

# Chapter 11

## Summary and Conclusion

The 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of OSS training camps for spies, saboteurs, guerrilla leaders, and clandestine radio-operators in the National Parks—in particular Catoctin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park—occurred in 2007. Although the training camps were closed and the OSS terminated in 1945, the valuable contributions to the Allied victory made by those facilities and by Donovan’s organization itself are an important part of the history of World War II. William J. (“Wild Bill”) Donovan believed that intelligence, deception, subversion, and psychological and irregular warfare could spearhead the Allied liberation of Europe and the Far East, and he crafted a novel instrument to serve that purpose. Like the secret agency itself, much of its history was cloaked in silence and mystery. The American public remained only partially aware of the OSS, its members, their training, their missions and their accomplishments until the 1980s when the CIA began to declassify the records of Donovan’s organization. Subsequently, OSS veterans, sworn to silence, began to feel free at last to talk about their experiences in training and serving in America’s first centralized intelligence and clandestine operations agency. Most of the remaining OSS files, including personnel files, were not declassified until 2008, more than half a century after the end of World War II.<sup>1</sup>

Particularly during the Cold War, with its extensive intelligence and counter-intelligence operations and clandestine actions on both sides, the public became fascinated with the shadowy world of spies and secret agents. Before the cynicism of recent years, secret agents were seen as glamorous. Popular novels and films reflected that view. Sometimes they noted the institutional dichotomy between the civilian spies and the rowdy, covert action agents, whom the less combat-oriented members of the OSS sometimes referred to as the “Bang-Bang Boys.”<sup>2</sup> But more often, particularly the sensational ones produced for the mass market, merged espionage, counterespionage and covert operations in a *mélange* of action, most famously in Ian Fleming’s debonair James Bond-007 series, but also in the tense, suspenseful *Mission Impossible* episodes

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<sup>1</sup> Brett J. Blackledge and Randy Herschaft, Associated Press, “Newly Release Files Detail Early US Spy Network,” 14 August 2008, [<sup>2</sup> Quoted in “History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I: Chronology and Administration, June 1942 – October 1945,” p. 25, typescript, n.d. \[apparently written in 1947\], copy delivered by W.J. Morgan, who had been with OSS Schools and Training Branch during World War II, to Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, OSS Records \(RG 226\), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 12, National Archives II, College Park, Md.](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/14/August; Spy Files Include a Justice, a Baker, and a Filmmaker,” Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger, 15 August 2008, A4.. The 750,000 newly declassified documents also seem to suggest that OSS had a total of 24,000 members rather than the 13,000 previously believed, but their status, whether permanent, temporary, member or consultant, American or foreigner, remains to be determined. The release of these three-quarters of a million documents occurred as the present study was going to press, and they have not been included in it.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

originated by Bruce Geller, and the action-filled techno-thriller films starring Tom Clancy, Tom Cruise, or Matt Damon. Aside from the three postwar films, *O.S.S.*, *Cloak and Dagger*, and *13 Rue Madeleine*, which celebrated the OSS and Robert DeNiro's recent film, *The Good Shepherd*, which attacked both it and the CIA, the OSS itself has seldom provided the basis for Hollywood films. Because until relatively recently the full extent of the operations of Donovan's organization had not been made public, the OSS has been portrayed mainly through historical, biographical, or autobiographical works rather than through the movies.

While the most popular topics concerning the OSS for the public and scholars alike have been the cloak and dagger work of the spies and counterspies, and the behind enemy lines operations of OSS guerrilla leaders and saboteurs, the least explored area of the OSS has been its training schools. The present study, commissioned by the National Park Service to help understand the role of the National Parks in the OSS's activities in World War II, provides considerable new light on that aspect of the OSS—and indeed on the CIA and the Special Forces which inherited some of its personnel and adopted much of the training techniques of Donovan's organization.

### **Training Spies, Saboteurs, and Agent Operatives in the Parks**

With its cardinal principle of secrecy, the OSS established its training camps in secluded yet accessible areas, most of them rural Maryland and Virginia within two hours drive from the organization's headquarters in Washington, D.C. Here as in many other matters, OSS initially drew upon the experience of the British secret services. Donovan's Special Operations (SO) Branch replicated the British Special Operations Executive's (SOE) penchant for rugged, isolated terrain for toughening up its covert operators for paramilitary missions behind enemy lines. It set up Training Areas A, B, C, and D in secluded woodlands. The only deviation was Area F, which was established on the grounds of the former Congressional Country Club for the Operational Groups. OSS's Secret Intelligence (SI) Branch replicated British Secret Information Service's (SIS) use of country estates as schools for introducing recruits into the murky world of espionage. Thus, it established Training Areas E and RTU-11 ("the Farm") in spacious manor houses with surrounding horse farms. Yet some members of each of the two American branches trained at the other's facilities. This was particularly true in the teaching of rugged survival and close-combat techniques at the Special Operations training camps at the two National Parks, where men preparing to be spies or other operatives sometimes joined the military recruits who were being trained physically and psychologically for clandestine raids from forest or mountain hideouts upon enemy outposts, command centers, or vital communication or transportation facilities.

The appeal of Catoctin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park, then known as Catoctin and Chopawamsic Recreational Demonstration Areas respectively, was precisely because of their location not far from Washington, their comparative isolation in rural areas, their existing camp facilities, and the fact that they were already federal property. That meant they could be obtained quickly and easily in the spring of

1942. With war declared, the War Department simply demanded that the Department of the Interior lease those lands of the National Park Service to it for military purposes for the duration of the war. The two parks had cabins for accommodation, woods in which to practice hit and run attacks on enemy targets, and open meadows for firing ranges, demolition work, and other field exercises. With nearly 10,000 acres each, the two parks were sizable enough to cloak the secret training that would be provided there, yet they were only one or two hours away from OSS headquarters.

The first three OSS training camps were established in the two parks in April and May 1942. Training Area B for the basic paramilitary course was created in Catoctin Mountain Park in northwestern Maryland, 70 miles north of Washington. Training Areas A and C were established thirty-five miles south of Washington in Prince William Forest Park. Area A for the advanced courses in special operations was located in the cabin camps in the western part of Prince William Forest Park. Training Area C, a school for preparing clandestine radio operators, was established in the cabin camps in the northeastern sector of Prince William Forest Park. At the end of the war, Schools and Training (S&T) Branch's only complaint about the facilities for Areas A and C at Prince William Forest Park was that OSS had to make a considerable number of changes to winterize them for its year around training, since they had originally been built as summer cabin camps.<sup>3</sup> Although S&T found the mountainous terrain of Catoctin Mountain Park useful for paramilitary training exercises at Area B, it concluded that the location a full two hours north of Washington was somewhat too far for efficient coordination, and that Franklin Roosevelt's use of his Presidential Retreat there during the summer considerably curtailed the paramilitary training exercises when he was in residence.<sup>4</sup>

Although additional OSS training schools for other operational branches of the OSS were subsequently established, Areas A, B, and C in the two National Parks served as the primary training sites for the Special Operations and Communications branches. Areas B and A also served as subsidiary training sites for the commando-like units of the OSS Operational Groups (OGs) after their initial training at Area F, the former Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland, acquired by OSS in 1943. The lakes in Area A served as the training site for waterborne infiltration practice before the acquisition of Area D on the eastern bank of the Potomac River and the establishment of the OSS Maritime Unit. The fields of Area A were used for parachute practice and low altitude jumps before OSS parachute training was relocated to the Army's main parachute school at Fort Benning, Georgia.

In the summer of 1942, the Secret Intelligence Branch acquired a country estate in Maryland 20 miles south of Washington as a training school called RTU-11, or "the Farm." The following year, the newly established Schools and Training Branch

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<sup>3</sup> "History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I: Chronology and Administration, June 1942 – October 1945," p. 17, typescript, n.d. [apparently written in 1947], copy delivered by W.J. Morgan, who had been with OSS Schools and Training Branch during World War II, to Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 12, National Archives II.

<sup>4</sup> "Excerpts from History of Schools and Training, OSS," attached to L.B. Shallcross, Deputy, STB/TRD, to John O'Gara, Chief, Staff Training Branch [of CIA], 1 February 1951, subject: information on OSS Schools and Training Sites, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 7, Folder 76, National Archives II.

established Area E, ultimately consisting of two country estates north of Baltimore, which served as training sites for a general introductory course for OSS recruits of various operational branches (as would sub-area A-3 in Prince William Forest Park). Area E eventually served mainly the Secret Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence, and Morale Operations branches.

The majority of the 13,000, or more, men and women in OSS, however, did *not* go to the training schools of the so-called operational branches. The clerks, typists, office workers and other administrative and support personnel, as well as the scientists and engineers of the Research and Development Branch and the scholars and other analysts of the Research and Analysis Branch, most all of these civilian employees, had been employed because they already had the skills required.<sup>5</sup>

In the winter of 1944-45, as the war in Europe neared its end, and the U.S. Army began plans to transfer many troops to the Far East, most of the OSS operational branch training sites in Maryland and Virginia became holding areas for returning veterans awaiting reassignment to Asia or other purposes. Most of the OSS's Far Eastern training programs had shifted to the agency's new training schools located on Catalina Island and Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base in southern California. These West Coast schools were modeled after those in Maryland and Virginia. With the Japanese surrender and the rapid termination of the OSS in October 1945, all of the OSS training sites were returned to their former owners. They were given back without the firing ranges, demolition areas, "houses of horrors," and other facilities that the OSS had built for the rough and tough training of the Special Operations teams (SO) and Operational Groups (OGs).

### **Aims and Methods**

"Set Europe ablaze!" was the goal enunciated by Prime Minister Winston Churchill when he authorized the creation of the British commandos and Special Operations Executive (SOE) forces, and it became part of Donovan's grand vision of the OSS as well, not just a centralized intelligence agency but also one that acted to subvert the enemy. It was widely believed at that time that the Germans' success in conquering much of Europe so quickly was not simply due the capability of their armies but also to the effectiveness of their spies, saboteurs and sympathizers ("fifth columnists" in the term of the day), who undermined the ability of the targeted nations to resist Hitler's forces. Churchill and Donovan sought to turn that technique against the Axis. They would use spies, propagandists, saboteurs, commando raiders, and guerrilla leaders to inspire, supply, and direct resistance movements to conduct subversive activity and raids behind

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<sup>5</sup> However, as Schools and Training Branch acknowledged after the war, too often OSS men were sent overseas without any military training, because it was assumed they would continue to work in purely service and support functions, such as Research and Analysis or Administrative Services, but once overseas were transferred to operational or other duties. "History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I: Chronology and Administration, June 1942 – October 1945," p. 29, typescript, n.d. [apparently written in 1947], copy delivered by W.J. Morgan, who had been with OSS Schools and Training Branch during World War II, to Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 12, National Archives II.

enemy lines in the Axis-occupied countries. What Churchill meant by his famous phrase was to set German-occupied Europe ablaze with the fire of subversion by indigenous resistance movements supplied and directed by the Allies. The German Army's lines of communication and supply would be hampered by subversive efforts by these Allied-led local partisans. Eventually, when the Allied conventional armies were raised and assaulted Hitler's Empire from the front, the Allied agents played a crucial role in sabotaging the German Army's supply lines with explosives they set as well as by bombs dropped by Allied aircraft they directed to the supply depots, assembly points, troop trains and convoys and other tactical targets.

Such unconventional warfare was made possible largely by two technological developments: the airplane and the radio. Airplanes facilitated the delivery of spies, saboteurs, guerrilla leaders and other personnel as well as weapons and supplies into enemy-held territory. Agents and supplies were generally parachuted in at night from low flying, black painted bombers. Radio, or more precisely the wireless transmission (W/T) of telegraphic messages by short-wave radio signals, provided a means of communication between regional headquarters and the spies and agents behind enemy lines. The idea was to obtain strategic and tactical intelligence and to engage in sabotage and other subversive activities behind the enemy lines. The regular military was suspicious, even hostile, to Donovan's group of civilians and former civilians. They disdained the absence of military discipline and protocol in the OSS and the inattention to the precision of dress that the regular military required. But the professional soldiers made a mistake in so easily dismissing Donovan's neophyte crew, since these were glorious amateurs, who were talented, eager, daring, and innovative, and most importantly, were in the forefront of new approaches to intelligence operations and unconventional warfare.

Donovan's vision of unconventional warfare, encouraged by the British, was broad and bold. He wanted to carry the war to the enemy right away and behind their lines in weak spots in occupied territory. Initially, he planned a combined centralized intelligence and subversive operations agency that would include more than gathering and coordinating intelligence and staging guerrilla and commando operations behind enemy lines. It would also use information and technology, especially radio, as weapons. Foreign radio broadcasts would be beamed at Allied, neutral, and enemy-occupied countries with news of the positive efforts and achievements of the Allies and negative, disinformation ("black propaganda") to undermine the morale of the enemy forces and civilian population. Donovan lost the positive propaganda entity in a bureaucratic battle to the Office of War Information, but he kept the black propaganda aspect, which became the domain of OSS Morale Operations Branch (MO). The centralized gathering and analysis came from the spies of the Secret Intelligence Branch (SI) and the rings of local agents they would recruit and run, and from one of Donovan's primary innovations, the Research and Analysis Branch (R&A), the scholars and others who used the foreign language newspapers, economic and political reports, and other published material in the Library of Congress as well as material obtained from agents overseas to provide comprehensive assessments of key industrial, political, and military targets for Allied bombers, commandos, or saboteurs.

The concept of deploying commandos, saboteurs, and guerrilla leaders behind enemy lines assumed organizational form in the Special Operations Branch and the Operational Groups. Despite considerable support from President Roosevelt and a

number of influential friends among economic, political, and social elites, Donovan had his enemies. The Wall Street lawyer and his organization of amateur soldiers, spies, and intelligence analysts, raised hackles among professionals in established and competing agencies, including especially the Military Intelligence Service, the Office of Naval Intelligence, the FBI and the State Department. Donovan had originally envisioned the agency providing primarily centralized strategic intelligence to various clients from the President himself to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), to particular military and civilian departments. He also hoped to have saboteurs and guerrilla leaders, and British type military commando units which he daringly hoped he would sometimes be able to lead personally on raids. But while the President and occasionally the JCS valued the intelligence that SI and especially R&A provided during the war, it became clear by 1943 that what some military theater commanders wanted more from OSS was tactical intelligence about the enemy forces deployed against them that could be used immediately. That involved running rings of agents near the battle zone. The U.S military developed its own commando-like units—Army Ranger units, Navy Underwater Demolition Teams, and Marine Raider battalions, primarily for short-range penetrations, spearheading advances. The armed services limited Donovan's Special Operations and Operational Groups mainly to deep penetration, working with partisan resistance groups far behind enemy lines. Thus, the missions Donovan's organization had originally conceived of and trained for were altered somewhat during the course of the war.

OSS training also evolved, but much more slowly. Training methods for these paramilitary forces came originally from the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) forces, which provided instructors, manuals, equipment and the aura of having already conducted operations behind enemy lines. The first American special operations instructors were trained at British SOE's secret Camp X at Oshawa, near Toronto, which one of them referred to as the "Oshawa School of Mayhem and Murder."<sup>6</sup> They, like most of Donovan's uniformed personnel, were citizen soldiers at that time rather than career soldiers, often they were reserve officers. Some were military police officers, some civilian law enforcement officers, some, particularly in the case of demolitions instructors, were engineering officers. The influence of the law enforcement officers/instructors quickly waned as it became clear that their orientation had been towards apprehending law breakers, while the OSS/SO curriculum was designed to teach trainees how to create damage and avoid being caught by local police or military forces. The British emphasis, carried over to OSS, on extreme secrecy and the "cloak and dagger" aspects of training, also seem to have become less important as time went on, and although not abandoned, they were de-emphasized in contrast to the increasing importance on practical techniques of accomplishing the mission whether espionage, sabotage, commando operations or guerrilla leadership.

Charismatic and visionary, William J. Donovan, more than anyone else, was responsible for creating America's first central intelligence agency, and through his Special Operations teams and Operational Groups, he was a major progenitor of the Special Forces. Yet, he was an abysmal administrator. Uninterested and perhaps unable to manage a growing organization that had so many different missions and branches,

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<sup>6</sup> George H. White, Diary, 1942, quoted in John C. McWilliams, "Covert Connections: The FBN, the OSS, and the CIA," *The Historian*, 53.4 (Summer 1991): 665.

