

The Brandenburger Commandos: Germany's Elite Warrior Spies in World War II (Stackpole Military History Series)

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Franz Kurowski Dortmund 30 March 1995**The OKW-AMT Ausland/Abwehr**On 1 January 1935 Kapitan zur See Wilhelm Canaris became head of the German Abwehr. The Abwehr had evolved from the Reichswehr's Intelligence and Identification Service and joined the Navy's secret service in 1928. The combined secret service was later renamed Abwehr and in 1932 came under the command of Fregattenkapitan Conrad Patzig. In 1935 the Abwehr was subordinated to the Reich War Ministry and in 1938 to the Wehrmacht High Command (OKW). In 1939 its official designation was changed to the OKW Amt Ausland/Abwehr (OKW Office for Foreign and Counter-Intelligence).Immediately after assuming his new post Wilhelm Canaris contacted his counterparts in foreign intelligence services, with whom he had already established ties through middlemen in the appropriate offices. In September 1935 in Munich he met with Colonel Mario Roatta, head of the Servizio Informazioni Militari—SIM, the Italian Secret Service. The Italians had tried to establish contact with Canaris' predecessor, Kapitan zur See Patzig, but in vain.Patzig was brought down as a result of the Rohm affair, when after the series of murders on 30 June 1934 he demanded the removal of Heydrich because he had far exceeded the authority of Hitler and Goring and had caused officers of the Reichswehr to be killed who were innocent of any part in the

“Rohm putsch.” Patzig convinced the Minister of Defense, Generalfeldmarschall von Blomberg, to press for the removal of Heydrich. Reich Minister of Defense Blomberg, who had secured the support of several cabinet ministers for this effort, made his move and was rebuffed by Himmler. Blomberg knuckled under. This slap in the face from Himmler seriously damaged his image, a thing for which he never forgave Patzig. When Blomberg proposed that the Abwehr establish ties with the Italian Secret Service, Patzig rejected the idea, arguing that it was not trustworthy. Later, when Patzig gave orders for a special reconnaissance squadron—later to become Special Group Rowehl—to carry out flights over Poland and France, flights which had been initiated by Hitler, Blomberg insisted that Hitler had forbidden the flights. In October 1934 the Minister of Defense learned that the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe’s high-altitude reconnaissance squadron had photographed the entire Maginot Line. Blomberg summoned Patzig to him and declared curtly: “I can’t use an intelligence chief who carries out escapades of this kind!” Patzig had to propose someone to succeed him to Admiral Raeder. When he gave Canaris’ name, Raeder rejected the idea brusquely. The Commander in Chief of the Reichsmarine didn’t like Canaris and had already sent him into oblivion by placing him in command of the fortress at Swinemünde. He wanted to retire Canaris in 1935. Patzig then raised a point that Raeder hadn’t considered. He declared that in that case the Army would take over the Abwehr. Raeder relented and approved the naming of Kapitän zur See Canaris as head of the German counter-intelligence service. The white-haired naval officer moved into house number 72-76 on the Tümpelstraße on the Berlin Landwehr Canal. On 1 May 1935 Canaris was promoted to Konteradmiral. He made all the former officers who had served as civilian employees with the Abwehr E-officers. One such was Major Hans Oster. Canaris also summoned old comrades from the Freikorps, men like Friedrich Wilhelm Heinz, a former cavalry officer, and Heinz Schmalzschager. Former naval officer Leibner came all the way from Nicaragua, and many others followed. One of Canaris’ early collaborators was Major Hans Piekenbrock. Under Canaris’ leadership the Abwehr grew into an extensive organization with three main departments; eventually, in the course of the expansion of the Wehrmacht, it became the Ausland/Abwehr, an agency that was to serve all three elements of the armed forces. The central department was headed by Oberstleutnant (later Oberst) Oster. Head of Abwehr Department I was Major (later Oberstleutnant and General Staff Oberst) Hans Piekenbrock. Department I was responsible for secret communications and carried out active intelligence gathering. The Abwehr’s Department II was commanded by Oberst (later Generalmajor) von Lahousen- Vivremont. Department II handled all sabotage actions and special missions carried out by the Abwehr. Department III under Oberstleutnant (later Generalmajor) von Bentivegna, was the counter-espionage and counter-intelligence branch. In spite of this division of authority overlapping missions were not uncommon. The areas of responsibility assigned to these three groups were in turn organized into three sub-departments, with one responsible for each branch of the armed forces—army, air force and navy. Sub-groupings and the various specialized intelligence objectives required further sub-divisions which shall be outlined briefly. Each Wehrkreiskommando (Military Area Headquarters) had an Abwehr office that was under the command of the unit Ie and the Abwehr AO. The unit Ie was a general staff officer tasked with handling intelligence concerning the enemy. The AO was an Abwehr officer. Like the Abwehr itself, all Abwehr offices were organized into Groups I, II and III, which were responsible for intelligence gathering, sabotage and special missions, and counter-intelligence respectively. **The Abwehr Departments I, II and III** The working plan of Abwehr Department Ausland I was as follows: For the command group: uniform direction of the secret message service. Summarization of all relevant intelligence sources. Cooperation with Departments II and III of the Office for Germans Living Abroad (Auslandsamt), the Foreign Office, the Gestapo and the Research Office (Forschungsamt). Execution of intelligence-gathering missions assigned by the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and of the three services: transmission of non-evaluated intelligence to the Ausland Department and the foreign offices of the three branches of the armed forces. This department consisted of the following sections: Office Officer (West), Passes, Registry, Group I, and Army. Abwehr I Hd was responsible for directing the secret military message service in the west and south. Abwehr I H (West/North) Section was responsible for overseeing the

