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COUNTER-DECEPTION, THE COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITY

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: *J. Sokol Jr.*

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<p>Deception is an integral part of war. Sun Tzu advocated it in his time as a means to gain an advantage, and the same holds true today. But, deception is not infallible or inevitable, its effects can be countered by the operational commander. This paper explores a general theory of logic for the operational commander to counter deception.</p> <p>Before a commander can counter deception, he must understand the theories, principles and techniques used by the enemy. First the theory of deception will be studied, based on the premise that deception is misperception. The structure of deception, the hiding of the real, and the showing the false will be examined. Then the operational principles and techniques that are used to build a successful stratagem will be explored.</p> <p>Armed with this knowledge, the commander is then able to identify the weakness and vulnerabilities of any deception operation. Using this baseline and answering four fundamental questions he can build a thought process to analyze his intelligence, and arrive at a logical conclusion of enemy capabilities or course of action.</p> <p>With a thorough understanding of deception, why, how, and to what end the enemy will use it, and through some anti-deception efforts of his own, the operational commander can counter the effects of deception.</p>			
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Abstract of

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Before a commander can counter deception, he must understand the theories, principles and techniques used by the enemy. First the theory of deception will be studied, based on the premise that deception is misperception. The structure of deception, the hiding of the real, and the showing the false will be examined. Then the operational principles and techniques that are used to build a successful stratagem will be explored.

Armed with this knowledge, the commander is then able to identify the weakness and vulnerabilities of any deception operation. Using this baseline and answering four fundamental questions he can build a thought process to analyze his intelligence, and arrive at a logical conclusion of enemy capabilities or course of action.

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## PREFACE

Counter-deception is a little addressed subject relegated to short chapters and small sections of larger works. The generally accepted view is deception is always possible and almost never fails. Although it may be true that a well planned effort may be difficult to detect in theory, in war it must be in pursuance of some other goal, deception for it's own sake is of little value.

The deception artist is like a criminal, he alone knows his capabilities and intentions, and if skillful, can stay one step ahead of the law. War is not an act for greed, it is an act in pursuance of a political goal. Therefore the laws/goals and specifically the objective, are narrowed considerably.

In this author's experience, deception can be countered at the tactical level, therefore, it follows it could be countered at the operational level. This paper explains how.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Deception has been used successfully to gain an advantage throughout the entire history of armed conflict. From Sun Tzu's time until the present, in peace and war, commanders have used deception techniques to mislead the enemy and keep him off balance in search for decisive victories. Deception is the tool of the commander, not the intelligence system.<sup>1</sup>

Deception is designed to produce an illusion, to profess the false in the face of the real.<sup>2</sup> It is present to one extent or another in our daily lives. Consumer advertising and the makeup industry are but two examples. Products sold by weight are packaged in a way to enhance the perception of a greater volume. The customer who recognizes the true importance of the weight of the product will not be fooled, he will buy by weight. The same is true in the cosmetic industry. Used usually to change color, or cover gray, hair color can fool the senses and portray a sense of youth. Again other cues will reveal the true characteristics.

In war deception has been, and will continue to be, an effective way to gain the advantage. It is generally designed to produce surprise. Operational commanders utilize it to

mislead the enemy to where, when and/or how an attack will take place. It is used as a force multiplier to aid in the application of decisive mass to achieve victory prior to the culminating point.<sup>3</sup>

To achieve this surprise, thus victory, deception must produce an action or inaction by the enemy. He can be fooled into leaving his forces in place, then be attacked elsewhere, (most effective) or he can be coerced into moving his forces elsewhere, for an attack where his forces just were (less effective). The most spectacular deception efforts in the past reinforced the enemy's preconceived notions. They successfully concealed capabilities or intentions and manipulated or exploited enemy intelligence to convince him that what he already believed was true.

Since deception is the tool of the commander, countering deception is also the responsibility of the commander. Given the fact that war must be in pursuit of a political goal the operational commander can, and must, know how deception works, when he is vulnerable to it, and how to counter or negate its effects.

This paper will examine deception theory, principles and techniques of operational deception and then explore counter-deception theory.

