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Cover and Deception

BY C. W. HELLAND

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An introduction to the general subject of cover and deception. It is intended that a later article will discuss the communication aspects of deception in detail.

INTRODUCTION

"All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive. When we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice him; feign disorder and crush him. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. Attack him where he is unprepared. Appear where you are not expected. These military devices leading to victory must not be divulged beforehand."

—Sun-Tzu

"The Art of War" 505 B. C.

"Military Cover and Deception is the art of causing the enemy to derive and accept a particular appreciation of our dispositions, capabilities, and intentions so that the enemy will react in a specific preselected manner disadvantageous to himself and advantageous to our forces."

—U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff

Memorandum of Policy No. 90,
dated 1 February 1955

Whether one prefers deception philosophy couched in the simple sentences of Sun-Tzu or the official phraseology of the Pentagon, it is clear that the two expressions differ little in concept. In fact the unvarying philosophy of the subject throughout the centuries is born out by countless examples in history and literature. Virtually every successful military leader has made deception an important feature of his strategy, and many a military maxim has been coined in its honor. "Machination is worth more than force," said Rabelais. "Mystify, mislead, and surprise," advised "Stonewall" Jackson. "The truth deserves a bodyguard of lies," cautioned Churchill.

But although cover and deception has probably been employed in one form or another since the beginning of organized hostilities, it was not until World War II that it was isolated from strategy and tactics and made into a separate military activity. The British and Americans elected to treat cover and deception as a technique in

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itself to be applied in support of real operations wherever and whenever the opportunity was presented. Extensive resources were allocated to its planning and execution, and its calculated application in virtually every major Allied operation was on a scale undoubtedly unique in the annals of warfare.

That Allied deception operations were successful—that is, that they made a significant contribution to the ultimate defeat of the Axis powers—has been attested to by the foremost military and political leaders of that era. Indeed, there is hardly a post-war memoir which has not touched on some facet of deception in describing the planning and conduct of the Allied campaigns. A painstakingly detailed account of a British deception operation is given in the book and motion picture "The Man Who Never Was," the plot centering around the creation of a series of false documents which were placed on the corpse of what purported to be a British officer courier. The body and documents were caused to fall into German hands, and their acceptance as authentic by the German High Command was an important reason for the improper deployment of German forces prior to the Allied invasion of Sicily.

Although there has been a certain amount of post-war publicity given to Allied deception operations, their wartime planning and execution were carried out with the utmost secrecy. Because knowledge of deception activity was so closely controlled, many an officer of high rank was kept ignorant of its application; and more than one force participated in deception unaware of the "true" nature of its activity. Thus, it was a year or more after the war—when the Allied campaign strategy and tactics had been analyzed and evaluated—before the significance of deception to the final outcome became apparent. With its value recognized, the decision was made to insure that it be continued as a military art.

In 1947, General Eisenhower, then Army Chief of Staff, issued instructions to his Plans and Operations Section which were designed to insure that cover and deception would be continued as an active military technique. Because this order has undoubtedly influenced U. S. military policy in this field, it is repeated here in its entirety.

"During World War II both cover and deception and psychological warfare, in its various forms, contributed materially and at times paid high dividends for the effort which we put into them. Particularly in the case of the former, experience indicated that due to the extent to which strategic and tactical cover plans assisted in the attainment of real objectives, no major operations should be undertaken without planning and executing appropriate deceptive measures.

"As time goes on individuals familiar with these means of warfare are likely to become progressively less available in the Regular Army and there is danger that these two means may in the future not be considered adequately in our

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planning. I consider it essential that the War Department should continue to take those steps that are necessary to keep alive the arts of psychological warfare and of cover and deception and that there should continue in being a nucleus of personnel capable of handling these arts in case an emergency arises.

"I desire therefore that the Director of Plans and Operations maintain the potential effectiveness of these arts in order that their benefits may become immediately available, as and when desired, in furtherance of national security."

While twelve years have passed since General Eisenhower dictated his views, they continue to be reflected in the attitudes and activities of the Defense Establishment. A specific body of doctrine has been developed—principally out of the lessons learned in World War II. Principles and techniques have been documented, and military commanders have been enjoined to incorporate deception in their plans and programs.

PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

Even though deception has characterized military activities throughout history, there is nothing to suggest that it was considered as other than a fundamental ingredient of strategy or tactics prior to World War II. Indeed, *strategy* itself carries a strong connotation of deceit or trickery, and *stratagem*, a derivative, is defined as a trick in war for deceiving the enemy.

Simply defined, strategy is the art and science of employing military forces. Tactics—to differentiate—lies in and fills the province of fighting; of maneuvering forces in the presence of the enemy. Strategy not only stops on the frontier, but has for its purpose the reduction of fighting to the smallest possible proportions. Perfect strategy would be to produce a decision—the destruction of the enemy's armed forces through their surrender—without any fighting.

Tactics seeks to find the course of least resistance, while strategy seeks to diminish the possibility of resistance, principally through causing the enemy to employ his resources and dispose his forces in such manner as to make him unable to counter effectively the operation which is planned.

Strategy fulfills its purpose by exploiting the elements of movement and surprise. Movement involves questions of time, topography, and the means and methods of moving and maintaining forces. Surprise lies in the psychological sphere, and its planning involves consideration of the many intangibles which affect the will of the enemy. Surprise is achieved through application of an artful blend of concealment and deception based on a thorough analysis of the enemy's beliefs and fears. Advance knowledge of what the enemy expects is the *sine qua non* to successful strategy, and certainly to deception.

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It seems appropriate to place some emphasis on the fact that strategy is greatly influenced by technology, and that the exercise of deception is similarly conditioned by the means and implements of warfare. Science, invention, and industry are constantly modifying the weapons, the methods of production, the means of movement, and the means and methods of communication. In ancient times, the innovation of cavalry, the long bow, and armor—to cite but a few examples—brought about drastic changes in the conduct of battles. In the intermediate period, gunpowder, the musket, and artillery had their effect on warfare. And in the past century, the development of electrical communications, rapid-fire weapons, tanks, poison gas, the airplane—and now, the supersonic aircraft, the ballistic missile, and the atom and hydrogen bombs—have individually and in combination created new conditions to exert an influence on strategy and deception.

INTELLIGENCE

The formulation of strategy, it has been suggested, demands an intimate knowledge of the enemy's "situation," such a "situation" consisting not only of the physical characteristics of the enemy force—its strength, disposition, and capabilities—but also its intentions, fears, general military doctrine, and other intangibles. Knowledge of the enemy is gained through *intelligence*, which term, somewhat unfortunately, denotes both a process and a product.

In a world made up of sovereign states, each state has vital national interests which are frequently in conflict with those of other states. Wherever there is a conflict of interests, there is a danger of hostilities, and in order for a nation to be in the best possible position to formulate policies and to organize and deploy its forces, it is essential that there be a continuing effort to collect and evaluate information relating to the attitudes, capabilities, and probable intentions of potential enemy nations. This process is intelligence, and its function is to observe, report, evaluate and summarize, and to repeat that cycle again and again.

Where strategic intelligence ends and tactical intelligence begins is not easy to state, and is a somewhat academic point since, for the most part, intelligence is separated into recognizable "types," as for example, industrial intelligence, military intelligence, naval intelligence, combat intelligence, signal intelligence. The intelligence activities at any government level are organized and conducted in a manner consistent with the mission and function of the organization or unit concerned. The bulk of intelligence flows upward—toward the national center—and, although combat intelligence is basically concerned with the order of battle and intentions of enemy forces in

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immediate opposition, the information gathered at this level finds its way into the strategic intelligence mechanism, where, added to the material from all other sources, it forms part of the complex mosaic which is the national intelligence "picture."

Intelligence relates to deception not only because our own intelligence must provide us with the information needed for planning, but also because it is at the intelligence organization of the opposing force that our deception is aimed. There can be no deception unless means exist to convey the contrived information to the individual empowered to order the action which is desired. Each enemy intelligence source or means is a potential recipient of deceptive information. Deception authorities consider that there are four principal "means" of perpetrating deception: physical means, related means, special means, and communications-electronic means. These are defined and exemplified as follows:

Physical Means

Physical observation is the principal source of intelligence, and the one in which the greatest reliance is placed. In its application to military deception, physical means involves the display of actual forces, installations, and weapons. A classic example of physical means as a method of perpetrating deception is the story of the Potemkin Villages.

When Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia in 1726, set out to view her somewhat deteriorated empire, Prince Potemkin took pains to see that she would observe only pleasant scenes. He therefore caused to be constructed, a day's travel apart, villages consisting of well-kept false fronts and peopled with trained performers from the theatre who impersonated a happy, prosperous peasantry which greeted Catherine with flowers, songs and dances. By artful routing of the royal entourage, the miserable condition of the real peasants was kept from the Empress.

A second example of the use of physical means in accomplishing deception, and one more in keeping with the military theme, occurred during the American preparations for the St. Mihiel offensive in World War I. General Pershing sent General Bundy with a corps staff to Belfort as part of a ruse designed to show preparations for an offensive by the American First Army in that area. To add to the deception, a copy of General Bundy's false instructions was allowed to fall into the hands of German spies. The false orders together with the physical evidence of a General and his staff in Belfort caused such apprehension among the Germans that they reinforced the sector with three divisions, thus diverting considerable strength from the force available to oppose the actual attack at St. Mihiel.

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Related Means

Related means consist in part of calculated security breaches, of which the loss of General Bundy's orders, as related above, serves as an example. The case of "The Man Who Never Was" is another excellent example. The seemingly chance remark in a tavern frequented by enemy agents, or the apparently unguarded conversation in a room which is under surveillance, are additional ways in which related means can be used to convey deception information to the enemy. Related means found unique application in the perpetration of a deception aimed at the Japanese during World War II. The plan called for the simulated reinforcement of the Alaskan area by five U. S. divisions—all fictional. The five divisions were organized on paper, and to lend a final touch of realism, division shoulder patches were designed and made public, appearing in a display of various unit insignia in the National Geographic magazine. Although an admittedly small part of a rather elaborate deception, the publication of these insignia undoubtedly contributed to the success of the plan, if for no other reason than that failure to do so might have raised a question as to the veracity of the whole scheme.

Special Means

Special means consist of the employment of enemy agents who have been "doubled;" i. e., caused to work for our side. While it is not considered appropriate to give actual examples of the use of "controlled foreign agents"—another term for "double agents"—their use is an obviously important deception method. Through this means deception information can be quite precisely controlled, and can be blended so artfully with truthful data as to convey an impression extremely difficult for an enemy to recognize as other than accurate.

Communications-Electronic Means

Signal intelligence results from the interception and analysis of foreign communications-electronics channels and means. As a means of deception, communications-electronics will vary in importance according to the ability of the enemy to intercept and draw significant conclusions from them in the first place, and, in the second place, with the degree of reliance which the enemy places on information from these sources. When a deception involves the simulation of a force, or of activity by forces, the simulation of communication phenomena consistent with the existence of such force or activity is usually necessary to *satisfy* the enemy signal intelligence effort; or, to state it another way, the seeming physical existence of military forces cannot long be sustained if no communications are evidenced. On the other hand, it would be even more implausible to attempt to mount a deception through nothing but communications, it being difficult to

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conceive of a situation where (a) the enemy could gain intelligence from no other source; and (b) the enemy would be willing to act on nothing but the evidence of his signal intelligence.

ALLIED DECEPTION IN WORLD WAR II

While classic examples of deceptive strategy are to be found in the exploits of the ancients such as Alexander, Scipio Africanus, Hannibal, and Caesar; and in the generalship of more recent military figures such as "Stonewall" Jackson, Nathan Bedford Forrest, Sir Charles Townshend, and the unfortunate von Schliemann, it is felt that their recounting here would savor more of a literary tour de force than as a development of the essential theme. The author has therefore elected to present a summary of the deception operation which supported the Allied invasion of France in June 1944.

While the example which follows is complete in itself, it must be understood that it has been taken out of strategic context, and that it is only one of many brilliant and successful Allied deception operations of World War II.

Situation

Early in 1944, Germany's armed forces were dangerously extended, with major operations underway in both eastern and southern Europe. The Allies hoped by deception means to have surplus German forces kept in Scandinavia, Italy and the Balkans so that fewer forces would be available to offer opposition in Russia, France, and the Low Countries.

The British and American Combined Chiefs of Staff on 20 January 1944, and later Russia, approved the over-all deception policy for the war against Germany, giving it the code name BODYGUARD, thus honoring Churchill's epigrammatic observation. Deception to support the Allied penetration into Germany for the first time involved Soviet, as well as British and American, coordination.

