

# Prioritizing Surprise

A Monograph

by

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Fort Leavenworth, KS

2022

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**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 30 06 2022		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> MASTER'S THESIS		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> JUNE 21-MAY 22	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Prioritizing Surprise				<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> John Meyers				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				<b>8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> This monograph reexamines the principle of surprise and its priority in US military doctrine. The principle of surprise has been discussed by military theorists for centuries but changes in the operational environment have impacted how cultures approach achieving surprise and dedicating resources for deception. Current US Army doctrine subordinates surprise to other principles of war largely due to its conceptual approach to military conflict thereby limiting the imagination of military planners. History provides significant examples of what surprise can achieve at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war often achieving greater results with less resources. As the United States continues to compete with global powers, a focus on surprise forces planners to enter the cognitive space of the adversary and thus facilitates the design of operations that are relevant to the operational environment.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Surprise, Military Deception, Tactical Deception, Principle of War, Operation Bodyguard, Yom Kippur War, Desert Storm					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b>	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>			<b>19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	41	913 758-3300

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Monograph Title: Prioritizing Surprise

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## Abstract

Prioritizing Surprise, by MAJ John F. Meyers, 41 pages.

This monograph reexamines the principle of surprise and its priority in US military doctrine. The principle of surprise has been discussed by military theorists for centuries but changes in the operational environment have impacted how cultures approach achieving surprise and dedicating resources for deception. Current US Army doctrine subordinates surprise to other principles of war largely due to its conceptual approach to military conflict thereby limiting the imagination of military planners. History provides significant examples of what surprise can achieve at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war often achieving greater results with less resources. As the United States continues to compete with global powers, a focus on surprise forces planners to enter the cognitive space of the adversary and thus facilitates the design of operations that are relevant to the operational environment.

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## Abbreviations

DISO	Deception in Support of Operations Security
FM	Field Manual
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
JP	Joint Publication
LCS	London Controlling Station
MDMP	Military Decision-Making Process
MDO	Multi-Domain Operations
MILDEC	Military Deception
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
OPSEC	Operational Security
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
TAC-D	Tactical Deception

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## Introduction

Surprise is the most vital element for success in modern war.

—General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, 23 August 1950

Surprise is one of the most elusive effects that can be achieved on the battlefield, often determining the difference between victory or defeat. Surprise can range from something as simple as deceiving an enemy on the time and place of an attack or something more sophisticated that achieves cognitive shock, forcing an enemy to reexamine their understanding of the world. US joint military doctrine identifies nine principles of war guiding the military planner. Among these, the principle of surprise is unique as it inherently focuses planners on the enemy, its mindset, how it understands the application of its own power, perceives others, and learns.<sup>1</sup> Analysis of the principle of surprise using history, theory, and doctrine illuminates its relative importance in warfare and informs recommendations on whether the military needs to increase emphasis on surprise during the planning process.

An examination of theorists through the 20<sup>th</sup> century provides a foundation for understanding the general emphasis that military writers have placed on surprise across time. To gain an appreciation of a broad range of theorists, this research incorporates works that pre-date modern conflict, theories of the Napoleonic era, and 20<sup>th</sup> century theorists such as Liddell Hart, John Boyd, Richard Simpkin, and Zvi Lanir. As Barton Whaley wrote regarding the timeline of military theories in *Stratagem*, “the story is not so much one of smooth evolution or systematic growth of theory as it is one of spasmodic accumulation of unconnected concepts and insights.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Staff. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018), I-2.

<sup>2</sup> Barton Whaley, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War* (Boston: Artech House, 2007), 45.

The theorists selected for research have had direct impacts on US military doctrine, albeit to differing degrees, and as a result influenced a cultural bias towards surprise and deception.

Building on these theoretical foundations, this monograph examines current doctrine to determine whether surprise is resourced sufficiently, prioritized adequately, or understood as a defining strategic principle. Notably, current US Army doctrine often deters incorporating deception because the Army typically operates in a resource-constrained environment where the prioritization of assets is given to tangible operations and not the ambiguous nature of deception. Army doctrine has a focus on the tactical level of war and as a result misses the opportunity to realize the economic advantage of achieving operational and strategic surprise. The definition of surprise in joint and US Army doctrine might lack sophistication and as a result, constrain the imagination of planners.

Finally, modern conflict has shown time and again the advantage in planning for surprise and deception operations. Historical examples in this monograph explore three conflicts in which the focus of surprise was paramount in their planning efforts. These examples illustrate how considerations of the enemy strategy can create options that exploit their paradigms and strategic concepts to produce a fundamental surprise. The examples include Operation Bodyguard in support of the Allied invasion of Normandy in World War II, the beginning of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and Operation Desert Storm. These operations highlight the significance and relevance of prioritizing surprise for future military planners.

Great powers, such as China and Russia, are challenging the United States in sophisticated ways and emerging domains. Prolonged US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan gave these actors valuable insights into the predictable nature of US military operations. As the United States prepares for its next conflict, it must appreciate the utility of surprise if it is going to design unique military strategies that reflect and disrupt enemy thinking. Surprise can achieve cognitive shock, or the strategic and operational disintegration of an adversary, and often with less resources compared to those necessary to achieve the same effect as attrition-based warfare.

In turn, this raises an important question concerning surprise: what is the relative importance of surprise and deception in military planning?

## Section 1: Prioritizing Surprise in Military Theory

All warfare is based on deception.

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Military conflict has always included elements of surprise, albeit to varying degrees. Military theorists have prioritized its efficacy differently thereby influencing its prominence in military doctrine and the dedication of resources to achieve those effects. For instance, the term stratagem is commonly defined as the use of deceptive tricks or schemes when it originally had a more nuanced concept of entrapment or circumvents. This change in meaning and overall use of the word has fallen out of the vernacular of military practitioners because of the low prioritization that deception operations were given in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> This monograph explores three eras for theoretical research: ancient theorists before the Napoleonic era, the Napoleonic era, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This timeline demonstrates that surprise is far from a new idea, the Napoleonic era by many accounts is a paradigm-shifting period for modern warfare, and even with applicable technology for modern conflict 20<sup>th</sup> century theorists still see the value of surprise.

Master Sun Wu, or more commonly known as Sun Tzu, is arguably an appropriate starting point to discuss the principle of surprise because his work from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., *The Art of War*, is synonymous with the idea of deception.<sup>4</sup> Sun Tzu dedicates a considerable amount of time in his “strategic assessments” to highlight the benefits of deception in warfare.<sup>5</sup> The reader can easily make the connection between Sun Tzu’s concept of winning a fight without going to war and his fundamental understanding of deception as a paramount consideration in the

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<sup>3</sup> Barton Whaley, *Stratagem: Deception and Surprise in War*, xxiii.

<sup>4</sup> Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, 1st ed. (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Thomas F. Cleary (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2005), 11.

conceptualization of war. If a stratagem can be used against an opponent that gives friendly forces a distinct advantage without unnecessarily exposing themselves to their adversary, they will not only achieve victory but will do so with minimal losses as well. The connection between these ideas shows the significance of military deception (MILDEC), and the advantages it can provide, often at a much lower cost than it would have otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

Sun Tzu is not the only pre-Napoleonic theorist or military commander to incorporate the ideas of surprise or MILDEC into operations. Famous ancient military operations such as the Trojan Horse highlight the significance that deception operations had in warfare before the modern era. The Romans and Greeks were well-known for using deception, as captured in Sextus Julius Frontinus' book *The Stratagems and The Aqueducts of Rome*.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the military classic, *Military Institutions of the Romans*, by Vegetius in "Book III" describes the use of stratagems over those of direct conflict and battle.<sup>8</sup> Military theorists from antiquity placed a premium on achieving strategic and tactical surprise because of the advantages it provided on the battlefield. However, this premium did not survive the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Napoleonic era.

