

UNCLASSIFIED

# DAILY ENTERPRISE

## (U) HISTORY TODAY - 14 November 2014

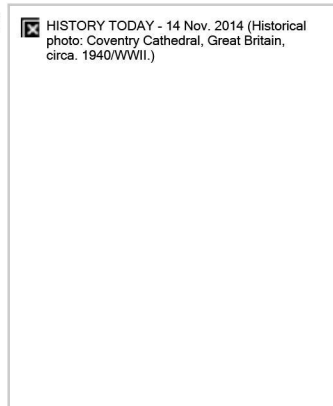
Run Date(s): 11/14/2014



(U) **Cryptologic Urban Myths:** Reading ULTRA messages, British prime minister Winston Churchill learned in advance about the German air raid on the city of Coventry. However, in order to protect the secret that the British could exploit German encrypted communications, Churchill did not order an evacuation of the city or call for added anti-aircraft defenses.

(U) In other words, the city was sacrificed to protect a cryptologic secret.

(U) **The Myth Examined:** On the night of November 14, 1940, the German Luftwaffe carried out a heavy raid on the city of Coventry. Although they failed to stop the military production of the city's factories, they did destroy many historical landmarks. The shell of Coventry Cathedral stood out -- and still stands -- as a reminder of the horrors of war.



(U) The British in 1940 were exploiting German Air Force messages enciphered on the ENIGMA machine; the British called the information from this source "ULTRA." ULTRA often provided warning of enemy bombing attacks.

(U) In the case of the November 14 bombings, ULTRA did indeed provide warning of the German attack -- but, critically, the target was not specified in the decrypted message. The British, including PM Churchill, knew an attack was imminent, but they had no clue that the target would be Coventry. One knowledgeable insider wrote after the war that Churchill had assumed the air attack would be on London.


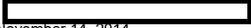
(U) Often, the target was not revealed in German planning messages because it was kept under tight controls until, literally, the very last moment. On bombing runs over the UK, German pilots followed a navigation beam from a German base in France. When the pilot encountered a cross-beam from German-occupied Norway, he would order the bombs to be dropped.

(U) The myth lives on. *History Today* will feature an article next week that explains why the *HT* staff believes this myth will live into eternity.

(U) Share historical topics with interesting folks. Visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) [Larger view of photo.](#)

(U) Have a question or comment on "History Today"? Contact us at DL cch or 

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