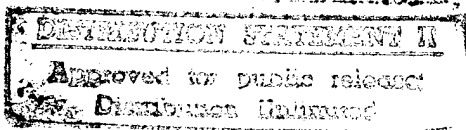


NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.

OPERATIONAL DECEPTION IN THE GULF WAR:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE JOINT COMMANDER



by

Eric L. Rolaf

Major, United States Marine Corps

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military 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: \_\_\_\_\_

14 June 1996

Paper directed by  
Captain D. Watson  
Chairman, Joint Military Operations Department

19960501 217

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 1

Unclassified

Security Classification This Page

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. Report Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED			
2. Security Classification Authority:			
3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:			
4. Distribution/Availability of Report: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.			
5. Name of Performing Organization: JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
6. Office Symbol: NWC Code 1C		7. Address: NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207	
8. Title (Include Security Classification): Operational Deception in the Gulf War; Implications for the Joint Commander (U)			
9. Personal Authors: Eric L. Rolaf, Major USMC			
10. Type of Report: FINAL		11. Date of Report: 14 June 1996	
12. Page Count: 25			
13. Supplementary Notation: A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.			
14. Ten key words that relate to your paper: Deception, Operational Deception, Surprise, Gulf War, Operational Art, Joint Doctrine, Desert Storm, Combat Multiplier, Synergy, Operational Leadership.			
15. Abstract: The Gulf War provided an opportunity for contemporary warfighters to observe the potential benefits afforded the operational commander who can effectively apply operational deception. From the outset of hostilities, General Schwartzkopf emphasized the need to use deception and directed that it be included as an integral aspect of operational planning. The conceptual planning bears this out, as well as the actual execution of the highly successful "left hook" through the desert that was made possible by use of a well-orchestrated deception plan. The American military leadership has since taken many of the lessons from the Gulf War and formalized the role of deception planning at the joint level. Likewise, the Gulf War had implications regarding the demand for creative and bold operational leadership in future conflicts as America comes to grips with smaller military forces and an aversion to casualties of any magnitude. Advancements in technology and operational art applied vigorously in formulating warfighting strategy will provide a solution through the combat multiplier effect of operational deception. Today, and in the future, it will be incumbent upon all joint operational commanders to maximize the combat effectiveness of assigned forces through the careful application of all warfighting implements available. Clearly, one of the most effective means available will be operational deception.			
16. Distribution / Availability of Abstract:	Unclassified X	Same As Rpt	DTIC Users
17. Abstract Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED			
18. Name of Responsible Individual: CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
19. Telephone: 841- <del>6461</del> 6461		20. Office Symbol: C	

Security Classification of This Page Unclassified

Abstract of

OPERATIONAL DECEPTION IN THE GULF WAR:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE JOINT COMMANDER

The Gulf War provided an opportunity for contemporary warfighters to observe the potential benefits afforded the operational commander who can effectively apply operational deception. From the outset of hostilities, General Schwartzkopf emphasized the need to use deception and directed that it be included as an integral aspect of operational planning. The conceptual planning bears this out, as well as the actual execution of the highly successful "left hook" through the desert that was made possible by use of a well-orchestrated deception plan. Additionally, General Schwartzkopf was well aware of Saddam Hussein's preconceptions regarding American combat power and ability to operate in the desert environment. By using this to his own benefit, General Schwartzkopf was able to defeat Hussein in very short order with minimal friendly casualties.

The American military leadership has since taken many of the lessons from the Gulf War and formalized the role of deception in planning at the joint level. Likewise, the Gulf War had implications regarding the demand for creative and bold operational leadership in future conflicts as America comes to grips with smaller military forces and an aversion to casualties of any magnitude. Advancements in technology and operational art applied vigorously in formulating warfighting strategies will provide a solution through the combat multiplier effect of operational deception. Today, and in the future, it will be incumbent upon all joint operational commanders to maximize the combat effectiveness of assigned forces through careful application of all warfighting implements available. Clearly, one of the most effective means available will be operational deception.

