

Chapter 3

BATTLEFIELD DECEPTION AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL OF WAR

Deception is common sense soldiering.

-- General Carl E. Vuono, Chief of Staff

Tactical commanders plan and prepare for upcoming battles and engagements according to the terms of battle set by campaign and major operation plans developed at the operational level. Battles are fought by corps and divisions. Engagements are fought by brigades and smaller units. Tactical operations require unity of effort between corps and divisions throughout the depth of operations--rear, close, and deep. The task of tactical commanders is to--

- ⁰Coordinate attacks on the enemy indepth with attacks on his forward units.
- ⁰Use indirect approaches and flank positions to achieve tactical surprise.
- ⁰Assure the uninterrupted support of field artillery, air defense, air support, engineer, military intelligence (MI), and logistic units.
- ⁰Avoid creating lucrative targets.
- ⁰Avoid positions that can become isolated as a result of enemy maneuver or fires.
- ⁰Remain informed in order to execute adjustments to the plan and retain the means to react to opportunities or threats.

The tactical commander is the catalyst who executes the means for tactical success--battles and engagements--to satisfy operational ends.

The terms of battle set at higher echelons should be exploited tactically to the maximum extent possible. Successful tactical exploitation of the enemy involves, among other things, using indirect approaches and deception.

TACTICAL DECEPTION PLANNING AND EXECUTION

The key to successful tactical planning is anticipation of future battle events and being prepared for contingencies. Deception operations are essential in the tactical planning process so that friendly anticipatory processes can be conducted with more certainty and to mask maneuver options. In practice, deceptions can play a significant role in--

- ⁰Masking the movement of tactical formations.
- ⁰Inducing the enemy to miscalculate friendly objectives or areas to be retained.

⁰Inducing the enemy to miscalculate friendly zones, sectors, and areas of responsibility.

⁰Creating notional tactical formations and force dispositions.

⁰Facilitating the execution of maneuver options which may develop during battles and engagements.

Tactical commanders exploit operational-level terms of battle by avoiding the enemy's strengths, striking at his weaknesses, and gaining surprise. To gain surprise--

⁰Feign and demonstrate the use of direct approaches to the objective, while actually using indirect approaches; or vice versa, if the situation so dictates.

⁰Feign, demonstrate, and display frontal dispositions, while using flank positions to attack command and control (C²) and logistic facilities.

⁰Feign, demonstrate, and display notional axes, routes, and battle positions to preserve combat, CS, and CSS forces, while simultaneously and harmlessly depleting enemy ground and air attack.

⁰Feign the air axes of attack helicopter, air cavalry, and air assault units.

⁰Demonstrate and display notional field artillery, air defense, engineer, and logistic units to enhance real-unit survivability.

⁰When changes to the tactical plan are required by the military situation, mask those changes with deception operations.

CLOSE OPERATIONS

Close operations involve the fight between the committed forces and the readily available tactical reserves of both combatants. Deceptions employed in close operations--

⁰Can be preplanned or ad hoc.

⁰Should center around facilitating the tactical scheme of maneuver and fire support plan.

⁰Should have localized, immediate effects during battle.

Commanders generally weight their main efforts with every available asset. Main efforts are usually complemented with feints--supporting attacks. If the main effort fails or an opportunity is presented during combat to exploit the feint as the main effort, commanders must be able to shift the effort rapidly.

Proper positioning of reserves to follow up either the main or supporting effort serves two purposes:

- ⁰To impede enemy assessments of where the main effort will actually occur by evaluating frontline--reserve positional--relationships-- Both threats cannot be ignored.
- ⁰To induce the enemy to position his reserve force at a location from which it can generally respond to both the main and supporting attack, but cannot decisively influence either.

DEEP OPERATIONS

Deep operations are employed to attack those enemy forces that can influence close operations, but are not yet in contact. Successful attack on them--

- ⁰Isolates the close fight.
- ⁰Alters the tempo of battle.
- ⁰Preserves freedom of action.

Deceptions in support of deep operations should either--

- ⁰Facilitate exposing enemy rear forces to attack.
- ⁰Facilitate their commitment at a time and place that is tactically irrelevant to the close fight.
- ⁰Delay, disrupt, or divert them.

REAR OPERATIONS

Rear area operations preserve the commander's freedom of action and assure uninterrupted support to the battle. Rear area units, whose assistance to the main effort is vital receive the highest priority for protection, thus enhancing survivability.

Deception in support of rear operations may show either the buildup of area logistic bases, notional fire and air defense sites, or the increase of survivability of the units. The use of decoys for survivability will not be reported as a deception operation.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL DECEPTION PLANS

Operational deception plans facilitate the conduct of campaigns and major operations by setting the terms of battle before battles and engagements occur. Tactical deception plans exploit the tactical situation being immediately confronted by the tactical commander. Although tactical organizations are not precluded from developing tactical-level deceptions independent of the operational context, they usually will be derivative slices of operational deception plans.

Tactical deception plans should not be developed in operational plan vacuums for the following reasons:

⁰Operational deception plans set the terms of battle in which tactical commanders fight: the size of the enemy force; its composition and dispositions; the enemy and friendly mission; where and when the battle will be fought; and tactical objectives; in other words, the factors of METT-T. These operationally induced factors directly influence the nature of the enemy intelligence collection, decision cycle, and troop control procedures tactical commanders will be deceptively manipulating to favorably influence tactical battle outcomes.

⁰Operational deception plans should contain deception event taskings for one or more tactical commands subordinate to the operational commander. Operational deception plans must, therefore, ensure that tactical-level plans are not working at cross-purposes with one another.

⁰Operational deception plans might call for one subordinate tactical command to provide support to another subordinate tactical command to satisfy the latter's operational deception-related taskings. Tactical deception plans must, therefore, be coordinated at the operational level to ensure they are not working at cross-purposes with one another. Figure 3-1 depicts the relationship between operational and tactical deception plans.