communication of secret messages, utilization of value judgments by Department 3 of the Army General Staff concerning intelligence material delivered to it, as well as personal data and the evaluation of agents. Abwehr I H (West/South) handled the compensation of agents following their retirement as well as the impartial auditing of the rendering of accounts by the Abwehr offices. Section I H (West/North) was responsible for the countries of Belgium, Holland, England, Denmark and Luxembourg. Section I H (West/South) was responsible for France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Italy and the overseas states, excluding Japan. There were also subgroups for the secret message communications service in the east and southeast: Section, I H (East/North) was responsible for Poland, the border states, Finland, the USSR, Scandinavia, Japan and China, and Section I H (East/South) for Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Southeast Europe, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. Gathering intelligence on foreign weapons and military technology was the job of Section I Ht. Its mission was to obtain examples of weapons and military hardware abroad and explore the manufacture of chemical weapons by other nations. Together with the command group, Abwehr Department II was responsible for the following areas: operation of the department as per instructions from the supreme command. Representing the interests of the department externally, uniform direction of the groups under its command and administration of funds. Branch Ia was responsible for the mobilization calendar and the commander's secret material as well as administering the secret command matter files. As well it handled the internal service and took care of economic matters, dealt with the external service when expressly instructed to do so. Branch Ia was also given the job of maintaining the Ausland/Abwehr war diary. Branch Ib controlled the laboratory responsible for technical research and maintained links with the armed forces office, the technical schools and institutes. It issued contracts for the procurement and stockpiling of materials and trained V men for special missions. Branch Ib was also responsible for issuing special directives, evaluating war experiences and using these for new special Abwehr missions. The tasks assigned the branches of Group I with their responsible group leader included gathering intelligence on minorities and ferreting out organizations hostile to the state. An especially important role was that of spreading subversive propaganda within the enemy's armed forces. They were also to explore potential lines of communication with the political groups of potential enemies in peace and war, maintain the exchange of intelligence information with friendly powers, and produce memoranda concerning the goals and organizations of minorities and subversive groups. This main branch had at its disposal various sub-branches. Sub-branch I ON was responsible for handling minorities and subversive groups in the Soviet Union, the Far East, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland. Sub-branch 1 OS fulfilled the same role for Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy, while Sub-branch I W was responsible for France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, England, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Sub-branch I Db (Overseas) handled North, Central and South America and Spanish Morocco and Sub-branch 1 I Africa (less Spanish Morocco), Asia and South America. Sub-branch 1 J was in charge of insurgency measures (promoting insurgent groups) world wide, as well as evaluating the press and books. Group 2 and its group leader controlled the operations of the special service and were responsible for the organization of the service, establishing S-areas and producing memoranda on the economic and military situation of hostile states. Group 2 was also responsible for exploring offensive opportunities for the S organization, transport of materials and their storage with corps headquarters and at the nation's borders. It was also to ensure lines of communication and message transmission. In order to carry out these tasks the branch was divided into the following sub-groups:

Branch 2 (WS-1): France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland.

Branch 2 (WS-2): Spain, Portugal, Latin America.

Branch 2 (WN): England, Holland, Scandinavia, Denmark.

Branch 2 (OS): Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, the Balkan countries.

Branch 2 (ON): Russia, Poland, border states.

Branch 2 (Db): North America, special organizations.

Branch 2 (Mar): waters around Europe, Africa and Asia.

Branch 2 (Luft): conduct of the special service and liaison with the Reich Ministry of Aviation.

Branch 2 (Lab): Technical experiments, material administration. Also part of Department II of the AuslandlAbwehr was what was later to become the 800th Special Purpose Instruction Regiment Brandenburg. When the Second World War began the unit was still in the formative stage; later, however, it was to play a decisive role in the actions of Department II. The idea for the formation of this German commando force came from Hauptmann Dr. von Hippel, who in his early considerations outlined the role of such a unit: "to seize vital objects such as bridges, tunnels, crossroads and armaments plants and hold them until the arrival of the leading units of the German Armed Forces." On 15 September 1939 Hauptmann Putz oversaw formation of the 1st Special Purpose Construction Instruction Company at the Bruck Troop Training Grounds. Hauptmann Verbeek was named company commander. His instructors included Leutnant Dr. Kniesche and Leutnant Grabert, as well as several NCOs and enlisted men. The company itself consisted of volunteers from the Sudeten German Freikorps, ex-soldiers of the Czech Army, and other young men. From this one company was to evolve the Brandenburg Regiment, whose actions will feature prominently in subsequent chapters.

