

CHAPTER 2

BATTLEFIELD DECEPTION AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL OF WAR

An integral part of any campaign or major operation is the deception plan. -- FM 100-5

Operational-level deceptions are within the purview of Theater Army component, Army group, field Army, and in some cases, corps commanders. The objective of deception operations at the operational level of war is to influence the decisions of enemy commanders before battle occurs. This is done so that the tactical outcome of battles and engagements is favorable and, subsequently, operationally exploitable. The goal is to maintain operational fluidity. For this reason operational deceptions have a much larger potential payoff than those at the tactical level.

These echelons of command may have operational or logistic sustainment or a combination of both types of mission responsibilities.

During peacetime, the unit's true and deceptive efforts concerning how the force is organized, equipped, trained, and maintained directly contribute to--

⁰The strategic aim of deterring war.

⁰If deterrence fails, the operational requirement to win campaigns and major operations.

During peacetime and wartime transition periods, the unit's true and deceptive efforts concerning how the force is allocated and sustained directly contribute to--

⁰Delaying final enemy war-waging decisions so political intervention or war-avoidance processes can be engaged.

⁰If political intervention fails, the operational requirement to induce the enemy to revisit his already-made force allocation and sustainment decisions.

CENTER OF GRAVITY

The essence of operational art is the identification of the enemy's center of gravity and the design of campaigns which expose it to attack and destruction.

Enemy operational centers of gravity can be a function of the political, economic, military, sociological, ideological, or psychological context (or combinations thereof) which give rise to the presence of the enemy. Operational centers of gravity have been characterized as--

⁰The mass of the enemy force.

⁰The boundaries between two major enemy combat formations.

⁰Vital command and control centers.

⁰Vital logistic bases.

⁰Cohesion among enemy alliances.

⁰Mental or psychological balance of a key commander.

A center of gravity is a fundamental source of enemy power and strength, and, in most cases, it will have to be attacked in phases over time.

A campaign plan's ultimate objective should be the destruction of the enemy's center of gravity. Deceptions supporting the campaign plan should be consciously designed to expose the enemy's center of gravity to increasingly higher levels of risk.

Deceptions that are developed around branches and sequels to campaigns and major operations plans weaken the robustness with which the enemy can preserve his center of gravity.

LINES OF OPERATION

Lines of operation define the direction of a force in relation to the enemy. Multiple lines of operation in a campaign are not uncommon, although often there is usually only one per campaign or major operation. This line, or lines, connect the friendly operational base or bases geographically with the operational objective. By manipulating these lines, it is possible to mislead the enemy and cause him to adopt inappropriate courses of action (see figure 2-1).

CULMINATING POINTS

All offensive operations reach a point--the culminating point--when the strength of the attacker no longer decisively exceeds that of the defender. Continuing to operate beyond that point risks overextension, counterattack, and defeat. The aim of attack is to achieve decisive objectives before reaching the culminating point.