There is no shortage of texts that cover the Napoleonic era and its impact on modern warfare. This is largely due to the first two revolutions in military affairs (RMA): the rise of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century state and the French Revolution; both of which contributed to producing the Grande Armée.<sup>9</sup> The two most prominent military theorists during this period were Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri Jomini. Each took different approaches to their theories, largely due to their experiences in the military, motivations for publication, and the influences of intellectual

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<sup>6</sup> Christopher M. Rein and Army University Press (U.S.), eds., *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, The US Army Large-scale Combat Operations Series (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Sextus Julius Frontinus et al., *The Stratagems: and the Aqueducts of Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Flavius Vegetius Rhenatus, *Military Institutions of the Romans*, ed. Brig Gen. Thomas R. Phillips (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Company, 1965) 69-111.

<sup>9</sup> MacGregor Knox and Williamson MacGregor, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13.

movements of their time.<sup>10</sup>

Clausewitz generally took a descriptive approach in his theoretical writings. However, the Prussian theorist does provide some instances of guiding principles to warfare, including surprise. Clausewitz sees taking the enemy by surprise as the equivalent of having a numerical superiority and to be the root of all operations.<sup>11</sup> He further elaborates that without having some sort of surprise against an adversary it is hardly conceivable to gain superiority at the decisive point.<sup>12</sup> However, Clausewitz deliberately differentiates the idea of a *surprise assault* versus the true meaning of surprise. The first can be reduced to a type of attack while the latter refers to the plans and disposition of friendly forces.<sup>13</sup> This differentiation between the two can be seen as the distinction between tactical and strategic surprise respectively. Clausewitz recognizes the difficulty in achieving strategic surprise and as a result, is critical of dedicating resources towards its effects due to friction and time.

Jomini, on the other hand, is even more skeptical in the ability to achieve surprise but respected its effects. In his work, *The Art of War*, Jomini sees surprise as more difficult to come by for two reasons: the invention of the firearm and the difficulties of quality intelligence on the enemy.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of the rarity and difficulty of surprise, Jomini still found it concerning enough to protect against because being deceived in war can cause confusion and perhaps render victory before the battle is even fought.<sup>15</sup> Due to Jomini's focus on protecting against surprise and Clausewitz's dismal prospects of achieving it strategically, the prioritization of surprise wanes as other principles of war, such as mass and maneuver, are given a higher priority and focus in their

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Calhoun, *Clausewitz and Jomini: Contrasting Intellectual Frameworks in Military Theory*, *Army History* 80 (Summer 2011). (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 24.

<sup>11</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 198.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>14</sup> Antoine Henri Jomini, *The Art of War*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1971), 209.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

literature.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the world witnessed the next three RMAs: the Industrial Revolution, World War I, and nuclear power competition.<sup>16</sup> Much like before, these RMAs brought about new perspectives to warfare and as a result the reexamination of surprise in its conduct. This monograph considers four theorists and how they approached the inclusion of surprise informing strategy and planning: Liddell Hart, John Boyd, Richard Simpkin, and Zvi Lanir. Each man's experience differed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet each found a common appreciation for the principle of surprise.

Liddell Hart, a British veteran of World War I, wrote prolifically on military subjects and formed his theories during the first half of the 1900s. Hart understood surprise as a central tenet of military strategy. "Strategy has not to overcome resistance, except from nature. Its purpose is to diminish the possibility of resistance, and it seeks to fulfill this purpose by exploiting the elements of movement and surprise."<sup>17</sup> Where movement is necessarily physical, surprise is psychological which makes it much more difficult to accomplish when compared to the physical.<sup>18</sup> To Hart, it is the combination of the physical and psychological realms to be taken into consideration to achieve what he coins as the *indirect approach* thereby dislocating the enemy's balance and not necessarily its destruction.<sup>19</sup> Hart sees surprise as essential in all warfare and still relevant despite the changing characteristics of conflict at the time.

Like Hart, fellow British theorist Richard Simpkin, dedicated much of his later life writing about military theory and doctrine during the Cold War. Simpkin attempts to anticipate what conflict looks like post World War II by studying military concepts such as German

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<sup>16</sup> MacGregor Knox and Williamson MacGregor, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc., 1967), 337.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

blitzkrieg and Soviet deep-battle operations. In his book *Race to the Swift*, Simpkin argues that surprise is of unquestionable value but is diminished by commanders who approach attritional warfare in a deliberate and predictable manner.<sup>20</sup> To Simpkin, surprise is all about the speed of planning and initiation of an attack because maintaining operational security (OPSEC) is nearly impossible as information funnels down the chain of command.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, whoever can plan faster, and attack first will achieve surprise against their adversary who is caught still in the planning or decision-making process.

Much like Simpkin, John Boyd also saw the disruption of an adversary's decision-making as vital to survival. A pilot in the US Air Force, John Boyd served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. His Observe Orient Decide Act (OODA) Loop is a common term in military circles to this day and is similar in concept to Simpkin's speed of planning. The concept explains how information is received, contextually understood, and acted upon.<sup>22</sup> Boyd offers a way for military planners to learn that produces speed by gaining cognitive initiative. This decision-making process is going on simultaneously between competing forces and whoever can make sense of information effectively and efficiently will ultimately achieve victory over their opponent. Achieving surprise will therefore provide a shock to an adversary's decisions making process while concurrently giving friendly forces ample time for their own.<sup>23</sup> Boyd's concept of getting inside an enemy decision-making process is not only valuable to fighter pilots but for all military commanders and planners.

The last of the 20<sup>th</sup> century military theorists explored here is Zvi Lanir. In his research paper *Fundamental Surprises*, Lanir explains the circumstances that resulted in the Israeli

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<sup>20</sup> Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare* (London; Brassey's Defence, 1985), 181.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>22</sup> Frans Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2005), 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

Intelligence failures during the 1973 Yom Kippur War and why it is so difficult to cope with surprise. Lanir's concept of situational and fundamental surprise are based upon an individual or organization's mindset relative to reality.<sup>24</sup> Organizations become more susceptible to fundamental surprise as the relevancy gap between mindset and reality widens. Like Boyd, Lanir attempts to help organizations learn to prevent surprise. Yet what each military theorist is also explaining are ways in which surprise is achieved against enemy commanders and units.

The principle of surprise has been part of military theory since antiquity and continues into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The importance to practitioners of this principle has varied yet its enduring value remains. Military theories explain the phenomenon that is war but must distill its lessons into a useable language for military practitioners. The US Army makes sense of these theories and codify them into a workable doctrine so that others can understand, practice, and execute military orders.

## Section 2: What does doctrine say?

Commanders use maneuver for massing the effects of combat power to achieve surprise, shock, and momentum.

