming in from Secret Service and Operational sources giving a particularly clear picture of the mixed state of affairs in French North Africa. The Headquarters S.L.U. handled a large volume of traffic from BP. and also assured communications of a special Intelligence nature, via the S.L.U.(which had landed at Algiers with the assault convoy) serving the forward element of AFHQ. under General Mark Clark, and which included a "U" indoctrinated Army Intelligence Staff Officer.

25. The R.A.F. "Y" service at Gibraltar was providing extremely useful information on the G.A.F. picture, but could not satisfy all requirements because of its remoteness and poor interception conditions. I therefore borrowed equipment and personnel from the Gibraltar "Y" station and dispatched them by air to Algiers under the Command of my "Y-U" fusion officer who, first at Algiers and subsequently at Bone, provided supplementary intelligence to Allied Air Force units based on Algerian airfields, which was of particular value on the tactical, defensive side, pending the establishment of the Allied Radar chain in Algeria. The value of this supplementary "Y" element, particularly in providing early warning of impending G.A.F. attacks in the early days of the North African campaign, can be largely attributed to the complete and detailed knowledge of the G.A.F., and of its deployment in the Mediterranean of my "Y-U" fusion officer, used as mental background in the interpretation of "Y" traffic. The importance of full collation of "Y" Signals Intelligence in the accurate perspective furnished by "U", induced me to strengthen my "Y-U" fusion party to a staff of three at an early date, the staff spending half their days in my "U" office at AFHQ., and half their days at the "Y" station (in the suburbs of Algiers), where a full "Y" picture from local intercepts, supplemented by Cheadle broadcasts, was available. As soon as the whole of the advanced element of AFHQ. had moved to Algiers, and when it became apparent that the Allied ground forces would not succeed in over-running Tunisia until the following Spring, I turned to the intensified local exploitation of intelligence (almost exclusively from "U") on Axis reinforcement and supply traffic to North African ports and along Tunisian roads and railways towards Libya, which traffic would obviously require considerable attention by the Allied Air Forces. To serve the Allied Forces established in Eastern Algeria and Western Tunisia, S.L.U. elements were established for 242 Group and Army Headquarters. At the former, A.O.C., S.A.S.O. and S.I.O. were "U" indoctrinated and received a limited direct service from EP., supplemented by daily appreciations, signalled from Algiers over the special link, based on "U" and all other intelligence. Headquarters Eastern Air Command R.A.F. (at Maison Carree, near Algiers) received "U" Intelligence through my branch at AFHQ. and gave me Combat Intelligence. Headquarters XIIth Air Force, USAAC, were moved up to Algiers as well and a similar two-way traffic of intelligence was established with them.



26. On the one hand, therefore, G-2 Air at AFHQ was handling G.A.F. Intelligence from all sources, to meet requirements of the Air Forces employed tactically, as well as to complete the Intelligence picture required by the Ground Forces and the Navy. This entailed following very closely, and in detail, the G.A.F. effort and intentions over the forward area, and against our shipping in the Western and Central Mediterranean. The basis was the comprehensive fusion of Intelligence from all sources, clarified by the powerful light cast upon the whole situation by "U". On the other hand there was the detailed study of the build-up of Axis reinforcements and supplies to Tunisia and Libya, with a view to providing the necessary guidance for the development of our offensive effort against such traffic, both by our Air Forces and our Navies. By making full use of all Signals facilities (S.L.U., "Y" point-to-point services, direct telephone lines and general Signals channels, as well as courier officers) a complete picture of all friendly and enemy Air activity became available daily at AFHQ. and was presented at the Chief of Staff's morning meeting by the A.C. of S., G-2. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Air held a daily meeting at which details of strategic Air action against enemy supply traffic were decided, and directives issued for the operations of the XIIIth Air Force and E.A.C. (Wellingtons), as well as for co-ordinated fighter action by 242 Group. This meeting was attended by S.A.S.O. or G/C Ops. from E.A.C., by the Chief of Staff or the A.C. of S., A-3, XIIIth Air Force, as well as by Naval and Army representatives, all on the "U" list. After the arrival in North Africa of General Spaatz, the meeting was also attended by him and his A.C. of S., A-2. I presented the full Intelligence picture. on which the adaptation of general policy to the current situation, and the selection of specific targets for bomber or fighter-bomber attention were based. Extremely detailed "U" Intelligence on enemy shipping guided attacks against convoys or vessels on passage between Italian and North African ports, and was exploited on the basis of corroboration by suitably oriented Air Reconnaissance, or by direct attack in the course of Naval or Air sweeps carefully planned from the points of view of effectiveness and security. In the case of attacks upon shipping in harbours, Air attack could be directed with less danger to security, because harbour areas in which important target ships could lie were restricted and general attacks on such harbour areas would therefore pay adequate dividends,

or because the results of Photo Recce, confirming "U" reports, provided a sufficiently satisfactory "open" source of Intelligence to warrant designation of specific ships as targets. We often knew the contents of the cargo of individual ships, and we also knew from what particular shortages the enemy was suffering; this gave us the basis for the allocation of priorities of attack.

