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**SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 2/10**
**General Patton Edition**
**Friday, June 18, 2010**

## 1. Why a 'General Patton Edition' ?

Most of you will have seen the article about Patton and his use of ULTRA in the 3/09 'Special Edition' SCU-Newsletter. I am delighted to tell you that it has now been published in the May Edition of QST the House Magazine of ARRL (American Radio Relay League). This is the magazine we selected as the most appropriate public outlet for our article about covert wireless in World War II.

## 2. Response.

As you know, we did not doubt for one moment the military skills of General Patton. Our 'complaint' is that his historians are seemingly reluctant to accept the great part ULTRA played in his successes in Sicily, France and Germany.

In the invasion of Europe in 1944, all the Allied Commanders had a British SCU/SLU attached to them to convey the output of ULTRA from Bletchley Park to the Commander in the field. General Patton who commanded the US 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was no exception and knew the benefits of ULTRA intelligence from his use of it in the Mediterranean, particularly during the invasion of Sicily.

Some Patton historians speak of his 'Brilliance' - his 'Sixth Sense' - now even his 'Genius' without acknowledging the part played by ULTRA. On receiving our 3/09 'Special Edition' SCU-Newsletter about Patton the Historian at a US Army College wrote to me and his letter says – inter-alia:

*"There are historians who understand the significance of the "Wireless War" and the best new histories include references to ULTRA. At the present time the best biography of General George Patton is PATTON: A Genius For War by Carlo D'Este. He writes on page 653: "Although Patton was privy to the Ultra secret, until early August l944 he had no idea that there existed a small, secret, special intelligence section attached to Third Army which processed information passed from Bletchley Park. Thereafter the Ultra officer, Major M.C. Helfers, briefed Patton each morning."*

*The challenge for historians is figuring out what "briefed each morning" really means. That Patton was briefed on Ultra doesn't provide us with any clues as to what Patton was told or what he did with the information. Many, if not all, of the Ultra intercepts have been declassified but they only tell us what was decrypted; they don't tell us if they were passed along to Patton, when they were passed along to Patton, or what he did with the information, **if anything**. Historians can assume that they had some impact, but how much is extremely difficult to gauge. It is unfortunate that Patton did not live to write his memoirs, to leave some written record of how he used ULTRA intelligence."*

## *"...if anything." !*

I hastily add that the emphasis in bold is mine to show my disbelief that someone would respond in this way in the face of such overwhelming evidence from the sources that exist.

## *"...if anything." !*

Group Captain Frederick Winterbotham (RAF), already Head of MI6 (Air), was appointed, *on orders from Winston Churchill,* to ensure the security of ULTRA. He reports in his book 'The Ultra Secret' published in 1974, of the use General Patton had made of ULTRA on a number of occasions.

*"...if anything." !*
Anyone doubting the great use that General Patton's armies made of ULTRA should read the CADRE PAPERS Issue 10 – entitled **"XIX Tactical Air Command and ULTRA – Patton's Force Enhancers in the 1944 Campaign in France."** Page after page refer to the way in which ULTRA guided the 3rd Army through France and into Germany and many instances are fully detailed.

The complete CADRE PAPERS Issue 10 – all 142 pages – can be easily downloaded under 'Cadre Papers.' These are most interesting, as well as revealing, to any historian writing about Patton. Hopefully, they would allow them to obtain a more accurate and balanced view of his achievements

The book referred to earlier *"as the best biography of General Patton"* is **'Patton: A Genius for War'** by Carlo D'Este. It is 975 pages long and a superb piece of research. However, sadly ULTRA is only briefly mentioned on four pages throughout the 500 pages devoted to Patton in World War II.

Considering the massive part ULTRA had played in his successes that is simply not sufficient to portray its great value to him. On page 637 Carlo D'Este writes: *"Patton never made a move without consulting G-2 [Oscar Koch]. In planning G-2 always had the first say.....and he acted on it' That explains why Third Army was never surprised and why it always smashed through vulnerable sectors in the enemy's lines."*

That alone is plain enough valid endorsement for the benefit of ULTRA enjoyed by Patton. Through his G-2 Col. Oscar Koch – his armies always knew the position of the enemy in front of them after being fed ULTRA, received from Bletchley Park, via our attached SLU. The exception to that was, of course, leading up to the Battle of the Bulge but that's another story.