Donovan frequently fled to the war zones and left the daily management to others. He built the organization by recruiting intelligent, able, and innovative people and then largely letting them find places for themselves. The branches essentially operated autonomously. “I ended up disliking Donovan,” recalled H. Stuart Hughes, Harvard trained historian and grandson of 1916 Presidential candidate Charles Evans Hughes, who worked in Research and Analysis Branch. “He was, I think, responsible for a certain wild style of administration and the sense that everything was chaotic. I remember that Sherman Kent [Yale historian and head of European Division of R&A] at some point had been reading Shakespeare. He found the passage, ‘Confusion now has made his masterpiece.’ He laughed and said, ‘That’s us!’”<sup>7</sup>

It was in response to such a haphazard arrangement and the problems of building a training program at the same time that OSS itself was evolving that the Schools and Training (S&T) Branch was formed in the winter of 1942-1943. The S&T Branch spent the rest of the war seeking to coordinate and to the best of its ability to standardize at least some of the training policies among the schools and training camps of the various operational branches—especially the often competing Secret Intelligence and Special Operations branches. S&T never did completely control them, and the branches remained the dominant influences on their trainees throughout the war. Indeed, they remained more attuned to evolving developments in the war due to their own agents in the combat zones. Although Schools and Training Branch had official authority over the instructional program, including the training schools, the curriculum, written and visual teaching materials, and the staff and instructors at the training camps, most of the staff and instructors came from the operational branches. Their loyalty remained with their branches, and most of them sought to be assigned overseas. It was not until near the end of the war that Schools and Training Branch obtained authority over the training camps that the various operational branches had established overseas, and even there, S&T had difficulty imposing its will. In practice, Schools and Training Branch served more as a managerial agency—overseeing and allocating among the training camps—than the key instructional agency. As instruction became less general and more specialized, it derived largely from the operational branches themselves. Overseas, the training camps were dominated by their regional detachments.

The trend in instruction over the course of the war moved from more generalized training in the early days, when it was unclear how individual recruits would ultimately be used, toward more specific training aimed at particular types or locations of missions. Because of the pressure to produce agents, the basic courses in both SI and SO were three to four weeks of intensive training. Graduates then went on to advanced and more specialized courses.<sup>8</sup> Yet attempts by SI and SO to tailor training of individual students to their future missions, were generally fruitless, in part because the area “desks” at OSS headquarters often did not know the missions of particular individuals in advance. So there always remained general aspects to the training. They deliberately included the kind of physical and intellectual demands designed to test the individuals and weed out those

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<sup>7</sup> H. Stuart Hughes, oral history interview conducted by Barry Katz, 10 May 1997, p. 13, in OSS Oral History Transcripts, CIA Records (RG 263), Box 2, National Archives II.

<sup>8</sup> “Outlines of Courses at All U.S. Training Areas,” December 1943, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.

unsuited either physically or emotionally for the demands of operations behind enemy lines. These physical and mental demands were also designed to create in those who graduated as members of the OSS operational branches, a sense of self-confidence, élan, and belief in themselves, their ability, and the mission of their elite organization. The OSS paramilitary training, as in other elite military organizations—rangers, paratroopers, Marines—was in part designed to impart the proud, can-do spirit of an extraordinary organization.

Aggressive physical toughening had greater emphasis in the paramilitary training camps than in the more subtle training schools of Secret Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence, and Morale Operations. The men and women of the latter three branches were often older and civilians, in contrast to the trainees in SO, OG, and CB who were required to have been in the armed services. All of the branches learned some basic aspects of the others' skills, but the training that occurred in the two National Parks, was primarily geared to SO, OG, and "Commo" work. (The Communications Branch was a technical service, and its training course for its own personnel, required a mastery of OSS's specialized equipment, codes, and high-speed wireless transmission. Its course for its personnel generally lasted three months.<sup>9</sup>) In addition to the physical toughening, the training courses at the two National Parks included a mastery of weapons. Most of the military recruits had already received basic training in the armed services. OSS trainees had to achieve a level of proficiency far beyond the standard Army training. They had to learn to operate and maintain not only a variety of standard American weapons but also various weapons from Allied or enemy countries. They learned to use specialized OSS weaponry—knives, grenades, pistols, rifle and submachine guns, some with silencers. To bolster their confidence, overcome combat fear, and simply give them skills to survive in the war's killing zones, they learned quick and effective means of pistol shooting (the "instinctive" method of firing off pairs of shots from the hip) as well as a hundred ways of disabling an enemy in unarmed combat using jiu-jitsu, kick-boxing, karate, and other forms of martial arts.

The OSS schools taught other skills as well. For sabotage, the students learned about various forms of explosives, including the new malleable but stable and highly explosive "plastic" compounds. They studied how to use such demolitions to destroy, railroad tracks, trains, bridges, tunnels, supply depots, industrial plants. For intelligence gathering, they gained knowledge about how to identify enemy units by their particular insignia, what to look for in military or industrial facilities. They were taught how to obtain and direct rings of indigenous agents. For guerrilla leadership, they learned how to recruit and work with local guerrilla resistance groups, how to train, lead, and supply them. SO and OG trainees practiced raids against simulated enemy outposts, power plants or bridges. The students were taught how to create miniature cameras out of matchboxes, how to sketch particular facilities, how to operate one of the wireless, radio/telegraph sets carried in what looked like a regular suitcase. They learned how to maintain cover even if captured, how to resist interrogation, and, if necessary, how to break the coated cyanide pill (the "L" for lethal pill they carried) in their mouth before revealing the names and locations of other agents or other vital information. "They gave us three [kinds of] pills," said George Maddock, a member of an OSS team that jumped into southern

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<sup>9</sup> "Outlines of Courses at All U.S. Training Areas," December 1943, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.



France in 1933, “one to give us energy, one to wake us up, and another one to kill us in case we were captured.”<sup>10</sup>

Organizationally, the OSS personnel who ran the training camps were divided into two staffs: one for administration and maintenance of the camp and the other for instruction. A commanding officer was put in overall charge of the camp, but he dealt almost as an equal with the chief instructor. As with the vast majority of uniformed personnel in Donovan’s hastily built organization, most of the men who staffed the paramilitary camps, as well as the OSS recruits who trained there, had previously been civilians. Donovan and his chief subordinates were successful business and professional people, and they recruited men and women who showed initiative, imagination, intelligence and adaptability, people who could think imaginatively, “outside the box.” They also wanted people who were reliable, and so they frequently counted upon personal connections and background for recruiting, particularly those who would become commissioned officers. This personal network contributed to the OSS’s reputation for being filled with socialites, of being “Oh-So-Social.” Although there was some truth to this as, the presence of Vanderbilts, Morgans, Whitneys, Mellons, and the like in the upper ranks attested, the vast majority of men and women who worked for the OSS came from the college-educated middle class. Some of the rank and file, especially those recruited from among the draftees and volunteers in the enlisted ranks of the military, came from the high-school educated, working class. What most of them had in common was that they scored high on intelligence tests and had already showed considerable ability and initiative. Many of them were adept in at least one foreign language. Those in the Communications Branch generally had some prior radio or telegraphy experience, a good number were short-wave radio hobbyists, known as “Hams.” With a few exceptions, most of the members of the OSS were not career military people. Even those in uniform in Special Operations, Operational Groups, and the Maritime Unit had generally been civilians who had become part of the armed forces only because of the war. On the whole, the regular military establishment was leery of Donovan and what it considered his free-wheeling, improvised group of amateurs. With its quasi-civilian status and its notorious lack of attention in its military branches to standard Army protocol and discipline, the OSS was indeed a most unmilitary military.

Although the training camps at Areas A, B, and C, at Catocin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park were organized as military detachments and were filled with uniformed personnel, both staff and trainees, they were most unmilitary in their decorum. There was no saluting or marching and few distinctions between officers and enlisted men. An atmosphere of informality and individual self-responsibility rather than ceremony and formal discipline pervaded the OSS and the training camps as well. The uniforms, weaponry, munitions, and tactical problems may have been military, but the emphasis was not on following orders but on individual skill, initiative, and imagination to achieve success in the mission.

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<sup>10</sup> George Maddock, newspaper interview in 2007, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1918, 2 December 2007, [osssociety@yahoo.com](mailto:osssociety@yahoo.com), accessed 2 December 2007.

### Critiques of Training

Initially, Donovan's organization received advice, teaching aids, equipment, and even some instructors, from the United Kingdom, but it had its differences with its British counterparts. These differences involved both the OSS's organization, which included both intelligence and special operations, and in its goal, which was only to defeat the Axis, *not* to restore the British Empire. OSS had its own American missions and style. It was geared toward Americans not Englishmen, as the informality and lack of military discipline illustrated. Starting with the British model, the Americans gradually developed their own training system, evolving both by plan and by trial and error, primarily learning by doing. It was a new organization feeling its way along. In general, its training was effective in one of its major goals: preparing agents psychologically, physically and to respond rapidly and appropriately to unpredictable situations. Nevertheless, there were issues that needed to be resolved.

As the OSS expanded during the rapid American mobilization of 1942-43, it faced the fact that some of the recruits who volunteered for overseas operations proved to be unfit for the physical and emotional demands. An elite organization, emphasizing heroism and hazardous duty attracted volunteers who craved the excitement and glory. But some of such volunteers lacked the emotional stability or the physical stamina for dangerous service behind enemy lines. Instructors tried to identify and weed out such characters and many trainees were dismissed and sent back to their armed forces. But some of the unstable got through training and were dispatched overseas before their unsuitability was discovered. Consequently, Donovan's office in 1944 initiated a major new psychological program to assess candidates for overseas duty even before they began their training.

The psychological assessment program, as it ultimately evolved, proved remarkably effective. In 1942 and 1943, many OSS recruits had found the interviews with psychologists perplexing and even a waste of time. As one student reported in 1942, he and the other students at Area B were "somewhat bewildered and made uncomfortable by our interviews with the psychological staff. The questionnaires given out by these men seemed pointless and naïve to us all."<sup>11</sup> Two years later, a radio-operator recruit had the same kind of senselessness after being interviewed for less than a minute in the psychologist's darkened tent in Area A. The psychologist waived a little pencil flashlight around, "asked a few things: where you were born, what you're interested in, and various others things. One question he asked me: 'Why do you wear your sideburns so long?' I said, 'I didn't know they were that long.' That was the end of it....It was strange, a little disorienting."<sup>12</sup>

By 1944, the OSS had expanded and perfected its assessment techniques. It established an Assessment Center, Station S, in a country estate in Fairfax County,

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<sup>11</sup> Unidentified trainee [signature page missing] to Lt. Col. P.G. Strong, 15 August 1942, subject: operation of SA/G [SO] schools, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 161, Folder 1754, National Archives II.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur ("Art") Reinhardt, interview at Prince William Forest Park, Triangle, Va., by the author 14 December 2004.

Virginia. There recruits were held and observed through a series of written and verbal tests and practical field exercises. Over a three day period, the potential agents for dangerous overseas missions were observed as they worked, played, talked and went through three dozen lifelike situation tests. In the last twenty months of the war, OSS teams of leading psychologists and psychiatrists, using radical methods and working in secrecy, developed a novel and successful method for assessing personalities and predicting an individual's performance on the kind of unpredictable situations prospective agents would face in the field. They employed simulations and situational exercises to identify and evaluate knowledge, behavioral traits, skills, competencies and weaknesses. According to an OSS report, the assessment program succeeded in "screening out the 15-20% who were obviously unfit."<sup>13</sup> The evaluation teams learned that beyond the specific skills and training, what makes an effective saboteur in France, an able spy in Germany, a good commando in Burma, a reliable undercover radio operator in China was a secure, capable, intelligent and creative person who can deal effectively with uncertainty and considerable stress. The effectiveness of the OSS's predictability with reasonable accuracy based on their assessment performance charts contributed to the success of the OSS. It also contributed to the postwar publication of the technique and its adoption by other government agencies as well as a number of corporations. It is still being used today.<sup>14</sup>

There were other gaps and difficulties along the way, some of which were quickly addressed and some of which were not so readily resolved. Francis ("Frank") Mills, a major in the field artillery, arrived at the OSS training camps outside the nation's capital in 1943 and could mainly recall the self-defense and silent killing instruction by the famous British expert, Colonel Fairbairn. All OSS trainees who saw him remembered the extraordinary skills of that otherwise unassuming, bespectacled, older Englishman. Mills said his group did not receive any training in intelligence gathering activity. "We were in special operations, fighting with the sympathetic forces behind enemy lines. We knew that," he said. "[But] we were given very marginal, almost no real training in how guerrillas were supposed to operate. So, we were given what little training the Army or OSS had to offer."<sup>15</sup> Erasmus ("Ras") Kloman, who entered OSS as a Princeton graduate and a young lieutenant, recalled a number of problems in Special Operations training in

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<sup>13</sup> "History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I: Chronology and Administration, June 1942 – October 1945," p. 42, typescript, n.d. [apparently written in 1947], copy delivered by W.J. Morgan, who had been with OSS Schools and Training Branch during World War II, to Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 12, National Archives II. The report, p. 39, stated that a surprising number of "psycho-neurotics" was found.

<sup>14</sup> "Spotting the Talent," *Financial Express*, 16 October 2005, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1172, 17 October 2005, [ossociety@yahoo.com](mailto:ossociety@yahoo.com), accessed 17 October 2005; Office of Strategic Services, *War Report of the OSS* (New York: Walker and Co., 1976), 238-241; reprint of the original typescript report prepared by the Strategic Services Unit of the War Department in 1947 (hereinafter OSS, *War Report of the OSS*); "A Good Man Is Hard to Find: The O.S.S. Learned How, with New Selection Methods that May Well Serve Industry," *Fortune* (1946): 92-95, 217-223; OSS Assessment Staff, *Assessment of Men: Selection of Personnel for the Office of Strategic Services* (New York: Rinehart, 1948).

<sup>15</sup> Francis ("Frank") Mills, oral history interview conducted by Maochun Yu, 19 November 1996, p. 2, OSS Oral History Transcripts, CIA Records (RG 263), Box 3, National Archives II.

the winter of 1943-44. Most importantly, it was never clear what his mission would be, and thus the training could not be matched to it. At first based on his knowledge of French, he was assigned to training as a SO agent who would be parachuted into occupied France. But that assignment was changed to SO in Yugoslavia. When he actually arrived overseas, he was sent neither to Yugoslavia or France but was given a series of administrative assignments in Egypt, Algeria, and Italy. A lot of his training in particular skills, for example a couple of days of Morse code, half a day of lock-picking instruction, he considered too brief to be adequate. He considered it “a little bit of this and a little bit of that in case it might come in handy someday.”<sup>16</sup>

In fact, a major complaint by many trainees and indeed by officials in the Schools and Training Branch, was that neither the students nor S&T knew, particularly in 1942-43, what kind of mission the operational branches and their regional desks had planned for particular students. Thus it was not clear to the students how any given topic related to their future mission, if at all, and the instructors at did not know either. (This was not true, of course, for the foreign trainees, the Yugoslavs, Norwegians, Thais, and Koreans, for example, who knew they would be infiltrated back into their home countries.) One response by Schools and Training was to establish a more generic form of training for the American trainees. Although Kloman was rescheduled to be sent to Yugoslavia, he had never been given instruction in Serbo-Croatian languages, nor had he been briefed on the political and military situations in that country. His superiors said that everything would become clear when he reached the Yugoslav desk in Cairo. “I supposed,” he wrote later, “it was assumed I would pick this up once I went abroad.”<sup>17</sup> Very much concerned about this problem, Schools and Training Branch did seek to link the regional desks in particular OSS operational branches—especially Special Operations, Secret Intelligence, Operational Groups—with particular individuals and groups of students, the better to gear their instruction toward their ultimate missions for OSS. Another problem, albeit one that conflicted with the desire for secrecy, was that especially in the early years, students were ignorant about the overall organization of the OSS and its various and sometimes competing branches.<sup>18</sup> Schools and Training Branch did later add an introductory course to give students a sense of where they fit in the larger organization and how the different branches could compliment and work in support of each other.

OSS tried to make the training as realistic as possible, despite the fact that the exact situations agents would face in the field could not always be foreseen, and in any event, many of those situations could not be adequately duplicated in the camps. Firing at a cardboard target was not the same as shooting at an enemy who was trying to kill you. Instructors tried to increase the realism by using live ammunition and explosives. They designed a rigorous obstacle course with small explosives set off by trip wires. They forced students to crawl under barbed wire with machine gun bullets zipping over their heads. Fairbairn built a mystery, pistol house, or “house of horrors” as it was called by

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<sup>16</sup> Erasmus H. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers: With the OSS in the Mediterranean Theater* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 10, 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; Erasmus Kloman, telephone interview with the author, 24 January 2005. In fact, his assignment was changed, and he was never sent to Yugoslavia.