The art of deception can only be cultivated and learned through history, the experiences of one's contemporaries, the encouragement of creativity and imagination in the military, constant emphasis on the need to reduce the cost and casualties of war, and an understanding of the enemy's own fears.<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

Deception, with its inherent value as a combat multiplier, has intrigued classic military theorists and great military leaders since the earliest experiences of warfare. From the ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu, who commented in *The Art of War* that "All warfare is based on deception," to the 19th century Prussian military reformer Carl Von Clausewitz, who, commenting on the idea of cunning, stated in his magnificent work, *On War*, that:

The use of a trick or stratagem permits the intended victim to make his own mistakes, which, combined in a single result, suddenly change the nature of the situation before his eyes.

Operational deception in the Gulf War is a contemporary example of the combat multiplier effect that ties force levels, technology and strategy together, facilitating success in wartime particularly as nations are concerned with loss of life and unnecessary expense to its citizenry. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that, even in the age of advanced technology and smaller forces, deception is still possible and necessary. Using the Allied Coalition victory in the Gulf War as a frame of reference, this paper will address some specific background information that defines the deception plan used, its exploitation and impact to the war effort, and then provides some insights into what the impact of the successful operational deception has had on joint doctrine and the future of warfare for the operational commander.

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Handel, *War, Strategy and Intelligence* (Totowa, NJ: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1989), 401.

## **Prelude to the Deception**

Once Saddam Hussein took the fateful step of invading Kuwait, "the President, aware of the regional sensitivities of a large US. military presence, made the decision that, if invited, the United States initially would deploy enough forces to deter further Iraqi attack, defend Saudi Arabia, and enforce UN resolutions, retaining the option to deploy more forces if needed to eject Iraq from Kuwait".<sup>2</sup> With the initial deployment of forces, better known as Operation Desert Shield, focusing on a defensive mission, the following set of clearly defined US. military objectives were established:

- \* develop a defensive capability in the Gulf region to deter Saddam Hussein from further attacks;
- \* defend Saudi Arabia effectively if deterrence failed;
- \* build a militarily effective Coalition and integrate Coalition forces into operational plans; and finally,
- \* enforce the economic sanctions prescribed by UNSC Resolutions 661 and 665.<sup>3</sup>

With these straight forward military objectives aimed at a defensive response to the Iraqi aggression against its helpless and unsuspecting neighbor, a concept of operations was developed that would serve to support these military objectives. The overall concept of operations essentially called for an area defense utilizing an enclave strategy for the Coalition whereby Saudi land forces, in conjunction with Coalition air power, would be able to trade space for time. This would allow for the rapid buildup of US. military power while also providing some capability to counter attack, if necessary.

---

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Dept. of Defense, Final Report to Congress: Conduct of the Persian Gulf War (Washington: 1992), 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## Genesis of the Deception

As early as August 25, 1990, during a CINCCENT briefing in response to a Secretary of Defense request for offensive options should Iraqi actions call for such a response, General Schwartzkopf outlined his intent:

We will offset the imbalance of ground combat power by using our strength against his weakness. Initially execute deception operations to focus his attention on defense and cause incorrect organization of forces. We will initially attack into the Iraqi homeland using air power to decapitate his leadership, command and control, and eliminate his ability to reinforce Iraqi forces in Kuwait and southern Iraq. We will then gain undisputed air superiority over Kuwait so that we can subsequently and selectively attack Iraqi ground forces with air power in order to reduce his combat power and destroy reinforcing units. Finally, we will fix Iraqi forces in place by feints and limited objective attacks followed by armored force penetration and exploitation to seize key lines of communication nodes, which puts us in a position to interdict resupply and remaining reinforcements from Iraq and eliminate forces in Kuwait.<sup>4</sup>

CINCCENT's intent clearly framed the offensive planning. With grave concerns over the frontal assault nature of the offensive planning, in October, 1990, CINCCENT was tasked to consider other offensive options including a wider use of an enveloping force to the west of Kuwait.

Two major ideas surrounded all aspects of Coalition planning for Desert Shield and Desert Storm; the use of decisive force, and applying Allied strength against Iraqi weaknesses. In contrast to the attrition style of warfare that characterized operations in Vietnam, defense planners were given the latitude and trust to be able to exploit every possible advantage in tactics, equipment, command and control, and the forces deployed to

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 84.

