

LEADER DEVELOPMENT - IN CONTACT!

Leadership Observations from the National Training Center



By Operations Group, The National Training Center

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Fellow Leaders:

At the National Training Center, we spend time assisting units to build their understanding of doctrine, the operations process, the science of control, and the fundamentals our units must execute on the modern battlefield. While critical to our success on future battlefields, some rotational units overlook the most critical element of combat power: leadership.

As I sat back a couple of months ago perusing “66 Stories of Battle Command” one simple observation jumped out. When looking back on their time in the Army, our most successful leaders nearly always talk about “people.” They focus on the actions of the subordinate leaders they served alongside. They talk about leader development, understanding, and efforts of Soldiers on the front lines. In essence, they speak of leaders making a difference.

When the National Training Center was founded in the early 1980’s, few understood the long term impact it would have on our force. But, the first Commander of Operations Group, made an astute observation when he said, “The real worth of the NTC will be clear within the early days of the next war.” While few leaders may go to war in the position they serve in during a rotation, what they learn as leaders on the NTC battlefield will influence the performance of our Army in the wars to come.

Often forgotten by many, the National Training Center’s greatest contribution to our Army are leader development experiences carried away by those we train. We develop leaders at the National Training Center each and every month...in contact with a fierce replicated enemy force amid the toughest operational environment the Army can provide.

This month, Operations Group examines the art of leadership, its application on the replicated NTC battlefield, and what some of our more successful rotational unit leaders do to build winning teams. If you want to be a great battlefield leader, you’ve got to practice being a good leader. If you want to be a good leader that prepares their unit for the rigors of the Army’s best replicated combat, start here.

As always, thank you for everything you do for our force. If there is any way Operations Group can assist your efforts to build your team, don’t hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Outlaw 01
Michael J. Simmering
Commander, Operations Group
National Training Center & Fort Irwin



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Battlefield Leadership – From the Fort to the Front: The Power of Leadership at the Point of Contact

By

Colonel Michael J. Simmering, Commander Operations Group

*“The real worth of the NTC will be clear within the early days of the next war.”
- Outlaw 01 (#1) – William Shackelford*

If you're an Army professional, you've probably experienced this scenario: You've subscribed to a litany of military social media outlets and other mediums that perpetuate a nearly constant stream of leadership focused articles. Each time one pops up, you open it...wondering what you can learn to become a better leader. While many are helpful and provide niche comments on ways to improve, they often miss the primary point of Army leadership: To inspire others to risk their lives to accomplish missions of importance to the Nation.

Between wars, the most important mission our Nation expects of America's Army is to be prepared to *fight* and *win* the next war. Often lost among our day to day demands, exercises, and training schedules, developing leaders at echelon to fight and win America's next war constitutes an essential task. Yet, for some reason, many believe leader development programs revolve around a series of LPDs, OPDs, NCOOPs, etc, etc. While educating our young leaders is important, too often we fail to realize one critical component of leader development: **Leaders are developed in contact, leading real Soldiers, accomplishing real missions that best replicate the true demands of modern combat. Internalized lessons from THOSE experiences serve as the greatest developmental experiences over the course of a leader's career.** While self-developmental and institutional learning are absolutely necessary components of leader development, operational assignments allow us to truly practice our craft.

The National Training Center rose from the ashes and associated shortcomings of a “hollow force” of the 1970's. Beyond building immediate readiness, the true long term value of the National Training Center has always been the ability to develop leaders at echelon in a demanding, competition based environment. We develop leaders each and every month...in contact. We see every leader on their best day, and we often see them on their worst day. After 40 years and countless rotations, the simple fact remains that our best leaders continue to be those who inspire, motivate, and provide purpose and direction under any condition.

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This paper describes what some of the most successful leaders do here at the National Training Center. ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, provides a solid model regarding leader



expectations. Divided into attributes (what a leader is) and competencies (what a leader does), these traits manifest themselves each and every rotation. While not a recipe for success, a leader's failure to accomplish any one of these tasks can result in frustration, miscommunication, and an inability to accomplish the mission.

Leading Your Soldiers

Building Trust Starts on Day 1: Whether you're a Squad Leader or a Battalion Commander, the most important question your Soldiers are asking themselves the minute you walk into their lives is, "Can I trust you?" Personally, they don't care what baggage you bring with you, and they don't care about your personal struggles. For whatever reason, you've been placed in a position to immediately influence their lives in numerous ways. They simply want to know if you're the type of leader they can trust to do what is best for them while accomplishing the mission.

While we've all heard the saying, "trust goes both ways," the trust between Soldiers and leaders truly manifests every day on the NTC battlefield. Soldiers will do amazing things if they trust their leadership. Soldiers who do not trust their leadership simply undermine the leader's efforts (knowingly or unknowingly) regardless of the purity of their intent. Take this example of a trusted leader from a recent NTC Rotation:

It was a cold, foggy, rainy night at the National Training Center. The BCT had been inching its way forward slowly all day, setting the conditions for the next operation...the biggest combat operation of the rotation. Several Battalion Commanders call you stating that they believe it is too dangerous to move in the restricted terrain many of them find themselves. Nobody has been hurt, but you can hear it in their voices that they are worried. Some are probably worried without reason. Others, based upon the density of the fog, rain and imminent flooding in their area, have a valid concern. Regardless, you know that stopping now risks mission failure for the entire team.

As the Brigade Commander, you have two choices at this point: 1) Tell them to continue mission. 2) Call your higher HQs and let them know that you're not going to make forward progress as planned, and the mission as envisioned by your Division Commander is at risk.

What do you do?

Answer: You called the Division Commander. After speaking with him, you realize that you're not the only unit Commander with concerns. Multiple other elements on the battlefield have raised similar concerns, but you were the first to call him directly. The Division directs you to retain your current position and prepare to execute when weather permits.

