THE OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF DECEPTION AT THE BATTLE OF KURSK

A Monograph

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Abstract

The Operational Implications of Deception at the Battle of Kursk by Major James E. Elder, USA, 49 pages.

This monograph analyzes the use of deception by the Germans and Soviets in the battle of Kursk. It uses a paradigm consisting of: commander's aim, intelligence, centralized control, synchronization and operations security to determine why Soviet deception succeeded and German deception failed. The analysis provides insights into the use of operational deception on the modern battlefield.

The conclusions of this monograph suggest that: operational deception is not a separate deception activity; it can be used in the offense or defense; it can be a viable combat multiplier today; and deception is an acquired skill. The monograph shows that operational deception must organize and control the deception efforts at the tactical level and that simple battlefield deception techniques can produce an operational effect.

The monograph shows the critical role commanders have in establishing an appropriate course of action that sets the stage for deception. The selected course of action must provide a picture of duplicity to the enemy commander by presenting two possible objectives. This concept of alternative objectives allows the deception activity to flow naturally from the COA and confuse the enemy.

The monograph recommends incorporation of deception into the officer corps' professional development through professional reading programs in schools and practical application at the National Training Center, Combat Maneuver Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center and the Battle Command Training Program. It also recommends that the Army develop and field sufficient communications and noncommunications devices to allow Army Groups to simulate a U.S. Corps.

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INTRODUCTION

The 1982 version of FM 100-5 added a number of new doctrinal concepts for military members to study and debate. One concept, the operational level of war, lay dormant for a few years as the army wrestled with deep attack and maneuver based tactics.1 Fortunately, interest in the operational level of war has been rekindled and with it renewed debate concerning operational art.

The current FM 100-5 defines operational art as:

> The employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or a theater of operations through the design, organization and conduct of campaigns and major operations.2

It is the link between strategy and tactics. As such, the onus is on the operational commander to set the conditions for tactical success and to exploit that success to achieve operational and strategic objectives. He accomplishes this by sequencing events in his campaign to gain his objective through battles, major operations and other tactical events.

Operational design is the embodiment of the commander's vision. It consists of those functions through which the operational commander directly influences the campaign. These are intelligence,

maneuver, fires, sustainment, leadership and deception.3

Obviously, each element of operational design is important and, in fact, interrelated. Most officers are comfortable with the operational aspects of leadership, intelligence, maneuver and fires but have difficulty grasping operational deception. Deception is not hard to understand; however, its application and implementation at the operational level of war cause discomfort.

There are four reasons causing this discomfort. First, the concept of the operational level of war is still relatively new to today's officers. Second, peacetime training at the operational level is difficult to accomplish. CPX's and computer simulations are possible, but FTX's are rare especially those involving opposing forces. Third, many officers are convinced that today's technology mitigates against anything but tactical surprise, thus deception is presumed impossible at the operational or strategic level. Fourth, many commanders lack the vision necessary to incorporate all the elements of operational design into a long term plan due to ambiguous strategic guidance. These reasons seem valid, but deception is far too beneficial to ignore or assume away.

Deception is not an end to itself but, a means to achieve surprise. All deception should result in surprise.4 The intent is not to achieve total surprise, but the degree of surprise needed to tip the scales of war in friendly favor. The enemy may suspect an event is going to occur but he can be surprised by the timing, location and strength of the blow.5 Surprise can alter the strength of the defense or deflect the offensive blow. The study conducted by Barton Whaley indicates that when surprise is present, the rate of casualties is 1-14.5 in favor of the protagonist.6 History and data, such as Mr. Whaley's, show that surprise is a decisive factor at all levels of warfare, which makes deception an invaluable asset.7

The purpose of this study is to examine deception within the parameters of operational art. The paper first reviews the concept of deception and its place in U.S. doctrine. Next, it focuses on a historical analysis of deception using the battle of Kursk. The paper answers the questions of how operational deception was used at Kursk and what are the implications for today? The answers to those questions will answer the bigger question of, what is the relationship of operational deception to tactical deception?

The battle of Kursk initiated the 1943 summer campaigns for both the Germans and the Soviets. It began on the 5th of July with a German offensive and ended on the 25th of August with the Soviets in full possession of the initiative on the eastern front. The operation reflects the lethality and mobility of mechanized warfare. This major operation clearly demonstrates the effective use of operational deception by the Soviets to set the conditions of the battlefield and also reveals the poor use of deception by the Germans.

The methodology used to evaluate deception at Kursk is a paradigm that allows one to compare and contrast the use and effects of deception by the opponents. The paradigm consists of five elements: commander's aim, intelligence, centralized control, synchronization and operations security. These elements are an expanded version of the cornerstones of deception as described in FM 90-2.

FM 90-2 lists the cornerstones of deception as intelligence, integration/sychronization and operations security.8 This structure assumes but does not emphasize the commanders aim or centralized control. The model used in this paper shows the importantance of those two elements to deception. The model does not

specify integration because that element occurs through synchronization.

The commander is the essential cog in the success of the overall operation to include deception. His role is not merely a matter of resource allocation but one of operational design and decision. The commander's concept of operation should include the presentation of viable alternatives to the enemy.9 When the enemy analyzes the indicators of friendly activity, he should read the possibility for multiple courses of action. This allows the deception effort to manipulate the perceptions of the enemy and thus mislead him as to friendly capabilities, dispositions and intentions.

Intelligence support is critical to the deception effort. Friendly intelligence must now be directed against the means and methods which the enemy uses to collect information. How does the enemy employ his collection systems, what do they collect and who do they report to? Intelligence must target those information channels which influence each enemy commander. We must be able to ascertain that someone is listening: that the enemy is acquiring the indications sent and then determine his reaction.10 This does not mean that one waits for a signal intercept in which the enemy announces his assessment:

but, that intelligence agencies analyze enemy activity in relationship to the deception effort to determine if his activity indicates that the bait was taken.

Due to the number of individuals, operational deception must influence and the number of collectors it must feed, centralized control offers the best chance for success. Ideally, a single source should exist which develops the deception story and executable tasks based on the commander's vision. The deception plan assigns units to conduct feints and to provide false radio signals and any other desired activity. Without centralized control, it would be impossible to synchronize the deception effort.

Synchronization insures each deception event feeds the proper signal to the selected target at the correct time and place. At the operational level, this often involves targeting information channels at all levels of enemy organization. It then becomes critical for the agency controlling the deception to understand which information channels must be fed which signatures to develop the complete deception effort.

Finally, operations security includes those measures taken to preclude the enemy from acquiring the truth. Winston Churchill declared,"That in war time the truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies."11 OPSEC conceals our

real effort, intentions, dispositions and capabilities which allows deception to mislead and confuse the enemy.12

> Real secrecy can only be achieved if in addition to the correct information which the enemy receives, he is also provided with incorrect information. Confusion is the only effective method of maintaining secrecy.13

If the enemy is confused, he will either try to defend everywhere, delay his plans or select a course of action that favors his opponent, all of which open the door to surprise.

DECEPTION

Put simply, deception consists of those actions designed to manipulate the enemy's perception of the battlefield.14 It attempts to set favorable conditions on the battlefield. It can prevent the enemy from exploiting a friendly weakness or create conditions within the enemy that we can exploit. This concept of deception has changed very little throughout history. What has changed are the techniques used to employ deception.

Prior to WWI and the revolution in communications, photography, and electronics, deception techniques consisted of the planting of rumors or false information through spies, double agents, newspapers,

or gossip.15 Military commanders relied on feints and demonstrations to mislead the enemy as to friendly capabilities and intentions. Deception was tied more closely to the concept of strategy.16 For example, Hannibal's victory at Cannae is not normally associated with deception. However, his decision to weaken the center of his formation and have it fall back as the Romans pressed the attack was a simple ruse. As we know from history, it was exceedingly successful resulting in a decisive victory and over 50,000 Romans being slaughtered.17

As technology increased the commander's ability to acquire information, it also increased the complexity of deception. Deception could now be compromised quickly through various information channels open for exploitation. In addition to the normal verbal and written channels, new photographic and electronic means could be used to quickly confirm or deny information.18 Deception slipped from the realm of simple tactics and strategy, the way forces are arrayed or maneuvered on the battlefield to confuse the enemy, and became a separate but parallel support activity designed to mislead the enemy.19

By the conclusion of WWII, deception became synonymous with the grand and masterful all encompassing lie such as those used to support

Operation Overlord, the invasion plan for Normandy, and Operation Husky, the invasion plan for Sicily. Operation Overlord encompassed at least six deception efforts to confuse the Germans as to the location, timing and strength of the allied invasion of France. The deception effort began in April 1943 and involved extensive simulations and disinformation activities.20 Operation Husky used two deception plans. One developed around a dead British courier whose body was deliberately washed ashore in Spain with secret plans for the invasion of Sardinia and Greece. The second plan used partisans to spread rumors that Greece was about to be invaded by the British.21

Although those deception efforts demonstrated the value of a dedicated deception cell and centralized control, they were unique. They were implemented at the strategic level, used strategic resources and were designed to influence future operations in areas where units were not in contact.

