

Introduction

Because of the secrecy that enveloped the U.S. Office of Strategic Services in World War II, it surprises most people, including nearby residents, to learn that spies were trained in some of the National Parks—not just spies but guerrilla leaders, saboteurs, clandestine radio operators and others who would be infiltrated behind enemy lines. What are today known as Catoctin Mountain Park in Maryland and Prince William Forest Park in Virginia played a vital role in the training of the operatives of the U.S. Office of Strategic Services. Known by its initials, the OSS was a specially created wartime military agency that fought a largely invisible and covert war against the Axis powers between 1942 and 1945. America's first national centralized intelligence agency with thousands of clandestine operatives, spies, and intelligence analysts, the OSS is acknowledged as the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency.¹ With its Special Operations troops and Operational Group commandos, the OSS is also widely considered a forerunner of today's Special Forces.²

From 1941 to 1945, the men and women of the OSS were part of a "shadow war," a war largely behind the scenes and often behind enemy lines around the world. Highly secret during the war and in many instances for years thereafter, that effort was designed to help undermine the conquests of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and militaristic Japan. The "shadow warriors" sought to supply and guide local resistance movements, demoralize the enemy through "black propaganda," and to gather intelligence and commit sabotage in enemy occupied territory to contribute to the victory of the Allies' armed forces as they overcame the totalitarian, Axis aggressors.

¹ Michael Warner, *The Office of Strategic Services: America's First Intelligence Agency* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2000), 1; the CIA website (www.cia.gov); 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), vii, 409-410.

² Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., *US 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; and Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of the Special Forces* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1986), 205-206. Because OSS was a civilian organization with military personnel merely assigned to it, the official lineage of the Army's Special Forces, specified by the U.S. Army's Center of Military History (www.army.mil/cmh/lineage/branch/sf), does not credit the OSS as a predecessor. But Special Forces veterans see OSS's combat units in Special Operation, Maritime Unit, and Operational Group Branches as their predecessors and so do many Special Forces organizations. See, for example, the websites of the U.S. Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Museum at Fort Bragg, at www.soc.mil/swcs/museum; and Airborne and Special Operations Museum at www.asomf.org/museum, both in Fayetteville, N.C.; and Troy J. Sacquety, "The OSS," *Veritas: Journal of Army Special Operations History*, 3.4 (2007): 34-51. The Pentagon allows veterans of those OSS combat units to wear the distinctive Special Forces shoulder tab; www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/Tab/SpecialForcesTab.htm,

The OSS was a civilian wartime organization with many military personnel assigned to it. It reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), although its director, William J. (“Wild Bill”) Donovan, had direct, personal access to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The actual number of men and women recruited and trained by the super secret organization may never be known. Traditionally it was generally believed that the OSS had 13,000 members.³ But this figure seems to have been based on the number of American personnel employed by the OSS at its peak in late 1944.⁴ In August 2008, just as the present study was completed, the CIA released 750,000 newly declassified OSS documents, including personnel files that seemed to indicate that there may have been 24,000 people employed by the OSS at one time or another during the war.⁵ But the status of these 24,000, whether permanent or temporary, member or consultant, American or foreigner, remained to be determined.

OSSers worked in half a dozen different branches of the organization and in a variety of missions, some of which were highly dangerous. Half of the OSSers served overseas, and perhaps as much as one-third of the OSS recruits were trained as agents.⁶ OSS Special Operations agents in small teams or commandos in larger Operational Groups infiltrated behind enemy lines in nighttime parachute drops, small plane landings or submarine or swift boat embarkations in Axis occupied countries in North Africa, Europe, and the Far East to help organize, arm, and help lead local guerrilla resistance fighters. Some of these OSS agents and commandos also engaged in sabotage-- blowing up railroads, bridges, and tunnels as well as power plants, communications centers, and weapons and munitions depots. Accompanying them were radio operators, members of the OSS Communications Branch, who kept the field operatives and headquarters informed through encoded messages via short-wave radios and temporarily strung antennas. In the field, they had to be on the move to avoid detection by enemy direction-finding and surveillance units. OSS Secret Intelligence operatives engaged in "cloak and

³ Warner, *Office of Strategic Services*, 9.