<sup>18</sup> Kloman, *Assignment Algiers*, 13-14.

the students, at Areas A and B. Students would be awakened in the middle of the night, given a pistol and ordered to kick in the door to the mystery house and rush through its darkened rooms and corridors, responding instantly and accurately with their Colt .45 to suddenly illuminated enemy mannequins and pop-up silhouettes of German soldiers. In addition, Fairbairn, who had mastered jujitsu, judo, knife-fighting, taught awe-struck trainees what one of them recalled were “100 Ways to Kill a Person without Firing a Shot.”<sup>19</sup>

The most frequent complaint of the students was of being “held” too long after completing their training. When they graduated, they were at their peak of enthusiasm and self-confidence and ready for their mission overseas, but OSS then confronted the problems of obtaining space on ships and planes going abroad. Priorities were lost among a welter of inter-service rivalries, bureaucratic confusion and the overall demands of logistics upon an already overburdened global transportation system supplying America’s armed forces. The new graduates were frustrated by the endless delays, and their enthusiasm and readiness eroded the longer they remained unassigned after graduation. Schools and Training officials tried to remedy this by sending them to additional courses, if there was space for them, or letting them go on leave, but sometimes they were kept in camps that were not at full capacity at the time.

### **Making Training Realistic**

Few of the OSS instructors in the Stateside training camps had any actual combat experience, at least until late in the war, and this was worrisome. As an espionage or morale operations student at Area A complained after graduation in 1942, “with the exception of Capt. White [from the Federal Bureau of Narcotics], no single instructor had any major experience with undercover work. Consequently, the lectures seemed rather lifeless. As a graduate of this course, I still have no idea of how to deal with ‘black market’ operations, false entry, financial operations, or any of the present day operational problems.”<sup>20</sup> To ameliorate this inexperience, several instructors were sent to Great Britain in the early fall of 1942 to gain firsthand experience at the British schools staffed by instructors, some of whom had worked behind enemy lines. Lieutenant Frank Gleason, a demolitions instructor at Area B in Catoctin, attended an industrial sabotage school in England for two months and learned how to blow up steam turbines, power plants, and factories. “When I left, I was a trained terrorist,” he recalled in 2005, “but in a worthy cause!”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> George Maddock, newspaper interview 2007, reprinted in OSS Society Digest, Number 1918, 2 December 2007, [ossociety@yahogroups.com](mailto:ossociety@yahogroups.com), accessed 2 December 2007.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, the complaint by an unidentified trainee [signature page missing] to Lt. Col. P[hilip].G. Strong, [head of Special Operations Branch], 15 August 1942, subject: operation of SA/G [SO] schools, p. 2, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 161, Folder 1754, National Archives II.

<sup>21</sup> Frank A. Gleason, telephone interview with the author, 31 January 2005.

Initial American instructors subsequently gained combat experience in the field, but they seldom returned to the United States as instructors. Some who had been overseas at British schools, like Frank Gleason and Charles Parkin in late 1942, or combat veterans, like Carl Eifler and Allen Richter from Detachment 101 in Burma in 1944, did give guest lectures upon their return.<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that most of the U.S. Army's officer instructors in the first years of the war lacked combat experience, although some of the old-time NCOs had seen combat in World War I.

In place of the general lack of experience by instructors, OSS sought, as the war went on, to incorporate lessons its agents derived from experience in the field and apply them to the curriculum in the training schools. But generally the field agents were too busy to write reports on recommendations for further training back home. Operational branch officers declined S&T's requests for copies of reports from overseas units as breaches of security and useless extra work.<sup>23</sup> This was a slow process for S&T, and apparently the lessons could be implemented into the curriculum more rapidly by the operational branches themselves (agents' field experiences relayed directly via branch headquarters to instructors) than by the more pedagogically oriented and centralized Schools and Training Branch. The training at the stateside camps was seen as a form of basic and mid-level advanced OSS training. For more advanced, specialized training, including instruction from veterans of the combat theaters, OSS first relied upon British SOE schools, and subsequently on overseas training schools established by the OSS operational branches themselves. SO and SI, for example, set up schools in North Africa, Italy, England, and China. In 1944, Schools and Training Branch was given official authority over these overseas OSS schools, and it then sought to coordinate OSS training at home and abroad. Some members of OSS in England and in China argued by late 1944 that S&T's role in the United States be limited to assessment screening and providing general indoctrination and basic military training. They argued that recruits would benefit from then being sent to specialized finishing schools overseas where they would be immersed in conditions in that theater of operations and brought into direct contact with operatives from the field.<sup>24</sup> This was not adopted, although Schools and Training did

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<sup>22</sup> "One afternoon of tremendous benefit to the group [of students] was that spent with a man recently returned from the field, who reported on his own activities and personal experiences interestingly and in detail. His talk and his answers to their questions were of real value in helping the men to picture the situations they may encounter, and the operations they may undertake. The group was enthusiastic over the opportunity to hear him, and their reaction certainly was evidence of the desirability of bringing in a man with actual field experience whenever possible." "Student" to Kenneth Baker [chief, Schools and Training Branch], 8 December 1942, p. 2, a three-page typed report by an anonymous student, in Appendix III, Part Two of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1722, National Archives II.

<sup>23</sup> Capt. W.B. Kantack, reports officer, SO, to Lt. Bane, 16 March 1945, subject: reports requirements of Schools and Training [in response to request from Mr. William R. Stewart, Assistant Intelligence Officer, S&T], OSS Records (RG 226), Directors Office Files, microfilm M1642, Roll 63, Frames 663-664, National Archives II.

<sup>24</sup> See the recommendations of Maj. Arthur Goldberg, head of the SI Labor Desk in Europe, "Report on an Hour with Major Goldberg," pp. 3-4, in "Interviews with Returned Men," OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31. In April 1945 S&T in China made a similar suggestion, ending, "It cannot be said that advanced training in the U.S. is a waste of time, but there is little doubt but that the U.S. training staffs could accomplish infinitely more if operating here." OSS Theater Reports, S & T Branch Excerpts, China

assume organizational responsibility for the overseas training schools that the operational branches had established.

OSS, like the Regular Army, was developing new curricula and training manuals to meet the new forms of warfare and to use the new weapons, munitions, and equipment, such as plastic explosives, a variety of weapons with silencers, bazookas, suitcase-size wireless transmitters and receivers. The OSS syllabuses and manuals were clear about the initial aims and methods of training in Special Operations and Communications in the training areas in Prince William Forest Park and Catoctin Mountain Park. The initial part of the training was to provide both physical conditioning as well as a sense of self-confidence and spirit in the organization and its purpose. It was also designed to weed out the unfit. For those who remained, it was to provide them with elementary skills in most of the areas they would need, plus advanced skills in their specialization. OSS did modify and adapt the curriculum in light of what its operatives learned in the field in the combat zones.

“The overall layout of training by OSS was really good,” concluded Allen R. Richter, who was part of the initial Detachment 101 communications contingent. “When we got overseas to Assam [India], we followed the same ideas. We would get our recruits and keep them together, but separated from the others, which meant they would sleep, eat and train there in their own little compounds. The advantage of that would be that everyone was doing their own thing, and not mixing demolition with radio and other activities--specialization. We copied Area C overseas.” Richter recalled that at least from 1942 to late 1944 when he returned to the United States, the specialized training program of Detachment 101 had been influenced by the Communications Branch back home and its training school at Area C, not by Schools and Training Branch, the umbrella training organization of OSS. “We had nothing to do with Schools and Training [Branch],” in India, Richter concluded.<sup>25</sup>

### **Problems of Schools and Training Branch**

Back home, the Schools and Training Branch suffered its own problems. “Someone recently likened Schools and Training to an island of ignorance with darkness on both sides of it,” bemoaned the new chief of S&T in October 1943, Lieutenant Colonel Henson L. Robinson. “We are trying to run a group of schools without knowing anything about the number of students we must train, the type of missions our students will have, or what happens to them after they get to their eventual destinations.”<sup>26</sup> In a

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Theater, 30 April 1945, p. 10, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 159, Folder 1729, both in National Archives II.

<sup>25</sup> Allen R. Richter, telephone interview with the author, 25 March 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Lt. Col. H.L. Robinson, Executive, Schools and Training Branch, October 1943, “Schools and Training,” p. 12, a 14-page typed report, included in Appendix IV, Part Three of the History [of Schools and Training Branch], OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 1723, National Archives II.

lengthy report, Colonel Robinson included some examples of what led to S&T's frustration:

We are suddenly informed by one of the [Operational] Branches that next Monday there will be 80 students to be trained for a very special mission; who must be kept segregated in a separate area; who will have to have special training in demolitions along with some other subjects that have not yet been decided upon; and a request that we rig up some models of various power plants, etc., for these students to play with.

Or, we are told a large group of Japanese, Thailanders, or Balkans [Yugoslavs] may be expected week after next and must be put in a separate area. A group now in process of formation is a good illustration. After various meetings, in none of which was any representative of Schools and Training included, a plan was evolved. Somebody was to recruit a hundred officers and fifty wireless operators. Operational Groups agreed to furnish some of their officers to give the group a short course in demolitions and small arms. Communications agreed to furnish some [telegraph] key sets and a few instructors to train the wireless operators. Quite by accident, later, we were told that we might expect to have 150 people suddenly dumped on our hands and it was up to us to find some place to put them. We tentatively agreed that, if and when the plan matured, we would put the group in Area F. Without further warning or advance notice, about 120 officers and men arrived at Area F, bag and baggage....The camp commander suddenly was confronted with the necessity of feeding and housing 120 people for whom he had drawn no rations or prepared any accommodations. He complained, justly, and we complained vociferously....So far we have received nothing.<sup>27</sup>

Schools and Training wanted to be involved from the inception of plans that could involve its training camps. Its leadership also desired reports on the successes or failures of the former trainees in actual operations abroad or lectures by returning field veterans to instructors in the training camps in the United States so that training could be adjusted and improved to reflect actual conditions in the field.<sup>28</sup> Since it could not obtain such branch reports, S&T sought similar information on its own, conducting a series of interviews with OSS operatives returning from overseas in 1944-1945.<sup>29</sup> These individuals had numerous suggestions for S&T's instructors. In 1949, the CIA

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>29</sup> OSS, Schools and Training Branch, "Interviews with Returned Men," fall 1944 to spring 1945, in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 31; and Lt. Arthur Simon, Area "K" [England], to Maj. Ezra Shine, Chief, S&T Branch [in England], 24 May 1945, subject: summary and analysis of deprocessing interviews [of men from the 13 teams parachuted into Germany between January and April 1945 and their assessments and recommendations regarding their training and its relationship to their missions], plus the transcripts of the interviews with the team members, all in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 158, Folder 26, National Archives II.



summarized a number of them as it built its own training program, modeled largely on that of the OSS. Many of the returning OSS veterans in 1944-1945, had contended that OSS as a whole and the training schools in particular put too much emphasis on what Major Peter Dewey, returning from France before his assignment to Indochina, called “too much ‘cloak and dagger’ creepiness in the training.” Dewey advised that the training “approach should be more matter-of-fact.”<sup>30</sup> A number of the field veterans complained that there was too little training in observing and reporting compared to cover and security. “Discipline, power of observation, military perspicacity, and common sense are the sine qua non of life behind the lines,” reported an SI agent from Greece.<sup>31</sup> Different agents sometime offered opposite views of the same issue. One SO instructor in Ceylon declared “natives being trained as [special operations] operatives must be treated with friendliness and respect. There is no other way.” But an SI agent from a neutral European country stated flatly “Never trust a man the first time,” and the chief organizer of a sabotage team warned that “friendly elements in the police can supply information of great value, but in nine out of ten cases the friendly policeman is a dangerous agent provocateur.”<sup>32</sup> Despite S&T’s efforts, the operational branches continued throughout the war to view the Schools and Training Branch merely as a support unit to provide instruction facilities for them as needed. Although S&T was given some additional authority, the operational branches remained predominant in operations and in the training of their agents throughout the war.

### Value of OSS Training

Many of the American agents overseas attributed their success at least in part to the value of what they had learned at the OSS training camps in the United States. They credited their achievements to the physical training, specific skills and techniques, and the self-confidence and faith in themselves and the organization, and the value of their

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<sup>30</sup> Maj. Peter Dewey quoted in Deane W. Starrett, Chief, Training Materials and Research Section [of CIA] to Col. [E.B.] Whisner, Deputy Chief, TRS, 16 May 1949, subject: wartime recommendations for the training of personnel in OSS, p. 16, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 161, Box 2, Folder 32, National Archives II. A Major Caskey from SI service in Greece and Turkey, p. 13, echoed that and contended that too much stress on security even at RTU-11 tended to make the student overly conscious of his cover.” On arriving in the field, he would be conspicuous by his secrecy.” Lt. George Demas from the Far East, p. 22, agreed that “being too tight-lipped, etc. tends to attract attention.” The summaries in the 1949 report were made by Donald C. Baker at the request of W.J. Morgan, who had served in OSS S&T Branch in WWII, and were taken from a series of interviews by Sgt. J.C. Gibbs of S&T with returning field personnel from SI, SO, MO, and MU during 1944 and 1945.

<sup>31</sup> Quotation from an unidentified Greek SI officer, *ibid.*, p. 21; for similar complaints about the need for more training on observation and reporting, see “John\_\_\_” SI, Greece, p. 16, “Dorothy C. \_\_\_” SI, Turkey, p. 17, and Huntington Bliss, cable officer, Bari, Italy, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> Quotations from Ray F. Kauffman, SO Ceylon, *ibid.*, p. 17; and “Mr. X” stationed in a “neutral country,” p. 8; and “chief organizer of a sabotage group,” p. 9. Emphasis in the original.

mission. Not surprisingly, those who stayed in the armed forces or later joined the CIA continued to draw upon and replicate techniques from the OSS training camps.

Major General John K. (“Jack”) Singlaub who as a young Jedburgh had trained at Areas B and F and then SOE schools in Britain, served with distinction in France and China, and after the war wound up his career by commanding all U.S. Army troops in South Korea, reflected in 1996 on what he had learned in his OSS training. “These were individual skills that are perhaps useful but are most important for training the state of mind or attitude, developing an aggressiveness and confidence in one’s ability to use weapons,” he said. “One of the most important aspects of the training was that it gave you complete confidence.” By the time he and his colleagues jumped into France in 1944, Singlaub said, “we had complete confidence that we could survive if we had a weapon. We were good. I mean, we hit targets in very dimly lighted places.... We were taught this ‘instinctive fire’.... [All of] that gave you an ability to concentrate on your mission, and not worry about your personal safety. That’s really a great psychological advantage. I used that later in training my units when I was a battalion commander and later, a Battle Group commander.”<sup>33</sup>

After the war, Robert R. Kehoe was employed by the CIA’s Office of Training and Education. The young New Jersey native had been a Jedburgh team radio operator in France after completing Commo training at Area C and SO training at Area B, and SOE instruction in Britain. “The experience at Area B-2 was a great morale builder,” he said later, “and when we departed in mid-December [1943], we were in top physical condition.”<sup>34</sup> He incorporated much of OSS training for the CIA.

Relating his personal experiences in a postwar memoir, Lieutenant Jerry Sage, who had spent more than two years in German POW camps after being captured in North Africa in February 1943, emphasized the importance of what he had learned in the OSS training camps, particularly Area B, where he learned while also instructing. Using techniques he learned at the OSS training school, he had escaped half a dozen times, but each time was recaptured in Germany. One of Sage’s most stressful moments and one in which, he said, his OSS training came to his rescue occurred in spring 1944, when he was brought back to *Stalag Luft III* after having been caught and beaten by the Gestapo. He was soon confronted by the irate camp commandant, a rather old colonel, under pressure from his Air Force superiors and the Gestapo to prevent any more escapes. As Sage recalled, *Kommandant* von Lindeiner went into a rage and pulled his pistol out of its holster, his hands shaking. “I’d learned from Dan Fairbairn that nobody is dangerous who just tells you to put your hands up and holds his pistol firmly on you,” Sage wrote later. “You can finally trick him and get close enough to disarm him in a number of ways. I knew how to do that.... I stood up slowly, fixed him with my eyes, and walked very gently toward him—with no threat and no bombast. Very quietly and calmly I said, ‘Be

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<sup>33</sup> Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub (USA-Ret.), transcript of interview by Maochun Yu and Christof Mauch, 31 October 1996, pp. 8, 13-14, OSS Oral History Transcripts, CIA Records (RG 263), Box 4, National Archives II. Asked if there were any areas of training that proved inadequate, General Singlaub replied in 1996, “I can’t think of any area [of training] that showed up at being deficient. There may be some, but I can’t think of any.”

