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OPERATIONAL DECEPTION

AND COUNTER DECEPTION

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 constitute my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Deception is a powerful tool used by all nations to gain advantage over, and defeat the enemy in war time. At the operational level, the success of deception plans can have a major impact on the outcome of the entire campaign. Therefore, operational commanders must consider the possibility of being deceived by the enemy, and take measures to detect and exploit their deception plans.

This paper begins by exploring several approaches that enhance the successfulness of deception operations and how they have been used in the past. With an understanding of techniques and one's own vulnerabilities to deception, several lessons learned can be drawn to aid in the detection and exploitation enemy deception plans. The operational commander needs to be aware of these to provide force protection for troops and increase the chances of achieving operational objectives.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the operational commander recognizes and deals with enemy deception plans. Detection of the plan is the most difficult and important aspect of counter deception. Once discovered, the plan can be turned to one's advantage. Exploiting the discovered plan is dependent on the particular situation and well beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, some of the requirements, assets, and methods available to the operational commander, to take full advantage of the discovery are given only a brief mention.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity. When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him."[1] Sun Tzu

Military deception is defined as, "Actions executed to mislead foreign decision makers, causing them to derive and accept desired appreciation's of military capabilities, intentions, operations, or other activities that evoke foreign actions that contribute to the originator's objectives."[2] If a deception plan merely confuses the enemy it is not successful. The plan must produce an enemy reaction that will benefit the deceiver. When performed successfully, it can provide a tremendous advantage. Most recently this was seen through the deception employed by the coalition forces in Desert Storm. They were able to gain numerical advantage and surprise over Iraqi troops, aiding in the liberation of Kuwait.

The operational commander must always consider the use of deception by enemy forces, and make efforts to discover and exploit it. The ability to do this can change the tide of war. Consider what may have happened if Admiral Halsey had not been drawn off at Leyte Gulf, or if the Japanese plan at Midway was successful.

Counter deception should be an important consideration for the operational commander, yet there is not much written on the subject. There is no doctrine, or manual on how to detect or exploit foreign deception plans. Little reference is made to counter deception other than the definition found in Joint Pub 1-02.

"efforts to negate, neutralize, diminish the effects of, or gain advantage from, a foreign deception operation. Counter deception does not include the intelligence function of identifying foreign deception operations."[3] It is interesting to note that by this definition, counter deception does not include identifying foreign deception operations through intelligence.

Joint Publication 2.0, Joint Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Operations, states, "The way J-2's and supporting intelligence organizations approach collection, analysis, and dissemination will determine, to a large extent, friendly force vulnerability to adversary deception efforts."[4] Clearly, uncovering enemy deception plans is dependent on intelligence, and exploitation depends on discovery. It is evident that intelligence and counter deception go hand in hand. One must discover the deception before they can exploit it.

To be effective at counter deception, one should have some understanding of deception, and techniques used to enhance its success. The next chapter will examine a few of these.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DECEPTION

Deception operations can have relative measures of success, depending on how well the enemy reacts to the ploy, whether enemy actions taken were desired by the deceiver, and the ability of the deceiver to capitalize on the adversaries actions. Whatever the level of success, historical study reveals several approaches that, when followed, greatly enhance the probability of success. This is not an all inclusive list, nor is it in order of relative importance.

First: Channels of Information. Deception is based on the control or manipulation of information available to the enemy. Therefore, one has to discover which channels of information are available to the enemy, then allow only the appropriate information into those channels.[5]

The manipulation and control of data received by the enemy is the heart of successful deception operations. Channels of information are the windows into the enemy's intentions and capabilities are seen, the basis upon which intelligence estimates and wartime plans are made. Ideally the deceiver should relay only the information that supports the deception and block all other. In reality this is almost impossible to accomplish. Therefore the preponderance of evidence available to the enemy must allow them to draw the desired conclusion with out uncovering the deception plan.

