

A Little Masquerade: Russia's Evolving Employment of Maskirovka

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

A Little Masquerade: Russia's Evolving Employment of Maskirovka, by MAJ Morgan Maier, United States Army, 55 pages.

“A little masquerade” is the literal English translation of the Russian *maskirovka*. Synonymous with deception, *maskirovka* is a complex Russian cultural phenomenon that defies easy definition. Despite the West's lack of interest in its former protagonist, the Russian Federation Armed Forces enjoyed continuity with its former Soviet character. The Russian Federation Armed Forces carried forward military theory, doctrine, and thought in the intervening years between the collapse of the Soviet Union and resurgence of Russian assertiveness. This included the importance of deception in the achievement of military objectives. *Maskirovka* is culturally rooted in Russian society and an important facet of Russian military operations. This monograph analyses the evolution of Russia's employment of *maskirovka* from the Second World War through the invasion of Ukraine in 2014. It argues that Russia's employment of *maskirovka* has evolved from a concept employed by the military to a concept employed by the whole of government. Once a means used to create advantageous conditions on the battlefield, *maskirovka* evolved to create ambiguity and uncertainty in the operating environment to enable freedom of action for achievement of Russian military and political objectives.

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Introduction

As soon as man was born, he began to fight. When he began hunting, he had to paint himself different colors to avoid being eaten by a tiger. From that point on *maskirovka* was a part of his life. All human history can be portrayed as the history of deception.

—Major General Alexander Vladimirov
Quoted in *How Russia outfoxes its enemies*

Major General Alexander Vladimirov underscores the Russian understanding of deception, highlights its importance in daily life, and implies that deception is a timeless facet embedded in all human activity. For the Russian military, deception is an enduring feature of human interaction, conflict, and survival, repeatedly illustrated throughout history. From the Russian perspective, people, governments, and militaries have sought to conceal intentions, confuse adversaries, and misdirect enemy efforts in attempts to gain advantage.

History is replete with examples of military deception. The Greeks infiltrated Troy using the Trojan Horse. Allied powers deceived Nazi Germany as to the location of the invasion of northern France with Operation Bodyguard. General Norman Schwarzkopf publicized use of an amphibious landing to divert Iraqi combat power away from the planned tunneling maneuver through the deserts of Saudi Arabian and Iraq. Cultures, governments, and militaries each have their own conceptions of deception and its value in the achievement of political and military objectives. *Maskirovka* is Russia's operating concept for deception and is considered a necessary element for the achievement of political and military objectives.

But how has Russia's use of deception changed in Russian strategy and operational art since the Second World War? Russians originally employed *maskirovka* to create a false reality to achieve surprise and battlefield advantage over adversaries. While surprise remains a significant component of *maskirovka*, it fails to address Russia's application of deception in modern conflict. *Maskirovka* has expanded beyond concealment to facilitate surprise, placing greater emphasis on

creation of ambiguity, uncertainty, or for controlling responses of potential adversaries. This monograph suggests that in future conflicts, Russian Federation Armed Forces will employ deception to create uncertainty and paralysis in adversaries and to enable Russian freedom of action.

Russia and the US military appreciate the concept of deception differently. In the US military, deception is a ruse used to fool the enemy. Russian Federation Armed Forces and the Russian government embrace a less restrictive understanding of military deception. Russian conceptualization of deception is the combination of camouflage, concealment, deception, denial, disinformation, and operational security. Since the Second World War, *maskirovka* has played an increasingly important role in Russian military operations. Russia uses *maskirovka* to conceal military and political activities, as well as engage in clandestine military operations. The Russian military and political apparatus see deception as an indispensable component of war, warfare, and operational art.¹

Three decades ago, the US military better understood and appreciated Russian deception. The fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of other threats made research and studies in the Russian military a secondary concern. Gaps in understanding developed as the US military shifted focus to other areas. During this interim period, between the collapse of the Soviet Union and present, the Russian military continued to develop and refine its operational concepts as it engaged in regional conflicts. The Russian Federation retained many Soviet operational concepts, albeit with updates and modifications for the current operating environment and new technology.

While the Soviet Union ceased to exist two decades ago, the United States and Europe will contend with the threat of a re-emergent Russia for the foreseeable future. Previously,

¹ Norta Trulock III, "The Role of Deception in Soviet Military Planning," in *Soviet Strategic Deception*, ed. Brian D. Dailey and Patrick J. Parker (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 275, 279-280, 284-285.

understanding of the Russian military, its capabilities, doctrine, and method of operation was commonplace in the US military and defense apparatus. The collapse of the Soviet Union allowed the United States to emerge as the world's sole superpower; US interest waned while focus shifted to other threats to national interests. The collapse of the Soviet Union put US military analysis of Russian military affairs, doctrine, and operational art into general decline. As focus transferred to the Middle East and other conflict regions, the United States shuttered institutions dedicated to the analysis of Russian military affairs. The United States no longer considered Russians a monolithic military threat and Russian studies declined in the United States.²

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia remained militarily active. The country engaged in a number of conflicts in its near abroad, continued to modernize its equipment, and improved the professionalism of its force.³ More recently, conflicts and the illegal occupation of

² Department of Defense, *George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies*, Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 5200.34 (Washington, DC: DoD, 25 November, 1992), 1-2; Jason Tudor, "Alumni mark 30th anniversary of attending Army Russia Institute," Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System, June 10, 2013, accessed February 20, 2016, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/108393/alumni-mark-30th-anniversary-attending-army-russia-institute>; "About the Marshall Center," George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/en/nav-main-explore-gcmc-about-mc-en.html>; "About Us," Foreign Military Studies Office, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/About-Us.html>. The US Army Russian Institute officially closed in 1993, two years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and converted into the George C. Marshall European Center for Security. The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies contained a broader mandate than the US Army Russian Institute and focuses on European defense education. Current courses include Foreign Area Officer studies, Cyber Security, Terrorism and Security Studies, European Security Seminars. The US Army also shuttered The Soviet Army Studies Office on Fort Leavenworth and converted into the Foreign Military Studies Office. Again, like the George C. Marshall European Center for Security, the Foreign Military Studies Office has a broader research mandate.

³ William Safire, "ON LANGUAGE; The Near Abroad," *New York Times*, May 22, 1994, accessed May 20, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/22/magazine/on-language-the-near-abroad.html>. The near abroad is a Russian term that refers to states that originally separated from the Soviet Union and formed the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia views these states as belonging to their sphere of influence and does not necessarily view them as completely sovereign.

territory belonging to other nations have re-illustrated the capability, capacity, and threat of the Russian Federation Armed Forces. This requires military professionals to reevaluate Russian Federation Armed Forces as a credible threat, worthy of examination. Contemporary operations by the Russian Federation Armed Forces have used deception and misdirection as a fundamental component to assist in the success of military operations. Consequently, it is important that we understand *maskirovka* as an operating concept that Russia employs during military operations.

Russian deception has evolved from facilitating surprise to enabling Russian freedom of maneuver. Russia has employed *maskirovka* in its recent conflict in Georgia, the illegal annexation of Crimea, and conflict in eastern Ukraine. Russian Federation Armed Forces have placed a premium on the use of deception to create favorable conditions for military operations. These conflicts all demonstrate the necessity for a continued understanding of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and *maskirovka*. It will be increasingly imperative that we understand this facet of the Russian Federation Armed Forces method of warfare and its strategic implications for future Russian conflicts. The evolution of *maskirovka* and its importance to Russian military operations necessitates further investigation as we witness a resurgence of Russian expansionism. This monograph explores Russia's concept of deception, its significance to Russian Federation Armed Forces military operations, and its development in employment since the Second World War.

This monograph is limited in its research because countries generally do not publicize deceptions that they have employed. This limits the availability of data to secondary sources that have conducted analysis exposing the deception. Additionally, most primary source information discussing Russian theory and thoughts on deception is in Russian, and therefore inaccessible unless translated.

Delimitations to this research project are the timeframe and number of cases explored. Analysis consists of four select cases starting in the Second World War and ending with the

invasion of Ukraine. Russian history is replete with examples of military and political deception that go unexplored in this monograph. An exhaustive analysis of Russia's historical application of *maskirovka* would require a significantly broader canvas than is possible in this short research paper. Moreover, this monograph does not examine any of the psychological, sociological, or historical reasons for Russian deception. Lastly, successful deception relies on the coordinated efforts of individuals and organization at multiple echelons. Strategic and operational deceptions fail if adversaries easily detect and interpret tactical level events. Conversely, complete deception at the tactical echelon is moot if the adversary knows operational and strategic intentions. Therefore, this monograph used tactical, operational, and strategic deceptions to present Russian *maskirovka*.

Readers will find this monograph organized into six sections. Section one contains the introduction. Section two explores Russia's conceptualization of deception to build a foundation of understanding. This section examines the importance of deception to Russian operational art and how Russian understanding of deception differs from US military perspective. Section three lays out the methodology for analyzing the case studies. Section four uses five case studies ranging from the Second World War to the invasion of Ukraine to highlight Russian deception. This monograph concludes with an analysis of the case studies.

Taxonomy

Maskirovka, is the historical word used to describe deception in Russia. Translated into English, *maskirovka* means "a little masquerade."⁴ Like other complex cultural ideas, Russia's

⁴ Lucy Ash, "How Russia outfoxes its enemies," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, January 29, 2015, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31020283>.

conceptualization of deception defies simple definitions. While the conceptualization of deception in Russia shares similarities to Western thought, it also possesses its own unique characteristics.⁵ For the last fifty years, the West has considered *maskirovka* synonymous with deception. *Maskirovka*'s central theme is the presentation of a believable falsehood to conceal the truth.⁶ *Maskirovka* seeks to create a false reality for the target audience. Militarily, this false reality fixes the enemy's attention on the factious, directing their efforts away from friendly forces. Conceptually, *maskirovka* seeks to mask disposition, composition, status, and intentions of friendly forces while seeking to make the enemy commit errors he otherwise would not.⁷ *Maskirovka* as Russian military science includes a broad set of principles, forms, and characteristics that address issues related to creating and maintaining a false reality for the enemy, concealing truth, and maintaining operational security to perpetuate deceptions.

Russian and American perspectives and understanding of deception share similarities in some areas and diverge in others. US military deception and Russian *maskirovka* are similar in that they both seek to improve the possibility of success. The two conceptualizations differ in how they seek to improve the possibility of success. The United States uses deception to deter, increase the success of defensive operations, and improve the success of offensive actions. US deception seeks to drive the "adversary to culmination," which facilitates friendly force's achievement of objectives.⁸ *Maskirovka* similarly seeks to create favorable conditions for friendly forces, but differs in that it specifically seeks to create surprise. For Russians, deception offers a

⁵ Lucy Ash, "How Russia outfoxes its enemies."

