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Fort Hunt's P.O. Box 1142

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Abstract

Fort Hunt is a World War Two Prisoner of War camp in Alexandria, Virginia. It housed more than 3,000 Axis prisoners and several war related programs, MIRS, MIS-Y and MIS-X. The World War Two POW experience is a missing part of the story, and Fort Hunt can help illuminate an important part of the United States’ war effort and responsibility. Fort Hunt was a secret location, and its activities included gathering and deciphering German written materials, interrogating Axis, mainly German, prisoners of war, as well as creating and distributing Escape and Evasion packages to air and ground forces in Europe. Today, Fort Hunt is a recreational park owned by the National Park Service and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. This camp remained secret until recently, when George Washington Memorial Parkway employees began investigating its history. Since then, there has been an effort to preserve and present its most recent history to the public. This project began at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland, combing through the documents of Fort Hunt’s past during World War Two, gathering information on its establishment and programs in hopes to bring attention to this important site. This project includes recommendations on how to present Fort Hunt’s World War Two story to its visitors, with photographs of what the park looks like today.

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Fort Hunt in Virginia

Fort Hunt park is located less than 20 miles from Washington D.C. and less than five miles from George Washington’s Mount Vernon’s estate. It sits alongside the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia in a quiet part of Fairfax County. It is primarily a recreational park, with picnic pavilions, playgrounds, playing fields, and trails for hiking and biking. Despite its uses today, Fort Hunt is a park with a layered history, including its use as a World War Two Prisoner of War Camp.

Prisoner of War (POW) camps were a part of the World War Two homefront story, but perhaps not always commemorated, or even remembered, like other aspects of World War Two. Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the World War Two homefront literature revolves around women in the work force, Rosie the Riveter, war time rationing, and providing for the Allied war effort. However, there was also another major component to the United States homefront during the war: The Prisoner of War camps that were situated throughout the country. This is part of the record that seems to be forgotten, at least until recently.

My interest in Prisoner of War camps started as a public history project on remembering, commemorating and presenting camp location sites that have been destroyed and seemingly forgotten since the war. How does one preserve and commemorate a site that has been destroyed, especially with a dwindling number of World War Two veterans? My project was on a specific camp site in rural Virginia, where many German prisoners were sent into the community to work on the local orchards and farms. Since it was a small, temporary branch camp, there were no permanent structures, and after the war, it was dismantled. In 2016, all that remains are
small concrete slabs where water facilities were once located, and if one looks closely, one notices the ground leveling off where the shelters were built. The site is now on private land, off of a main highway, and if one did not know its existence and purpose, there would be no way of knowing it housed German prisoners during the harvest months. This particular site is not the only small and temporary branch prisoner of war camp in the United States. There are hundreds more like it, where many people in today’s community have no idea that it once existed there. For the most part, many of the camp sites were either neglected or purposefully dismantled after the war, leaving the sites now virtually unknown. Especially in the small camps, like the ones in rural Virginia, there are no markers, plaques, or memorials that signify the camp’s location or significance, but there are also larger camps that have almost arrived at the same fate.

The Prisoner of War Camp at Fort Hunt in Alexandria, Virginia housed thousands of Axis prisoners during the war and served as a multi-functioning camp, with 87 structures and several programs under operation.1 The camp was established as a secret camp, designated as PO Box 1142, its mailing address, and only its personnel and staff were aware of its existence and purpose at the time. The camp was dismantled after the removal of the final prisoners at the war’s end. Since it was secret and was destroyed after the war, it had almost been forgotten until recently.

There were several programs at Fort Hunt. The Military Intelligence Research Section (MIRS) investigated and translated captured enemy documents, usually German, newspapers, scientific publications, and other publications.2 This helped aid another

branch of the camp, Military Intelligence Section/Service Y (MIS-Y). MIS-Y was the first and largest operation, and was able to house, facilitate, and interrogate Axis prisoners of war. One of the goals of MIS-Y was to find out the superior technologies of the German Wehrmacht, especially the Luftwaffe. Two main structures were used for housing and interrogating these high-value prisoners. Construction on these sites began in the Spring of 1942, under the leadership of Commanding Officer Russell Sweet at its creation, and had its first prisoner later that year.\(^3\) It housed more than 3,000 enemy prisoners within its fences and involved the covert interrogation of a range of Axis prisoners, including Italian, Polish, and French, although there were primarily German officials located there. The majority of the early German prisoners were U-boat officers. The prisoners were questioned on war tactics, strategies and new technologies of Hitler’s Nazi Germany. MIS-Y used several ways of ascertaining this kind of information, including one-on-one interrogations, monitoring conversations between roommates and fellow prisoners, and spies who secretly extracted information that prisoners did not divulge during interrogations. Perhaps the most fascinating way to gain the desired information was through the casual and informal relationship that was built between prisoner and interrogation officer. Going on walks and playing board games are just a few examples of how friendly tactics like these gave them the desired information. MIS-Y was an efficient and successful program at Fort Hunt, which affected the Allied war effort against Nazi Germany.

Military Intelligence Section/Service S (MIS-X) was another operation at the camp.

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site, and is perhaps more unique than the other programs located there. This program was more covert than the other two, with only MIS-X operators aware of its existence and purpose; the United States Congress was even unaware of the program. Its location was alongside MIS-Y at Fort Hunt for secrecy; its staff and personnel could be housed and concealed as part of MIS-Y’s staff and operations.\(^4\) MIS-X was created in October 1942 after a proposal from Secretary of War Henry Stimson to the Chiefs of Staff, as a site for the creation and distribution of Escape and Evasion (E&E) packages for the Allies.\(^5\) These E&E packages were built by technicians who disguised ordinary, mundane objects into secret tools that would be useful to any Allied serviceman attempting to evade or escape capture from the enemy. Technicians built their own supplies and even contracted with United States companies and agencies who agreed to help with the war effort, and “helping with the war effort” was all the information that was given to these companies. MIS-X had five subsections: interrogation, correspondence, POW locations, training and briefing, and technical.\(^6\)

Secrecy of these programs was the highest priority to those in charge of the camp. This made recruitment for interrogator and E&E positions more difficult than usual because they could not detail too much information about the positions, jobs, and responsibilities. Many were recruited from the Armed Forces, and many were German-Jewish immigrants whose family fled to the United States to escape Hitler’s persecution. Working for MIS-Y required the proficiency of at least two languages, German and

English, so the personnel could interrogate, translate, and monitor conversations of the German prisoners. MIS-X recruitment was different, but again more covert than the MIS-Y recruitment. The First Service command sent out general fliers “to all Army units along the Eastern seaboard, requesting the animus of cabinetmakers, radio hams, electric technicians, and printing press operators,” all experts in the technical field, to build parts of the E&E pages.\(^7\) Men who were recruited were usually proficient in technologies like typewriters and had knowledge of war technology, like science, planes, jet engines, and changes in technology. Men recruited for MIS-X communication section were selected from Yale University lists and rosters.\(^8\)

MIS-Y and MIS-X were disbanded and ordered to shut down after the war. There are records of MIS-Y that remain, but there are few records of MIS-X, affecting how this site is commemorated today. MIS-X products reached German POW camps through the Axis-controlled territory, but production slowed down after D-Day and the Allied invasion of Normandy. When Germany surrendered in May 1945, MIS-X operations immediately stopped. After the surrender of Japan in August 1945, many of the MIS-X records were destroyed.

This study examines the establishment of and purpose behind PO Box 1142, and explores how to preserve and present its valuable story today. What programs were operated there? How did it remain secret during the war, and for so long after its end? Who worked at the camp and who was imprisoned there; were there notable prisoners? What are the lasting memories of the camp, and how do those who worked there

remember it? How does one capture those memories, especially with the dwindling number of World War Two veterans? How does one convey the camp and its purpose to the public?

Chapter One researches the establishment of the site, its programs, prisoners and camp layout and design, and how the camp was managed. This is a survey of the camp, since there are no secondary works on the site and the history of its structures. Chapter Two examines Fort Hunt’s programs MIS-Y and MIS-X. The MIS-Y section investigates the POW experience, and highlights who was interrogated and any notable prisoners, the process of the interrogations, and the equipment and personnel. The MIS-X section investigates how an unlikely program in the United States came to be of great success. Although it is hard to determine how many E&E packages actually were used during any Allied serviceman’s escape or evasion, it is possible to make the connection between the number of shipments that were sent and the success of the war. Chapter Three highlights the POW experience and significance of Fort Hunt, its history as a park, and what is being done today to help preserve and present the story of the park’s visitors. How can Fort Hunt’s PO Box story be presented when there are no remaining structures left? Does the park’s recreational use today compromise its integrity? Do the National Park Service (NPS) and the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) have any plans for future use and interpretation of the park?

Fort Hunt is a unique place, as a historical site, recreational site, and POW camp, and there is much yet to be written on it. The majority of sources used for this project are located at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. There is essentially no scholarly secondary literature on the campsite’s establishment, creation, programs or
personnel. According to the National Archives, there has been some attention given to these records recently, so there may be a secondary work in progress. Surprisingly, and to the benefit of any researcher of this camp, there is a report on one of the camp’s main programs, MIS-X, written by one of the camp’s operatives, Lloyd Shoemaker. The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X The Super-Secret U.S. Agency Behind World War Two’s Greatest Escapes is immensely useful, since no records remain on that section of the camp.

Fort Hunt can contribute to other subjects relating to World War Two, like our understanding of the POW experience, the United States homefront, and the Allied efforts in the European theatre. It is a surprise to most that there were nearly half a million Axis prisoners located in the United States during the war, and hopefully Fort Hunt’s story can help illuminate that housing these prisoners in the United States was an important part of the war effort.

Fort Hunt is now owned by the NPS and GWMP. It has made efforts to present the story of PO Box 1142 to the public and visitors of the park, but needs a better visitor experience to successfully present its history. Fort Hunt’s World War Two story is not the only fascinating story there. Fort Hunt has a unique history, dating from prehistory to the present. The land was home to Native Americans, part of George Washington’s River farm estate, a Coastal Defense area, an African American ROTC training camp, a Bonus Army March camp, a CCC camp, and PO Box 1142. Its new history and the park’s recreational use today has caused the GWMP to revise and create a historical park

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that can perhaps coexist with the recreational aspect of the park. All these stories should
be presented and preserved at Fort Hunt. It is a place with a layered history, and GWMP
needs to its preserve story.
Fort Hunt’s Establishment

Fort Hunt began as a POW camp and housed thousands of Axis prisoners of war from 1942 until 1946. It has a unique story, and is an atypical POW camp, but can help present the POW experience during World War Two. The United States held over 400,000 enemy prisoners of war, and of these 425,000, most were German, but there were also Italian and Japanese prisoners. The War Department created a system of permanent and temporary camps, ranging in size and location. Most camps, especially at the beginning of the war, were located in the southern part of the United States, which made for a safer and cheaper setting and a milder climate. As more prisoners entered and more camps needed to be constructed, sites were established further North. There were temporary and permanent camps, with permanent camps usually sheltering higher numbers of Axis prisoners. There were also extensions of temporary camps, called branch camps, which usually housed smaller numbers, up to hundreds, of prisoners in rural areas. In many branch camps, prisoners were sent out into the community to work, usually on farms. The Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War 1929 prevented their use in war production but they could be employed in agricultural production. The United States and the War Department had little experience housing enemy prisoners before World War Two, but they soon built a successful system.

There was a constant intake of prisoners once the United States entered the war, but the number of prisoners peaked in 1943 and 1944, after the Allied invasion of North

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Africa and Italy, and especially Normandy. World War Two was the first war that brought such a significant number of enemy and foreign prisoners into the United States, and the War Department’s responsibility was to shelter, feed, guard, provide “productive labor” and “other needs”, and was “directly charged with the custody of all enemy prisoners of war”, all while adhering to the standards set in place by the Geneva Convention.\(^{12}\) The United States was part of a coalition that signed and ratified the Geneva Conventions of 1929 and World War Two was the first time the United States had the opportunity to apply the Accords.

The United States treated its prisoners exceptionally well during the war, and Fort Hunt, for the most part, adhered to the Convention. There were a few exceptions, which is important to clarify when talking about the POW experience. Perhaps the biggest violation was the United States’ failure to inform the Axis country and the Red Cross of the location of the prisoner in the POW camp, which was a requirement set by the Convention. The United States did find a way to sidestep this violation, by designating P.O. Box 1142 as a temporary relocation center. By classifying it as this, the United States was not required to provide any permanent information to the Axis country, as it was disguised as a temporary stopping point for prisoners traveling to their permanent camps. Prisoners were also earmarked for interrogation and were sent to either Camp Meade or Pine Grove Furnace, cover-up camps that were working with Fort Hunt.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\) Mason, “German Prisoners of War in the United States,” 201.

\(^{13}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, MIS, G-2, WDGS. The Interrogation Section Fort Hunt, Virginia; Tracy, California and MIS-X Section Fort Hunt, Virginia. Covering the Period from 1 August 1942 to 1 August 1945, Record Group 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland, 13. Cited as Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA.
Under this guise, the United States was not required to notify the Axis Powers of the “temporary” stop.