Such was the case in the allied deception plan for the invasion of Normandy. Operation Bodyguard was the overall deception plan for the Normandy invasion. It consisted of many sub-plans, including Fortitude South, which was aimed at convincing the Germans that the allied invasion would come through Pas de Calais. The plan was meticulously carried out, paying close

attention to every detail. Many of Germany's intelligence channels were deceived. The Allied forces used double agents, built a fictitious headquarters for forces that did not exist, and sent all the message traffic that would normally be generated by a such a force. Dummy landing craft, aircraft and lighting schemes were used to deceive German reconnaissance assets. Radio deception and sonic devices were also employed. Allied reconnaissance and bombing prior to the Normandy invasion concentrated on Pas de Calais to give the appearance that it would be the landing sight.[6] Though most of the success for Fortitude South is attributed to double agents, virtually all the channels of information available to the Germans were manipulated.[7]

Operation Bodyguard was so successful that when the invasion took place, Hitler was apprehensive to reinforce Normandy because he believed it to be a diversionary tactic. He was convinced the main assault was still to come via Pas de Calais.

Second: Magruder's Principle. "It is generally easier to induce an opponent to maintain a preexisting belief than to present notional evidence to change that belief. Thus, it may be more fruitful to examine how an opponent's existing beliefs can be turned to an advantage than to attempt to alter these views."[8]

It is more difficult to change the opponents beliefs than to figure how his preconceptions can work to one's advantage. Thus, deception plans will have a greater success rate when the enemy already believes the deception to be true. Again, the allied landing at Normandy provides an excellent example.

Hitler and many of his advisors believed Pas de Calais to be the point where the allies would attempt a cross channel attack. The allies discovered this through Ultra intercepts and made their deception plans based on this preconception.[9]

Third: Feasibility. The deception plan must be feasible. Any deception plan has to be within the capabilities of the deceiver or it will be disregarded as impossible, or at least not likely. It must be logical and enhance the deceivers ability to attack the enemy's center of gravity or critical vulnerability. If it does not accomplish this, it will be disregarded as irrelevant.

Fourth: Target Audience. The deception plan must be aimed at leaders who can make the desired action/reaction take place. Without the desired action, the deception plan does no more than add confusion to the enemy, and fails to produce a quantifiable advantage to the deceiver. Playing on the personality of the target audience will contribute measurably to the success. Take for example, the Battle of Leyte Gulf during World War Two.

The battle was triggered by General McArthur's invasion of Leyte. The Japanese knew their only hope to prevent further advance was to lure part of the American fleet away, leaving transport ships destined for Leyte vulnerable to attack. Admirals Shima and Nishimura made up the Japanese southern force and Admiral Kurita the center force. They approached Leyte Gulf from the south and west. Meanwhile Admiral Ozawa commanded the northern force, which was used as a diversionary force to lure Admiral Halsey away, leaving the transports open to attack.[10]

The Japanese knew Admiral Halsey was an aggressive leader who would not pass up the opportunity to battle with the Japanese carriers. "Japanese operational planners put considerable emphasis on studying the psychological traits of the opposing commanders. Hence, they had high hopes for the complete success of their deception plan because of Admiral William H. Halsey's well known propensity to act rashly and aggressively.[11]

When Ozawa's northern force was finally discovered by Admiral Halsey, he took off in pursuit of battle believing that Admiral Kinkaid's forces were adequate for defense of the transports. The Japanese ploy was extremely successful and were it not for the outstanding performance by Admirals Olendorf and Clifton Sprague's forces, the ultimate objective of destroying the transports and cutting off support for the landing would most likely have succeeded.

Fifth: Condition the target audience. This can be done in a variety of ways. By slowly and incrementally exposing the audience to something abnormal, they become conditioned to accept it as normal. Over a period of time, they become desensitized to what is actually taking place and miss the big picture. A classic example of this was provided by the Germans during World War Two.

The German ships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and Prinz Eugen were docked in Brest for repairs and supplies. Daily British air attacks continued to inflict damage upon the ships while they were in port. Hitler, convinced the British were going to attack Norway, wanted the ships moved north where they would be safer from air attack and could guard the Norwegian coast. The transit through the English Channel would be extremely risky due to British radar and aerial coverage. [12]

The Germans were able to fool British radar operators by jamming their radar incrementally over time. The operators were so conditioned to the radar interference that they blamed it on atmospherics, never considering it to be intentional jamming. Eventually, the periods of jamming became long enough for the Germans to move the ships out of Brest undetected.[13]

Keeping these approaches in mind, we can draw several conclusions to help in the realm of detecting and countering enemy deception operations.