Abwehr Department III, whose command group was responsible for the overall control of German counter-espionage activities and also for the maintaining of finances, personal affairs and the war diary, was divided into the following groups and branches. The administration officer, who was responsible for the running of the office and who had to catalogue all incoming mail. He administered the secret documents and handled personnel applications. Finance administration administered all funds, scrutinized incoming accounts and manned the pass control desk. The registry handled business transactions, maintained the mail register and dealt with accumulated mail. It administered the secret and non-secret files and digests, procured office supplies, saw to space requirements and administered the case files. The role of Command Group III W (Armed Forces Counter-Intelligence) was the uniform conduct of counter-espionage activities within the armed forces. The command group leader was responsible for this. One of the group's chief responsibilities was the safeguarding of military secrets. It provided expert testimony in front of courts, especially the Reich court. The command group leader also fulfilled the role of the responsible deputy of the department chief. Group III H was responsible for conducting counter-espionage in the army and evaluating the results. It gathered material for briefings and lectures, and maintained statistics on cases of treason in the army as well as on cases of desertion in the German armed forces. It also worked with Group III S in counter-sabotage operations. Branch III Kgf. directed and guided counter-espionage in the prisoner of war camps in cooperation with the Inspector of Prisoner of War camps through V-officers of the Abwehr III itself. This branch investigated German POWs abroad and escape attempts by POWs. It also carried out neutral missions and was responsible for prisoner exchanges. Like all other branches, III Kgf. was under orders to cooperate with Group III S in matters involving counter-sabotage. Branch III M oversaw counter-espionage activities in the navy and monitored all attempts at subversion in the German armed forces as well as questions of precautionary maintenance of secrecy. It ran all counter-espionage activities in the Kriegsmarine and in the coastal fortification zones. The branch was also responsible for the maintenance of statistics on cases of treason and desertions in the navy, providing expert testimony before the courts, and the exchanging of prisoners. It was also under orders to cooperate with Group III S in matters of counter-sabotage. Group III Luft: Responsible for counter-espionage in the Luftwaffe. It was required to investigate all Luftwaffe losses and handle the individual cases. Crimes of treason and cases of desertion within the Luftwaffe also fell within its jurisdiction, as did providing expert testimony before the courts. The leader of Group III Wi (counter-intelligence in industry) was responsible for the uniform direction of defensive measures against espionage and sabotage in industry and to evaluate the group's experiences in this field. Branch III Wi I's sphere of activity encompassed Military Areas I, II and X and the Abwehr offices in Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. Its purpose was to handle armaments questions concerning the navy and general Abwehr matters and to review the construction plans of the army and navy. As well the group was responsible for investigating press and police reports with regard to these themes, the release of navy military equipment for export, and assembling and evaluating the results of industrial espionage in the Nordic States, Russia and the British Dominions. Branch III Wi 2 was responsible for handling the

release of army military equipment for export, cooperating with the security service (SD), keeping track of foreign nationals, and conducting industrial espionage in Southeastern Europe and Asia(excluding Russia, China and Japan).Branch III Wi 3 worked with the economic offices and the industry and trade councils. The monitoring of the labor exchanges and labor courts lay within its area of jurisdiction. It was also responsible for screening those businesses vital to the military and civilian economies. Its area of responsibility in the field of industrial espionage was Western and Southwestern Europe excluding England and Africa.Branch III Wi 4 was responsible for checking all questions relating to Luftwaffe armaments, monitoring factory air defenses, aviation-related construction plans and the four-year plan, and directing important fuel-producing firms. It was also in charge of releasing air force military equipment for export and industrial espionage in Japan, China and the USA.Group III C, which was divided into five sub-groups, carried out its missions inside Germany. Its sub-groups coordinated suspected cases of espionage, conducted counter-propaganda and monitored signals communications and passenger traffic.The primary responsibilities of Group III F, counter-intelligence abroad, concerned counter-intelligence in the western and eastern states as well as the operation of passport offices in neutral countries. Five branches carried out these tasks.Group III D, whose mission was "deception," consisted of two branches and was responsible for misleading potential enemies by means of counter-espionage and for monitoring the release of falsified material by Abwehr offices in conjunction with the general staffs of the army, navy and air force.Group III S, anti-sabotage, required four branches in order to deal with its volume of work. It was responsible for combating all types of sabotage and activities detrimental to the defense of Germany at home and abroad; it also led anti-sabotage activities in the army, navy and air force as well as in the prisoner of war camps.Group III G consisted of two branches and provided expert opinions dealing with cases of treason in the western and eastern states.The last group was Group III Z Arch. (Central Archive of the Armed Forces High Command). Its job was to screen all female and male personnel hired by the OKW, OKM and RLM and to handle all cases of treason or loss of life that occurred in those areas. One of its most important duties was the precautionary maintenance of secrecy and the security of the headquarters of the OKW and of the Bendler, Tiergarten and Ltitzow Blocks in cooperation with the on-site commanders. All persons calling on the head of the OKW or on the Abwehr of Foreign Office had to be screened by this group. It handled the procurement of visas for official travel abroad and was responsible for security in the offices of Ausland/Abwehr III.Also part of the OKW Office Ausland/Abwehr were the Foreign Mail Screening Office Berlin and the Foreign Telegram Screening Office Berlin. Both were authorized to examine correspondence of all types to or from persons classed as threats. They were also responsible for chemical investigations, and for scrutinizing the contents of private, business and military mail and in particular letters sent by prisoners of war. In its card index files were all those persons who came under suspicion in the course of monitoring communications as well as those already deemed worthy of scrutiny.This completes the outline of the entire Ausland/Abwehr. The office had cast its huge spider web over the entire world and an awareness of this scope is necessary if one is to understand the extent of the actions of every type that were planned and carried out in and outside Germany before and during the war.The "tension agents" (S-Agents) and "war agents" (A-Agents) began their work as soon as Canaris took charge of the office. The agency set up nets of agents whose sizes and diversity simply could not be plumbed by the enemy. The creation of this peacetime and wartime organization was Canaris' first priority.**Actions before the WarPREPARATIONS AND EXPANSION** In 1936 Canaris visited Estonia, where he had private discussions with the Chief of Staff of the Estonian Army and the director of Department 2 (the Estonian Secret Service). As a result of these talks an agreement was reached to exchange all results of espionage against the USSR. Baron Andrei von Uexküll was named chief liaison officer between the two secret services. The Abwehr set up Group 6513 in Estonia. Technical specialists were dispatched to Estonia to step up radio espionage against the USSR.Canaris had met with Colonel Mario Roatta, head of the Servizio Informazioni Militari, in Munich in September 1935 to discuss the possibility of cooperation in counter-intelligence. This was followed by a meeting between the two secret service chiefs in Rome in June 1936; the topic was joint action by Germany and Italy to intervene in the Spanish Civil