⁶ Daniel W. Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?" (monograph, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1987), 28.

⁷ Charles L. Smith, "Soviet Maskirovka," *Airpower* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 28.

⁸ Joint Publication (JP) 3-13.4, *Military Deception* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), I-1.

way to create surprise and influence enemy actions. Surprise and influence help preserve combat power, mitigate risks, and act as combat multipliers.⁹

The US military and Russian Federation Armed Forces further differ on their understanding of deception's echelon of employment. US military deception occurs at the operational and tactical levels or war.¹⁰ The Russian view considers deception applicable across all levels of war and necessitates strong command and control. The Russian approach recognizes the need for centralized control of deception efforts to synchronize efforts and increase the likelihood of success.¹¹

Lastly, Russian and US military deception differ on what are legal, ethical, and authorized uses of military deception. Joint Publication 3-13.4: *Military Deception* states deception that misinforms friendly forces is detrimental to mission accomplishment. The Joint Publication further asserts that information released to the public must not be "of any [military deception] action [to avoid loss of] public trust."¹² US military deception therefore directs all deception efforts solely against enemy military forces. *Maskirovka* does not possess these constraints. Russian military deception has no prohibition on deception of friendly military forces or civilian populations, and is instead dependent on the costs, benefits, and risks of the deception

⁹ Bruce R. Pirnie, *Soviet Deception Operations During World War II* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1985), 1; Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 16-17.

¹⁰ JP 3-14.4, I-2.

¹¹ David M. Glantz, *Soviet War Experience: A Deception Case Study* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1988), 3. Glantz presents a translated portion of the Soviet General Staff's analysis of *maskirovka* support efforts for offensive operations.

¹² JP 3-13.4, vii.

effort to the operation or Russian government.¹³

For Russian operational art, the historic goal of *maskirovka* is threefold. *Maskirovka* creates surprise, offers the potential to control adversary's actions, and preserves combat power. For the Russian military, surprise is a major combat multiplier that is essential to military operations. Soviet General Staff analyses during the Second World War recognized that "the success of an operation depends, to a large extent, on the unexpectedness of the activities. Secrecy of preparations of one's operation and inflicting a surprise strike constitute one of the most important conditions for the achievement of victory."¹⁴ Russian military thought generally believes that deception, above all other means, is the best way to achieve surprise against an adversary at any level of war. Russians recognize that surprise provides significant advantages to military action and presents an opportunity for their forces to deliver a decisive blow to the enemy that would otherwise be unavailable.¹⁵ A simple ruse, concealment of forces, or elaborate deception can all create such surprise. Regardless of the method, success of *maskirovka* is evaluated by how surprise facilitated (or failed to facilitate) the accomplishment of the mission.¹⁶

Secondly, *maskirovka* must interfere with enemy decision-making. Deception efforts must lure the enemy into taking inappropriate action. In this regard, *maskirovka* and reflexive control theory can operate in conjunction. Russian reflexive control focuses on interfering with

¹³ James H. Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Studies in Intelligence* 46, no. 1 (2002): 50. This is evident by the deceptions that the Soviets used against their own soldiers and civilians. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet Union informed soldiers headed to Cuba that they would be going to a cold weather environment.

¹⁴ Glantz, *Soviet War Experience: A Deception Case Study*, 3.

¹⁵ Andrew W. Hull, Andrew J. Aldrin, and Peter B. Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analysis, 1989): III-2; Pirnie, *Soviet Deception Operations During World War II*, 1; Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 16.

¹⁶ Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 26.

decision making in two areas: the human-mental and computer decision making processes domains.¹⁷ Reflexive control seeks influence a system or individual into taking voluntary action that they otherwise would not do. Reflexive control attempts to do so by exploit the weakest link in a system or a specifically selected link of importance.¹⁸ Reflexive control and *maskirovka* can function together to create deception, convince of the truthfulness of deception, and influence action onto desired predetermined course. Reflexive control aids in the creation and believability of a deception by assisting in the selection of a node to affect (commander, unit, and information system) or by tailoring deceptions to specific nodes. Employment of false information or deceptions that play on the target's preconceived notions, morals, psychology, past experiences, and personality are powerful influencers of action.¹⁹ In the case of information systems, this could mean injecting false information into the system or altering its sensitivity.

Lastly, *maskirovka* serves a secondary role of assisting with survivability on the battlefield. Concealment, misdirection of enemy weapon effects, and circulation of misinformation all assist with the preservation of combat power. *Maskirovka* serves as both a form of force protection and operational security.²⁰ Surprise, reflexive control, and preservation of combat power are not the focus of this monograph. Nevertheless, they are important to understand how *maskirovka* contributes to Russian operational art through these three functions.

¹⁷ Timothy L. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 2 (June 2004): 237. Russian reflexive control theory recognizes that human decision-making can be affected by directly targeting the individual or the collection and information systems individuals use to assist in making decision. In this regards reflexive control could involve cyber intrusion to plant falsified data into an information system to influence human decision-making.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 241-242; Timothy L. Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2011), 118.

¹⁹ Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," 241-242.

²⁰ Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 15.

Before *maskirovka*'s employment, practitioners must first consider several salient points regarding the purpose of the deception and its intended target. All deceptions start with a truth. The starting point is therefore the consideration of what is true (operation, facility, position, etc). Second, the planner must consider what the intent of the deception will be. Is the deception intended to merely hide the truth or create a false truth, and what actions do we want or expect the enemy to take? Next, available resources are considered. A practitioner analyzes available time, terrain, troops, and technical means to determine what is within the realm possibility. Lastly, consideration of enemy reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition capabilities ensure the deception is appropriate to conditions. Deception planning proceeds following analysis of these initial factors.²¹

Once the practitioner concludes his initial assessment, he can begin with choosing which of *maskirovka*'s forms to use. *Maskirovka* recognizes four primary forms: concealment, simulation (or imitation), demonstrations (to include feints), and disinformation.²² These individual forms apply at all levels of war, independently, or in combination to create deception. Successful employment relies in great measure on the creative use of available resources, and not solely on sophisticated or costly technical means.²³

Concealment refers to all methods employed to reduce the physical and electromagnetic signature of men, weapons, and equipment.²⁴ In this regard, concealment hides friendly

²¹ Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 22.

²² Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-1.

²³ Kenneth C. Keating, "Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage" (student research report, US Army Russian Institute, 1981), 7.

²⁴ Smith, "Soviet Maskirovka," 31; Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-1.

disposition from the adversary. Concealment creates false impressions by hiding the truth from enemy observation, so that he will make mistakes that he otherwise would not.²⁵ Historically, concealment is the most widely employed form of *maskirovka*.²⁶ It can be applied at all military echelons but is the primary concern of tactical formations.²⁷ Unlike other forms of *maskirovka*, concealment can operate independently or in conjunction with the other forms of *maskirovka*. Unlike simulations, disinformation, and demonstrations, vertical and horizontal coordination is not required or expected for concealment. Individual soldiers, tactical units, and strategic assets can camouflage to conceal their disposition and composition from observation, regardless of conditions or context.²⁸

Concealment of men, weapons, equipment, and intentions includes a wide variety of technical, nontechnical, natural, and artificial means to minimize detection.²⁹ Terrain masking, the use of weather effects, and darkness are all means used to minimize detection of static or mobile formations and equipment. Camouflage and radar scattering nets, awnings, screens, and smoke are additional means to prevent observation and detection.³⁰ Other nontechnical means employed to ensure concealment include restricting movement to periods of darkness, sound and

²⁵ Keating, "Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage," 4.

²⁶ Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-9.

²⁷ Pirnie, *Soviet Deception Operations During World War II*, 2.

²⁸ Keating, "Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage," 13.

²⁹ Roger Beaumont, *Maskirovka: Soviet Camouflage, Concealment and Deception* (College Station, TX: Center for Strategic Technology, 1982), 6; Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-9.

³⁰ Keating, "Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage," 8; Smith, "Soviet Maskirovka," 31.

light discipline, engagement restrictions (fire discipline), and communication restrictions.³¹

Simulations and imitations are the second forms of *maskirovka*. Both attempt to make fake objects, positions, and activities appear real to observers. Simulations and imitations attempt to assist concealment by misdirecting enemy attention away from actual positions, by providing fictitious targets for enemy engagement. While both are related, they are distinctly different. Imitation employs passive techniques while simulation employs active techniques to create distinctive signs.³² Examples of imitation include the use of false positions, decoys, dummies, and mockups. Similarly, simulation uses the same inert techniques but augments them with real equipment, soldiers, smoke, sounds, and light signatures.³³ Creation of a false assembly area with dummy vehicles and facilities would only constitute an imitation. Augmenting the same false assembly area with a few real vehicles and soldiers moving around the site would constitute a simulation. Soviet research concluded that if ten percent of a fictitious site is real equipment and personnel the deception is significantly more believable.³⁴

The third form of *maskirovka* is the use of demonstrations to create a deception. Demonstrations involve the deliberate exposure of units to mislead the enemy as to your intentions.³⁵ These forces intentionally reveal and posture themselves in a manner to deceive the enemy as to time, place, and direction of the real operation. The employment of these forces will bear all the hallmarks of an actual operation with enough military potential to possibly be

³¹ Krueger, “Maskirovka—What’s in it for Us?,” 18.

³² Smith, “Soviet Maskirovka,” 31-32.

³³ Krueger, “Maskirovka—What’s in it for Us?,” 19.

³⁴ Richard N. Armstrong, *Soviet Operational Deception: The Red Cloak* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1988), 16.

³⁵ Smith, “Soviet Maskirovka,” 32; Keating, “Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage,” 11.

successful. A demonstration could go so far as to utilize troops and formations that are oblivious to the true role of their mission.³⁶ This ignorance adds to the realism of the action and provides operational security if soldiers are captured.

Demonstrations can include real offensive operations by a supporting effort unit in support of the main effort. Also known as a feint, this type of demonstration attempts to deceive the enemy into believing direction and location of the main attack, to divert enemy combat power away from the main effort's zone of operation. Demonstrations can also include passive measures to create deception. Formations could occupy and fortify defensive positions to create the illusion of no further offensive operations, when in fact, they are preparing and staging troops for offensive operations rearward of these fortifications.³⁷

The final form of *maskirovka* is the use of disinformation to create effects in the operating environment. Disinformation uses the dissemination of false information or half-truths to achieve deception. Disinformation can additionally include deliberately staged activities to mislead friendly, enemy, and neutral militaries, populations, and political entities. Disinformation deceptions can leverage false media reports, social media, and the internet, wittingly and unwittingly, to disseminate disinformation.³⁸ Disinformation is not limited to half-truths. Disinformation includes outright lies to both friendly and enemy military personnel and civilians.