27. To ensure that a full and accurate Intelligence picture was kept before Commanders and Senior Staff Officers, I produced a daily "U" Digest, including important matters from open sources by way of completing the picture. In view of the direct interest of ALL aspects of the campaign to Air Commanders and, conversely, of the equally direct interest of Naval and Army Commanders in the Air Intelligence picture, this daily Digest was not limited to Air subjects, but covered all three fields, from the Air point of view. The circulation of this "Top Secret" "U" document was restricted to the A.C.of S., G-2 (who submitted it to the Allied Commander-in-Chief and his Chief of Staff) General Spaatz and his A.C.of S., A-2, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air, A.O.C., E.A.C. and C.G., XIIth Air Force (and their indoctrinated staffs), the Naval Commander-in-Chief, his Chief of Staff and S.O.I. All copies were promptly returned to me for destruction by fire, a file copy being retained in my branch under secure conditions.

28. "U" cover was so detailed and complete, that we had advance notice of every intention and move of the German Forces in Africa and Italy, and of as many moves and intentions of Italian Forces as fell into joint Italo-German programmes. By following a few basic rules and by exercising ordinary common-sense it was possible to make the greatest use of all this Intelligence, strategically and tactically, without endangering security. But the intimate knowledge afforded by "U", of every facet of the enemy situation, was probably more valuable still, in that it permitted an accurate appreciation of enemy capabilities on a long-term basis and, therefore, the framing of the proper policies to deal with them. One of the factors which was of decisive importance in this whole picture was the confidence induced in all Commanders and Senior Staff Officer, a most important point at an integrated Headquarters such as AFHQ., with staffs drawn from the three Services of each of two nations. In this connection, the work of my deputy (Col. Palmer Dixon) in keeping the full picture before Headquarters, XIIth Air Force, was outstanding, and provided a solid foundation for that Headquarters when it moved east to Constantine, and also

for Headquarters, Northwest African Air Forces (with a staff partly drawn from the XIIth) when it also set up there and handled "U" Intelligence direct, with less dependence on AFHQ.

29. After this development the daily Target Meetings at AFHQ., where Headquarters, Mediterranean Air Command had also then set up, (Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder) were discontinued, (they took place at Headquarters NAAF.,) and the full Air picture was from then on given to the Chief of Staff's meeting by me, subsequently by Air Commodore Woolley (or Col. Dixon) when I joined the staff of Headquarters, NAAF. as Deputy A.C. of S., A-2 in April 1943, some six weeks after its formation.

30. At the latter Headquarters, which exercised executive control over the North West African Strategic, Tactical and Coastal Air Forces, there was a substantial, integrated Intelligence Staff, comprising Combat Intelligence, Target Intelligence, "Y" and Counter-Intelligence Sections. A "U" Section had also been formed, and I devoted particular attention to this, in order to provide, again, the fullest fusion of Intelligence from all sources. A daily Digest was again produced, as well as an interpretative "U" service, over S.L.U. links, to formations under Command. Close touch was also kept with the Air Intelligence branch at M.A.C. (AFHQ), with particular reference to "U". A daily as well as a weekly Intelligence Summary were produced at NAAF. Headquarters, by the Combat Intelligence Section (the Head of which was duly indoctrinated.) These two documents were written on the basis of open Intelligence only, but were checked by the "U" Section for erroneous implications. The daily report dealt almost exclusively with factual matter and corrections were seldom necessary. The Weekly Summary, including, as it did, a statement of the Order of Battle of the German and Italian Air Forces in the Mediterranean Theatre (and other deductive matter), based on "Y", Combat Intelligence and Photo Recce results, not infrequently contained mis-appreciations in connection with points of detail, although there were rarely any erroneous interpretations as far as the over-all picture was concerned. By applying "U" background knowledge to the scrutiny of the matter submitted weekly to the "U" Section (known as the G.I.F. Section) it was possible to avoid the publication of inaccurate information in this document, which was classified SECRET only. By and large, Combat Intelligence

produced a very good Intelligence Summary, without access to "U" sources. The section which required particular watching from the "U" security point of view, was that based on "Y", where the line of demarkation with "U" was sometimes exceedingly thin due, of course, to the "U" background available in the minds of some "Y" officers, acquired chiefly in their contacts with "Y-U" fusion officers. Furthermore, at the time the Germans were still comparatively indiscreet in their W/T traffic, making it possible for a good "Y" officer to get a fairly clear picture of what was going on.