<sup>34</sup> Robert R. Kehoe, “1944: An Allied Team with the French Resistance,” *Studies in Intelligence: Journal of the American Intelligence Profession*, OSS 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue (June 2002): 104.

reasonable.’ This was in my poor German but he understood me. ‘You would never forgive yourself, if you killed an unarmed man like this.’” It worked, the tension of the moment was broken, and the commandant went back to his office.<sup>35</sup>

At *Stalag Luft III*, where he was part of the plan for what became known as the “Great Escape,” rumors spread in 1944 that the Nazis might kill the POWs if the Allies reached Germany. The senior American officer asked Sage to train a hand-picked group of men to try to seize the camp if the Germans started such an operation, or at least to avoid being killed without a fight. Sage drew upon Fairbairn’s instructions on “silent killing,” the dispatching of sentries with knives, other instruments, or bare hands, to train a selected group of his fellow prisoners to take over the POW camp in case the Germans started “liquidation proceedings.” That did not happen, but Sage did escape successfully in January 1945 from a German POW camp in Poland, returning home via the Ukraine and Egypt.<sup>36</sup>

OSS training was equally effective in the Far East according to many veterans who served there. After a tour of duty as a demolitions instructor at Area B from 1942 to early 1943, Lieutenant Frank Gleason, SO, was sent to China. There he helped instruct Chinese commandos and he personally helped impede a Japanese advance by blowing up bridges and several warehouses of stored weapons and munitions to keep them from falling into enemy hands. After a successful postwar career in the Army Corps of Engineers, he retired as a full colonel. Asked how effective OSS training had been in China, Gleason asserted, “It was very effective. We blew those bridges. We did it with what we learned in our training here and in England. In China, we had classes where I taught Chinese how to destroy mechanical equipment. Joe Lazarsky used it against Japanese in China and with [Ray] Peers in the jungles of Burma. I felt fully prepared....Most of the students who graduated from the OSS training camps in Maryland and Virginia thought highly of their preparation there.”<sup>37</sup>

Lazarsky, who later spent a career with the CIA, concurred in regard to OSS training. “The training in weaponry and demolitions was effective. So was building self-confidence and the ability to get things done.” Lazarsky had also used such training to prepare indigenous agents in the Far East. “It was very effective [training],” he said. “If you debrief a Thai agent, they would tell you that. Even after the war, they would say thank you. [One of them said] ‘You know what you and Leo [Karwaski] taught me about demolitions—we could *not* have gotten that anywhere else.’”<sup>38</sup>

“Training is not spectacular work,” Schools and Training Branch acknowledged in its typewritten history. “It means doing a sound teaching job, adjusting sights to fit circumstances, and keeping right on doing it.” Certainly there were some brilliant instructors who spiced the programs with their personalities and operating experiences, “but the bulk of the work was done by hundreds of lesser known instructors and

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<sup>35</sup> Jerry Sage, *Sage* (Wayne, Pa.: Miles Standish Press, 1985), 207-208.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 305, 327, 431.

<sup>37</sup> Frank A. Gleason, Jr., telephone interview with the author, 9 February 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Lazarsky, telephone interview with the author, 11 February 2007.

administrators who stuck to the grind, class after class.”<sup>39</sup> Operating like the OSS itself which was created in haste and without American precedent and which was impelled with a tremendous drive for speed, production, and results, the Schools and Training Branch sometimes appeared confused and indecisive, as S&T acknowledged. Yet, training areas and programs were indeed developed almost overnight to fit the evolving needs of Donovan’s organization and other wartime developments. To meet suddenly increased quotas, the capacity of training areas was from time to time doubled in size, sometimes by putting new sub-camps into operation, sometimes with the creation of “tent cities” to accommodate additional students. Yet, Schools and Training also admitted that “only toward the end of World War II was OSS beginning to approach the kind of training that was really adequate for the complex and hazardous operations carried out by OSS personnel.”<sup>40</sup>

### Size of the OSS and the Task of Training

At its peak in December 1944, OSS included 12,974 uniformed and civilian personnel worldwide. This included nearly 8,500 men and 4,500 women; approximately 7,500 of these (including 900 women) served overseas.<sup>41</sup> Intelligence branches composed 26.8 per cent (3,484 persons) of the total. Operations, including the OGs, made up 23.7 per cent of the total. Miscellaneous units comprised 22.8 per cent. For some reason, the Communications Branch was listed within the Miscellaneous Category. It was the largest segment of that category. Communications Branch personnel on December 31, 1944, numbered 1,728 persons and represented 13.2 per cent of total OSS personnel.

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<sup>39</sup> “History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I: Chronology and Administration, June 1942 – October 1945,” p. 53, typescript, n.d. [apparently written in 1947], copy delivered by W.J. Morgan, who had been with OSS Schools and Training Branch during World War II, to Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 12, National Archives II.

<sup>40</sup> “OSS Training Branch, Chapter VI (History),” p. 1, typescript n.d. [1946-1947?], recommendations for “the Training Section of a secret intelligence agency in time of war,” OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 14, National Archives II.

<sup>41</sup> “Strategic Services, Office of (OSS),” W. Thomas Smith, Jr., *Encyclopedia of the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 220. Smith provides a rounded off figure of 13,000 as the 1944 peak strength of the OSS. The precise peak figure of 12,974 in December 1944 is listed and compared with other months since October, October 1944 being, according to the report, “the first month in which total figures were available” for “OSS the world over....” Louis M. Ream [OSS deputy director for administrative services, including personnel] to Col. G. Edward Buxton [deputy director of OSS and Donovan’s right hand man], memorandum, 18 January 1945, [no subject line, but the topic is Ream’s concern with the fact that although on 23 October 1944 Donovan had promised Harold D. Smith, head of the Bureau of the Budget, an immediate 5 per cent reduction in the total OSS personnel complement, resulting in a reduction of about 600 persons, in fact there had been an increase rather than a decrease in OSS personnel from 12,740 in October to 12,974 in December, due primarily to delays in terminating military and civilian personnel from overseas, but, as Ream emphasized, “it is very necessary that General Donovan’s promise to Mr. Smith be kept.” OSS Wash-Dir-Op-266, #55, “Liquidation of OSS,” copy in CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas Troy Files, Box 6, Folder 46, National Archives II.

Administrative Services [support services: including Research and Development, to Security, Special Funds, Medical Services, Procurement, as well as other branches, including Schools and Training] comprised 16.5 per cent of the OSS.<sup>42</sup> Of the nearly 13,000 members of the OSS, approximately 4,000 were civilians and some 9,000 were uniformed personnel.<sup>43</sup>

In summarizing Schools and Training's achievements, the branch's postwar history emphasized the numbers that the organization had handled in the last two years of the war. Between January 1944 and the end of the war, the Assessment Stations screened and evaluated 5,300 candidates, the Basic Espionage Schools graduated more than 1,800 operatives, and the Advanced School at RTU-11 ("the Farm") graduated 800 men and women; the Special Operations Schools trained 1,027 men.<sup>44</sup> These figures did not include the trainees in 1942-1943, nor did they incorporate the numbers of trainees in the specialized groups over which Schools and Training had divided or little control, such as the training of military recruits for the Maritime Unit, the Operational Groups and the Communications Branch. S&T's official historians concluded that "like the other branches of OSS, though falling far short of perfection, Schools and Training on the balance somehow accomplished a creditable task. Men were trained and sent against the enemy. Men did accomplish results that substantially contributed to the war effort."<sup>45</sup>

### CIA adopts OSS Training

Effectiveness of the OSS training was confirmed by the fact that its successors, the CIA and Army Special Forces, adopted much of it. "The [Central Intelligence]

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<sup>42</sup> Louis M. Ream, deputy director, administrative services, to Charles S. Cheston [second assistant director of OSS since March 1943], memorandum, 29 January 1945, pp. 2-3 [no subject line, but Ream provides some statistical analyses of OSS personnel strength between October and December 1944, and also a functional distribution by percentage and sometimes with actual numbers of personnel in various categories]. For a breakdown of personnel by geographical theaters of operation as well as branches and other functional categories, see the tables for March and April 1945 entitled simply "Summary" [presumably April 1945], also in OSS Wash-Dir-Op-266, #55, "Liquidation of OSS," copy in CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas Troy Files, Box 6, Folder 46, National Archives II.

<sup>43</sup> The figures given in May 1945 were 12,816 OSS personnel at that time, of which 8,939 were numbers of the armed forces. Of a total of 2,593 officers, 2,192 had commissions in the Army or Army Air Corps; of a total of 6,346 enlisted personnel, 5,817 were serving on detached duty from the Army. A relatively few service members were from the Navy or Marines. Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan to The Adjutant General, War Department, 15 May 1945, subject: recommendation for promotion [of Col. Millard P. Goodfellow], p. 3, copy in Papers of M. Preston Goodfellow, Box 2, Biographical Material Folder, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Calif.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in "History of Schools and Training, OSS, Part I: Chronology and Administration, June 1942 – October 1945," p. 52, typescript, n.d. [apparently written in 1947], copy delivered by W.J. Morgan, who had been with OSS Schools and Training Branch during World War II, to Col. E.B. Whisner, 7 January 1949, OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 176, Box 2, Folder 12, National Archives II.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 51, emphasis in the original.

Agency picked it up almost 100 per cent,” explained Lazarsky, who subsequently spent twenty-five years with the CIA. “They took the manuals, instructional materials, and that right into the Agency. You know, the COI [Office of the Coordinator of Information] and the OSS started it from scratch. The Agency would have been foolish not to have adopted their training.”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, William R. (“Ray”) Peers, who as a young lieutenant had trained at Area B in spring 1942 before leaving for the jungles of Burma as one of the early leaders of Detachment 101 in Burma, later served in Taiwan as chief of a CIA program for training Chinese agents to be infiltrated into mainland China, 1949-1951.<sup>47</sup>

Although former OSSer Frank Wisner’s covert operations office was the driving force within CIA for its first few years as well as one of the main recruiters of former OSS SO personnel and OSS training methods, when former Army General Walter Bedell (“Beetle”) Smith became Director of Central Intelligence in 1950, he began to emphasize intelligence gathering and analysis. Smith established a relationship of confidence and trust with Truman similar to that of Donovan and Roosevelt. He quickly recruited former OSSers, some from Secret Intelligence but mostly from Research and Analysis to prepare the basis for what became the national intelligence estimate that the DCI would present to the President. Called back William Langer, former OSS chief of R&A, from Harvard, and Langer recruited a number of former OSS staffers to assist him. Ray Cline, had been a young Harvard graduate when OSS enlisted him in 1943 for R&A’s Current Intelligence office. In 1950, he became the CIA’s the first chief of the new Estimates Staff. The National Estimates Board members included several former OSSers: Langer; Calvin Hoover a Duke University expert on the Soviet Economy and a former member of OSS Secret Intelligence; Sherman Kent of Yale, who been with Langer at R&A; and a number of non-OSS veterans. Kent was reluctant to leave Yale to join the National Estimates Board, and Cline later recalled talking to him in 1950 at the temporary CIA headquarters in an old OSS building, across a scarred old wooden desk inherited from OSS. “I told him that so few people in the new CIA knew what intelligence analysis was all about and such threatening situations existed in the world that he was needed.” “I do not know whether this influenced him,” Cline said, “but he came, stayed, and [as Langer’s successor] built the National Intelligence Estimates into a significant element in decision-making.”<sup>48</sup> General Smith also brought in as deputy director of CIA Allen Dulles, former OSS Secret Intelligence chief in Switzerland, who had resumed a law practice but also maintained his Washington connections. Dulles would replace Smith in 1953 and serve as Director of Central Intelligence until 1961.

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<sup>46</sup> Joseph Lazarsky, telephone interview with the author, 11 February 2007. Frank Gleason concurred. “They [the CIA] had to because of the sound training we had.” Frank A. Gleason, Jr., telephone interview with the author, 9 February 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 265n. Tom Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 60, reports that Peers ran Western Enterprises, a CIA front organization in Taiwan, designed to help subvert Mao Tse-tung’s regime.

<sup>48</sup> Ray S. Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1976), 109, 111, quotation on 122.

For the indoctrination and initial training of field agents, CIA has continued to rely in part upon OSS paramilitary style training to evaluate recruits and build self-confidence and élan as much as imparting usable skills. While the agency first relied upon Army bases, by the early 1950s it established its own top-secret, 10,000-acre paramilitary training facility at Camp Peary in the woods near Williamsburg, Virginia. It continues the rough and tumble type of OSS special operations training there to the present day. But unlike the exclusively male trainees at the rugged OSS Special Operations training camps in the National Parks in World War II, there are now women as well as men engaged in military-style training and simulated Special Operations exercises at the CIA's "boot camp" that is known in agency variously as "The Farm" "Isolation," and "Camp Swampy."<sup>49</sup>

Valerie Plame Wilson, a CIA covert operations officer, became famous when officials in the administration of President George W. Bush blew her cover after her diplomat husband challenged a key rationale they had put forward for the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. She opened her best-selling 2007 memoir with a description of the paramilitary exercises she had participated in as a 22-year-old trainee for the CIA in 1985. In the climactic field exercise, her team of three male and two female trainees, each carrying an eighty-pound backpack containing survival materials and ammunition and each toting an M-16 automatic rifle, spent a clammy late fall night practicing what she called "escape and evasion from an ostensible hostile force—our instructors." At dawn, they linked up with another group of trainees at the designated landing zone, but soon found themselves under simulated attack by hostile forces. Magnesium flares exploded around them amidst the sound of machine gun fire and the noise of exploding artillery shells. Adrenaline flowing, M-16s blazing, they rushed to the helicopter, which whisked them off to safety.<sup>50</sup> Earlier, Plame Wilson's CIA training had included personality tests and stress tests, many of them derived from the OSS, an introductory course providing an overview of the organization, more tests and courses, and most appealing to the CIA students as to their OSS predecessors, talks by case officers about their direct experiences in the field. Without wartime pressures, CIA provided a much longer training period than OSS. After three months of introductory training, the future intelligence analysts and operational case officers were assigned as "interims" in various departments, after which they were sent to a three-month, military-style course at the "Farm." It was tough and demanding and, according to Plame Wilson, although "the Agency clearly understood that we were rarely, if ever, going to be called upon to use these skills" the managers maintained the paramilitary course because it "forged an esprit de corps that would last throughout one's career" and it provided yet another chance for the Agency to assess "a new employee's strength of character, ability to work in a team, and dedication—all skills critical to success in the Agency, no matter what your career path."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "Peary, Camp," W. Thomas Smith, Jr., *Encyclopedia of the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Facts on File, 2003), 183.

<sup>50</sup> Valerie Plame Wilson, *Fair Game* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 1-2, 315.

<sup>51</sup> Her training courses continued in intelligence gathering and analysis before she was given her first assignment. *Ibid.*, 12-27, quotation at 12.

From the beginning, the CIA had also adopted the OSS's communication system. "The agency kept on the OSS radio training and equipment," Joseph Lazarsky stated firmly.<sup>52</sup> But it was even more than that. Looking back on the antecedents of the Agency, Ray Cline declared in 1976 that "one of Donovan's lasting achievements for central intelligence was securing the right of independent encrypted radio and cable communication with all of his field units." This achievement of a separate and effective network, Cline concluded, was "essential for clandestine intelligence collection operations, and an indispensable precedent for building up the magnificent professional staff of communications operators, which later gave CIA the advantage of prompt, secure links to the field with regular staff communications or clandestine radio nets that neither the State Department nor the military agencies could rival."<sup>53</sup> Cline knew whereof he spoke, for in the course of his long career, he worked not simply for the OSS and CIA but also for the Pentagon and the State Department.