⁴ On the peak figure of 13,000 OSS personnel in December 1944 (with 5,500 in the USA and 7,500 overseas), see *War Report of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services)*, 2 vols. (New York: Walker and Co., 1976), I, 116; hereinafter, *War Report of the OSS*. This is a declassified published version of the original institutional history of the OSS, "War Report, Office of Strategic Services," that was completed on 5 September 1947, by former OSS personnel working for its successor, the Strategic Services Unit. The executive officer of the History Project was Serge Peter Karlow; the chief of the History Project was Kermit Roosevelt, a former OSS officer and a grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt. An OSS document from May 1945 signed by General Donovan gives the following breakdown: "OSS has a total personnel of 12,816, of which 6,939 are members of the Armed Forces. Of a total of 2,593 officers and 6,346 enlisted service personnel, 2,192 are Army officers and 5,817 Army enlisted men." Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan to the Adjutant General, 15 May 1945, subject: Recommendation for Promotion [of Col. M. Preston Goodfellow], p. 3, in Millard Preston Goodfellow Papers, Box 2, Biographical Material Folder, Hoover Institution, Stanford, Calif.

⁵ Brett J. Blackledge and Randy Herschaft, Associated Press, "Newly Release Files Detail Early US Spy Network," 14 August 2008,

⁶ Warner, *Office of Strategic Services*, 9; the figure of perhaps one third of the 13,000 being trained as agents is from Erasmus H. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers: With the OSS in the Mediterranean Theater* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 10.

dagger" espionage, ferreting out and relaying information about industrial and military production, transportation, war plans, deployment of enemy units, and the status of supplies and morale.

Donovan's organization also employed thousands of men and women engaged in equally important but less hazardous work in regional stations overseas and especially at the OSS's headquarters in Washington, D.C. Among these were scholars in the Research and Analysis Branch (R&A) pouring through evidence of political and economic developments in enemy and enemy occupied countries; scientists in the Research and Development laboratories, developing new weapons and means of communications; members of the Counter-Intelligence Branch, who sought to apprehend enemy agents sent or left behind Allied lines; and the men and women of the Morale Operations Branch (MO), who specialized in foreign-language radio broadcasting and leafleting sought actively to undermine enemy military and civilian morale.

Among the many highly talented, ambitious and often well-connected members of the OSS, a number later achieved national prominence. Among them were subsequent CIA directors Allen Dulles, Richard Helms, William Colby and William J. Casey; Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg; Ambassador David Bruce and two dozen other U.S. ambassadors; presidential advisers such as political scientist Roger Hilsman, economist Walt Rostow, and historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.; ornithologist and wildlife specialist S. Dillon Ripley II, and Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon. The glamorous aura, independence and social standing of the OSS brought in representatives of some of the wealthiest families in America—DuPonts, Mellons, Morgans, and Vanderbilts—a fact that led some critics to suggest that the agency's initials, OSS, actually meant "Oh, So, Social!"⁷ Despite the socialites, however, in sheer numbers, the vast majority of OSS personnel came from middle-class backgrounds. Most of them had never heard of OSS, and were selected mainly on merit. They did the bulk of the work in the new organization and did it well. Little wonder that so many of the OSS members proved so successful in their postwar careers as well.

Thousands of men and women served in the OSS, but it has been mainly those of the operational branches, especially those engaged clandestinely behind enemy lines, that have been the most heralded. Their work remained largely secret during the war, but almost immediately afterwards, through published accounts and fictionalized Hollywood films starring Alan Ladd, Gary Cooper, and James Cagney, they achieved a celebrated place in the public imagination.⁸ Americans thrilled to the daring exploits and cocky,

⁷ Other colloquialisms, such as "Oh- So- Secret" and "Oh-Shush- Shush," parodied the pervasive wartime secrecy of the OSS. Junius Morgan dispensed clandestine funds at the London office; Paul Mellon was an administrative officer in Special Operations Branch; his brother-in-law, David Bruce, also a millionaire, was chief of the London Office. At OSS headquarters in Washington, D.C., Henry Morgan (Junius's brother and also a son of J.P. Morgan) headed the Censorship and Documents Branch.; William Vanderbilt served as an executive officer in Special Operations; and Alfred DuPont headed a section for espionage projects in France. Smith, *OSS*, 15-16.

