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OPERATION DESERT DECEPTION:
Operational Deception in the Ground Campaign

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

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This paper examines the operational deception plan that shaped the ground battlefield for Operation Desert Storm to determine the factors that contributed to its successes or failures and draw conclusions for future operational deception pleanners. Following a description of the deception plan supporting offensive ground operations and of its execution, it reviews the plan against the maxims of the Central Intelligence Agency's Deception Research Program to illustrate the reasons for the results achieved by the plan. It discusses the impact of the media, particularly television, on operational deception, its planning, and execution, and offers arguments for more widespread dissemination of the operation deception concept. It assesses the achievements of the plan, the success of the deception in the west and the adverse impact of the amphibious deception in the east, on the overall operation. It concludes by updating several of the maxims and offers guidance derived from Operation Desert Storm to operational deception planners supporting ground operations.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES iv

All Warfare Is Based Upon Deception 1

The Deception Plan and its Execution 2

Why the Deception Worked 8

What Went Wrong 22

Lessons to be Learned 25

Endnotes 33

Selected Bibliography 35

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Abstract

This paper examines the operational deception plan that shaped the ground battlefield for Operation Desert Storm to determine the factors that contributed to its successes or failures and draw conclusions for future operational deception planners. Following a description of the deception plan supporting offensive ground operations and of its execution, it reviews the plan against the maxims of the Central Intelligence Agency's Deception Research Program to illustrate the reasons for the results achieved by the plan. It discusses the impact of the media, particularly television, on operational deception, its planning, and execution, and offers arguments for more widespread dissemination of the operational deception concept. It assesses the achievements of the plan: the success of the deception in the west and the adverse impact of the amphibious deception in the east on the overall operation. It concludes by updating several of the Maxims and offers guidance derived from Operation Desert Storm to operational deception planners supporting ground operations.

LIST OF MAPS AND TABLES

LIST OF MAPS

MAP		PAGE
1	VII Corps Assembly Areas	4
2	ARCENT Deception and VII Corps Plan of Attack and Final Iraqi Troop Dispositions	6
3	NAVCENT's 4th MEB Feint	7

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Deception Maxims	9

All warfare is based upon deception.
Sun Tzu 1/

In less than 100 hours, United States and Coalition ground forces, assisted by the combined air forces, defeated the largest military force in southwest Asia at a cost of 146 U.S. killed in action and 467 wounded. While superior technology, overwhelming force, and well-trained and lead military forces were critical to success, a well-planned and executed operational deception plan, fully integrated into all aspects of the campaign plan, created exploitable operational and tactical advantages. As a direct result of the deception, Iraq maintained or changed tactical and operational dispositions that placed its forces vulnerable to the combined air and ground assault. Both operationally and tactically, the Iraqi Army in the Kuwait Theater was improperly oriented to counter the U.S. assault, which attacked through Iraqi corps and division rear areas and surprised the combat units. In short, the successful operational deception directly led to the low casualties of the ground campaign, casualties which would have been much higher had the Iraqi force been properly oriented.

How and why the operational deception succeeded offers critical lessons in the use of deception to shape the battlefield for the defeat of the enemy. This paper will explore the use of operational deception in support of the

planned and ultimately executed ground campaign, and not upon the use of agents and other clandestine or technical methods of deception, which are frequently outside the realm of the operational commander. This paper will describe the operational deception plan and its execution. Following a discussion of what went well and why, the paper will suggest areas in which the operational deception detracted from the execution of the mission. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications for the operational commander in utilizing deception to shape the battlefield and suggest throughout the discussion, guidelines for the development of operational deceptions in support of ground combat operations.