the theater at maximum speed. By using this principle of decisive force, the Coalition was capable of conducting massive, simultaneous operations throughout the Kuwait theater of operations and Iraq, rather than attacking centers of gravity and other objectives piecemeal. Additionally, the Coalition was able to apply its strength against Iraqi weaknesses by carefully exploiting superiority of personnel and training, technology, intelligence support, unimpeded use of space, widespread international support, and finally, with the high caliber of Coalition political and military leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Planning for the ground campaign was focused on several operational imperatives. Among these imperatives were several factors addressing the need for deception. For example, CINCCENT intended to achieve rapid theater intelligence on the battlefield while utilizing deception as a means of portraying a predominantly defensive posture, fixing or diverting the Republican Guard away from the main effort, and facilitating the penetration of barriers.<sup>6</sup> Finally, after months of continuous planning and guidance from the Secretary of Defense, CINCCENT's mission statement evolved from the original "defend and deter" role and now focused on aggressive offensive combat. CINCCENT's mission statement now read as follows:

Conduct offensive operations to neutralize Iraqi national command authority, eject Iraqi armed forces from Kuwait, Destroy the Republican Guard, As early as possible, destroy Iraq's ballistic missile capability, and assist in the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 96.

From this final mission statement, CINCCENT implemented his four-phased campaign plan which included a strategic air campaign, establishment of air supremacy in the Kuwait theater of operations, preparation of the battlefield, and the offensive ground campaign. The offensive focus was now also articulated in the concept of operations that stated:

Conduct a coordinated, multi-national, multi-axis air, naval and ground attack. Strategic air campaign focused on centers of gravity such as Iraqi national command authority, NBC capability, and Republican Guard Forces Command. Progressively shift air operations to; and conduct ground operations in the Kuwait theater of operations to isolate the theater and sever Iraqi supply lines, destroy the Republican Guard forces, and liberate Kuwait City with Arab forces.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Deception Plan**

There is no doubt that the susceptibility to conditioning is one of the most fundamental human proclivities to be exploited by deception operations.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the planning process, CINCCENT emphasized the need for a comprehensive plan to deceive Iraqi forces regarding Coalition intentions and to conceal the potential Allied scheme of maneuver. The deception plan was intended to convince Iraq that the main attack would be directly into Kuwait, supported by an amphibious assault. The plan also sought to divert Iraqi forces from the Coalition main attack and to fix Iraqi forces in eastern Kuwait along the Kuwaiti coast.

All components contributed to the deception. Activities that were planned to support the deception included Navy feints and demonstrations in the northern Persian Gulf, Marine

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>9</sup> Handel, 374.

landing exercises along the Gulf and Omani coast, positioning of an amphibious task force in the Gulf, and air refueling and training activity surges that desensitized the Iraqis to the real pre-attack buildup. The absence of air attacks on some western targets was also to contribute to the impression that Coalition main attack would come from the vicinity of the Saudi-Kuwait border and from the sea. This impression was to be reinforced by USMC and Joint Forces East (JFC-E) operations south of Kuwait to fix Iraqi divisions along Kuwait's southern border. Numerous raids and some Special Operations Forces activities were expected to contribute to Saddam Hussein's confusion as to the most likely location for the main attack.

None of the divisions would move until the air war had begun. Together, that and the planned ground, counter-reconnaissance battles would hinder Saddam Hussein's ability to detect and effectively react. The 1st Cavalry Division was to remain in the east, simulating the activities of the divisions which moved west, so Iraqi intelligence would not notice their absence. The 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions (MARDIV) conducted combined arms raids along the Kuwaiti border to confuse the Iraqis and focus their attention on the east. Finally, operations security practices supported deception.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Dept. of Defense, 102.

### Target of the Deception

To succeed, operational deception must be targeted against the enemy commander who has the authority and resources to *react operationally*.<sup>11</sup>

Like any good commander, General Schwarzkopf took a special interest in his opponent. He carefully studied the Iraqi dictator's psychology which enabled him to see that Saddam Hussein was a stubborn and cunning man, although also an extremely limited man that was clearly used to getting his way by force and, therefore, ill-equipped to gauge the resolve of a world in which he scarcely traveled. Like all megalomaniacs - and Schwarzkopf concluded that Saddam had a megalomaniacal desire to lead the Arab world - he was deluded. He was, in short, a parochial thug with dangerous fantasies. One official close to the general said that Schwarzkopf tried to put himself in Saddam's shoes and concluded that the Iraqi dictator's strategy was likely to be based upon several elements that would eventually prove misleading. For example, Hussein was focused on issues such as his eventual success against Iran in a war of complete brutality; American failures in Vietnam, in the aborted hostage-rescue mission in Iran in 1980, and in the unsuccessful expedition of Marines into Beirut in 1983; the apparent fragility of so wide a coalition, with several Arab members, especially if Israel was attacked; and a conviction that U.S. commitment would prove extremely tenuous as soon as the body bags started piling up.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Milan Vego, "Fundamentals of Operational Design," an Unpublished Paper (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 1995), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Cohen and Claudio Gatti, In the Eye of the Storm: The Life of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991), 226-227.

