



by Larry Kay, Josh Cosmos, Dan DeNeve, Nicole Courtney, Jeremy Mounticure

*Editor's Note: This is the second of a three-part article, stay tuned for the final part tomorrow. In the previous article, the authors discussed the importance of aligning planning with targeting as well as illustrating a sense-making model which can inform when and why a staff should adjust their planning horizon. In this next post, they aim to explain the importance of assessment-driven planning, finding flexibility in a battle rhythm, and the natural tension between deception, dilemmas, and risk.*

### **Assessment-Driven Planning**

Assessments are critical to planning. For an assessment to realize its full potential in LSCO, it must measure and indicate progress toward accomplishing a task, creating a condition, or achieving an objective. A holistic operation assessment measured in time, space, and purpose visually and succinctly informs decision points and, as necessary, [informs the development of branch plans and sequels](#). The tempo and scale of the LSCO environment

require a tactical assessment methodology across all warfighting functions (WFFs) to ensure integrating cells are prepared to plan and allocate resources against their respective planning horizons (i.e., ATO cycles, as shown in Table 1 above). Without strict adherence to planning horizons, a cascade of events will eventually exhaust the staff and deprive the commander of decision space. For this reason, operation assessments must measure progress against the division's established planning horizon, vice the next 24 hours. This prevents both the duplication of short-term efforts and the subsequent loss of long-term situational awareness which could contribute to unfavorable force ratios, thus jeopardizing coordination of longer lead-time support from higher headquarters. Similarly, unfavorable force ratios result in increased friendly attrition which present as a risk to force and ultimately a risk to the overall mission. Moreover, operation assessment illustrates what opportunities the division could exploit given the favorable, and potentially unanticipated, force ratios. Furthermore, the division COS and G5 are critical to the assessment process. The COS's presence emphasizes the cross-functional importance, while the G5's presence informs recommended adjustments to the plan. The G5 then communicates these adjustments during subsequent plans updates to the commanding general.

### **Finding Flexibility in the Rigidity of a Battle Rhythm**

The battle rhythm, which is a deliberate daily cycle of command, staff, and unit activities intended to synchronize current and future operations, [can be as hindering as it is helpful](#) if the staff is not responsive to the requirements of the OE. To ensure the staff was constantly apprised of both the commanding general's planning guidance and the G5 section's nascent plans, the G5 section had four total touchpoints with the entire staff over the course of a 24-hour period. These highly informal huddles enabled the entire staff, to include the rear command post (RCP) and BDE LNOs, to orient on emergent problems or plans. The highly informal nature of the huddles ensured maximum participation at the lowest level and boldness and creativity in contribution from the staff and subordinate units. The [more frequently and quickly](#) the situation changed, the more often the plan required revision, and the more often the planners had to meet. However, as with many components of a Warfighter Exercise, which does its best at simulating imagined realities of LSCO, four additional touchpoints combined with unplanned displacements may not be feasible.

### **Deception, Dilemmas, and Risk**

[Deception contributes to](#) creating multiple dilemmas, achieving operational surprise, and maintaining the initiative. Although, dilemmas are not the same as problems. A problem is a situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful that must be dealt with and overcome. A dilemma, by contrast, is [a situation in which a difficult choice](#) must be made between two or

more alternatives, especially equally undesirable ones. To craft an effective dilemma, 3ID postured maneuver forces convincingly enough to force the enemy to commit forces or resources against it. Put differently, the assumption of risk is significantly involved in the creation of believable dilemmas. To mitigate this risk, 3ID created deceptions to either lessen the risk to force or to present dilemmas, in and of themselves, to the enemy, thus creating an opportunity for 3ID. Furthermore, to ensure the deceptions were nested with the plan, while being resourced and constructed in time to be useful, the information operations officer was embedded within the G5 section and empowered to lead the cyber & electronic warfare team, space, special technical operations, psychological operations, and civil affairs officers. From start to finish, every planned operation and objective incorporated an associated deception. Nevertheless, and when faced with multiple risk decisions, the commanding general often posed a simple question to the G5 section: “what would happen if we didn’t do the feint?” Plain and simple, it was a brilliantly effective method to conduct a pre-mortem analysis of the planned deceptions. In some cases, the G5 could justify the deception, and in others, the G5 team was left in speechless contemplation, often resulting in a reframe or a decision to forgo the deception.

“No enterprise is more likely to succeed than one concealed from the enemy until it is ripe for execution... When you are aware that the enemy is acquainted with your designs, you must change them. After you have consulted with many about what you ought to do, confer with very few concerning what you are actually resolved to do.”

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Art of War*

Of the deceptions 3ID executed, some were effective, and some were not. [A comprehensive view](#) must capture failure as well as success, for a review of successes would only belie the fact that successful deception is immensely difficult to plan, much less achieve. During the exercise, the commanding general registered concerns regarding [a principle recommendation](#) of deception planning, which is to “limit the number of informed planners and participant to those needed.” Were this not a simulation, it begs the question as to how the division would and why the division would not adhere to the principle, and in effect, [what consequences would be born](#) out of this omission. Furthermore, and especially in LSCO, during which a Corps will be party to the conflict, effective deception planning should originate at the Corps level, including adjacent headquarters (divisions), to achieve a scope and scale persuasive enough to induce the enemy to make poor decisions. Tactical deception plans [must](#), therefore, be coordinated at the corps level to ensure divisions are not working at cross-purposes with one another, implying as well, they must originate at the corps. Despite this, military deception will [continue to be a vital part](#) of LSCO, and the risks associated with them will become an essential area of study for commanders, staffs, and

leaders at all levels. As for the future, the idea that you can present persuasive and effective dilemmas without incurring risk is illusory.

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