## CHAPTER II

### WHY DECEPTION?

"Deception aims to mislead the enemy into a predictable course of action or inaction which can be exploited".<sup>4</sup>

In order to cause the condition the deceiver attempts to: Surprise the enemy (strike him at a time or place, for which he is unprepared)<sup>5</sup>, Mislead the enemy by forcing him to violate the principle of mass (concentrate his combat power at the decisive place and time)<sup>6</sup>, or confuse the enemy (make him squander or scatter his resources).<sup>7</sup> Having achieved one or all of the above conditions, the perpetrator is able to exploit this condition and use military force for the decisive victory.

Deception is used as a force multiplier, it can cost little, some even say it is cheap<sup>8</sup>, but the investment can have a great payoff potential. This is why it is so attractive to most all military leaders. But the entire theory, principles, and techniques of deception are worthless unless they are applied in a cohesive logical course of action in quest for the enemy's centers of gravity and the objective, the campaign plan.

CHAPTER III  
GENERAL THEORY OF DECEPTION<sup>9</sup>

In his theory of deception, Barton Whaley contends:

"Deception is not a function of technologies. All deception is applied psychology - the psychology of misperception".<sup>10</sup>

He further states that:

Because deception is a matter of misperception, it is a psychological phenomenon. All deceptions occur inside the brain of the person (or animal) deceived. They take place only in the proverbial 'eye of the beholder'; we are not deceived by others, we only deceive ourselves -- the 'deceiver' only intending and attempting to induce deception. He contrives and projects a false picture of reality; but to be deceived we must both perceive this attempted portrayal and accept it in more-or-less the terms intended and projected.<sup>11</sup>

## The Structure of Deception.<sup>12</sup>

In it's simplest terms, deception can be broken down into two basic parts: diſsimulation and simulation.<sup>13</sup> Diſsimulation is hiding the real. It is the aspect of the operation that conceals the true capabilities or course of action. All military diſsimulation relies to one extent or another on security because without tight security the true course of action cannot be hidden.

Simulation is the part of the operation that paints the false picture. It presents a capability or course of action as the truth. It is done by showing the enemy one or more characteristics that compromise the distinctive pattern of a false thing.<sup>14</sup>

Generally there are just three ways to diſsimulate and three to simulate. The three procedures by which the real objects or events are concealed are masking, repackaging, or dazzling.<sup>15</sup> Masking conceals the real by making it invisible. A commander may hide his aircraft under roof to shield them from satellite surveillance. He will diligently use Operational Security (OPSEC) to conceal his true plans from the target.

Repackaging disguises the real by modifying its appearance. It is done by adding or subtracting

characteristics to transform them into a new pattern that resembles something else. A chemical weapon manufacturing plant disguised as a baby milk factory is a contemporary example.

Dazzling hides the real by confusing. It adds different characteristics to a thing in order to reduce certainty about it. Military codes and cyphers are a type of dazzle, they are jumbled and padded so characteristics are further confused although they are fully recognizable as a code.<sup>16</sup>

The three procedures used to show false things as real are mimicking, inventing, and decoying.<sup>17</sup> Mimicking has one thing imitating another.<sup>18</sup> It creates a double so to speak. Dummy aircraft replicas set out on a runway are mimicking the real.

Inventing creates one or more new characteristics to create an entirely new pattern.<sup>19</sup> Misleading radio traffic intended to portray a certain activity contrary to the true activity is inventing.

Decoying shows the false by diverting attention.<sup>20</sup> It creates alternative false characteristics to portray a second pattern. Ideally this pattern carries more conviction than the real one. Fake with a right, then follow with a left hook. Creating a diversion in one area then attacking another is decoying.

From this discussion we can see that most all successful deception efforts are made up of the two elements: dissimulations and simulations. Whaley further contends the sub-categories of dissimulation and simulation oppose each other like so:<sup>21</sup>

<u>Dissimulation</u>	{Masking {Repackaging {Dazzling	Mimicking} Inventing} Decoying }	<u>Simulation</u>
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He states the most effective combination would be masking and mimicking and the least effective is combining dazzling and decoying. In reality, at the operational level of war, the most spectacular efforts involve combining one or more of the sub-categories of dissimulation and simulation to produce the desired misperception.

## CHAPTER IV

### OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF DECEPTION<sup>22</sup>

To be successful, the operational commander must apply the theory with some general principles in mind. First the entire plan must be under centralized command and control so dissimulation and simulation are possible, as well as logical and coordinated. A plan executed piecemeal will not be nearly so effective as a well coordinated plan.