WWII provides other examples of successful deceptions. Some of these did not involve full time specialized staffs to implement and did occur with units in contact. The German Ardennes offensive took advantage of American preconceptions and used camouflage, concealment, radio listening silence, and operational security measures to deceive and achieve

surprise.22 During the Burma campaign, Field Marshal Slim used a feint and economy of force to defeat the Japanese in his Irrawaddy operation.23 In 1941 while in North Africa, General Rommel deceived the British through simulation. He mounted dummy tank bodies on Volkswagens which caused the British to overestimate his strength and delay their attack.24 Finally, we are getting glimpses of the huge successes the Soviets accomplished on the Eastern Front through simple but well synchronized battlefield deception techniques that were associated with the tactical level of war.25

Indeed, each of the above examples demonstrated deception through tactical means while units were in contact. They were planned and controlled at the operational level to achieve operational impact; however, they were implemented at the tactical level. (One could argue that Hitler operated at the strategic level early in the war; however, by the Ardennes operation he attempted to control all levels of war.) The tentative conclusion is that deception at the operational level of war does not need to be separate and distinct from tactical deception; but, it must control and synchronize the tactical effort on a scale that can achieve an operational effect.

CURRENT DOCTRINE

The primary manuals which provide insights on operational deception are FM 100-5 (Operations), FM 90-2 (Battlefield Deception), and coordinating draft FM 100-6 (Large Unit Operations). FM 90-2 states that.

> The objective of deception operations at the operational level of war is to influence the decisions of enemy commanders before battle occurs. This is done so that the tactical outcome of battles and engagements is favorable and, subsequently, operationally exploitable.26

In order to accomplish this, operational deception must influence tactical, operational and quite possibly strategic commanders. Information reaching the enemy through many channels must lead enemy commanders to the same conclusion or create enough confusion to delay critical enemy decisions that could upset friendly operations. This implies that operational deception is different but not separate from tactical deception.

Doctrinally, the differences rest in the scale, timing, and targets of its application.27 Operational deception must influence tactical, operational and strategic commanders through the full spectrum of enemy collection assets for weeks or months prior to a battle or major operation. The effort required for operational deception demands consistency and plausibility in the deception story. This indicates

that operational deception requires centralized control and sychronization of effort.

Before turning to the Kursk operation, a quick discussion on the types of deception is in order. Deception measures are either active or passive . Active measures are those that attempt to present a specific indicator of friendly activity. These are grouped as feints (supporting attacks), demonstrations (show of force, presence), ruse (a trick of war), and displays (simulations).28 Passive measures are those that attempt to hide friendly activity. These include the full range of OPSEC measures but primarily refer to camouflage, cover, and concealment.

At the operational level of war, deception measures are used in many combinations and synchronized throughout the execution of the plan. The deception planner becomes an artist. He orchestrates the timing and location of activities he wants the enemy to see and the concealment of those items the enemy must not see. Sun Tzu described this effort best:

> All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack we must seem unable: when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near we must make the enemy believe that we are away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him.29

KURSK OVERVIEW

The conditions for the battle of Kursk developed in the winter of 1943. On 5 March 1943, Field Marshal Von Manstein launched the second phase of his brilliant counterattack against the Red Army to seize Belgorod/Kharkov. He proposed to continue this attack to encircle Soviet forces in the Kursk salient. However, his plan required Army Group Center to assault from Orel towards Kursk to complete the encirclement. The commander of Army Group Center, Field Marshal Von Kluge, refused. His refusal, combined with the spring thaw, left Kursk for another time.30

The Kursk salient was approximately 170 miles wide and extended roughly 140 miles into German lines.31 It offered excellent offensive prospects for both sides. For the Germans, it offered an opportunity to encircle and destroy large Soviet forces in the area. The Soviets had an opportunity to split the German line and isolate Army Group South. In fact, both sides were planning offensives while waiting for the muddy season to end.

From the outset of February 1943, Hitler was determined to seize the initiative on the eastern front. He needed a success to bolster public support and realized that 1943 was his last chance to fight

before another front opened in the West.32 The question facing Germany was how to regain the initiative in the East?

The German High Command pushed for a limited objective offense that would shorten the German line and create new operational reserves. OKH thought that this could be accomplished before the Soviets were ready to attack. They believed that the Soviets had suffered such severe losses at Kharkov that they could not possibly be ready to attack until June at the earliest.33

Field Marshal Von Manstein recommended a defensive-offensive strategy designed to allow the Soviets to attack first, over extend themselves and then suffer a counterattack.34 Hitler rejected this recommendation due to his desire to hold terrain. On 13 March 1943, he issued Operations Order #5. It stated that the German armies would seize the initiative by attacking when the ground would permit armored warfare.35 The attack, code named Zitadelle, would be against the Kursk bulge involving one Panzer Army attacking from Belgorod and another Army attacking from Orel. The concept was for a limited offensive merely to destroy Soviet forces in the bulge and shorten German lines.

Immediately after issuing Operations Order #5, Hitler confused the German command by directing other operations. On 22 March, he directed 1st Panzer Army to plan for Operation Habicht and Army Group South to plan for Operation Panther. Both operations were limited offensives on a smaller scale then Kursk, but paralyzed German planning for Zitadelle.36 On 15 April, Operations Order #6 seemingly resolved the problem by announcing Zitadelle as the major operation. Originally scheduled to begin on 3 May, the operation was constantly postponed to allow for the fielding of new equipment, particularly new tanks (Tigers, Panthers), self propelled artillery (Ferdinands) and FW 190's aircraft. Finally on 18 June, Hitler directed the operation to begin on 5 July.

The final plan envisioned an attack by Army Group South from Belgorad-Oboyan-Kursk. 4th Panzer Army would conduct the attack with eight infantry divisions and nine Panzer divisions. Army Group Center would attack from Orel-Ol'Khovatka-Kursk with fifteen infantry divisions and six Panzer divisions.37 This involved 900,000 soldiers, 2,700 tanks and 10,000 guns.38 The ground force was supported by 1800 of the 2,500 aircraft available on the eastern front.39

GERMAN DECEPTION

Operations Order #6 directed the following deception measures,

> In order to deceive the enemy, preparations for "Panther" are to continue in the area of Army Group South. They must be supported by every means (conspicuous reconnaissance, show of tanks, preparation of crossing materials, radio, agents, spreading rumors, employment of the Luftwaffe, etc.) and kept going as long as possible. These deception operations will also be supported by measures necessary to strengthen defensive forces at the Donets Front. In the area of Army Group Center, no large scale deceptive measures are to be carried out. However, everything must be done to confuse the enemy's picture of the situation (false and retrograde movements as well as marches by day, spreading false information about the timing of the attack (that it would be in June) etc. In both Army Groups, new formations are to maintain radio silence.40

The evidence does not show that either the OKW or OKH attempted to develop a centralized plan for deception events. The one exception was a directive to 1st Panzer Army ordering the commander to prepare a demonstration towards Izyum (which was actually part of Operation Panther).41 The Germans did take other deception measures. They hid deployments by moving at night and using radio listening silence and artillery fire to mask movement. 4th Panzer Army used a feint by LII Corps to support operations on 4 July.42 They also achieved a modicum of technological surprise by

fielding early warning radars around the airfields at Kharkov.43 Unfortunately, German deception plans were left in the hands of individual commanders and as such had little chance to create an operational effect. Field Marshal von Manstein claimed that, "All deceptions and camouflage measures were taken but failed because of the lengthy delay."44 The fact is that Soviet forces were aware of German plans to attack Kursk as early as April 1943.45

SOVIET PLANS

The Soviet plan for Kursk had solidified much earlier and faster than that of the Germans, although they also debated the issue of a strategic offensive or a defensive-offensive strategy. Early in the planning, Marshal Zhukov directed intelligence operations to locate German operational reserves. This was achieved using partisans and aerial and ground reconnaissance.46 On 8 April he recommended that Stalin use the defensive/offensive strategy. On 12 April Stalin opted,