Another violation of the Geneva Convention was the interrogation of prisoners. Captured personnel were required to provide their name and rank, but nothing else, so any further questions violated the Accords. Again, the United States sidestepped this violation to avoid any repercussions. Neither Germany nor the Red Cross knew of Fort Hunt’s existence or purpose, so although it technically broke the Accords, the U.S. faced no punishment or fear of having to shut the camp down. Despite these violations, Fort Hunt abided by other standards, as did the majority of other POW camps in the United States. There was adequate shelter, food, and water, and torture was not used during interrogations or questioning. Many of the veterans of the camp are proud of having ascertained information based on friendly relationships, and always without the use of torture, which could not have been said about their British allies.

MIS-Y and MIS-X were both important parts of Fort Hunt’s camp. For MIS-Y, the idea of an interrogation camp in the United States originated before the United States officially entered the war. United States Intelligence operations observed the British Prisoner of War camps and especially their interrogation centers, particularly those designated for German prisoners. From the beginning of Britain’s involvement in the war in 1939, officials had established a system to successfully interrogate and question German prisoners, and the United States wanted a similar program to help aid the war effort. Interrogation was necessary to gain information about the Axis war effort and plans, that otherwise would be unattainable. The frequent questioning meant that interrogation centers had to be established covertly. The United States began its own
interrogation centers in 1941 with the purpose of questioning and interrogating enemy prisoners on certain topics on the war effort. The majority of Axis prisoners were German, but there were Japanese, Italian, and pro-Vichy French who were all present at these camps. Both camps were top secret, with all personnel agreeing to vow an oath of secrecy about all conduct at the camps.

The British interrogation centers set the example for the United States’ establishment of the camps, but the United States camps were not modeled after England’s, in several ways. Many women performed interrogations for the British, but at Fort Hunt, and probably other camps involved in the Joint Interrogation Centers, it was men who worked at the camps, as personnel, guards, interrogators, and staff members. The records from the National Archives on Fort Hunt have only men listed at the camps. Another distinction was the adherence to the Geneva Conventions in comparison to the British. Fort Hunt did not use torture as means of ascertaining desired information, unlike the British and their rumored tortured interrogation center of infamous The London Cage in Gardens Kensington Palace Gardens.

Fort Hunt is now owned by the GWMP and is used as a recreational park, and the “new” history of PO Box 1142 has helped create a need for a better and more educational visitor experience. Fort Hunt’s PO Box 1142 is a unique and complex story, and can be presented as such, first with MIS-Y. Between December 1941 and January 1942, recommendations to the Army Chief of Staff, Head of the Intelligence Center were sent detailing the request for a camp in the United States to be similar to those in England. There were many requirements that needed to be met in order for the camp to be successful and there were many sites that were visited that could potentially be the
location of the camp. There were 26 sites identified near Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; and Frederick, Maryland. The three most important and essential aspects of selecting a site were for the location to be “secure, [and] to be within 100 miles of Washington, D.C., and [with] suitable facilities already constructed.” Two of the most favored locations were Swannanoa, Virginia and Marwood, Maryland. Swannanoa seemed to be the right location for the site, since it was only “97 miles from Richmond and 127 miles from Washington,” and needed some revisions and “few minor conversions,” but ultimately it was not picked. Marwood was less desirable because of the possibility of the publicity and of news reporting compromising its secrecy. After these two sites were officially eliminated, it was decided that the site would best be located at Fort Hunt.

On May 15, 1942 Fort Hunt in Alexandria, Virginia was officially designated as the location of the Joint Interrogation Center. Harold L. Ickes, the Acting Secretary of the Interior, granted permission to “use and occupy for war purposes all of that area, with the exception of the old Powder magazines, and antiquated gun emplacements which [had] been assigned to the National Archives for the storage of nitrate films, within Fort Hunt Reservation, George Washington Parkway, Virginia ” to Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War. Permission was awarded to erect and build “additional housing facilities” for housing and interrogating the incoming prisoners. In May 1942, the construction orders were finalized and $217,000 was “allocated by [Eugene Reybold], Chief of Engineers for

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14 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 5.
15 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 5.
16 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 6.
the necessary construction at Fort Hunt.” Construction was estimated to proceed quickly, with hopes of completion within a few months, and an anticipated finishing date of July 1, 1942. There were some minor delays and postponements with equipment and personnel, but construction was completed by July 22, 1942 and the essential equipment arrived by the end of the same month. A Report on Progress at Fort Hunt, Virginia “was able to announce that all construction was completed, furniture received and in place, telephones installed, and fourteen listening machines were ready in operation” by July 30, 1942.

There were different areas and buildings for different programs at Fort Hunt, and construction continued as prisoners increased and programs expanded. These were the housing facilities and buildings for MIS-Y program, “Enclosure A” and “Enclosure B.” Enclosure A was occupied in August 1942 with the first arrival of prisoners. It was “designed as a self-contained unit—a two-story rectangular structure, combin[ed] under one roof twenty-two rooms for prisoners of war. Nineteen of these [were] capable of holding three prisoners each and three [were] designed for solitary segregation. In this building also [were] five interrogation rooms, a kitchen, guard room, control officer’s room, and miscellaneous store rooms.” There were few other buildings erected near Enclosure A. Enclosure A was “surrounded by ‘cyclone’ wire fences with double apron barbed wire on the top and fences [were] separated by a corridor fifteen feet in width. Four guard towers [were] installed, one at each corner of the enclosure.”

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17 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 7.  
18 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 7.  
19 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 7.
Enclosure B was an addition, built in 1944, and [was] a “distinctly different type of construction.”\(^{21}\) It was “planned” and built from Enclosure A, with “minimum personnel necessary for operation”, like administration and guard movements, “sanitation, housekeeping, supply and issue of clothing, and keeping of records.” Enclosure B “consist[ed] of four wings stemming from a central hub surmounted by a guard tower… the four wings contain[ed] twenty-four rooms for the prisoners, two persons to a room. In addition, there [were] five interrogation rooms, an assembly room, welfare officer room, control officer room, and the processing section located in the South Wing, consisting of five rooms, reception, disrobing, shower, medical examination, and clothing issue” for when the prisoners first arrived. Enclosure B included the Administration Building and kitchen. One latrine and one guard room was built in each wing. There were also exercise rooms “with wire barrier and wood screening erected parallel with the room windows on the wings to prevent observation or contact between prisoners in rooms and exercise pens. The pens [were] enclosed by concrete walls and ‘cyclone’ fence, surmounted by barbed wire, and the entire fence [was] protected by an electrical contact alarm system in the Central Guard Tower and also in the Control Officer office.”\(^{22}\) The construction of the Enclosures gave the advantage to the interrogators, guards, and other personnel working the camp. Personnel wanted to either encourage, prevent, or completely ban forms of communication and contact, depending on the desired information and the prisoners. Construction of these buildings and the location of the prisoners were used by MIS-Y to help provide the best environment conducive for

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\(^{21}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 33.

\(^{22}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 34.
getting the desired information, and the layout was designed for that reason. The layout of the camp is still significant today, it provides an idea of how and why the buildings were designed, and gives the GWMP a blueprint for possible future planning and construction. Knowing the design of the buildings is perhaps most significant because there are no remaining structures at the park today, so it provides visitors with an idea of what the camp used to look like.

There were also rules and restrictions established after the completion of Fort Hunt and prior to any prisoners entering the camp. From the beginning, all members involved knew of its secrecy, and as the prisoners began entering, it needed to remain secret. Guards, personnel, and staff who worked at any of the facilities in the camp site took an oath of lifetime secrecy, promising not to divulge the information with anyone, not even friends or family members. (Veterans who have come forward and shared their stories since the flagpole dedication and reunions in the early 2000s did not face any form of punishment for finally sharing their story and speaking of the camp’s history). There was also the need for command within the camp, and in May 1942 the War Department published a Memorandum for the “general principles governing the command of Joint Interrogation Center within the continental United States,” illustrating that the “interrogation centers were placed under the control of [Allen W. Gullion], the Provost Marshal General.” In September 1942, command was given to the Chief Military Intelligence Services. While there was one commanding unit head of the interrogation centers, there were four commanding officers at MIS-Y Fort Hunt, Colonel Daniel W. Kent from July 1, 1942 to October 21, 1942; Colonel Russell H. Sweet from October 21, 1942 to February 1, 1943; Colonel John L. Walker February 1, 1943 to July 18, 1945;
and Colonel Zenas R. Bliss from July 18, 1945 until its close. There were two commanding officers at Tracy, California, a camp laid out similarly to PO Box 1142, Colonel Daniel W. Kent from November 5, 1942 to February 7, 1945 and Colonel Zenas R. Bliss from February 7, 1945 to July 18, 1945.\textsuperscript{23}

While plans were made for the location, construction, and secrecy of the site, there were also plans for equipment and personnel. There needed to be proper interrogation locations, equipment, and wiring to ensure successful interrogations. January and February 1942 saw the selection and purchase of the best equipment, like Memorox transcriber recorders, recorders and producer instruments, spare parts, records, supplies, headphones and foot control Boxes, and microphones installed in the camps.\textsuperscript{24} For personnel, there were different positions than just simply “guard” or “interrogator”; there were psychologists, translators, listeners, administration, translator-typists, and stenographers.\textsuperscript{25} These positions were successful and essential for the interrogation of enemy prisoners.

After the camp was fully constructed and ready to take prisoners, it had to plan how to bring them there and how to shelter them. There was a selection process on who to interrogate, and where to find them, and Fort Hunt selected its prisoners differently than other interrogation centers. Fort Hunt relied on a “variety of sources”, from selecting prisoners from the theatre of operations, like from Detailed Interrogation Centers; camps located within other parts of the United States; and through several ports along the East Coast. Detailed Interrogation Centers, which were interrogation centers located within

\textsuperscript{23} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 19.
\textsuperscript{24} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 8.
\textsuperscript{25} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 8.
the “theatre of operation”, only selected its prisoners from its theatres. Of these three options, the most successful and reliable way to earmark potential prisoners was from the debarkation ports.\textsuperscript{26}

Prisoners selected within the theatre of operation, usually from the European theatre, were selected through the Combined Service Detailed Interrogation Centers (CSDIC) and transported by ship or plane to the United States and Fort Hunt. Detailed Interrogation Center 6824 in France sent prisoners twice monthly to Fort Hunt.\textsuperscript{27} These prisoners were selected to stay at the camp for an extended period of time for interrogation, and although their identities were unspecified, these men were probably high-ranking Nazi officials, or proved to have some kind of valuable insight to the Axis war plan. This type of selection of prisoners began toward the end of the war, probably after the Allied invasion, when the number of prisoners being captured in Europe increased, and although this method of selection was not used throughout the entire war, it did prove to be an effective strategy.

Prisoners who were selected through various camps throughout the United States proved to be less effective. This strategy seemed more of an inconvenience and annoyance. Toward the end of the war, there were hundreds of prisoner camps located throughout much of the United States, and it took an extensive amount of time and effort by Fort Hunt personnel to travel and select suitable prisoners for interrogation. Team members had to travel, usually long distances, to select a prisoner to then travel back to Alexandria for the actual interrogation. These long travels and absences away from the

\textsuperscript{26} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 23.
\textsuperscript{27} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 23.
camp took valuable time that the United States needed for interrogations and other responsibilities.\textsuperscript{28}

Selecting prisoners through ports of debarkation was the most effective way to find prisoners. Axis prisoners entered the United States through three ports, at Newport News in Virginia, Brooklyn in New York, and Boston in Massachusetts. Interrogators, translators, and other personnel from the camp traveled to these ports to select prisoners upon their arrival. This was done by examining the prisoner’s personal belongings, and filling out paperwork and questions, which determined if a prisoner was “useless” or worth sending to the camp for further questioning. The selection of prisoners to Fort Hunt was important, not only with time management, but making sure that prisoners who were sent there would be a valuable asset to the Allied effort.\textsuperscript{29}

There were two other camps that worked with Fort Hunt, in cooperation with the interrogation process and to help hide its existence from the Axis Powers: Pine Grove Furnace in Pennsylvania and Fort George C. Meade in Maryland. Because there were so many prisoners entering the United States and earmarked for interrogation, and because Fort Hunt could only house a certain number of them, Pine Grove Furnace and Fort Meade aided in holding and transporting the captured personnel. There was a Memorandum on May 5, 1943 that “directed [Brehon B. Somervell], “the Commanding General, Army Services Force, to activate the Prisoner of War Internment Camp at Pine Grove at the earliest possible date”, and the memo officially activated the camp on May 20, 1943.\textsuperscript{30} The camp was under the command of the Commanding General, Third