⁸ John Chamberlain, "OSS," *Life*, 19 November 1945, 119-24; Corey Ford and Alistair McBain, *Cloak and Dagger* (New York: Random House, 1945); Arthur Goldberg, "Top Secret," *Nation*, 23 March 1946, 348-50; Paul Cyr, "We Blew the Yellow River Bridge," *Saturday Evening Post*, 23 March 1946; Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, *Sub Rosa: The O.S.S. and American Espionage* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946); Elizabeth MacDonald [later Elizabeth MacDonald McIntosh], *Undercover Girl* (New York: Macmillan, 1947). Among the Hollywood feature films about the OSS, the most notable were *Cloak and*

devil-may-care attitudes of the OSS spies and commandos as they fought with courage, skill and initiative against the Nazis and the Japanese. Working in the shadow of enormous, depersonalized armies, navies, and air forces, the solo OSS agents, fighting behind enemy lines, surviving through their courage and wit, seemed to exemplify a continuing role for the daring and able individual even in an age of industrialized mass warfare.

The story of the OSS and its charismatic director, Wild Bill Donovan, has been told many times.⁹ But in the past two decades, there has been an outpouring of books about other aspects of the OSS. This resulted from the extensive declassification of OSS organizational records at the National Archives.¹⁰ It also stemmed from the willingness of many OSS Veterans, sworn to secrecy during the war, to tell about their exploits as part of what was being hailed in the 1990s, fifty years after the war, as the "Greatest Generation."¹¹ The publishing avalanche has gone beyond autobiographies of OSS operatives who subsequently achieved notable careers.¹² As part of the new social history "from the bottom up," many former operatives, without prior claim to public attention,

Dagger (Republic, 1946); *O.S.S.* (Paramount, 1946); and *13 rue Madeleine* (20th Century Fox, 1947). See also James I. Deutsch, "Representations of O.S.S. Espionage in Hollywood Films of 1946," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1997.

⁹ Corey Ford, *Donovan of OSS* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970); Smith, *OSS*; Edward Hymoff, *The OSS in WWII* (New York: Ballantine, 1972); Joseph E. Persico, *Piercing the Reich: The Penetration of Nazi Germany by American Secret Agents During World War II* (New York: Viking, 1979); Anthony Cave Brown, *The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan* (New York: Times Books, 1982); Richard Dunlop, *Donovan: America's Master Spy* (New York: Rand McNally, 1982); Smith, *Shadow Warriors*; Thomas F. Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid: Donovan, Stevenson and the Origin of the CIA* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ The Central Intelligence Agency began declassifying the OSS records and transferring them to the National Archives in the 1980s. By the 1991, some 5,000 cubic feet of OSS documents from the CIA and the U.S. State Department's intelligence office had been opened for scholarly investigation. See Lawrence H. McDonald, "The OSS and Its Records," *The Secrets War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II*, George C. Chalou, ed., (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1992), 78. By 1997, declassification by the CIA had brought to collection to some 7,000 cubic feet, with another 300 cubic feet of records received from CIA in 2000. Interviews by the author in 2005 with John E. Taylor and Lawrence H. McDonald, archivists, Modern Military Records Branch, National Archives II, College Park, Md. As indicated above, in August 2008, CIA declassification resulted in the release of another 750,000 documents.

¹¹ Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

¹² A sampling of such prominent autobiographies would include, General William R. Peers and Dean Breilis, *Behind the Burma Road: The Story of America's Most Successful Guerrilla Forces* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963); Allen W. Dulles, *The Secret Surrender* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); William Colby and Peter Forbath, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978); William J. Casey, *The Secret War Against Hitler* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1988); Major General John K. Singlaub with Malcom McConnell, *Hazardous Duty: An American Soldier in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Summit Books, 1991); and Richard Helms with William Hood, *Look Over My Shoulder: A Life in the CIA* (New York: Random House, 2003).

have been publishing their memoirs.¹³ Historians and biographers, some of them OSS veterans, are also mining the OSS records, examining virtually every aspect of the organization -- its leaders, its exotic weapons, its female members, its relationships with the Allies, and its secret operations in countries around the world.¹⁴ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the U.S. Special Forces Command (USSOCOM) have celebrated their connections with the OSS.¹⁵

One largely neglected subject in this outpouring, however, has been the training of the OSS agents. Historical accounts or memoirs of the OSS generally ignore this or dispense with it in only a few paragraphs or a couple of pages. Consequently, there has been no adequate study of the recruitment and preparation of the men and women of the OSS for what were demanding and often dangerous activities.¹⁶