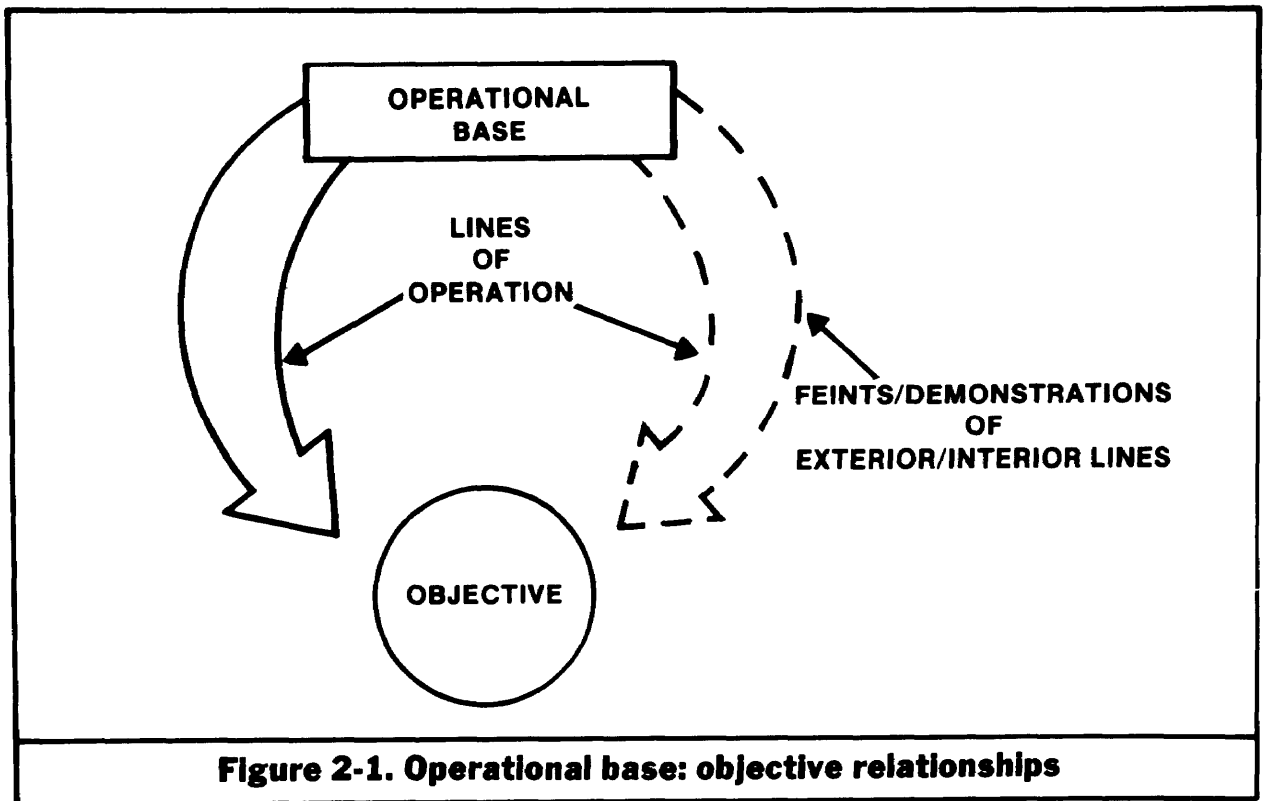
While on the attack, deception operations make it easier to move supplies forward and to preserve--

⁰Available stocks.

⁰Numerical advantage of the attacking force.

⁰Reserve forces.

⁰Local air superiority.



offensive deception operations can take the form of displays, feints, or demonstrations (which reduce enemy maneuver or fire-induced force attrition), or a combination of displays, feints, and demonstrations. All contribute to delaying premature achievement of friendly culminating points.

Operational commanders who are attacking can manipulate the indicators which the enemy commander uses to perceive friendly culminating points. This can induce the enemy to--

- ^oMiscalculate which major operation is the main effort (where the decisive battle is sought).
- ^oMiscalculate which branch of the major operation is then assuming main effort emphasis.
- ^oMiscalculate postbattle disposition, objectives, and missions.
- ^oPrematurely shift to the offensive.
- ^oPrematurely commit reserves.
- ^oHold forces in reserve too long.
- ^oAdopt hasty defensive postures.

⁰Be logistically underprepared for the impending battle.

⁰Inappropriately over-weight a sector logistically, or with fire support, where a decision is not sought.

⁰Inappropriately exhaust or withhold enemy close air support or battlefield interdiction sorties.

Defense hastens culmination of the enemy attack, and then exploits it offensively. While on the defensive, deception operations are employed to--

⁰Induce the allocation of numerically inferior forces to the offensive (feign or demonstrate weakness).

⁰Dilute the enemy's ability to concentrate his main effort with fires and maneuver (notionally threaten his flanks and rear areas).

⁰Through notional means, canalize enemy movement into special or conventional (air and ground) weapon kill zones.