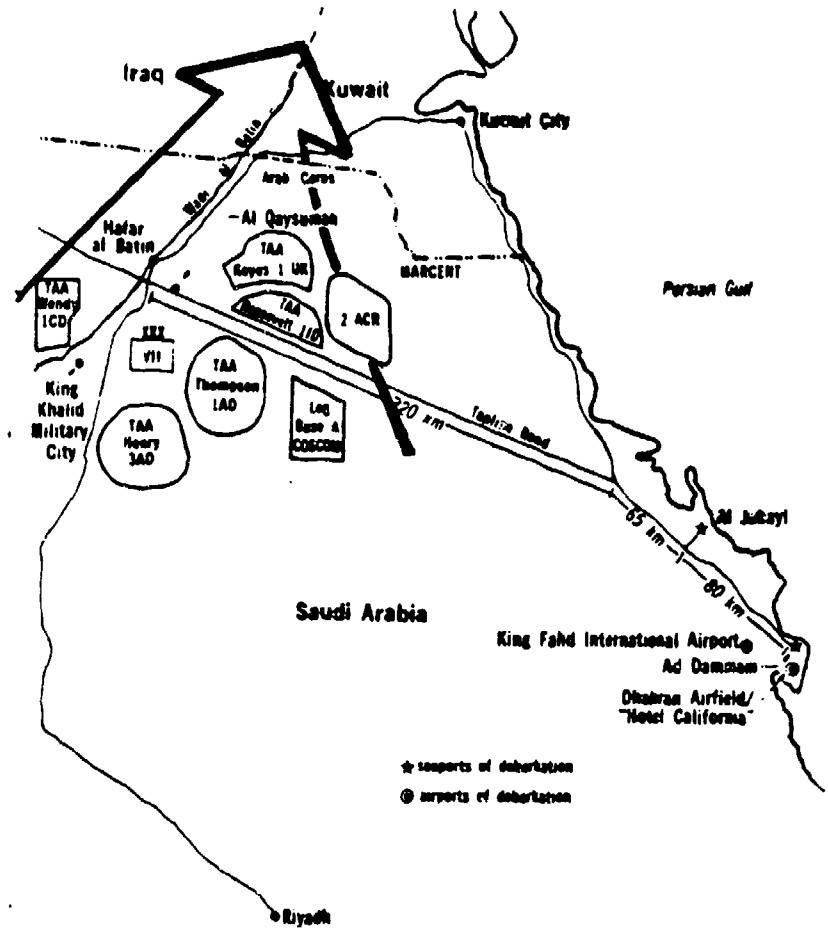
The Deception Plan and its Execution

In addition to restoring Kuwaiti territorial integrity, the mission of CENTCOM was to destroy a significant portion of Iraq's offensive military capability and specifically to destroy the Republican Guard Forces Command (RGFC) that was a critical power base for Saddam Hussein. CINCCENT's 27 February briefing to the press confirmed that an elaborate yet simple operational deception plan was fully integrated into all aspects of the campaign plan, particularly the ground phase of that campaign. The goal of the deception was to convince the Iraqis that the main attack would come up the Wadi Al Batin along the

Kuwaiti-Iraqi western border. This attack would be supported by an amphibious attack from the northern Gulf and attacks directly into the defenses along the southern Kuwaiti border. The desired effect was to hold the RGFC and the professional army, the regular armor and mechanized divisions, oriented upon the Wadi and the coast. This disposition would expose them to the VII and XVIII Airborne Corps enveloping maneuver and facilitate their destruction. 2/

Execution of the deception plan began even as the United States began executing the President's November, 1990 decision to increase the force in Saudi Arabia. The I U.S. Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) and the XVIII Airborne Corps remained firmly in northeastern Saudi Arabia behind Arab forces of the Joint Forces Command East (JFCE). As the VII U.S. Corps closed into Saudi Arabia, it moved into assembly areas directly south of the western Kuwaiti border, at the mouth of the Wadi Al Batin. The deception was enhanced by the locations of the VII Corps divisional assembly areas, which formed a spear angled directly into the Wadi Al Batin. 3/ (See MAP 1, page 4) CENTCOM and ARCENT enforced operations security (OPSEC) prohibiting reconnaissance of planned assembly areas to the northwest of Hafir Al Batin and delaying the preparation of the logistics bases to support the "Hail Mary" until the beginning of the air campaign. 4/ Iraqi forces extended their defenses into the Wadi and positioned the

targeted regular and RGFC armored and mechanized forces to counter the attack. After the air phases of the campaign began, the final pieces of the deception plan came into place in late January as the 1st U.S. Cavalry Division moved directly into the Wadi Al Batin just south of the tri-border region 5/ and showed itself to the Iraqi forces in that area. The Iraqis knew U.S. forces were poised at the entrance to the Wadi. To the east, afloat elements of the II MEF conducted extensive and well publicized amphibious exercises, such as Imminent Thunder throughout January and February. Nearly seven Iraqi divisions responded to the coastal area and established beach defenses and a theater reserve to counter the threat.