war on the side of Nationalist Spain under General Franco. In September of that year, the German military attaché in Ankara, Oberstleutnant Rohde, reported that he had received reports from allied sources concerning shipments of military supplies for the Red Brigades in Spain from the USSR through the Turkish straits at the Bosphorus. In 1937 Canaris and his deputy, Oberst Piekenbrock, once again visited Estonia to step up the intelligence-gathering effort against the USSR and a short time later Canaris enlisted the exile organization of Ukrainian nationalists into the service of the Abwehr. A German message center was set up in Shanghai in autumn 1937 to monitor the import and export of military supplies and their transshipment from this important port to all of East Asia. Engineer Hermann Lang, an Abwehr agent working in the USA, reported on a highly-effective new bombsight that had come to his attention in the course of his duties as an assembly inspector with a major air armaments concern. A short time later he gained access to all the files on the new bombsight which resulted in further interest in the device. The files subsequently reached Germany. Then in October 1937 Nikolaus Ritter, an Ausland/Abwehr expert from the Hamburg office, traveled to the USA. His orders were "to explore the possibility of establishing an extensive espionage net and the conduct of industrial espionage missions." In 1937 an agent of the Ausland/Abwehr I Luft group was exposed by the US Secret Service; however with the help of friends he managed to escape to Canada by car and from there returned to Germany. The Federal Bureau of Investigation now became active in this area and placed the "League of Friends of the New Germany," of which the exposed agent had been a member, under surveillance. When a Sudeten German named Rumrich then ferreted out a courier of the German Abwehr and proposed a major coup, the latter agreed. The idea was to kidnap an American officer after having tricked him into bringing the mobilization plans of the units under his command. Rumrich sent a request to the Colonel in question to bring the mobilization papers to a specified place where he was to hand them over to a representative of the War Department. The letter was on War Department paper in an official envelope bearing a forged seal. The American Colonel became suspicious, however, and brought with him several FBI men, who arrested Rumrich. During interrogation the latter revealed the names of all the Abwehr agents known to him and their helpers. Johanna Hoffmann, a hairdresser working on the Europa, was taking the place of the German V-man, who was on leave in Germany at the time. She was arrested when the Europa returned to New York. Hoffmann, too, told all she knew, resulting in a series of arrests. A total of eighteen persons were charged with treason. Also charged were several German officers serving with the military mission: Oberst Busch, Fregattenkapitan Menzel, Korvettenkapitan von Bonin and Korvettenkapitan Pfeiffer. The Abwehr effort in Estonia was stepped up in 1938. It was clear to Canaris that gathering intelligence on the USSR could best be done from the Russian border states. His contact and that of the Abwehr officials so far had been Colonel Maasing. Maasing went to Berlin in 1936 to sign the agreement for joint intelligence gathering in the USSR which he and Canaris had worked out verbally. When Maasing was released to the reserve in 1938, he once again went to Germany to write down everything he knew about Department 2 of the Estonian General Staff. His successor, Colonel Willem Saarsen, had already been won over by the Abwehr while serving as department head. He developed the Estonian Secret Service entirely into a "branch office of the German Abwehr." In the years up to 1938 Military Attaché Rohde carried out several trips from Ankara in the service of the Abwehr to Syria and Palestine, to Iran and Iraq, and to Afghanistan. His mission was to discover everything that might be of use to the Abwehr and establish first contact with rebels and nationalists in those countries. The Long-Range Reconnaissance Squadron of the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, over which Canaris' predecessor had been brought down, had been flying intensive high-altitude reconnaissance since 1937 and made its first flights over the Soviet Union. Stationed at Berlin-Staaken, it received more and more high-altitude aircraft and was ultimately expanded into a group. The unit was commanded by Major Theodor Rowehl. Beginning in 1940, with the help of Department 2 of the Estonian General Staff the Abwehr began infiltrating several German espionage and sabotage groups into the USSR. One figure who would later become well known was the agent leader Gavrilov. Ukrainian exiles, as well as a number of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nationalists, were enlisted by the Abwehr. They were trained for missions in Poland and the Soviet Union at a