Secondly, the plan must be soundly prepared. It requires a thorough knowledge of the enemy and his ability to gather intelligence. The entire plan must be planned to the most minute detail. Every piece of information the enemy is to receive must be contemplated and judged that it will contribute to the final conclusion he will draw.

Thirdly, the deception or ruse must be viable and plausible. It must not be in conflict with the strategic culture, or past warfighting history of the adversary. A plan that is counter to past actions will be less likely to be believed than one that is in concert with history. It must not be illogical or far-fetched. The most effective deception plans allow the enemy to draw his own conclusions through his own intelligence analysis. These conclusions seem to carry

more conviction than if the enemy was more or less handed the information.

The indicators (simulation) must be presented through as many sources as possible to aid the enemy in drawing the desired conclusion. This principle obviously requires a thorough knowledge of the enemy intelligence gathering capabilities. It is extremely difficult to fool all methods of collection at once. In some of the more spectacular examples of deception one or more of the enemy's intelligence sources were manipulated or denied to him.

Timing is ever so critical in the design of a deception plan. For the plan to work properly it must be implemented to occur outside the enemy's decision cycle. That is, to produce the required action or inaction, the enemy has to be given time to acquire, analyze, accept, and react to the information given. However, it must not be done so far in advance the enemy has time to analyze the information thoroughly enough to uncover the ruse.

Security (Dissimulation) is vital to any successful deception plan. This can be a paradoxical in the fact that sometimes an apparent breach of security is what is required to convince the enemy of the intended course of action. But suspicion must not be raised, or the enemy will see through the

plan and not bite at the bait. This can be a double edged sword. Too much secrecy can mislead friendly forces and cause confusion to them as well as the enemy.

Lastly deception requires initiative. It requires creative thought and a desire to produce action or inaction which can be exploited for a tactical, operational, or strategic victory, in pursuit of the political goals.

## CHAPTER V

### DECEPTION TECHNIQUES<sup>23</sup>

Based on the applied psychology of simulation and dissimulation some of the more successful operational techniques of causing misperception include:

Encourage the belief in the most logical course of action then proceed with an alternative plan.<sup>24</sup> The most spectacular examples include Operation Bodyguard during WWII and the Hail Mary during Desert Storm. During Bodyguard the German notion that the invasion would come at Pas-de-Calais was reinforced, when in fact, Normandy was the objective. Similarly in Desert Storm Saddam was duped into thinking the main attack was through Kuwait via an amphibious assault, when a flanking maneuver to the west was the true allied course of action.

The Lure.<sup>25</sup> Based on the decoy simulation the enemy is presented with a situation that is not a reality. A trap has been set so when the enemy takes the "bait" he will be thrust into a surprise situation and unable to react to counter the efforts. Former Soviet air combat tactics relied quite heavily on this deception.

The Repetitive Process.<sup>26</sup> This aims at lulling the adversary into a false sense of security by repetitive activity. Again this was done by the allied air forces in preparation for Day 1 of Desert Storm. For several weeks prior to January 15th, many large force practice missions were flown, both to lull the enemy, and to train allied pilots.

The Double Bluff.<sup>27</sup> A technique revolving around the idea that by revealing the truth to the enemy he will disregard it as a bluff and follow another course of action. Rather risky, this technique is not often used.

The Unintentional Mistake/Bad Luck.<sup>28</sup> A simulation technique targeting enemy intelligence acquisition. It is used to supply the enemy's intelligence network with the required information through a non-existent security breach, or simply as a result of the friction and fog of war. The enemy is duped into thinking the adversary has suffered a stroke of bad luck and then develops a course of action based on the facts that have been acquired.

## CHAPTER V

### COUNTERING DECEPTION

The Fundamental Questions. Because everything (whether objects or events) can to some extent be both simulated and dissimulated, deception is always possible. However, because this can never be done to the full extent, counter-deception is also always possible.<sup>29</sup> It must be remembered that if an object or event is dissimulated or simulated to the fullest extent, it becomes the reality.

Counter-deception must be the responsibility of the commander. Only with a thorough understanding of theory, principles, techniques and operational application of deception can the operational commander counter its effects.

There are two fundamental weaknesses in deception: The fact that deception is merely misperception, and the reality that war is in pursuit of a political goal. We will examine the second question first.