OSS's paramilitary operations behind enemy lines had impressed a number of influential U.S. military commanders, and their support, Cline surmised, was one of the key reasons why the OSS was able to maintain its separate communications network.<sup>54</sup> One of those commanders was General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, who in May 1945, with the defeat of Hitler's regime, declared that the value of the OSS "has been so great that there should be no thought of its elimination."<sup>55</sup>

### **Special Forces: Successor to the OSS**

Although the OSS was eliminated in October 1945, its legacy included the Army's Special Forces as well as the CIA, and those Special Forces, known from the 1960s through the 1990s as the "Green Berets," also adopted many OSS training procedures. When the U.S. Army established its first Special Forces unit in 1952, it followed the training and traditions of the OSS Special Operations and Operational Groups. The commander of the first Special Forces unit, Colonel Aaron Bank, later celebrated as the "father of Special Forces,"<sup>56</sup> had received his initial OSS training at

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Lazarsky, telephone interview with the author, 11 February 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Cline, *Secret Spies and Scholars*, 67. It could be added that Donovan's decision was validated as there were no known compromises of the OSS Communications Branch system, in contrast to the penetration of numerous other coding and communications systems. Arthur Reinhardt, email to the author, 27 June 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Cline, *Secret Spies and Scholars*, 67-68.

<sup>55</sup> Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to War Department, 26 May 1945, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (RG 218), Admiral Leahy's Files, Box 9, Folder 54, quoted in Bradley F. Smith, *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 307.

<sup>56</sup> "SWCS Dedicates Bank Hall: Building Named for 'Father of Special Forces,'" press release from the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1291, 1 March 2006, [ossociety@yahoo.com](mailto:ossociety@yahoo.com), accessed, 1 March 2006. On November 21, 2005, the JFK



Areas F and B, before serving in France, Germany, and Indochina. In 1952, much of Bank's initial cadre was composed of former OSSers, including Jack Shannon, Caesar Civetella, and Herbert Brucker, and they prepared the training curriculum for the first Special Forces Group, which was established at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>57</sup>

Like OSS paramilitary training, initial training of the Army's Special Forces emphasized self-confidence and élan as well as individual skills with weapons, demolitions, field craft<sup>5</sup>, and at least rudimentary ability with communication equipment and medical treatment. There were also courses in organization of resistance movements and operation of their networks, agent training to include espionage and sabotage, guerrilla warfare, codes and radio communication, survival, instinctive pistol firing, and the Fairbairn method of hand-to-hand combat and silent killing. Although many of the initial recruits came from the Rangers which were being deactivated, more than fifty came from OSS veterans. Most of the training was done at Fort Bragg and its satellite, Camp Mackall, with its woods and swamps. But the final extensive field exercise simulating clandestine operations behind enemy lines was held in Chattahoochee National Forest in the Appalachian Mountains of northern Georgia. Banks and the other former OSS officers used the mountainous timberlands of the U.S. Forest Service just as the OSS had used the forests of the National Park Service in World War II.<sup>58</sup>

Drawing on the legacy of elite Army units, including the Rangers, Paratroopers, and various Army Raider units, the U.S. Army's Special Forces today also embrace the aura of the OSS's combat teams. Their tough, hard-boiled, daredevil self-image was augmented by ultra-demanding physical training, thriving on danger, and achievements in the field. Through the daredevils of Donovan's Special Operations teams and Operational Groups, OSS is widely recognized as a forerunner and an ancestor of today's Special Forces, indeed, some of the OSS emblems are incorporated into insignia worn by troops in today's Special Operations Command.<sup>59</sup>

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Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, dedicated the former Special Operations Academic Facility as Colonel Aaron Bank Hall after a man known as the "father of Special Forces."

<sup>57</sup> Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces* (Novato, Calif.; Presidio Press, 1986), 172-174.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-185; and Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare, Its Origins: Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941-1952* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982), 150-151.

<sup>59</sup> The issue of lineage of the Army's Special Forces has been made more complicated and confusing by the various reorganizations and designations in the U.S. Army as well as the decision, unjustified in the opinion of many Special Forces veterans, by the Army's Center of Military History to designate the U.S.-Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Special Force (the "Devil's Brigade"), which served in Italy and southern France, as the forerunner of Army Special Forces. [www.Army.mil/cmh/lineage/branches/sf](http://www.Army.mil/cmh/lineage/branches/sf). A number of authoritative sources disagree with the decision of the Army's Center of Military History and cite OSS's SO and OG combat units as direct ancestor of the Army's Special Forces. See, for example, Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins: Psychological and Unconventional Warfare, 1941-1952* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1982; rev. ed., University Press of Kansas, 2005), 23-25; Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of the Special Forces* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1986), 205-206; Gordon L. Rottman, *The U.S. Army Special Forces, 1952-1984* (Osprey, 1985); Charles Simpson, *Inside the Green Berets: The First Thirty Years: A History of the U.S. Army's Special Forces* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1983); and Mike Yard, "OGs Get to Tell Their Story," *OSS Society Digest*, Number

### Achievements of the OSS

The reputation of the OSS rested in part on its accomplishments and in part on the aura of “Wild Bill” Donovan himself, who President Eisenhower eulogized as “the last hero.”<sup>60</sup> But in part the organization’s reputation derived from the legend it created after the war. It was a romantic legend emphasizing individualism, innovation, heroism, and glamour. In keeping with traditional American images, the tale focused on amateur adventurers bent on excitement, glory, and victory in a crusade for law and order, justice and democracy. Although it may have irked many professionals in the armed forces and the old line government intelligence bureaus, the legend of the OSS helped establish a cult of romanticism about secret agents that contributed to popular support for dark arts of espionage and special operations for decades afterwards. Both the OSS and later the CIA helped to foster that image for their own purposes. But that meant that controversies over the CIA’s clandestine activities would sometimes lead to disputes over the nature of the OSS and its relationship to the CIA.<sup>61</sup>

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1317, 30 March 2006, accessed 30 March 2006. Paddock and Bank credit OSS as more representative than ranger, paratrooper or the “Devil’s Brigade,” of the kind and range of actions conducted by today’s Special Forces. Furthermore, the Special Forces themselves have informally adopted OSS and its combat units such as Special Operations, Operational Groups, Detachment 101, and Maritime Unit, as among the predecessors of today’s Special Forces. See, for example, the websites of the U.S. Army’s John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, N.C., at [www.soc.mil/swcs/museum](http://www.soc.mil/swcs/museum), and the semi-official Airborne and Special Operations Museum, Fayetteville, N.C., at [www.asomf.org/museum](http://www.asomf.org/museum). On some of the OSS insignia being incorporated into today’s Special Forces and the U.S. Special Operations Command, see the story on the opening of an OSS Exhibit at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum in January 2008, reported in “Retired General [John K. Singlaub] to Speak on Career,” *Fayetteville Observer*, 24 January 2008, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1962, 26 January 2008, accessed 26 January 2008; and Troy Sacquety, “The Special Forces Patch: History and Origins,” *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, 3.3 (2007): 59-63.

<sup>60</sup> Otto C. Doering, New York City, interview with Anthony Cave Brown, 1 November 1977, quoted in Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* (New York: Times Books, 1982), 833.

<sup>61</sup> The romantic cult of Donovan and the daring men and women of the OSS, although it largely ignored the laborious research and analysis which is such a major part of any major intelligence organization, was maintained by the CIA among others as it contributed to that patrimony contributed to the legitimacy and mystique of the postwar central intelligence and covert operations agency. Significantly, periods of major public criticism and assaults upon the CIA in America such as in the 1970s, 1980s, and the first decade of the twenty-first century, often included disputes over the nature of its predecessor, the OSS, as well as the linkage in personnel and policies between the two. See, for example, the defense of the OSS amidst the critiques of the CIA in the 1970s by Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Ray S. Cline, *Secret Spies and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1976); and Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1981, orig. ms. Classified secret, 1975), esp. v-vii, 402-415. For the evidence of the dichotomy amidst the controversy over the CIA today, see, for example, critiques of OSS in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Cloak and Dollar: A History of American Secret Intelligence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003, orig. ed., 2002) 130-153; and Tom Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 3-8; and a championing of the OSS by Patrick K.

The deliberately crafted image of the OSS, like that of the dominant narrative of the American war effort itself, emphasized heroism, self-sacrifice and significant contributions to Allied victory. Understanding that the legend accentuated the achievements and minimized the problems in the organization, one can still appreciate the value and the historic role of the OSS. Although the military intelligence agencies and some other have remained skeptical of the glamorous history of the OSS, and while it is true that the Allies would have won the war without it, there is considerable evidence, as this and other studies have shown, that Allied victory was expedited and many Allied lives saved by the extraordinary efforts of the men and women of Donovan's comparatively small but highly dynamic organization. Despite its brief existence, the OSS did have a lasting impact.

Although the public has been fascinated by the spies and saboteurs, the real world probably has few "James Bond" characters. Instead, one of the most important contributions of OSS was the unglamorous work of the men and women, studying and writing in the Research and Analysis Branch (R&A). They were little known by the public and unheralded by the media. It was a Donovan innovation, a group of civilians expert in particular areas, not working for any particular department, but rather gathering data on specific topics from as many sources as possible, analyzing this material, and generating strategic intelligence reports. They collected disparate scraps of information and tried to assemble them into a meaningful mosaic. Working primarily in Washington, D.C., the more than 900 scholars in this path-breaking unit, included many persons destined for future fame. Among them were Crane Brinton, Ralph Bunche, August Hecksher, H. Stuart Hughes, Charles Kindelberger, Herbert Marcuse, Walt Rostow, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. They produced reports on everything from the state of enemy morale and weapons production to the most effective targets for Allied bombing attacks, such as the Nazis' synthetic oil plants. The detailed reports R&A made of economic, geographic, strategic and political aspects in various countries not only proved valuable during the war but were still being used by intelligence officers of the U.S. Army,<sup>62</sup> and undoubtedly the CIA as well, for years afterwards. Donovan's R&A demonstrated that much valuable intelligence could be obtained from seemingly mundane published sources and how civilian scholars, working with libraries and other resources, could play an important role in obtaining, summarizing, and evaluating intelligence data. Despite the problems achieving inter- and even intra-agency cooperation and access to information, R&A's Current Intelligence Office began the process of what would under CIA become the preparation of the centralized, summarized, regularly submitted National Intelligence Estimate.

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O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 311-314.

<sup>62</sup> Elbert G. ("Al") O'Keefe, a retired lieutenant colonel from U.S. Army intelligence (G-2), told the author that both in Europe and in the Korean War, Army G-2 used estimates compiled by OSS's Research and Analysis Branch. "They were good and still valuable," declared O'Keefe, who as a professor soldier, said he did not otherwise think much of Donovan and his organization. Elbert G. ("Al") O'Keefe, conversation with the author after a presentation on the OSS given by the author at Catocin Mountain Park, Thurmont, Md., 17 November 2007.

### Spies and Intelligence

OSS was denied direct access to the most important intelligence breakthroughs of the war—the American MAGIC and the British ULTRA decrypts of enemy coded wireless messages—and this limited OSS to less vital information. British Secret Intelligence Services (MI-6) dominated Anglo-American human espionage in Europe until 1944, when OSS's Secret Intelligence Branch began to achieve independent results from its own spy handlers and the rings of indigenous agents. An exception was the OSS success in 1942 in Vichy French North Africa where because of French distrust of the British, it was the OSS which was able to establish an extensive network of agents there who not only provided vital information for the U.S. invasion in November but negotiated with the Vichy French to limit resistance to the American landings.<sup>63</sup> By the last year of the war in Europe, SI officers and their agents, were able to provide accurate and useful Battle Zone intelligence. An Army G-2 staff member of the Joint Intelligence Committee of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, recalled that at the meetings of that bickering inter-service intelligence committee, “the Army and OSS both claimed a universal competence....The Army had no hesitation about contradicting an OSS political or economic estimate. OSS delighted to expose deficiencies in the Army's order of battle [Army intelligence's identification of the enemy units in the battle zone].”<sup>64</sup>

There were numerous instances where Army commanders were able to utilize effective OSS intelligence to supplement their own G-2 staff reports. OSS's chief agent in occupied Rome, Peter Tompkins, provided information about an impending German counterattack on the Anzio beachhead that enabled Allied commanders to sustain their position against what was supposed to be a surprise attack. Most exemplary among the Allied commanders using and coordinating with the OSS was Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, head of the Seventh U.S. Army. Information from OSS agents helped convince him that he could risk initial landings in southern France with only three U.S. divisions and a small Allied airborne force. In Patch's subsequent drive through the upper Rhone River Valley, intelligence from OSS revealed a hole in the German defenses that enabled his forces to race 150 miles around the enemy's left flank. By pinpointing the location of the German commander's only remaining armored division, OSS agents led to its destruction by Allied airpower and subsequently helped the Seventh Army push forward, later eliminate the Colmar pocket, and finally drive into Germany. In March 1945, an OSS agent in a German uniform provided key tactical intelligence, the location of a German Panzer division, that allowed the Ninth U.S. Army to cross the Rhine River

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<sup>63</sup> In December 1942, General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, paid special notice to the importance of OSS's assistance in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, OSS, *War Report of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services)*, Vol. 2, *The Overseas Targets* (New York: Walker Pub. Co., 1976; declassified version of the 1947 official history of the OSS), 18.

<sup>64</sup> Ludwell Lee Montague, “The Origins of the National Intelligence Estimate,” p. 66, offprint of an article from an unidentified journal, indicating that the text was an address given by “the late Dr. Montague, a retired member of the Board of National Estimates, at the first meeting of the Intelligence Forum, 11 May 1971.” Copy in the CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas Troy Files, Box 12, Folder 99, National Archives II.

at a location where there was little chance of a counterattack by German armored forces.<sup>65</sup>

OSS's Secret Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence Branches proved effective in both Europe and Asia. In China, although hampered by Chiang Kai-shek's own spymaster, Dai Li, and the Chinese intelligence and surveillance system, OSS's Secret Intelligence Branch produced significant results by the last year of the war there. It was responsible for identifying a high percentage of the targets attacked by the bombers and fighter-bombers of General Claire Chennault's Army Air Forces, and relaying information from its coast watchers to Admiral William Halsey's fleet that led to the destruction of significant amounts of Japanese shipping.

In Europe, Secret Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence was also effective. OSS's X-2 Branch that handled counter-intelligence and counter-espionage seems to have been more effective than the Army's Counter-Intelligence Corps in ferreting out enemy agents planted behind advancing American armies. The most spectacular achievement of OSS Secret Intelligence, however, was certainly the accomplishments of Allen Dulles in Switzerland. Dulles obtained some of the best human intelligence coups of the war through his top level contacts within the German foreign ministry, general staff, and military intelligence agencies in Berlin, most importantly career foreign service officer and anti-Nazi, Fritz Kolbe who had been rebuffed by the British. Dulles's contacts with disaffected Germans provided much valuable economic, political, and strategic information. The topics included the location where the V-1 and V-2 rockets were being developed, the spying of the Albanian valet to the British ambassador to Turkey, who as "Cicero" was selling secrets to the Nazis, foreknowledge of the German generals' conspiracy against Hitler in 1944, and solicitations to Dulles that eventually led to a negotiated German Army surrender in Italy a week before the Nazi regime capitulated in Berlin. In regard to Dulles's main German agent, Fritz Kolbe, Richard Helms, retired Director of Central Intelligence, wrote in a memoir published in 2003 that "Kolbe's information is now recognized as the very best produced by any Allied agent in World War II."<sup>66</sup>

Although Donovan championed centralized intelligence and authorized the scholars and spies to make it work, his own combative nature led him to take special interest in the paramilitary teams fighting behind enemy lines. Driven by his sometimes misguided sense of the demands of personal honor and perhaps also by a thrill of danger, Donovan went ashore in American landings on Sicily, Anzio, and Normandy, and recklessly flew in an inspection tour deep inside Japanese-occupied Burma. He envied his paramilitary forces, hailed their accomplishments, and sought to make sure that they were well trained, equipped, and supplied. Donovan took a personal interest in the development of special weapons, explosives, and espionage devices and materials developed by various support offices to service different branches of OSS. The most noted was the Research and Development Branch under chemist Stanley P. Lovell, who

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<sup>65</sup> "Office of Strategic Services," George J.A. O'Toole, *The Encyclopedia of American Intelligence and Espionage: From the Revolutionary War to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 339.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Helms with William Hood, *A Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Random House, 2003), 37.