Disinformation is further broken down into two sub-categories: political and military. Political disinformation uses propaganda to influence populations and political bodies. Military

³⁶ Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 19.

³⁷ Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-2.

³⁸ Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 20.

disinformation uses fabricated information to mislead the enemy.³⁹ Military disinformation can come in the form of false orders deliberately allowed to be captured or falsified maps depicting false terrain and structures or omitting real ones.⁴⁰ Another example of disinformation could be the obscuration or misrepresentation of weapon capabilities during peacetime to deceive the enemy as to true military capabilities.⁴¹

For any form of deception to be successful, the enemy must believe in the fictitious information presented to them. To achieve this, *maskirovka* stresses the importance of applying four basic forms and principles when attempting any deception: plausibility, activity, continuity, and variety. Believability of any of the above listed forms of *maskirovka* is dependent upon successful application of these principles.⁴²

For practitioners, plausibility is likely the most important deception principle. For an adversary to believe that a deception is real, the deception must be convincing, believable, or natural. Mock defensive positions must occupy defensible terrain. Size, placement, dispersion, activity, and equipment quantity of mock positions should be in accordance with doctrine. Units conceal and camouflage real equipment to avoid detection and assist in the realism of simulated positions. Failure to adhere to the principle of plausibility allows the enemy to identify the deception as a hoax.⁴³

Activity is the second principle of Soviet deception that emphasizes the importance of

³⁹ Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-3.

⁴⁰ Smith, "Soviet Maskirovka," 32-33.

⁴¹ Hull, Aldrin, and Almquist, *Managing Uncertainty: Soviet Views on Deception, Surprise, and Control*, II-4.

⁴² Krueger, "Maskirovka—What's in it for Us?," 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

persistence and diligence in execution of a deception. The deception requires practitioners to continuously alter and modify the deception to ensure consistency with the environment and conditions. Equipment is rarely stationary, installations must bristle with activity, and command and control nodes need to emit electronic signals. Activity ensures that the deception does not go stale and remains as real as possible.⁴⁴

Third, and regardless of the form of *maskirovka*, practitioners must maintain continuity of the deception throughout the operation, either until it is clear the enemy is aware of the fiction, or the mission is accomplished. Continuity is emphasized via repair, renewal, refreshment, and continuous effort to maintain the deception as time progresses. Deception efforts are more believable when they do not go stale. All facets that could lead to detection need consideration.⁴⁵

The final *maskirovka* principle is the use of variety. When planning or executing a deception, variety seeks to ensure that repetition does not occur. Adversaries become accustomed to deceptive measures when frequently repeated. Novel and creative measures assist in avoiding detection as long as they remain consistent with the operating environment.⁴⁶

Russian military science further breaks *maskirovka* down into the two distinct modes of active and passive measures.⁴⁷ Active measures elicit an immediate response from the target of the deception. In this way, demonstrations and simulations constitute active measures. These active measures attempt to deceive the enemy as to the true disposition and intention of friendly forces. They further attempt to force the enemy into actions that are disadvantageous to his goal.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Smith, “Soviet Maskirovka,” 38.

⁴⁵ Keating, “Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage,” 6.

⁴⁶ Smith, “Soviet Maskirovka,” 38.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁸ Krueger, “Maskirovka—What’s in it for Us?,” 21.

Conversely, concealment is a passive measure. Whereas active measures seek to elicit a response, passive measures attempt to conceal the true character or purpose. In this capacity, passive modes do not seek to induce a response from the enemy other than inaction. Sound and light discipline, camouflaging, and some types of disinformation are all examples of passive *maskirovka*.⁴⁹

Maskirovka and its principles of deception are applicable to all three levels of war. Strategically, *maskirovka* ensures that preparations for operations and campaigns remain secret from the enemy. Soviets leverage *maskirovka*, at the strategic level, to disorient the enemy as to the true nature and actions of armed forces.⁵⁰ In this way, *maskirovka* can conceal military operations, strategy, intention, and weapon systems quantities or capabilities. Strategic deceptions include efforts to avoid international inspections, conceal strategic level assets, misrepresent military capabilities (both diminish and inflate), and misrepresent intentions.

Operational *maskirovka* safeguards the secrecy of major operations. It is similar in nature to efforts at the strategic level but with a reduced scope.⁵¹ The primary focus at the operational level is to use simulations, disinformation, and feints to conceal the true nature of upcoming operations. Regardless of what effects strategic and operational *maskirovka* attempts to achieve, efforts depend on the application of *maskirovka* at the tactical level. No amount of deception at strategic and operational levels is convincing if facts on the ground do not reflect the attempted deception.⁵²

Maskirovka at the tactical level focuses on the concealment of combat formations, misdirection of local enemy combat power, and concealment or misdirect of the true objective of

⁴⁹ Krueger, “Maskirovka—What’s in it for Us?,” 21.

⁵⁰ Keating, “Maskirovka: The Soviet System of Camouflage,” 4-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵² Smith, Soviet Maskirovka,” 37.

localized combat operations.⁵³ Application of tactical *maskirovka* is the responsibility of division and lower military formations. Tactical *maskirovka* is therefore concentrated on concealment and demonstrations to present a façade to adversaries.⁵⁴ Sound and light discipline, creation of false fighting positions for the enemy to attack, and camouflage of individual pieces of equipment are all examples of *maskirovka* applied at the tactical level.

Unsynchronized deception efforts are possible, though Soviet *maskirovka* emphasizes the importance of unity of effort to achieve best results. Strategic, operational, and tactical efforts work in concert to create the best possible false reality. In this manner, strategic deception efforts rely on operational efforts to conceal the preparation for major combat operations, while operational deception efforts rely on tactical efforts to conceal troop dispositions.⁵⁵ For full-scale deception to work, indicators must be concealed at all three levels of war. Failure to do so could inadvertently inform adversaries of the true disposition, aim, or intention of upcoming operations.

Lastly, *maskirovka* recognizes the importance of operational security in protecting deception efforts. To ensure security, orders can be limited to key leaders in hardcopy format only. Subordinate units may not receive orders until the last possible moment and they may come in verbal form only.⁵⁶ Leaders may instruct strict supervisory and disciplinary measures to ensure compliance with concealment efforts.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Krueger, “Maskirovka—What’s in it for Us?,” 21.

⁵⁵ Smith, “Soviet Maskirovka,” 37.

⁵⁶ Krueger, “Maskirovka—What’s in it for Us?,” 23. This form of operational security is dated because of the prevalence of electronic information systems used for the transmittal of information. While encrypted communications can conceal content, the use of hardcopy orders may still be useful for military organizations. Hardcopy or verbal orders limit rapid reproduction, transmittal errors, circumvent traffic pattern analysis, and are easily and completely destroyed. Electronic formats leave room for doubt as they can easily be copied, stored, transported, archived, and potentially recovered even after destruction.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.

Methodology

Comparative analysis of historical case studies allows for evaluation of Russian deception efforts, how deception enabled Russian achievement of military or political objectives, and the effectiveness of various deceptions. This monograph uses four case studies to highlight the evolution of Russian *maskirovka*. Case studies used in this monograph include the battle of Kursk in 1943, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014. Each case study presented in this monograph provides a brief background of the historic event, a description of deception efforts, and that deception's successes and failures. Descriptions of Russian *maskirovka* for each case study assist in the assessment of *maskirovka*'s evolution from the Second World War to the invasion of Ukraine.

Understanding *maskirovka* entails understanding the different deception techniques used in each of the four case studies. This necessitates a thematic analysis of these case studies, as opposed to a temporal campaign analysis. This thematic analysis keeps events in chronological order only when it facilitates situational understanding. Three variables evaluate the four case studies used in this monograph. These include analysis of what form of deception was primarily employed, the echelon of employment, and by whom the deception was employed.

More specifically, this monograph will examine the form of deception employed by using *maskirovka*'s four categories of deception (concealment, simulation, demonstrations, and disinformation) to identify shifts in the importance of these elements over time. This monograph considers tactical, operational, and strategic as distinct level of employment and uses these levels of employment as evaluation criteria. Lastly, who employed the deception and against whom was the deception directed, assist in identifying changes in *maskirovka* employment between the Second World War and invasion of Ukraine.

Case Study I: Kursk, 1943

Soviet efforts to employ *maskirovka* continuously improved over the course of the Second World War. Soviet soldiers primarily employed *maskirovka* to camouflage and conceal tactical formations for survivability during the early portion of the Second World War. Soviet units generally practiced these deception measures independently and haphazardly, without lateral or vertical synchronization or integration. During the initial German invasion, *maskirovka* mainly occurred at the tactical level.⁵⁸ Additionally, German aerial reconnaissance further hampered Soviet deception efforts during the early period of the war. The Soviet's impromptu concentration and movement of large military forces, the result of Germany's surprise invasion, and Joseph Stalin's unwillingness to believe Soviet intelligence, both hindered Soviet *maskirovka* and aided Luftwaffe reconnaissance.⁵⁹ Soviet military employment of *maskirovka* improved as the war progressed. Lessons learned and implementation of best practices improved the quality of deception efforts.⁶⁰

The importance of *maskirovka* to Soviet military operations increased as the Soviet military began offensive operations to retake Russian territory.⁶¹ *Maskirovka* concealed the movement and grouping of Soviet formations for the counteroffensive. Specifically, the Battle of Kursk illustrated the effectiveness of Soviets *maskirovka*. Carefully planned and executed deception by the Soviets, effectively wrestled any chance the German army would have of regaining the initiative in Russia. In preparation for the battle, the Soviets used a host of

⁵⁸ Armstrong, *Soviet Operational Deception: The Red Cloak*, 4-5.

⁵⁹ David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War* (London, England: F. Cass, 1989), 21, 22, 103.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁶¹ Armstrong, *Soviet Operational Deception: The Red Cloak*, 5.

maskirovka's principles to ensure the secrecy of their preparations and intentions. The Kursk offensive primarily used *maskirovka* to conceal the movement, buildup, and grouping of Soviet forces from German reconnaissance.⁶²

Following the German loss at Stalingrad, the Soviets launched the winter offensive of 1942-1943. During this period, the Germans seeded terrain against the Soviet offensive. The Soviet winter offensive culminated with a large salient formed around Kursk, occupied by two Soviet Fronts (Armies). As spring approached, the two belligerents each prepared for offensive operations. The Germans planned to attack the Kursk salient from the north and south to isolate and destroy the two Soviet Fronts in the area, seize the key rail junctions at Kursk, and regain the strategic initiative. The Soviets enjoyed near perfect intelligence of the German plans.⁶³ With this knowledge, the Soviets planned to deliver a decisive blow to the attacking German military.⁶⁴ The Soviet military primarily concerned themselves with the concealment of forces and misdirecting German fires onto false targets. The Soviets perceived deception as essential to the initial defense of Kursk and the subsequent counterattack.⁶⁵ In preparation for the offensive, the

⁶² Armstrong, *Soviet Operational Deception: The Red Cloak*, 5-6; Benjamin R. Simms, "Analysis of the Battle of Kursk," *Armor: Mounted Maneuver Journal* (March-April 2003): 8.