—*FM 3-0, Operations*

Doctrine writing goes through a routine process informed by theory, put to the test through training and conflict, and evaluated relative to success and failures on the battlefield. Doctrine is revised to prepare the armed forces for future conflict which is often unknowable in its location, nature, time, or duration. Current joint and army operational doctrine does a poor job distilling the previous theorists mentioned to incorporate the principle of surprise. Instead, it largely focuses on what Richard Simpkin identified as a predictable and deliberate approach to maneuver. Only the manuals that cover deception operations do an adequate job of describing

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<sup>24</sup> Lanir, Zvi. *Fundamental Surprises*. Ramat Aviv: Center for Strategic Studies University of Tel Aviv, 1983.

how to achieve surprise by breaking down maxims, explaining how to conduct conduit analysis, consider the resources available, and employing appropriate tactics all to achieve surprise against the enemy. The combat operations officer must dig deeper into their doctrine to truly gain an appreciation for the advantages of achieving surprise.

Joint Publication 3-0 lists principles of joint operations, which includes nine principles of war.<sup>25</sup> It goes on to define each principle and how it can impact operations. The principle of surprise is first defined as “to strike at time or place or in a manner for which the enemy is unprepared.”<sup>26</sup> It goes on to explain how surprise can shift the balance of power through speed in decision-making, deception, and OPSEC. This conception of surprise shows clear links to the previously mentioned theorists.

The language of the definition implies a certain understanding of the enemy decision-making process in terms of speed and understanding. While the other principles are more focused on friendly forces disposition, posture, and planning efforts, the definition of surprise requires not only an understanding of friendly forces but how the enemy views the operational environment. What is most concerning is how abruptly the JP transitions from the definition of surprise and never really addresses it again unless it refers to MILDEC.

The US Army’s equivalent to JP 3-0 does little to give a formal definition of surprise. Instead, FM 3-0 focuses on two aspects of surprise. The first is how to capitalize on surprise through maneuver.<sup>27</sup> Through maneuver, and overcoming obstacles, FM 3-0 says surprise achieves a psychological shock to the enemy thereby overloading its systems and delaying its decision-making.<sup>28</sup> Because of the tactical nature of Army doctrine, surprise is subordinate to

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<sup>25</sup> US Joint Staff, JP 3-0, I-2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., A-3.

<sup>27</sup> US Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office), 2018, 2-41.

<sup>28</sup> US Army. FM 3-0, 2-41.

maneuver. Surprise is achieved through maneuver instead of enabling maneuver to achieve its objective. The second acknowledgment of surprise identifies the dangers it poses to friendly forces. To mitigate or reduce the likelihood of surprise requires dedicated intelligence collection, systems to filter information and data, and good OPSEC.<sup>29</sup> Similar to theorists, such as Jomini, Army doctrine highlights both the significance of surprise and ways in which to overcome organizational surprise.

There is an implicit relationship between surprise and deception. Joint and army doctrine provide practitioners with a codified approach to the categories of deception, maxims of deception, conduit analysis, the means for employing deception operations, and the tactics available to the commander. The language within *FM 3-13.4 Army Support to Military Deception* creates a more nuance environment for the military planner. This is where doctrine offers a more meaningful conception of surprise.

First, it is important to identify the different categories the US military creates for deception. The three deception categories are: MILDEC, tactical deception (TAC-D), and deception in support of operations security (DISO).<sup>30</sup> See Figure 1.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., A-61.

<sup>30</sup> US Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-13.4, *Army Support to Military Deception*. (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office), 2019, 1-2.

	<b>Military deception</b>	<b>Tactical deception</b>	<b>Deception in support of operations security</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Influence the action or inaction of enemy decision makers	Gain a tactical advantage over an enemy	Make friendly force intentions harder to interpret
<b>Level</b>	Strategic or operational	Tactical	Any
<b>Support to</b>	Military campaigns and major operations	Army commanders	All in support of an approved operations security plan
<b>Headquarters</b>	Combatant command and joint task forces	Joint task forces, Army Service component command, division, and below	All
<b>Approval from</b>	In accordance with CJCSI 3211.01 or DODI 3604.01	Two levels higher (as per combatant command instruction)	Two levels higher (as per combatant command instruction)
<b>Target</b>	Adversary or enemy	Enemy	Foreign intelligence entity
CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction		
DODI	Department of Defense instruction		

Figure 1. Deception Differences, US Department of the Army. Field Manual 3-13.4, *Army Support to Military Deception*. (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office), 2019, 1-2.

Figure 1 illustrates the focus of each, the level to which it is used, whom it supports, the likely headquarters or approval authority for such operations, and the target. Much of this monograph, both in the historical case studies and analysis, addresses MILDEC exclusively. However, TAC-D and DISO are seen throughout as any plan must incorporate elements of the others to truly achieve surprise.

Second, the Army derives many of its deception ideas from fields such as game theory, social sciences, and decision analysis theory.<sup>31</sup> A set of maxims within the doctrine help the military planner better understand the concepts that facilitate the planning and implementation of deception operations. For instance, the maxim labelled McGruder’s Principle is about creating an ambiguity-decreasing dilemma.<sup>32</sup> This principle manipulates and exploits the beliefs and biases of the enemy to convince them of what they already believe to know instead of trying to change their mind. Conversely an ambiguity-increasing deception causes the target to become uncertain

<sup>31</sup> US Army, FM 3-13.4, 1-8.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1-7.

of the situation because of an inundation of information that paralyzes their ability to make decisions.<sup>33</sup>

Third, is the conduit analysis that occurs during the planning of deception operations. This is the detailed mapping of individual conduits or information pathways to the potential deception targets.<sup>34</sup> For instance, an enemy commander's reconnaissance organization has surveillance assets on the battlefield that feed information through the many channels and units with the organization. Built into this chain are a series of filters that help validate or invalidate the emerging information. Conduit analysis is important because it forces a deep understanding of the enemy on a cultural, psychological, and personal level. By understanding enemy heuristics and bias, deception planners gain a much clearer understanding of how the enemy thinks, makes decisions, and anticipates.

Once military planners understand their enemy target and develop a concept for deception, they can begin to employ the means available. According to FM 3-13.4, deception means fall into three categories. Physical means include decoys, troop movement, field exercises, reconnaissance, and surveillance activities. Technical means include communication networks, transmissions, emissions, and data. Finally, administrative means consist of activities such as port calls, traffic control coordination, construction requests, and other preparatory coordination associated with a military operation. The military planner must synchronize the different means employed to maintain credibility and create the desired perception.<sup>35</sup> The techniques and tactics selected to employ the means will depend on the resources, time available, and nature of conflict. This task can prove difficult due to a variety of different circumstances and source constraints.

Current joint doctrine does little to address the principle of surprise outside of a definition. The army's *Operations* manual does not even define surprise and only speaks to its

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<sup>33</sup> US Army. FM 3-13.4, 1-6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-11-1-12.

impacts on the battlefield through the lens of maneuver and how to defend against it through intelligence. This implies either that the commander or planner must figure it out for themselves or that it is not worth the resourcing. Only when the practitioners dig deeper into FM 3-13.4 does the true nuance of surprise and how to achieve it reveal itself. Perhaps history can remind future military planners of the benefits of prioritizing surprise and what it can achieve.

### Section 3: Historical Examples

If you want peace, understand war.

--Liddell Hart, 1932

The reason theorists have studied surprise for centuries is that it is a consistent theme in war. No one wants to be surprised, and surprise gives an advantage to the one who achieves it, potentially the initiative. While its role in warfare varies in scale, it often remains a major characteristic. Tactical surprise is typically achieved by an event that is unexpected in its time and location. Operational surprise shocks an enemy's system and gives friendly forces space and time for decision-making. While strategic surprise takes advantages of an adversary's paradigm and exploits their failure to prepare sufficiently. Despite advancements in technology, organizations, and doctrine, deceiving an adversary can often provide the relative advantage necessary to achieve victory at the tactical, operational, and strategic level of conflict. A common misunderstanding about deception is that those at a disadvantage are the only ones to apply resources towards achieving surprise. However, this is simply not true.