special camp on the Chiemsee, near the Abwehr laboratory in Berlin Tegel and in Quenzgut in Brandenburg. **THE FEELERS ARE EXTENDED** The visit by Canaris and Oberst Groscurth to Baghdad marked the first attempt to extend feelers to the Middle East. The Germans held talks with Arabian forces who had spoken out against England and gone underground. When the efforts of German agents became noticeable in the USSR, the Soviets abruptly closed the German consulates in Kharkov, Kiev, Leningrad, Novosibirsk, Odessa, Tbilisi and Vladivostok. In May 1938 Hermann Lang, who was active in the American aviation industry as an engineer and an agent, returned to Germany to brief German technicians on production of the USAAF's modern bombsight. As a result of his efforts a copy of the bombsight was built in Germany within a short time. Lang soon returned to the USA and set up a network of agents there to spy on businesses producing war-related materials. The year 1938 brought the Abwehr turbulent developments all over the world. In spite of the unmasking of eighteen agents—whose number included E. Graser, J. Hoffmann, Gliner-Gustav Rurnrich and Werner Voss—in America in spring 1938, the Abwehr was able to expand its efforts in the USA. Fourteen of the suspected spies were warned in time, and most fled to Mexico, from where they later returned to the USA to resume their work. In June 1938 in Berlin a deal was worked out between the Abwehr and the Japanese military attache Major-General Hiroshi Oshima specifying the conditions for an official exchange of intelligence concerning the USSR and the Red Army. Oshima, head of the Japanese secret service's European control station, was the son of Japan's Minister of War. Both father and son were keen on obtaining as much information as possible on the Soviet Union. Their goal was to ensure that their country was fully prepared for a possible war against the USSR in which Japan would carve out a large piece of that nation's huge Asiatic land mass to provide living space for her people. This piece was to be large enough to ensure forever the dominance in the East-Asian sphere that Japan was secretly striving for. So "Junior" Oshima went to Germany to see to it that Russia was threatened from the west as well as east. In Admiral Canaris, Oshima had found a counterpart who fully supported the Japanese plans concerning Russia. The two men were thus able to reach an agreement whereby the Japanese and German intelligence services would exchange information concerning the USSR. A preliminary verbal agreement had been reached in October 1935; however it was not considered worthy of a formal agreement as the Japanese government was not yet ready to cast in its lot with Germany by forming an alliance. After much negotiation, in which Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop was also involved, on 25 November 1936 Japan and Germany concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact. When General Oshima returned to Germany in 1937 he brought a draft agreement for cooperation between the armed forces of both nations, including their air forces. Hitler declined, because the Japanese had invaded Northern China in July and he had no desire to allow himself to be drawn into a war in the Far East. General Keitel only went as far as to tell the Japanese that cooperation could be guaranteed even without a written obligation binding the German side. In September 1937 Oberst Rohde once again journeyed to the nations of the Near and Middle East, including Afghanistan, in order to gather authentic material for the Abwehr. On his return he outlined for the first time the possibility of including the rebels and other enemies of Great Britain in actions that could be planned and conducted by the Abwehr. In an effort to further stimulate this promising state of affairs, Senior Government Advisor Dr. Woehrl, a specialist who had been carefully selected by the Abwehr, was sent to Teheran on Canaris' orders to assess the chances of reinstating the ex-king of Afghanistan, Aman Ullah, who was living in exile in Rome, and at the same time strengthen the position of the king's supporters. Dr. Woehrl had worked in Kabul as an Abwehr agent for some time and he knew the land and the mentality of the leading members of the opposition groups. During discussions with Canaris he gave him the impression that it was possible to restore the ex-king to power by means of a putsch, thus creating a government friendly to Germany for the struggle against England. In talks with the Abwehr, the Afghan specialist Woehrl was able to convince the Admiral that the plan was feasible. The latter sent Woehrl to Rome to see the ex-king and—once he had secured his agreement to take part—to Afghanistan. Emir Aman Ullah had succeeded his father Emil Habib Ullah in 1919 and became king in 1929; however as a result of hastily-implemented reforms he was overthrown the same year by an Islamic revolt. The leader of the revolt was "Batscha-ji Saqqa—the son of a water bearer"—a

tadjik. With his support Aman Ullah's cousin Nadir became king in October 1929. The latter, now Nadir Shah, was murdered in 1933. He was succeeded by his son Saher, who was now to be replaced by Aman Ullah. Following the return of Senior Government Advisor Dr. Woehrl and his report that the "wild" mountain tribes on the Afghan-Indian border were ready to risk a revolt, Admiral Canaris saw to it that these plans were presented to Hitler. He instructed his colleague Oberst Edler von Lahousen-Vivremont to draft a report for the Fiihrer in which the Abwehr's planned action in the west, the position of the Ukrainians, Operation Tibet and Operation Afghanistan were mentioned. Hitler agreed that the "Afghanistan story" should be pursued.

The Wartime Organization of the Abwehr

The Ausland/Abwehr Office of the High Command of the Armed Forces began forming war organizations (KO) in most of the states of neutral Europe in 1936, a process that intensified during the course of the Second World War. They were housed by the German diplomatic missions in the nations concerned and their members were camouflaged as mission personnel. Depending on the Abwehr officers included in their staffs, these war organizations carried out missions for the three Abwehr Departments—I, II and III. Department III did not begin sending representatives to the war organizations until the outbreak of war, however. In the war zones it was the Abwehr squads that selected agents from the population in areas where partisan warfare was being waged. Town and field commanders were also used to work for the Abwehr where and when this was promising. Even before the war broke out, therefore, Germany had laid an extensive counter-intelligence net over those states of interest to her, a net that abruptly increased in density in the course of the war. The strands of the net came together in the Ausland/Abwehr office of the OKW. Cooperation between the Abwehr and Office VI of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Central Security Office), as well as the Auslands Organization of the National Socialist Party under its chief, Gauleiter Bohle, began soon after the war started and this relationship was consolidated as time went on. As well, the Ausland/Abwehr Office worked with the Volksdeutschen Mittelstelle. Cooperation with the three attaché departments of the elements of the armed forces, especially that of the army, referred to the evaluation of the foreign military attachés and their aides in relation to their possible recruitment for espionage activity for the Abwehr. The Long-Range Reconnaissance Squadron of the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe under its commander Major Theodor Rowehl was responsible for long-range reconnaissance missions on behalf of the Abwehr. Tasked with delivering agents by parachute was the Reconnaissance Group of the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, commanded by Hauptmann Karl-Edmund Gartenfeld. Both officers were decorated with the Knight's Cross for their actions deep inside enemy territory. Communication between agents abroad and the Reich was achieved in a number of ways. One was by mail to a cover address, which might be a real or false private address. Mail to one of the latter was directed through official channels to the appropriate post office. When letters addressed to these fictitious addresses arrived, they had to be sorted by the post office and forwarded without delay to the offices of the Abwehr. As well, such shipments went to post office boxes. The letters were mostly open business letters. The secret text was written between the lines with chemical inks that were capable of passing any postal inspection. Abwehr I's V-man in Lisbon, Major Kraemer-Auenrode, sent messages to and received the same from England in the form of books or postcards whose text had been determined in advance. However the best, fastest and most secure method of communication was radio, even though in some cases this could be ferreted out and located by means of radio location. Not until after the outbreak of war did this radio traffic develop into a worldwide net for the transmission of secret intelligence. The Abwehr required outstanding radio stations for its worldwide communications. The central radio station near Berlin conducted radio traffic with all war organizations and the offices subordinate to them. The major Abwehr offices, which also had to cover very large areas, likewise had at their disposal first class radio stations. The Abwehr office in Hamburg also set up a radio station in the suburbs of the Hanseatic port for radio traffic with agents; it had both large receiver and transmitter installations, situated several kilometers apart. Set up in the receiver site's Europe half, which picked up all European radio transmissions, was a reception site with 20 receivers. In the overseas hall, which picked up all radio transmissions from overseas, were 23 receivers, which were manned around the clock. The