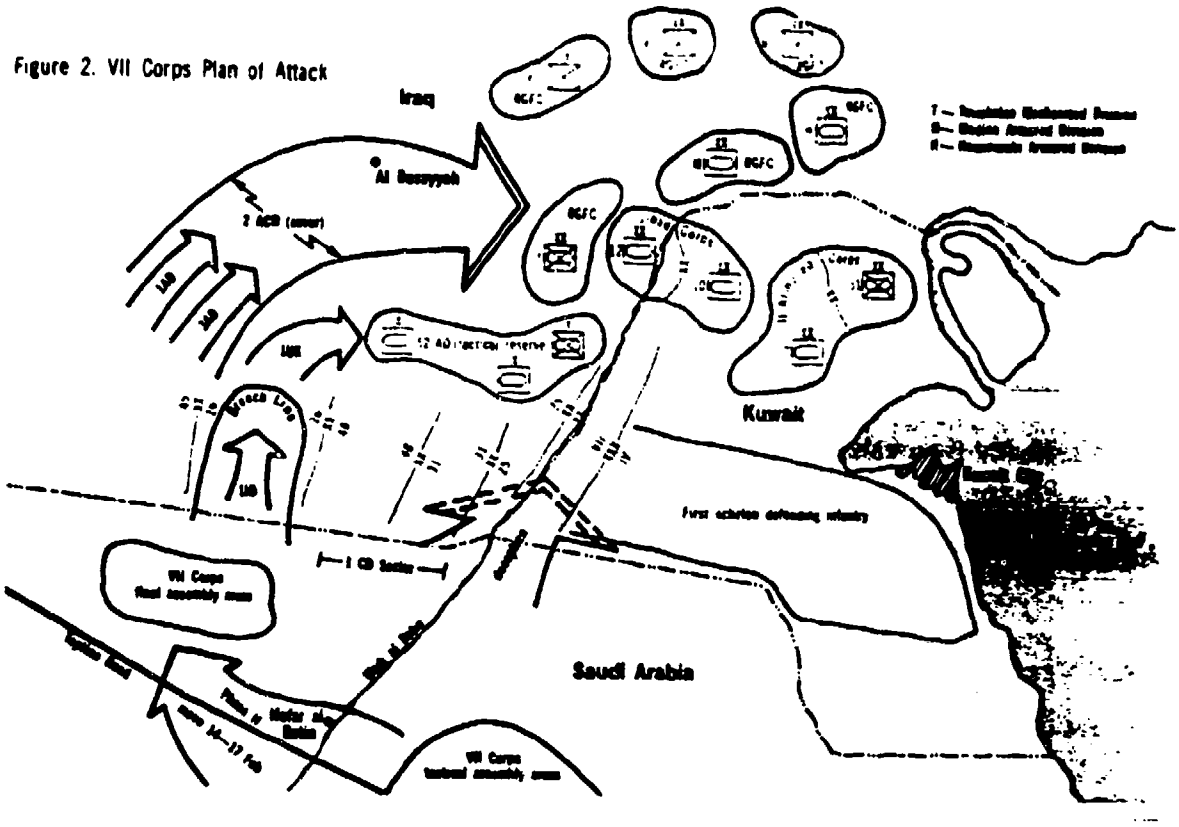


Map 1: VII CORPS Assembly Areas
December 1990 - February 1991 6/

In the divisional and MEF assembly areas in the desert, training activities, well covered by international and U.S. press, unwittingly supported the deception that frontal attacks against the teeth of the Iraqi defense were imminent. Virtually every division constructed replicas of Iraqi defensive positions and conducted extensive training against them. Artillery and attack aviation units conducted detailed training in cross border raids and support for breaching operations. Training exercises in the fast moving maneuver anticipated were not covered, and few reporters covered the mundane movement of troops, equipment and logistics deeper into the desert.

As the air forces neutralized most of the Iraqi intelligence gathering capability, the tempo of the deception increased. Leaving behind small units to replicate its radio traffic, XVIII Corps began moving west on 17 January. On 13 February, VII Corps began its move. To cover the movements and reinforce the deception, the 1st Cavalry Division and VII Corps Artillery launched feints, raids, and reconnaissance elements against Iraqi positions in the tri-border region on 1 February. The Iraqis responded by moving an additional armored brigade and major artillery units into the Wadi. On 20 February, the Division launched a brigade level reconnaissance. Meeting major Iraqi resistance, the Division suffered 2 KIA and lost thee combat vehicles. Three Iraqi armored or mechanized divisions

Figure 2. VII Corps Plan of Attack



Map 2: ARCENT Deception and VII Corps Plan of Attack

Final Iraqi Troop Dispositions 7/

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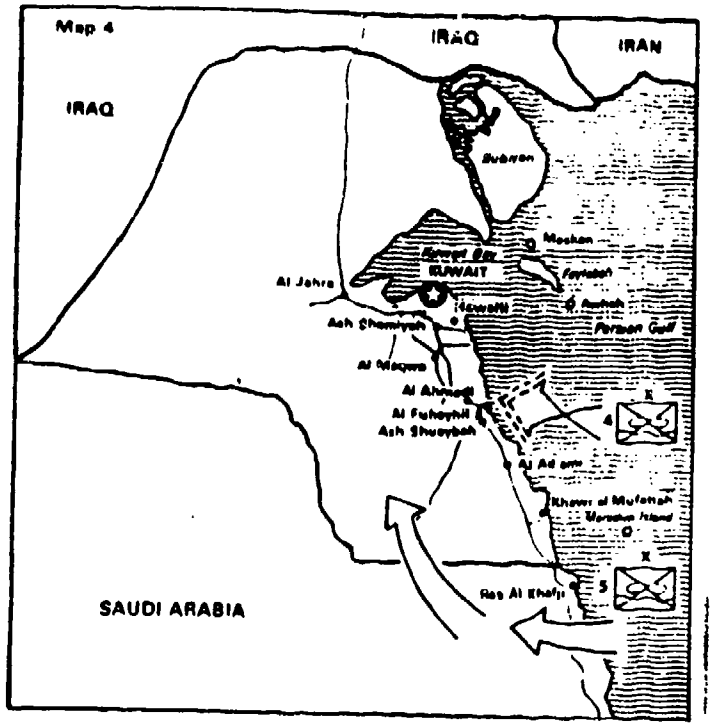
remained poised to counter any force coming up the Wadi by mid-February. (See Map 2) Along the coast, I MEF's Task Force Troy continued to simulate the presence of the Marines along the coast. As 4th and 5th MEB reembarked after conducting amphibious assault rehearsals, the Iraqi divisions in southeastern Kuwait to withdrew north, halfway to Kuwait City. The RGFC heavy divisions remained outside of Kuwait, oriented on Wadi and northeast Kuwait, prepared to respond to the attack up

from the Wadi or the sea north of Kuwait while an armored corps remained focused on the southern border and the coastline. On 24 February, four days after originally planned, the ground campaign began, but the deception did not yet end.



Map 3: NAVCENT's 4th MEB Feint
24 February 1991 8/

Three hours before the scheduled Marine attacks in the southeast, SEAL Task Force Mikme reinforced the threat of amphibious assault thirty kilometers south of Kuwait Having alerted the Iraqi defenses, the SEALs departed as elements of two Iraqi divisions moved to the coast. (See Map 3) Further south, elements of the I MEF and JFCE launched attacks against Iraqi frontline units to seize Kuwait City, as 5th MEB came ashore in Saudi Arabia and assumed the role of MARCENT reserve. Meanwhile, further west, the 1 Cavalry Division launched limited attacks into the Wadi Al Batin. The major ground forces, the VII and XVIII U.S. Corps, and the main attack would not begin until G+1, 25 February. CENTCOM's operational plan reinforced the deception, seeking a clear reaction from the

Iraqis to the Wadi and to the coast underway as the main attack began. The deception would be sustained into the attack.

Why the Deception Worked

In 1981, the Central Intelligence Agency's Deception Research Program developed a number of "deception maxims" which summarize the work of numerous political scientists, sociologists, intelligence analysts, and academicians into a unified body of knowledge. 6/ (See Table 1, page 9) The application of many of these maxims was evident throughout the deception and suggest general guidelines on the development of deception plans. The needs of operational ground commanders are, however, unique, and must be used properly within the context of these needs.