Military history showcases numerous examples that display the benefits of focusing on surprise by forces of equal, inferior, and superior relative combat strength. The three following examples illustrate this. In World War II, Allied planners developed an elaborate deception operation to achieve operational surprise against the German forces defending the coast of France, all to provide the invasion forces the necessary time to establish a lodgment. In the 1970s, Egypt engaged in political and strategic deception to catch the Israeli forces off-guard to regain

previously lost territory. Finally, the US military in the 1990s employed deception operations despite their overwhelming technological and resource advantages over Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces in Kuwait and achieved tactical surprise with the left hook.

## Operational Surprise: Shocking the System

The code-name given for the overall planning of the deception operation that involved six principal and thirty-six subordinate plans to support allied forces invasion of Normandy was Operation Bodyguard.<sup>36</sup> Up until 1942, resources in support of deception operations were hard to come by for the allies.<sup>37</sup> Allied planners recognized they needed to do several things to deceive the Germans effectively in western Europe after witnessing the positive impact of deception operations against the Germans in North Africa.<sup>38</sup> The London Controlling Station (LCS) led the planning. They divided their strategic planning efforts into threatening Scandinavia, Pas de Calais, and the Mediterranean.<sup>39</sup> In doing so, allied planners hoped the Germans would unnecessarily dedicate combat strength to strategically defend all western and southern Europe. They designed Operations Fortitude North, Graffham, Zeppelin, and Royal Flush in support of the deception.

Fortitude North created a fictitious field army, the British Fourth Army, with a headquarters in Scotland.<sup>40</sup> The planners aimed to convince the Germans of an invasion on the coast of Norway. Despite minimal resources, the measures to convince the Germans of this new army were elaborate. False radio traffic, fake marriage announcements, unit athletic team scores, and military band concerts in British media were just some of the means employed to achieve

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<sup>36</sup> Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, 205.

<sup>37</sup> Whitney T. Bendeck, *"A" Force: The Origins of British Deception during the Second World War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013), 163.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>39</sup> Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, 209.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 143.

their end.<sup>41</sup> Allied estimates suggest that Germany kept 400,000 naval, air, and ground forces in Norway until the end of the war as a result of the deception. At the same time, the British only used 500 personnel to convince the Germans.<sup>42</sup>

Operations Graffham, Zeppelin, and Royal Flush supported Fortitude North. Graffham, aimed to convince Germany that the Swedes would assist in the proposed attack on Norway. The allies developed various diplomatic means to include the rigging of the Stockholm stock market to raise the price of Norwegian securities and imply an anticipated liberation.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Royal Flush applied diplomatic pressure on neutral countries such as Spain, Turkey, and Sweden. Finally, Zeppelin focused efforts in the Mediterranean, thereby threatening the Balkans.<sup>44</sup>

These operations set strategic conditions for the allied invasion force. Germany received reports of possible armies invading Norway, threats to neutral countries, and an attack in its belly through the Mediterranean. This placed German intelligence into disarray, unable to determine reality from fiction. Allied planners created an increasingly ambiguous environment that led to the paralysis of decisions. The Germans knew that an invasion was coming but could not adequately determine its timing or location.

After 1943, Hitler made his focus on northwest France was well known.<sup>45</sup> Despite German intelligence reports suggesting invasions could occur anywhere on the European continent, his top concern across the channel remained as seen in Figure 2. Putting Rommel in charge of the anti-invasion forces in northern France, Hitler signaled where he anticipated the allies to land. By dissecting Hitler's decision, allied planners leveraged Magruder's Principle: "it

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<sup>41</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 143.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, 213.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Cancian, *Inflicting Surprise: Gaining Competitive Advantage in Great Power Conflicts* (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2021), 24.

is generally easier to induce the deception target to maintain a preexisting belief than to deceive the deception target for the purpose of changing that belief.”<sup>46</sup> This principle led to planning for the second half of Operation Fortitude.

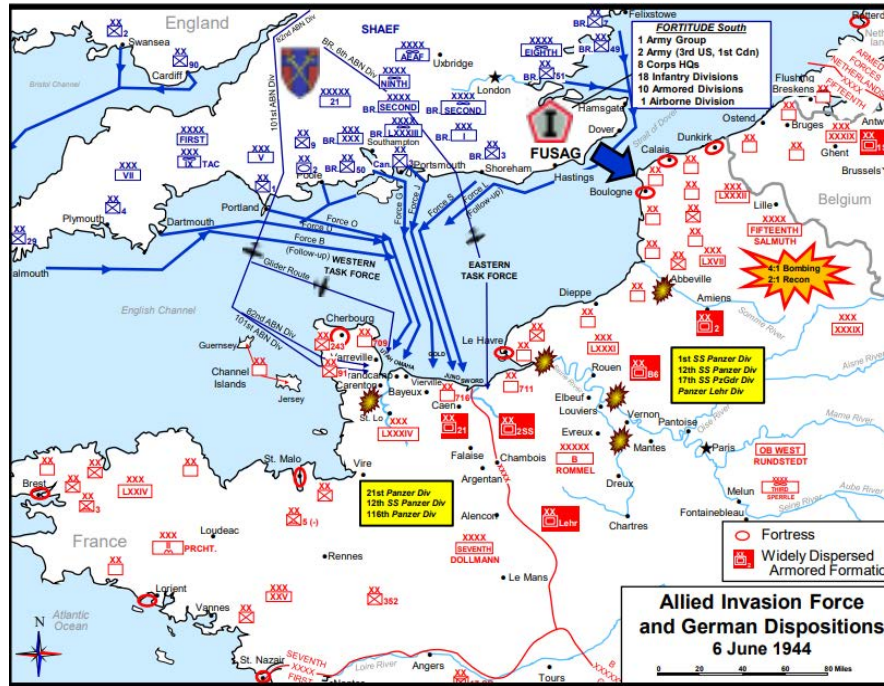


Figure 2. Allied Invasion Force and German Dispositions, June 1944. Christopher M. Rein and Army University Press (U.S.), eds., *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, The US Army Large-scale Combat Operations Series (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 141.

Allied planners used German intelligence on an American ground headquarters in England to their advantage in creating a coherent narrative.<sup>47</sup> Operation Fortitude South created the illusion to Rommel that an invasion of France was imminent somewhere other than Normandy.<sup>48</sup> The location for Fortitude South was Pas de Calais. Similarly, Operation Ironsides attempted to convince the Germans of an impending attack on Western France, namely the port of

<sup>46</sup> US Army, FM 3-13.4, 1-8.

<sup>47</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 143.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

Boudreaux.<sup>49</sup> The success in misleading every level of German Command as to the precise target and strength of the threat was one of the central triumphs of the deception staffs of the entire war.<sup>50</sup>

One of the reasons it is difficult for commanders to employ deception operations is that it is difficult to show they achieved their aim. To overcome this challenge, allied planners relied on their extensive intelligence network and even turned German spies into double agents as part of Operation Double Cross<sup>51</sup> While initially defensive in nature, the British realized they had control over every German agent in Britain they could now take a more offensive approach. Instead of feeding the Germans snippets of falsehood, they could provide a war-changing lie.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, being able to control the narrative and see how the Germans reacted is precisely what Allied planners needed to ensure that their deception operations were working.