OPERATIONAL DECEPTION PLANNING AND EXECUTION

Operational commanders plan and execute campaigns and major operations that extend from ports and support areas far to the rear of the line of contact to similarly distant sources of enemy support. They concentrate superior strength against enemy vulnerabilities at decisive times and places. These commanders set the terms of battle, which will be fought by subordinate units, by synchronizing--

⁰Ground force movement of corps, field armies, and Army groups.

⁰Air force close air support, counterair, and battlefield interdiction efforts.

⁰Logistic sustainment activities.

⁰Where appropriate, naval activities.

For these reasons, rear, close, and deep operations truly become one AirLand Battle, whether offensive or defensive in nature.

The operational commander is the catalyst who converts strategic ends into operational means--campaigns and major operations--to accomplish the ends. He focuses on executing the campaign plan by staging, conducting, and exploiting the outcome of major operations. Campaign plans set long-term goals that are accomplished in phases in most cases. Depending on what the enemy center of gravity is, they can be designed to defeat the enemy in a number of different ways, such as--

- ⁰Physically destroying enemy forces.
- ⁰Defeating or depriving the enemy of his allies.
- ⁰Separating his armies in the field for piecemeal defeat.
- ⁰Preventing enemy deployment.
- ⁰Destroying enemy logistic support.
- ⁰Occupying decisive terrain, which forces battle on terrain unfavorable to the enemy.
- ⁰Carrying the war into the enemy homeland.

CAMPAIGN PLANS

The plan for the first phase of the campaign depicts the commanders intent, allocates forces to major subordinate units, disposes the force for operations, and coordinates air and naval support for ground maneuver.

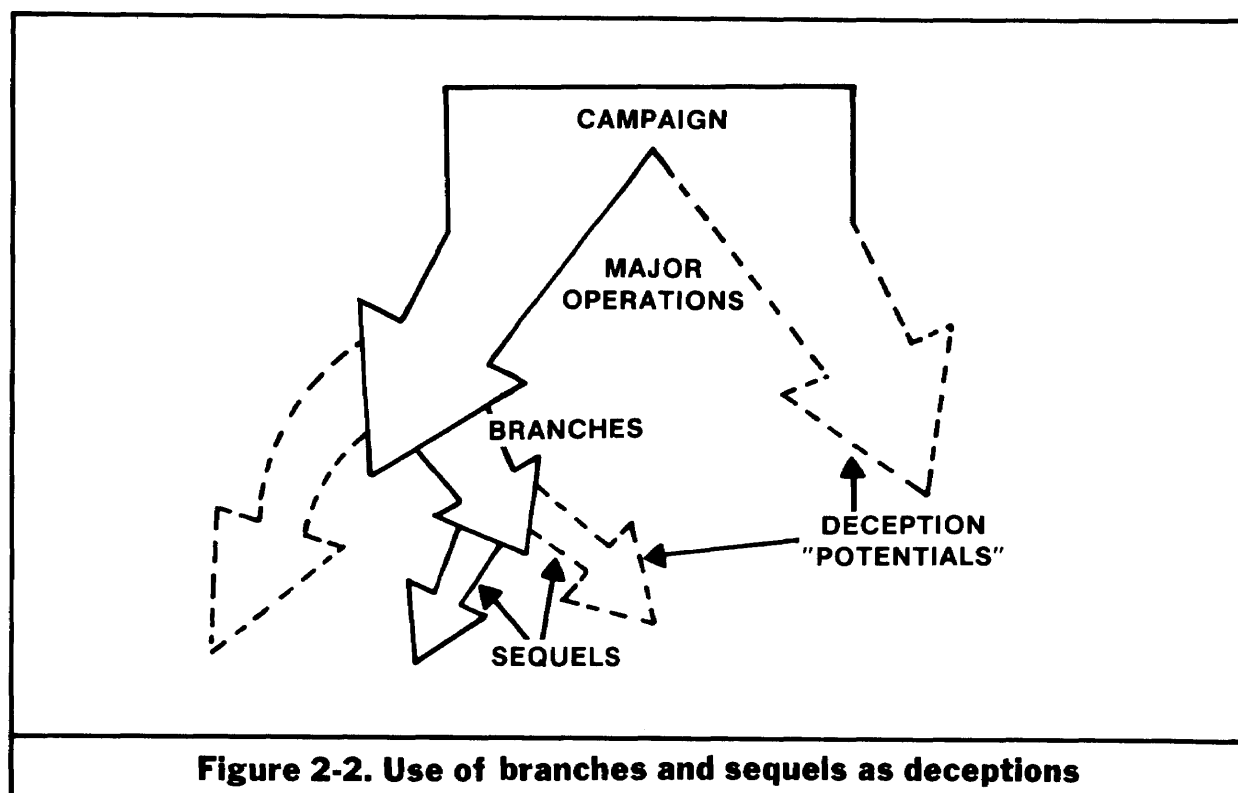
Employing deception during the first phase of a campaign affords operational commanders ample opportunities to--