CHAPTER THREE

INTELLIGENCE AND AWARENESS OF DECEPTION PLANS

The operational commander must be concerned with enemy deception plans throughout the entire operation. Exploitation of such a plan can be turned into a great advantage, but the difficult task lies in its discovery. This is done through intelligence . A process consisting of three phases; collection, analysis, and acceptance, all of which are equally important for successful discovery of enemy deception plans.

Intelligence collection attempts to gather as much information about the enemy as possible. "Deception becomes more complicated as the number of channels of information available to the victim increases, since consistent symptoms should ideally be given in all available channels."[14] Logically it follows from this that to avoid deception, one should make as many channels of information available to them as possible.[15]

Intelligence channels available to the operational commander are numerous and none should be overlooked. From satellites to ground reconnaissance teams, each has an important contribution to make in determining enemy capabilities and intentions. National assets can be tasked to support the operational commander and many agencies such as the National Reconnaissance Office, Defense Mapping Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency and others have focused more attention on supporting theater commanders. Additionally, technology has made data from national assets readily available to theater commanders.

Within the theater of operations, each service brings a multitude of organic assets. These provide both unique and redundant capabilities, allowing

confirmation and back up of other intelligence sources. The operational commander must not overlook non traditional sources such as the local population and non governmental organizations that can provide relevant information. Multiple channels of information enhance collection capabilities but is only a portion of the intelligence process. A larger challenge is putting the varied sources together and making an objective analysis.

World War Two is full of examples where intelligence branches from different services and agencies were unable to pool information gathered from many different channels to better understand enemy intentions. Army sources were not privy to navy sources and the intelligence data available to those in Washington was different than what was available to theater commanders. This lack of common intelligence information contributed to Washington's disbelief of an impending Japanese attack on Midway. These incidents point to the need for intelligence sources to be joined together in a timely fashion. The Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) is ideally suited for this data fusion process.

The JIC is responsible for collecting and analyzing intelligence data from all resources available to the operational commander. They must fit pieces of the puzzle together, determine intelligence gaps, find ways to collect missing data, and make an objective analysis of the information. Analysts must be acutely aware of their own preconceptions, (Magruder's Principle), and avoid tainting the evidence to support a theory that data points otherwise. A counter deception cell within the JIC would be helpful in this area.

The counter deception cell would be tasked to take a different approach, looking at the data from the enemy's point of view. They would need to place themselves in the mind of the enemy, determine how they would develop a deception plan and see if evidence supports it. Although difficult to do, it would

give another aspect or interpretation of the data. The enemy may not be employing a deception plan, but the process will aid in exploring different enemy courses of action that may have been overlooked.

Acceptance of the analysis is the last part of the intelligence process. Ultimately the operational commander must decide the validity of the analysis and make decisions based upon those conclusions.

Like analysts, operational commanders must be aware of their own preconceptions and promote an atmosphere that will support an objective analysis. A staff of "yes men" and analysts that do not feel free to express their objective analysis will be harmful to the counter deception effort. The operational commander needs to feel secure that the analysis has not been manipulated just to please the old man.

Admiral Nimitz and his staff provide an excellent example of how the command climate contributes to revealing deception plans. The Japanese planned to use the invasion of the Aleutian Islands as bait to lure the U.S. fleet to the north. The Japanese fleet was waiting in the vicinity of Midway, poised to attack the U.S. fleet as it headed north past Midway.

Communications intelligence available at Pearl Harbor indicated the Aleutian Islands were a decoy, and the real focus of Japanese effort was at Midway. Yet in Washington, analysts were convinced that Nimitz was wrong and the real target was either Oahu or the West Coast. To help ensure an objective analysis of the intelligence available, Nimitz had Captain McCormick, his war plans officer, analyze the raw data. He also assigned another member of his staff, Captain Steele, to play devils advocate and not to be afraid of coming up with different conclusions. Both men determined the analysis was correct and Midway was the actual target of the Japanese fleet.[16] Nimitz was correct, and the climate

he fostered, encouraging his staff and analysts to voice their opinions was a contributing factor in determining the real intentions of the Japanese.

The operational commander also needs to be aware of lessons drawn from deception techniques that are difficult to defend against, and intelligence functions may not pick up. The last three approaches discussed in chapter two fall into this category and merit brief discussion.