> To meet the German offensive with fire from all weapons, from deeply-echeloned defenses, with powerful blows from the air and counter-blows by operational and strategic reserves, that wear down and bleed the enemy white, and finish him off in powerful counteroffensive actions in the Belgorod-Kharkov and OREL sections. This was to be

followed up by deep offensive thrusts in all major sectors.47

The final Soviet plans involved seven fronts, called for an initial defense in depth within the Kursk salient, and were assisted by two major counterattacks followed by a counteroffensive. The plan demanded strict deception operations using camouflage, concealment, diversions, and simulations.48

The Voronezh and Central Fronts held the Kursk salient. Their missions were to build a massive defense designed to halt the German attacks. The Steppe Front, initially the strategic reserve, was moved into a position east of Kursk to back up those fronts. Its mission was to stop any German penetration and be prepared to counterattack towards Belgorod-Kharkov.49 The Bryansk Front and a portion of the Western Front were used to assist the Central Front's defense and to conduct a major counterattack against Orel. The Southwestern and Southern Fronts were tasked to conduct diversionary attacks in the south. These diversionary attacks were designed to tie down German operational reserves.50 During preparations for Kursk, Soviet intelligence had the mission to track all German Panzer corps.51

SOVIET DECEPTION

Soviet preparations for their major operation in Kursk involved a total of 1,008,100 soldiers, 25,500 guns and mortars, 3,200 tanks/self-propelled guns, and 3,950 aircraft.52 The Kursk defenses were developed to a depth of 150 kilometers with five to six defense lines, 6,000 km of trenches and 500,000 mines.53 The armies of each first echelon front manned a section between 32-64 kilometers wide.54 Despite this mammoth engineering effort, conducted from April to July, the German command failed to recognize critical preparations and grouping of forces.

Soviet plans called for massive deception. The primary emphasis was designed to conceal Soviet intentions and capabilities for the counteroffensive. Each Front prepared a deception plan which involved

> Concealment of preparations, creations of false tank concentrations, simulations of false radio nets and communications centers, construction of false air facilities and false aircraft, the dissemination of false rumors along the front and in the enemy rear area.55

Plans focused on concealing the movement of reserves (the Steppe Front), preparations for the counteroffensive and the locations of command and control sites.56

The Soviet plan designed the main effort for the counteroffensive to occur at Belgorod. The Voronezh and Steppe Fronts were designated to conduct the attack. Deception played a significant role in setting the conditions for the attack.

The Voronezh Front concealed units by all methods of camouflage and concealment backed by radio listening silence. The Front directed certain units to receive orders through other front line units. The 7th Guards Army, which deployed to the Voronezh Front in June, received its orders through the 69th Army's communications.57 The Front constructed fifteen airfields with dummy aircraft, runways, control towers and shelters. These airfields were attacked by German aircraft on numerous occasions.58

Perhaps, the best deception was the Front's effort to simulate one tank army and one field army with supporting artillery near the town of Sudzha. The Voronezh Front deployed 829 dummy tanks and simulated army communications through radio stations which transmitted and received false messages.59 The Front also moved tanks, guns, and infantry to the front lines during the day and returned them at night only to reappear the next day.60 The Germans took the bait and moved one tank and one infantry division to cover

Sudzha, increased air reconnaissance and bombed the dummy guns and tanks.61

Additionally, the Soviets conducted their diversionary attacks against 1st Panzer Army on 15 July and 6th Army on 17 July to tie up German operational reserves. Neither attack gained any ground but both drew off German reserves. On 14 July the XXIV Panzer Corps was shifted to support 1st Panzer Army while the 23 Panzer Division and II SS Panzer Corps were sent to help 6th Army.62 Thus, all German operational reserves were diverted when the Soviets launched their counteroffensive towards Belgorod.

The Soviets managed two other deceptions that caught the Germans off guard. First, they launched their counteroffensive with only a brief regrouping of forces. The German 4th Panzer Army ceased its attack on 18 July and the Soviets launched theirs on 3 August. Second, the Soviets attacked the nose of the German penetration.63 Both measures caught the Germans unaware and achieved operational surprise. This is clearly evident by Field Marshal Von Manstein's decision on 2 August to delay movement of his force back to their original positions.64

ANALYSIS

What happened? Why were the Soviets successful in keeping their intentions, capabilities and dispositions concealed from an army in contact. Neither side had air superiority: the opportunities for ground and air reconnaissance were the same for both sides. On the surface it seems that the only advantages the Soviets had were in their use of partisans to conduct deep reconnaissance and the infamous "Lucy" spy ring.65 It seems that both sides possessed adequate capabilities to collect and process intelligence concerning enemy dispositions, capabilities and intentions. If we use the paradigm of aim, intelligence, centralized control, synchronization, and operations security, the reasons why German deception failed and soviet deception worked becomes clear.

AIM

There were a number of failures in the German concept of operation. From a deception aspect, the Germans were hurt by the Hitler's inability to make a quick decision on either Operation Zitadelle, Habicht, or Panther. Although this did confuse the Soviets as to

the direction of the attack, it also hurt German planners by dissipating their time and efforts.

The delay of the plan from early May to 5 July extended the deception efforts beyond their designed scheme. Operation Order #6 directed the attack to take place within six days after receipt of orders from OKH with the earliest date set for 3 May. Based on that guidance, German deception efforts had to work for at least thirty days. The constant delays increased that time to 75 days, which was much too long to hold a deception effort relying on the planning of independent commands.

Although Operation Order #6 did direct Army Group south to continue with Operation Panther as a deception, it failed to provide the necessary signature to truly divert the Soviet effort. It was the German postponement of the attack which eroded the deception effort and failed to disguise the efforts of 4th Panzer Army.

However, Soviet plans were decided early, did not vary and incorporated every measure of deception. Every commander in the Soviet operation clearly understood the intention of Stavka. The numerous simulations not only confused German commanders but dispersed the efforts of their supporting air and artillery.

The strategic plan incorporated deception from the beginning and directed the effort of all forces. The effectiveness of the Soviet efforts are revealed through the following quotes. The commander of the 19th Panzer Division declared,

> We knew too little about the strength of the Russian in this region prior to the beginning of the offense. We did not assume there was one fourth of what we had to encounter.66

General Von Mellenthin stated:

> We did not manage to detect even one minefield or anti-tank area until such time as the first tank was blown up by a mine, or the first Russian antitank guns opened fire.67

INTELLIGENCE

German intelligence collection consisted of agents, ground reconnaissance, aerial photography/observation and radio intercept. It is clear that the intelligence picture failed to account for the depth of the Soviet defense, strength and location of major forces, and assessment of morale. Army Group Kempf which conducted the attack with 4th Panzer Army out of Belgorod assessed the depth of the Soviet defenses as:

> Opposite the point where the German attack was intended to break through the enemy line in the vicinity of Belgorod, the Russian system of fortifications, which consisted of three successive lines, reached a depth of up to 40 KM.68

The German High Command's assessment of 1 July noted:

> A well-constructed, heavily-mined defense system echeloned in depth, had developed along the entire

> front. In some sections, as in the Belgorod and in the Salient of Orel, this system of defense allowed a depth of up to 25 KM.69

Those assessments are far short of the 150 KM of depth that the Soviet defense system employed.

Maps 4-9 show the failure of German intelligence to pick up Soviet second echelon forces. In all, German intelligence failed to detect ten armies, two of which were tank.70 Additionally, German intelligence failed to track Soviet groupings and constantly underestimated Soviet strength. The only time they had an accurate picture was prior to the Soviet diversionary attacks, which were designed to be seen.

Intelligence expected Soviet morale and fighting spirit to be low after their defeat at Kharkov. The resiliency of the Soviet force surprised the Germans. A member of Army Group Kempf stated after the operation:

> Higher headquarters had been hoping the troops were going to encounter an enemy weakened in his power of resistance. This proved to be an illusion. The enemy appeared to be prepared materially (good rations, equipment, and arms) as well as morally (high degree of patriotism, confidence in victory aroused) against all symptoms of deterioration.71

We can only speculate as to the reasons why German intelligence performed so poorly. It seems a case of overestimation of one's own abilities, underestimation of the opponent and failure to collect intelligence out to operational depths.

Soviet intelligence functioned extremely well. Based on the measures of deception used (false radio nets, dummy air fields, tanks, artillery, false concentrations, and diversionary attacks), it is clear they knew the means of German collection. Soviet intelligence correctly keyed on the German Panzer corps as the proper indicators to determine the location and timing of the German attack. The Soviets collected intelligence in depth often observing German dispositions and rear supply efforts. In June, 4th Panzer Army reported the following:

> Enemy reconnaissance activity on the ground and in the air had increased in intensity and scope. Even in the bivouac area of our mobile units we discovered enemy agents on two occasions.72

Essentially, Soviet tactical, operational and strategic intelligence confirmed German plans. The effectiveness of their intelligence effort is indicated by the overwhelming success of their deception.