\textsuperscript{28} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 23.
\textsuperscript{29} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 25.
Service Command and “was to be used ‘exclusively for special purpose’”, which was the holding of captured personnel awaiting their interrogation at Fort Hunt. Pine Grove was about 120 miles from Fort Hunt in a “relatively isolated” area, which made it “highly desirable for all holding purposes.” Pine Grove was a valuable assistance site to Fort Hunt, as it watched and selected potential prisoners in a variety of ways. It primarily held prisoners who were thought to be of possible value for interrogation.\(^\text{31}\) It helped isolate potentially valuable prisoners from contact with “other more security conscious and less ‘cooperative’ prisoners”, and observed the prisoners at a more leisurely and less formal questioning process. All these procedures allowed Pine Grove to eliminate the “duds” and unavailing prisoners, and “at times, only 20 percent of an originally selected group would be retained for detailed interrogation at Fort Hunt.”\(^\text{32}\)

The camp at Fort Meade was used as a “holding compound” and and cover for intelligence operations at Fort Hunt.\(^\text{33}\) All prisoners were routed through Fort Meade instead of PO Box 1142 in order to help maintain its secrecy. Fort Meade, which was only about 40 miles from Fort Hunt, then helped transport the prisoners in “unit buses, closed and ventilated in such way as to prevent visibility.”\(^\text{34}\) Officers and guards then convoyed the prisoners, who were separated by affiliation such as Nazi or anti-Nazi, on these covert buses. These two camps worked with Fort Hunt in the secure and covert housing and travel of prisoners, evidence that PO Box 1142 would not have been a success without its agreement and assistance.\(^\text{35}\)

\(^{31}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 29.  
\(^{32}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 29.  
\(^{33}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 29.  
\(^{34}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 29.  
\(^{35}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 30.
An “Agreement for Movement of Prisoners of War between Box 1142 Installations and Internment Camps of the Third Service Command” was established in written record in 1943, signifying the system of transportation, processing and regulations between the camps. These secondary locations were similar to Fort Hunt, and certainly aided in the processing and selecting of valuable prisoners to interrogate.\footnote{Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 29.}

With MIS-Y, thousands of prisoners of war traveled to and were stationed at Fort Hunt, but PO Box 1142 can also be used to tell the story of the Allied war effort, in particular in the European theatre. MIS-X provided air and ground forces with packages that offered assistance in escaping or evading capture by the enemy. The program was housed at Fort Hunt and under the War Department, but was a separate entity from MIS-Y. MIS-X began after MIS-Y, and with far less enthusiasm from Secretary of War Stimson, in 1942. Stimson was skeptical if the E&E program would work, but, with convincing and witnessing the British success with its own program, he agreed to facilitate MIS-X in October in 1942.

These were the housing facilities and buildings for MIS-X program, the Creamery and the Warehouse. These facilities were used for purposes of communication to POWs and the creation of E&E packages. Like Fort Hunt’s covert name PO Box 1142, these facilities of MIS-X used covert names. Correspondence and communication activities were housed in the Creamery, and E&E activities were housed in the Warehouse.

The Creamery was renovated from World War One officer’s quarters and was completed in November 1942. Its designation was for the communication between Fort Hunt and Allied prisoners, the foundation of the MIS-X program. Cryptoanalysts and
code users were stationed in the Creamery, deciphering incoming mail and sending outgoing mail. 14 cryptanalysts worked in one room at a 21-foot-long table, seating seven on each side with a “wooden partition separating them to ensure privacy.”\textsuperscript{37}

The Warehouse was constructed across the path from the Creamery and was completed in December 1942. It’s designation was for the technical section, housing the “mechanical shop, the printing press, the parcel room, the briefing room, and central official administrative office.”\textsuperscript{38} The Warehouse was constructed with “one center section flanked by two wings measuring 75 by 25 feet each”, the technical wing to the left and the briefing room wing to the right. There was only one single entrance to the Warehouse, leading into the center section of the building and only one entry to the center office. Both wings were guarded by security doors. The technical wing housed the areas where E&E equipment and material were received, created, and shipped. The end of the technical wing housed heavy duty equipment, like the printing press, storage and supply shelves, and a “16-foot-long smooth topped counter…used as a packaging table.” There were two other sections located at the end of the technical wing, the Shop and the loading dock. The shop was a “small room [that] measure[ed] 25 by 50 feet” that housed a 50-foot-long table alongside “the length of one wall, [with] six freestanding work stations, and a seventh table in the back corner” for the designation of the creation of the E&E materials. The loading dock was protected by “solid-core double doors fitted with security locks” and housed the stations for mailbags and mailing equipment. The second wing housed the briefing room, where there were only chairs and

\textsuperscript{38} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 22.
a blackboard.\textsuperscript{39}

The Warehouse also housed a small “ten foot square cubicle [that] contain[ed] two bunk beds” and a shower and bathroom facility for the “men whose MIS-X responsibilities additionally included living in the building as security guards for the length of their service.”\textsuperscript{40} Activities in the Warehouse were so covert and furtive, in particular in the technical wing, that once it was “it was occupied it was never permitted to be uninhabited.”\textsuperscript{41}

Camp layout and arrangement of the buildings, and the design and functions of the interior of the buildings are important when presenting Fort Hunt’s history. MIS-X section of the camp was created and positioned far enough from MIS-Y to remain a separate and secret entity at Fort Hunt, yet still be housed at the same location. These two programs worked throughout the war to aid the Allies in Europe.

MIS-Y and MIS-X were programs both located at Fort Hunt, making it a unique and original campsite during World War Two. Not even its partnered camp in California had a similar layout. The other camp that was part of the Joint Interrogation Center, Camp Tracy, located in Byron Hot Springs, California. This camp, and Fort Hunt, were the two established interrogation centers during World War Two. Since the creation of the interrogation centers, there was the agreement that there would be two, one on the East Coast close to Washington, D.C. and the other on the West Coast. Like Fort Hunt, Camp Tracy’s existence began in May 1942 with Eugene Reybold, the Chief of Engineers. He was directed “in accordance with the War Department Construction

\textsuperscript{40} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 24.
\textsuperscript{41} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 23.
Policy, to immediately take steps to provide an interrogation center on the west coast.”  

Byron Hot Springs, California, or its mailing address PO Box 651, was chosen for the Captured Personnel and Material (CPM) site and was officially effective June 1, 1942.

Construction began in June 1942 and was finished by the end of that same year in December. Tracy was part of the Joint Interrogation Centers, but served different and fewer purposes than its other camp, Fort Hunt. Tracy was smaller in size and number, it was established as only an interrogation center as MIS-Y program, and mainly for Japanese prisoners, but, fortunately, was “prepared to receive prisoners of other nationalities in the event that the supply of Japanese prisoners [would run] out.” Perhaps not surprisingly, there were few Japanese prisoners, especially early in the war, to occupy the facilities at Tracy, so many German prisoners were sent there. The Board of Interrogations details that in 1943, there were 173 Germans at Tracy, with only 71 Japanese prisoners, all awaiting their interrogations.  

Tracy selected, processed, and interrogated prisoners, either Japanese or German, in similar fashion as Fort Hunt, but did not house a MIS-X unit.

The personnel and staff’s oath of secrecy almost prevented Fort Hunt’s story from being presented and shared with the public. All of the remaining records and documents of Fort Hunt are now open and located at National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and have been available since 1997, but few, if any, personnel who worked at the camp were aware of the release of records, so they continued to stay silent. It was not until the early 2000s when the veterans of the camp were questioned about the site that they began

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42 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 72.
43 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 76.
44 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 73.
discussing the activities that happened there during the 1940s. The records are available, but there has also been an extensive effort to contact, meet, and interview the veterans of the camp, to know the men who worked there on a personal level and hear their stories, something that cannot be done by combing through papers and boxes at the archives. The camp was demolished after the war’s end, so there are no physical buildings, structures, fences, or towers left of the camp. How does one present this history to the public?

Fort Hunt was officially ended in 1946, with orders to discontinue its operations no later than October 31, 1946. There has been little published online or in print on the activities at Fort Hunt. There has been secondary scholarly work published on Britain’s interrogation centers, agencies, and programs like MI9 and MI19. This project is meant to encourage research and interest in the United States’ prisoner of war camps. There has since been attention, especially locally in Alexandria, with community outreach from the GWMP, and newspaper and media attention.

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45 Subject: Discontinuance and Transfer of Intelligence Activities, 1946, Record Group 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.
Fort Hunt’s Programs MIS-Y and MIS-X

Fort Hunt’s MIS-Y and MIS-X programs were successful and efficient. The type of programs that were managed at Fort Hunt was first introduced in World War Two by the British intelligence centers. Britain began its organization of intelligence systems early in the war, and created the British Directorate of Military Intelligence Section 9, or MI9. It was the idea of a system of communication between Britain and their prisoners of war, for those who wanted to escape their imprisonment, and those who evaded their capture was proposed in September 1939. It was established December 23, 1939 as a sub-branch of Britain’s War Office and under the leadership of Major Norman Crockatt.46 MI9 was created from Britain’s World War One POW escapees; out of Britain’s 2.5 million prisoners, 107,000 escaped from their prison camps, and Britain’s War Office wanted to aid World War Two prisoners to increase the number of escapees, and better, evaders.47 During World War Two, “POW camps in Europe [were] along eastern front, one thousand miles from the English channel”, making it longer and harder for POWs who escaped to reach safety and for supplies to reach them from the Allies.48 In 1940, Britain had done little to prepare for the escape and evasion of its prisoners, and nearly one-tenth of its units were already taken prisoner by May and June, 1940.49 MI9 had to quickly prepare and become efficient for its prisoners who stayed behind enemy territory. This helped create the need for MI9, and eventually part of Fort Hunt’s camp.

The primary purpose behind the creation of branch MI9 was for the Allied

46 Foot and Langley, *MI9 Escape and Evasion 1939-1945*.
49 Foot and Langley, *MI9 Escape and Evasion 1939-1945*. 
servicemen evading capture or escaping imprisonment. MI9 created disguised escape and evasion devices and either delivered them to air and ground forces traveling into Europe or covertly mailed them to established POW camps. MI9 was also able to collect enemy information. Crockatt positioned his work as head of MI9 as having the responsibility to

“To facilitate escapes of British prisoners of war, thereby getting back service personnel and containing additional enemy manpower on guard duties. To facilitate the return to the United Kingdom of those who succeeded in evading capture in enemy occupied territory. To collect and distribute information. To assist in the denial of information to the enemy. To maintain morale of British prisoners of war in enemy prison camps.”

Crockatt’s organization was divided into two sections. The first section commanded responsibility of the British “prisoners, escapers and evaders” and the second section managed the “captured enemy” prisoners. Crockatt commanded both sections of the organization. He made A.R. Rawlinson, an intelligence officer during the last year of World War One, head of the captured enemy prisoner section, which became a separate subsection in December 1941, as MI19. Crockatt organized and coordinated the halves of the operation successfully, and changed part of MI9 into “five subsections: b for liaison with other branches and services and interrogation of returned escapers and evaders, d for training, x for planning and organization of escapes, y for codes and z for tools.”

Crockatt’s organization and success inspired the United States after their involvement. Those in Washington, D.C. who were in contact with Crockatt liked him,

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and his leadership, command, and personality made him a knowledgeable man. MIS-X and MI9 worked closely together with their intelligence agencies, in particular with their escape and evasion programs, and coordinated and learned from one another’s programs. Crockatt and his programs helped create a strong Allied system of cooperation, adaptation, and coordinated relationship.

The British system influenced how the United States managed its programs, in particular MIS-X, but the United States did not just model all programs and operations after the British, but created its own ideas, adaptations, and inventions that the British then adopted. One in particular was the idea of the POW unit, a plan that every man who was captured or evaded imprisonment and was left in enemy territory was to think of himself as part of a new unit, the POW unit. Prisoners and evaders alike joined with one another, despite nationality, to create a unit for the sole purpose of escape or evasion. These new units gave the servicemen the “will to escape.”

Another adaptation the United States emphasized was the interrogation of enemy prisoners. The British MI9 sections on interrogation, and Britain’s subsequent branch MI19 program, did question certain captured enemy personnel, but became more involved in the program after the success of the United States MIS-Y program. MI9 adopted a program similar to the United States’ system as Prisoner of War Interrogation Section (PWIS) in April 1942, the same time that Fort Hunt was beginning its programs and operations. Although the United States entered the war after the British, the U.S. created its own ideas and adaptations concerning intelligence and escape plans.

The British and the United States established their intelligence centers with particular priorities and studied, designed, and constructed their programs after one another’s success. Britain joined the war first and set the precedent for the creation of the programs. MI9’s main purpose was its escape and evasion practices, with less priority on MI19’s enemy interrogation. The United States created Fort Hunt and Camp Tracy with the main purpose of interrogating captured enemy personnel, MIS-Y, and later established MIS-X and its E&E programs.

This is an exceptional aspect of Fort Hunt. These adaptations from the United States suggest that the U.S. did loosely model some ideas on the British precedent, but the U.S. also came up with its own ideas. This proves it was an Allied effort, both the United States and Britain working in a coordinated effort for the war cause. It also suggests that the programs happening at Fort Hunt were more than singular events that not only affected United States servicemen, but also affected the British and their operations.