The operational deception plan worked because it capitalized on Iraqi preconceptions and reduced the ambiguity in the mind of the Iraqis. The Coalition ability to limit information flow into Iraq, proper sequencing to maintain the deception well into the campaign, and near perfect feedback on Iraqi reactions were key contributing reasons for success. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, each component commander was tasked specifically to conduct operations in a manner to support the deception plan and major decisions concerning operations, particularly the sequencing of logistics operations, the movement into preassault

DECEPTION MAXIMS 7/

Maxim 1: Magruder's Principle--the Exploitation of Preconceptions.

It is generally easier to induce an opponent to maintain a preexisting belief than to present notional evidence to change that belief.

Maxim 2: Limitations to Human Information Processing.

There are several limitations to human information processing that are exploitable in the design of deception schemes--among these, the law of small numbers and susceptibility to conditioning.

Maxim 3: The Multiple Forms of Surprise.

Surprise can be achieved in many forms. In military engagements, these forms include location, strength, style, and timing. Should it not prove attractive or feasible to achieve surprise in all dimensions, it may still be possible to achieve surprise in at least one of these.

Maxim 4: Jones' Lemma.

Deception becomes more difficult as the number of channels of information available to the victim increases. However, within limits, the greater the number of controlled channels the greater the likelihood of the deception being believed.

Maxim 5: A Choice among Types of Deception.

Where possible, the objective of the deception planner should be to reduce the ambiguity in the mind of the victim, to force him to seize upon a notional world view as being correct--not making him more certain of the truth, but more certain of a particular falsehood. However, increasing the range of alternatives and/or the evidence to support any of many incorrect alternatives may have particular use when the victim already has several elements of truth in his possession.

Maxim 6: Axelrod's Contribution: The Husbanding of Assets.

There are circumstances where the deception assets should be husbanded despite the costs of maintenance and the risk of waste, awaiting a more fruitful use.

Maxim 7: A Sequencing Rule.

Deception activities should be sequenced so as to maximize the persistence of the incorrect hypothesis(es) for as long as possible.

Maxim 8: The Importance of Feedback.

A scheme to insure accurate feedback increases the chance of success in deception.

Maxim 9: "The Monkey's Paw."

Deception efforts may produce subtle and unwanted side effects. Planner should be sensitive to such possibilities and, where prudent, take steps to minimize these counterproductive aspects.

Maxim 10: Care in the Design of Planned Placement of Deceptive Material.

Great care must be exercised in the design of schemes to leak notional plans. Apparent "windfalls" are subject to close scrutiny and often disbelieved. Genuine leaks often occur under circumstances thought improbable.

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positions, and the timing of the attacks, were made in consonance with the deception. The importance of each commander being aware of the intent and importance of the deception plan, cannot be overlooked.

Maxim 1: Magruder's Principle -- the Exploitation of Preconceptions.

> It is generally easier to induce an opponent to maintain a preexisting belief than to present notional evidence to change that belief. 8/

The operational deception plan reinforced Iraq's strategic and operational vision of the war. Early statements by Saddam Hussein revealed his basic strategy: the U.S. could not sustain casualties and therefore, a defensive strategy of attrition would be decisive. Operationally and tactically, Iraq had perfected a defense during the Iran-Iraq War and felt confident of its ability to wage such a war. Countering armored attacks, as exemplified in the Battle of Susangerd in January, 1981, were essentially large armored ambushes. A lead element withdrew and pulled in enemy in allowing units on the flank to counterattack into the advancing enemy. Offensive operations of any scale required extensive rehearsal and seldom demonstrated any ability to exploit initial success. The strategic and operational experience of the Iraqi Army was defensive, infantry-oriented, and set piece. 9/ An examination of Iraqi troop dispositions in the Wadi Al Batin demonstrated the potential operational plan in the west. The Iraqis wanted the Coalition to attack into the teeth of the defense, and the CENTCOM deception gave them what they wanted.

Further, the Iraqis did not think an attack through the desert was possible. Iraqi general officers captured by the VII U.S. Corps were incredulous about the capability of the U.S. to execute the "Hail Mary." Whenever they had exercised in the same desert, they had gotten lost and were incapable of massing combat power in terrain without features. They therefore saw no option from the west as possible and oriented accordingly, a cognitive human reaction that Maxim 2, Limitations to Human Information Processing, seeks to exploit. 10/

Early intelligence reports revealed an Iraqi preoccupation with a possible amphibious assault. Countering such an assault was outside of their strategic and operational experience. They responded in a predictable fashion, establishing a very heavy barrier of infantry and holding the II Armored Corps north of Kuwait City. After the Kafji attack, the threat of amphibious attack south of Kuwait City forced the withdrawal of Iraqi forces to about 30 kilometers north of the Kuwait-Saudi border. Recon Marines entering Kuwait City found a sand table depicting the extensive Iraqi beach defenses which existed along the coast and attesting to the success of the amphibious deception. 11/

Television unwittingly supported the deception, covering training exercises on breaching operations and amphibious assaults. Every televised report of these activities reinforced the perception that an attack into the center of the southern Kuwaiti theater and an amphibious assault were in the plan. Journalist and spokesmen discussing the possibility of large U.S. casualties also reinforced Hussein's preconception. Likewise, the Congressional debate of early January, 1991, in which virtually every congressman opposed to the resolution based his arguments on the anticipated casualty levels, unwittingly reinforced Hussein's belief in the success of a strategy of attrition. On virtually every level, the operational deception plan and other U.S. actions, in many cases unwittingly and unplanned, reinforced Saddam Hussein's predisposition on the conduct of the war. The enduring nature of this Maxim is the greatest lesson to be learned, not only in developing a deception plan, but in recognizing a deception operation against you.

Maxim 5: A Choice among Types of Deception.