⁶³ James E. Elder, "The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk" (monograph, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), 19-20, 31. Soviets had an extensive spy ring in German and received orders before the German eastern front chain of command would receive them.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Jukes, *Kursk: The Clash of Armour* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1968), 10-12.

⁶⁵ David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *The Battle of Kursk* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 74-76, 368, 374; Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War*, 154; STAVKA (Soviet High Command) published directives that subordinate units needed to pay special attention to deception efforts. Similarly, the Voronezh Front published reports that highlighted the importance of *maskirovka* to the upcoming defense. Further senior officers inspected camouflage and concealment of different portions of defensive positions daily to ensure subordinate units were adhering to directives.

Soviets moved the Steppe Front into position in the Voronezh Front's area of operation.⁶⁶ In addition to the movement of additional forces into the Voronezh Front's area, the Soviet army needed to reorganize and regroup formations. During preparations, engineers carefully built concealed assembly areas and camouflaged units to conceal them from aerial reconnaissance. Rear echelon units strictly observed radio silence. Ground telephone lines and messengers minimized radio communications and the ability of the German army to detect the true scale of Soviet concentration. To make operations appear normal, the Steppe Front received all of its communication through the Voronezh Front's first echelon units.⁶⁷ This facilitated the appearance of normal military operations within the salient. This arrangement helped conceal the army group by denying the German army the ability to intercept radio communication or conduct traffic pattern analysis on communication nodes. Soviet forces further assisted in the concealment of the buildup by moving military forces only during periods of darkness, to avoid German reconnaissance.⁶⁸

Simulations and imitations additionally aided the deception during preparations. The Voronezh Front created and maintained fifteen false airfields, complete with mock aircraft and facilities, to draw German aerial attack away from actual facilities and preserve Soviet combat power. These dummy airfields proved highly successful at drawing German aerial attack; leading up to the offensive, German aviation attacked these dummy sites with over 200 sorties. Similarly,

⁶⁶ Donald J. Bacon, *Second World War Deception: Lessons Learned for Today's Joint Planner* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air Command and General Staff College, 1988), 12.

⁶⁷ Dennis E. Showalter, *Armor and Blood: The Battle of Kursk, the Turning Point of World War II* (New York, NY: Random House, 2013), 66; Elder, "The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk," 19-20.

⁶⁸ Glantz and House, *The Battle of Kursk*, 74; Showalter, *Armor and Blood: The Battle of Kursk, the Turning Point of World War II*, 66.

the Voronezh Front faked the existence of one tank and one field army with supporting artillery. To accomplish this, the army group constructed over 800 mock tanks and simulated radio communication between the two simulated armies. This local deception forced the Germans to deploy one tank and one infantry division in response. The Germans further responded by apportioning aerial sorties to attacking mock vehicles.⁶⁹ The Soviet also moved dummy and inoperable equipment into vacated fighting positions during the regrouping for the Kursk offensive.⁷⁰ This helped create the appearance that the Soviets occupied defensive positions, perpetuated the status quo along the Voronezh Front, and built credibility into the other deception efforts conducted to create a false reality for the German army.

⁶⁹ Elder, “The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk,” 19-20, 31.

⁷⁰ Armstrong, *Soviet Operational Deception: The Red Cloak*, 9.

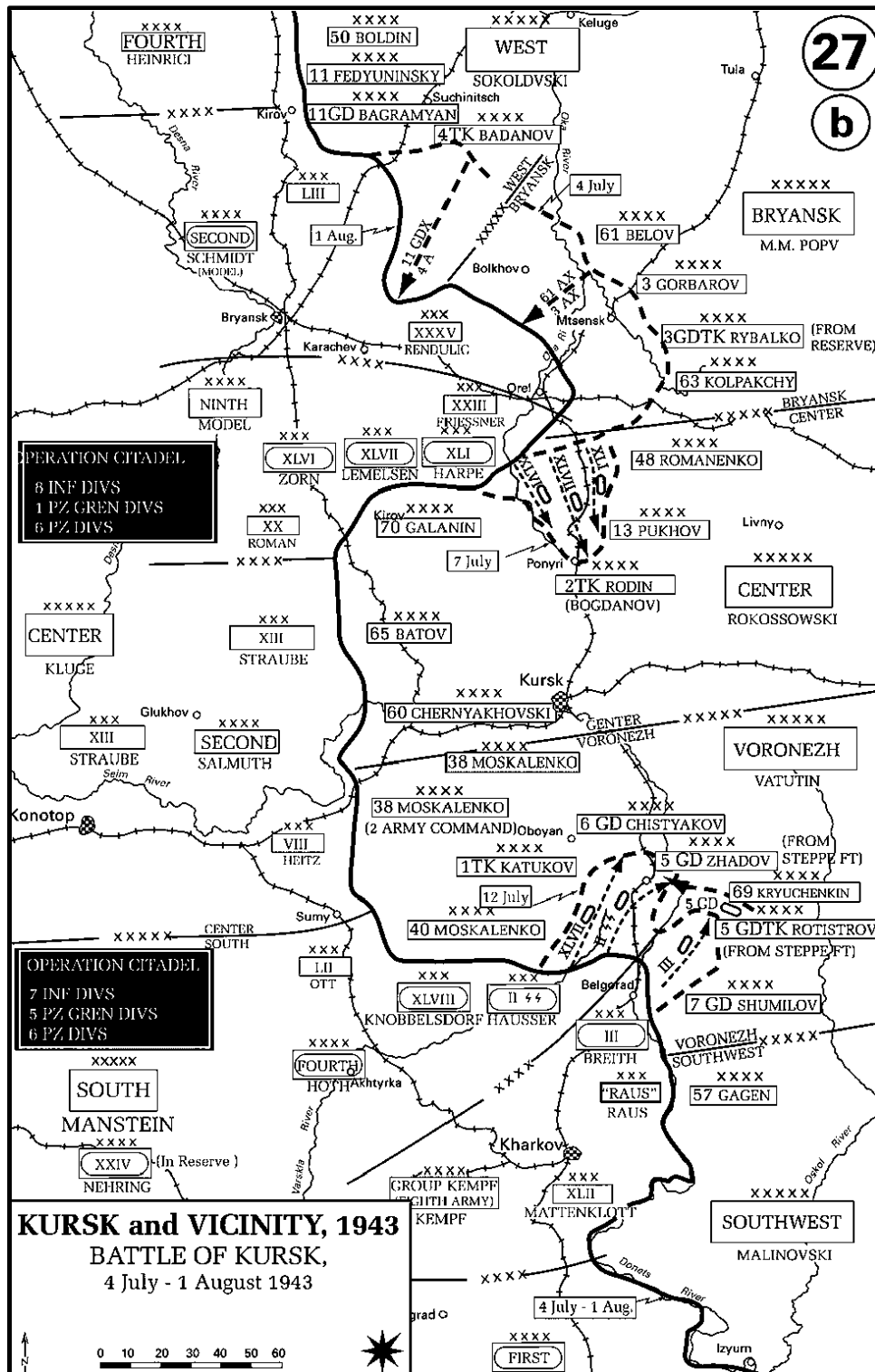


Figure 1. Map of the Kursk Salient

Source: Map from United States Military Academy, Department of History, “Battle Of Kursk, 04 July–01 August 1943,” accessed March 20, 2016, <http://www.usma.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World%20War%20II%20Europe/WWIIEurope27Combined.gif>.

To support the false reality that the Soviet army was creating around the Kursk salient, disinformation was required to further convince the German military. During preparation for the Kursk offensive, the Soviet army transmitted false information over radio nets. Collaborators along the front and in the German rear areas communicated the Soviet narrative by spreading disinformation.⁷¹ Both efforts assisted in keeping the concentration of Soviet forces concealed from the German military.

The final form of deception carried out by the Soviet army utilized demonstrations along the southwestern and southern fronts as diversions. STAVKA overtly massed Soviet forces along the North Donets and Mirs Rivers for German observation.⁷² The Soviet’s intended for these demonstrations to draw the German army’s operational reserve south of the Kursk salient and the deception succeeded. The German army shifted its operational reserve southward, and in doing so, made the reserve unavailable for the Soviet counterattack.⁷³

Soviet *maskirovka* during the Kursk offensive was complete. A total of ten armies and Soviet groupings went undetected by both German military and intelligence. Over one million Soviet soldiers, 25,000 guns, 3,000 tanks, 4,000 aircraft, 6,000 kilometers of trench, and the emplacement of a half a million mines all went undetected. The Soviets successfully achieved

⁷¹ Elder, “The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk,” 19.

⁷² Brian D. Dailey and Patrick J. Parker eds., *Soviet Strategic Deception* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 522. STAVKA stands for General Headquarters of the Soviet Supreme High Command.

⁷³ Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War*, 149-150; Elder, “The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk,” 18, 21, 25.

this level of deception through the proper application of the tenets of *maskirovka*. The Soviet army exercised centralized control and synchronized actions from the strategic through to the tactical echelon.⁷⁴

Kursk Analysis

Soviet *maskirovka* during the battle of Kursk was successful because the Soviets carefully considered the effect they were attempting to achieve, planned the deception in detail, and used available resources appropriately. Analysis of the German army's capabilities informed the Soviets of what was required for a successful deception. The Soviet army understood German intelligence collection, methods, systems, and capabilities. In planning the deception, the Soviets were able to ensure that the methods employed were capable of avoiding German detection. The German military succeeded in detecting the units involved in the defense of Kursk, however failed to identify the Steppe Front's concealed defensive positions of the true scope of the concentration of Soviet forces arrayed in depth.⁷⁵

During the Battle of Kursk, all four forms of *maskirovka* successfully deceived the attacking German military. Concealment ensured that the bulk of Soviet forces were undiscovered by German reconnaissance. Simulations preserved Soviet combat power by redirecting German weapons effects away from real military targets. Disinformation assisted in concealing the buildup of Soviet forces while demonstrations drew German combat power away from the salient in preparation for the eventual Soviet counterattack. Though the Soviets displayed all four forms of *maskirovka*, concealment was the primary deception. The other three forms of *maskirovka* served as complementary efforts to assist in concealment of the buildup.