MIS-Y

One major precedent was PO Box 1142’s MIS-Y program. Fort Hunt housed over 3,000 prisoners during its operation. MIS-Y had records and charts illustrating the number of prisoners at the camp and the success of the interrogations. These charts present information about Fort Hunt, but also on the war conditions and environment. Researchers are able to study the charts in relation to the Allied war effort, and see how the surge of prisoners in 1943 and 1944 is ascribable to the Allied presence in North Africa, and particularly, the Allied invasion of Normandy and the subsequent liberation.
of France. These are charts listed for MIS-Y and MIS-X:

Chart One: Lists the “total number of prisoners received since activation, total number of prisoners shipped, and on hand” from August 1942 to July 1945.\textsuperscript{55}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of prisoners received since activation</td>
<td>3451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of prisoners shipped</td>
<td>2546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On hand – 31 July 1945</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart illustrates the efficiency of the camp. There was a large number of Axis prisoners who lived inside the camp for its duration, and maybe not every interrogation was a success, but it is outstanding that the personnel working at the camp questioned the great number of prisoners during its three years of operation. The 159 prisoners there after the war’s end is intriguing, and they may have held valuable scientific information about German technologies, the reason for their longer duration.

\textsuperscript{55} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 51.
Chart Two: Breaks down the intake of prisoners and their stay, with a “quarterly tabulation of the number processed and the average number of days they were retained.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Oct. 1942</td>
<td>94 Ps/W</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Jan. 1943</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 30 Apr. 1943</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Jul. 1943</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Oct. 1943</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Jan. 1944</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 30 Apr. 1944</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Jul. 1944</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Oct. 1944</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Jan. 1945</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 30 Apr. 1945</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mos. Ending 31 Jul. 1945</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are multiple significant items about this chart. It presents the number of prisoners that were processed each month and the average duration of a prisoner’s stay. The number of POWs starts out small when there were fewer ground forces in 1942 and peaks in October 1944 after the invasion of Normandy and and victory in France, when there were more Allied forces on the ground. The last year of the war sees a significant decrease of the average number of days a prisoner is stationed at Fort Hunt, peaking at 29 days early in the war and decreasing to an average of just over a week in October 1944, highlighting here, and in other interrogations, that prisoners became more cooperative, gave information up faster and easier than during the beginning of the war. Many prisoners toward the end of the war were cooperative because they did not think Germany would be victorious.

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56 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 51.
Chart Three: These are lists of Interrogation officer’s reports from their questioning, only listing the number of interrogations that were fruitful in the “material of sufficient interest and/or value to warrant extracting and/or disseminating” This chart lists Year, Month, and Number, from May 1943 to August 1945.\(^57\) Below is year 1943.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart Four: Similarly structured, with lists of information received from “intercepted verbatim conversations with Prisoners of War and materials supplied by Prisoners of War themselves.”\(^58\) It lists Year, Month, and Number, from May 1943 to August 1945. Below is year 1943.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^57\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 52.

\(^58\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 52-53.
Chart Five: There are two Extract lists, Order of Battle and MIS-X Section, on “extracts of material received and furnished to interested offices.” These charts list Year, Month, and Number from March 1944 to December 1944, and March 1944 to April 1945.

**Order of Battle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MIS-X**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|       | Total:154 |

The majority of these reports detail the records from the interrogation center MIS-Y branch of the camp. The Extracts lists may be some of the few documents and records that remain on MIS-X. There are more charts on Draft Reports and Memorandums,

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59 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 53-54.
listing Year, Month, and Number from March 1944 to August 1945, illustrating the amount of paperwork and records that traveled back and forth to Fort Hunt. These charts track the course of the war, especially with the Allied invasions, the number of successful and fruitful interrogations, and when Nazi Germany began its decline.

There are other documents that highlight the efficiency and success of MIS-Y. In order to keep track of the personnel and staff of the camp and their job responsibilities, the men filled out informative paperwork. These charts show the significance and efficiency of the MIS-Y program at Fort Hunt, and the Description Questionnaire records the manpower, time, and devotion of each the personnel. Interrogators, guards and personnel at the camp were required to complete a Military Intelligence Service Officer Duty Description, at least starting in 1944 if not throughout the life of the camp. The Description asked for the name, Army Serial Number (ASN), grade, title of position, and 4 options: service (1), branch (2), section (3), and subsection (4) of the personnel at the camp, and details of job description, duties, and supervisions. The instructions were to complete the form, with exact details and descriptions.\textsuperscript{60} The form, titled Army Services Forces Position Description Questionnaire, was “prepared for the purpose of assembling significant facts about the duties and responsibilities of the officers” and was sectioned into three parts. Block One was name and information and options 1-4 of the personnel. Block Two was Description of Duties, filled out by the personnel, and distinguished as the “most important part” of the form, and instructions asked the respondents to be as specific as possible. Block Three was Supervision Over Others, providing the names of personnel.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Military Intelligence Service Officer Duty Description}, Record Group 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.
anyone under an officer’s control. These forms were given to all personnel in the camp, from interrogators, mess officers, administration positions, and monitoring and signal officers. These types of manning tables were submitted to present the manpower of the camp. The Army Services Forces Position Description Questionnaire was only part of the records that presented the manpower of operations the camp, the type of personnel working, and the camp efficiency.

The personnel who worked there and the success of its secrecy are a big reason why the camp is so unique. Fort Hunt is less than thirty miles outside of Washington, D.C., a busy area, and Alexandria was also a busy city, even during the 1940s. The men who worked at Fort Hunt in any of its operations swore an oath of secrecy, and upheld the oath for decades. Two of these men of the brotherhood of PO Box 1142 were Fred Michel and H. George Mandel, who recently shared their experience and story at Fort Hunt. Michel and Mandel are publicized in several news articles around the Washington, D.C. area, like The Washington Post and The Alexandria Times for their time at Fort Hunt, as they shared their stories and once strongly-kept secrets of the camp with GWMP. They tell their story of their background, how they were recruited to Fort Hunt, what they did, and how they never spoke of it to anyone, not even each other. They both came back to Fort Hunt to share their memories during the reunion of 2007. Both men lived in the Washington, D.C. area for decades, close to the camp site and close to one another, but failed to discuss their experiences until then. Both men’s stories are outstanding, and speak to the uniqueness of the Fort. Michel and Mandel were both

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61 Army Services Forces Position Description Questionnaire, Record Group 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.
German Jewish immigrants whose family fled from Germany in the 1930s, and were recruited for their knowledge of the German language and their science background.\footnote{Petula Dvorak, “Fort Hunt’s Quiet Men Break Silence on WWII,” \textit{The Washington Post}, October 6, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/05/AR2007100502492.html.}

Another recruited staff member was Werner Moritz, who worked as a monitor at Fort Hunt, who listened to the conversations of the German prisoners. According to Moritz, he monitored a conversation that possibly helped lead the Allies to German technology in the town of Peenemunde, Germany, the site where German scientists, including Wernher von Braun, were working on rocket technologies with the V-2 rockets. At the time of the conversation, Moritz and probably others at the camp did not know the importance of Peenemunde, but the British eventually bombed the town and destroyed it, along with the rockets. Von Braun ended up at Fort Hunt and was interrogated with his involvement in that work.

This is not the only mention of Peenemunde. It is controversial how and where the British received the information to locate and bomb the area, whether by air sighting, British intelligence, Polish intelligence, or other reports, and according to Moritz, possibly from MIS-Y. It is unknown if it was mentioned in any interrogations; perhaps it is unlikely that it would be, but it was mentioned between German prisoners.\footnote{P.O. Box 1142, The Free Library, http://www.thefreelibrary.com/P.O.+Box+1142.-a0220843513.}

Another veteran who received public attention in media interviews is Wayne Spivey, from Georgia, who did not interrogate prisoners or work in MIS-X, but instead worked in a database system. He deciphered, sorted, and categorized the information during the interrogations. These are the types of stories that should be presented at Fort
Hunt today, to help commemorate the veterans and keep their story alive.

Interrogation MIS-Y

Fort Hunt’s purpose as the MIS-Y interrogation center was to gain intelligence by questioning and interrogating certain selected prisoners of war. The intelligence obtained through these interrogations was shared with the Allied Powers to help the war effort. MIS-Y oversaw the selection and interrogation of prisoners, but also the interaction and communication between prisoners. MIS-Y operatives covertly listened in to room conversations between prisoner roommates to determine if the prisoners were divulging all information during the interrogations. There was a standard protocol for selecting, escorting, and questioning each prisoner, but each interrogation officer was able to question his prisoner using his own methods. In addition to the interrogation officers, there were also guards, escorts, monitors, listeners, and transcribers all involved in the questioning process, which began upon the prisoners’ arrival at the camp.

When prisoners first arrived, they waited in the reception or “intake” room to be called into the “first processing room” for questions and searches. These first inquiries gave the personnel at Fort Hunt a critical impression of the prisoner, whether he was cooperative, what information he knew, what he could know but was holding back, and how that information could aid the Allies. This helped assign the prisoners to certain sections: Air Section, the Geographic Section, the Army Section, or elsewhere. The prisoners were searched for documentation and personal property, personal forms, documents or papers. The prisoners were then escorted to the following rooms for routine plans, Dressing Room, Shower Room, Medical Examiner, Supply Room, and
then a “designated detention room”, or the prisoners living quarters while he was there. After this intake process, an Evaluation of Documents Officer evaluated all papers and documents taken. These materials were personal items, usually letters, photographs and mementos from home. This is proof that Fort Hunt did break the Geneva Conventions as earlier noted, asking for more information than what was allocated by the Accords, but no punishment was issued to the camp.

The interrogation officers were briefed on all information gained by the intake process. The officer in charge of each unit assigned these prisoners to certain interrogation officers, meeting a certain criterion, and selecting pairs that would best be suited for ascertaining desired information. This ensured the best chance for any information to be gathered. It was essential, especially during times of high priority like the planning of invasions and attacks, to ascertain information that was of any value. Many of the first prisoners were U-boat operators and many of the later prisoners were German scientists, and many of them were questioned about Germany’s technologies. The information that was given during these interrogations was used later in the war to build new bombers, engines, and equipment for the Allies.

The selection and pairing of interrogation officer to prisoner was essential in getting the desired information. Most men built an informal relationship with their prisoner, finding it the best way for a successful interrogation. Officers would take walks, play games, and smoke with their prisoner, proving a friendly relationship was effective in obtaining certain information. This is a definite break away from the British system,

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64 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 31.
65 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 35.
66 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 36.
where torture and physiological trauma, like sleep deprivation, was used. This is another example that proves that the United States used new ideas and set new precedents from the British. This is an aspect of PO Box 1142 that some of the returning veterans of the camp are most-proud of, interrogation without torture, especially in today’s war environment. At a veteran reunion of the PO Box 1142 brotherhood, many spoke of how they were able to maintain their humanity during their work at Fort Hunt, and condemned the way interrogation has been used in the war today.67

When preparing for any interrogation or questioning, the assigned interrogation officer uses the materials gathered during the intake process, like the personal letters and mementos from home, to get to know the prisoner, and use as leverage during the actual interrogation. Most items were returned to the prisoners once a “friendlier footing” was made.68 These briefings could take three to six hours for every one hour of questioning.

There was a process conducted before and after each interrogation. Interrogation officers were briefed, interrogation rooms were assigned, monitors checked the status of the prisoner to hear if any conversations happening between roommates, and if desired, monitors were instructed to either “take notes” or “completely record” the interrogation.69 The prisoner was escorted to the available room, where the interrogation officer began his questioning.

After this standard protocol, every interrogation was different, based on the interrogation officer, his briefing, his prisoner, their relationship, what information was

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68 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 36.
69 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 37.
desired, if the prisoner was cooperative, and if there were monitors listening in, recording, and transcribing the interrogation. Men who worked there described the interrogations as casual, with the officer sometimes playing chess with the prisoner, or even enjoying a cigarette with him.\(^70\) Not all interrogation officers were so friendly with their prisoner; each officer had his own way of questioning and “handling various situations.”\(^71\)

The prisoners that were interrogated and the information that was gathered throughout the 1940s is outstanding. Some notable prisoners were Wernher von Braun, Reinhard Gehlen, and Wener Henke. The type of information that was received at Fort Hunt helped aid the Allies in the war, with their knowledge of train routes, supply areas, and perhaps most importantly, German technologies and where they were located, like the V-2 rockets, U-boat adaptations, and the jet engines. This type of information ascertained in interrogations gave the United States the ability to build the same kind of technologies and destroy German factories.

An interrogation could last any amount of time and could be finished another day, and most interrogation officers conducted three to five interrogations per day. There was also a standard protocol to follow after an interrogation concluded. The interrogation officer signaled that the questioning was done, a guard escorted the prisoner back to his room, and monitors were notified on what to do with the notes and records from the interrogation. The officer signed out on a record book, noting the date, time, and prisoner


\(^{71}\) Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 37.
he just questioned. He completed his reports and sent them to the Evaluation Section.\textsuperscript{72}

With prisoners entering and exiting the camp daily, these detailed records and documents were used for keeping track of the prisoners, noting who was of the highest value, and what information was desired and received.