transmitters of every German agent in the world were linked with this reception installation and every frequency was monitored by four radio operators and a "stand-in" working six-hour shifts. Equally extensive was the Abwehr office in Vienna, which controlled radio traffic in the entire southeastern area. Transmission times for all frequencies were precisely prescribed and were changed according to a specific pattern. Finally, micro-photography was also used. Every war organization had a device that was capable of reducing entire typed pages of text to a microdot. In this way agents returning from abroad could easily carry all intelligence on their persons, in such a way that it could never, even on the closest inspection, be discovered. Shortly before the outbreak of war, in August 1939, the OKW Office Ausland/Abwehr issued an order for the quickest and most extensive possible securing of important information from the enemy's files. The primary objective was to use these sources to quickly create an accurate picture of the measures being taken by enemy leaders in regard to all military but also political questions, so as to be able to take appropriate steps. Furthermore through an intensive study of these sources it was hoped to be able to identify those persons and groups of persons who had been known or were now found to be potential enemies of Germany. Obviously this list included agents operating in Germany on "behalf of these nations who were active as underground agents. It fell to Abwehr II to play a leading role in this effort, for it received orders to employ selected, specially-trained teams which, following close on the heels of, and in some cases preceding, the German assault units, were to enter the previously pinpointed archives of the countries being attacked and secure the desired files at all costs. For this purpose the teams were provided with weapons, equipment, vehicles, and uniforms from the enemy states. One of the first assignments of this type read: "An Abwehr front-line reconnaissance detachment is to find, seize and secure all material from Polish intelligence offices and archives, especially from the archive of Department 2 of the Polish General Staff in Warsaw." The Abwehr office in Breslau subsequently formed and equipped the necessary commando team; commanded by Major Heinz SchmalschHiger, it was sent by the Vienna Abwehr office in the direction of Warsaw. After the fall of Warsaw the team was to secure all intelligence material from the 2nd Office (of the Polish General Staff, which dealt with reconnaissance and with espionage and secret service activities). Another source for the work of the Ausland/Abwehr was the German Geopolitical Institute, which even before the war investigated, listed and catalogued all material coming in from Russia and the Near and Mid East. The institute had more than 1,000 employees who, after thorough analysis of the mass of incoming material, produced various summaries, especially reference books, in cooperation with the Economic and Armament Office of the Armed Forces High Command and military intelligence. This resulted in studies of Russia's armaments industry and its rail system, the capacities of the oil-producing countries of the Near and Middle East, and more. The material used to produce these studies came to Germany via every possible avenue, from foreign trade, economic and foreign political institutions and units, but also via Abwehr agents in the German missions and embassies. Given Hitler's known aversion to the "Bolsheviks" it is no surprise that even before the war much attention was paid to the Russian armament industry and efforts were made to determine its locations and capacities and identify eventual bottlenecks in raw materials or energy problems. The temporary alliance with the Soviet Union did nothing to change this. Of course another focal point of interest was the oil producing and refining industries of those states with oil industries, especially those that were important to German industry and to its war machine. Also of interest were some sources of other raw materials and their development, which were vital to German industry. One such was platinum from Columbia, which was vital to the aircraft and equipment industries. A special "Russia staff" was created to coordinate all sites in Russia to be examined.

THE COMMAND ELEMENTS OF THE ABWEHR

The Chain of Command Hitler, who viewed the Abwehr as an important instrument of his leadership in the political as well as military fields, gave what was then still the Abwehr Department, called the Abwehr Working Group, his full support and had Canaris promoted from the ranks. Nevertheless this department at first led a shadow existence. It was not until the first German field marshal of the Third Reich, Generalfeldmarschall Werner von Blomberg, who had become the Commander-in-Chief of the German Armed Forces and Reich Minister of War, was dismissed and the Reich Ministry of War disbanded, that the Abwehr's hour arrived. From then on