> Where possible, the objective of the deception planner should be to reduce the ambiguity in the mind of the victim, to force him to seize upon a notional world view as being correct--not making him more certain of the truth, but more certain of a particular falsehood. However, increasing the range of alternatives and/or the evidence to support any of many incorrect alternatives may have particular use when the victim already has several elements of truth in his possession. 12/

The operational deception plan was clearly designed to reduce ambiguity in the Iraqi military leaders. Ambiguity reducing deception is termed "M-Deception." Given the control the Coalition exercised over the information flow into Iraq, Hussein had little information on the Coalition operations that the Coalition did not want them to have. Introducing information contrary to Hussein's preconception would have increased the real risk of the operational ground operation. However, without such a firm and reasonably well known preconception, "M-Deception" on a ground operational level is dangerous. Surprise is frequently only achieved by introducing ambiguity, termed "A-Deception," as to the details of an attack. Balancing the strength of the preconception the "M-Deception" is exploiting against the need for deception to mask the actual time and location to the enemy requires careful consideration.

This inherent conflict between strategic or operational "M-Deception" and tactical "A-Deception" was resolved satisfactorily, but points up that this maxim should not be taken definitively in planning deception in support of a ground campaign. Successful operational deception can frame tactical success, but the cost in casualties by blindly promoting a single preconception can be high, particularly if ground maneuver forces are employed to promote that preconception or if the operational or tactical options remaining to the commander

require he nevertheless play into the hand of the enemy. If the operational commander relies upon "M-Deception", he must recognize Maxim 3, The Multiple Forms of Surprise, and allow the subordinate commanders the latitude to conduct their own "A-Deceptions:"

> Maxim 3: The Multiple Forms of Surprise.
>
> Surprise can be achieved in many forms. In military engagements, these forms include location, strength, style, and timing. Should it not prove attractive or feasible to achieve surprise in all dimensions, it may still be possible to achieve surprise in at least one of these.

In Desert Storm, the operational deception plan was sufficiently broad as to allow for tactical commanders exercise deception operations to confuse the enemy as to the exact location, strength, and style of attack, but not time. The success was due in large measure because CENTCOM violated the commonly held belief below:

> "The number of witting personnel should be minimized, even to the point of misleading your own forces." 13/

The operational deception plan was pervasive in its influence on and integration into the entire ground organization's planning and execution. This seems to contradict conventional wisdom that the "art of deception can be practiced

only by organizations that are willing to delegate much authority to, and have confidence in, a small group of people," 14/ and the statement above. While it may be true that the development of the operational deception plan was vested in a small group, its execution was only possible through widespread knowledge of the intent of the plan, acceptance of the need for the plan, sufficient latitude to allow tactical deception, and consistency between the deception and the actual operation plan.

The use of ambiguity reducing deception, "M-Deception," was required by the operational deception plan, as explained above. On a tactical level, however, ambiguity inducing deception, "A-Deception," was required. I MEF was going to attack, and the 1 Cavalry Division was going to probe the Iraqi defenses. Both of these units had to deceive the enemy they were facing as to time and location of their respective attacks. The VII Corps commander was faced with a dilemma. As an operational commander, he was the principle beneficiary of the theater deception plan, but the area allocated him to for offensive action forced him to actually breach Iraqi lines with one of his divisions. He had to deceive the enemy as to the location of the breach and yet destroy sufficient forces prior to the attack to assure its success. This reflects an inherent friction between the needs of tactical and operational commanders in deception planning and execution. Resolving this friction requires complete

understanding of the operational deception plan and argues against too much secrecy when ground forces are a tool of the deception planner.

For example, ARCENT units operating in the Wadi Al Batin, both the 1st Cavalry Division and the VII Corps Artillery, were aware of the deception plan down to at least battalion commander level. While there exists a danger that commanders will not execute deception combat operations with the necessary violence to be convincing or that the deception will be compromised, the knowledge that a unit is conducting a deception aids in planning and executing the mission and prevents exploitation of tactical successes that upset the operational deception. The execution of the deception operations in the Wadi were conducted with the same violence that characterized the ground campaign. Just as successful execution of an operational plan requires clear understanding of the senior commander's intent, successful execution of deception plans utilizing ground combat forces requires the same level of understanding in the intent of the deception, regardless of the risk of loss of secrecy.

Maxim 4: Jones' Lemma.

> Deception becomes more difficult as the number of channels of information available to the victim increases. However, within limits, the greater the number of controlled channels the greater the likelihood of the deception being believed. 15/

With the increased telecommunications technology, Jones' Lemma takes on increased importance. The ground deception plan was effective because Iraq had few, in any, information gathering systems remaining. The clear U.S. domination of the electronic warfare spectrum, the success of the counter-intelligence and OPSEC efforts, and Iraq's lack of overhead systems left Iraq with few independent intelligence systems. When the air campaign successfully neutralized Iraqi radar and active EW systems, Hussein was left only with passive means and HUMINT. Despite the overwhelming air campaign, Iraq maintained the capability to monitor radio and radar traffic causing U.S. forces to conduct radio deception plans. Even the most low-tech enemy will be able to conduct some intercept and direction finding that can be exploited to promote deception or expose the actual operation. Rarely can one expect to so completely destroy the technical intelligence system of the enemy, but imposing such complete blindness is double-edged. Significantly reducing the number of channels available compromises the ability to feed the enemy the deception and may force reliance upon systems, such as the media, over which the deceiver exercises less control.