**3. The Article on Patton in the May edition of QST – the magazine of ARRL.**
This is a pdf attachment to this Newsletter. For those not in the wireless world, ARRL is 'The American Radio Relay League' founded way back in 1914 and now with something like 156,000 members. They kindly gave me permission to reproduce the article for the SCU-Newsletter but understandably imposed an embargo until mid-June.

There is one obvious difference between my first article and the one in QST. The Editor rightly found that my picture of Helfers briefing Patton with the latest ULTRA traffic was too low resolution for his magazine. Here I am not quite so concerned about resolution and it is included again for you.

Publication of the article in QST has brought them positive responses from its readers. Some have written directly to me from as far apart as Norway and New Zealand. I cannot print them all but this one sums up the general feeling.

*Dear Mr. Pidgeon,*

*I just read your article in the QST magazine and I want to thank you. My father was attached to Patton's 3rd Army during the war. Possibly the code-breaking work done by the British Intelligence (ULTRA) may have saved his life and I treasured him for another 60-years.*

*I thank you and the others at Bletchley Park and those attached to the Army units for your dedication and service. Very interesting article.*

*Thanks again*

Name and e-mail address withheld.

*Major Melvin Helvers the senior SLO of the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army is here briefing General George Patton and Major General Hugh J. Gaffey Patton's Chief of Staff – with the latest ULTRA messages.*

We should note that Major Helfers the ULTRA SLO – *but a relatively junior officer amongst the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Intelligence staff* – is shown in the photograph actually presenting ULTRA reports directly to General Patton. It confirms that (a) Patton knew of the existence of ULTRA intelligence and (b) we know he used it to his advantage – with great skill.

As the QST Article relates, Major Melvin Helfers was one of the 25 US Army Officers trained at Bletchley Park and selected as Signals Liaison Officers (SLOs). Helfers was the only regular US Army Officer amongst them. A majority of those chosen were, like Adolph Rosengarten (the SLO to General Bradley's 1<sup>st</sup> Army), lawyers with an appreciation of the strict rules of confidentiality.

As SLOs, they had the difficult task of receiving the ULTRA messages but not allowing other officers – *often senior to them* – to see or even handle the message, unless directly authorised by his Commanding General. Even then, only those fully inducted into ULTRA could receive it. Knowledge – *even of its very existence* – was limited to General George Patton, Major General Hugh Gaffey his Chief of Staff, Brig General Hobart Gay, his G-2 – Colonel Oscar Koch, Col. Robert Allen and of course, Major Melvin Helfers and Major Warrack Wallace.

It is said that Patton did not meet the two US Army SLO officers for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army until it was activated in France. They were Major Melvin Helfers and his assistant Major Warrack Wallace. This most certainly does not imply that Patton was unaware of the benefits of ULTRA. When he arrived earlier in Algiers he had requested a meeting with Group Captain Winterbotham. I quote from his book 'The Ultra Secret' where he reports that General Patton greeted him with a broad smile and cheery welcome and said:

*"Now young sir, what's this all about." He was then delighted at the idea that we were reading the enemy signals but when the matter of security of this priceless source was raised he said "You know, young man I think you had better tell all this to my Intelligence Staff, I don't go much on this sort of thing myself. You see I just like fighting."*

In spite of his seeming indifference to ULTRA, there was one our SLUs – supplied by Winterbotham – attached to his Intelligence staff in North Africa. As a result, Patton's Commands benefited from its use in North Africa and in well-documented ways in Sicily, long before the 'D-Day' invasion. Again, the following is a quote from 'The Ultra Secret' when writing about 'Operation Husky' the allied invasion of Sicily.