While the invasion of Normandy clearly displayed the strength and courage of the service members who willingly stormed the beaches, understanding Operation Bodyguard provides a deeper understanding to shape future planning efforts. Through Operation Bodyguard provides this picture. Allied planners engaged in sophisticated and robust deception planning efforts that enabled the success of D-Day. Operation Bodyguard provided the allies an essential advantage against German defense forces in France. While the US military must remember the tactical actions on 6 June 1944, it should not forget the shaping operations at the operational level that contributed to victory.

## Strategic Surprise: Taking Advantage of the Paradigm

Humiliated by the Six-Day War of 1967, the Arab world sought to restore their honor and

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<sup>49</sup> Jon Latimer, *Deception in War*, 217.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>51</sup> Ben Macintyre, *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* (New York: Crown, 2012), 4.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

prestige in the region. For several years, Egyptian and Syrian forces rebuilt their militaries with the help of the Soviets to regain previously lost territory and save face. This military rebuild, especially for the Egyptian forces, was not just in manpower and technology. Instead, it included adopting a mindset and concept from its Russian partners called maskirovka which is akin to concealment, deception, and camouflage.<sup>53</sup> Maskirovka, in Soviet doctrine, breaks down further into the three levels of war with the emphasis of deception in large-scale operations in support of the operational and strategic desired end state.<sup>54</sup> The Egyptians incorporated this stratagem to create the desired conditions when they launched their attack.

Egyptian President Muhammad Anwar El-Sadat ordered a two-prong approach to support the invasion focusing on political and military spheres of influence.<sup>55</sup> On the political side, the Egyptian deception planners relied heavily on the media to convincingly convey their message. The first story they wished to portray to the Israelis was the poor state of the Egyptian military. The expulsion of Soviet military advisors in 1972, leaked information to foreign correspondents about the inadequate air-defense system, and the general low morale of Egyptian troops reinforced this narrative.<sup>56</sup> President Sadat himself supported the second effort. Leading up to the invasion, Sadat changed the rhetoric and tone of many of his speeches and international engagements.<sup>57</sup> Instead of the hyperbolic and aggressive stance towards Israel, Sadat refocused on Egyptian efforts and relied on diplomacy. By creating this perception of diplomacy as a priority over military force, the Israeli Intelligence apparatus could rationally support the

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<sup>53</sup> Roger Beaumont, *Maskirovka: Soviet Camouflage, Concealment, and Deception* (College Station, Texas: Center for Strategic Technology, The Texas Engineering Experiment Station of the Texas A&M University System, 1982), 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Asher, *The Egyptian Strategy for the Yom Kippur War: An Analysis* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2009), 93.

<sup>56</sup> Walter J. Boyne, *The Yom Kippur War and the Airlift Strike That Saved Israel* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003), 18.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 184.

information they received about Egyptian movements along the Suez Canal as nothing more than routine military activities.

The Egyptian military conducted a series of wargames and exercises to build up readiness for the eventual invasion as the second component of the plan.<sup>58</sup> The military approach accomplished several things internal to the organization and the externally with neighboring countries. First, it provided the Egyptian forces with the latitude to rehearse its logistics, gap crossing, and initial attack across the Suez. Secondly, the media portrayed a military with low morale. Importantly, the Egyptian military sold these maneuvers as esprit-de-corps type activities to weed out the complacency of a defeated force. Finally, these constant maneuvers near the Israeli border created something called the *cry wolf effect*. Israeli intelligence saw these maneuvers and initially raised the pending invasion alarm. However, this pattern of life became an accepted norm over time, making the Israeli intelligence network numb to these repeated exercises along its borders.

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<sup>58</sup> Daniel Asher, *The Egyptian Strategy for the Yom Kippur War: An Analysis*, 94.

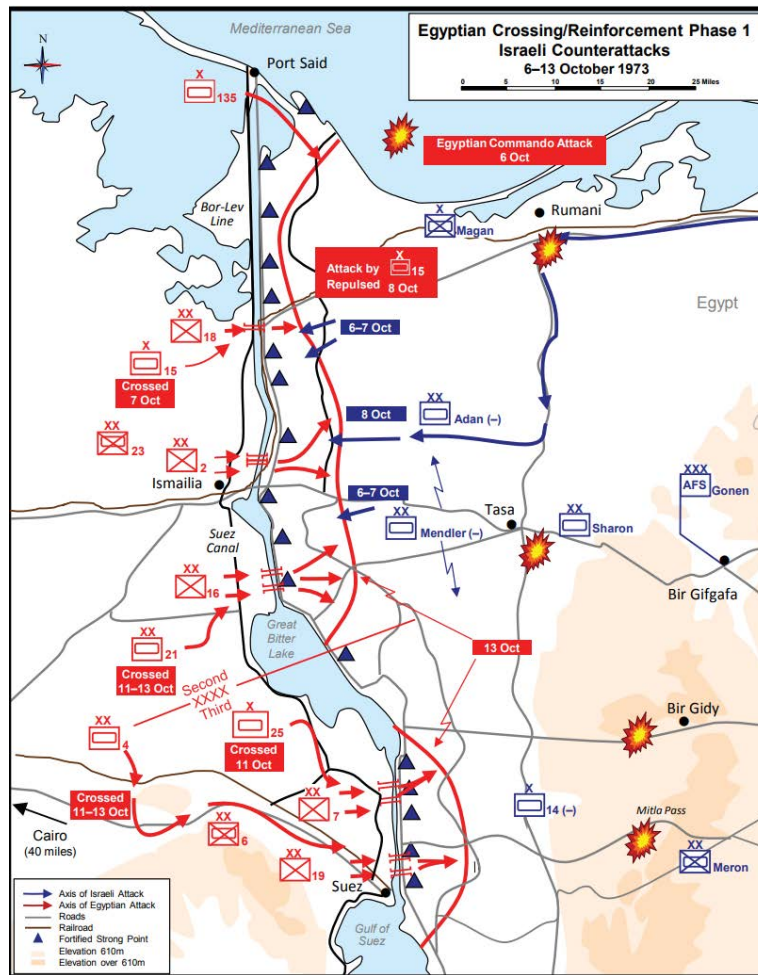


Figure 3. Egyptian Crossing/Reinforcement Phase 1 Israeli Counterattacks, 6-13 October 1973. Christopher M. Rein and Army University Press (U.S.), eds., *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, The US Army Large-scale Combat Operations Series (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 177.

The Egyptian deception plan directly led to the initial success of their 1973 invasion of Israel as seen in Figure 3.<sup>59</sup> The Egyptians launched a complex attack, conducted a wet gap crossing, consolidated their defense lines, and achieved all this below estimated war game losses.<sup>60</sup> They took the Israelis by surprise despite the Israelis confirming all reports. Just a week prior, Israeli intelligence had confirmed both the existence of Syrian and Egyptian troops on its

<sup>59</sup> Mark Cancian, *Inflicting Surprise: Gaining Competitive Advantage in Great Power Conflicts*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Asher, *The Egyptian Strategy for the Yom Kippur War: An Analysis*, 97.

borders and the intent to attack. Israeli intelligence dismissed this as it went against the story they knew and ultimately what they thought they understood.<sup>61</sup> Israeli hubris and the elaborate deception plan by Egypt directly led to the results in 1973.