## Leading the Deception, "A Great Captain"

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf was a product of the Vietnam War era. He had an abiding trust in the American military and a sincere love for the average soldier. The welfare of those warriors under his charge was never far from his thoughts. Recognizing that the United States could not tolerate excessive casualties, and seeking to maximize his combat power against the Iraqi war machine, Schwarzkopf determined that every operational capability available should be used to defeat Saddam Hussein. This included the artful use of deception applied at the operational level of war.

The deception plan clearly reflected Schwarzkopf's study of military history and his commitment not to play to the Iraqi strengths. Schwarzkopf stressed that he wanted to use Allied strength against Iraqi weakness. This concept would guide the general throughout the war. He saw war as a noble art and was determined to outfox Saddam through the careful application of that art. As a contemporary practitioner of modern warfare, he understood that "soldiering was about the kind of audacity that led Hannibal to bring his elephants over the Alps, Bradley to bring his troops ashore at Omaha Beach on D Day, and Patton to rush to the relief of Bastogne during the battle of the Bulge."<sup>13</sup>

General Schwarzkopf did not invent anything new in the Gulf. "Schooled in military theory, fascinated by the maneuvers of great generals, he brought the knowledge of the ancients to bear on the use of twenty-first-century technology."<sup>14</sup> A careful review of Sun Tzu, which Schwarzkopf had read, provided the basis for the concept of deception in

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 228.

warfare and the idea of attacking where the enemy is unprepared. For example, Sun Tzu had written centuries earlier: "For the impact of armed forces to be like stones thrown on eggs is a matter of emptiness and fullness. *Attack complete emptiness with fullness.*" Sun Tzu also advised his generals to "appear where they cannot go, head for where they least expect you."

### **Deception in the Desert**

It is clear that strategists who prefer victory at the lowest possible cost or even without bloodshed also show more interest in deception than those who see the acme of a commander's skill as being demonstrated in battle itself and are therefore continually searching for the decisive engagement.<sup>15</sup>

CINCCENT clearly placed a high priority on protecting his force while also surprising the enemy through the use of deception operations. These operations were intended to convince Iraq that the main attack would be directly into Kuwait, supported by an amphibious assault. Aggressive ground force patrolling, artillery raids, amphibious feints and ship movements, and air operations were all part of CINCCENT's orchestrated deception operation. For 30 days before the ground offensive, the 1st Cavalry Division conducted aggressive feints, demonstrations, and artillery raids in the direction of the Iraqi defenses nearest the Wadi Al-Batin. These activities reinforced the deception that the main attack would be launched directly north into Western Kuwait. It also held five infantry divisions and an armored division in place, well away from the actual VII Corps zone of attack.

I MEF also implemented a detailed deception operation. A series of combined arms raids, similar to those conducted in January, drew Iraqi fire, while PSYOP loud speakers broadcast across the border. For 10 days, Task Force (TF) Troy, consisting of infantry,

---

<sup>15</sup> Handel, 364.

armor, reconnaissance, engineers, Seabees and Army PSYOPS created the impression of a much larger force, engaging enemy elements in the Al-Wafrah area, conducting deceptive communications, and building dummy positions.