As the war continued, the character of the camp and its interrogations changed. MIS-Y’s interrogations and questions changed as they welcomed more cooperative prisoners, who saw the war as already lost, and were more willing to help the Allies. It also changed as the war environment and technology changed, from questioning U-boaters to questioning scientists and spies, all while using a unique style of interrogation. Fort Hunt’s positions changed as the conditions of World War Two changed.

MIS-Y was complex in that it had different methods of obtaining information. Straightforward interrogations were not the only method in ascertaining desired information from prisoners. There were other ways besides interrogation for Fort Hunt to gain intelligence, and used a variety of methods during questioning, and more furtive and covert styles of ascertaining information. There were several types of ways in which this was done, like the informal relationships, use of covert listening devices, and the use of spies, or stool pigeons.

Listening devices were placed throughout the camp and grounds to covertly listen in and monitor conversations between prisoner roommates, before and after interrogation, during mess, or exercising. These were placed throughout the camp in places like lights, vents, behind walls, and even in trees on the grounds. Room conversations were often listened in and recorded.

\textsuperscript{72} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 38.
Stool pigeons were another source that was used by Fort Hunt. Stool pigeons were essentially spies, working against their own country for the benefit of the Allies, and only used when completely necessary. This was perhaps the most tricky and troublesome way of ascertaining information because there was a significant amount of time and work that was spent into finding and training the right agents.\textsuperscript{73}

For these spies to be hired, they were required to be exceptionally reliable, a quality not usually found in someone willing to go against his own country. These spies also had to be vehement, intelligent specialists; they had to be versatile, adaptable, and good actors. At Fort Hunt, these stool pigeons worked under an “officer ‘handler’ who became fully acquainted with his stool pigeon’s capabilities, temperament, and his methods of work.”\textsuperscript{74} The spy acted as one of the prisoners; possibly assigned as a roommate, friend, or exercise partner. Perhaps most essential, he had to be “protected at all times from possible detection”, because if a prisoner suspected the use of a stool pigeon, he might close up and not reveal any information.\textsuperscript{75}

These were valuable sources in gaining information through a variety of unusual ways. As with anything else, the use of these spies changed as the war changed. They were used primarily in the beginning years of the war to “break” more “security-minded prisoners”, and were used less and less as more cooperative prisoners began entering Fort Hunt.\textsuperscript{76} During the final years of the war, there emerged a more “‘cooperative’ attitude of large numbers of prisoners of war, some of whom voluntarily, and in many instances

\textsuperscript{73} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 38.
\textsuperscript{74} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 40.
\textsuperscript{75} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 38-40.
\textsuperscript{76} Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 40.
openly, aided in obtaining desired information from fellow prisoners.” Later years of the war produced Germans and other Axis prisoners who were war-weary, leaving them more open to aiding the Allies.

Fort Hunt Commander and Interrogator Paul A. Neuland questioned a prisoner who fully cooperated and volunteered to work with Allied Powers in 1943. Italian Prisoner Captain Mario Marioni volunteered himself to the British in Medjez-el-Bab, Tunisia. He was involved in motor transportation technology and information, and was “chief of the entire Motor Transportation setup of the Italian Army.” He traveled throughout France and North Africa during the war, and did not want to help Germany win the war. He was angry with his positions and travels in the service, and was war-weary by the time of his surrender. He surrendered himself on May 12, 1943, as he drove his car into the British camp Medjez-el-Bab to cooperate with the Allies. By this time, the Allied invasion of North Africa was a success, and just a day later on May 13 the Axis in Tunisia surrendered. With the successful Allied invasion, frustration with his service, and perhaps seeing no chance of a victory, he surrendered himself willingly.

Neuland’s report presents the POWs willingness to cooperate and collaborate “in any way [that] he could.” He was viewed by Neuland and MIS-Y as a valuable prisoner, “based on his wide experience in and knowledge of Italian military matters,

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77 Report on the Activities of Two Agencies of the CPM Branch, 1945, NARA, 39.
especially motor transport activities...both on domestic Italian soil and overseas.”

He expressed his hatred of Germany and wanted no part of helping them to victory, also characterizing this as a common attitude in Italy. He stressed that the Allied invasion of North Africa “hurt Italian morale” and called his surrender a “day of liberation.”

He was considered a valuable prisoner of war by Neuland and interrogators at Fort Hunt. His strong aversion to his own country and Nazi Germany, on top of his war weary attitude, made him, and those like him, a valuable and treasured asset, and was evaluated as a reliable prisoner. Neuland’s interrogation comments in the report illustrate that he was so willing to help, that there little need to furnish him with anything but a “typewriter, paper, and a list of topics on which information [was] desired.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, there were other prisoners like him willing to aid in providing information to the Allies.

Not all interrogations and prisoners were as easy or eager to disclose knowledge. It was all dependent upon the type of prisoner, the desired information, and the war circumstances. There were prisoners, like those noted above, but there were also unreliable prisoners, unwilling to give up desired information. In September 1943, Neuland interrogated German prisoner Wilhelm Ludy, who was labeled as pro-Nazi,
uncooperative, and believed he was more valuable than he actually was. The interrogation reports listed the prisoner’s personality as “small in stature and mind”, and that “Nazi corpuscles flow[ed] through his veins.” Neuland’s summary placed him in the unreliable POW category, and that he was “only good for his limited knowledge of airplanes and airplane factories.” Nueland stressed not to waste interrogation time on this POW.

These interrogations present the different types of prisoners that were earmarked and sent to Fort Hunt. Some prisoners were successful in aiding the Allies, and others were not. These interrogations also prove that there were a variety of reasons that prisoners cooperated with Fort Hunt personnel: they were either war-weary, disliked Hitler and Germany, or simply and openly wanted to volunteer the information.

MIS-Y functions changed as the war environment changed. The number of prisoners increased, the prisoners became more cooperative as they began to see they would not win the war, and the type of questions changed. The functions of Fort Hunt depended on how the war was going, but how the war was going also depended on Fort Hunt’s operations.

MIS-X

Fort Hunt’s purpose as an Escape Factory was dissimilar to that of MIS-Y. MIS-Y was secret, but MIS-X was guarded as more of a secret and was “established a little later

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84 Interrogation of P/W Ludy, Wilhelm Monitored with notes only, Capt. Neuland, Lt. Martin, Sept. 28, 1943, Record Group 165 Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland.
Alexandria community residents, residents in Washington, D. C., Congress, and Commanding Officer John Walker did not know of MIS-X’s existence. (Walker knew that the MIS-X program was stationed at his fort, but did not know the details of what the program did). MIS-X’s operations at the camp alone created a unique environment, with no other POW camp in the United States or in the countries of its Allies having a MIS-Y and MIS-X program. It was extra covert and secretly guarded, which is part of what makes it so special today.

How did it stay a secret? Only those who needed to know about MIS-X were told, there were not as many employees working with MIS-X as MIS-Y, and members of the MIS-Y system did not know of the operations of MIS-X. Perhaps most importantly, how did the residents of Alexandria not know what was happening in their community? How was there no public press about the operation at Fort Hunt, especially with its proximity to the nation’s capital? This is one of the aspects of the camp that helps make it such a significant spot. One of the reasons why it was chosen, its close proximity to Washington, D.C., also could make it more easily available for residents to discover the activities of the camp.

What about the residents of Alexandria? Fort Hunt and its operations needed to remain a secret, but the camp could not sacrifice its daily activities like the travel to and from the camp from other designated camps nearby. Fort Hunt not only operated within its fences, but it also had to travel into surrounding communities. Fort Hunt operated “olive green, windowless buses” transporting prisoners around Alexandria’s roadways, and there were employees and personnel who had to travel into the community to gather

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supplies for E&E packages.\textsuperscript{86} Fort Hunt did have outside involvement from its camp, and the community, and people in Washington, D.C. did not know what was actually happening there. Since the United States housed over 400,000 enemy prisoners during the war, many communities had to welcome guests of the Wehrmacht, and Alexandrians thought they were doing the same thing. The citizens of Alexandria believed that Fort Hunt was a prisoner of war camp, since there were many camps in the United States during that time. They did not know the uniqueness and essential nature of the camp to the Allied war effort, they did not know that these prisoners were hand-picked for interrogations and questioning, and they certainly did not know that technicians were working with materials to send as escape and evasion packages to the Allies in Europe.\textsuperscript{87}

This is an extraordinary characteristic of the camp. It is significant that the camp was successful and remained covert, while all this secret activity was happening just miles outside of the nation’s capital in a busy and populated community. The camp was complex, with many personnel working within different locations and programs, and especially with hundreds of enemy Axis prisoners, and is part of the reason the story should be presented at Fort Hunt by the GWMP.

Fort Hunt’s purpose as MIS-X was the covert assistance to Allied prisoners of war and those evading escape from Axis territory. This was done with three programs within MIS-X, “letter codes” and code breakers working in a building designated as the Creamery for communication between Fort Hunt and the prisoners, preparing the E&E equipment and packages by technicians in a building designated as the Warehouse, and

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\textsuperscript{86} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 5.
\textsuperscript{87} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 5.
\end{flushright}
perhaps the most essential, the guaranteed shipment and delivery of these packages to the POWs and those preparing to go to Europe.\textsuperscript{88} It is hard to measure how many of these products and packages aided Allied servicemen in their escape or evasion, but the program was successful, in its inventions and disguises of ordinary supplies as covert material, in its delivery of these packages, and in the escape and evasion of certain Allies.

Commander Carl Spaatz thought a program like Britain’s MI9 would be successful in the United States, but there were doubts from people like Stimson that it would work. Secretary of War Stimson was not convinced that an agency that sounded something like “science fiction” could be a success.\textsuperscript{89} Stimson’s doubt about the project meant that it was almost not introduced in the United States, but those who saw the success of the British’s system pushed and encouraged that such an unlikely and dubious program could work, and work successfully. Spaatz helped convince Stimson with the fact that Britain’s MI9 programs and leaders were successful, and that a similar program could be useful in the United States. The Escape and Evasion programs became an Allied effort in October 1942, when Stimson agreed to the United States program, and appointed “Prisoner of War Branch commander Catesby ap Jones” as command of the MIS-X program.\textsuperscript{90}

This helped start MIS-X, in its designated buildings: The Creamery and the Warehouse. Communication between PO Box 1142 and the Allies was perhaps the most essential part of MIS-X. There was no need to create and distribute the E&E packages if there was no way of knowing whether or not the packages reached the POWS, and there was no need to create the items if the POWS did not know what to look for in the

\textsuperscript{89} Foot and Langley, \textit{MI9 Escape and Evasion 1939-1945}, 45.
\textsuperscript{90} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 12.
packages. Communication was dependent upon MIS-X’s briefers and cryptoanalysts and code users, and MIS-X and Commanding Officer Robley Winfrey had the highest standards upon who he selected and how he selected them. Communication was reliant on code users and cryptoanalysts, but also on briefers, who would educate air and ground forces making trips to Europe on the provided E&E kits, how to use the equipment, how to evade capture, and if captured, how to unify with other prisoners as a POW unit and attempt escape.\footnote{Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 16-18.} MIS-X’s communication was also with POWs who had escaped or those who had evaded capture all together, including “interviews with returning prisoners and evaders,…and correspondence in code with those still behind barbed wire.”\footnote{Foot and Langley, \textit{MI9 Escape and Evasion 1939-1945}, 45.} Communication was first established in May 1943.\footnote{Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 36.}

The Warehouse opened later with its purpose of designing and shipping E&E packages. It’s first order was for Oflag 64 in Schubin, Poland in Spring 1943, where POWs wanted to attempt an escape plan before being transported to another POW camp. MIS-X first sent food packages for the POWs, then the disguised escape and evasion packages. E&E packages were sent under fake humanitarian organizations, a tip that the United States learned from MI9’s system. Under the \textit{Geneva Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War 1929}, prisoners were allowed packages from the Red Cross and humanitarian organizations while imprisoned. MIS-X did not disguise any Red Cross packages, but did create its own fake organizations. These fictitious organizations loaded several types of packages, “straight” shipments were simply food and contained no E&E equipment, “clothing parcel” shipments contained E&E
equipment, and “recreational parcel” shipments contained the largest number of E&E equipment.\textsuperscript{94} MIS-X used different tape, glue, twine, paper, labels and cardboard for each fraudulent humanitarian society and were shipped via the U.S. Postal Service so the packages would not stir up suspicion when arriving to the POW camps.\textsuperscript{95} Oflag 64’s shipment contained disguised giggle saws, tissue maps, and compasses, and was labeled to inform the POWs that it was a secret E&E package.\textsuperscript{96} Communication continued between MIS-X and Oflag 64 throughout the war until its liberation in 1945.