The role the media unwittingly played in promoting the deception was discussed above. Conversely, Operation Desert Storm also demonstrated the true "wild card" in controlling

information to the enemy: a wiser media. Even as the first air strikes on Baghdad destroyed telecommunications, CNN was reestablishing its real time links and remained on the air. Anyone with a satellite dish can receive their broadcasts, and Newsweek published the operational concept of the ground campaign on 26 January. General Schwartzkopf confirmed use of the press to support deception in the following exchange in his famous 27 February briefing:

> Schwartzkopf: ...we wanted the Iraqis to...believe that we were going to conduct a massive amphibious operation in this area. I think many of you recall the number of amphibious rehearsal we had, to include Imminent Thunder, that was written about quite extensively for many reasons. (Emphasis added)
>
> Reporter: (Later) You talked about heavy press coverage of Imminent Thunder early on, and how it helped fool the Iraqis into thinking it was a serious operation. I wondered if you could talk about other ways in which the press contributed to the campaign.
>
> Schwartzkopf:...I don't want to characterize Imminent Thunder as being only a deception...the one thing I would say...(when) we didn't have much on the ground, you all had given credit for a whole lot more over here...Other than that, I would not like to get into the remainder of your question. 16/

The American free press is difficult, if not impossible to control, and its manipulation raises its ire. Deception planners can assume some resentment on the part of the press to

its perceived manipulation that will make it more wary of information from the military.

One of the enduring operational deception lessons from Desert Storm is that television and the media will forever intrude on the operational planner and his deception counterpart. The difficulty of maintaining a deception has increased exponentially. Control of the press, particularly television, to support OPSEC and to promote the deception of the enemy, without compromising freedom of the press will require careful balance and be increasingly difficult. The full integration of the Public Affairs Officer into operational deception will be necessary. The use of media pools will facilitate maintaining deception, but, the nervous laughter that accompanied the reporter's question to General Schwartzkopf on 27 February mentioned above echoed a serious question that all military commanders must be prepared to answer. Having been once used, the press will forever ask if what they are covering is the real thing, or a deception.

Maxim 8: The Importance of Feedback.

> A scheme to insure accurate feedback increases the chance of success in deception. 17/

The same technological superiority and air supremacy that decapitated Iraqi intelligence provided near perfect feedback on the results of the deception. Iraqi responses to the deception

were quickly picked up by national overhead systems and theater reconnaissance assets within days. As JSTARS entered the theater, near real time information was available to the theater commander. Feedback on the deception plan could not have been better. Television also provided feedback. Since it was well known that Saddam Hussein watched CNN, operational planners could see what independent information he was receiving and respond accordingly. While such national systems will remain available to theater commanders, the open terrain of the dessert denied the Iraqi forces the ability to conceal or camouflage their movements. Only in a desert will such systems so reliably and accurately report enemy reaction to our deception efforts.

Maxim 7: A Sequencing Rule.

> Deception activities should be sequenced so as to maximize the persistence of the incorrect hypothesis(es) for as long as possible. 18/

Sequencing of actions to support the deception flowed directly into the sequencing of the attacks across the theater. From the beginning, U.S. forces were positioned directly south of Kuwait to portray positioning for attacks into the Wadi. No operational movements were conducted westward until after the air campaign began to blind most Iraqi intelligence and information systems. VII Corps dispositions remained oriented upon the Wadi Al Batin, until 13 February, less than seven days before the projected G Day of 20 February. ARCENT LogBases

supporting the "Hail Mary" were not begun until after the air campaign began. As if to counter any conclusions Iraq might make if they picked up the movement of U.S. forces west, the 1st Cavalry Division actions in the Wadi Al Batin intensified as the two Corps closed in assembly areas further west and the 1st U.S. Infantry Division began to prepare for its assault into Iraqi defenses just west of the Wadi. 19/

Maintaining the deception that the main attack was coming through the Wadi, the 1 Cavalry attacked there on 24 February while 4th MEB launched a feint below Kuwait City. The Joint Forces attack up the coast and the Marine attack through the "elbow," were designed to fix the attention of the Republican Guard, the strategic reserve, and the two regular heavy corps, the theater reserve, to the east and pull them south to counter it. The VII Corps attacks were scheduled for 25 February. The timing of the attacks served to maintain the deception. Most Republican Guard units were still oriented south and eastward as late as 27 February. This sequencing of the attacks was a major factor in sustaining the success of the deception.

The success of the Desert Storm operational deception plan is a result of the general application of the key Maxims of the original Deception Research Program. Particular emphasis on reinforcing enemy preconceptions was critical to the success.

Knowing the preconception was essential. But just as important was recognition of the "wild card" of the media and the advantages of media pools in maintaining security and in promoting the deception. Similarly, briefing commanders executing ground combat operations in support of the deception reaped benefits in reducing, not increasing, the operational ambiguity, but also allowed tactical commanders to develop deception operations that both supported the operational plan and enhanced through deception their tactical plan. Desert Storm also demonstrated the capability of a professional military force to prosecute deception as an organization. But all was not perfect in the deception.

What Went Wrong

Maxim 9: "The Monkey's Paw."

> Deception efforts may produce subtle and unwanted side effects. Planner should be sensitive to such possibilities and, where prudent, take steps to minimize these counterproductive aspects. 20/

The "Monkey's Paw" summarizes the major shortfalls in the execution of the operational deception. In Operation Desert Storm, the deception effort produced major and unwanted side effects which upset the synchronization of the theater attack and arguably lead to the escape of one of the RGFC armored divisions. While Iraqi troop dispositions in the west were maintained vulnerable to the envelopment into the second day of

the ground attack, the same was not true in east. Schwartzkopf knew that "the Iraqis were quite concerned about an amphibious operation across the shores to liberate Kuwait." 21/ Imminent Thunder and the Sea Soldier series of exercises, the last conducted on 2 February, had struck an extremely sensitive nerve. In fact, they were so fearful of amphibious assault that they withdrew their defenses north 40 kilometers, half way to Kuwait City. To what degree was the Iraqi move precipitated by Sea Soldier?

