

MIS-X and Oflag 64, The Secret Communication

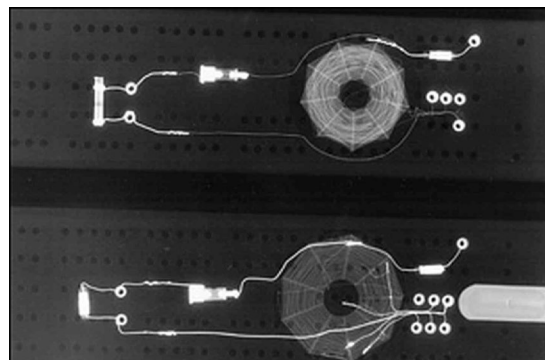
Military Intelligence Section/Service S (MIS-X) was established in mid-1942. One of its missions was to create and distribute Escape and Evasion (E&E) packages for American POWs. MIS-X prepared for this mission even before soldiers were shipped overseas and before entering into major operations. Soldiers from each squadron or battalion were secretly selected and taught codes used by the correspondence section of MIS-X (named the Creamery) and designated as Code Users (CU). Ex-Kriegy Jim Shoaf (Keeper of the “Bird”) recorded “Two months before I was captured, 10 of us were taken to the rear and given training in ‘communicating’ in the remote chance that we might be taken prisoner later on. We learned letter codes and the BBC 24 hour frequency routine...” If captured they were to identify themselves to the Senior Allied Officer at the camp as having that ability and then write a coded message to a friend or relative. Inbound letters from POW camps were screened and those from a list of captured code users were routed to Fort Hunt, VA, home of MIS-X. The letters were steamed open, decoded, resealed and sent to the addressee. Once communication was established, Kriegies would request items they needed to escape. MIS-X would respond with letters addressed to a Kriegy from a relative or friend unknown to him. Ex-Kriegy Bill Sharpe once received such a letter and “immediately I knew to take it to Lt Col Alger”, the Oflag 64 Security Officer (S2). These coded letters would alert the POWs as to when the items they had requested would arrive and what the package looked like.

This all worked because Germany was a signatory of, and abided by, the 1929 Geneva Convention which allowed POWs to receive mail and packages from the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations. MIS-X never used Red Cross parcels to send items but instead created their own fake organizations: War Prisoner’s Benefit Foundation and Servicemen’s Relief. MIS-X’s first order was from Oflag 64 in Szubin, Poland in spring 1943, where POWs wanted to attempt an escape plan. Food and clothing packages were sent first and then the disguised E&E packages were sent. MIS-X became expert at hiding compasses and tissue-paper maps in the handles of shaving brushes, shoe brushes, and Ping-Pong paddles. Checkerboards were steamed apart and maps, documents, and currency inserted.

By the end of the war, MIS-X was sending out 120 parcels a day and was in communication with nearly every American POW camp.

For more information on MIS-X please go to this linked video:

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xixivh>



MIS-X Crystal Radio Hidden in Cribbage Board