These operations complemented the deception effort carried out by amphibious forces off Kuwait's coast. The amphibious task force (ATF), assigned the mission of deceiving the Iraqis into expecting an assault against Kuwait, and conducting that assault should it become necessary, began posturing in the Gulf in mid-January. A well publicized amphibious rehearsal in Oman attracted media attention in the end of January while, simultaneously, Marines from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) conducted a raid on the tiny Umm Al-Maradim Island off the Kuwait coast. As the ground offensive approached, the ATF moved into the northern Gulf, conspicuously preparing for a possible assault. Overall, the deception operation was key to achieving both tactical and operational surprise and, ultimately, the ground offensive's success.<sup>16</sup>

The resounding operational success enjoyed by the Coalition also involved the combined cooperation of several allied nations and the use of advanced technology and intelligence capabilities that were not available to the Iraqis. Indeed, cooperation played a pivotal role for Schwartzkopf in his effort to defeat Hussein. As evidenced by the ability of the Coalition to pull off the now famous "left hook" maneuver in the desert, this movement of a very large force 200 km to the west, was hidden from the Iraqis by "taking out their eyes" (as General Norman Schwartzkopf put it), by obtaining Russian and French cooperation

---

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Dept. of Defense, 344.

(whose satellite photo systems could readily see a movement of this size) and by disciplined emission control and night operations. Aided by the speed with which the VII Corps proceeded from the west through "unnavigable desert," coalition ground forces achieved near total surprise and a stunning victory over the Republican Guard Division.<sup>17</sup>

### **Operational Deception as a Combat Multiplier**

Deception is one of the most effective ways to secure the achievement of military surprise on all levels.<sup>18</sup>

The impact of operational deception must be viewed as a part of a larger effort surrounding the execution of a major operation or campaign. As Professor Vego has instructed us in "Fundamentals of Operational Design" :

Deception, in general, is intended, among other things, to mislead the opponent as to one's own intentions; to give a false idea of the strength of one's own and friendly forces; and to draw the opponent's attention away from the real attack... Operational deception seeks to facilitate the execution of a major operation or campaign by manipulating the enemy's *perceptions* and *expectations*... Operational deception is designed to paint a false picture of reality, by concealing one's own actions and intentions until it is too late for the opponent to react operationally and effectively.

By all accounts, the deception was successful. On the Coalition side, total numbers roughly equaled Iraqi totals, but ground forces were thought to be numerically inferior. Despite that apparent disadvantage, Coalitions forces held several important advantages including high technology weapons, an extensive intelligence network, and a combined

---

<sup>17</sup> Charles Fowler and Robert Nesbit, "Tactical Deception in Air-Land Warfare," Journal of Electronic Defense, June 1995, 37-79.

<sup>18</sup> Handel, 35.

air-sea-land capability. The synergistic effect produced by these combat multipliers created strategic, operational, and tactical dilemmas with which the Iraqi command structure could not cope. While the state of training of the Coalition varied, overall it was superior to that of the Iraqis, particularly those Iraqi forces occupying Kuwait.

Playing on Iraqi perceptions and expectations regarding American combat force employment, "Schwartzkopf treated the map like a chessboard, aligning his forces precisely with Iraqi positions 'in a very deliberate decision' to suggest a head-on confrontation in the making."<sup>19</sup> Iraqi commanders, having eight years of experience with set-piece battles against charging Iranian masses, were not led to believe the U.S. Central Command had any other plans in mind. This apparently lulled the Iraqi defenders into believing they would simply be required to duplicate their last war's methods of defense. Commenting on what occurred the morning of Feb. 24, Schwartzkopf said, the allies first launched an attack that was "exactly what the Iraqis thought we were going to do, and that's to take them on head on into their most heavily defended area."<sup>20</sup>

The deceptive scheme had several key factors working in its favor. Among the leading factors contributing to the overwhelming success of the deception were Saddam Hussein's preconception, based on our Vietnam experience, that the U.S. could not maintain public support for the war if casualties were high; an over-concern with the possibility of a Marine amphibious assault; the perception that the U.S. would not violate Iraqi territory; and finally, the Iraqis considered armor movement to the west of their positions in Kuwait

---

<sup>19</sup> Barton Gellman, "Deceptions Gave Allies Fast Victory," The Washington Post, 28 February 1991, sec. A, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

infeasible as their own experience in training areas through which the "Hail Mary" would have to pass resulted in complete lack of operational integration and attendant navigational problems.<sup>21</sup>

As an example of Coalition access to advanced technology and intelligence capabilities, General Schwartzkopf was able to exploit information gained through employment of Joint STARS (Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System) to ascertain the Iraqis did not reposition their forces to counter the left hook. Twenty four hours before the ground attack was launched, Joint STARS spotted one unit starting to move from its position to the west; air strikes were called in, causing the unit to move off the road into fixed positions.<sup>22</sup>

The marriage of military force, bold strategy, and advanced technology created circumstances that the Iraqi leadership was simply unable to handle. For example:

It is especially noted that the "left hook" deception operation was characterized by false indications that were logical and believable; completely integrated real and deception operations; accurate and timely feedback on enemy reactions; denial of real operation accomplished by a combination of stealth and elimination of relevant sensors and associated C3 systems; sufficient realism in the deception activity to convince the remaining Iraqi intelligence systems to keep forces largely in place until it was too late to react to the real operation; and, finally, boldness and creativity.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Smith, "Military Deception and Operational Art," an Occasional Paper of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies (Newport, RI: Naval War College, August 1993), 12-13.