Deception Objectives

Allied deception operations in northwest Europe were separated into a threat against the Pas de Calais (FORTITUDE SOUTH) and a threat against Scandinavia (FORTITUDE NORTH). By deceptive means the Allies sought to induce the enemy to believe:

- a. That forces were being held in readiness in the United Kingdom for a return to western Europe at any time in the event of a German weakening or withdrawal.
- b. That an operation would be carried out in conjunction with Russia in the spring, with the immediate object of opening a supply route through northern Norway to Sweden, thereafter enlisting the

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active cooperation of Sweden to cover an assault on Denmark from the UK in the summer.

c. That a large-scale cross-channel operation, with a minimum force of fifty divisions and the craft and shipping for twelve divisions, would be carried out in late summer in the direction of the Pas de Calais.

The purpose of the FORTITUDE deception was to induce the enemy to make faulty dispositions in northwest Europe before and after the cross-channel assault, thereby reducing the rate and amount of reinforcements of the target area, causing the enemy to expend efforts to fortify other areas and in general to lower his vigilance in France during the buildup and mounting of the invasion forces in the United Kingdom.

Execution of Deception

The story for FORTITUDE NORTH was that southern Norway would be assaulted on 1 May, one month prior to NEPTUNE (Normandy landings). On 15 May an assault against northern Norway would be initiated in conjunction with Russia, to be followed, as soon as Allied forces became established in Norway, by one against Denmark.

FORTITUDE NORTH was implemented by a fictional Fourth Army in Scotland and Ireland. Its presence was indicated by various means, including precise radio activity. Amphibious training with real troops was carried out, and early in May it was indicated that the entire assault force had moved to the River Clyde. Along with other deceptive measures, diplomatic "feelers" were sent to Sweden relative to the use of airfields. The Russians made actual preparations for an assault on northern Norway and conducted actual maneuvers to support the threat.

Simultaneously with the execution of the various actions involved in FORTITUDE NORTH a threat was being mounted against the French Calais area. The Germans held the entire coast of France, with their 15th Army deployed in defense of the Pas de Calais, and the 7th Army in the Brest-Cherbourg area. FORTITUDE SOUTH was designed to contain the 15th Army in the Pas de Calais area before and after the Allied landings on the Cotentin Peninsula. To achieve this strategic advantage it was necessary to convince the German High Command that our main assault would be made on the Pas de Calais 45 days after our Normandy landings, which were to appear to be a diversion to draw German reserves from adjacent areas. Once these reserves had been committed, fifty Allied divisions were, supposedly, to launch the main attack across the narrowest part of the English Channel, thus taking the "logical" and most direct route to Paris.

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FORTITUDE SOUTH was implemented by providing an elaborate but fictional order of battle, utilizing some actual forces. The units were located in southeast England and appeared to be part of a First U. S. Army Group. American, British and Canadian troops were included. The existence of this force was conveyed to the Germans by a variety of deception means, beginning with the fabrication of the commands themselves and the assignment of real commanders. The tragic death of General Leslie McNair resulted indirectly from this deception operation, in that he was the nominal commander of the force and his presence in France lent credence to the overall plan. Amphibious exercises were carried out to indicate the assembly and training of a huge assault force. Special roads were marked, areas were restricted, diplomatic mail privileges cancelled, travel restricted, and communications activity simulated, all in support of the great hoax. Decoy landing craft were assembled in large numbers in the Thames estuary, and a furious air assault was carried out against the supposed objectives.

Deception Results

The Allied landings on the coast of France on the 5th and 6th of June 1944 were vastly assisted by the successful achievement of these deception aims. The German 15th Army remained in the Pas de Calais from D-Day until the latter part July. It was not until 25 July that the first division of that army moved westward in a belated attempt to reinforce the crumbling Normandy front. Tactical surprise was obtained during the landings to an amazing degree; indeed, many of the German troops thrown against the Allies were armed with wooden bullets—maneuver exercise ammunition!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The author has attempted in the foregoing to present cover and deception in its theoretical and historical context, and has sought to make the point that, as an applied art, it is a function of the technology of the era in which it is practiced. It has been implied that deception is not an independent activity; that it is, rather, a fundamental military technique, the employment of which entails complex considerations, foremost of which are our own and our opponent's intelligence capabilities and appreciations.

It is planned that another article, discussing cover and deception in the current environment, will appear in the *Journal* in the near future. The forthcoming article will analyze the role of communications-electronics as a modern deception medium.