CENTRALIZED CONTROL

The German deception effort lacked the scale of that employed by the Soviets. The attempts at camouflage, simulation and feints were weak, independent efforts lacking ties to an overall plan. This problem existed within both Army Groups. This lack of centralized control over the deception effort

generated piecemeal actions that could not affect Soviet operational commanders.

The Soviets used centralized control from Stavka through Front level commands. Marshal Zhukov and Marshal Vasilevesky controlled field operations including the deception effort of the Western, Bryansk, Central and Voronezh Fronts.73 At Front level, deception was organized and controlled by the Chief of Staff or the deputy commander.74 The scale of the deception effort successfully confused the Germans as to the intentions, capabilities and dispositions of Soviet forces.

SYNCHRONIZATION

Without an overall deception plan or centralized control, German synchronization was impossible at the operational level. The German plan had been compromised to the extent that Soviet forces could ignore feints, diversions and simulations as mere noise.

The Soviet plan synchronized the effort of multiple fronts and armies within fronts. The timing of the diversionary attacks by the Southwest and Southern Fronts moved German operational reserves away from the main effort of the Soviet counteroffensive. Numerous simulations directed German observation away from

actual Soviet force concentrations, thus preserving Soviet combat power. These events confused the German command so that the German primary attack at Kursk became a secondary concern.

OPERATIONS SECURITY

Unfortunately for Army Groups South and Center, German plans and intentions were compromised early at both the strategic and operational levels. Their inability to win the counter-reconnaisance battle from April through July insured this compromise. Their attempts to conceal regrouping activities fell prey to Russian partisans watching rail and road movements. Their plans to build-up combat power and use new technology were announced publicly. Operations on 4 July by 4th Panzer Army to seize key terrain resulted in an alert to enemy forces.

Soviet operational security was far more successful due to:

1) Their appreciation of their opponent.

2) Their knowledge of his ability to gather information.

3) Their ability to overload German Intelligence

4) Their use of wire communications between higher HQ's and radio silence at lower units.

5) Their effective use of counter-reconnaissance means.

6) Their stringent use of camouflage and every type of simulation.

CONCLUSION

Obviously, the German effort at Kursk lacked true deception. The result was a total failure of Operation Zitadelle and total loss of the initiative on the eastern front. In large measure, this lack of effort stemmed from German illusions of Soviet incompetence and German superiority. Actually, the only deception that Germany succeeded in using was self-deception.

German opportunities for deception existed, but were not exploited. The German High Command failed to present a viable alternative course of action to the Soviet High Command and restricted the flexibility of Army Group commanders. Their forces had to be ready to launch the attack within six days after receipt of the OKH order. Thus, German commanders had little freedom to locate operational reserves or develop force concentrations to simulate alternatives.

Although Operations Order #6 set the parameters for German deception, the plan failed to identify the proper target or function at the scale and timing

needed to create an operational effect. The following sum up the reasons for the German deception failure at Kursk:

1) They failed to develop a centralized plan.

2) They failed to collect intelligence out to the operational depths and failed to appreciate the means of Soviet collection.

3) They failed to win the deep or close counter-reconnaissance battle.

4) They failed to identify and locate the Soviet center of gravity which was the Soviet tank reserve of the Steppe Front. Therefore, the 1st Panzer Army demonstration would at best only freeze forces in the Southwest Front.

Soviet success confirms a number of operational deception requirements. The Soviet plan was initiated at the strategic level and centrally controlled at the operational level. Deception measures were employed at each level of war to support the plan. Central control ensured overall sychronization. The Soviets were realistic in their appreciation of what deception could or could not do and subsequently concealed true indicators while feeding false indicators to overwhelm, confuse, and mislead German decision makers.

The absolute mastery of Soviet deception over German commanders is revealed through three items:

1) The number of bombing missions sent against false areas of concentrations. 244 bombing sorties were flown against the Voronezh deception alone.75

2) The movement of German operational reserves away from the Soviet main attack.

3) Failure of German intelligence to pick up the concentration of the Steppe Front.76

The scale of the Soviet deception, covering seven fronts for over 75 days deceived German tactical, operational and strategic commanders. The deception effort most certainly set the conditions for battle which lead to operational and strategic success.

The analysis of Kursk highlights the symbiotic relationship among each element of the paradigm. The commander's aim provides the direction and opportunity for deception while intelligence provides the information needed to develop the aim and to execute and to verify the deception effort. The plethora of communication channels needed to target enemy commanders dictates that the deception effort be centrally controlled which greatly improves the opportunity to synchronize the effects of deception with other battlefield events. Finally, the entire effort must be protected from compromise through operations security. The lessons of Kursk indicate

that these are the elements that make or break the deception effort.

The lessons of Kursk also point out that deception is a viable force multiplier at the operational level. Used skillfully, deception can set the conditions for tactical success and operational exploitation. However, deception is not resource free. The Soviet model shows that deception is resource intensive requiring planning effort, manpower, and props.

Deception can be used in the offense or defense and can benefit overwhelmingly strong as well as under strength armies. The Red Army used deception to convince the Germans of their weakness and to compel Hitler to proceed with his attack. The majority of German commanders were convinced that Soviet intentions were purely defensive. Then, while the Germans attacked, Soviet deception drew German operational reserves away from the main effort of the Soviet counteroffensive. Essentially, the Soviets (the stronger force) used deception to alter the correlation of forces at the decisive point by shifting the German center of gravity (the German Panzer Corps).

Finally, Kursk demonstrates that deception is not a given skill. It is an acquired skill. The Soviets were often forced to use battlefield deception to survive during 1941-1942. By 1943, they were able to

apply the lessons in camouflage, concealment, simulations, radio deception, and alternative objectives to offensive warfare, which they did very effectively at Kursk.

IMPLICATIONS

U.S. doctrine is sound in its conceptional presentation of operational deception, but must stress the importance of deception linkage throughout the three levels of war. Deception can be used at each level, but is most effective when used interdependently not independently. In fact, as shown in Kursk, deception can have an operational effect through simple battlefield deception techniques employed at the tactical level. The scale, timing and targets of the deception effort determine the operational impact.

Fundamental to all deceptions are the commander's aim, intelligence, centralized control, sychronization and operations security. However, it is at the operational level that the effort is pulled together to create tactical success and achieve operational and strategic objectives. Only the operational commander can pull together the resources needed to synchronize and combine deception measures throughout the theater of operations/war.

The admonishment in FM100-5 "not to divert resources from the main effort" is sound advice. However, the purpose of deception is to support the main effort by causing the enemy commander to make decisions that favor us. In a resource constrained environment, this can best be accomplished by a plan that presents viable alternate objectives to the enemy commander based on friendly positioning of forces. Alternate objectives combined with basic battlefield deception skills can manipulate enemy perceptions. The diversions of the Southern and Southwest Front were effective because the entire German command feared and expected a Soviet attack in that area.

Current deception practice within the U.S. Army is presently at about the same level as the Soviet's was in 1941. Deception doctrine exists, but the ability to orchestrate deception at a large unit level is lacking. There are three problem areas that must be overcome.

1) Leadership top to bottom must be conditioned to the point where they appreciate the benefits of deception and their role in making it work. History shows us that those commanders who never used deception or never saw it used will not use it.77 Today, our Army is in a far better position to train with deception then in the past. The National Training Center (NTC) , Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC),

and Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) programs offer excellent opportunities for the grass roots commanders to practice and train in support of a deception effort. This opportunity is also available in computer simulations and Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) for division and corps staffs. Operational headquarters can and should practice during major FTX's and CPX's.

2) Deception requires superb intelligence. A good deception effort needs a level of intelligence support that currently is not available to operational commanders in NATO. The Army Group Commanders cannot see beyond the tactical limits of the battlefield and have virtually no capability to determine enemy intent much less preconceptions. This also means, that the Army Group cannot look deep enough to locate and track enemy operational formations. This deficiency severely handicaps the Army Group from differentiating enemy deception from the real threat.

The ability of a regional commander such as, the AFCENT Commander, to look beyond the tactical depths is better. However, he must rely on national collection means and analytical support to see beyond 300 KM. If those assets are lost, he is blinded beyond tactical formations.

3) Current emphasis on command and control of the battlefield is to centralized planning and decentralized control, and the use of Auftragstaktik. This will not work for operational deception. Operational deception must use centralized planning and centralized control to avoid non-synchronized independent effort. The deception effort should be driven from the top down. Strategic guidance may direct the deception story, but it is at the operational level where it is aligned within the theater of operations. The operational command must prepare a detailed plan of deception events that are to occur at each level of war.