<sup>22</sup> Fowler, 79.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## **Saddam Surprised**

Saddam Hussein underestimated his opponent on many accounts. Believing he could sever the ties between the United States and Western nations and the Arab/Islamic states, he continually orchestrated propaganda and political overtures in an attempt to create internal strife, to no avail. When conflict seemed inevitable, he mistook democratic debate for weakness, threatening the Coalition with heavy casualties to shake its resolve. Next, the Iraqi defensive posture in the Kuwait theater of operations, which seemed to ignore the exposed flank in the Iraqi desert, underscored the mistaken belief that the Coalition would not attack through Iraq to free Kuwait. Enhanced by the Coalition deception plan, this miscalculation positioned Iraqi forces facing south and east, intent on fighting a battle of attrition for which Iraqi commanders expected based on their combat experiences in Iran. Also, Hussein underestimated the potency of modern weapons and combat technology. Basing his calculations on his experiences in the Iran-Iraq war, he failed to comprehend the destructive potential of the air, land, and naval power that would be used against him. The battlefield advantages of precision-guided munitions, stealth technology, electronic warfare systems, a host of target acquisition and sighting systems, and highly mobile, lethal ground combat vehicles, used by highly trained personnel, were simply not understood by the Iraqis. First his air force and air defense forces, then his ground forces, and ultimately the Iraqi people suffered for Saddam Hussein's gross miscalculations.<sup>24</sup>

The immense value that operational deception contributed to the Allied Coalition success is now a matter of historical record. It inflicted a high level of uncertainty and friction in the Iraqi decision cycle and allowed freedom of movement and swift, decisive

---

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Dept. of Defense, 115.

combat action for the forces arrayed against them. The fact that operational deception is a significant tool for the operational commander to possess is evidenced as follows:

The U.S. casualty figures of less than 150 killed in action and only slightly over 450 wounded in action attest to the success of the operational concept. That concept, without question, structured the battlefield in a way that reduced risk, optimized U.S. operational doctrine and technological capabilities, preserved coalition options and eliminated enemy options—largely as a result of the deceptive measures taken.<sup>25</sup>

### **Implications for the Future**

Although the tendency of powerful states to rely on 'brute force' can be understood, it certainly cannot be justified: the strong and powerful need not waste their strength or pay a higher cost simply because they are confident of victory. Strength unaccompanied by stratagem will become sterile and lead to eventual defeat. For that very reason, the more powerful military establishments must make a conscious effort to incorporate deception into their military thinking.<sup>26</sup>

The Gulf War provided an opportunity for thoughtful warfighters to get a glimpse of the future of warfare. The lessons were there for those carefully observing the battlefield and looking beyond the simple question of "which side won?". The speed of maneuver with enhanced mobility, the devastating lethality of modern weapons, the ability to see the battlefield from space, and the ability to shape the battlespace to best accommodate a commander's needs are just a few of the larger lessons drawn from the Allied victory. But, an equally significant, and perhaps farther reaching lesson, must be drawn from the Gulf War that addresses the synergy attained by combining raw power with operational art. The

---

<sup>25</sup> Smith, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Handel, 401.

application of operational deception as a critical combat multiplier foreshadowed the future potentials and possibilities that are to be placed before the operational commander.

Operational deception is essentially about getting the enemy to do something (act/react), not just about getting him to think about doing something. For example, it is clear that Saddam Hussein did not, or was unable to, take serious action to adjust his forces in advance of the Allied "left hook" that proved so decisive against Iraqi forces in Kuwait. The evidence available indicates that he was prepared to act against the Allied forces already positioned in locations as he expected, waiting for the order to attack Kuwait frontally and from the sea. The deception succeeded largely because Hussein held perceptions that the Allied forces understood and reinforced in word and deed. But, more importantly, Allied leadership was consciously applying deception as the key to placing overwhelming power at the decisive point when it was most useful.