Donovan liked to call his “Professor Moriarity.” Some of the projects were ludicrous—the idea of bats carrying small incendiary bombs over Tokyo, for example. But others were so effective they continued to be used, in different forms, to the present day: magnetic limpet mines, self-contained underwater breathing devices, waterproof watches, swim fins, small mines shaped like insignificant camel, donkey or horse droppings (later in the Vietnam War, the CIA adopted the idea and used simulated tiger droppings to conceal small, fist-sized sensitizer/transmitters to signal enemy movements along jungle trails). The “Liberator” pistol, a cheap one-shot .45 caliber pistol, designed for killing a sentry or other solitary individual and obtaining his weapon, was distributed by the OSS behind Japanese lines in China. Later during the Cold War, they were distributed by CIA in the Congo, and a 9mm version went to anti-communist tribesmen in the mountains of Laos and Vietnam.<sup>67</sup>

Other development offices had their successes as well as problems: producing forged passports and identity papers and paraphernalia for spies, some of which passed inspection and some of which did not; as well as matchbox cameras and various mechanisms for hiding secret messages. In those days when electronics was based on the vacuum tube and home radios were sizable pieces of furniture, OSS Communications Branch developed some extraordinary pieces of equipment. Among these were the famous “suitcase radio,” the SSTR-1, a portable transmitter-receiver and power supply that could be packed into a suitcase or three small packages, which became the standard equipment for OSS field agents behind enemy lines around the globe. A small, shorter-range wireless set, the SSTR-3, could be carried in a briefcase. These wireless telegraphy transmitter/receivers proved highly effective, when they were not damaged in the aerial drop, as too often happened. OSS also developed and deployed in the last year of the war, a small, hand-held radio communicator, which enabled an agent on the ground to communicate by voice with a plane circulating high over the area in a very high frequency system, codenamed “Joan-Eleanor,” which could not be detected by enemy direction finding equipment.

For the protection of its agents who frequently worked in stealth, OSS created effective silent, flashless pistols and even submachine guns, so the agents could fire without betraying their position. Seeking to impress President Roosevelt with the OSS’s latest invention, Donovan once sneaked one of the new silenced .22 caliber pistols into the Oval Office in a shoulder holster while carrying a small bag of sand. While the Chief Executive was dictating to his secretary and looking away, Donovan pulled out the weapon and fired an entire, ten-round clip into the bag of sand in the corner without the President hearing a sound. With his handkerchief around the still hot barrel, Donovan handed the pistol to the President and explained that he had just fired ten bullets into the bag of sand. Shocked, the wide-eyed President quickly composed himself, then inspected the weapon, thanked Donovan for the new gun and offered his congratulations to its

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<sup>67</sup> John W. Brunner, *OSS Weapons*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Williamstown, N.J.: Phillips Publications, 2005), 2-12, and Toni L. Hiley, curator, CIA Museum, interview with the author, 14 January 2005.

developers. Then regaining his sense of humor, he joked, “Bill, you’re the only black Republican I’ll ever allow in my office with a weapon like this!”<sup>68</sup>

### OSS and the Multiplier Effect

The OSS itself particularly hailed the work of the daring, action-oriented paramilitary teams organizing, training, supplying, and directing indigenous resistance groups behind enemy lines. These were the Special Operations teams or two or three agents and the Operational Group sections, usually of ten to twenty men each, sent in when more substantial, self-sustaining units were needed. The Operational Group sections, somewhat like commando units, were generally ethnic, foreign-speaking Americans drawn from the ranks of the wartime Army of citizen-soldiers. It was one of Donovan’s great insights that from America’s multiethnic population, he could recruit commando-like units familiar with the language and cultural of countries occupied by the Nazis. While the SO teams were more oriented toward liaison with local Resistance, the OG detachments were combat units themselves and were more oriented toward direct combat engagements in guerrilla warfare. Both SO and OG, however, engaged in sabotage and subversion usually in coordination with indigenous resistance groups. In total, about 1,500 members of Special Operations teams and Operational Group detachments were infiltrated behind enemy lines.<sup>69</sup> Most of the SO and OG personnel were trained at Area F and also either Area A or B. Their missions would not have been possible without the clandestine radio-operators of the OSS Communications (“Commo”) Branch, who kept their teams in contact with their base stations, sometimes under the most adverse conditions. Most of these combat radio operators, like Robert Kehoe, Spiro Cappony, and Art Reinhardt, had been trained at Area C. As Major Frank Mills later wrote of the radio operators who had accompanied the Jedburgh teams from Europe to the Far East in 1945, “These radio operators provided the essential communications link between the operational teams and the supporting base, and they were not only superb radio operators, but were some of the best combat soldiers we had in France and China.”<sup>70</sup>

Paramilitary teams demonstrated what would later be called a “multiplier effect.” OSS had dispatched less than 200 agents in France, and according to Donovan, they armed and organized more than 20,000 men and women in the local Resistance.<sup>71</sup> Other

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<sup>68</sup> As related by Donovan the next day to Stanley P. Lovell, head of OSS’s Research and Development Branch, and included in Lovell’s memoir, *Of Spies & Stratagems* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), 40-41.

<sup>69</sup> Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars*, 67.

<sup>70</sup> Francis B. Mills with John W. Brunner, *OSS Special Operations in China* (Williamstown, N.J.: Phillips Publications, 2002), 20.

<sup>71</sup> Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan to Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 1945, reprinted in Mills with Brunner, *OSS Special Operations in China*, 442-446.

small groups of agents in Italy, Greece, and the Balkans played similar roles. A few Americans, two or three in a Special Operations team or a dozen or so in an Operational Group detachment, were inserted behind enemy lines, and then trained, supplied and directed local resistance groups numbering hundreds, even thousands. In the Mediterranean and in Europe, these paramilitary OSS teams infiltrated and fought with distinction in North Africa, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Italy, Albania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary, France, the Low Countries, and Norway. There they organized, supplied, and directed local partisan bands in hit and run raids and in destroying key bridges, railroad lines, and tunnels to impede German efforts.<sup>72</sup> In 1944 following the Allied landings in France, they were particularly active in seeking to block or delay hundreds of thousands of German reinforcements from trying to drive back the Allied liberators. In addition to seriously interfering with the sending of German reinforcements, these OSS teams also rescued more than a thousand downed Allied fliers, who were then able to continue in the air war against the Axis.

The accomplishments of the Special Operations teams and Operational Groups in the European and Mediterranean theaters ranged from Serge Obolensky's inducing the surrender of a 300,000-man Italian garrison on Sardinia, to the multinational Jedburgh and SO teams that helped impede German reinforcements to the Normandy invasion area and then directed the French *maquis* in protecting the exposed right flank of Gen. George Patton's Third Army as it rushed across northern France. The chief of Army Intelligence (G-2) in the European Theater of Operations estimated such actions may have saved the lives of as many as twelve thousand Allied soldiers, and reported to Supreme Allied Headquarters, "You can be satisfied that the OSS has already paid for its budget in this theater."<sup>73</sup> Throughout the European and Mediterranean Theater, the OSS paramilitary operations included both SO teams and Operational Groups, and their effectiveness was certainly disproportionate to their small size. Small teams totaling 200 Greek-Americans, led by officers like Jim Kellis and Johnny Athens, inflicted 1,400 casualties on German units while suffering only 25 casualties themselves. They destroyed key bridges, halting Turkish chrome shipments to Germany, cut railroad lines, severed communications links, and tied down large numbers of German units in Greece for a year and a half. In southern France, a French-speaking American OG team led by Roy Rickerson blew up bridges and railroad viaducts and blocked the Rhone River canal and with his dozen troops and a hundred Resistance fighters, forced the surrender of a contingent of 3,800 German soldiers. Aaron Bank and his team armed and directed some 3,000 French

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example, regarding OSS/SO in Italy, "Company D [2677<sup>th</sup> Regiment OSS (Provisional)] — Semi Monthly Reports," September 1944 through February 1945; and Reports of SO under HQ Company D, 5<sup>th</sup> Army Detachment; 8<sup>th</sup> Army Detachment, and SO Maritime Detachment [all in Italy], April to May 1945, all in OSS Records (RG 226), Entry 136, Box 177, Folder 1886, and decoded copies of W/T messages to and from agents in the field, in Folder 1884, National Archives II. For SO in France, see Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2005); and Colin Beavan, *Operation Jedburgh: D-Day and America's First Shadow War* (New York: Viking, 2006).

<sup>73</sup> Quoted in "Office of Strategic Services," George J.A. O'Toole, *The Encyclopedia of American Intelligence and Espionage: From the Revolutionary War to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 338.



*maquis* against the Germans supply lines. William Colby parachuted with white-clad OG team into the snow-covered mountains to destroy a key railroad line in Norway. Actor turned Marine and SO officer Sterling Hayden skippered supply vessels past German patrol boats to deliver much needed supplies to the partisans in Yugoslavia. Teams of Italian Americans, many on missions organized by Albert Materazzi, helped the Italian Resistance cause enough problems in northern Italy that the Germans had to dispatch several divisions from the frontlines to try to suppress them.

Because of their location behind enemy lines, the SOs and OGs also became involved in sending intelligence information, particularly tactical information, especially concerning German troop and supply movements and vulnerable transportation targets (although unpredictable flying conditions, coordination, and the Army Air Corps' own priorities, often made it difficult to get fighter-bombers to the target in time—or to obtain supplies on schedule<sup>74</sup>). A number of women agents were used by the OSS, as well as by local Resistance movements, particularly as spies and liaison personnel. The most celebrated American woman SO agent was Virginia Hall, the “limping lady” with the artificial limb, feared and hunted by the Gestapo, who provided valuable information for the Allied invasion and also organized and trained three battalions, several thousand resistance fighters, in the *maquis* for guerrilla warfare in support of the Allies. In 1945, she became the only civilian woman in the war to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, America's highest medal for bravery after the Medal of Honor.

### Assessing the OSS

Although many in the Regular Army were skeptical, General Eisenhower and his top assistants came to understand the value of the OSS. A report by one of Eisenhower's trusted subordinates, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey, in the U.S. Army's Operations Division in early 1945 concluded after a study of coordination of Resistance movements throughout Europe by the OSS and SOE that “Resistance Groups, alone,

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<sup>74</sup> This problem with the Air Force and lack of OSS's own planes was also a problem in OSS activities in Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean Theater, see Geoffrey M.T. Jones, comments in *Gli Americani e la Guerra de Liberazione in Italia: Office of Strategic Service(O.S.S.) e la Resistenza/ The Americans and the War of Liberation in Italy: Office of Strategic Services(O.S.S.) and the Resistance* (Venice: Institute of the History of the Resistance, 1995), p. 203. I am indebted to one of the Italian participants in the conference from which this book is drawn (and a former member of the Resistance and OSS's Cayuga and Rochester Missions), Piero Boni of Rome, father of my good friend, Silvia Boni, for providing me with a copy of this book. In Italy, the OSS did not have the use of a specially designated unit of the U.S. Army Air Force, unlike the OSS in northern Europe which was served by a unit of the 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force known as the “Carpetbaggers” which flew black-painted, specially modified B-24 Liberators delivering OSS supplies and personnel. However, even in northern Europe, OSS teams often had difficulty obtaining sorties of fighter-bombers to attack targets they identified. In China, combat radio operator Arthur Reinhardt acknowledged similar difficulties because the calls had to go through the Chinese Army headquarters and then the 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force with its own scarce resources, by which time it was “hoped the target hadn't vanished.” According to Reinhardt, “Initially the close support missions were flown by P-40's. The pilots were gutsy, flew in low, sometimes with flaps down and bombed and strafed. Later on (although I observed little), the P-40's were replaced by P-51's, which were faster and better armed, but the pilots were a different breed and did not get down low.” Arthur Reinhardt, email to the author, 24 February 2007.

cannot win a campaign or a battle, but they are capable of rendering important assistance to regular forces.” This, Caffey said, included forcing the enemy to deploy large numbers of troops to protect lines of communications and supply, disrupting the flow of vital supplies and information to the enemy by destroying his lines of communication and supply, and alerting advancing forces to hidden defenses such as gun emplacements and minefields, and also freeing advancing conventional troops from the need to clear up pockets of resistance. General Caffey, like other regular officers, criticized the lack of experienced, career officers among the unconventional units, but his overall assessment was positive. “While OSS and SOE are hampered by poor staff work, their personnel in the field have done remarkably well,” His conclusion was that “They deserve credit and appreciation for their fine work... This method of warfare is a vast potential in obtaining military strategical and tactical objectives. No commander should ignore this potential.”<sup>75</sup>

In occupied France and elsewhere, the sight of armed and uniformed American soldiers deep in enemy occupied territory lifted the spirits of the villagers and swelled the ranks of the Resistance, especially when parachuted loads of weapons and other supplies began to follow. Ralph Ingersoll, a member of the staff of General Omar Bradley, commander of U.S. forces in the Normandy invasion, concluded that the German commanders had to assign at least half a dozen divisions to counter the *maquis* during the invasion. “The [OSS led] French Resistance was worth at least a score of divisions to us, maybe more.”<sup>76</sup> German generals in France and Italy were quite concerned with the

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<sup>75</sup> Brig. Gen. B.F. Caffey, U.S.A., chief, SP[ Special Operations] Ops S/Sec., G-3, “Resistance Movements in Occupied Countries,” OPD 334.8 TS, Case #325, “top secret,” pp. 2, 5, in a 5-page typescript report, undated [c. early 1945, before the end of the war in Europe in May 1945], copy from the papers of Dr. E.P. Lilly, former JCS historian, located in the CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 4, Folder 30, National Archives II. Brigadier General Benjamin Franklin Caffey, Jr., was a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School, who became an Army officer in World War I, served in France, and became a lifelong friend of Dwight Eisenhower’s beginning in the 1930s in the Philippines. In World War II, Colonel Caffey had led the 39<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team in the capture of Algiers, then was made brigadier general and assistant commander of the 34<sup>th</sup> (“Red Bull”) Infantry Division in Italy. Serving in its advance through Italy, he was twice injured and except for those disabling occurrences, Caffey would have become, according to Eisenhower, a major general and a division commander. The second injury, badly frozen feet, led to his assignment in an important staff position in the Allied Force Headquarters, Mediterranean in early 1945, which is probably when he wrote this report. After the war, Eisenhower appointed Caffey to the Operations Division of the General Staff. See Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. Alfred D. Chandler, et al., 21 vols. (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970-2007), 2:687n; 2: 1293; 11:237; and 14:430n.

<sup>76</sup> Ralph Ingersoll, *Top Secret* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 181-183. In contrast, John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), belittles the impact of the French Resistance and contends that their entire contribution was barely equal to a single Allied division. A 1991 Army study of the relationship of 11 Jedburgh Teams to Omar Bradley’s 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group in its rapid drive across eastern France from Paris to Nancy in August 1944, concluded that despite the courage and daring of the Jed teams, they were “only marginally significant” in that Army’s offensive that month largely because the Army was advancing so rapidly, its staffs were overwhelmed with data, and the commanders were not familiar with nor receptive to such groups operating behind enemy lines. At the same time, the author acknowledges that the Jedburgh special operations teams in 1944 were an innovative idea but one that because of technical problems and lack of receptiveness by Army commanders was an idea ahead of its time. Samuel J. Lewis, *Jedburgh Team Operations in Support of the 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group, August 1944* (Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1991), 65-66. On the other hand, Stewart King, son of Donald King of the OSS, who served with the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during attacks in the Vosges (south of the 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group) in November 1944, “while there is a

seriousness of having to face not only the Allied armies in their front but increasingly assertive and effective Resistance forces in their rear.<sup>77</sup> General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, declared flatly that “The Resistance surpassed all our expectations, and it was they who, in delaying the arrival of German reinforcements and in preventing the regrouping of enemy divisions in the interior, assured the success of our landings.”<sup>78</sup> “Without their great assistance,” General Eisenhower concluded, “the liberation of France and the defeat of the enemy in western Europe would have consumed a much longer period of time and meant greater losses to ourselves.”<sup>79</sup>

In Southeast Asia, the most widely heralded OSS operations were conducted by its famous OSS Detachment 101 in Burma. Led by men trained at Areas B and X, it conducted some of the organization’s most difficult and most successful operations. By the end of the war, 700 Americans, who served in Detachment 101, headed first by Carl Eifler and later William Ray Peers, had mobilized, trained, supplied, and directed more than 10,000 Kachin tribesmen. The number of Americans in Detachment 101 who actually parachuted into the Burmese mountain jungles to lead those 10,000 Kachins numbered less than 200. They harassed the Japanese Army’s lines of communication and supply, thus helping to protect the American construction of the new Burma Road.<sup>80</sup> They severed enemy supply lines, targeted camouflaged supply depots for American bombers, rescued downed fliers<sup>81</sup> and forced the Japanese to maintain large numbers of troops to try to protect their lines of communication and supply. Ultimately, as in Europe,

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lot of information in the declassified OSS files [e.g. RG 226, Entry 190], much of the communication between the SSS forward teams that my father served on and the intelligence sections of the divisions (and later armies) they served with was informal and thus only recorded elliptically. OSS was one of many sources that intelligence staffs used.” Stewart King, “Re: How Did OSS Help U.S. Soldiers in Combat?” *OSS Society Digest* Number 1539, 13 January 2007, [ossociety@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ossociety@yahoogroups.com), accessed 13 January 2007. Concerning another action by OSS, see Robert G. Gutjahr, *The Role of Jedburgh Teams in Operation Market Garden* (Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1990), which examines what Gutjahr considers the understandable failure of the two Jed teams to blow up the assigned bridge as simply part of the overall failure of British General Bernard Law Montgomery’s complex plan, Operation Market Garden, to get across the lower Rhine in September 1944.