Communication and shipments between POW camps and MIS-X created a successful and efficient program. The United States first had to turn to the British system to learn their tricks in the creation and concealment of the escape devices. From its beginning, MI9 was a treasured resource for the British prisoners of war and those in occupied territories. One of its main purposes was sending packages to these prisoners and supplying men going to occupied territories with ordinary devices disguised as essential tools for a successful escape. Many were designed by World War One pilot Christopher William Clayton-Hutton, who was hired by the War Office, in the spring of 1940. These included shoe maps, compasses masked as collar studs, razors that were magnetic, hacksaws that were small enough to be concealed in a pant leg, Gigli, or surgical saws covered as bootlaces, and perhaps the most outstanding disguise, the escape boot. The escape boot “looked like an ordinary fleece-lined boot with a strip of webbing around the ankle”, but hidden inside the top of the lining was a concealed small knife, used to cut the strip of webbing and “separate the leggings from a pair of respectable

\textsuperscript{96} Shoemaker, \textit{The Escape Factory: The Story of MIS-X}, 41.
black walking shoes.”97 The knife was also used to “slit up the seams of the leggings” to “two halves of a fleece-lined waistcoat” all waiting to be sewn together into a civilian disguise. The “most widespread aid” was the escape Box, “a pair of flat transparent acetate plastic Boxes, one fitting closely inside the other, filled with malted milk tablets, boiled sweets, a bar or two of plain chocolate, matches, a few benzedrine tablets for energy and a few whalebone tablets for purifying water, a rubber water-bottle to hold about a pint, a razor…and a needle and thread.”98 All these inventions and disguises assisted in men attempting to evade or escape, and many more devices were invented, especially when the United States became involved and partnered with the British in the program, and as more men were captured and imprisoned by Germany. These devices and packages were given to men before their mission to Europe, and also sent covertly to prisoners already in camps. With these models, the United States was able to create, package, and distribute its own E&E supplies, with some new ones of their own.

MIS-X created high tech and intricate E&E devices in ordinary, mundane items. MIS-X disguised radio sets, money, maps, compasses, and other contraband hidden in cribbage boards, Monopoly boards, playing cards, and even baseballs. To get the supplies used at concealing the equipment, personnel and staff of MIS-X traveled into the surrounding community to pick up the materials. MIS-X operative Lloyd Shoemaker’s positions was to travel to drug stores and supermarkets to purchase the devices needed for the disguises. Soon, with a tip from MI9 operatives, he was being sent to manufacturers for their help in loading escape aids. MIS-X reached out to stores in Baltimore,

97 Foot and Langley, *MI9 Escape and Evasion 1939-1945*.
98 Foot and Langley, *MI9 Escape and Evasion 1939-1945*. 
Maryland, Cincinnati, Ohio and towns in Massachusetts to conceal certain items for its packages. An obstacle was to maintain secrecy while trying to pursue the manufacturers for help. Shoemaker was sent to Cincinnati, Ohio for the covert use of baseballs for radio transmitters. For the radios to work, the four different parts had to be packaged and shipped delicately and separately, each wrapped in cotton and then placed into a “small aluminum capsule”, then packaged into a baseball. Shoemaker was sent to Goldsmith Baseball Company to convince Mr. Goldsmith to wind the capsules as the core of the baseballs and to color coordinate a system for each individual part of the radio. A puzzled Mr. Goldsmith agreed, and Shoemaker gave instructions for the finished products to be sent to a store in Baltimore, Maryland, where they were then picked up. It is difficult to determine if these radio parts in baseballs helped how many POWs, but some did reach POW camp Stalag Luft III in Germany, where POWs were able to receive all four parts of the radio.  

Perhaps surprisingly to Stimson, MIS-X was a success. It took a while for the E&E packages to start operating successfully, but it helped the Allies in Europe. The doubt behind the Secretary of War and the apprehension of starting the program draws more attention to its eventual success, including the efficiency and skill of the camp’s personnel. The E&E system went beyond Stimson’s expectations. Technicians and those involved in MIS-X were also hesitant that such a program would work, but continued to be reassured by the British example and the leadership of the program in the United States. The camp dynamics, and its accomplishments that were once doubted, should now be celebrated and commemorated by those who worked there who can finally tell

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their story to the public, especially with the tools and equipment that was invented there. This major accomplishment, along with MIS-Y, should be presented on the site where it once took place, and should have equal attention and recognition as other accomplishments and successes of the Allies during the war, because it was these code breakers, technicians and other personnel who helped with those accomplishments.

Helping the Allies in Europe and delivering the most accurate, specific and current details to them was essential. Hitler’s orders had placed all prisoner of war camps on the Eastern front far from supply lines, and under Hitler and the Gestapo’s rule, Germany had become a police state. All this made for a longer and more dangerous trip for the Allies to escape to safety, and a longer trip for packages and mail to be delivered. For any escape or evasion to be successful, the most accurate and up to date information was needed, especially at the start of the war.

MIS-X, along with its partner MI9, was extremely efficient, which is extraordinary since there had been no organization like it prior to World War Two to set any kind of precedent. MIS-X was a multiplex operation, with different sections doing different jobs, requiring communication and shipment of packages. After communication was first established, “MIS-X briefers…taught 7,724 military personnel the letter codes, and MIS-X was able to maintain constant communication” with POWs in Axis territory.¹⁰⁰ E&E packages were shipped regularly with strict protocol, with different packaging and labels. The British set precedent with the United States on MIS-X, but the United States adapted its programs and extended them to reach more of the Allies, especially during 1943 and 1944 with the Allied invasion of Europe. After that, the operations slowed down until

they were eventually stopped. MIS-X and MI9 worked and coordinated closely together for an inter-Allied effort. The United States and Britain had no experience with these types of POW supplies before, and successfully gained intelligence though questioning POWs and shipped hundreds of supplies that aided escapers and evaders in German territory. This was a new aspect of war for the Allies, with cooperation extending past the reach of coordination on the ground in Europe, and now to operations at campsites through its own countries.

Similar to MIS-Y, MIS-X creation and shipment of E&E packages changed as the war conditions changed. By 1944, there were greater numbers of POWs who need packages, and these packages had to be sent further distances to reach them in Europe.\(^{101}\) As the war continued, the character of MIS-X changed, like the type of packages and supplies. After Nazi Germany began to fall, many packages were sent with more food and less E&E supplies, and it became the serviceman’s option to attempt escape or evasion.

The sources for both the British and United States’ programs are unique. There are more secondary works on the British intelligence system, especially with their MI9 programs. With Fort Hunt material, there is far more on the MIS-Y interrogation section that remains, as nearly everything from MIS-X was destroyed after the war by command from Washington, D.C. Where the United States sources are lacking, the British sources are more fruitful.

These stories of MIS-Y and MIS-X, with the interrogation of enemy prisoners and the creation and shipment of Escape and Evasion packages, tell of the United States’

involvement during the war. MIS-Y was an atypical POW experience, with the large majority of Axis prisoners being stationed at ordinary permanent or branch camps, but drawing attention to MIS-Y can help tell of the POW experience in the United States. The fact that over 400,000 prisoners lived temporarily in many communities throughout the United States creates a different homefront story. MIS-X provides another new look at the homefront experience, with programs and operations working to aid imprisoned Allied servicemen in Europe. The GWMP can help preserve and present these stories to the public at its original site at Fort Hunt, with better and more educational visitor experience.
**Fort Hunt as a Significant Space**

This project seeks to contribute to the ongoing conversation about what to do with Fort Hunt as a historical and public place, recommendations for ways in which the public can learn about the significance and story of PO Box 1142. There is a significant story to tell at Fort Hunt. Its programs and activities are no longer secret. Since the 1990s, World War Two archives have been available for the first time, including the archives and records on Fort Hunt’s use during the 1940s. It seems that this, along with Lloyd Shoemaker’s *The Escape Factory* published in 1990, went unnoticed by much of the public, including Fort Hunt veterans. It took nearly another 20 years for any type of official recognition and commemoration to take place. It was in the early 2000s when a recognition of its space emerged into public consciousness, with the George Washington Memorial Parkway’s project. The George Washington Memorial Parkway’s goal is to capture, preserve, and tell the story of Fort Hunt and its personnel, and it has organized events to commemorate the site and the veterans, including the first reunion of two PO Box 1142 veterans in August 2006, a dedication in June 2007, and a National Reunion and Symposium with a flagpole memorial dedication in October 2007.\(^\text{102}\) The GWMP work so far has been a great enhancement to the lack of attention prior, but there is still a call for more recognition to the site, and more GWMP outreach seems to be a successful way to accomplish that goal. The GWMP has to find solutions to some of the obstacles of preserving and presenting Fort Hunt’s story, including determining if a site that was purposefully not chosen to be preserved at the time of destruction can be preserved in the

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\(^\text{102}\) P.O. Box 1142 Uncovering the Secret History of Fort Hunt Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park Service, [https://www.nps.gov/cue/events/spotlight08/Talks_PDFs/bies.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/cue/events/spotlight08/Talks_PDFs/bies.pdf).
Matthew Virta, Cultural Resource Program Manager at GWMP, acknowledges that what GWMP has done so far is substantial and a contribution to the site, but specifies ways it can improve its presentation of information and visitor outreach.  He details that at the very least there needs to be more informative signage stationed throughout the Fort Hunt site, and there is a call for better service, more interpretation, and better visitor experience.

Fort Hunt is a powerful place. Fort Hunt now houses picnic pavilions, playing fields, GWMP ranger classes, concerts, hiking and biking trails, and the option to explore the battery structures. Some of these activities involve the history of the park; like the hiking trails established in the 1930s by the CCC and the battery defenses. (See Photograph 1 in Appendix).

This is a major deviation from how the park both looked and functioned during World War Two. There is no reason why the park today cannot function as both a recreational site, where visitors can enjoy a park setting, but also as a historical site, where visitors can learn the layered history of the park’s past. If PO Box 1142 successfully and efficiently operated both its covert operations MIS-Y and MIS-X during the 1940s, then it can certainly function as both a recreational and historical landmark. For that to be completed, there needs to be extensive work done by the GWMP.

There have been efforts to present Fort Hunt’s history since the rediscovery of PO Box 1142. Today there stands a flagpole memorial and is dedicated to the programs of

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104 The signage at Fort Hunt now is misplaced, with World War Two history displayed on the signs by the battery saters of the early 1900s, potentially causing confusion to visitors.
Fort Hunt during the war. This is significant, but there could be more outreach to present its story. These are only some of the ideas and options that could be implemented to make Fort Hunt’s PO Box 1142 an educational space. (See Photographs 2 and 3 in Appendix).

The characteristics that make Fort Hunt so unique and intriguing also set obstacles for remembrance and public presentation of the site. These obstacles include Fort Hunt’s complex programs and operations, the lack of sources available, its secrecy, and its lack of remaining structures. Fort Hunt was a complex camp, with several programs of operation, which may make it difficult to determine how to tell each story, especially with a lack of sources for certain programs. There are considerable records available for Fort Hunt at the National Archives, but they are almost entirely about MIS-Y, leaving information on MIS-X dependent on other sources, like personnel who worked there. The number of staff and personnel who worked at the camp, like the number of all World War Two veterans, is dwindling. This means there are fewer sources, opportunities, and artifacts that are left available. It is essential to gather and record the memories, stories, and possible artifacts from those who worked at the camp, especially in MIS-X. The secrecy of Fort Hunt also creates an obstacle for remembering its story. Records for MIS-X were destroyed after the war’s end to help keep the program covert, and the records that did remain were not fully opened to the public until the early 1990s. Even then, the personnel of the camp continued to honor their legal oath to secrecy and remained silent, with most, if not all of them, unaware the records were opened. Some individuals even continued to remain silent after the existence of the camp was made public. Another major obstacle is the lack of remaining structures of either MIS-Y or
MIS-X. Structures and buildings of MIS-Y and MIS-X can help visitors understand its story and significance, but how is that done when there is an absence of these buildings? There are no structures dated to the PO Box 1142 era that remain. Today, there is only one structure remaining that is related to PO Box 1142, a Non Commissioner Officers (NCO) quarters. The NCO quarters sits in the park and is one of the first structures visitors see upon entering. It was used during the 1940s, but dates back to the early 1900s for its use during the Spanish-American war. Fort Hunt is not just a product of World War Two, and it is not a new space; it is a shared space, with other structures from different eras and different purposes. How do you present Fort Hunt’s PO Box 1142 story along with its other history? Fort Hunt was established with no precedent to anything like it prior, so there is certainly no precedent on how to create, build, and tell its story. These are only some of the many possibilities. (See Photograph 4 in Appendix).

These obstacles should not prevent an attempt to further the recognition and commemoration of the site. Fort Hunt was a major successful program, and its uniqueness and efficiency should be recognized and shared with the public since there were no prior camps or operations like it in the United States. MIS-Y and MIS-X aided the war effort in important ways, and these stories should be part of the World War Two history.