The successful application of operational deception in the Gulf War has not been missed by America's military leadership. In fact, the lessons of Desert Storm have already found their way into newly minted joint doctrine that is designed to standardize the way American forces will fight in the future. Specifically, joint doctrine not only mentions operational deception as a minor part of attaining surprise, it now emphasizes and formalizes the role and function of deception as an integral aspect of operational planning, intelligence support planning, and command and control warfare. For example, JCS Pub 3-0, which addresses Doctrine for Joint Operations, states that, "Deception operations are an integral element of joint operations." And a strong signal is sent to operational planners and commanders as JCS Pub 3-0 indicates that deception is, "a powerful tool in full dimensional

operations." Likewise, JCS Pub 2-0, addressing Joint Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Operations, further enhances the overall importance of deception. Of the six "Intelligence Purposes" highlighted, two specifically address deception: Security of Operations-Avoiding Deception and Surprise, and Security of Operations Through Deception. Both publications provide detailed doctrinal guidance on the value and necessity of deception operations. And it is interesting to note that both publications specifically site Operation Desert Storm as the example to demonstrate what tremendous benefit the application of deception brought to the Allies. The joint doctrine published today will lead operational commanders to the fundamental conclusion that deception provides the combat multiplier that best serves the combined aims of force preservation and mission accomplishment.

For the operational commander, a significant aspect surrounding the application of deception from the Gulf War is the issue of functional responsibility. In other words, how will the overall integration and coordination be handled? JCS Pub 2-0 discusses how it should be supported by the intelligence function, while JCS Pub 3-0 addresses the operational value of deception and stresses its importance. With the complexity of modern warfare expanding at a furious rate, operational commanders will require dedicated planning and coordination support once the commander's concept has embraced the issue of operational deception.

Fortunately, the Joint Staff is addressing the issue of functional responsibility with doctrinal guidance. JCS Pub 3-13 (presently in draft form), which addresses Joint Doctrine for Command and Control Warfare (C2W), lists, among several other items, deception as one of the "Elements of C2W". As expected, this places planning of deception operations

within the framework of the J-3 who is also tasked for normal operational planning. This ensures coordination and integration between "real" and deceptive operations which maintains unity of effort. JCS Pub 3-13 also provides establishment of the C2W Officer as the individual responsible for accomplishing the coordination and integration of deception operations into other aspects of C2W.

Even with doctrinal guidance and increased emphasis on the use of deception, military leaders must never forget the key ingredient to any successful major operation or campaign. As clearly demonstrated in the Gulf War, having an operational commander who was capable of carefully applying operational art as the long range solution to the crisis at hand speaks a great deal about the future of warfare. American military leaders need to embrace the idea that the creative military genius of the operational commander must be developed and nurtured so as to ensure our forces are led with superior warfighting skill. Operational commanders must be selected based upon ability to synergize the effects of limited forces available with the applicable technologies and circumstances creating a net result that exceeds the relative capability of each element taken separately. General Schwartzkopf exemplified the type of operational commander that will be required to effectively operate on the battlefield of tomorrow. Possessing a clear vision of how to defeat his adversary, he applied the lessons of operational art that he had studied for years while demonstrating his own blend of military genius and superb operational leadership. To the uninitiated adversary, military efforts to do "more with less" may not appear as physically intimidating as the presence of a great army massed on a border. But the ability to cause friction and confusion on the enemy through bold strategy and advanced technology that

permits the willful application of overwhelming force at the decisive point will spell surprise for the enemy and victory for the friendly force. Public pressure demanding military mission accomplishment with less force and few friendly casualties will increase in the future, not decrease. The Gulf War has shown that operational deception is a force multiplier that can provide this potential to the operational commander.

