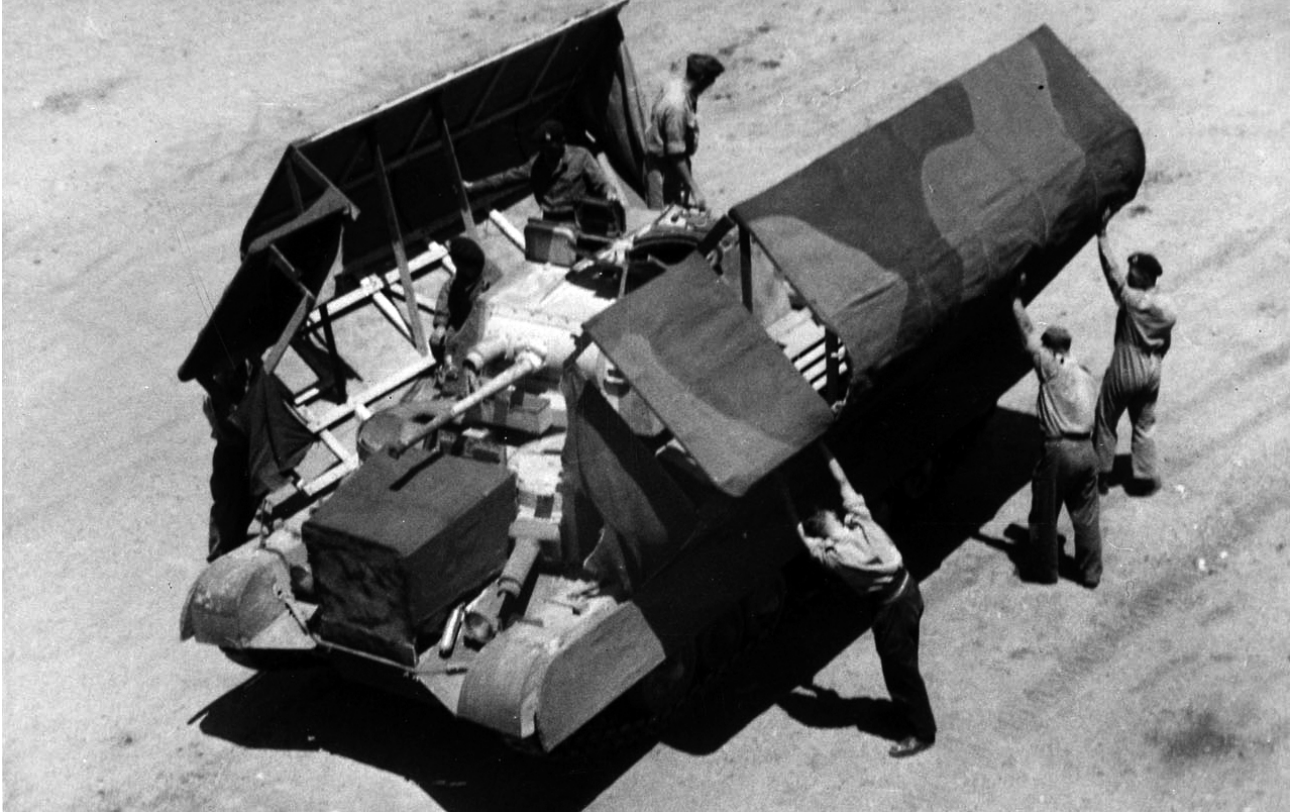


Deception carried out by the British army, May 1941

Catalogue ref: WO 201/2841



What is this source?

This photograph shows a tank fitted with coverings to make it look like a truck.

The coverings were made of plywood and painted canvas.

What's the background to this source?

During the early stages of the war in 1939–40, the Germans used aircraft very effectively to attack enemy ground forces. Aircraft were also very effective at spotting enemy targets and giving their positions to their artillery. Disguises like this were designed to confuse and mislead enemy pilots.

Deceptions like this one were tried out quite early in the war. For example, 'concrete' forts were actually made of plywood and canvas. They were used on a large scale in the campaigns against German and Italian troops in North Africa. As well as tanks made to look like trucks, the army made trucks to

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look like tanks! This was useful in convincing the Germans that the British were massing tanks in one area for an attack when they were actually planning to attack somewhere else. Deception was used on a very large scale just before the D-Day landings. Here the allies used radar, inflatable tanks, trucks and even aircraft to deceive enemy aircraft.

It's worth knowing that...

British commanders were suspicious at first about whether it worth the effort of building fake weapons or disguising it. However, by 1944 they were convinced it was useful. In the run up to D-Day huge amounts of fake equipment were placed in Kent to convince the Germans the landings would go from there. In fact they went from further round the coast.

The original idea for some of the illusions came from people in the entertainment industry, especially stage magicians.

How does this source help us to understand the importance of deception tactics during the war?

1. What was the point of making a tank look like a truck?
2. Do you think this disguise would be effective from the air?
3. Do you think this source can help you to convince your friend that the British used deception tactics in WW2?

You could do this as a presentation or a written report. Use the following report sheet to help.