Canaris and his intelligence apparatus were under the direct command of the Armed Forces High Command and thus General Keitel. Later Canaris received his instructions only from Hitler. As the senior department head, he even became Keitel's deputy in the OKW. Thus the "midjet", as he was called in the inner circle on account of his diminutive stature, only about 1.6 meters tall, came to wield a level of power that was matched by few of the other leading figures of the Third Reich. In 1939, when the Abwehr Working Group was enlarged to about 400 persons, this huge apparatus was renamed the Ausland/Abwehr Office. It was divided into several departments, and each of these groups was a complex in itself. They were: **Department I** Department I was responsible for foreign espionage and the secret reporting service. It was led by Oberst Hans Piekenbrock and later Oberst Hansen. This department was divided into the four groups Heer IH (army), Luft IL (air force), Marine 1M (navy) and Technik IT (technology). As well there the secondary groups Wirtschaft IW (economics), Geheimwesen IG (secrecy) and Funk /J (radio). The intelligence of all types acquired by this department was passed on to the three components of the armed forces. As well the Wehrmacht Operations Staff under Generaloberst Jodi also received intelligence by way of Department III and Department II (Foreign). **Department II** As sabotage central, it had under its command all agencies which carried out such actions in Germany and abroad, in peacetime and during war. Its primary task was to find qualified men for these varied missions, attract them and train them. All of these missions required professional soldiers and extremely well trained fighters; as a result a house unit was called into being. During the Christmas holiday of 1939 the unit was given the name "Brandenburger". This was the origin of the 800th Special Purpose Construction Training Company Brandenburg. The unit's first commanding officer was Major Grosskurth. He was succeeded by Oberst Lahousen and in the summer of 1943 Oberst von Freytag Loringhoven. **Department III** The main function of this department was counter-intelligence. It, too, was organized into groups—Heer III H, Luftwaffe III L, Marine III M, and Wirtschaft III Wi. This department was led by General Staff Oberst Bamler and later by General Staff Oberst Bentivegni. **Department III F** This sub-department was led by Kapitan Protze. The department was assigned the job of directing the dispatching of agents to foreign countries by ship or submarine. These men were to infiltrate the intelligence services of various nations while others were to carry out acts of sabotage. That counterintelligence had to work closely with the Reichssicherheitshauptamt was due to the fact that the Abwehr had no executive authority, so that all punishable acts had to be pursued by the police. Thus the German Armed Forces were never given the authority to take those measures that were required to prevent sabotage and espionage against the armed forces themselves. This regulation, that the police and not the armed forces themselves might decide on and punish these cases, dated back to the year 1869. It had never been taken off the books. This allowed the Secret State Police (the Gestapo) to claim responsibility in all cases of this nature. Unfortunately the Abwehr never protested against this anachronism. The secret reporting service alone remained the sole province of the Abwehr. The Abwehr's foreign department, which was later elevated to a working group, was the central authority for military attachés in foreign countries. All military diplomats had to direct their reports to this department. Commander of this department was Konteradmiral Biirkner, who was also Admiral Canaris' deputy. **Central Department Z** was a part of Abwehr Department III C and directed the Abwehr group in the administration. At the same time it was also administration central and was thus charged with the administration of the entire huge apparatus of the Abwehr. It also included the agent files, the legal department, the accounting office and the passport office. Head of this department was then Major Oster (promoted to Generalmajor on 1/12/1942). Oster, later one of the leaders of the conspiracy against Hitler, had a close contact with the National Socialist Party in Graf Helldorf. His contact with the Reichssicherheitshauptamt was by way of Criminal Director Nebe. The latter was in charge of Office V of the Reich Criminal Police. All incoming reports passed through Oster's office. In his central office they were sorted and passed on to the various departments. It was an ideal place for sabotage, falsification of reports, and treason. At the beginning of the war the Abwehr office included 400 officers and approximately 30,000 agents. One of the Ausland/Abwehr's special units was a reconnaissance squadron which conducted strategic reconnaissance with specially modified aircraft. After the war Generalleutnant Piekenbrock

described the unit's operations:

Very early on aircraft were sent over Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, England, and Russia on high-altitude reconnaissance missions. Since such activities in peacetime were a breach of neutrality, the aircraft flew at altitudes of about 13,000 meters. They were neither seen nor heard. However, on account of the great heights involved, they could only be used in clear weather. Their mission was to photograph fortifications, airfields, their layout and usage, troop camps, railway traffic, and other prominent points such as barracks. The resulting photographs were used to create target maps for the Luftwaffe. The results were very good. It spared many agents and also provided source material for their use.

As per the terms of our agreement with the Luftwaffe General Staff, the Rowehl squadron had to be returned to the Luftwaffe when war broke out. But the Rowehl squadron also produced the Gartenfeld Squadron, which during the war delivered agents into Russia. As commander of the unit, which for security reasons was designated "Reconnaissance Group of the Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe," on 27 September 1940 Oberstleutnant Theodor Rowehl was awarded the Knight's Cross. At that time, in terms of aviation and photographic technology, this aerial reconnaissance of enemy installations was unique in the world. It made an important contribution to the rapid successes of the later blitzkrieg. When, during the Nuremberg Trial against the "leading war criminals", Generalmajor Lahousen was asked about the activities of this special squadron by American Colonel Amen, he answered:

Rowehl was a Luftwaffe colonel. He had a squadron for high altitude flight, which worked with the Ausland/Abwehr office in reconnoitering certain regions and states. Rowehl reported the results of his flights to Admiral Canaris and gave him the resulting photographs, which underwent some sort of evaluation by Department I's Air Group. These flights were made over Poland, then England and the southeast of Europe. I know that the squadron was based at Budapest for a time to monitor the southeast area. I myself once flew back from Budapest to Berlin in such an aircraft.