PO Box 1142’s programs are not the only complex story. Fort Hunt falls into the neglected Prisoner of War category and experience. Although POWs at Fort Hunt had an atypical experience with MIS-Y, the site can help bring public attention to the reality that thousands of Axis prisoners temporarily lived in the United States during the war. Commemoration and action with this site can possibly, and hopefully, not only inform
the public about POWs in the United States, but pique the interests of those curious about this part of the story.

E. Barlett Kerr notes in his work, *Surrender and Survival: The Experience of American POWs in the Pacific 1941-1945*, that the story of prisoners of war is often a piece of the World War Two story that is obscured by the many other fascinating stories to tell. In comparison to other works on World War Two, the POW story is lacking, and Kerr wished to “illuminate a dark and little understood chapter in the history” of World War Two. Kerr’s work does help highlight parts of the POW experience, with American POWs abroad, but that still excludes foreign POWs in the United States.

Foreign prisoners in the United States are part of the POW story that lacks explanation and presentation. The National World War Two Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana is a museum ranked #3 in the United States and #16 in the world, according to TripAdvisor, and is one of the main World War Two exhibitions in the world. The section of the exhibition dedicated to prisoners of war throughout the European and Pacific theatre and in the United States is absent from its displays, proving there is an important piece of the story missing. The Museum of World War Two in Boston, Massachusetts is also missing a substantial portion of the POW story. This museum does dedicate part of its space to a Prisoner of War section, but mainly conveys the United States servicemen’s POW experience in the Pacific and Europe, and leaves out the

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history of Axis prisoners located within the United States. In addition to the POW experience section, there is another part of the museum where this story could possibly fit, in the Pearl Harbor and American Homefront section. The Homefront section explores “the reality of war” in the United States, with rationing and propaganda, by utilizing many war-time propaganda posters and anti-German and anti-Japanese memorabilia. This section could possibly move beyond that particular part of the homefront story and explore the large presence of Axis, in particular, German prisoners located in the United States, with many of them aiding the wartime economy by working in rural and small-town communities with agriculture.\textsuperscript{108} An outstanding aspect of this museum is its accessibility. The Museum of World War Two is available to a broad range of people throughout the globe with its Virtual Tour option, which gives visitors the ability to select a section of the museum and then virtually explore that section’s story and artifacts.\textsuperscript{109} This would be a great opportunity to frame the almost half a million Axis prisoners here in the United States, as this too was an important part of the homefront experience. With mentioning the story at Fort Hunt, this could help draw attention and crowds to visit the site and learn its history. Museums like these have the opportunity to tell the POW story and educate the public on a little known aspect of World War Two.

Since this is such an obscure part of the World War Two story, how does GWMP highlight Fort Hunt’s story and educate its visitors? How does it attract patrons outside

\textsuperscript{108} The Geneva Convention permitted this as long as their work was doing going directly to the Allied war effort.

\textsuperscript{109} Museum of World War Two, Boston, Massachusetts. http://museumofworldwarii.org/.
of the community to visit the site? How can it successfully share the space as a recreational park and still preserve and present the story of PO Box 1142? Does the current landscape and use of the park undermine and compromise the park’s integrity? These are questions this project attempts to answer, but it cannot fix all of its problems.

This project is a call for attention to the camp site. The GWMP and its staff have done an extraordinary job of preserving and presenting Fort Hunt’s story so far, but there is much more that needs to be accomplished so this story does not fade into the background again. If we can give national attention to this site, it may also draw attention to other, smaller POW camps throughout the United States. As with Fort Hunt, an overwhelming majority of camps have been demolished and neglected since the end of the war, often leaving behind no traces of their existence. National recognition of Fort Hunt can possibly draw attention to these types of camps, hopefully leading to the preservation of some of them and perhaps some establishment of informative signage. This would greatly help highlight this neglected part of the story, and is just part of the reason why a more attentive approach should be made with Fort Hunt.

These are the obstacles with commemoration at Fort Hunt and this public history project offers some of the options for preserving and presenting its story. The first option is an online exhibit, presenting the public from all over the world with a virtual website to learn about the camp’s establishment and purpose. The next option is to create a physical, on-site exhibit, an endeavor that is costly and more involved, but also perhaps more rewarding. The first option permits anyone to create a website, but a successful and central website by the GWMP and NPS would be most beneficial to site’s history, since these organizations own the land and already have trusted, academic, and available
webpages.

Online and digital exhibits can be constructed by a knowledgeable individual, but they can also be done poorly. Webpages are more accessible to the general public than on-site exhibits and are available for anyone to see. Individuals who have researched Fort Hunt’s records and collections at the National Archives and GWMP staff members would be qualified candidates to create an inclusive, educational, and central webpage.

The newspaper articles written by *The Washington Post* and *The Alexandria Times* in 2007 at the dedication of the flagpole memorial and veterans reunion generated more public and online attention than before. These news media outlets, along with CBS news and NPR, drew attention to the site, and these stories were circulated in newspapers throughout the country. There are also blog posts online where individuals detail their experience at the site. The blog posts’ creators and commenters express their surprise that a site like Fort Hunt existed in the United States, especially within such close proximity to Washington, D.C. Even local residents of Alexandria wrote into blog sites to express their surprise of its existence during the 1940s.

The GWMP Oral History Project is another successful story of the site, and is what helped generate the rediscovery of PO Box 1142. GWMP employees were assigned to conduct research on the park for the construction of informative signage, and after some time the employees were led to Fred Michel, a veteran of Fort Hunt, who shared his story with them to help explain the purpose and functions of the once top-secret camp.\(^{110}\) This

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encouraged the employees to begin their search for more veterans, who were hopefully willing to share their experience. The search was successful, and the GWMP located and interviewed over 40 PO Box 1142 veterans, creating the Fort Hunt Oral History Project. According to Virta, the Fort Hunt Oral History Project is still being processed and transcribed, and is not yet available to the public, but many of the stories of veterans have been captured.\textsuperscript{111}

Media coverage on the work that GWMP has successfully completed is another hopeful resource to create public attention. Webpages and digital PDFs like \textit{P.O. Box 1142 Uncovering the Secret History of Fort Hunt Park} from the GWMP provide dates, photographs, illustrations and an overview of the camp and the GWMP’s outreach project.\textsuperscript{112} The University of Delaware \textit{The Messenger} also published an article on the project, in particular one of its former students, Brandon Beis, who helped create it. It follows the story of Fort Hunt, and how the employees are reaching out to veterans and the community to help present its story.\textsuperscript{113} These news and media outlets help create better coverage of Fort Hunt’s story. Media across the country, Virginia, Washington, D.C. and Delaware help draw attention to Fort Hunt in Virginia.

There is other coverage of the site, through less national and more local community outlets. There is a website where there are interviews and video interviews from several

\textsuperscript{111} P.O. Box 1142 Uncovering the Secret History of Fort Hunt Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/cue/events/spotlight08/Talks_PDFs/bies.pdf.
\textsuperscript{112} P.O. Box 1142 Uncovering the Secret History of Fort Hunt Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway National Park Service, https://www.nps.gov/cue/events/spotlight08/Talks_PDFs/bies.pdf.
of the veterans of the camp, and there is a short documentary available. There is also a photograph website, where there are photographs and visuals of the reunion of the veterans. There are other websites that provide the background and history of the camp and its programs, but they are not academic websites. All of this is extremely useful information when searching for information about Fort Hunt, and especially drawing attention to its value, but these are scattered throughout the web, making it hard to find a concise webpage to gather all of the information.

There have also been several unsuccessful attempts to draw attention to Fort Hunt. There are two separate social media pages, on Facebook and Twitter, dedicated to P.O. Box 1142, and although perhaps not completely unsuccessful, both do not appear to be a good outreach program or tool to draw in the public. The sites do not post often, and have posted broken links, or links that are no longer available. There are websites dedicated to the veterans of Fort Hunt, but most do not have much detail or history of the site and its accomplishments and significance. There have been several attempts that have gone unfinished. Two separate recognition pages have been abandoned, the first a P.O. Box 1142 Top Secret Heroes webpage, that when opened reads “COMING SOON”, but is dated to 2013.\(^\text{114}\) The second is a failed Kickstarter page, dated from 2012 with a goal of reaching $1,000 to help recreate and share Fort Hunt’s story, but it went unfunded after only raising $193.\(^\text{115}\)

There have been attempts to tell and share Fort Hunt’s unique and complex story within the online community, to educate the public and to attract patrons to visit the camp

\(^\text{114}\) P.O. Box 1142, http://poBox1142.com/

\(^\text{115}\) P.O. Box 1142 Kickstarter, https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/afk/po-box-1142.
The George Washington Memorial Parkway and its employees helped create the Oral History Project, and national and local news media outlets have all helped create coverage and draw attention to Fort Hunt’s history and have helped veterans reunite and tell their own stories and experiences. There is yet to be a single, central, large-scale, academic website to fully explain Fort Hunt’s establishment and its significance, with information on its programs and prisoners. In addition to these great resources, there still needs to be a consolidated, educational and central website done by the GWMP to tell Fort Hunt’s story, including information on the camp’s programs, veterans’ stories, the Oral History Project, and links to media coverage. This website would help educate visitors from all over the world, and hopefully inspire some to visit Fort Hunt Park.\textsuperscript{116}

The GWMP is most qualified for this job, because of its ownership of land and recent work, but also because of the relationship it already has with the veterans. The GWMP website for Fort Hunt would be part of the National Park Service branch, making it both a central and educational website. If the GWMP’s goal is to draw public attention, foster a desire to learn, and prompt people to visit the virtual and physical site, there is a need for a successful organization, like the GWMP and NPS, to lead this project. A central, professional, academic website is important to Fort Hunt’s story, but is certainly not the only option that needs to be done. A physical, on-site exhibition must be completed for the improvement of education and the public experience at Fort Hunt.

Creating a physical exhibit at the site of Fort Hunt is a costly and involved endeavor. Many reports and media outlets call for an exhibit on the site, which could

draw in more public attention to educate visitors on why PO Box 1142 is so unique and powerful, both in the story of World War Two and the the home front experience. Because it is mostly recreational, there is certainly not enough informative signage at the park today. The flagpole memorial reports only a short paragraph on the park’s activities during the war, which does not do a sufficient job at interpreting its story. The GWMP has acknowledged that more signage, an on-site visitor center, a visitor kiosk, better service and interpretation can all improve Fort Hunt’s status as a historical site. It has also planned for some kind of additional informative signs to be in use in the future, but none have been finalized. There is currently not enough adequate signage at the park. All signage is located at the battery structures, which may draw in visitors to read the information, but may also create confusion. The battery saters date to the early 1900s, and condense all of the park’s unique stories into a few sentences for each era. (See Photographs in Appendix).

These are the ways in which the GWMP can continue and complete the conversation to tell Fort Hunt’s story on its physical site. There are no visitor centers or park rangers stationed at Fort Hunt Park, leaving the possibility that many visitors’ questions may go unanswered. The GWMP has published several pamphlets and digital PDFs on how to fix this visitor experience problem. The “Next Steps” for Fort Hunt’s PO Box 1142 were published, proposing ideas on what the National Park Service can do in the near future.\(^{117}\) The “Next Steps” original plan was the use of the NCO quarters house as a Visitor Contact Station PMIS #128166. This house sits on Picnic Area A at

the park now, the site where many of the structures of PO Box 1142 once stood. Is there a way to bond the use of Picnic Area A today and the use of the park during World War Two? Can the two seemingly different purposes coexist in the same place without compromising the history of Fort Hunt? This project does not have all the answers, but it seems that its recreational use today undermines the significance of its story. (See Photographs in Appendix).

According to Virta and the GWMP, these have been some of the questions that have been under revision for the past few years. In 2011, 2012, and 2015, there have been efforts by the GWMP to adapt and prepare an improved visitor educational experience and a commemorative space for the site. The GWMP completed several Site Development Plans (SDP) and Environmental Assessments (EA) to consider ideas and efforts for improvement, for “identify[ing] an overall direction for park management of Fort Hunt Park while defining specific resource conditions and improvements to visitor experience.” In the Summer of 2015, there was an Open House Review Board to discuss the SDP and EA and its ideas based on “public comments and additional analysis” of previous EAs and Section 106 visits. The Open House forum chronicles the need for more sufficient park management, resource conditions, direction and public interpretation and visitor experience, all from the result of the “recent discovery of the site’s rich history”, PO Box 1142. The already established recreational uses of the

park and this new history created the need for better interpretation and facilities. The 2011, 2012 and 2015 years have all contributed to different alternatives in an effort to successfully complete and provide these ideas to the public. These alternative plans not only affect the recreational areas, like restrooms, roads and parking, and the possibly of a PO Box 1142 site, but also the already established historical battery structures, and the forested land, which the GWMP also emphasizes as a habitat for many specifies and migration patterns. All this must be thought of and considered when planning a site improvement for the purpose of only one of the many stories of the land.

