This article was validated by Subject Matters Experts at Doctrine Wing, the School of Armour, CTC Live and DINTTC

'All war is deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable........ When we are near, we must make the enemy believe that we are far way. [We must] hold out baits to entice the enemy.'
- Sun Tzu

The old adage, "we are not deceived; we deceive ourselves," often rings true in modern warfare. Deception in war deceives first the eye and then the mind. Deception on the battlefield is a force multiplier whose target is the adversary's mind as much as his technology. For example, in WWII the British used a professional magician (Jasper Maskelyne) to plan and coordinate their deception campaign against Germany's LT-GEN Erwin Rommel.

Successful physical and electronic deception events have been recorded worldwide in more recent times. For example, in Kosovo, the Serbs used fake tanks (with burning coal to create a realistic thermal signature) to deceive United Nation Coalition air sorties.

Although the Australian Army has only recently released developing doctrine on the subject, among it's first recorded uses of deception was the withdrawal from Gallipoli. In December 1915, the Anzac's fooled the Turks into thinking the Allied force was digging in for the winter, when in fact they were withdrawing. One of the successful deception techniques involved rigging up weights to the triggers of Lee Enfield rifles that enabled them to fire long after the last troops had left, thus maintaining regular fire and fooling the Turks into believing that the trenches were still manned.

More recently, Army's 1 Bde formulated a cunning deception plan using mirrors, smoke, decoy vehicles and electronic deception from a decoy HQ to hide their battle group during Tandem Thrust 2001. The deception enabled 1 Bde, both outgunned and outnumbered, to outwit the US Marines Corps and Army's 3 Bde.

The decoy vehicles used several techniques taught in a counter-surveillance course at the School of Military Engineering (SME). To deceive their opponents, 1 Bde employed several useful deception tactics:

(tr Reflective metallic material was used within the shell of the decoy tanks and APCs to represent the radar signature of actual armoured fighting vehicles;

(tr Fake warm engines were constructed using heat beads, and personnel were required to move around the vehicles and take-up positions in the drivers seat or on gun-pickets to simulate the routine of normal field operations;

(tr These techniques fooled synthetic aperture radar, thermal sensors, satellite and photographic imagery as well as physical observation;

(tr 1 Bde also allowed some of their positions to be detected and then carefully replaced live vehicles with the decoys to fool follow-up surveillance sensors; and

(tr The use of extended radio silence and false traffic within the decoy HQ proved to be a key part of the successful use of deception.

The valuable lesson here is that as the battle raged, precious effort was expended by the main force in attempting to find the actual location of 1 Bde units and its HQ.

Furthermore, by using smart techniques and good discipline it is possible to challenge the assumption that large armoured formations are easily detected.

Interestingly, Doctrine Wing at the Land Warfare Development Centre has recently released LWP-G 3-2-2 Deception Tools as developing doctrine. It states that the primary deception techniques in defence are demonstrations and displays.

Through the use of demonstrations and displays the defender seeks to provide false indicators of deployments and capabilities in order to divert the attackers attention away from the real defended positions and their vulnerabilities.

FOOLING 'CHARLIE'
One 'trick' used in the Vietnam War involved soldiers feigning withdrawal, while under likely enemy observation, and then immediately disembarking to re-engage the unsuspecting VC, regaining surprise.

Examples of the ways demonstrations and displays may be used are:

(tr   displaying stereotyped patterns in an area other than the real defensive position;

(tr   displaying indicators of a false fire plan, including demonstrating the firing of false defensive fire targets;

(tr   simulating a movement into a false position;

(tr   displaying a false track plan and placing decoys and dummy positions in an area other than the real defensive position;

(tr   leaking false information to local civilians and displaying false tactical signs on vehicles, and false route markers (care must be taken not to confuse our own troops);

(tr   changing civil road signs in the area to confuse the enemy;

(tr   simulating the location of automatic weapons, artillery and surveillance equipments;

(tr   erecting dummy minefields; and

(tr   demonstrating an apparent counterattack rehearsal.

© For further reading on this topic consult LWP-G 3-2-2 Deception Tools which can be downloaded from the Army Doctrine Electronic Library (ADEL) on http://lwdc.sor.defence.gov/au/doctrine. Also, for further reading on OPFPOR deception tactics consult 'The Inherent Vulnerabilities of Technology' by COL John D. Rosenberg, US Army, which can be downloaded from the CAL homepage.