### **Conclusion**

Although it is likely that deception operations in the future will be characterized by the heavier use of sophisticated technological means, the use of stratagem itself should not be confused with electronic and counter-electronic warfare. It would be dangerous to believe that in the age of satellites, radars, infrared sensing devices, and sophisticated eavesdropping techniques, deception is becoming obsolete. After all, human nature cannot be expected to change; and since most deception operations are designed to reinforce the existing beliefs and perceptions of the deceived, successful deception will continue to be an important factor in war.<sup>27</sup>

Operational deception provides a combat multiplier to the operational commander that allows for the balanced approach to preserving the force while accomplishing the mission. It is an aspect of joint operations that is now integrated into all aspects of planning. Clearly, public opinion demands that commanders begin to look at deception as an operational imperative and apply their limited forces in such a way as to minimize casualties and limit the duration of the conflict. This has created circumstances that enable commanders to maximize the use of available technology and employ bold and creative strategies to defeat an adversary. The concept of operational deception as a significant combat multiplier has been validated by the Allied victory in the Gulf War and has demonstrated that even a great power can, and should, apply force wisely and prudently.

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 39.

The present day value that the American military establishment places on the idea of operational deception can be seen in both academic and practical military environments. Professor Michael Handel of the Naval War College's Strategy and Policy Department has written several books that, among other things, address the issue of deception at the operational level of war. Likewise, Professor Milan Vego of the Naval War College's Joint Military Operations Department has included detailed information on operational deception as part of the required readings for instruction on Operational Design. And the Joint Chiefs of Staff have included the issue of operational deception in joint warfighting doctrine by embedding the topic in several key joint publications. As long as military officers are properly educated in all aspects of operational art and are determined to employ the joint doctrine now available, operational commanders of the future will be able to confidently and creatively apply operational deception as part of their long term strategy for military success on the battlefield of tomorrow.

Coalition leadership achieved what Sun Tzu called the greatest achievement of a commander, defeating the enemy's strategy. As General Schwartzkopf exercised his creative military genius and applied advanced technology to the warfighting effort, Saddam Hussein found himself confused and misled by the array of combat power facing directly across from his forces in Kuwait. Saddam's strategy of inflicting casualties on the Coalition as it advanced frontally into his defensive positions, his attempts to draw Israel into the war, and his inaccurate perceptions on Allied military strength, unity, and creativity all contributed to his "wake up call" in the desert. His forces wound up surprised by the "left hook" that swept

behind from the west as they waited for the main attack from the south and from the sea.

Much of this success is owed directly to the application of operational deception.

Just as Saddam Hussein was to learn first-hand in 1991 the chameleon nature of battle, Professor Handel has articulated an essential truth about warfare and deception:

The basic principles and objectives of reinforcing the desires and perceptions of the deceived will not change, since human nature and the psychological mechanism of human perception are ever the same. In terms of its forms and means employed, deception will, like war itself, change as new weapons and technologies appear.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., 396.

## Selected Bibliography

- Barnes, Fred. "The Unwimp." The New Republic, 18 March 1991, 17-18.
- Clark, Robert L. IV. "The Essential Elements of Operational Surprise." Technical Report. Cameron Station, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, 1987.
- Clausewitz, Carl Von. On War. Translated and Edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Cohen, Roger and Claudio Gatti. In the Eye of the Storm: The Life of General H. Norman Schwartzkopf. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.
- Fowler, Charles and Robert Nesbit. "Tactical Deception in Air-Land Warfare." Journal of Electronic Defense, June 1995, 37-79.
- Gellman, Barton. "Deceptions Gave Allies Fast Victory." The Washington Post, 28 February 1991, pp. A1, A37:1.
- Handel, Michael. War, Strategy and Intelligence. Totowa, N.J.: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1989.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Operations. Joint Pub 2-0, Washington D.C.: 5 May 1995.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. Doctrine for Joint Operations. Joint Pub 3-0, Washington D.C.: 1 February 1995.
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Doctrine for Command and Control Warfare (C2W). Preliminary Coordination Draft. Joint Pub 3-13, Washington D.C.: May 1995.
- Smith, Douglas V. "Military Deception and Operational Art." An Occasional Paper of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies. Newport, RI: Naval War College, August 1993.
- Summers, Harry Jr. On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War. New York: Dell, 1992.
- Sun Tzu. The Art of War. Edited by James Clavell. New York: Delacorte Press, 1983.
- U.S. Dept. of Defense. Final Report to Congress: Conduct of the Persian Gulf War. Washington: 1992.
- Vego, Milan N. "Fundamentals of Operational Design," an Unpublished Paper, Newport, RI: Naval War College, July 1995.

Whaley, Barton. Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Center for International Studies, 1969.