On 24 February, when JFCE and I MEF conducted their initial attacks, there was no effective Iraqi resistance in southeast Kuwait. The withdrawal from southeastern Kuwait was accelerated by an amphibious demonstration against Ash Shuaybah, 40 kilometers north of the border, on 25 February at 0400 hours. The Iraqis moved another division north to counter the threat. 22/ The operational timing of the attacks were upset by the rapid advance of the Marines. Schwartzkopf had already reacted to the advances in the east and ordered ARCENT to immediately attack in the west, 18 hours early. The sequencing of the ground campaign was disrupted as Iraqi units began to bolt north.

The following day, a second amphibious assault, this time further north at Bubiyan Island, could well have accelerated the

withdrawal of the RGFC Hammurabi Armored Division. Positioned as the eastern most of the three heavy RGFC divisions, northwest of Safwan, the Hammurabi had more time available and potentially better communications with Baghdad. Faced with evidence of the II Iraqi Armored Corps withdrawing north and the amphibious demonstration on 27 February, it quickly withdrew north through Basrah and west towards An Nasiriyah to Baghdad. There were not just subtle unwanted side effects, but Iraqi reactions to deception efforts seriously complicated the complete destruction of the RGFC heavy forces and the II Iraqi Armored Corps by accelerating the withdrawal of those forces.

Clearly, Schwartzkopf did not make the same correlation between the amphibious demonstrations and the rapid advance of the Marines and JFCE. He reacted by slowing the advance of MARCENT and accelerating the attack of ARCENT, and apparently took no action to cancel future amphibious demonstrations. In both cases, he upset the synchronization of the respective attacks. MARCENT held back the Tiger Brigade and sacrificed some initiative. VII Corps was faced with completing its breaching operations in failing light, stringing out the attacking armored divisions in the face of the RGFC, and leaving bypassed and undetected Iraqi infantry in its rear. The VII Corps Commander elected to cease operations that night rather than assume these risks. 23/ A failure to properly interpret

the feedback to the deceiver or perhaps a lack of full understanding that the operational plan required fixing the RGFC strategic reserve to effect its destruction may account for the shortfalls. Nevertheless, the failure had adverse impact on the conduct of the operational ground campaign.

Lessons to be Learned
Developing Operational Deception Plans in Support of Ground Operations

While many argue that operational deception was not significant because the Coalition had thoroughly neutralized the Iraqi intelligence operations, the operational deception prepared the battlefield for the Hail Mary well before the first bomb was dropped on the Iraqi C3I. After the air phase of the campaign began, the deception may no longer have been necessary since Iraq no longer could adequately respond to the actual plan. But, contrary to the popular conception, Iraqi forces in the Kuwaiti Theater did react to VII Corps. As early as 25 February, 6 brigade-sized elements of the Jihad Corps were moving west into the flank of VII Corps and elements of the RGFC Tawakalna Mechanized Division were attacking west into VII Corps' 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment. Further north, elements of the RGFC Adnan Infantry Division was moving to screen the RGFC

Medina Armored Division from the 1st Armored Division. 24/ Even an enemy pummeled by over 40 days of an intensive air attack, totally isolated from any external support, and blinded retained a capability to react with over 7 brigade-sized units to an attack from an unexpected direction, setting off a continuous armored battle for nearly 72 hours involving thousands of armored vehicles. That movement itself is evidence of a sufficient C3I capability remaining to demonstrate the significance of the operational deception.

Desert Storm reveals the tremendous advantages a well planned and executed operational deception plan can create. Clearly, the low casualties, particularly in the VII and XVIII Corps, resulted from the operational and tactical advantages of flanking and rear attacks on an unsuspecting enemy and superior U.S. tactical abilities in fluid armored warfare when Iraqi units were forced to leave their dug-in positions to maneuver or reposition. Operational and tactical ground forces are invaluable assets for executing ground deception. The Maxims of the Deception Research Program remain solid guidance for the operational deception planner. However, the unique requirements of operational ground operations require some modification to the Maxims and place increased importance on others.

Operation Desert Storm once again demonstrates the preeminence of Magruder's Principle, the Exploitation of Preconceptions. Reinforcing the enemy preconception is more likely to succeed than trying to change a preconception. The essential prerequisite for exploiting the preexisting belief is knowing what that belief is. This argues for increased intelligence gathering and analysis, not only in military matters of doctrine, capability, and order of battle and disposition, but in cultural and social factors. Sociological and cultural profiles offer the clues to preconceptions that may be exploited strategically, operationally, and tactically. During peace, attaches and other HUMINT agents should be tasked to seek out preconceptions of the military and national leadership of their country on their vision, concept, and impressions of the nature of war. Similarly, as the operational commander transitions to conflict, he must insure that his intelligence officers seek evidence of enemy preconceptions that may be exploited as the operation unfolds.

General guidelines on the conduct of deception argues for "M-Deception," ambiguity reducing deception. This is in general conflict with operational and tactical ground commanders who want to increase the ambiguity in the mind of the enemy as to time, place and method of attack. Should the operational deception planner choose "M-Deception," he must recognize the

inherent conflict between his M-Deception and the subordinate or tactical commanders need for "A-Deception." The construction of a sufficiently broad and flexible "M-Deception" concept allows the subordinate commander sufficient latitude to surprise the enemy as to time, strength, location, and method of attack, application of Maxim 3, the Multiple Forms of Surprise. Similarly, increasing the range of incorrect alternatives frequently has greater utility in operational ground deception by forcing dispersion of enemy forces. Conversely, building a narrow "M-Deception" can limit the element of surprise for the subordinate commander. The inherent tension between the needs of the operational commander practicing ambiguity reducing deception and his subordinate's needs for surprise and deception must be satisfactorily resolved.