<sup>77</sup> On German Field Marshals Gerd von Rundstedt and Walther Model in France, see Irwin, *The Jedburghs*, 240-241; on Field Marshal Albert Kesselring in Italy, see, *Kesselring: A Soldier’s Record* (New York : William Morrow, 1954), 272.

<sup>78</sup> Gen. George C. Marshall quoted in Blake Ehrlich, *Resistance: France, 1940-1945* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), 194.

<sup>79</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 296.

<sup>80</sup> William R. Peers and Dean Breilis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America’s Most Successful Guerrilla Force* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 220.

<sup>81</sup> In a letter to the head of the U.S. Army Air Forces in April 1945, Donovan said more than 200 downed American aviators had been rescued from the jungles by OSS personnel and that the 10<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force had received 90 per cent of its target intelligence in 1944 from OSS units. William J. Donovan to General [H.H. “Hap”] Arnold, 6 April 1945, pp. 1-2, OSS Records (RG 226), Directors Office Files, Microfilm M1642, Roll 21, Frames 107-108, National Archives II.

the OSS-led resistance groups provided major assistance to advancing Allied armies, this time American, British, and Chinese armies pushing the Japanese out of Burma.<sup>82</sup>

Concerning the relationship of OSS Detachment 101 and the U.S. Army, Toni L. Hiley, curator of the CIA Museum, likes to tell the story of what she calls “the two handshakes.” When the first battalion of the Army’s raider unit known as “Merrill’s Marauders,” penetrated into Burma in March 1944 and started working their way through the jungle, an OSS agent from Detachment 101 suddenly stepped out of the jungle onto their path and welcomed them. The two units then worked together as the OSS teams and their Kachin guerrillas guided the Army units through the jungle, while simultaneously protecting their flanks against surprise attacks from the Japanese. Hiley contends that the OSS’s successor, the CIA, and the Army are still working together. The CIA had its agents into Afghanistan seventeen days after the terrorist attacks on the United States on 9/11/2001. A few days later, those agents greeted the first of the Army’s Special Operations teams when the soldiers arrived.<sup>83</sup>

The success of one part of Detachment 101, 300 Americans and 3,200 native guerrillas, in the spring of 1945 against two Japanese divisions, killing 1,300 Japanese soldiers and routing 10,000 others while losing only 47 men, who earned a Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for Detachment 101 in January 1946 from General Eisenhower, who was then Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army.<sup>84</sup>

Only gradually did OSS expand its role in the Far East, but when it eventually obtained considerable success. There OSS agents also worked with indigenous groups to subvert Japan and to rescue hundreds of downed fliers behind Japanese lines in Burma, Thailand, Indochina and China itself.<sup>85</sup> OSS missions into Thailand contributed to the overturning of its initially pro-Japanese government. Donovan’s organization got into China belatedly in the spring of 1943. The OSS was often defensive about its effectiveness in China, declaring, correctly, that its role there was delayed and restricted by internal squabbles within the multi-branch American mission there and most importantly by restraints imposed by Chiang Kai-shek’s chief of intelligence and secret

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<sup>82</sup> In twelve months in 1944-1945, Detachment 101 was responsible for the deaths of an average of nearly 200 Japanese soldiers per month in jungle ambushes in Burma. Donovan reported in April 1945 that an analysis of enemy casualties inflicted in the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) between 15 October 1944 and 15 January 1945, by all ground troops in that area “reveals that Det. 101, with less than one per cent of total strength in NCAC, has inflicted 29 per cent of all casualties.” William J. Donovan to Gen. Marshall [Gen. George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff], 6 April 1945, p. 2, in OSS Records (RG 226), Directors Office Files, Microfilm M1642, Roll 21, Frames 109-110, National Archives II.

<sup>83</sup> Toni L. Hiley, curator of the CIA Museum, Langley, Va., interview with the author while providing a personal tour of the exhibits, 14 January 2005. Indeed, the first American casualty in the war against Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 was Mike Spann, a CIA Special Activities Division, Ground Branch operative, who was working with U.S. Army troops there when he was killed.

<sup>84</sup> General Orders, War Department, Washington, D.C., 17 January 1946, by order of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Army Chief of Staff, reprinted in Peers and Brelis, *Behind the Burma Road*, 208-209.

<sup>85</sup> “Recent rescues have raised to well over 200 the number of Air Force personnel brought to safety by OSS units in Burma.” William J. Donovan to General Arnold [Gen. H.H. Arnold, Chief of Staff of U.S. Army Air Forces], 6 April 1945, p. 1, in OSS Records (RG 226), Directors Office Files, Microfilm M1642, Roll 21, Frames 107-108, National Archives II.

police, Dai Li. Nevertheless, OSS Detachment 202 with headquarters in Kunming made increasingly contributions to Allied victory by helping the Chinese forces tie down hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops, many of whom would otherwise have been sent to fight the Americans in the Pacific. OSS ran rings of agents who provided useful targeting information from behind Japanese lines for “Flying Tiger” General Claire Chennault’s 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Air Force as well as Admiral Chester Nimitz’s Pacific Fleet. Special Operations teams sabotaged railroads, bridges, tunnels and munitions warehouses. Frank Gleason’s team blew up 50,000 tons of weapons, munitions, and explosives to prevent them from falling into Japanese hands. Paul Cyr’s Chinese guerrillas destroyed a heavily guarded, vital railroad bridge across the Yangtze River that American bombers had been unable to take out.

“There were fewer than 2,000 OSS people in China in 1945, and at least half of them were desk people rather than combat people and never got near the Japanese,” recalled John W. Brunner, a veteran of the Communications Branch in China in 1944-1945. “But with less than a thousand combat personnel, we were officially credited with the killing of more than 12,000 Japanese.” The official report supports Brunner’s contention.<sup>86</sup> The OSS transferred many of the successful SO and OG teams from Europe to China in 1945, and Arden Dow and Frank Gleason and others were training the first Chinese commandos, paratrooper units that had just begun combat missions when the war ended. With news of the emperor’s decision to surrender, SO teams flew or parachuted into Japanese-run POW camps in China, took control of them, and rescued thousands of military and civilian captives, including surviving fliers of the “Doolittle Raid” on Toyko, and General Jonathan Wainwright, who had been a prisoner of the Japanese since the capture of the Philippines in 1942. At the end of the war, OSS had been preparing espionage and paramilitary teams of Koreans and Japanese Americans to be infiltrated into Japan to assist the planned U.S. invasion of the home islands in 1946. In his official commendation of Donovan’s organization, the U.S. commander in China, Lieutenant General Albert Wedemeyer, praised the OSS personnel for the “outstanding performance of duty in their vital missions” and concluded that their achievements constituted “a record of extraordinary heroism, resourcefulness, initiative and effective operations against a ruthless enemy.”<sup>87</sup>

The much touted successes of the OSS with indigenous resistance groups became a major part of its legacy in the postwar world. Under former OSSer Frank Wisner and others, the CIA tried without success in the late 1940s and 1950s to apply the same techniques to building resistance groups in the Soviet Union, Communist China, and North Korea. Later in the 1960s, the methods were applied to wholly different strategic situations in other parts of the world, sometimes with disastrous results. Even some former OSSers asserted that the CIA’s emphasis on clandestine paramilitary action in the

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<sup>86</sup> John W. Brunner, telephone interview with the author, 21 March 2005. The figures of 2,000 OSS personnel in China in 1945 being credited with direct responsibility for the killing of more than 12,000 Japanese troops, are in General Orders No. 27, Headquarters, U.S. Forces, China Theater, by Order of General [Albert] Wedemeyer, 1 February 1946, reprinted in Mills with Brunner, *OSS Special Operations in China*, 431-432.

<sup>87</sup> General Orders No. 27, Headquarters, U.S. Forces, China Theater, by Order of General [Albert] Wedemeyer, 1 February 1946, reprinted in Mills with Brunner, *OSS Special Operations in China*, 431-432.

postwar era as a part of the OSS legacy mismatched what in fact had been a unique experience of World War II, when the OSS like the western Allies received widespread, enthusiastic reception from groups seeking to overthrow the hated Axis conquerors.<sup>88</sup>

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### Costs, Failures, and Accomplishments

It remains unknown how many people were infiltrated or otherwise worked in enemy territory for the OSS in World War II. The Special Operations Branch reported that it infiltrated some 1,600 operatives. But comparable figures about the precise number of uniformed personnel in Operational Groups sent behind enemy lines or the number of men and women working as spies for the Secret Intelligence Branch have not been disclosed. Working behind enemy lines is hazardous work, and it took its toll, even though those total figures, if they include indigenous agents as well as Americans, may never be known.<sup>89</sup>

In all, Americans in the OSS suffered some 450 casualties. Of these, 143 were killed in the line of duty. More than 300 were wounded, including a handful who were captured and were not executed. These figures do not include a large and unknown number, probably in the hundreds, of foreign agents working in various capacities for the OSS who were killed or wounded.<sup>90</sup>

Despite numerous successes, the OSS paramilitary campaigns in the various theaters in World War II were not without their failures. Attempts to sustain infiltrated paramilitary missions in areas that were not overwhelmingly supportive of the Allies and where the Axis were in complete control such as Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and southern Serbia failed because the local population would not protect them, indeed invariably reported them to the enemy.<sup>91</sup> When the Germans quickly crushed an uprising

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<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Ray S. Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (Washington, D. C.: Acropolis Books, 1976), 76.

<sup>89</sup> Edward Hymoff, who worked for OSS and later became a war correspondent and author, notes that even calculating the numbers of people who served in or with OSS is difficult if not impossible cause it would have to take into account those who were assigned full-time, those assigned temporarily, as well as, even more difficult, those foreign partisans, guerrillas, and intelligence gatherers who were for various periods of time directly under the command of OSS officers of branches such as SO, OG, SI, MO, and X-2. Edward Hymoff, *The OSS in World War II* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 340.

<sup>90</sup> Casualty figures from the following: OSS, *War Report of the OSS, Overseas Targets*, 220, which lists a 10 per cent casualty rate as an average for SO/France and 7 per cent for SI/France; see also Cave Brown, *The Last Her*, 787-788; Robin Winks, *Cloak and Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961* (New York: Morrow, 1987), 203; Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Brig. Gen. B.F. Caffey, U.S.A., chief, SP[ Special Operations] Ops S/Sec., G-3, "Resistance Movements in Occupied Countries," OPD 334.8 TS, Case #325, "top secret," p. 3, in a 5-page typescript report, undated [c. early 1945, before the end of the war in Europe in May 1945], copy from the papers of Dr. E.P. Lilly, former JCS historian, located in the CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 4, Folder 30, National Archives II.

in Slovakia, Holt Green's OSS team there was aided by many local people but was ultimately betrayed by others. The Gestapo captured, tortured and executed seventeen members of Green's "Dawes" Mission at Mauthausen concentration camp.<sup>92</sup>

Mistakes, treachery, reprisals, bad luck can be lethal. Guerrilla warfare is neither a romantic pastime nor an inexpensive form of combat. Even in countries where the population overwhelmingly supported the Allies and overall the missions were successful, there were casualties. In France, 21 of 276 Jedburghs were killed in the summer of 1944. At least three teams were ambushed shortly after landing and most of the members killed. Jedburgh Team "Augustus" became trapped between fluid front lines in eastern France and when they ran into a German roadblock guarded by a Tiger tank, all three were killed, two Americans and a Frenchman. In Italy, an entire detachment of Italian American OGS, 13 men of the "Ginny" Mission, landed from PT boats to blow up an important railroad tunnel were betrayed by a fascist sympathizer and were lined up, executed, and buried in a mass grave. In China, Captain John Birch, an Air Corps intelligence officer, working for OSS was brutally murdered by Chinese Communists, and in Indochina, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Dewey, head of the OSS mission in Saigon, was killed in an ambush by Communist guerrillas, who apparently mistook him for a French officer.

OSS achieved a great deal with a comparatively few people. Its successes were disproportionate to its numbers. Its secret intelligence and research and analysis did provide useful information, strategically and tactically, and revealed the limitations of traditionally departmentalized intelligence. It underscored that intelligence gathering and analysis were more than simply the domain of the military and that centralized analysis was a vital process in national security. In addition, its paramilitary agents in the field, possibly never more than two thousand Americans working deep behind enemy lines, also proved of considerable assistance to the Allied cause, particularly in providing target information, impeding lines of communication and supply and distracting and diverting enemy resources to try to find and destroy them. They did so far beyond their numbers because of the multiplier effect in generating, arming, and directing ultimately tens of thousands of indigenous forces. At its peak in December 1944, Donovan's organization consisted of only 13,000 Americans. This was slightly less than one full-sized U.S. Infantry Division of 14,000 men, and the U.S. Army deployed 90 such infantry divisions, plus 16 armored divisions. The 13,000 in the OSS was but a handful compared to the 16 million Americans in the armed forces in World War II.

The fledgling organization won most of its battles overseas, but it lost its most important bureaucratic battles in Washington. Yet, although short-lived and comparatively small in size, the OSS did, in fact, leave a substantial legacy in many areas of American life. It had important impacts on the National Parks in which it trained. It was instrumental in the development of the U.S. Army's Special Forces. And it was the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. In that latter respect, OSS was the only one of the more than one hundred temporary "war agencies" that ultimately survived the postwar demobilization, albeit after a two-year hiatus, and reached independent status.

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<sup>92</sup> Jim Downs, *World War II: OSS Tragedy in Slovakia* (Oceanside, Calif.: Lieftrinck, 2002), 247-325.

### **Relationship of the OSS and the National Park Service**

The OSS not only contributed to the eventual emergence of the CIA and Special Forces, its main institutional legacies, but it had an important impact upon the two National Parks, which provided a home for some of its most important training camps. The superintendents of the two parks—Ira B. Lykes at Prince William Forest Park and Garland B. (“Mike”) Williams at Catoctin Mountain Park—attested to the effects as they sought to preserve the parks while also benefiting in the long run from the military’s wartime occupation. During the war, the superintendents and their superiors worked assiduously with OSS training camp commanders to ensure that the military abided by the terms of the special permit that allowed them exclusive use of the property during the war. That meant ensuring respect for the National Park Service’s mission of preservation of the land and the resources and facilities that Congress had designated as worthy of maintaining in the public interest. But this mission had to be carried out in the extraordinary circumstances resulting from the U.S. declaration of war and America’s full scale mobilization in World War II. The War Department took over the two parks for OSS training purposes, brought firearms and explosives into the woods and declared the area to be off limits to the public for the duration of the war.

It took considerable insight, judgment and tact as well as a keen sense of purpose for the civilian National Park Service to make the best of the dramatically changed situation when the users of the park were the U.S. Army and Marine Corps instead of charitable civilian organizations such as the Maryland League for Crippled Children, the Salvation Army, and the Boy and Girl Scouts of America. Yet, Lykes and Williams performed admirably in supervising the military use of the properties and seeking to ensure the preservation of their natural and historical resources. The two park managers built relationships of respect with the military camp commanders. They encouraged a positive and cooperative relationship between these government agencies, each recognizing that the other had a job to do in difficult times. The park managers filed complaints when violations of the permit became too frequent or egregious, such as the shooting of wildlife and the destruction of trees and historic stone fences. Yet, they could also be helpful to the military in dealing with the local authorities over issues about road use and the control of forest fires. Most importantly, unlike the military which was there only temporarily, the NPS took the long-term perspective on developments in the area that the National Park Service had been federally-mandated to preserve for the benefits of the American public.