Technology can assist in deception due to the large number of signatures on the battlefield that reveal type, size, location and direction of movement. In addition to the normal visual signatures, electronic signatures derived from communication and noncommunications systems provide telltale signs of who and what you are. Air defense, artillery, intelligence and signal equipment all provide unique signatures. Commanders and deception planners need an awareness of these signatures and knowledge on how to mask or simulate them, and they need to know how to prevent the placement of these systems from tipping off their plans.

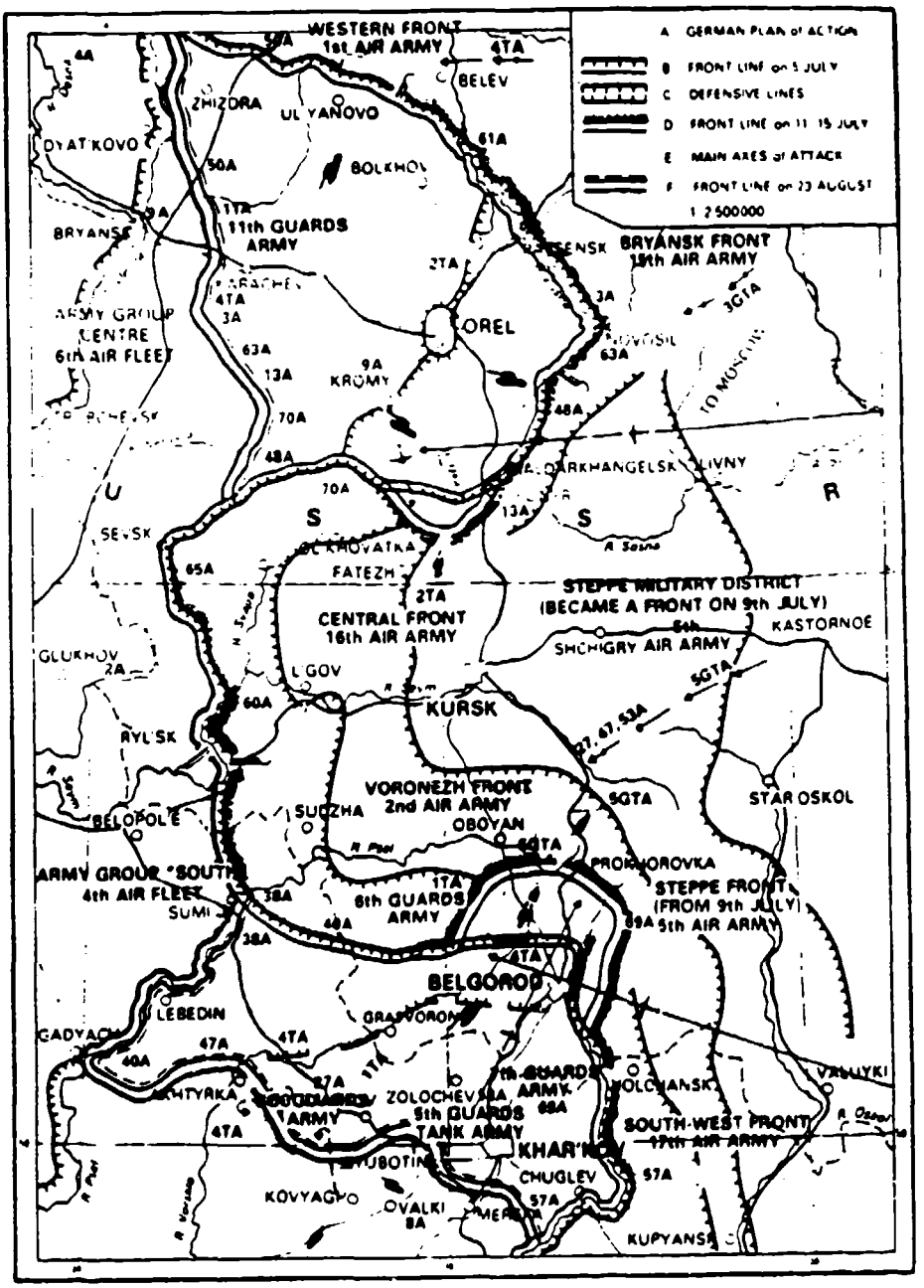
The belief that improvements in collection systems make large scale deceptions (operational deception) unlikely is fallacious. Modern collection systems have merely increased the range and quantity of intelligence collection. This allows an opponent to condition the enemy through repetitive demonstrations, deny through concealment combined with simulations, and overwhelm by flooding the collector with so many signals that the opponent becomes confused. As General Alfred Krauss stated: "confusion is the only effective method of maintaining secrecy." 78

RECOMMENDATIONS

The cornerstones of deception doctrine must include the commander's aim and centralized control as distinct elements. U.S. Army deception doctrine should stress the importance that commanders have in setting the conditions for deception. The commander's selected course of action should present a picture of duplicity that creates an opportunity for deception to confuse the enemy commander.

Centralized control allows the operational commander to affect deception on the scale and timing required to achieve an operational effect. It also allows the appropriate targets to receive the desired

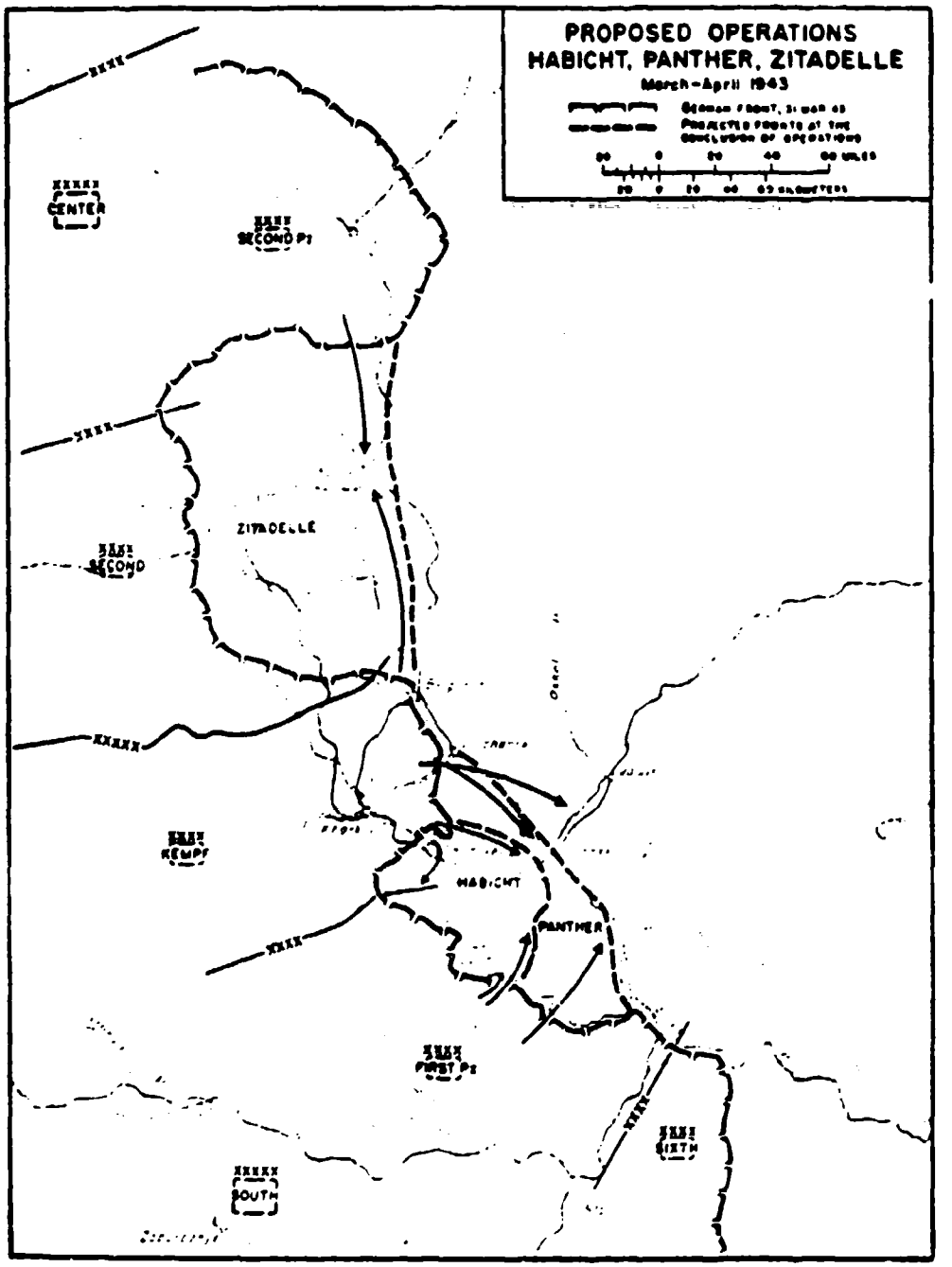
MAP 1



Kursk Overview

Source: Pavel Rotmistrov, "Tanks Against Tanks," Main Front (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers,1987), p. 106