- ⁰Influence enemy perception of friendly operational intent (objectives), and by extension, strategic ends.
- ⁰Induce incorrect enemy conclusions and decisions about friendly forces being allocated to fight the battle.
- ⁰Induce incorrect enemy conclusions about force dispositions.
- ⁰Induce incorrect enemy conclusions about the nature and extent of air and naval support to the ground maneuver.

All this is done to predispose the enemy to adopt a posture that is operationally exploitable in the first as well as coming battles.

Preplanned branches to the campaign plan--options for changing dispositions, orientation, direction of movement, and decisions to accept or decline battle--are the fertile soil into which the seeds of deception can be sown.

Sequels establish dispositions, objectives, and missions for subordinate units after battle. Preplanned sequels allow effective transit to exploitations, counteroffensives, withdrawals, retreats, or reorientations of the main effort. Deceptions can be as effectively woven around preplanned sequel variants as branch variants (see Figure 2-2).



MAJOR OPERATIONS PLANS

Major operations planning begins prior to war (as long as a campaign plan is in place) or can begin as branches or sequels to campaign plans. Major operations are coordinated elements of campaigns, and their outcomes impact on different phases of a campaign plan.

DECEPTION SUSTAINMENT PLANNING AND EXECUTION

Operational sustainment provides support by--

- Manning the force with leaders and soldiers.
- Arming the force with weapon systems and munitions.
- Fueling the force with supplies.
- Fixing or replacing damaged or destroyed materiel.
- Transporting the supported force.
- Protecting the sustainment system from degradation or destruction.

The following sustainment imperatives facilitate the sustainment function:

- ⁰Anticipation.
- ⁰Integration.
- ⁰Continuity.
- ⁰Responsiveness.
- ⁰Improvisation.
- ⁰Lines of Support

ANTICIPATION

Operational sustainment planners must ensure that base facilities, priorities of support, lines of communication (LOC), and troop movements support the main lines of operation. They must also be robust enough to postpone attainment of the culminating point until after the friendly decision point is reached, in anticipation of attacks by enemy--

- ⁰Agents and sympathizers.
- ⁰Special purpose forces.
- ⁰Point and area deep attack systems (air and/or ground).
- ⁰Airborne forces.
- ⁰Airmobile forces.
- ⁰Ground maneuver (exploitation) forces.

Operational sustainment planners should create notional base facilities and establish and use notional LOC.

INTEGRATION

Integration of operational and sustainment deception plans will result in the anticipatory sustainment requirements, mentioned earlier, being satisfied within the context of preplanned branches and sequels to campaign and major operations plans.

CONTINUITY

By satisfying the integration requirement mentioned earlier, operational continuity (in terms of lines of operations and culminating points) will be enhanced.

RESPONSIVENESS

Deceptive dilution of the sustainment system, through the use of notional logistic bases and LOC, preserve the robustness of the system during surge periods needed to reconstitute the defense or exploit offensive successes.