OPERATION HUSKY

31. In May 1943, a Command Post - with essential staffs only - was set up jointly by M.A.C. (Air Chief Marshal Tedder) and NAAF. (General Spaatz) at La Marsa, near Tunis, to take over control of all Air operations directed against Sicily and the Italian mainland in connection with the imminent invasion of Sicily. I was appointed Chief Intelligence Officer, with a very streamlined staff to deal with indispensable Intelligence only. Because the structure of the Intelligence Branch at La Marsa was, in my opinion, the ideal type-organisation required at a Headquarters of this sort, I shall describe its composition and functions in detail.

32. (a) G.A.F. Intelligence Section. ("U" Section). Here there was one officer specializing on all G.A.F. Intelligence, particularly that gleaned from "U" sources, with an assistant in the shape of a "Y-U" Fusion Officer who, again, spent half his time at the "Y" Station nearby and half his time in my "U" office. Both were Royal Air Force officers. Intelligence on Axis reinforcement and supply traffic was dealt with by two other officers (one R.A.F. and one U.S. Army Air Corps). Clerical assistance was provided by a junior R.A.F. officer (shorthand-typist), and the whole staff was in self-contained offices, contiguous to mine and to the S.L.U. serving the Headquarters.

(b) Combat Intelligence Section. This Section, located in separate offices half a flight of stairs below the G.A.F. Section, was staffed by three U.S. Army Air Corps officers, assisted by a clerical staff of three enlisted men, and dealt with all Air Intelligence from "Y", Photo (and other) Reconnaissance, and other non-"U" sources.

(c) Target Intelligence Section. Located in an office-trailer hard-by the other Intelligence offices, this Section consisted of one U.S. Army Air Corps officer and one R.A.F. officer, assisted by one enlisted man.

(d) Registry. General clerical assistance was provided by three R.A.F. other ranks, with an office in a tent next to the trailer above mentioned.

33. The Intelligence Branch thus had a total strength of eleven officers and seven other ranks, all provided by Headquarters, NAAF, with the exception of some of the clerical staff. A direct "U" service from BP. working on a full (and very large) volume basis, supplied spot Intelligence on all subjects affecting the Mediterranean Theatre, Sea, Land and Air. MA.C assisted particularly in connection with the study of supply traffic through the Italian L. of C., by a "U" service over the Algiers-La Marsa S.L.U. link, and recapitulative summaries and appreciations were exchanged over the same special link with Algiers and Air Ministry (through B.P.). Where desirable, such signals were repeated to formations under Command, as well as to Cairo, whence Headquarters, R.A.F. Middle East also frequently took occasion to signal appreciations and queries. It was not found necessary to maintain a night duty officer in the "U" Section, although the volume of information flowing in, and the work entailed with the clarification of the general picture from the day's "Y" activity, made for late working hours at night. The S.L.U. operated on a twenty-four hour basis and called on me, or one of the officers concerned, in the event of any particularly important signals arriving during the early hours.

34. The Combat Intelligence Section received its information arising out of the activity of Commands under NAAF. through Main Headquarters, Constantine, except for "Y" and Photo Recce results, which it received direct from the "Y" Station and from the Photo Interpretation Unit at La Marsa airfield. The last mentioned source of Intelligence was a most important one and, as Photo Reconnaissance of airfield and other targets was controlled by Command Post, under co-ordination by myself, it was possible to guide activity in the closest relation to Intelligence and Operational requirements, on an hour-to-hour basis. A daily, brief Operational Intelligence Report was produced by the Combat Intelligence Section at La Marsa; the full daily summary continued to be produced at Constantine, and there was the closest touch between the two Combat Intelligence Sections. The Combat Intelligence Section worked round the clock, the late-night Duty Officer being responsible for the production of the daily Operational Intelligence Report. Constantine continued to produce the weekly Intelligence Summary after clearing at La Marsa.