MAP 2



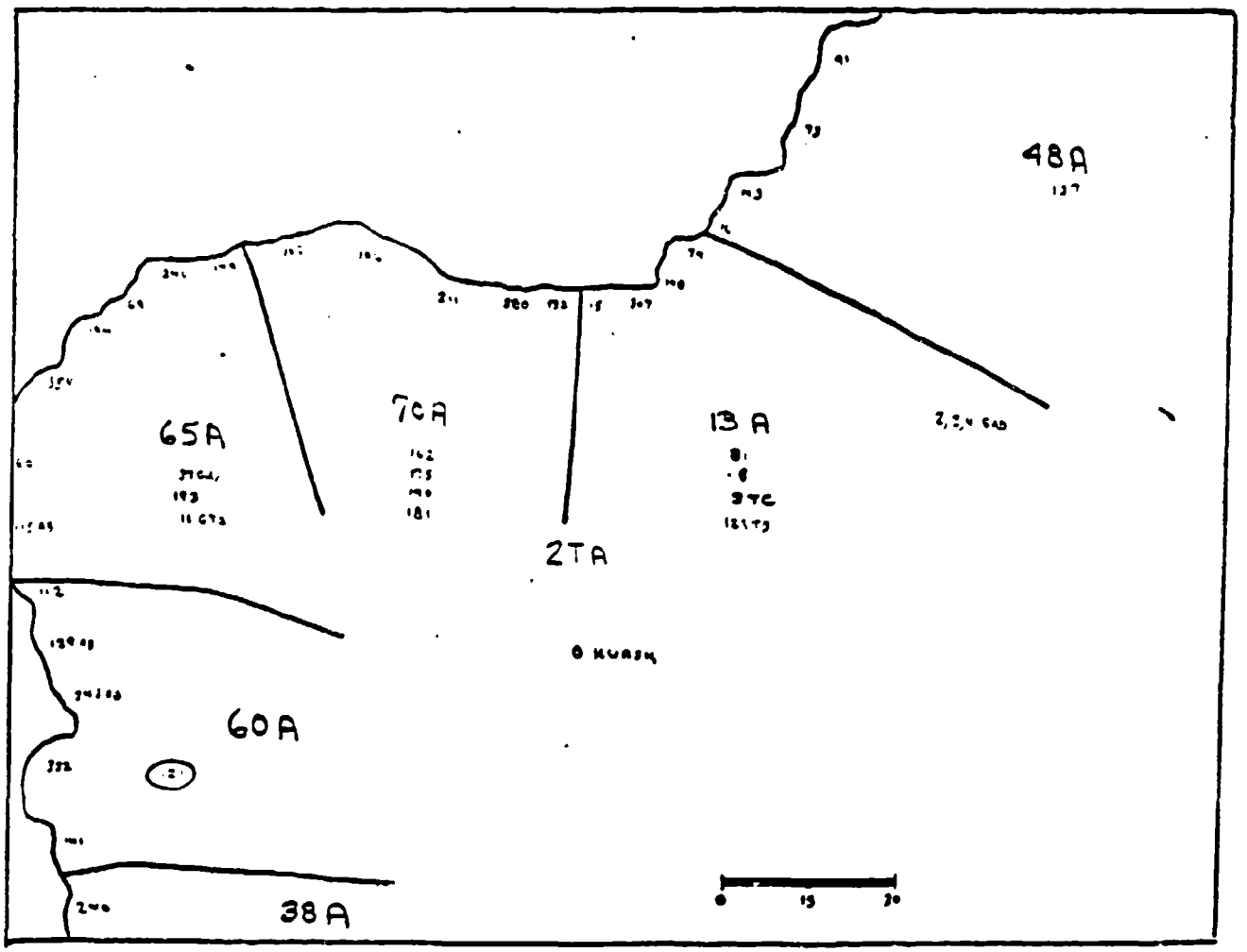
Source: Earl F. Ziemke, Stalingrad to Berlin (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army,1987), p.125

MAP 3

Soviet diversions, simulations and offensives during the Kursk operation.

Source: Col. David M. Glantz, "Soviet Operational Intelligence in the Kursk Operation, July, 1943" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1988), p.36

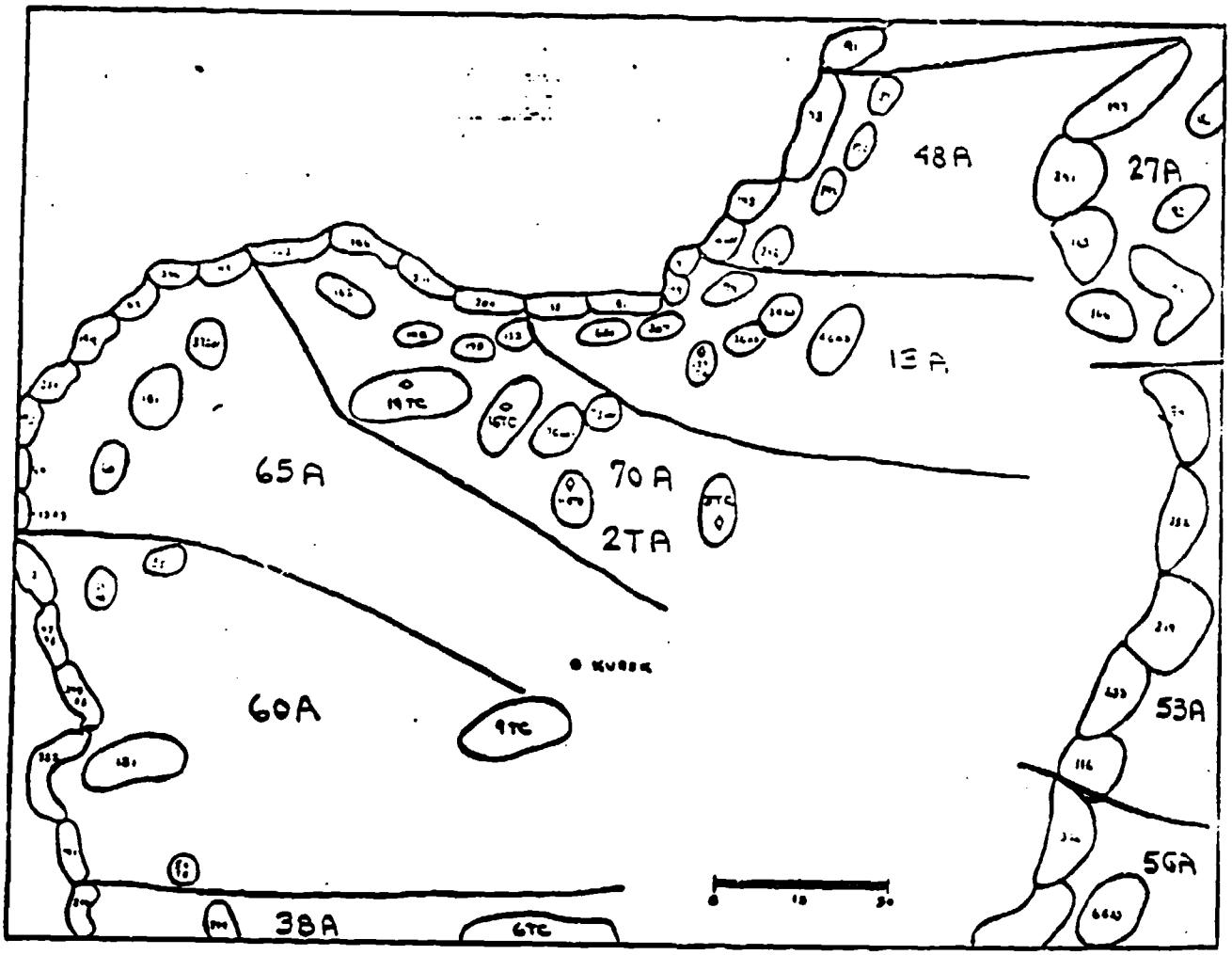
MAP 4



Kursk Operation: German Intelligence Assessment, Northern Sector, 5 July, 1943.