IMPROVISATION

The key imperative to sustaining the force is the imagination of everyone involved in the sustainment system to improvise, using organic and, where possible, host nation resources. For example, notional sustainment nodes can be created from discarded empty containers or materiel.

LINES OF SUPPORT

Creation and manipulation of both central and multiple bases of support, in conjunction with interior and exterior lines of support, are the means with which the sustainment system is deceptively enhanced. Reference to lines of support can be found in FM 100-5.

OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS AND MAJOR OPERATIONS

The key to success in offensive campaigns is to defeat the enemy before reaching your culminating point--the point where the offense becomes exhausted.

Unfortunately, for one or more of the following reasons, culminating points are often reached before the decisive objective has been achieved:

- ⁰ Successive battles and engagements result in attrition of the force.
- ⁰ Forces are allocated to the flanks, reducing numerical advantage at the forward line of own troops (PLOT).
- ⁰ Supply Wines become more extended and thus more fragile to interdiction, physically taking longer to get supplies and ammunition to the front.
- ⁰ Significant rear area threats require the commitment of forces away from the main effort.
- ⁰ Enemy defenses may stiffen, as outer defensive belts are breached, causing further attrited forces and the use of more supplies and ammunition.
- ⁰ The natural friction of war and the sheer physical effort necessary to move and sustain forces work against maintenance of offensive momentum.

To prevent reaching the culminating point at the wrong time--before the objective is secured--the attacker must cause the enemy defense to collapse as rapidly as possible. He must simultaneously protect his forces and sustainment system. Operational commanders should employ deception in offensive campaigns to--

- ⁰ Mask the intentions of operational and sustainment forces.
- ⁰ Put the defender into positions of decisive disadvantage before battles and engagements are joined by subordinate units.

- ⁰Put the defender into positions of disadvantage so that the outcomes of battle--success, stalemate, defeat--can be exploited by operational reserves.

The reasons for employing deception go to the heart of maintaining operational fluidity. Deception is employed to--

- ⁰Preserve the initiative.
- ⁰Induce and strike enemy weaknesses.
- ⁰Induce the enemy to expose his formations in depth to facilitate deep attack.
- ⁰Prevent the enemy from establishing a coherent defense.

Offensive campaigns may be fought against concentrated or dispersed enemy forces. Against concentrated enemy forces, operational deception should induce the enemy to abandon his positions and fight at a positional disadvantage. This means--

- ⁰Directing operations against enemy flanks or rear, while demonstrating or feigning a frontal main effort.
- ⁰Penetrating weak areas of the defense, while demonstrating or feigning against flanks and rear.
- ⁰Operating on converging exterior lines of operation, while demonstrating or feigning the use of interior lines.

Against dispersed enemy forces, operational deception should induce the enemy to remain dispersed for piecemeal defeat. This means--

- ⁰Deceptively manipulating the sequencing of campaign branches and sequels so that enemy reserves do not decisively influence current battle outcomes.
- ⁰Deceptively manipulating LOC and lines of operations so that notional convergence occurs at multiple objectives at the same time.
- ⁰Feigning or demonstrating forms of maneuver that facilitate penetration of the attacking force into enemy rear areas of operations.

General Grant's Vicksburg Campaign during the Civil War graphically depicts the use of deception against both concentrated (Vicksburg) and dispersed (Vicksburg-Jackson) forces.

Grant used demonstrations and feints north of Vicksburg to mask his maneuver south around Roundaway and Vidal bayous, and up the Big Black River. This phase of the campaign turned the southern flank of the Vicksburg defenses and exposed the rear (the town of Jackson) to attack.

By demonstrating and feigning south of the Vicksburg defenses, extending east from Warrenton toward the Big Black River, rebel forces at Vicksburg were effectively held in place. By demonstrating east to Jackson, rebel forces there were held in place as well. This tactic allowed Grant to--

- ⁰ Maneuver (interdict) against the Vicksburg defender's supply LOC in the general vicinity of Champion Hill.