Part of the Soviet success rests on the proper synchronization of efforts at the operational

⁷⁴ Elder, "The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk," 19, 25, 30.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26-27; Glantz and House, *The Battle of Kursk*, 74.

and tactical levels. Tactical formations carefully executed their assigned duties, particularly in regards to concealment. This allowed the amassed formations to go largely undetected by the German military. Coupled with the operational employment of simulations to misdirect the Luftwaffe, and the general lack of German intelligence, this created a powerful dynamic. The Soviets amassed numerical superiority in almost all categories of personnel and military equipment, most of which were largely undetected by the attacking Germans. Demonstration of Soviet forces to the south of Kursk as a ploy to draw the German operational reserve away from the battle were successful however it is unclear how much these forces would have contributed to the outcomes of the battle. In all instances, Soviet *maskirovka* by tactical and operational formations focused on deceiving their opposing tactical and operational adversaries; strategic deception was not present during the Battle of Kursk.

Later in the Second World War, Soviet military deceptions became increasingly sophisticated and capable due to repeated practice. The Soviet army learned through repetition, the importance of centralized control and careful planning to successfully employ *maskirovka*. Practice proved that execution required false positions be animated with ten percent real soldiers and equipment.⁷⁶ The Soviets carried these lessons forward throughout the rest of the war to achieve surprise during other major operations.

Case Study III: Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

The Soviet Union further employed *maskirovka* during the Cold War to veil the buildup of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons in Cuba. The Soviets concealed the introduction of nuclear weapons into Cuba in three ways. The Russian ensured operational security throughout the deployment, they engineered a disinformation campaign to misdirect US intelligence, and

⁷⁶ Armstrong, *Soviet Operational Deception: The Red Cloak*, 16.

lastly they concealed military equipment and personnel entering into Cuba. Initially, deception successfully kept Soviet efforts obscured from the United States. As the massing of Soviet nuclear forces in Cuba continued, the deception became increasingly difficult to maintain.

The Soviets employed disinformation to mislead the United States as to Soviet intentions in Cuba, leading up to the introduction and through the unequivocal discovery of nuclear weapons by the Central Intelligence Agency. While on vacation in Crimea, Nikita Khrushchev informed American Ambassador Foy Kohler that the Soviet Union would be establishing a fishing port in Cuba. During the meeting, Khrushchev assured Kohler that the Soviet Union only had defensive intentions designed to assist the Cubans. This disinformation was in fact the first of several attempts by the Soviets to conceal the deployment of Soviet controlled nuclear weapons into Cuba. The United States' attempt to overthrow the communist Cuban government, using a proxy force of Cuban nationals at the Bay of Pigs, substantiated any increase in the defensive posture of Cuba.⁷⁷ This fiasco added an air of plausibility to Soviet claims.

Further disinformation efforts by the Soviets involved the leaking of factual information through unreliable sources. While the Soviets denied the introduction of any offensive weapons into Cuba, they simultaneously leaked partially true information to dissident Cuban groups not trusted by the Central Intelligence Agency. Even before the actual Soviet introduction of weapons, thousands of reports inundated the Central Intelligence Agency claiming that Soviet weapons were in Cuba. This had the desired effect; the Central Intelligence Agency discounted dissidents reporting as not credible, desensitized the United States, and assisted Soviet

⁷⁷ Stewart Alsop and Charles Bartlett, "Eyeball to Eyeball," in *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, ed. Robert A. Divine (New York, NY: Markus Weiner Publishing, 1988), 68-69.

maskirovka.⁷⁸ Soviet lies and half-truths continued once the buildup was underway. First, the Soviets claimed they were not introducing soldiers or military equipment into Cuba. Next, the Soviets claimed that they were introducing agricultural advisors and Soviet-made agricultural equipment into Cuba. Prominent Soviet figures assisted in the spread of disinformation. Ambassador Dobrynin, in discussions with Robert Kennedy, claimed that steps taken in Cuba were for Cuban self-defense and posed no threat to the United States. Georgi Bolshakov, Premier Khrushchev's personal courier, echoed the same strategic message to Robert Kennedy roughly a month later. The decision to place nuclear weapons in Cuba occurred in June 1962. Dobrynin's and Bolshakov's statements were made three and four months, respectively, following Moscow's agreement with Cuba.⁷⁹

The Soviets final disinformation attempt occurred after the Central Intelligence Agency discovered short and medium range ballistic missiles in Cuba. In a final effort to perpetuate the deception, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko met with President Kennedy and reaffirmed that the Soviets were only providing defensive weapons to the Cubans. This disinformation was a half-truth that attempted to deny the introduction of nuclear weapons without making an outright lie. Gromyko's attempted disinformation failed; the Central Intelligence Agency had already briefed President Kennedy on the discovery of ballistic missiles discovered by aerial reconnaissance.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ David T. Moore and William N. Reynolds, "So Many Ways to Lie: The Complexity of Denial and Deception," *Defense Intelligence Journal* 15, no. 2 (2006): 16; Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 55.

⁷⁹ Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 55; Richard N. Lebow, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Reading the Lessons Correctly," *Political Science Quarterly* 98, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 433-434.

⁸⁰ Alsop and Bartlett, "Eyeball to Eyeball," 69; James G. Hershberg, "New Evidence on the Cuban Missile Crisis: More Documents from the Russian Archives," *Bulletin* 8-9 (Winter 1996/1997): 271-272, accessed December 23, 2015, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP_Bulletin_8-9.pdf.

Soviet disinformation was not limited to only deceiving the United States. The deployment of Soviet soldiers occurred under the title of Operation Anadyr which itself was another means of disinformation intended to misdirect attention away from the true intentions of the deployment. Anadyr is a river in northern Siberia that flows into the Bering Sea. It is the capital of the Chukotsky Autonomous District in northeastern Russia and is the name of a Soviet airbase in the same region. The use of the word Anadyr was a twofold deception. Soviet leadership's intent was to make both Soviet soldier and Western observers believe that mobilized forces were headed to northeastern Russia. The Soviets reinforced this disinformation by issuing arctic equipment to soldiers headed to Cuba to further the narrative of a cold weather deployment.⁸¹

In addition to disinformation, the Soviets also used a variety of methods to conceal the buildup of military personnel and equipment in Cuba. The Soviets concealed the delegation to negotiate the staging of nuclear missiles, within a delegation of agricultural experts advising the Cubans. Scientist, engineers, military personnel, and Soviet generals possessed fake identification and traveled with the agriculture delegation to avoid detection.⁸² Once the Cubans and Soviets agreed to terms, Soviet equipment and soldiers began movement into Cuba.

The Soviets took special efforts to conceal the accumulation of military personnel and equipment. A rolling blackout along rail lines used to transport men and equipment through the Soviet Union to their ports of embarkation ensured secrecy before transportation. During shipping, weapons were packed in crates disguised as industrial equipment. Routine farm equipment was stored on the decks of ships to assist in the concealment of military hardware.

⁸¹ Anatoli I. Gribkov and William Y. Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: edition q, 1994), 15; Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 50.

⁸² Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 5.

While underway, soldiers remained below deck during daylight hours and were provided limited time above deck during evening hours. Similar efforts at debarkation aided concealment. The Cubans constructed high walls around port terminals used in the offload of Soviet military equipment during periods of darkness. The Cuban government assisted by keeping Cuban citizens off roads that Soviet military equipment traversed.⁸³ In total, the Soviets infiltrated approximately 42,000 military personnel into Cuba; US intelligence estimated only 4,000 to 5,000 Soviet personnel inside of Cuba.⁸⁴ The full scales of the Soviet military buildup in Cuba did not become apparent to US intelligence until U2 reconnaissance planes identified launch pads, and the deception fell apart.

Lastly, the Soviets maintained operational security during the introduction of nuclear weapons into Cuba by limiting the amount of people who knew about the scheme. Only a few select Soviet officials were aware of the plan. Couriers delivered handwritten orders to prevent leaked or intercepted information.⁸⁵ Ship's captains and crews remained unaware of their destination until they were at sea, ensuring crews did not jeopardize the deception.⁸⁶ Lastly, once in Cuba, Soviet forces did not communicate by radio. Instead, the Soviets used couriers to carry dispatches to and from headquarters to ensure the US military did not intercept Soviet electronic communications.⁸⁷

⁸³ Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 52-54. Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 36-37.

⁸⁴ Moore and Reynolds, "So Many Ways to Lie: The Complexity of Denial and Deception," 17; John A. McCone, memorandum, August 20, 1962, in *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, ed. Mary S. McAuliffe (Washington DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992), 19-20. Some Central Intelligence Agency estimates put the number of Soviet personnel in Cuba between 45,000 to 50,000 personnel. The Central Intelligence Agency did not published these figures and instead used the 4,000 to 5,000 figure when interfacing with President Kennedy's administration.

⁸⁵ Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 50.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

Cuban Missile Crisis Analysis

Deception efforts during the Cuban Missile Crisis shared both similarities and notable differences with deception efforts during the Second World War. The Cuban Missile Crisis showed a continued emphasis on the usage of concealment and an increased importance on disinformation. In this way, the Soviets employed *maskirovka* to conceal intentions similar with efforts during the Second World War. *Maskirovka* during the Cuban Missile Crisis differed from its Second World War employment, with an increased importance placed on tactical, operational, and strategic disinformation.

By attempting to conceal the buildup of nuclear forces, the Soviets military employed tactical concealment. This is evident in the concealment of troops and equipment on ships they embarked to Cuba, efforts taken at ports of debarkation, and efforts in Cuba to conceal the short and medium range ballistic missiles within Cuba. The success of Soviet concealment efforts is evident in the large number of Soviet military personnel moved into Cuba largely undetected by the US military and Central Intelligence Agency.⁸⁸ Concealment efforts however, failed to conceal surface to air missile site used for protecting the ballistic missiles and associated launch pads. Further, nuclear missiles, once in Cuba, had inadequate concealment. The lack of concealment in Cuba lead to US military aerial reconnaissance's detection of surface to air missiles and the launch pads they defended. The large buildup of surface to air missiles assisted

⁸⁸ Hansen, "Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis," 54; McCone, 19-20; Gribkov and Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 27-28. The Soviets were able to infiltrate over 40,000 soldiers and personnel associated with the buildup of ballistic missiles. In the months preceding the crisis, the Central Intelligence Agency estimated only 4,000-6,000 Soviet personnel were in Cuba.

in thwarting the deception.⁸⁹

Additionally, the Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated tactical, operational, and strategic *maskirovka* in the form of disinformation. Strategically, Soviet diplomats and political leaders made false statements that attempted to mislead political leaders in the United States as to the nature of Soviet intentions in Cuba. The clever naming of the military operation and Soviet intelligence service's use of untrusted Cuban dissidents represent the operational use of disinformation to mislead. Lastly, tactical disinformation by the Soviet military against their own troops successfully ensured that Soviet troops would not leak military plans.