Resolving the inherent conflict between an operational and subordinate commander's deception requirement requires close coordination. When ground commanders, their planning, and their units are directly involved, misleading one's own ground forces can have disastrous implications. Just as subordinate commanders must fully understand the commander's intent on the execution of his campaign, subordinates must understand both the intent and the desired effect of the operational deception plan. Restricting knowledge of the deception to the point of misleading your own forces is risky. Lack of synchronization

between deception and actual operational and tactical plans, particularly at brigade and higher levels upsets both the operational and the tactical plan.

The sequencing of the deception remains critical in operational deception. Once the deception scheme is settled, logical military activities must occur in the appropriate sequence to support the scheme. The actual execution of military operations in support of the true objective should, where possible, be sequenced to prolong and exploit the operational deception scheme, particularly when the intelligence organizations of the enemy remain capable.

The need for feedback on the deception effort is evident. Not only must the deceiver know if the enemy is receiving the deception, he must know if he is reacting in the desired manner. Desert Storm was unique in the amount of feedback available to the deceiver. Nevertheless, no one drew sufficient parallels between Iraqi concern over amphibious assaults and their reactions in withdrawing from southeastern Kuwait. Feedback in deception operations is more than just seeing what the enemy does, but recognizing whether or not the action is a reaction to the deception. In addition to overhead imagery, signals intelligence, and the more traditional means of feedback operating under near ideal conditions, the knowledge that Saddam

Hussein watched CNN and American television allowed the deceiver to see the same feedback the enemy was receiving from a major portion of the deception. This source of information on the enemy will gain increased importance, but must be read within the cultural and sociological parameters of the enemy.

Jones' Lemma addresses the impact of controlling channels of information to the enemy. Clearly, the more channels of information available to the enemy, the more difficult the deception will be. Desert Storm demonstrated that the media is the most powerful source of information to the enemy. Television can be used to promote the deception. But, it has a greater probability to compromise a deception. The utilization of press pools, particularly television pools, takes on added importance when deception on a grand scale is contemplated. Control of access to ensure the proper falsehood is presented to the enemy is essential to success. However, having been once used to promote a deception, the media will be sensitive to being used again and will ask whether the operation being covered is a deception. This media dynamic requires the involvement of the Public Affairs Officer in controlling the messages received by the enemy through the public media.

Related to Jones' Lemma is the tremendous capability of the U.S. to neutralize enemy command, control, communications, and

intelligence-gathering platforms. Exercising such a capability is double-edged when deception is a major part of the overall campaign. Depriving the enemy of the ability to receive the deceiver's signal compromises the deception and deprives the deceiver of the advantages brought by successful deception. Similarly, future enemies recognize the control the U.S. can exercise over their intelligence gathering organs and will view skeptically any information received. In developing targets lists for strategic and operational air and naval operations, the theater commander may want to leave some C3I targets functional as a means of transmitting the deception to the enemy and to permit the enemy to retain some credibility in its own intelligence organization.

The key Maxims of the Deception Research Program are excellent guidelines for the development of deception plans. However, in planning operational deception for ground forces in campaigns, the unique aspects of those forces argue for greater communication of the deception plan to the ground forces than proposed by those maxims. Successful deception requires extraordinary planning and pervasive influence upon subordinate's operational and tactical plans to resolve the inherent conflict between the types of deception required at various levels. Operation Desert Storm holds these key lessons for future planners of operational deception. The operational

deception plan for Desert Storm created the disposition of Iraqi forces that were exploited so decisively in the ground campaign, and serves as a model for shaping the theater battlefield through operational deception.

1/ Samuel B. Griffith, Sun Tzu The Art of War, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 66.

2/ H. Norman Schwartzkopf, "Central Command Briefing," Military Review, September, 1991, pp. 96-108.

3/ Peter S. Kindsvatter, "VII Corps in the Gulf War, Deployment and Preparation for Desert Storm," Military Review, January, 1992, pp. 13-14.

4/ William G. Pagonis and Harold E. Raugh, "Good Logistics is Combat Power," Military Review, September, 1991, p. 34.

5/ This is the region in the Wadi Al Batin where the borders of Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

6/ Kindswater, "VII Corps in the Gulf War, Deployment and Preparation for Desert Storm," p. 9.

7/ Ibid., p. 13.

8/ Pope., p. 68.

9/ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Research and Development, Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore, (Washington, 1981). pp. 5-41.

10/ Ibid.

11/ U.S. C.I.A., Ibid., p. 5.

12/ Aaron Danis, "Iraqi Army: Operations and Doctrine," Military Intelligence, April-June, 1991, pp. 6-12.

13/ This information was relayed to the author by 1st Armored Division intelligence officers after the cease fire.

14/ John R. Pope, "U.S. Marines in Operation Desert Storm," Marine Corps Gazette, July 1991, p. 69.

15/ U.S. C.I.A., Ibid., p. 22.

16/ C.I.A., Ibid., p. 37.

17/ Michael I. Handel, Military Deception in Peace and War (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1985), p. 28.

18/ U.S. C.I.A., Ibid., p. 21.

19/ Schwartzkopf, Ibid., pp. 97 and 102.

20/ U.S. C.I.A., Ibid., p. 33.

21/ Ibid., p. 32.

22/ Peter S. Kindsvatter, "VII Corps in the Gulf War, Ground Offensive," Military Review, February, 1992, pp. 19-20.

23/ U.S. C.I.A., Ibid., p. 36.

24/ Schwartzkopf, Ibid., p. 96.

25/ Pope, Ibid., pp. 64-65.

26/ Kindswater, "VII Corps in the Gulf War, Ground Offensive," pp. 24-25.

27/ Ibid. pp. 27-31.

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