The feasibility of the deception plan is a double edged sword that the operational commander needs to be aware of. Often, what has been perceived as too difficult, too risky, or impossible, was done to the complete surprise of the enemy. For example, McArthur's landing at Inchon was considered by many to be too risky, yet the successful landing caught the Koreans completely by surprise. Likewise, During World War Two, Hitler's drive into France through the Ardennes Forest was thought to be impossible for such a large formation. Yet, in doing so, he surprised the High Command and defeated the French Army. While these are not deception plans per se, they produced the same effect. They achieved surprise, provided a great advantage, and acted as a force multiplier.

This yields an interesting contradiction which Professor Handel describes as a paradox: "The greater the risk, the less likely it seems, and the less risky it actually becomes. Thus, the greater the risk, the smaller it becomes."[17] Though a deception plan must be feasible and plausible, one must not be quick to disregard that which is considered to be too difficult or risky.

The operational commander should also expect enemy deception plans to condition their audience and be aimed at decision makers. There are no real defense mechanisms for these aspects other than, like being aware of one's own preconceptions, to be aware of these techniques. One further measure that may have some success would be to bring in an outsider to look over the evidence and thus get an outsider's point of view. This helped Nimitz to confirm the analysis of

Japanese intent at Midway and it may have helped the British radar operators who were conditioned and willing to accept atmospherics for the reason their radar was degraded. Often times a fresh perspective, can bring light to a problem because of their new point of view.

Once the difficult task of discovering the enemy deception plan has been accomplished, the operational commander must take measures to exploit the plan and turn it to his advantage.

CHAPTER FOUR

DECEPTION EXPLOITATION

The ultimate goal of counter deception is exploitation of the discovered plan. To do this successfully, the operational commander must be able to protect discovery of the deception plan, have the flexibility required to react to the plan, and have a supportive C4I structure.

Once the deception plan is discovered, the operational commander really becomes the deceiver. Proper OPSEC procedures must be employed to prevent the enemy from learning their plan has been compromised. The enemy's intelligence channels must be manipulated to lead them on, and some of their channels may have to be denied so they can not monitor actions taken to counter their plan. Keeping the discovery a secret from the enemy is vital to exploitation. If successfully done, exploitation can have overwhelming success.

To exploit enemy deception plans the operational design of a campaign must be flexible and allow for quick reaction to their discovery. Through continuous planning of branches and sequels based on enemy action, contingency plans for different alternatives of force employment can be made. This greatly reduces reaction time and facilitates teamwork by having the component commanders on board with the plan.

The operational commander should also consider the use of operational fires to destroy the enemy's ability to carry out the plan. This can be accomplished by attacking C2 nodes or restricting enemy ability to maneuver. To facilitate operational maneuver, reserves may have to be committed and reconstituted from a different area of operations. The courses of action available to the commander are almost endless and certainly situation dependent. This is where operational art abilities will come into play.

The C4I structure is essential throughout the entire process. Intelligence provides the information needed to make decisions. Command and control enable the commander to enact plans and take appropriate actions to defeat the enemy. Communications allows the rapid flow of information up and down the chain of command, and the operational commander to disseminate intentions to subordinates. The ability to do these things efficiently is essential. If quick enough, the operational commander will be able to get inside the enemy's decision cycle and keep him in a reactionary mode. This will allow the operational commander to control the situation and act faster than the enemy can react.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Deception is a powerful tool which usually enjoys some measure of success. Therefore, it is important for operational commanders to take counter deception measures. This is an extremely difficult task that like war, is more of an art than science.

There is no established doctrine, formula, or set of procedures to follow for uncovering deception, but in theory, all deception plans can be discovered. There are always clues available to point out the deception plan. Operational commanders are held responsible for ensuring counter deception efforts are taken to safeguard against enemy deception efforts.

Service doctrine and joint publications emphasize the importance of deception and that it should not be overlooked as a tool, but pay scant attention to discovering and exploiting enemy deception plans. The definition of counter deception itself is narrow in scope. There is much more to counter deception than just exploitation. One must consider vulnerabilities to deception itself, and the functions of discovering the deception plan. More emphasis and research needs to be done in this area. Fortunately, the best tools available to discover and take advantage of an enemy deception plans are at the operational commander's fingertips.

Organic intelligence collection assets are at the operational commander's disposal. The JIC provides an excellent data fusion center where intelligence gathered from all sources can be analyzed. The command climate can establish a healthy environment for the objective analysis of intelligence data, and the expression of theories.

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