Soviet *maskirovka* ultimately failed during the Cuban Missile Crisis for numerous reasons. First, the Soviets and Cubans failed to conceal missile launch sites. Second, the Soviets and Cubans failed to properly conceal ballistic missiles. The final contributing factor to the failure of Soviet *maskirovka* was the lack of trust. US government officials did not trust the Soviets or believe the Soviet narrative or messaging. The lack of trust the US government placed in the Soviets made any statements suspect and open for analysis and verification.⁹⁰

Case Study IV: Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968

A final example of Soviet employment of deception during the Cold War occurred during the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Trouble began with the election of communist party member Alexander Dubcek as head of the Czechoslovak government. Dubcek was open to reform of the communist system and allowed outspoken dissidents to express views inconsistent

⁸⁹ Kenneth M. Absher, *Mind-Sets and Missiles: A First Hand Account of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 29-31, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub935.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Alsop and Bartlett, "Eyeball to Eyeball," 69.

with communist teachings. This led the Soviet Union to suspect the possibility of instability in the Soviet satellite. The Soviet Union believed that action was required to secure their borders. Soviet invasion, occupation, and replacement of the government of Czechoslovakia became the solution. Deception would be a cornerstone of this invasion.⁹¹

The Soviets employed *maskirovka* to create uncertainty and pretenses for Soviet military presence in the area. A minor Soviet deception campaign circulated anonymous letters and leaflets in public spaces. These letters claimed the newly elected government was comprised of counter-revolutionaries, was opposed to the communist ideology and the proletariat, and was seeking to destroy socialism. The letters further called on Czechoslovaks to fulfill their civic responsibility and expel or resist the elected government. Soviet disinformation and propaganda during this time also charged that the United States and Germany were planning an invasion of Czechoslovakia. The threat of a German invasion played on Czechoslovak's experience with Nazi Germany's invasion, and attempted to add an element of fear to the disinformation campaign.⁹²

The Soviets built upon disinformation with simulations as part of their *maskirovka* campaign. Soviet intelligence service created a weapons cache with a large stock of US military weapons and government issued tactical equipment. They then secretly reported the cache to Czechoslovak secret police.⁹³ The Soviet intelligence agents then coupled the fictitious weapons cache with the creation of fake counter-revolutionary documents that implicated the Central

⁹¹ Robert K. George, "An Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception" (student report, Air Command and Staff College, 1987), 41-43.

⁹² Ibid., 45-46.

⁹³ Ibid., 47; Mark Kramer, "The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia: New Interpretations," *Bulletin* 3 (Fall 1993): 3, accessed December 23, 2015, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHPBulletin3.pdf>.

Intelligence Agency as attempting to incite the counter-revolution.⁹⁴ This advanced the notion that the Soviets were friendly and that the west had ill intentions for Czechoslovakia. The imitation of a German-US weapons cache built credibility into the disinformation that the Soviets anonymously distributed, fueled fears of another German occupation, and set conditions for the employment of other elements of *maskirovka*.

Czechoslovakia agreed to Soviet military exercises on Czechoslovak soil on 30 June 1968. It is unclear whether Czechoslovakia believed in the Soviet's manufactured threat to security or whether it was Soviet pressure, behind closed doors, that resulted in the unplanned military maneuver, Exercise Sumava.⁹⁵ One theory is that disinformation had convinced the Czech government that a Soviet military exercises in Czechoslovakia was necessary to deter a German-United States invasion.⁹⁶ Once the maneuvers were underway though, the Soviets used them as a means to strengthen their position in Czechoslovakia; the exercise was in fact a large-scale simulation. These exercises masqueraded as military training to misdirect attention away

⁹⁴ Jon Latimer, *Deception in War* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2001), 263; Michael Dewar, *The Art of Deception in War* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles Publishers, 1989), 87.

⁹⁵ Cynthia M. Grabo, "Soviet Deception in the Czechoslovak Crisis," in "45th Anniversary Issue: Special Unclassified Edition," special issue, *Studies in Intelligence* (Fall 2000): 81-82, accessed November 09, 2015, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/fall00/ch5_Soviet_Deception.pdf. There is debate regarding why Czechoslovakia agreed upon the maneuvers. The Czechoslovak government would have been aware of any planned Soviet maneuvers well in advance, which begs the questions whether the Czechoslovak government was pressured into agreeing to the maneuvers or whether there was belief in the Soviet's disinformation and propaganda campaign. It is also unclear as to Soviet motives for the maneuvers. Soviets intentions could have been to pressure the Czechoslovak government in an attempt to avoid conflict. The second hypothesis is that the Soviets could have been a deception to pre-stage forces for an already planned intervention. The maneuvers could also have been a combination of the two; attempt to political pressure the Czechoslovak government with the intervention as a branch plan in the event of failure.

⁹⁶ George, "An Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception," 46.

from their true intention; the deployment and prepositioning of forces for invasion. During the course of military exercises, the Soviets continued to reinforce elements of the exercises with more troops beyond the agreed-upon force cap. The Soviets used the exercise to move unauthorized Soldiers into Czechoslovakia and pre-stage military forces for the intervention.⁹⁷

Other large-scale exercises followed Exercise Sumava. The Soviets followed with a logistics exercise that encompassed most of the western Soviet Union (Latvia to Ukraine) between 23 July and 10 August. A Soviet naval exercise proceeded in the Baltic, an air defense exercise which took place 25 July through 31 July, with a subsequent communications exercise. All of these exercises were demonstrations that desensitized Czechoslovaks and the western powers to the impending Soviet intervention into Czechoslovakia.⁹⁸

The Soviets further strengthened their position with another deception designed to pull Czechoslovak forces away from critical infrastructure. Soviet leadership convinced the Czechoslovak government to conduct their own exercises along Czechoslovakia's western border, in conjunction with East German maneuvers, to increase the credibility of deterrence.⁹⁹ Once maneuvers were underway the Soviet Union cut supporting fuel and ammo to these units. The Soviets lied about the reduction in supplies, claiming their reduction was necessary to support the East German exercise.¹⁰⁰ *Maskirovka* in this case had a two-pronged effect in support of the intervention. First, it moved large amounts of Czechoslovak troops into western Czechoslovakia where they could not interfere with the Soviet intervention. Second, this

⁹⁷ George, "An Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception," 48-50.

⁹⁸ Dewar, *The Art of Deception in War*, 87-88; Latimer, *Deception in War*, 263; Grabo, "Soviet Deception in the Czechoslovak Crisis," 81, 86.

⁹⁹ George, "An Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception," 49-50.

¹⁰⁰ Mark Llyod, *The Art of Military Deception* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), 126; George, "An Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception," 48-49.

deception ensured that Czechoslovak troops were inadequately supplied to resist the Soviet intervention.¹⁰¹

The Soviet's final deception as the invasion unfolded, claimed that elements within Czechoslovakia had asked for an intervention. Soviet disinformation misled the Czechoslovakia as to the true nature of the transpiring events. This final act, and the corresponding disinformation that accompanied it, set conditions for a successful Soviet invasion.¹⁰² The overthrow of the Czechoslovak government and takeover of the country occurred without major fighting.

Czechoslovakia Intervention Analysis

The Soviet Union employed a number of *maskirovka's* principles to realize their objectives in Czechoslovakia. Disinformation stoked existing popular fear, misdirected Czechoslovak military assets, and created a false pretense for the introduction of Soviet troops into the country. A simulated weapons cache provided evidence that made Soviet disinformation claims believable. Lastly, the Soviet's use of demonstration, in the form of military exercises, desensitized the Czechoslovak government and populace as to the true intentions of the Soviet forces. The combination of these factors allowed for the Soviets to surprise both Czechoslovakia and western governments with the invasion. Soviet intentions became clear once Czechoslovakia was under the control of the Soviet Union.

In line with Soviet efforts during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Soviet's intervention in Czechoslovakia demonstrated a continued trend that coupled both military and diplomatic deception. At the tactical and operational levels, the Soviets employed disinformation combined

¹⁰¹ Dewar, *The Art of Deception in War*, 87; Latimer, *Deception in War*, 262-263.

¹⁰² George, "An Historical Investigation of Soviet Strategic Deception," 77.

with simulations, in an attempt to influence public opinion in Czechoslovakia. Military simulations in the form of maneuvers and exercises postured Soviet military forces for the intervention. These maneuvers and exercises further desensitized the Czechoslovak population and removed the Czechoslovak military as an obstacle for intervention. In additions, the maneuvers strategically deceived Western governments as to what was transpiring in Czechoslovakia.

Strategically, the Soviet political apparatus further employed disinformation during the execution of their intervention in an attempt to disguise what was truly occurring in Czechoslovakia. Statements that the Soviet's had been invited into Czechoslovakia by disenfranchised political leaders both misdirected Western nations as to what was truly unfolding in Czechoslovakia and provided a believable rationale to the Czechoslovak people.

Case Study V: Invasion of Ukraine, 2014

Before analyzing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is first important to examine Russia's evolving conceptualization of deception, recent discussion by Russian military theorist, and Russia's evolving understanding of military operations. Russian discussions regarding deception have focused on the rise of *obman* (deception), *voennaya khitrost* (military cunning), and *vvedenie v zabluzhdenie* (to mislead) as replacements for *maskirovka* (now trending back to its original meaning of concealment or camouflage only). Russian experts have debated the relevance of the term *maskirovka*. Theorist's point out that *maskirovka* (as concealment) is a component of deception (*obman*) and not the other way around. The internal Russian debate argues that the term *maskirovka* is vague and illogically groups all deception under the Russian term for concealment. This has moved *maskirovka* back to its original meaning of concealment and the use of a more appropriate term to encompass all deception efforts under it. Essentially, the overarching principles and elements of *maskirovka* are retained, but under a more appropriate

terminology. Like *maskirovka*, *obman* is an umbrella term for deception. In this section, *obman* supplants *maskirovka* in an effort to stay within the currently accepted Russian conception of deception.¹⁰³

Russia's understanding of the nature of warfare, like its conceptualization of deception, has evolved with the passage of time. Commonly referred to as the Gerasimov Doctrine or New-Generation War, Chief of the Russian General Staff General Valery Gerasimov outlined his observations of modern warfare in *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier* (Military-Industrial Courier). General Gerasimov, along with other Russian military theorist, make several observations of note relevant to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Gerasimov observed that there is no longer a clear distinction between war and peace. Further, in modern war, increased emphasis is placed upon informational and psychological warfare. Correspondingly, this requires the use of nonmilitary means of power, in conjunction with the military, but has the potential to reduce the required military power.¹⁰⁴

In new generation war, public institutions, mass media, religious organizations, cultural institutions, NGOs, public movements, criminal, and diplomats are all weapons of the aggressor state. These institutions all assist in the information and psychological war that weakens the target state. *Obman* assists in this effort, as these organizations use disinformation to assist in the

¹⁰³ Thomas, *Recasting the Red Star*, 113-116.