### **Legacy of the OSS in the Parks**

Despite all the firing of weapons, blasting of explosives, and digging of trenches and other emplacements that disrupted the area, the military also contributed to a number of lasting improvements in the two parks. As required by the NPS, the purely military structures were dismantled at the end of the war—the rifle ranges, pistol houses, mortar



and grenade ranges, demolitions areas, and munitions storage bunkers. A few old houses had been destroyed, some trees cut down, and at Catoctin some old stone fences had been ground up for gravel. But this had to be measured against the added value to the parks as a result of their wartime occupation. The 1,139 acres acquired at Prince William Forest Park by the War Department and the 288 acres acquired at Catoctin Mountain Park during the war helped to round off the two parks. At the end of the war, when the National Park Service resumed full control of the majority of acreage in the two parks, it also acquired the old CCC work camps, which had been the prewar property of the War Department, and which were improved during the war and deeded to the NPS afterwards by the War Department. Similarly, the OSS had winterized the cabins, dining halls, recreational halls and other facilities at the NPS's group camps. It had erected some new buildings and other facilities that the NPS retained. Utility systems—electrical, water supply, sewerage and waste treatment—had been modernized and expanded, and during OSS occupancy, there had been some rearrangement and improvement of the interior road system.

The two National Parks experienced some other significant changes as a result of the wartime experience. Catoctin Mountain Park became internationally famous as the site of the Presidential Retreat, President Roosevelt's Shangri-La, later renamed Camp David by President Eisenhower, and as the site of wartime meetings between Roosevelt and Churchill and subsequently many important international meetings, including the site for the Camp David Peace Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978. Although the majority of federal Recreational Demonstration Areas from the 1930s were turned over to the states after the war, Catoctin was retained by the U.S. Government in large part because of the Presidential Retreat created there. Because of its proximity to the nation's capital, Prince William Forest Park was also retained by the federal government. However, as a result of the wartime occupation of the southern part of the park some 5,000 acres appeared to become a fixture of the U.S. Marine Base at Quantico, for half a century. Only in 2003 did a mutually acceptable resolution divide the sector, providing nearly 3,400 acres for the Marines and 1,700 acres for the park. Meanwhile, in the postwar years, Prince William Forest Park had maintained a positive relationship with the U.S. Army. Superintendent Ira Lykes developing a cooperative arrangement with the Corps of Engineers at Fort Belvoir in which the combat engineering troops moved a number of their practice exercises to Prince William Forest Park and in the process constructed roads, dams, and bridges in the park at minimal expense to the National Park Service.

### **OSS Veterans**

The majority of OSSers, like other American veterans, came home to resume their life in postwar America, to complete their education, to get married, to get ahead, and to make up for the years they had given for their country. But they did not forget their wartime service, sense of common purpose, patriotic duty and achievement, and above all, the comradeship through good times and bad. Within a few years, they, like many other veterans, sought to resume those friendships and commemorate their achievements.

There was a feisty, independent character to the OSS, and its veterans liked to reminisce about those days of service in the unorthodox, individualistic, innovative and generally anti-bureaucratic organization that Donovan had created. After the war, many of them became highly successful.

What impressed the present author about the OSS veterans he interviewed for this study beyond the fact that they were highly intelligent, articulate, and accomplished was that they remained intellectually and often physically active, many of them through their 80s and early 90s—some were auditing classes at nearby colleges, others doing volunteer work, teaching young people or aiding others. From their postwar resumés, it is clear that they remained a highly able, self-motivated, achievement-oriented, and very special group. They had become highly successful in business, law, academe, diplomacy, government, the military or intelligence work. Some became Presidential advisers, a number became U.S. ambassadors. Some remained in the Army, generally in engineering, infantry, military intelligence or Special Forces. Many of the communications people went into radio or television work in the private sector; others continued in government. A number of OSSers worked for the CIA in intelligence, special operations, communications, or the training.

While Donovan and other former leaders of the organization sought to build the public memory of the OSS through a series of books, articles, and Hollywood films in the postwar era, other ex-OSSers held reunions and formed their own veterans' societies. Their variety illustrated the continued influence of the different specialized units of the OSS. Veterans of the Burma campaign formed the Detachment 101 Society. Those who had served in the Communications Branch established the CommVets Association. Many members of the Secret Intelligence Branch joined the larger Association of Former Intelligence Officers. Those in Special Operations or Operational Groups could become members of the U.S. Army Special Forces Association. Members from any branch of OSS could also join the more broadly based OSS Society.<sup>93</sup> Most of these groups held their annual meetings and other reunions in Washington, D.C., occasionally at the Congressional Country Club (the former Training Area F), which maintains an exhibit of photographs from its wartime occupation by the OSS. The CommVets have maintained a special interest in the site of the Communications School, Training Area C, in Prince William Forest Park, organizing a number of reunions and group visits to the old training camp and supporting the creation of an OSS exhibit in the Visitor Center at Prince William Forest Park. A wayside exhibit on the OSS is also planned at the site of former Training Camp B at Catoctin Mountain Park.

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<sup>93</sup> See, for example, OSS-101 Association at [www.oss-101.com](http://www.oss-101.com); OSS ComVets Association; Association of Foreign Intelligence Officers, [www.afio.com](http://www.afio.com); and the OSS Society at [www.ossociety.org](http://www.ossociety.org). The Operational Groups have their own website at [www.ossog.org](http://www.ossog.org). The author wishes to thank especially, Arthur Reinhardt of the OSS Society and the ComVets Association and Charles T. Pinck, President of the OSS Society, for their assistance.

## Commemorating the OSS

Spies, saboteurs and other agent operatives work behind enemy lines, but there has always been a duality in clandestine activities between the murky world of espionage and the openly perilous environment of the special forces. That duality is generally reflected in different types of museums: there are those that exhibit the history of spies and those that feature the rowdy daredevils of various types of special operations. The aura of the OSS has proven attractive and useful to other institutions, not just its direct heirs, the CIA and the Special Forces. While the most visited exhibit featuring the OSS is in the privately-operated International Spy Museum, which opened in 2002 in Washington, D.C., the official memory of the OSS is maintained by a number of institutional museums. The Airborne and Special Operations Museum completed in 2000 and the U.S. Army's JFK Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, both in Fayetteville, North Carolina, celebrate the OSS Special Operations teams and Operational Groups, as well as one of the predecessors of today's Special Forces.<sup>94</sup> The National Navy UDT-Seal Museum on North Hutchinson Island at Fort Pierce, Florida, commemorates the operational swimmers of the OSS Maritime Unit as a direct ancestor of today's SEALs.<sup>95</sup> The new National Museum of the Marine Corps that opened in 2006 on the Marine Base at Quantico, Virginia, includes a highly favorable reference to Marines like Peter Ortiz who served in the OSS: "Audacious Marines with icy nerves parachuted behind enemy lines in Europe with the Office of Strategic Services."<sup>96</sup>

The CIA hails the OSS as its predecessor in its official publications, its website, and in its private museum at CIA headquarters. The museum is not open to the public, but a tour of the OSS exhibit and other aspects of the Agency's history is part of the indoctrination of every new CIA recruit. In the white marble entrance hall to a main building at the CIA headquarters, one wall contains a bas-relief of Allen Dulles, OSS veteran and the Director of Central Intelligence who was responsible for the construction of the new CIA campus-like headquarters at Langley, Virginia. A few feet away from the bas-relief of Dulles is a display case with a book containing the names of CIA officers

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<sup>94</sup> Websites of the International Spy Museum at [www.spymuseum.org](http://www.spymuseum.org) ; and U.S. Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, N.C. at [www.soc.mil/swcs/museum](http://www.soc.mil/swcs/museum), and the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, Fayetteville, N.C. at [www.asomf.org/museum](http://www.asomf.org/museum). The latter, which became part of the U.S. Army's museum system in 2005, includes references to the OSS in its regular exhibits, but established a special exhibit on the OSS in January 2008, which included materials from its own collection, plus artifacts loaned by the North Carolina Museum of History from the collection of George Hill, a member of a prominent North Carolina family, who served in the OSS's Research and Development Branch. Exhibit reported in "Retired General [John K. Singlaub] to Speak on Career," *Fayetteville Observer*, 24 January 2008, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1962, 26 January 2008, accessed 26 January 2008.

<sup>95</sup> "Naval Special Warfare Heritage: Navy Seal History," The National Navy UDT-Seal Museum, Fort Pierce, Florida, [www.Navysealmuseum.com/heritage/history.php](http://www.Navysealmuseum.com/heritage/history.php), accessed 26 January 2008.

<sup>96</sup> National Museum of the Marine Corps, World War II Gallery, "Global Developments," [www.usmcmuseum.org](http://www.usmcmuseum.org), accessed 26 January 2008.

who lost their lives in the service of the nation. Etched into the white marble on the opposite wall are the names of 116 members of the OSS who were killed in the line of duty in World War II. Overlooking the names of the American dead in the entrance hall to the CIA headquarters, is a single statue, a life size, bronze figure of Major General William J. (“Wild Bill”) Donovan.<sup>97</sup>

Although the Central Intelligence Agency continued to draw upon the aura of Donovan and his glorious and successful citizen-spies, analysts, saboteurs and guerrilla leaders after World War II, OSS veterans, like many other Americans, differed over many of the CIA’s actions, for example, the use of paramilitary covert action to overthrow, popularly-elected, anti-American governments during the Cold War era. There had been considerable popular trust in the government and the military in the era of World War II, and much of it continued until the challenges of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The OSS belief was that secret intelligence and covert operations could be combined for worthy purposes. In the era of prolonged U.S.-Soviet tensions termed the Cold War, when these were combined to overthrow or attempt to overthrow governments, some of them popularly-elected, some OSS veterans supported their use as a necessary aspect of the anti-communist containment policy. But other former OSSers contended that such actions ultimately hurt American interests and represented a distortion of the OSS legacy. It was, the latter argued, an entirely different strategic situation from World War II. The Second World War was a declared war of full national mobilization, and the Allies and OSS had been welcomed by the populations against hated Axis occupying forces and received great cooperation from the public and organized resistance groups.<sup>98</sup> In more recent years, influenced by failed endeavors, fumbled coordination, bumbling spies, rogue agents, extra-legal actions, and even betrayals, many Americans have become more skeptical, even cynical. While the present study was being completed between 2005 and 2008, the discussion in the OSS Society’s electronic bulletin board and chat room as well as the author’s interviews with many OSS veterans

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<sup>97</sup> The author expresses his appreciation to Ms. Toni L. Hiley, curator of the CIA museum, for a personal tour 14 January 2005 of the displays, including the OSS Gallery, which opened in 2001 on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Donovan’s organization, the Cold War Gallery, Directorate of Intelligence Gallery and Directorate of Science and Technology Gallery. Although the CIA museum inside the agency’s compound in Langley, Va., is closed to the public, the agency has an electronic virtual museum at [www.cia.gov/about\\_cia/cia-museum/index-html](http://www.cia.gov/about_cia/cia-museum/index-html), which provides a glimpse of the galleries.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, R. Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 367-383. The point about the different strategic situation was made forcefully by Ray S. Cline, veteran of OSS’s R&A Branch, who later served in high positions in both the intelligence and clandestine services divisions of the CIA, in *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars*, 75-76. An Army report in 1945 had emphasized the necessity of support for OSS covert operations teams by the local civilian population and indicated that where that had been lacking, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and southern Serbia, OSS missions there had failed. Brig. Gen. B.F. Caffey, U.S.A., chief, SP[ Special Operations] Ops S/Sec., G-3, “Resistance Movements in Occupied Countries,” OPD 334.8 TS, Case #325, “top secret,” p. 3, typescript report, undated [c. early 1945, before the end of the war in Europe in May 1945], copy from the papers of Dr. E.P. Lilly, former JCS historian, located in the CIA Records (RG 263), Thomas F. Troy Files, Box 4, Folder 30, National Archives II.

demonstrated the continuation of an ongoing division among OSS veterans over the foreign, national security, and intelligence policies of the United States.<sup>99</sup>

Recently, there have also been some suggestions that the “war on terrorism” would be better conducted not by direct action, man-hunting teams of the American military’s Special Operations Command but in the long run by less glamorous missions which would establish security, encourage economic and political development and spread persuasive messages to win over the local population. By 2006, the Army was considering doing so by incorporating Special Forces with civil affairs, and psychological operations. But Max Boot, a senior analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations, and some others, have gone further to suggest removing unconventional warfare from Special Operations Command and assigning it to a resurrected Office of Strategic Services. This new OSS could include Army Special Forces, civil affairs and psychological operations, plus the CIA’s Special Activities Division, consolidating, as Boot told a Congressional Committee, “all the key skill sets needed to wage the softer side of the war on terror” as well as having the ability to employ indigenous personnel from particular regions on a much larger scale than currently.<sup>100</sup> Thus, the debate over the OSS and its legacy continues.

What remained in the National Parks when the last members of the OSS left the after World War II? There were no echoes of marching orders or other military commands. The noise of gunfire and demolitions explosions had long faded away. The softer sounds—the grunts accompanying jujitsu training and the quiet tapping of the telegraph key—had also vanished. Memories remained, of course, of the strenuous training exercises but also of the comradeship and the leisure time at the recreation hall or in neighboring towns and cities, and perhaps also a fond memory of outdoors and the stillness and beauty of the woods in the National Parks. The ever present emphasis on secrecy had prohibited trainees from revealing their true identity even to each other. They went by fictitious names, and they told local residents—and even their own friends and relatives—that they were just regular members of the armed services. The local people generally accepted that explanation which seemed plausible given the extensive number of military facilities in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, and the millions of young men in uniform in wartime America.

Most dramatically, of course, the OSS occupation of those two National Parks during the war meant the closing off of their recreational lands and interior roads to the public for the duration. The press reported only that the two parks had been taken over

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<sup>99</sup> As evidenced by comments by some OSS veterans on contemporary actions and issues in the OSS Society’s electronic bulletin board and chat room on the internet, [ossociety@yahoo.com](mailto:ossociety@yahoo.com). This site is open to OSS veterans, their families and descendants and to other persons interested in the OSS, but applicants must be approved to have access. The author has had access since he began his research on this history in 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Max Boot, testimony before a House committee, reported in Jefferson Morris, “Analyst Says SOCOM Not Well Suited for Terror War,” *Aerospace Daily & Defense Report*, 30 June, 2006, p. 5, reprinted in *OSS Society Digest*, Number 1401, 16 July 2006, accessed 16 July 2006. Boot is the author, among other works, of *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). Two candidates for the Republican nomination for President in 2008, Senator John McCain and Mitt Romney, also proposed recreating an OSS-like intelligence and operations agency. OSS Reborn by Charles and Dan Pinck, “Glorious Amateurs: A New OSS,” [www.ossreborn.com](http://www.ossreborn.com), accessed 25 January 2008.

for the “war effort” and that the public was barred from entry. The nature of their contribution to the war effort was not disclosed. Those who drove to or by the park entrances would see them guarded by armed sentries and, of course, Army vehicles, especially closed Army trucks, were observed on the roads. It was rumored that the facilities were interning prisoners of war, which seemed plausible as there were German POW camps established in a number of rural areas. Although local residents around Catoctin National Park were not aware that the park was being used as an OSS training camp, preparing spies and saboteurs, they did observe that President Franklin Roosevelt was made a number of visits to the park. They assumed that he had established a secure, wartime retreat there, an assumption verified within weeks after the end of the war, when the press revealed the Presidential Retreat to the entire world.

“Wild Bill” Donovan, visionary, charismatic leader, and incurable romantic, and the freewheeling OSS that he molded in his image—bold, innovative, “dashing, slightly madcap, and highly effective”—will undoubtedly always remain fascinating.<sup>101</sup> It has only been in recent years, however, with the declassification of the OSS records beginning in the 1980s, the spate of books on the OSS, and in the 1990s, the fiftieth anniversary of the war effort and the celebration of the veterans as the “Greatest Generation,” that the people in and around Catoctin Mountain Park and Prince William Forest Park have begun to learn the full story of the OSS in the nearby National Parks.

Now it is hoped that they can also learn more specifically about the contributions of the two National Parks to the war effort. It is a fascinating story of spies, saboteurs, guerrilla leaders, and clandestine radio operators who began their rugged training in these formerly cheery campgrounds and who then went forth, sometimes deep into enemy territory, to a secret, shadow war to help defeat the Axis powers in World War II. It is a story well worth remembering and commemorating.

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<sup>101</sup> Max Boot, “Why the OSS Succeeded and the CIA is Failing,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 2004. Boot argued that “Donovan’s high-powered recruits did impressive work, often utilizing connections that no humdrum bureaucrat could possibly have cultivated.”