During the design and execution of a campaign, among many others, there are four fundamental questions that must be answered by the commander and his staff:

- What will produce victory? This leads to a derivation of the objective which will result in the desired political end state at the end of the conflict.
- What will produce enemy defeat? This leads to the derivation of the enemy centers of gravity, (COG) the source of all their power, will, or freedom of movement.
- What will produce enemy victory? What objective must the enemy achieve to attain the required political end state.
- What will produce friendly defeat? What is the source of friendly power, will or freedom of movement, this is the friendly COG, this is what will cause the conflict to be lost.

Once these questions are answered, the commander restricts the enemy's potential to cause misperception. Unfortunately the difficulty in answering these questions is two-fold. First the enemy's concept of victory, or their political end state may not be in accordance with generally accepted western views. In their pursuance of political goals the enemy may think the operation worthwhile even though military victory may not be

guaranteed.<sup>30</sup> Israel was surprised by the Egyptians in 1973 because they did not understand this concept.

Closely related to the first question is the fact that, paradoxically, what will produce friendly victory, and what will cause enemy defeat may not be, and often are not, the same. The American experience in Vietnam proves this to be so. Merely winning all the battles in a self declared war of attrition did not ensure victory.

For the purpose of countering deception, the two questions the commander is primarily concerned with are: What will produce enemy victory? and What will produce friendly defeat? In answering these questions, assuming the enemy has a viable campaign plan (worst case assumption) the commander will arrive at the end state the enemy must produce and the friendly COG to protect. If the enemy acts outside of the parameters, the act has a higher probability of being a deception effort. It may be tactically, but not operationally significant, so the commander should be wary of the "decoy" or "lure".

The battle of Midway provides the case study for this. The Japanese dissimulation and simulation was incomplete, as always, because the Americans had broken the code. Still, Spruance was puzzled why the Japanese would want Midway. He felt the American Island twelve hundred miles northeast of

Honolulu had little strategic value. But Japanese operations against the Aleutians seemed equally illogical.<sup>31</sup> Admiral Nimitz felt otherwise. If the Japanese were about to launch an offensive in the Pacific Ocean . . . they were going to have to seize or bypass the armed U.S. outpost of Midway, which stood squarely in their way.<sup>32</sup> Through assessment of what was required for the Japanese to continue their quest for victory, Nimitz correctly assessed the Aleutian raid as a diversion. Since he was not about to diffuse his efforts and scatter his limited forces<sup>33</sup> he intended to resist with minimum effort in the Aleutians and concentrated his efforts for a preemptive strike on the Japanese prior to their strike at Midway.

It could be argued that this is not a valid example because the Americans had the Japanese code, but dissimulations and simulations are never complete, and there was some doubt if the code was really broken. But the true intentions were surmised when the flaws in the dissimulation and simulation were overlaid with the right answers to the operational questions. The disconnect occurred in the Japanese quest for victory. It is illogical the Japanese would waste effort on the Aleutians. Nimitz correctly assessed the Japanese need for Midway, both for victory and to eliminate an America COG in order to continue with their effort in the Pacific.

Contrast this with Halsey's actions in the Battle for Leyte Gulf. Here the questions were not answered correctly and this led to the misperception. Halsey did not look inward to assess the enemy objective, which was to prevent the amphibious landing. Since the American carrier force protected the amphibs, and gave them the freedom of maneuver, the carriers become a center of gravity. The Japanese realized they could achieve their objectives one of two ways, destroy the carriers, (unlikely) or lure them far enough away to uncover the amphibs long enough for a decisive attack. The plan worked using the lure, only a fine action by Admiral Oldendorf and feats of individual heroism prevented disaster for the amphibious task forces.

The Stage for Misperception. The commander must be attuned to his own intelligence sources, limitations and vulnerabilities if he is to prevent misperception. It is through intelligence sources that the deceiver will set the stage for misperception through both dissimulation and simulation. Intelligence work can be divided into three distinct levels: acquisition (the collection of information); analysis (its evaluation); and acceptance (the readiness to make use of the information).<sup>34</sup> Acceptance of this information

relies on the judgement of the commander, and is of course, the most critical aspect of the equation.

Some of the most spectacular deception in the past has succeeded because the target has been denied some of his intelligence acquisition methods. Germany in WWII did not have air superiority thus the ability to see the allied buildup at Normandy. Nor did Saddam have access to satellite photos or aerial reconnaissance to see allied forces move to the west. Thus when dissimulation can be facilitated, simulation becomes easier. A commander who is denied some of his intelligence collecting methods must be especially wary of deception.