¹⁰⁴ Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations," *Military Review* (January-February 2016): 24; Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* (January-February 2016): 30-31; Sergey G. Chekinov and Sergey A. Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War," *Voyennaya Mysl* 10, no. 4 (2013): 12, 16-17, accessed March 16, 2016, http://www.eastviewpress.com/Files/MT_FROM%20THE%20CURRENT%20ISSUE_No.4_2013.pdf; Jānis Bērziņš, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy* (Riga, Latvia: National Defense Academy of Latvia Center for Security and Strategic Research, 2014), 5.

concealment of military operations and the effort as a whole.¹⁰⁵

In line with Russia's understanding of modern warfare and the continued importance of *obman* to Russian operational art, Russia has employed a host of deception measures in Ukraine to conceal Russian involvement, dissuade outside intervention, and control public opinion. Russian deception in Crimea centered on disinformation to conceal involvement of Russian soldiers in the seizure of the territory. On February 27, 2014, "little green men" who wore Russian military uniforms, without insignia, seized key infrastructure in Ukraine's autonomous state of Crimea.¹⁰⁶ Russians spread disinformation from multiple levels of the government, denying Russian involvement. President Vladimir Putin denied the involvement of Russian armed force. As an alternative, he claimed that the armed men in Crimea were civil defense forces and that Russian military uniforms were easily purchased almost anywhere.¹⁰⁷ Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, further perpetuated the deception. Lavrov claimed media suggestions of Russian involvement as "complete nonsense" and that Russian soldiers were still present in their military installations.¹⁰⁸ It was not until after the Russian annexation of Crimea that President

¹⁰⁵ Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content of New-Generation War," 17, 18, 20; Jānis Bērziņš, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy*, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Ash, "How Russia outfoxes its enemies."

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; Maria Snegovaya, *Putin's Information Warfare In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare* (Washington DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2015), 17.

¹⁰⁸ Jill Dougherty, *Everyone Lies: The Ukraine Conflict and Russia's Media Transformation* (Cambridge, MA: Joan Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, 2014), 4; NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, (Riga, Latvia: NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, 2014), 35, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/analysis-russias-information-campaign-against-ukraine>.

Putin admitted that Russian soldiers participated in the seizure of Crimea.¹⁰⁹ A deception that was useful, then replaced one that was not. Russian media followed Putin's revelation with claims that the actions were necessary to protect Russia speakers from Ukrainian fascists.¹¹⁰

Demonstrations by Russian Federation Armed Forces along the Ukrainian border supported Russian actions in Crimea. The buildup of troop during the Crimean takeover diverted Ukrainian attention away from events in Crimea.¹¹¹ This buildup postured forces for the invasion of eastern Ukraine that followed shortly after the annexation of Crimea.

In early May 2014, the Ukrainian cities of Donetsk and Luhansk declared independence from Ukraine. Like events in Crimea, the Russian government used deception to obfuscate involvement in transpiring events and create plausible deniability. Deception in Donetsk and Luhansk shared similarities with Crimea. Demonstrations as a form of *obman* misdirected both western media and intelligence. Russian state run media and social media dispersed widespread disinformation. Russian troops were committed to fighting, but their involvement denied.

During the course of fighting in eastern Ukraine, the Russians used aid convoys as a means of directing attention away from incursions of Russian forces and military equipment into Ukraine. Observers and media heavily scrutinized these convoys as they crossed the border into Ukraine. Examination of these convoys revealed that they carried little in the way of aid and

¹⁰⁹ James Miller, Pierre Vaux, Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, and Michael Weiss, *An Invasion by Any Other Name: The Kremlin's Dirty War in Ukraine*, (New York, NY: The Institute of Modern Russia, 2015), 45, accessed February 25, 2016, http://www.interpretermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IMR_Ukraine_final_links_updt_02_corr.pdf; Ash, "How Russia outfoxes its enemies;" Dougherty, *Everyone Lies: The Ukraine Conflict and Russia's Media Transformation*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Dougherty, *Everyone Lies: The Ukraine Conflict and Russ's Media Transformation*, 4.

¹¹¹ John R. Davis, "Continued Evolution of Hybrid Threats," *Three Swords Magazine*, no. 28 (May 2015): 22.

nothing in the way of military equipment. Instead, the real movement of Russian military hardware and personnel occurred at other crossing points, simultaneously with the aid convoys. The entire effort was a simple demonstration that used a shiny object to draw attention away from meaningful crossings.¹¹²

The Russian government obfuscated events in eastern Ukraine through a disinformation campaign that used public statements from prominent political leaders, social media, and the Russian media. When confronted with reports that Russian soldiers had been fighting in eastern Ukraine, Russian government and politicians consistently denied involvement. Instead, the Russian government noted that many ethnic Russians had heeded the call to arms and gone to eastern Ukraine as patriotic volunteers, others were Russian citizens on holiday.¹¹³ Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, denied Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine as he did in Ukraine's Crimea.¹¹⁴ These claims persisted despite the capture of Russian soldiers and the death of Russian military personnel in Ukraine.¹¹⁵

Further disinformation in Ukraine involved widespread disinformation from Russian media and internet trolls that made a wide variety of negative and disparaging remarks about

¹¹² Paul Huard, "Maskirovka' Is Russian Secret War," *War is Boring*, August 25, 2014, accessed February 25, 2016, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/maskirovka-is-russian-secret-war-7d6a304d5fb6#.hyjvjrjrdxt>; Lawrence Freedman, "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War," *Survival* 56, no. 6 (December 2014-January 2015): 16; Mary E. Connell and Ryan Evans, *Russia's "Ambiguous Warfare" and Implications for the U.S. Marine Corps* (Arlington VA: Center for Naval Analysis, 2015), 11.

¹¹³ Ash, "How Russia outfoxes its enemies;" Huard, "Maskirovka' Is Russian Secret War."

¹¹⁴ Snegovaya, *Putin's Information Warfare In Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Miller, et al., *An Invasion by Any Other Name: The Kremlin's Dirty War in Ukraine*, 46, 53-54. Thirty-one of forty separatist fighters killed at the Donetsk airport were Russian military. Russian soldiers were also captured by Ukrainian military forces.

Ukraine's execution of the war.¹¹⁶ In one deception, online social media falsified Ukrainian government documents to discredit the Ukrainian government's support to the war effort. Accusations by social media claimed that the Ukrainian government sold US supplied weapons to Syria for personal gain. Russian state media bolstered the narrative and claimed the Ukrainian government had abandoned the front line Ukrainian military.¹¹⁷ Both of these are examples of the disinformation campaign used to discredit the Ukrainian government's fight to regain sovereign territory.

The downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 highlights how state-owned Russian media sowed doubt for the government. Following the downing of the commercial airline, Russian news started a sustained disinformation campaign to create confusion and to control the narrative surrounding the event. In the days that followed, the Russian media perpetuated numerous theories regarding what had happened to Flight MH17. All of the theories presented were consistent with their message; the downing of the aircraft had no Russian or separatist involvement and that Ukraine and the United States destroyed MH17. The message presented by Russian media was for domestic Russia consumption and used to obfuscate events surrounding

¹¹⁶ "Troll," NetLingo: The Internet Dictionary, accessed February 27, 2016. <http://www.netlingo.com/word/troll.php>. Troll is term used on the Internet for a person who spreads misinformation, derogatory accusations, inflammatory comments, or suppress constructive discourse.

¹¹⁷ John R. Haines, "Russia's Use of Disinformation in the Ukraine Conflict," Foreign Policy Research Institute, February, 2015, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://www.fpri.org/article/2015/02/russias-use-of-disinformation-in-the-ukraine-conflict/>.

MH17's destruction.¹¹⁸ Russian media would later claim that the BUK missile system in question had been Ukrainian hardware, captured by separatists as a way to explain its presence on the battlefield.¹¹⁹

Disinformation and deception experienced diminishing returns as evidence of Russian involvement was uncovered.¹²⁰ Social media, geotags, and news media made it more difficult to maintain a deception.¹²¹ Once Russia's invasion was underway, these media vehicles assisted in providing evidence counter to Russia's narrative of popular uprising in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. In this regard, social media proved an effective counter to Russia's state run media. Russian media consistently manipulated images used in supporting the Russian narrative of what

¹¹⁸ NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 34; Dougherty, *Everyone Lies: The Ukraine Conflict and Russia's Media Transformation*, 2; Freedman, "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War," 23; Ellie Zolfagharifard and Jonathan O'Callaghan, "How Flight MH17 Was Obliterated in Just 12 Seconds," *Daily Mail*, July 18, 2014, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2697068/How-MH17-obliterated-just-12-seconds-BUK-missile-carrying-150lbs-explosives-fired-doomed-Malaysian-flight-95-accuracy.html>. Russian theories of how the aircraft was destroyed included accusations that the aircraft had been downed by the Ukrainian air force, a Ukrainian surface to air missile shot it down, that it had been filled with corpses and remote detonated to discredit Russia, that the aircraft crashed because of mechanical problems, that the United States shot it down to discredit Russia, and that Ukraine shot it down because they thought it was President Putin's plane (assassination attempt). The Russian media also assisted the Russian government by reporting that no BUK missile systems were in the area at the time of the shoot down. Following the shoot down images of a SA-11 Gadfly (BUK missile system) in the area of MH17 shoot down surfaced on social media.

¹¹⁹ Miller, et al., *An Invasion by Any Other Name: The Kremlin's Dirty War in Ukraine*, 15.

¹²⁰ Freedman, "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War," 11; NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 39.