The United States looked to this conflict for lessons to incorporate into its military rebuild in the 1970s and 80s. Many of the lessons learned from this Middle Eastern conflict reinforced a proclivity to a certain type of war that was tactical in nature. The lethality of weaponry and the tempo of the conflict led US decision-makers to develop their firepower and speed on the battlefield in the Big Five (Abrams, Bradley, Apache, Patriot, and Blackhawk).<sup>62</sup> These new systems provided the United States with its version of lethality and speed that it had witnessed along the Suez Canal and Golan Heights. The United States tested this system in the 1990s to confirm if they were a worthwhile investment.

## Tactical Surprise: The Left Hook

Almost twenty years after the war between Israel and the Arab countries, the United States found itself involved in a Middle Eastern conflict of its own. Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces had invaded Kuwait, and by October 1990 had roughly 430,000 forces awaiting a response from the western world.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, under the command of US Army General Norman H. Schwarzkopf, 200,000 coalition troops deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Desert Shield.<sup>64</sup> The number of coalition troops increased over several months; however, one thing tipped the scales in the coalition's favor. With the recent investments in its Big Five and the collapse of the

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<sup>61</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 187.

<sup>62</sup> John L. Romjue, *Prepare the Army for War. A Historical Overview of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1973 - 1993*: (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, January 1, 1993), accessed November 22, 2021, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA267030>, 34.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 217.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Soviet Union, America was in a prime location in space and time to test out its new systems. One would think that being deployed along the border of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for six months, with the world knowing of the inevitable invasion, removes any possibility of employing surprise by the coalition. That could not be further from the truth,

While strategic surprise was lost, an operational and tactical surprise was still possible. Before Iraq invaded Kuwait, it had fought a long war with Iran, displaying skill in employing a defense-in-depth. To mitigate this, US planners hoped to achieve surprise in the location and timing of their offensive. General Schwarzkopf approved a two corps approach and selected a particular cell in his J5 to lead the deception planning efforts in support of the offensive.<sup>65</sup> US planners attempted to reinforce the Iraqi assumption that the coalition would attack directly north via Wadi al Batin while simultaneously conducting an amphibious landing in the vicinity of Kuwait City. Coalition planners relied on Magruder's principle to reinforce this narrative.

To get around the Iraqi intelligence network, the United States targeted and crippled its ability to sense the battlefield with airstrikes erasing its air power and critical detection assets. Doing so limited the number of conduits feeding the Iraqi intelligence, which meant the planners could take more considerable risks with troop movement and focus deception efforts on what remained of the Iraqi intelligence network. With air superiority achieved on 20 January 1991, the coalition's "left hook" could finally reposition its assembly area.<sup>66</sup> Until that point, XVIII Airborne Corps had remained just south of the Kuwaiti border to continue selling the northward attack assumption. VII Corps followed suit a few weeks later. See Figure 4.

In support of XVIII Airborne Corps, the United States used psychological operations (PSYOPS) teams, engineers, and other assets to replicate the physical and electronic signature of the corps headquarters at its previous location. Even with the Iraqi's intelligence hindered, the US

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<sup>65</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 220.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

planners took no chances. PSYOPS teams and special forces contributed to this narrative by targeting specific locations and organizations in Iraq-occupied Kuwait. Iraqi forces and the people of Kuwait were the targets of leaflets, radio broadcasts, and loudspeakers. Some Iraqi troops fled while those that remained continued to believe a northward attack near Wadi al Batin was imminent.

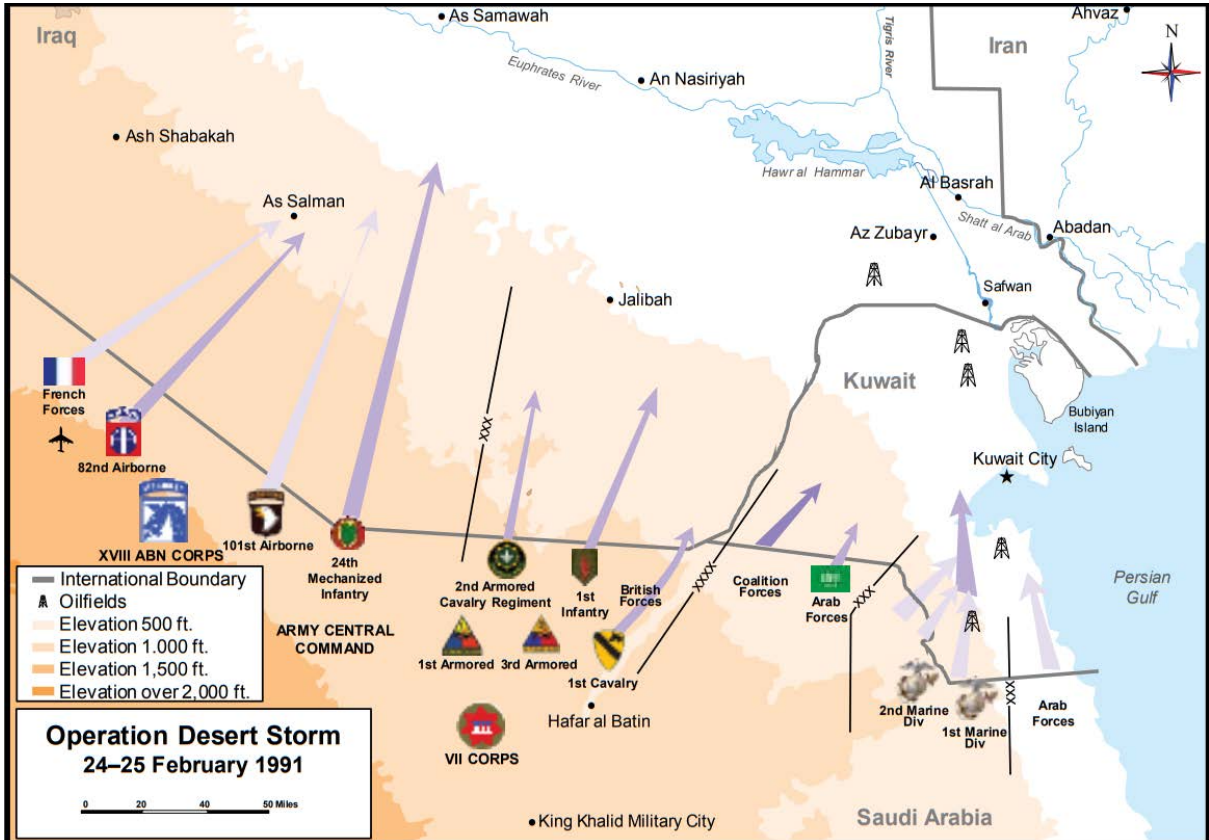


Figure 4. Operation Desert Storm, 24-25 February 1991. Christopher M. Rein and Army University Press (U.S.), eds., *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, The US Army Large-scale Combat Operations Series (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 222.

Western media contributed to this overall deception operation without their knowledge. Building on the Iraqi assumption of amphibious operations towards Kuwait City, General Schwarzkopf allowed media outlets to capture US preparations. Schwarzkopf allowed this because, according to Iraqi officials, the western press provided some of the most accurate

sources of operational military intelligence in the world.<sup>67</sup> The media covered marines conducting amphibious operations rehearsals, a very public appearance by General Schwarzkopf visiting the marines, and ultimately, a US Navy feint on the city.<sup>68</sup> The role the media played in the US deception plan has called into question the ethical relationship between the Pentagon and the press; however, the value the media played in unknowingly selling the story to Iraqi senior military leaders aided the coalition's efforts.