Source: Col. David M. Glantz, "The Kursk Strategic Operation, July 1943" (Unpublished Manuscript, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1989), p.213

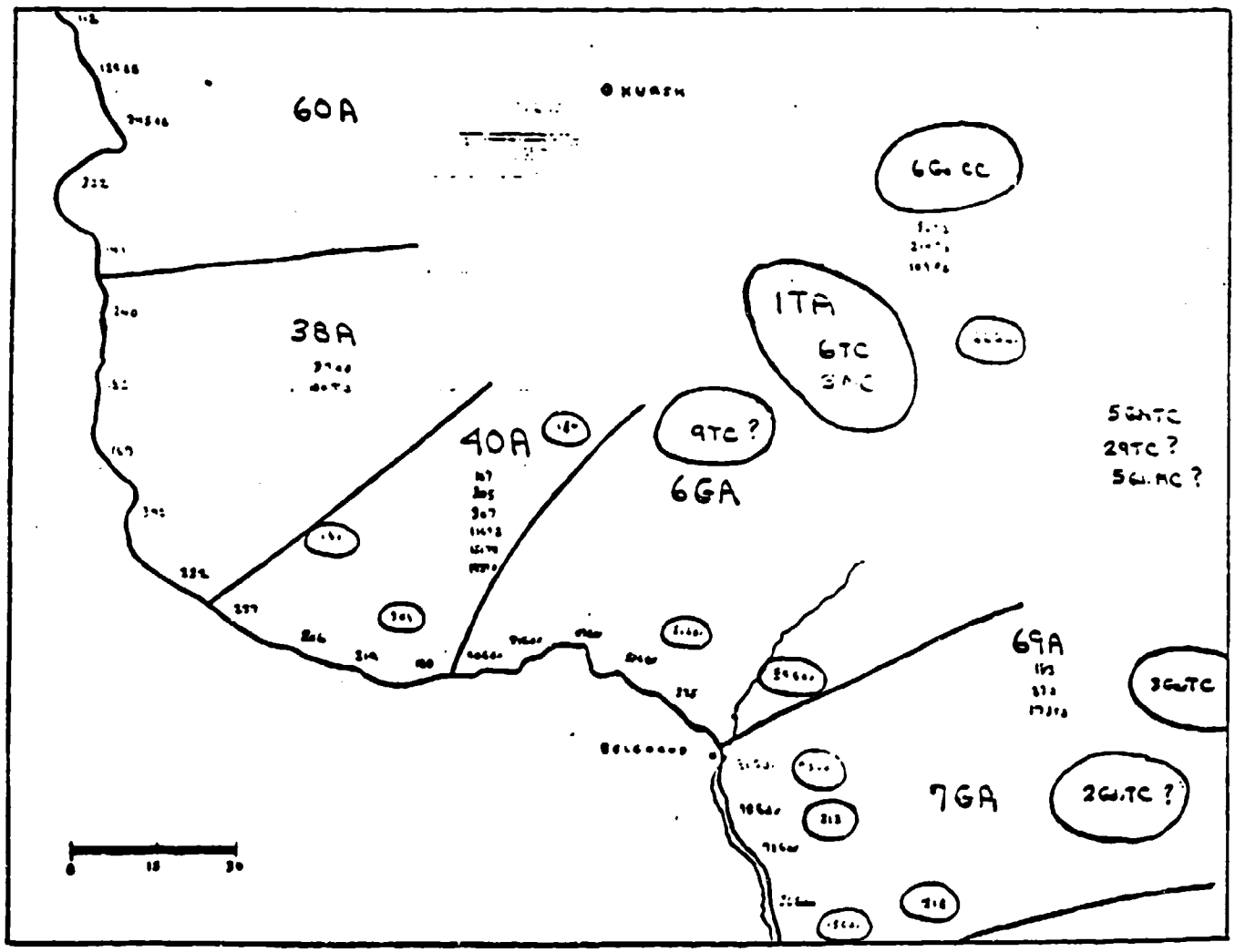
MAP 5



Kursk Operation: Soviet Central Front dispositions, 5 July, 1943.