The analysis phase is where the characteristics gathered from the acquisition phase are translated into capabilities and courses of action. During this phase it is most important to have creative, knowledgeable staff personnel analyze the work. The commander and his staff must never surrender to preconceived notions. A general concept of enemy thinking can come from many psychological factors such as: mirror imaging (what would I do if I were him); or wishful thinking (I hope he does this); or simply the aura of self infallibility. This leads to narrow minded assessment, and is the basis for misperception. Adolf Hitler is perhaps the most extreme example of this phenomenon in modern history. He surrounded

himself with yes-men and sycophants. His closest military advisors carefully ensured that he received only the reports that confirmed his beliefs and images. At no point, even after the most serious defeats, did Hitler encourage any other type of reporting.<sup>35</sup>

Human psychology dictates human nature. It also can be a hinderance to a true analysis or acceptance of intelligence signals. Humans are social creatures with egos and needs for acceptance. It dictates the desire to be correct, and to be part of the team. This makes it difficult both for the commander and the subordinate when conflicting views are presented. Reinforcing a popular, or commanders opinion can be the easiest, least politically controversial, and possibly perceived as the most career enhancing path.

In the quest for honest analysis all views must be discussed, but simply appointing a "Devils Advocate" may not be enough. Although an individual may be assigned the role and be politically protected, he cannot be expected to express the conviction and in-depth understanding of someone who genuinely believes in that position.<sup>36</sup> The commander must aggressively seek out and encourage contrary opinions and views during the decision making process. Only then will he have the diverse ideas required to reach a logical conclusion. Freedom of

expression of opposing views is a fundamental concept in a comprehensive analysis process.

The Initiative. Finally, deception requires initiative. It requires imagination and freedom of action to plan and execute the theory, principles, and techniques of deception in pursuance of the operational objectives. It follows that denying the enemy the initiative is a necessary course of action in countering deception. If the enemy does not have the time to plan the operation, if the nature of the battle and the objectives change, or if he is forced to react to other actions and deception efforts, he will be less likely to produce a thorough, believable stratagem that will produce the misperception, thus the victory. Nimitz denied the Japanese the initiative in the quest for Midway by the preemptive strike. Even though outnumbered, the Americans knocked the Japanese off balance enough to negate their attack, thus winning a decisive victory. In Desert Storm, had Saddam been able to deny the coalition forces the initiative by raids similar to Khafaji, the deception effort may have been impossible, or less effective.

So, if the initiative can be denied, or if the enemy is reacting to friendly initiative, he will have less opportunity

and circumstances to implement a deception plan. Effectively this might be considered more anti-deception than counter-deception.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Deception is merely misperception. The crux of the problem is how to avoid the misperception the enemy tries to cause. It seems clear, both from tactical experience and from operational history, that a logical process can be developed to avoid or minimize the misperception, thus the deception.

Since nothing can be dissimulated or simulated to the fullest extent, otherwise it becomes the real, there are always clues present. The question becomes one of acceptance of the clues as fact, and further, how one reacts to them.

It must not be forgotten that the misperception is designed to produce an inaction or action to aid the enemy in his quest for victory. But deception always costs something, it requires initiative, effort, and resources to build a viable stratagem. This stratagem must be focused in accordance with the questions of end state and centers of gravity. If not, the stratagem need not be countered, for it will be irrelevant to the campaign. If the enemy is focused properly, then the deception becomes harder to counter, but since this effort costs something, as shown in the Aleutian and Leyte Gulf diversions, the enemy will not be able to fully apply the

principle of mass in quest for the objectives and centers of gravity that will assure his victory.

When analyzing intelligence clues, the commander and his staff should always overlay them with the four questions. If during the intelligence analysis process it seems the most logical course of action is to react in a way contrary to what the answers to the questions may dictate, a flag should be raised, and the problem analyzed further it must be remembered the best deception plans reinforce a preconceived notion.

Finally the commander must not allow the enemy the initiative to design and employ the stratagem. He must do this through his own initiative and deception efforts to bewilder and beguile the enemy.

Through a logical thought process to identify enemy deception, and through diligent anti-deception actions the commander can counter the effects of enemy deception over the course of the campaign. The true genius of the commander is not to conform to the nature of a war, but to dictate it to the enemy.

## NOTES

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