It is difficult to quantify the effectiveness of surprise which is one of the reasons deception operations are a course of action not often taken. The deception operation for Desert Storm is no different. Critics might dismiss the value of deception and surprise achieved in Desert Storm. Yet, a few facts show its importance. First, records indicate how much Iraqi officials leading up to the US offensive were certain of corps-level attack via Wadi al Batin.<sup>69</sup> Despite receiving an intelligence report on 23 January 1991 of US troop movement westward, the Iraqi's Military Intelligence Directorate saw this as a move to protect the coalition's western flank and not an indication of the "left hook"<sup>70</sup> Second, the number of Saddam Hussein's divisions positioned along the Kuwaiti coast compared to none on the western flank strongly suggest where the Iraqi's placed their assumptions.<sup>71</sup>

The impressive speed in which the United States and its partners eliminated the Iraqi threat from Kuwait in 1991 indicated the lethal and technical superiority it had achieved with the investment of the Big Five. This quick victory highlighted technology, perhaps overshadowing

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<sup>67</sup> Kevin M. Woods, *The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein's Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War*; [Official US Joint Forces Command Report], (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 126.

<sup>68</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 223.

<sup>69</sup> Kevin M. Woods, *The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein's Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War*, 128.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>71</sup> Christopher M. Rein, *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, 226.

the value that deception and surprises provided. In fact, unlike the other historical examples, what is unique about Desert Storm is that the United States still achieved surprise after building combat strength in Saudi Arabia for nearly six months to prepare for the invasion. Despite sharing a narrow physical front, the Iraqis were still incorrect in their assumptions. Desert Storm was one of the most impressive and quickest wars in the history of the United States, with coalition casualties below 300 because of both technology and deception.<sup>72</sup>

#### Section 4: Stratagem Moving Forward

The United States has had the luxury, and burden, of being the preeminent superpower since the 1990s. The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown the world the might of the US military and how it thinks, operates, and prioritizes resources. This exposure poses a challenge and creates a vulnerability that America's adversaries can exploit. Moving forward, the United States Army needs to reorient how it approaches warfare and what it should prioritize. Perhaps an update in doctrine, redefining how the army prioritizes surprise, and how organizations can provide it the necessary edge moving forward.

The significance of surprise and deception show how it is useful as a weapon but also something to protect against. Incorporating it into the army culture will also prove valuable to protect against deceptive efforts from adversaries and might even train the organization to detect deception more easily. Emerging technological and geopolitical trends provide new challenges and opportunities for the US military. How the United States, China, Russia, and other actors design their strategies and incorporate all the available tools will most likely determine the future great power.

The US military is a massive bureaucratic organization with reinforcing mechanisms to control behavior and reproduce effects. Militaries are the epitome of institutionalizing in that they

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<sup>72</sup> Otto Friedrich, ed., *Desert Storm: The War in the Persian Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 225.

attempt to influence human behavior by setting up predefined patterns of conduct channeled in a similar direction.<sup>73</sup> This institutionalization is an effective way to focus people on the same path towards a common end. However, it requires self-reflection to determine and evaluate if the underlying assumptions fit into the greater world. The past twenty years of conflict have also shaped how the military views the world and itself. This institutionalization and experience create a culture reflected in its members' behavior and is seen in doctrine.

The current doctrine of the US Army, as explored earlier, is overly tactical. The army's approach in Iraq and Afghanistan showed just how well it could win the battle but miss the strategic objective. Richard Simpkin wrote that "addicts of attrition rate surprise very differently than those who are masters of maneuver."<sup>74</sup> It requires imagination to determine the usefulness of surprise and deception. Perhaps that is why the joint definition and army definition are lacking. The US Army's doctrine is built in a way that is at odds with incorporating surprise and deception fully.

Concepts like the main effort exemplify how US doctrine impedes the incorporation of surprise and deception. ADP 3-0 describes the main effort as the most critical unit at a given time or place during an operation that receives the prioritization of resources and support.<sup>75</sup> Couple the concept of the main effort with the typical resource-constrained environment the US Army is accustomed to operating within, and it is relatively simple to see why deception and surprise are rarely considered. Instead, the main effort is prioritized resources for lethality, energy, and intelligence. Planners experience resistance with any attempt to allocate resources towards activities perceived as not supporting the main effort.

The US military culture is a product of its size and how it approaches problems. It can be

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<sup>73</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 55.

<sup>74</sup> Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare*, 181.

<sup>75</sup> US Department of the Army. ADP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2019), 4-6.

described as an effective organization and not an efficient one. Over the past two decades the US military absorbed errors, mistakes, and threats because of its robustness relative to the adversaries it has been fighting. The US operational concept looks for an advantage in fires, overmatching technology, and projecting power. The United States is not comfortable thinking creatively as a hegemon and balks at the idea of surprise due to the ambiguity that surprise entails.<sup>76</sup> To overcome this way of thinking to better prepare for a near-peer conflict, the US military needs to reassess its doctrine and its approach to planning.

The Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) is a specific example of the US Army culture that needs updating. The US Army uses MDMP to manage the planning team for tactical problems. However, MDMP's simplicity has become ingrained into the officer corps, which has struggled to evolve its thinking for the operational and strategic mindset necessary to deal with complex problems. MDMP has created a culture of checklists and PowerPoint presentations with little critical thought required. As a result, planning teams solve every situation very similarly and through an almost identical lens, whether they are looking at themselves or the enemy.

During mission analysis, the second step of MDMP, planning teams conduct intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). There is an extensive list of items that the planning team must consider and produce to have a shared understanding of the operational environment. The intelligence officer of the organization typically leads this effort in concert with other members of the staff. However, the lens through which the planning team assesses the enemy is through an American cognitive bias. It looks for capabilities and uses its capabilities as a reference point to determine value. Unfortunately, because of this lack of self-awareness, the planning team never really appreciates how the enemy operates or thinks and merely offers a description of the enemy as if the United States were in control of the enemy's assets.

Conversely, a focus on surprise challenges this thought process and forces the planning

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<sup>76</sup> Mark Cancian, *Inflicting Surprise: Gaining Competitive Advantage in Great Power Conflicts*, 15.

team to achieve deeper into understanding of the enemy. Asking questions like: How does the enemy receive information? Where does it find value and worth? What is it willing to sacrifice? Where does it accept risk? Focusing on trying to surprise the enemy will inform the planning team on how the enemy operates. Naturally, this will tell the team about the other principles of war. Suppose the planning team has the enemy's course of action fully understood. In that case, they will now know where to concentrate, mass, and ensure security. Equally important, the planning team can achieve surprise against the adversary, thereby causing confusion and creating time and space for decision-making as the enemy comes to grips with its current reality.

This process, much like MILDEC, always starts with the enemy commander or decision-maker. Studying the enemy commander is a lost art in the US Army and rarely a consideration during a warfighting exercise. Asking the previous questions related to the enemy decision-maker through conduit analysis can highlight potential opportunities to exploit, seize, or watch. Culturally, the army planning team needs to emphasize the possibility of surprising the enemy commander, thereby forcing the team to challenge its understanding of the situation and increasing the likelihood of determining the enemy's course of action.

There are clear advantages, shown already, why dedicating resources towards deception activities can prove beneficial. Achieving even a moment of surprise can provide friendly forces with the necessary time and space on the battlefield. Sometimes surprise can even mean the difference between victory and defeat. Resources applied to achieving surprise can be robust to limited; all that is required is a creative approach and a deep understanding of the enemy target.