Some of the early alternatives include, a No Change alternative, leaving the site as is. Other options for advised alternatives published in the latest public release are an Interior Visitor Center, which would include the establishment of a visitor center of visitor kiosk in Picnic Area C, which would happen at the expense of the removal of some recreational facilities, like picnic pavilions and ball fields. The next alternative from the 2015 public release is the Gateway Visitor Service, which would establish a “visitor service zone near the entrance of Fort Hunt that could include the historic NCO Quarters and current office space in Pavilion A to support a visit service function.”121 According to the GWMP and the press release, this is the preferred alternative method. These alternatives must also consider constructional options, like the pavement or removal of roads and parking, restrooms, walking and running trails, reconfiguration of current park structures, and removal of “non contributing” elements of the park.

These alterations are compared and evaluated for their impact on the categories of

recreational, natural, and cultural resource effects. The categories in recreation and natural resources are visitor use and experience; rare, threatened, and endangered species; wildlife; vegetation; soils; and cumulative impacts. The categories for cultural resource effects are historic structures; cultural landscapes; archeological resources; and cumulative impacts. Positive impacts like the “increased interpretation” and visitor experience may override the potential negative impacts on the soil and vegetation with construction and building.122

Because these alternatives would affect the public visiting and traveling throughout the park, the GWMP presented these alternative possibilities to the community with the options for them to submit online and mail-in comments back to the GWMP. The community was also encouraged to download or request a copy of the EAs. This community’s involvement is important because this site is going to attract a different type of visitor than a typical museum or memorial. Patrons usually seek out museums and memorials for the sole purpose of visiting, but this park attracts those who may not know its history, but may be drawn into it after arriving, a visitor who does not initially visit for the history, as in other museum environments. This does not mean the GWMP should only consult the public, but it should also contact professional historians and public historians about their opinions, recommendations and alternatives for the camp site. The public may not have as much interest in the site as the GWMP had hoped and they may not wish to see the changes possibly made to the ball fields, picnic pavilions, parking and recreational facilities, but that does not mean that the importance of the commemoration

of this site should continue to be neglected. This is a collaborative presentation of the story of Fort Hunt.

Why does all this matter? This might be the question that many visitors may ask when construction of a new visitor center may be obstructing their use of a ball field, picnic pavilion, or parking. This may be a frequent question to the GWMP employees by angered patrons wishing to enjoy the park without construction. A physical site, visitor center, and more interpretation would give visitors an opportunity to learn about the camp site, even if that was not the reason for attending the park initially. It would let veterans to share their story of PO Box 1142’s operations, and for visitors to physically connect the park’s past with today. It would also give a better presentation of the POW experience in the United States during World War Two, even if it was an atypical POW camp. Fort Hunt’s preservation and presentation would hopefully set a precedent for more recognition of POW camps, in museums like the World War Two Museums and for other POW camps in the area and around the country, for better interpretation and signage to tell its story. The preservation of Fort Hunt would educate the public about the United States’ role in World War Two, with this particularly unique and neglected story of intelligence and escape operations and programs. Online presentation and on-site preservation lets visitors see into this piece of the story that is just newly rediscovered, hopefully reshaping their ideas while they are entertained. Attracting crowds to Fort Hunt to learn about the new history should not be an obstacle. Fort Hunt is not right in Washington, D.C., so it would not automatically attract the tourist groups that visit the monuments and memorials, but it is less than 30 miles from the nation’s capital and less than 5 miles from George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate, so its
proximity could attract new visitors. After the Fort Hunt project is complete, GWMP could partner and circulate its information about its new exhibition with the major tourist attraction in Washington, D.C. and Mount Vernon to gain more attention and recognition. The secret interrogation of Nazi prisoners and the creation of E&E programs are an intriguing headline to visitors, even to those not necessarily interested in history. For the visitors interested in history, and in particular World War Two history, this site would be an outstanding exhibit.

Fort Hunt is unique and set apart from all other POW camps throughout the United States. Its programs were secret, its prisoners include high-ranking German officials and affected the theatre of operation in Europe, and its story is one of the few that are being told. No other POW camp was as complex or valuable as Fort Hunt. Even its partnered camp, Camp Tracy in California, did not hold as many programs as the one in Virginia. The camp’s covert status remained for decades after the war’s end, almost hurting its opportunity for recognition. Fort Hunt is now a shared, multifunctional public space. What happened during World War Two is not the only reason why Fort Hunt is so fascinating. It is part of different stories throughout history, making it an unusual and unique place to share its story. Much of the public may also question why the GWMP is putting so much emphasis on PO Box 1142’s story instead of its other histories. PO Box 1142 is unique and efforts for its preservation and presentation should be made with haste because it is newly discovered, there are many people who do not know of its existence or significance, and with the dwindling number of World War Two veterans, this is the prime time to build an exhibit. An exhibition needs to be on the physical site of Fort Hunt, for the commemoration of its significance, for those who worked at the camp, and
for the education of the public. There is much more to be learned about PO Box 1142. (See photograph 6 in Appendix).

There is no Fort Hunt citation or description in the *Encyclopedia Virginia*, which is surprising and details the lack of importance placed on POWs. This particular encyclopedia is available and used to document all major historical places throughout the state, but it does not describe Fort Hunt as a POW camp, or for any of its other history.  

*Encyclopedia Virginia* is an excellent resource, and would be improved if Fort Hunt’s information was listed, both for the website and for the physical site.

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Fort Hunt Today

Fort Hunt’s land has a rich history, from prehistoric Native American site, Washington’s River farm, Coastal Defense, African American ROTC Training Camp, Bonus March Camp, CCC Camp area, and finally PO Box 1142. It is very much a shared space, but the new history of PO Box 1142 has led to new ideas and revisions about the park site’s interpretation and visitor experience.124 It has been transformed over the past centuries, and its transformation is still incomplete.

The project proposed here is certainly not the only option for researching and learning about Fort Hunt. This proposal was to emphasize and highlight the camp’s creation and establishment, its layout and design, and its programs and operations, all while illustrating how it was a successful, efficient, and perhaps most importantly, an original camp in the United States. This project was intended to reveal the fascinating story behind PO Box 1142 and its brotherhood of veterans, and to emphasize that there is a demand for “the next steps” for its public history presentation. Fort Hunt tells a variety of stories all throughout this one camp, with its POW experience, efforts to the Allies on the ground, and the homefront. For someone interested to World War Two history and public history, there is a responsibility to create a commemorative, educational, and interactive experience at Fort Hunt’s site. There may not be any physical structures remaining on the camp to physically preserve, but the preservation of the story should be just as powerful.

This project aimed to emphasize the POW experience, and highlight that along with the Rosie the Riveter idea of the home front, there were also nearly half a million Axis, mainly German, prisoners of war situated throughout the United States. This is part of the World War Two story that seems to go most unnoticed by museums and the public. This significant and powerful POW camp may increase the attention given to this part of World War Two. It can also draw attention to the United States’ effort to aid the Allies in the European theatre, with the creation and distribution of the E&E packages. It is hard to measure how many E&E packages were received, and how many aided air and ground servicemen in their escape, but these packages were helpful to several POW camps throughout Europe.

This project is designed with emphasis on the creation, establishment, layout and design of the camp. There are sections on PO Box 1142 printed and published in encyclopedic works, NP magazines, and brochures from GWMP, but there are no inclusive and scholarly secondary sources on the camp’s history, how it came to be, and how and why it was designed. These designs are important parts of the camp, affecting both MIS-Y and MIS-X and its secrecy, and is why they are highlighted here.

The examples of interrogation and the creation of certain E&E packages are part of what makes Fort Hunt an intriguing camp during the 1940s, and are part of the stories that have not yet been told together as a coordinated effort at Fort Hunt. MIS-Y and MIS-X were two separate programs, working with different materials for different goals, but all were coordinated under one effort of defeating the Axis. Lloyd Shoemaker’s *The Escape Factory* tells the story behind MIS-X, but there are no works that tell the stories behind both operations and how they worked for the same goal. With very few
secondary sources available on this camp, this project is an original work, detailing the importance of Fort Hunt’s establishment, operations, and contribution to the war effort, all with its unique stories. There are no other works that illustrate the efficiency and successful of these two programs, and that call for the hasty preservation and presentation of the camp’s on-site physical exhibition.

There are other areas of research. There has been interest in these records, but no works have yet been published, so perhaps one is in progress.

MIS-Y and MIS-X Areas of Further Research

MIS-Y’s records and papers are open and available to the public at the National Archives. Research opportunities include the Fort Hunt and MIS-Y’s adherence to the Geneva Convention; significance of interrogators, interrogation tactics, and prisoners; why Fort Hunt began its operations with MIS-Y; how prisoners at Fort Hunt reacted once they were transported out of Fort Hunt and to an alternative POW camp; and the different kinds of information that were ascertained during the interrogations; and the time prisoners stayed at Fort Hunt and how that affected the post-war world. Many German officials and high-value prisoners who were interrogated at Fort Hunt, especially towards the end of the war, were scientists from Nazi Germany. Wernher von Braun, a German scientist studying space engineering and architecture, was interrogated by PO Box 1142. The United States used von Braun, his information, and his fellow scientists for Operation Paperclip and American technology after the war. Fort Hunt’s interrogations and its relationship with Operation Paperclip, a program which brought more than 1,500 German scientists to the United States after the war to work on science, engineering, and
technology, is an expansive area of further research. Some prisoners did not leave Fort
Hunt until 1946, after the war was over, so these certain prisoners may have had
knowledge of certain scientific operations of Germany, which the United States tried to
ascertain. Researchers may find other areas of interest while going through the records
and papers of MIS-Y at the National Archives.

MIS-X is more difficult to research. All of the MIS-X records were destroyed after
the war. The destruction orders sound like a scene from a movie, with an important
government official arriving at the camp and ordering its personnel to start gathering
records, papers, anything from MIS-X, and burn it. This creates an obstacle for finding
sources. Lloyd Shoemaker’s *The Escape Factory* is an outstanding, and the only, work
on MIS-X, presenting the creation and distribution of the E&E packages, and his own
involvement in the camp. MIS-X is a fascinating part of Fort Hunt, and may interest
many, because of the covert and unusual operations and projects they conducted. Even
Shoemaker had problems tracking down available and surviving sources. Shoemaker
began at the National Archives and found that there were only “disconnected records”
and reports, so he then traveled and searched several other archives in Washington, D.C.
and around the country. He ended up back in Washington, D.C. at the Smithsonian
Institution and the Library at the Air Force Academy, where he found photographs and
materials that were used in POW camps in Germany that were sent from MIS-X.

After his research began, he was requested to speak at Stalag Luft Ill Spell in 1987,
and with an attendance of over 600 POWs, Shoemaker and MIS-X received public
attention and reporting. He continued his research, contacting different archives and
Special Collections throughout the country. The majority of the time he had no luck
finding official records and documents of MIS-X, but he occasionally found artifacts, photographs and materials, usually through veterans of the MIS-X program. Shoemaker’s work recounts the primary sources he was able to find, and also presents how difficult it was to track down the documents and records from a major program during World War Two.125

The United States was not alone in these intelligence systems in the war. The interrogations and intelligence gathered during the war were very much an inter-Allied, closely coordinated effort between the United States and the British. The United States was able to make its own contributions to the war effort with PO Box 1142, both with the doctrine of the POW Unit and with the shipment of the E&E packages to camps across Europe. The initial success of the British MI19 helped create the United States’ MIS-X, and the creation of the United States’ MIS-Y program helped foster Britain’s interrogation systems. MIS-X and MIS-Y coexisted at the same camp, aiding the war effort in different but equally important ways.

Fort Hunt was a unique site during World War Two, and remains one today. There is much more to learn about Fort Hunt and its programs, while there is the possibility that the veterans are still alive and willing to share their experience and stories. The stories of veterans are such a useful part of World War Two history, and they are something that should be emphasized when researching Fort Hunt. This is a newly discovered place and piece of the World War Two story, the POW experience, and the homefront experience. There was excitement about the camp in the early 2000s, with the published news media, interviews, and reunions in 2006 and 2007, and the excitement should be reinvigorated.

when a finalized plan for commemoration, interpretation and education by the GWMP and construction begins.
Appendix

Photograph 1
Fort Hunt, Virginia. Photographed by Lindsey Wood.
Photograph depicts the recreational use of the park today, with PO Box 1142’s flagpole memorial in background.
Photograph 2
Fort Hunt, Virginia. Photographed by Lindsey Wood. Flagpole memorial dedicated to PO Box 1142 and its service.
Photograph 3
Fort Hunt, Virginia. Photographed by Lindsey Wood. Flagpole memorial plaque, noting the existence and purpose behind PO Box 1142 in World War Two.
Photograph 4
Fort Hunt, Virginia. Photographed by Lindsey Wood. Photograph depicts view upon first entering the park, with unmarked and weathered NCO quarters in the background.
Photograph 5
Fort Hunt, Virginia. Photographed by Lindsey Wood. View of early 1900s structure, with informative signage of Fort Hunt’s World War Two history.
Photograph 6
Fort Hunt, Virginia. Photographed by Lindsey Wood. View of part of the camp with informative signage in foreground and PO Box 1142 flagpole memorial in background.
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