When the war broke out these flights were stepped up and were carried out under strict secrecy. It was only natural that the number of flights increased when war broke out in 1939. There now follows a brief history of the squadron. **The Rowehl Squadron and its Operations** The Luftwaffe Special Detachment Rowehl was formed in 1937 and that same year began carrying out photo-reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union. It flew He 111 aircraft disguised as commercial transports. In 1934 the German airline Deutsche Lufthansa had issued a contract to Heinkel to design a high-speed commercial transport for use on its network of high-speed routes; in addition to its crew, the new aircraft had to be able to carry at least 10 passengers. For aerodynamic reasons Heinkel decided on a twin-engine machine and gave it the type designation He 111. Its design was based on the principles used in the design of the He 70. After it had completed its first flights as a passenger aircraft, the Reich Aviation Ministry ordered a bomber version of the He 111 that was to become the Luftwaffe's standard bomber. The first example of the horizontal bomber variant left the production line on 4 May 1937. Examples of the He 111 converted for high-altitude flight were delivered to the Rowehl Squadron. Some were fitted with pressurized cabins and flew as far as the Crimea and the Caucasus. As previously mentioned, in spring 1939 the squadron operated its high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft from Budapest on flights over the areas of Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, Zhitomir, Zaporozhye, Krivoy Rog and Odessa. In July 1939 Oberstleutnant Rowehl presented Admiral Canaris with the results of his reconnaissance flights and was given a new assignment: the dropping of agents over Great Britain and Ireland as soon as England and Germany were at war. On 3 September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany. The dropping of agents began. As well, Rowehl's squadron was the first unit to conduct marine reconnaissance for the Luftwaffe and, to a very limited extent, for the submarine arm. In January 1940 the Rowehl squadron began flying its reconnaissance missions mainly against the Soviet Union—from Seerappen in East Prussia, from occupied Czechoslovakia and from hastily-prepared airfields in occupied Poland, as well as from bases in Finland, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria.

Oberstleutnant Rowehl succeeded in locating and obtaining high quality photographs of Soviet military bases, airfields, industrial complexes, railway junctions, and especially bridges. Coastal and inland ports were reconnoitered and a precise target map was created which included

airfields, frontier fortifications, depots and army bases. The anti-aircraft zones of Soviet cities were located and during operation "Oldenburg" Soviet sources and stockpiles of raw materials were targeted. The Moscow and Leningrad industrial districts were important targets of the reconnaissance flights, as was the oil-producing region from Maykop to Grozny and Baku as well as the western territory of the USSR. Within the unit one part of the squadron became known as the "island squadron." This was on account of its secondary role of dropping agents over Ireland. On 13 February 1940, in the OKW, Admiral Canaris was able to give General Jodi a comprehensive report, lavishly illustrated with air photos, and brief him on the special squadron's experiences during its missions over Russia. On 28th April the squadron began flying from the Bardufoss airfield in northern Norway, which had fallen to German alpine troops under General Dietl. The first flights from Bardufoss went to Murmansk and the railway line leading to the port as well as Arkhangelsk. Like the sorties flown over the Ukraine and western Russia, these missions could prove useful in the planning of operations by the Brandenburgers, so that in this connection the flights by the special squadron were also often of decisive importance to this unit. At the beginning of 1941 the squadron flew sorties over Kronstadt, Kronstadt Bay and the units of the Soviet Fleet based there from several Finnish airfields. Activities were also stepped up over Leningrad, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. With the help of target maps and the scouting of Soviet defense systems, when the campaign in the east began, Army Group North was supposed to be able to take Leningrad quickly. The primary purpose, however, was to facilitate a blockade of the USSR's northern sea routes and the Kola Peninsula. Still in January 1941, the squadron flew missions from Rome and Sardinia over unoccupied France and Corsica, in order to obtain material from these critical areas in the event that a march into or through unoccupied France or the occupation of Corsica became necessary. 27 March 1941 saw the special squadron fly its first direct mission over Yugoslavia, when three aircraft took off from Wiener-Neustadt. A crisis situation in Yugoslavia could not be ruled out. In summing up the squadron's operations, it can be said that the pilots of this unit distinguished themselves, often spent many hours over enemy territory, never lost track even in difficult situations, and always came home with excellent material.

Admiral Canaris's House Unit FROM THE 800TH SPECIAL PURPOSE CONSTRUCTION TRAINING COMPANY TO THE 800TH SPECIAL PURPOSE TRAINING BATTALION "BRANDENBURG"

On 27 September 1939 Dr. von Hippel, Hauptmann in the Abwehr II/Aus-land, obtained from his chief the order for the formation of a company of picked soldiers for use in the coming campaign in the west. Admiral Canaris summoned Hptm. von Hippel on 15th October and gave him the job of raising this unit, which was to form the core of his house combat unit. At first it had to be capable of carrying out all kinds of operations. In addition to special missions for the western campaign, the program also included sabotage missions and surprise strikes.

Rare look into the secret military operations of Hitler's Germany Page-turning narrative detailing the unit's exploits Very few books have been written about this clandestine operations unit, which was run by the German Army's intelligence service. Trained to be quick, mobile, and self-reliant and steeped in local customs and languages, the Brandenburgers operated behind enemy lines around the world. From Western Europe to Romania, Russia, Egypt, Afghanistan, and World War II's other fronts, they seized bridges and other strategic targets and engaged in sabotage, espionage, and other daring missions-often bending the rules of war in the process. Although the unit was dissolved in 1944, its tactics influenced special forces around the world both during the war and after.

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