Those who apply the time and effort to understand the enemy with the aim of surprise can also use these same methods, processes, and analysis for friendly forces. Like John Boyd's orient portion of the OODA Loop, planners can evaluate their conduits and filters.<sup>77</sup> Essentially, how do those same planners understand their operational environment, the gaps, and seams in their

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<sup>77</sup> Frans Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*.

planning, and what do they trust as information. In doing so, planners can better prepare themselves to avoid what Lanir calls fundamental surprise.<sup>78</sup> Suppose the culture of the Army and the planning team were to engage in more deception activities. In that case, they could, in theory, better counter-deception actions against themselves.

Similar to counter-deception is OPSEC and DISO. With OPSEC integrated into the plan, deception can be a decisive tool in altering how the enemy views, analyzes, decides, and acts in response to friendly military operations.<sup>79</sup> Even if the Army culture cannot pivot entirely from a very predictable approach to large-scale combat operations, it can employ DISO. Unlike MILDEC or TAC-D, DISO does not aim to make an enemy act or not act. Instead, it focuses on protecting the current operations by deceiving the enemy's intelligence organization. OPSEC, as Simpkin stated, is very difficult to achieve, and may prove more challenging given the increasing technologies.<sup>80</sup>

New weapons and technology have always impacted warfare. Typically, new technology makes war more lethal, faster, and destructive. Yet the world since Desert Storm has shown a significant evolution on how technology will impact information and communication networks. The US Army's Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) warfare concept tries to address these new trends in artificial intelligence, space, and cyber.<sup>81</sup> These advancements might seem to indicate that achieving genuine surprise or deception will become more complex. However, it may become easier as humans put more faith and trust into their technology. Essentially, their filters for vetting information are more vulnerable to deception activities because of their built-in coding. Once these technologies are fully understood, deception planners can replicate conditions

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<sup>78</sup> Lanir, Zvi. *Fundamental Surprises*. Ramat Aviv: Center for Strategic Studies University of Tel Aviv, 1983.

<sup>79</sup> US Army, FM 3-13.4, 1-1.

<sup>80</sup> Richard E. Simpkin, *Race to the Swift: Thoughts on Twenty-First Century Warfare*, 191.

<sup>81</sup> Chief of Staff Paper #1, *Army Multi-Domain Transformation: Ready to Win in Competition and Conflict* (Headquarters Department of the Army, 2021), 1.

to provide a signal that convinces both the technology and human operator.

These technologies are currently being fielded and exploited by US adversaries. The current buzz phrase *great power competition* is a subject of deliberation for policymakers and military leaders alike. Russia, China, and non-state actors will act to undermine the institutions of the United States, thereby limiting their influence in regions of the world, tarnishing its reputation, and removing its status as the only superpower. Unlike the United States, these other adversaries embrace deception and operate to avoid what America does best in large-scale combat operations.

Russia continues to show aggression in Europe beneath a threshold that invokes a complete response from NATO or the United States. A recent example is the 2014 annexation of Crimea.<sup>82</sup> Russian government and military officials used disinformation, denial, and deception to move thousands of *little green men* into the peninsula and bring Crimea into Russian control. Russia similarly in 2022, before their most recent invasion of Ukraine, built-up combat forces under the guise of a training exercise with the Bulgarian military.

China is also conducting acts of aggression and subversion that keep a western response in question. The India-China border dispute in 2020 is just one example of how China relies on establishing a pattern of life and then exploiting an adversary's conditioning to such behavior operating below western thresholds of war.<sup>83</sup> While building an airbase near the shared border with India, Chinese military and construction vehicles established a routine convoy to the construction site, until one day the vehicles diverted and crossed the Indian border, Indian forces by surprise. Similarly, their approach to Taiwan demonstrates a pattern of life behavior with their

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<sup>82</sup> "How Russia Outfoxes Its Enemies." *BBC News*, January 29, 2015, sec. Magazine. Accessed December 1, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31020283>.

<sup>83</sup> "Exclusive: How China Used Deception to Mobilise Troops at Border with India in Ladakh - India News." Accessed December 1, 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/exclusive-how-china-used-deception-to-mobilise-troops-at-border-with-india-in-ladakh-1682552-2020-05-27>.

aircraft approaching Taiwan's airspace, getting closer and increasing in size with each flight.<sup>84</sup>

These deceptive actions are not exclusive to Russia and China against the western world. US and allied forces have experienced these same tactics in Iraq and Afghanistan for the past twenty years. Fighting against the various extremist organizations, the concerns for positive identification, rules of engagement, and improvised explosive devices made the fight for the coalition that much more difficult. It took the United States by surprise and frustrated US planning and strategies because the insurgents were not fighting according to what the western world considers the rules of war. Therein lies the problem. What matters is not what the United States regards as the way to conduct war, but how its adversaries view its war's conduct. All signs point to deception and surprise.

## Conclusion

The principle of surprise in military conflict maintains relevance at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war. While military theorists have wrestled with the concept of surprise over time, its acceptance in history has fluctuated yet its importance remains. In antiquity, surprise is ubiquitous in the writings of eastern military theorists such as Master Sun Tzu as well as Roman generals in the west. Surprise declined in priority during the Napoleonic era when Clausewitz and Jomini saw it as something very difficult to achieve and to be protected against. In more recent times, military theorists such as Liddell Hart, John Boyd, Richard Simpkin, and Zvi Lanir all explored the phenomenon of surprise and highlighted how useful it is against the enemy and how military organizations can learn to avoid being victims of surprise.

US military doctrine acknowledges the existence of surprise but subordinates it to other principles of war, such as maneuver. Only when military practitioners open *FM 3-13.4 Army Support to Military Deception* is the concept fully realized. A reminder from historical events

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<sup>84</sup> "Record Number of China Planes Enter Taiwan Air Defence Zone," *BBC News*, October 5, 2021, sec. Asia, accessed December 1, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58794094>.

such as Operation Bodyguard, the opening of the Yom Kippur War, and Desert Storm can provide future operational artists the lessons necessary to incorporate surprise at the tactical, operational, and strategic level. This is because the principle of war surprise is inherently the only principle of war that focuses on how the enemy thinks and understand the world.

Operational planners should approach the planning process as an opportunity to understand an adversary. Unfortunately, the US Army has created a culture of checklists as it navigates the briefing requirements of MDMP. As a result, an understanding of the enemy is seldom revealed because the planning team focuses on producing products instead of learning about the enemy. By focusing on the principle of surprise, the planner creates an environment that elevates the importance of the enemy's decision making. In turn, military planners can directly leverage courses of actions against the enemy they understand, and if done well, potentially even predict. Additionally, because of the post-Iraq/Afghanistan operational environment, focusing on surprise provides the military the essential advantages as it continues to compete on the global stage.

Current competitors of the United States, such as Russia and China, continue to operate below the levels of full-scale armed conflict and are willing to exploit emerging technologies, long-lasting relationships, and international law to undermine the international order. China, Russia, and other aggressive actors often use means of deception to fracture systems and alliances of the West. Recent examples along the Russian-Ukrainian border and the Indian-Chinese border highlight this fact. If the US Army is going to counter against these stratagems, it should focus on the principle of surprise to better understand how their adversaries think and inform future planning. The principle of surprise is the only principle that focuses specifically on the enemy and as a result can inform all other principles of war.

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