- ⁰ Keep the Vicksburg and Jackson forces from massing.

- ⁰ Subsequently defeat by piecemeal the Vicksburg and Jackson defenders.

DEFENSIVE CAMPAIGNS AND MAJOR OPERATIONS

The key to success in defensive campaigns is to destroy the enemy's capability to sustain forward movement--to hasten his culminating point. Defensive campaigns are undertaken--

- ⁰ When the military situation does not allow for offensive operations.

- ⁰ When commanders must economize to support attacks elsewhere.

Defensive campaigns must control the enemy's attack, while simultaneously preserving the defending force's ability to defend and to assume offensive operations. Commanders mix defensive and offensive battles and engagements. They contest the initiative at every opportune time and place, within the area of operations, to exhaust the enemy attack.

Operational commanders should employ deception in defensive campaigns to--

- ⁰ Exploit enemy prebattle force allocation and sustainment decisions.

- ⁰ Exploit the potential for favorable outcomes of protracted minor battles fought by subordinate units.

- ⁰ Lure the enemy into friendly territory, exposing his flanks and rear to attacks.

- ⁰ Mask the aggressiveness of the sustaining and operational forces committed to the defense.

The reasons for employing deception go to the heart of maintaining a coherent defense. Those reasons are to--

- ⁰ Defeat a large attacking force.

- ⁰ Retain territory.

- ⁰ Gain time.

Defensive campaigns, like offensive campaigns, contain branches and sequels that give the commander preplanned opportunities to exploit the

military situation. It is around these branches and sequels that deception potentials exist.

Specific deceptive actions that the operational commander can take to hasten exhaustion of the enemy offensive include, but are not limited to--

- ° Manipulating the SALUTE factors associated with defensive dispositions.
- ° Creating notional obstacles.
- ° Masking the conditions under which he will accept decisive battle.
- ° Manipulating the SALUTE factors associated with operational reserves, particularly their mission intent.
- ° Luring the enemy into a decisive battle, the outcome of which will precondition branching or sequencing to an offensive campaign.
- ° Inducing enemy operational reserves to remain uncommitted at the decisive time or place.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL DECEPTION PLANS

Strategic deception plans are designed to facilitate war fighting, escalation control and war winning at theater level and higher. Operational deception plans facilitate the successful conduct of in-theater campaigns at Army EAC. Although EAC organizations are not precluded from developing operational-level deceptions independent of the strategic context, they usually will be land component-specific, derivative slices of strategic deception plans.

Campaign plans and operational deception plans must not be developed in strategic plan vacuums for the following reasons:

- ° Strategic deception plans are designed to have long-term effects on the enemy's ability to prosecute the war. They directly influence those enemy factors from which Army campaign plans are designed to set the terms of battle. Therefore, operational deceptions should be constantly maintained to respond to strategically induced evolutions in fundamental enemy battlefield capabilities.
- ° Strategic deception plans must contain deception event taskings for one or more service components operating in the same theater. Strategic and Army operational deception plans must, therefore, be coordinated at the strategic level to ensure they are not working at cross purposes with one another.
- ° Strategic deception plans might call for one service component to provide support to another component, to satisfy the latter's strategic deception-related taskings. Army operational deception plans must, therefore, be coordinated to ensure they are not working at cross purposes with one another.

⁰ Strategic deception plans may require that some deception event taskings be subordinated for execution through Army operational echelons down to Army tactical echelons,

⁰ Other-theater deception plans may directly or indirectly influence Army EAC organizations to set the terms of battle their tactical formations may have to deal with. Army EAC organizations do not normally know about potential other-theater impacts on their ability to wage campaigns. Army operational commanders, therefore, must look to the commander in chief to ensure that intertheater coordination occurs.

Strategic deception may influence the enemy’s total capability to wage war in-theater. Operational deceptions, taking the enemy’s induced war-waging capability into account, set the terms of battle for tactical formations (see Figure 2-3).