35. The Target Intelligence Section was kept supplied with Target material by its parent section at NAAF Headquarters, and by the Photo Interpretation Unit at La Marsa. A full range of Target dossiers was kept to meet tactical, and particularly strategic bombing requirements, arising out of the application of general policy or of intelligence from "U" or other sources, on specific targets. For reproduction work and plotting, the facilities of the Ph.I.U. were available.

36. The full Intelligence picture was presented daily by me at the Allied Air Commander-in-Chief's daily meeting attended by Commanders, Chiefs of Staff and Operations Staff Officers of all formations under Command. During the first part of this meeting representatives from Army Group Headquarters and from the Navy gave their accounts of the situation, followed by detailed reports by the Air Commanders on their activity during the previous twenty-four hours. Before the second part of the meeting officers who were not "U" indoctrinated took their leave, and I then presented the full Intelligence picture, compiled from all sources, including "U". After this, targets were selected for attack two days later, based on my suggestions. Not infrequently it was necessary, due to the quickly changing situation, to recommend modification of the next day's programme of bombing operations as agreed twenty-four hours earlier. This was particularly necessary in the case of our Air offensive against enemy airfields, in respect of which "U" kept us very fully informed of bombing results and the consequent frequent re-dispersal of G.A.F. units. In the preparatory period before the Allied landing in Sicily, the rate of destruction to landing areas on airfields used by the G.A.F. was so rapid that the very closest watch of all relevant information and co-ordination of "U", "Y" and Photo Recce sources was necessary if wasteful attacks on airfields temporarily evacuated by the enemy because of damage suffered were to be avoided. This was greatly assisted by regular Photo cover of Sicilian airfields at least once - often twice - every day. The effect of our overwhelming Air superiority applied under these conditions of extremely close co-operation between Operations and Intelligence, was that the Luftwaffe withdrew from the Battle of Sicily altogether at an early date, in the hope of living to fight the Battle of Italy.

37. In view of the small circle of officers receiving "U" Intelligence at the La Marsa Headquarters, and of the ready accessibility at all times of Air Chief Marshal Tedder and General Spaatz, the production of a daily

"U" Digest was not necessary, particularly as the frequent exchange with Air Ministry et al, of views and appreciations (copies of which were circulated) provided adequate recapitulative summaries for the benefit of all concerned.

38. Upon my posting to Air Ministry at the beginning of August 1943, the Intelligence Branch at La Marsa continued to function on the lines described, under the direction of my successor, during the remaining stages of the Battle of Sicily and the opening phases of the Italian campaign.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

39. "U" was first exploited in Overseas Commands in the Mediterranean Theatre. If its Operational application in Middle East tended to suffer from over-timidity in the beginning, this was certainly a good fault at a time when, because there was insufficient experience prudence could hardly be exaggerated.

40. As experience accumulated and the Intelligence background became increasingly solid, there was more scope for discrimination as to the direct application of "U" to operations, with less risk to security. The selection and the creation of "alibis" became easier, because of a wider Intelligence knowledge on the one hand and of greater Operational resources on the other.

41. In spite of this, however, no liberties were taken and the standard of "U" security, directly and indirectly, was a high one. Apart from difficulties in some cases, in keeping officers on the "U" List from flying operationally, there was no problem about direct security, if regulations were strictly observed. The exercise of caution in the indirect aspect (i.e. in the Operational use of source) was more difficult because there was always a danger that - in order to exploit a good opportunity - extremely thin corroborative information would be viewed through rose-coloured glasses and be construed into the cast-iron alibi required. My own maxim was that the alibi must contain more information, of the kind which MIGHT induce a NORMAL operation, than the original item from "U", and that I must not assume that, in the event of a security investigation, the enemy would automatically dismiss the possibility of a "U" leakage, merely because there had been another source. "You can't fool all of the people all of the time".

42. As to the value of "U" in the Mediterranean, we have a yard-stick

available which we can use to compare an Air Intelligence organisation WITH or WITHOUT "U". We had full "U" Intelligence on the German Air Force, but NOT on the Italian. Our picture of the latter was incomplete and our knowledge far from sound; so - fortunately - was the I.A.F. Had we not known more about the G.A.F. than we know about the I.A.F., our Intelligence position would have been a weak one; what our Operational position would have been, is not for me to appreciate in this paper.

October, 1945,

(Signed) R.H. Humphreys, Group.  
Captain.