Seeking to help rectify this omission, the present study provides a detailed account of OSS training, particularly of the Special Operations, Operational Group, and

¹³ For example, Franklin A. Lindsay, *Beacons in the Night: With the OSS and Tito's Partisans in Wartime Yugoslavia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Dan C. Pinck, *Journey to Peking: A Secret Agent in Wartime China* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2003); Charles Fenn, *At the Dragon's Gate: With the OSS in the Far East* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2004); Richard W. Cutler, *Counterspy: Memoirs of a Counterintelligence Office in World War II and the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004); Erasmus H. Kloman, *Assignment Algiers: With the OSS in the Mediterranean Theater* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Peter Grosse, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994); John W. Brunner, *OSS Weapons*, 2nd ed. (Williamstown, N.J.: Phillips Publications, 2005); Elizabeth P. McIntosh, *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1998); Robin Winks, *Cloak and Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961* (New York: William Morrow, 1987); Barry M. Katz, *Foreign Intelligence: Research and Analysis in the Office of Strategic Services, 1940-1945* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999); Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to the Cold War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996); Christof Mauch, *The Shadow War against Hitler: The Covert Operations of America's Wartime Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Will Irwin, *The Jedburghs: The Secret History of the Allied Special Forces, France 1944* (New York: Public Affairs/Perseus, 2005). For general overall accounts of the OSS in World War II, R. Harris Smith, *OSS: the Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) and the meticulously researched, Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1981) are still the most detailed scholarly studies. But the most readable popular treatment of the OSS (at least in the European and Mediterranean Theaters) at the present writing is Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press/ Simon & Schuster, 2004).

¹⁵ "OSS: 60th Anniversary Issue," *Studies in Intelligence: Journal of the American Intelligence Professional* (June 2002): 1-196, published by the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence; CIA Museum, Langley, Va.; U. S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Award to Caesar J. Civitella, OSS Italian Operational Group, May 19, 2008, USSOCOM HQ, MacDill AFB, Tampa, Florida. The USSOCOM also adopted the OSS emblem, the spear point as its own emblem (www.ussocom.mil).

¹⁶ The sole study available is a history of the OSS's Schools and Training Branch (S&T) prepared by that branch itself in August 1945, probably by Major Keith P. Miller. Nearly forty years later the typescript was declassified under the Freedom of Information Act and published as William L. Cassidy, editor, *History of the Schools and Training Branch of the OSS* (San Francisco: Kingfisher Press, 1983). Although helpful as a guide, Cassidy's volume, based on a single source, is of limited value as a history of training in the Office of Strategic Services.

Communications Branches but also including when relevant, the training of personnel of Secret Intelligence, Morale Operations, and the Maritime Unit. The geographical focus is on three of the main OSS training facilities, the ones located in two forested areas of the National Park Service. The three camps were OSS Training Areas A and C in what is today named Prince William Forest Park, some 15,000 forested acres on the watershed of the Quantico Creek in northern Virginia, and OSS Training Area B in Catoctin Mountain Park, some 5,800 acres of wooded mountain terrain in northern Maryland. These National Park Service areas were the sites of OSS training camps during most of World War II.

In the following account of the OSS training in the two National Parks and subsequent service overseas, this historical study addresses a number of questions. Why did Donovan's organization choose these parks as training sites? What were the OSS's training aims and methods? Did they change over time? Who ran the camps, and who was trained there? What were typical experiences at the camps and in OSS overseas missions? How effective was the training? What relationship did the National Park Service have with the OSS and the military during the war? How did military leasing and use affect the parks, their operation, and their relationship with their surrounding areas during and after the war? What roles and responsibilities did NPS's park managers have at the two parks during the war, and how did they manage their relationship with the military? After the end of the war, how did the military and the National Park Service handle the return of the parks to civilian control and use? Finally, what has been the legacy of the wartime training in the parks—to the parks, to the National Park Service, to the veterans who trained there, to the OSS, and to the institutional heirs of Donovan's organization, the CIA and the Special Forces?

The present study attempts to answer these and other questions as it addresses the significant roles that the National Park Service's Catoctin Mountain Park, Maryland, and Prince William Forest Park, Virginia, played in connection with the Office of Strategic Services during the Second World War.