*"Patton, taking full advantage of the move of the panzers to hold Montgomery, and knowing from ULTRA that there was nothing to stop him, was making his famous high-speed left hook towards Palermo and Messina....."*

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Slessor says – in his Foreword to 'The Ultra Secret' – speaking about the likes of Montgomery and Patton *"...It may detract a bit from the glamour surrounding some of them to know that they might not have done so well had they not so often held in their hands pretty full details of the enemy's strength and dispositions, logistic situation and operational plans, before and throughout their battles."*

## 4. 'ULTRA and historians'
I suggest that when writing about the war campaign in Europe, some historians might benefit from reading one or two of the multitude of excellent books on ULTRA. The Bletchley Park Bookshop is a good source but there are others. It is difficult to suggest a short list but clearly the following are essential reading.

**'Ultra Goes to War'** by Ronald Lewin.
**'Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy'** by Ralph Bennett.
**'Ultra in the West'** by Ralph Bennett.
**'The Ultra Secret'** by F. W. Winterbotham.
**'XIX Tactical Air Command and ULTRA – Patton's Force Enhancers in the 1944 Campaign in France'** by Major Bradford J. Shwedo of the USAF – as CADRE Paper No.10..

This was published in May 2001 at the College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education – Air University Press –Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

### Historians writing about World War II and the use of ULTRA should take note !

In a letter addressed to Major General Sir Stewart Menzies – **'C'** – Chief of Britain's Secret Intelligence Services (SIS, or more frequently referred to as MI6). It is from General Eisenhower, the Allied Supreme Commander, and written in July 1945.

*Dear General Menzies,*

*I had hoped to be able to pay a visit to Bletchley Park in order to thank you, Sir Edward Travis, and the members of the staff personally for the magnificent services which have been rendered to the Allied Cause.*

*I am very well aware of the immense amount of work and effort which has been involved in the production of the material with which you have supplied us. I fully realise also the numerous setbacks and difficulties with which you have had to contend and how you have always, by your supreme efforts, overcome them.*

*The intelligence which has emanated from you before and during this campaign has been of priceless value to me. It has simplified my task as a commander enormously. It has saved thousands of British and American lives and, in no small way, contributed to the speed with which the enemy was routed and eventually forced to surrender.*

*I should be very grateful, therefore, if you would express to each and every one of those engaged in this work from me personally my heartfelt admiration and sincere thanks for their very decisive contribution to the Allied war effort.*

*Sincerely,*
*(Sgd.) Dwight D. Eisenhower*

General Eisenhower is here expressing his considered view – immediately after the Allied victory in Europe – that ULTRA had saved thousands of Allied serviceman's lives and shortened the war.

Historians, with the benefit of later research were able to gauge how much the success of our Commanders on land, sea and air – and our final victory – was due to the priceless information provided by ULTRA and the huge secret organisation behind it.

Estimates for the saving of Allied lives as a result of having the priceless ULTRA certainly goes into hundreds of thousands, and that is not including the lives of the Axis forces facing us. So far as timescale is concerned, many think that ULTRA shortened the war by up to a year, with some suggesting even longer.

I have just started to read 'Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life' again by Carlo D'Este. I recommend it to others for its insight into this very complex man. I am not surprised to read from the jacket that it took five years of primary research.
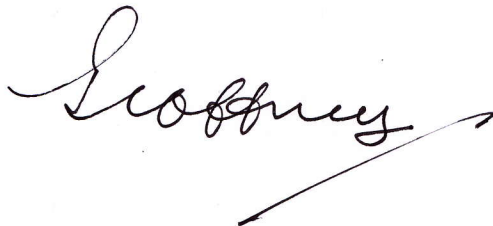
However, again there are only five quite brief mentions of ULTRA in the 888 pages of the book. That hardly sits well with General Eisenhower's deep appreciation of the magnificent work of Bletchley Park, as expressed in his letter to Stewart Menzies – Chief of our Secret Intelligence Services – MI6.

I am very grateful to my wartime colleague Wilf Neal for his considerable input to the original article. The many responses received about ULTRA – like the one quoted earlier – have made our efforts truly worthwhile but I want to end on an appreciative note.

***Nothing we have written detracts from the fact that
General George S. Patton was one of the great Generals of World War II.***

All this has come about simply due to the reluctance of some of his historians – and the General George Patton Museum at Fort Knox in particular – to recognize the part played by ULTRA in his successes.

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