


Deconfliction: What the "XXXX" Is That?



Many of you may have seen Secretary of State John Kerry, in a press conference a while back, with his Russian counterpart discussing the avoidance of military conflict in Syria, saying that "they were working on methods of "deconfliction". I watched this in real time, assumed what I thought the word meant, and asked myself, why he didn't just say "keep the planes from running into each other?" Now in the case of American and Russian planes in the same air space over Syria, it gets a bit more complicated, as maybe both countries have a mission and don't want to accidentally bump into each other and have an international incident break out. OK, let's put our TRIZ hats on and analyze this.

If you do a web search using the word "deconfliction", you will see three things. First the definition, "the acting of deconflicting" (did that help much?). Then you will see that the use of this word is almost entirely within the framework of military and law enforcement. Rather like "contradictions" to a TRIZ person. Then you will see a total of 210,000 hits. Take a look at one of the first page links: <https://www.ncirc.gov/Deconfliction> where you will see a national conference on this topic where deconfliction is defined as "event deconfliction is the process of determining when law enforcement personnel are conducting an event in close proximity to one another at the same time. Events include law enforcement actions, such as undercover operations, surveillance, and executing search warrants. When certain elements (e.g., time, date, location) are matched between two or more events, a conflict results. Immediate notification is made to the affected agencies or personnel regarding the identified conflict". The headline for this conference brags about "The Regional Information Sharing Systems® (RISS) and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs) are proud to announce the integration of the three nationally recognized event deconfliction systems: Case Explorer, SAFETNet*, and RISSafe. More acronyms.

Rather than "deconflict", if you type "avoid conflict" or "prevent conflict" into a web browser, you will get 6-7,000,000 hits regarding numerous ways in which this is accomplished in many non-law enforcement and non-military situations (marriage counseling, anyone?). Even better, if you type in stop fighting you get 12,000,000 hits and even better than that, avoid fighting, you see 26,000,000 hits. And the crown jewel is the one where you use the words you would use to describe "deconfliction" to a ten year old, "not run into each other accidentally", and see 114,000,000 hits!! At this web search you will see some very interesting items regarding soccer players not running into each other, avoiding people you don't want to meet (such as ex-spouses), and numerous videos including some on train collisions that almost happened and bulls not running into each other.