Source: Glantz, "The Kursk Strategic Operation, July 1943," p. 214

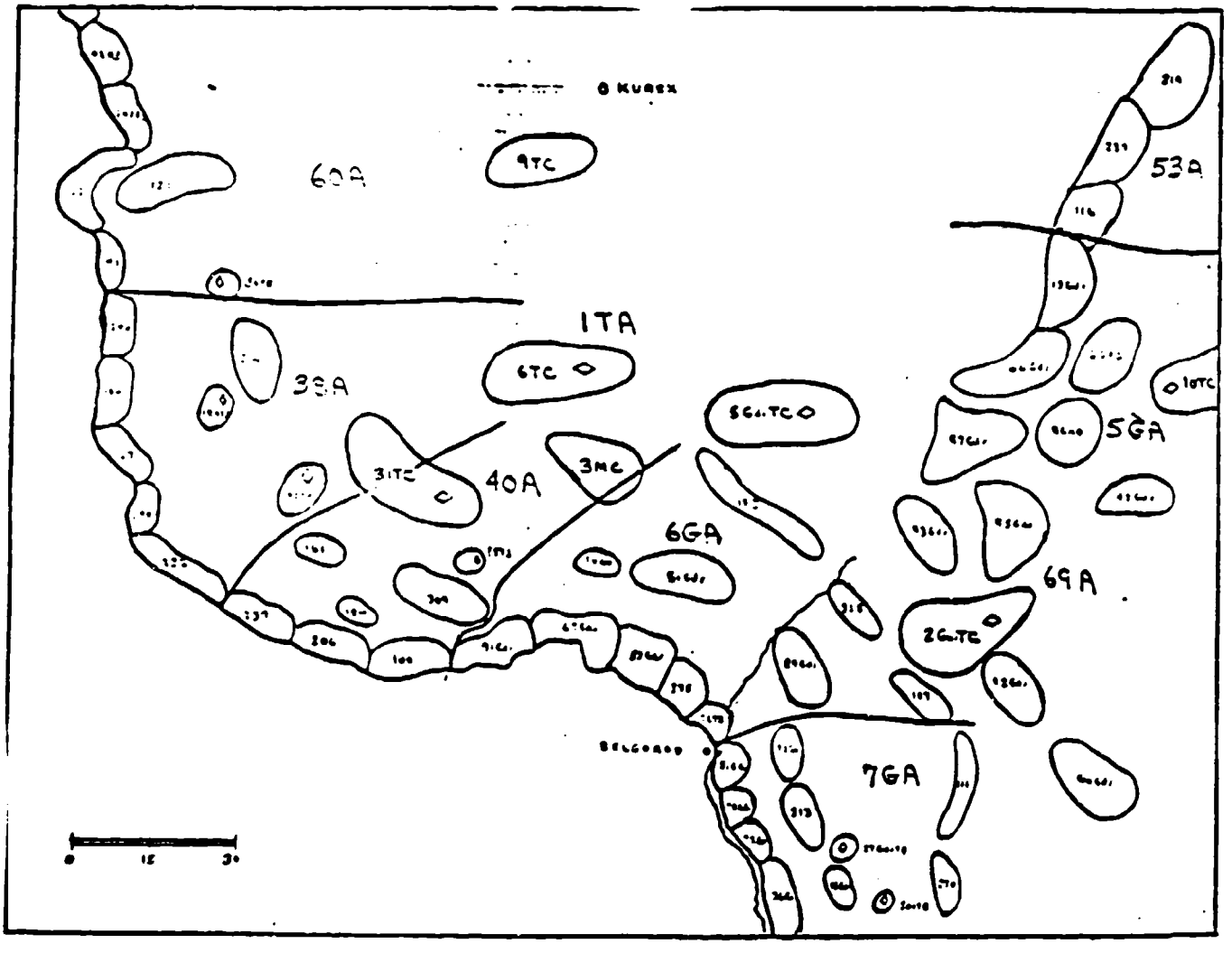
MAP 6



Kursk Operation: German Intelligence Assessment Southern Sector, 5 July, 1943

Source: Glantz, "The Kursk Strategic Operation, July 1943," p. 215

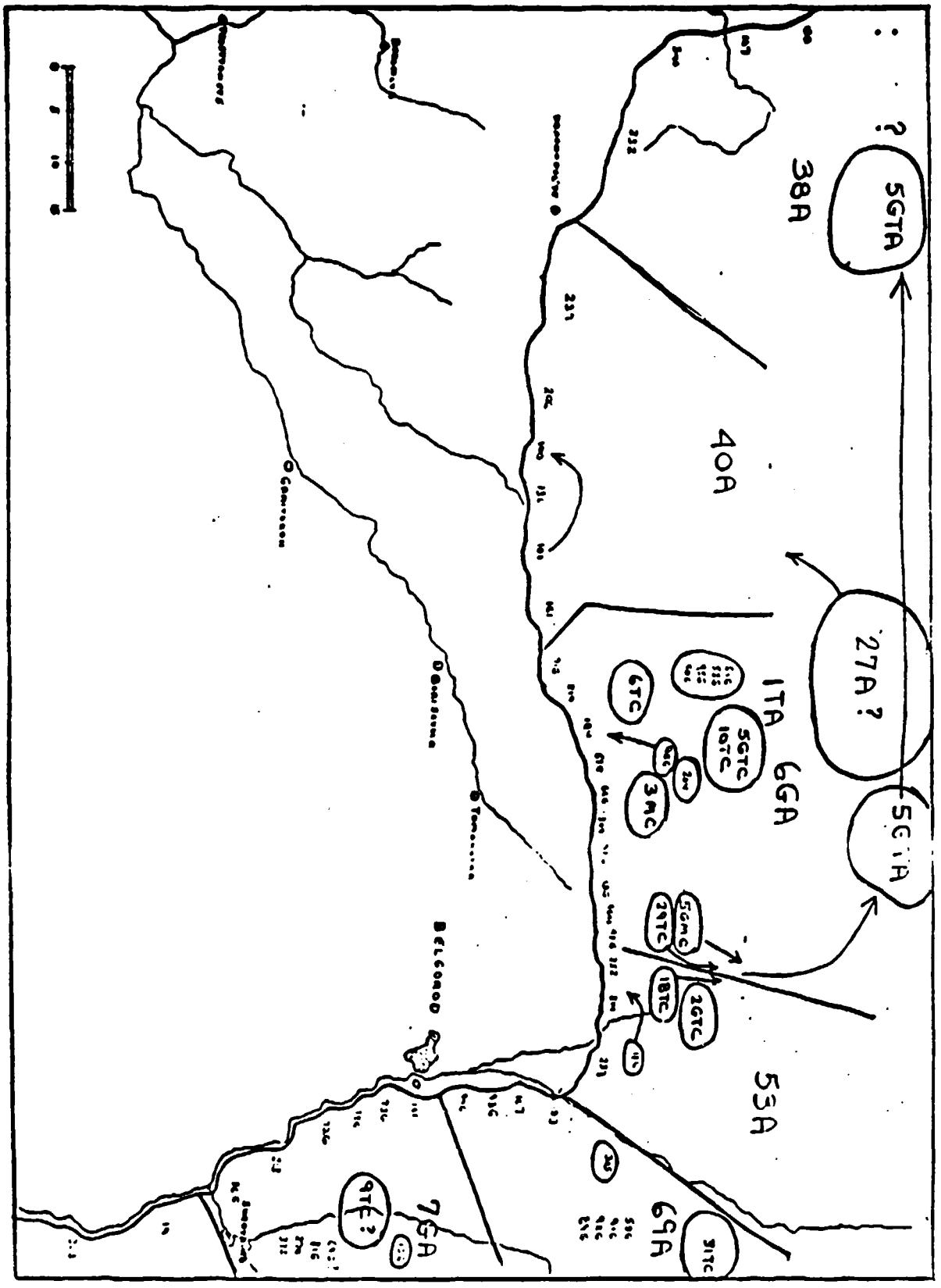
MAP 7



Kursk Operation: Soviet Voronezh Front dispositions
5 July, 1943.

Source: Glantz, "The Kursk Strategic Operation, July 1943," p. 216

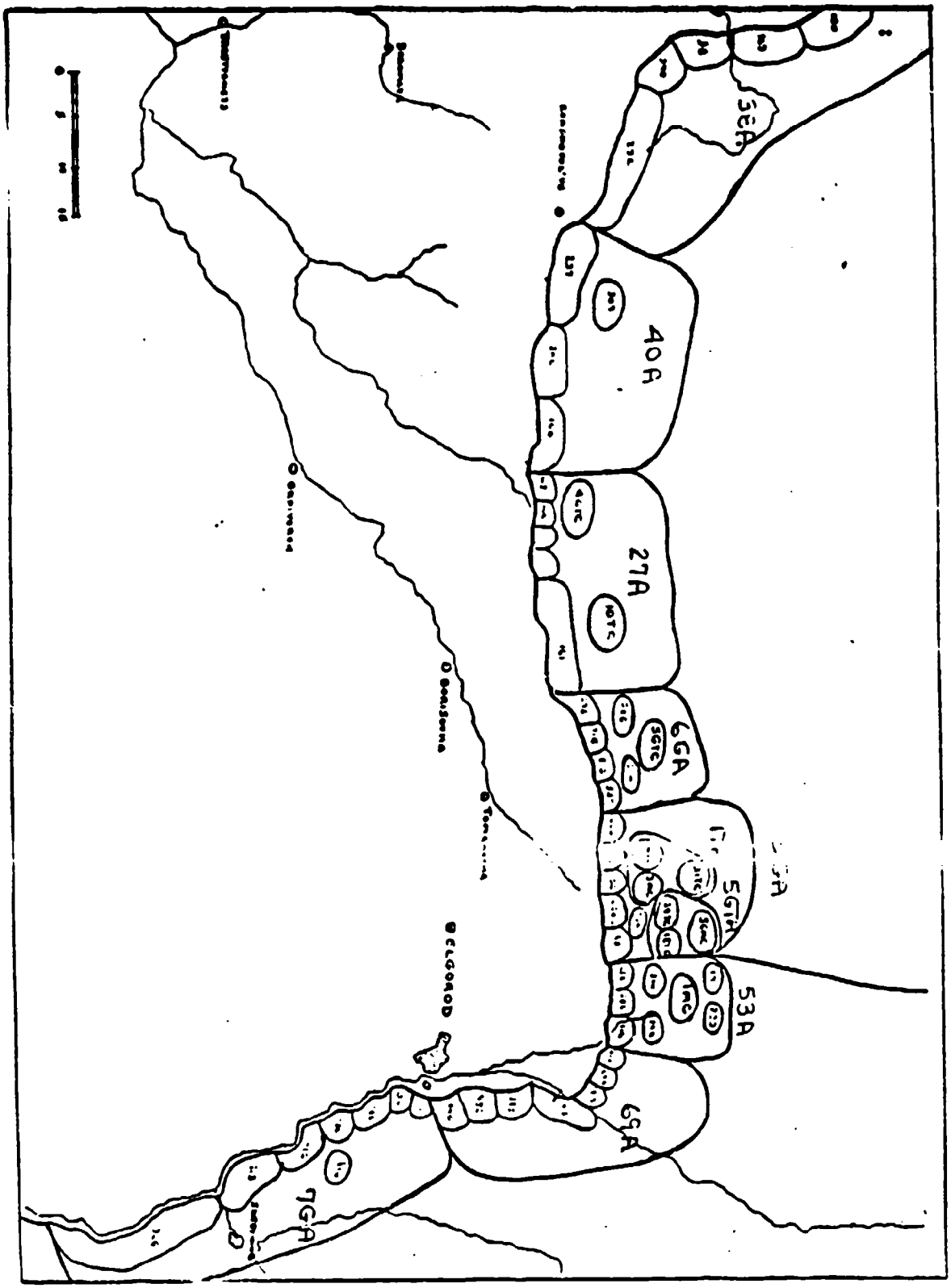
MAP 8



Kursk Operation: German Intelligence Assessment, Belgorod-Kharkov, 2 August, 1943.

Source: Glantz, "The Kursk Strategic Operation, July 1943," p. 244

MAP 9



Kursk Operation: Soviet dispositions, Belgorod-Kharkov, 2 August, 1943

Source: Glantz, "The Kursk Strategic Operation, July 1943," p. 245

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This monograph analyzes the use of deception by the Germans and Soviets in the battle of Kursk. It uses a paradigm consisting of: commander's aim, intelligence, centralized control, synchronization and operations security to determine why Soviet deception suceeded and German deception failed. The analysis provides insights into the use of operational deception on the modern battlefield.

The conclusions of this monograph suggest that operational deception is not a separate deception activity, that it can be used in the offense or defense, that it can be a viable combat multiplier today and that deception is an acquired skill. The monograph shows that operational deception must organize and control the deception efforts at the tactical level and that simple battlefield deception techniques can produce an operational effect.

The monograph shows the critical role commanders have in establishing an appropriate course of action that sets the stage for deception. (contonued on other side of form)

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The selected course of action must provide a picture of duplicity to the enemy commander by presenting two possible objectives. This concept of alternative objectives allows the deception activity to flow naturally from the COA and confuse the enemy.

The monograph recommends incorporation of deception into the officer corp's professional development through professional reading programs in schools and practical application at the National Training Center, Combat Maneuver Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center and the Battle Command Training Program. It also recommends that the Army develop and field sufficient communications and noncommunications devices to allow Army Groups to simulate a U.S. Corps.

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