¹²¹ "What Your Smartphone Photos Know About You," Duke University, accessed February 25, 2016, <https://security.duke.edu/what-your-smartphone-photos-know-about-you>. Social media exploited included YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Geotag refers to metadata contained in captured media files. This data can provide geolocation, date, time, and user identification.

was occurring in Crimea and Ukraine. Russian media fabricated events utilizing images from Chechnya, Syria, and Kosovo. Further exposed fabrications included Russian media using the same actor in multiple roles, scenes, and situations but adhering to a single narrative.¹²²

Social media and the internet allowed Russia to disseminate disinformation but also provided opportunities to disprove the deceptions. In a few instances, Russian soldiers uploaded photos of themselves in Ukraine.¹²³ Poor operational security, lack of knowledge about metadata contained in pictures, and social media provided proof against Russian claims of no soldiers in Ukraine. Russian deception experienced further degradation with analysis of other disinformation attempts. An investigation proved the strangulation of a pregnant woman by a pro-Ukrainian extremist and the Odessan doctor was false. No remains could be located, medical personnel had no records of such a person or death, and people in the reported location could not confirm the event. Bloggers refuted the Doctor from Odessa claims when they revealed the doctor's picture was from an online dental brochure. Following the revelation, the Facebook page was deleted and no such doctor could be found.¹²⁴

In addition, captured Russian soldiers have also revealed Russia's role in Ukraine. Mass media and the internet have been assets the Ukrainian government leveraged to dispel Russian deception efforts. The Ukrainian government posted video of captured Russian soldiers identifying themselves and explaining their activities in Ukraine on social media, as evidence

¹²² NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 14; Davis, "Continued Evolution of Hybrid Threats," 23. General Breedlove has stated that Russia's disinformation campaign "is probably the most impressive new part of this hybrid war, all of the different tools to create a false narrative."

¹²³ Miller, et al., *An Invasion by Any Other Name: The Kremlin's Dirty War in Ukraine*, 76.

¹²⁴ NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence, *Analysis of Russia's Information Campaign Against Ukraine*, 28.

against Russian disinformation. In one such posting, Russian soldier Private 1st Class Ivan V. Milchakov identified himself as an active member of the Russian military and was aware that he was fighting in Ukraine. Of particular interest to Private 1st Class Milchakov's admission was that he was unaware of the objective of his incursion into Ukraine.¹²⁵

Invasion of Ukraine Analysis

The continuing conflict in Ukraine further highlights the increased importance of *obman* in Russian military operations. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea demonstrated the continuity between *maskirovka* and *obman* in the form of concealment, simulations, demonstrations, and disinformation. The conflict further demonstrated how Russian employment of *obman* has changed since its previous employment in the Second World War, Cuban Missile Crisis, and intervention in Czechoslovakia. The invasion of Ukraine witnessed a shift in Russian deception. Plausible deniability of transpiring events supplanted physical concealment of forces.

A significant difference between previous deception efforts and efforts in Ukraine was Russia's increased use of disinformation over other forms of deception. Disinformation formed the cornerstone of Russian *obman* efforts in Ukraine. It was significant that a majority of the disinformation that occurred in Ukraine was executed across the whole of government. Russian political leaders, state media, government controlled social media trolls, and government agents

¹²⁵ "Transcript of Interrogation of Russian Paratrooper Captured in Ukraine," The Interpreter: The Online Russian Translation Journal, accessed February 25, 2016, https://pressimus.com/Interpreter_Mag/press/3950; The circumstances of Private 1st Class Ivan V. Milchakov capture are not presented in material reviewed. Nor are the circumstances of his admission. It is possible that Private 1st Class Milchakov's admission was provided under duress and should therefore be critically considered. Of material importance to this examination is that his capture occurred inside Ukrainian territory and that Private Milchakov understood that he was headed to Ukraine prior to his capture.

were used to spread false information and create a false narrative surrounding the unfolding events. The scale of these efforts overshadows the diplomatic and intelligence service efforts employed during the Battle of Kursk, Cuban Missile Crisis, and intervention in Czechoslovakia.

Beyond the whole of government use of disinformation, Russian Federation Armed Forces focused deception efforts on the use of simulations and demonstrations. The employment of “little green men,” Russian soldiers wearing masks and no unit or national identification, constituted tactical and operational simulation of local partisan forces. Operationally, demonstrations along the Ukrainian border by Russian military forces assisted in fixing Ukraine’s attention away from Crimea. Concealment occurred at the tactical level to infiltrate Russian soldiers into Ukraine. Beyond this, concealment assisted in force protection and survivability on the battlefield but did not play as large a role as it did during the Second World War or Cuban Missile Crisis.

Conclusion

This monograph set out to determine the evolution of Russian deception from the Second World War through the invasion of Ukraine in 2014. The hypothesis that Russian deception has shifted away from creating surprise, preserving combat power, and as a way of assisting with reflexive control to being more focused on creating ambiguity and uncertainty to enable freedom of action proved partially true. Research identified that Russian deception has undergone changes from its use in the Second World War, specifically the rising importance of disinformation in Russian military operations and deception’s importance to creating uncertainty. Beyond the cosmetic shift from *maskirovka* to *obman* as better nomenclature for expressing deception, *maskirovka* has undergone noticeable changes in three areas of emphasis since the Second World War. The case studies examined highlight a trend in the increased importance of disinformation and simulations to the physical execution of deception. Further, there is a decreased trend in the

purely military application of deception and an apparent development of a whole of government approach to its application. These shifts correspond with the changing reason for the employment of *maskirovka*. This changing reason no longer ties *maskirovka* to only creating battlefield surprise, for assisting in reflexive control, or force protection for Russian military forces. Russian *maskirovka*'s now includes obfuscation and the creation of ambiguity and uncertainty to facilitate Russia freedom and action in the operating environment.

Since the Second World War, Russia's use of *maskirovka* has placed increasing importance on disinformation and simulations as the primary means of deception. Analysis of the Battle of Kursk revealed that concealment was the principle form of *maskirovka* employed by the Soviet military. The Soviet concealment of over a million men in and around the Kursk salient allowed for the destruction of attacking German forces and wrested any remaining chance of the Wehrmacht regaining the strategic initiative on the eastern front. Twenty years after the Battle of Kursk, the Soviets again employed *maskirovka* to conceal the introduction of ballistic missiles to Cuba. Concealment of the shipment of these missiles, their supporting military personnel, and their storage sites in Cuba constituted the bulk of Soviet deception measures taken. Soviet disinformation in the form of diplomatic communications and Soviet intelligence efforts occupied a secondary role that attempted to keep the United States from scrutinizing Russian shipments to Cuba.

The intervention in Czechoslovakia and invasion of Ukraine both marked a continued trend towards disinformation and simulations as the primary forms of deception employed. In Czechoslovakia, Soviet deception efforts almost entirely relied on the use of disinformation and simulation to achieve desired military and political objectives. Soviet intelligence services used simulations to implicate Western power in plots to overthrow the communist government and employed a disinformation campaign to foment anti-Western sentiments. The Soviets also simulated large-scale military maneuvers to posture force for the intervention. The Soviets used

these two forms of *maskirovka* to obscure their intentions from the Czechoslovak government, and Western powers. Soviets designed their deception to create uncertainty amongst the population and Western powers as to what was truly unfolding in Czechoslovakia.

The invasion of Ukraine continued to raise the importance of disinformation and simulations as the dominate forms of deception employed by the Russians. Disinformation was widely employed to deny the involvement of Russian soldiers in the conflict, incite social unrest, and create an alternative narrative to the truth. Russian Federation Armed Forces simulated partisan force to lend further credibility to Russian disinformation operations. In both cases, the reason for *maskirovka's* employment was not surprise but to create plausible deniability.

Maskirovka further developed from a concept applied by Russian military forces to a concept applied by the whole of the Russian government. During the Second World War, the Soviet military almost exclusively employed *maskirovka*. In the conflict that followed, there has been a steady progression of *maskirovka's* employment by other elements of the Russian government. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, both the Soviet military and Soviet diplomats attempted to conceal events with *maskirovka*. Later in Czechoslovakia, the Russians military, diplomats, and Soviet leadership employed *maskirovka* to set conditions for intervention. Lastly, in Ukraine, Russia employed multiple elements of Russian government in their deception. The Russian President, senior political leaders, diplomats, state media, state sponsored internet trolls, and Russian Federation Armed Forces all played roles in the disinformation campaign surrounding the invasion.

The aim that Russian deception sought to achieve has further changed. During the Battle of Kursk, deception focused on concealing forces to create battlefield surprise. The Cuban Missile Crisis generally continued this aim of *maskirovka*. Soviet efforts focused on concealing military forces from the United States for the infiltration of nuclear weapons onto the island. The intervention in Czechoslovakia and invasion of Ukraine demonstrated a shift to the use of

deception to obfuscate the true nature of events. In both these cases surprise was created but was not the primary concern as Russian military forces were already superior to Czechoslovak and Ukrainian forces. As an alternative, the Russians used *maskirovka* to create favorable conditions for Soviet and Russian action. Creating ambiguity and uncertainty was a greater driver of deception than surprise. In the case of Czechoslovakia, this deceived the local population and Western powers of why the Soviets were intervening. In Ukraine, ambiguity was used to create plausible deniability of Russian involvement.

Several factors have driven the changes in *maskirovka*. The increased importance of disinformation is likely driven by the increased importance of social media and its ease of manipulation, the rise of worldwide connectivity, and the ease of using disinformation versus the difficulty of disproving false claims. The nature of the Russia's opponents also accounts for the shift in Russia's methodology. Russian military confrontations following the Cuban Missile Crisis have not been against an existential threat. This reduced the importance of surprise but raised the importance of sowing the seeds of confusion. In these cases, Russia used deception not to create surprise but to hinder the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization from gaining a clear understanding of what was truly occurring.

Lastly, the subordination of concealment and demonstrations may be the result of increases in reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities. During the Second World War, simple camouflage could conceal military forces from aerial reconnaissance. On the modern battlefield, signals, measures and tests, imagery, and electronics intelligence all provide adversary militaries with unique capabilities that can detect concealed military formation. The sensitivity and sophistication of advanced systems to detect may exceed the ability to conceal. As a result, Russia may have shifted the emphasis to disinformation and simulations to achieve effects.

This research contributed to the existing body of research on Russian deception. The reduced role of concealment, increasing importance of disinformation, whole of government

approach to deception, and shift from creating surprise to creating ambiguity are hallmarks of Russia's current employment of *maskirovka* and contribute to military planners understanding of Russian military operations. Military planners can use the research contained in this monograph to gain a better understanding of Russian military thought on deception. Understanding of historic Russian deception efforts and the effects they attempted to achieve provides military planners with an understanding of how Russian's use deception at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. Research also provides military planners with a way of using deception outside of US military doctrine to facilitate achievement of US military objectives. The potential of well-executed deceptions and limitations of deception are important considerations for military planners. Furthermore, *maskirovka's* ability to create uncertainty, influence adversary actions, divert enemy weapon effects, and create surprise are important force multipliers. *Maskirovka* has been a defining component of Russian operational art and will remain an important component of future Russian conflicts. Future conflicts involving the Russian government and military should expect widespread use of deception across a broad range of mediums.

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