While seemingly small, this Brigade Commander had Battalion Commanders who felt they could bring him problems. They trusted him to handle the situation. They confided in him that the mission was at risk, but Soldiers' lives would needlessly be lost if they continued on their current path. This type of trust happens every day at the NTC, and it happens at echelon. Those leaders whom subordinates trust make better decisions, and subordinates fight harder for leaders they believe have their best interests in mind.



Setting the Example: We've all struggled with this at some point. If you're not the type of leader who wonders every day whether or not you are setting a good example for others to follow, then you probably don't deserve to be leading others. If you're the type of leader who has to be told by your boss you aren't setting a good example, you definitely don't need to be leading others.

Many times, we skew the term "setting the example." At the point of contact, when life becomes seemingly impossible in the furry of battle, your Soldiers don't care how many push-ups you can do. They care even less about how fast you can run. In peace, these things inspire your Soldiers to be better. But on the battlefield, your Soldiers simply want someone to provide purpose, direction and motivation. They want to know that if they do things like you, their chances of survival just went up. They want someone to be that one person in the most confusing of situations who can answer their most immediate question, "What do we do now?"

As the Brigade proceeded forward to clear key terrain, the operation had not gone as planned. The famed Iron Triangle at the National Training Center had been the Cavalry Squadron's primary mission: Clear the Iron Triangle of three enemy AT systems in order to enable the forward passage of the remainder of the Brigade. One Cavalry Troop had already been decimated by enemy AT fire when supporting Apaches failed to arrive on station as planned. A second Cavalry Troop had lost a platoon of combat power.

The second Troop Commander knew the situation had begun to deteriorate rapidly. He also knew that the enemy AT systems operating in defensive positions would likely destroy his remaining forces if he attempted to move forward. Rallying his remaining forces, he dismounted with his remaining platoon and moved forward with three separate Javelin teams. The Troop's remaining Bradleys remained in position providing overwatch as the dismounts maneuvered forward.

Meanwhile, the Squadron informed the BCT that passing the maneuver battalions forward on schedule wasn't possible. The BCT Commander was not pleased, but knew that without the Apache support, the tempo of the operation had to slow down. The success or failure of the entire BCT's mission now rested on a decision that a subordinate Troop Commander had already made.

Result: Within 90 minutes, the dismounted Cavalry Scouts had cleared two of the three enemy AT systems. The Troop Commander's efforts to rally his remaining Soldiers, and provide them calm, deliberate instructions, had begun to pay off. Meanwhile, the Apaches came on station and destroyed the remaining AT system. As the Bradleys continued to provide overwatch, the remaining Troops maneuvered forward to meet the dismounts on the key terrain, the Squadron Commander called the remainder of the BCT forward.

After the fight, one of the OC-Ts asked the Troop Commander during the AAR, "What made you think of that course of action? We haven't seen a Troop Commander dismount like that and move that far in a long time."

Before the Troop Commander could respond, one of the Platoon Sergeants laughed, "I'm not so sure that anyone really thought about it. When he told us what the plan was, we simply followed him. We couldn't have him out there playing the hero by himself."



Leaders who set the example simply personify everything that we want our subordinates to be...nauseatingly proficient in their craft, willing to share both hardship and risk, and immediately capable of accurately assessing a situation and directing everyone's efforts to overcome adversity – to save as many lives as possible while getting the job done. A leader who can do that becomes the type of leader we hope to be when that “worst day” finally arrives. They are also the ones that we want leading us into combat. A leader who can do that in combat is more valuable than ten who cannot. They are the type of leader we would let lead our own son or daughter into combat.

Effective Communication: In our profession, we often boil the ability to communicate down to an equipment based solution. We constantly talk in terms of primary and alternate nets. We fret over lower and upper tactical internet. In reality, effective communication doesn't just revolve around equipment; effective communication revolves around people and their ability to share thoughts, ideas, and information. While the saying “if you can't talk you can't fight” has always been true, the notion of being able to talk has never guaranteed the ability to effectively communicate.

After seven days of fighting, the Brigade had finally done it. The Soldiers had secured the capital city of Razish after an 18 hour long battle that began at 1800 the night prior.

As the unit conducted consolidation and reorganization, the Brigade Intelligence Officer provided an updated assessment: The lead elements of the 802nd BTG had been destroyed during the initial enemy counter-attack; however, multiple elements of the 802nd BTG remained throughout sector. UAS had begun to detect the consolidation of two Company size elements of the 802nd BTG massing for another counter-attack. Given their current rate of movement, the S-2 assessed another enemy counterattack would take place shortly after sunset.

The Brigade command net came alive with the Brigade Commander's voice, “Listen guys, I know you all have been fighting hard for the last 18 hours, but we're not done. The enemy is going to try to take this city back. We need to retain this city at all costs. X Battalion – you have responsibility for destroying anything that comes into the city. Y Battalion – you back him up if he needs help. Z Battalion – you need to continue to defend the area outside of the city. For the Cav Squadron, I need you to tell me where he's coming from...I just lost all my eyes and ears from higher...you've got to paint a picture for the rest of us.”

Two hours later, the enemy counterattack came quickly. After proxy forces destroyed the Battalion HQs responsible for the interior of the city the enemy launched a chemical attack against the Brigade's Main Command Post to degrade the BLUEFOR's ability to C2 the Brigade. Meanwhile, a Mechanized Infantry Company (+) reinforced with additional dismounted infantry attacked directly into the city. With the Battalion and Brigade Command post both rendered combat ineffective, mission failure appeared almost certain.

Suddenly, the Brigade Command net lit up with the voices of three different Company Commanders from three different Battalions. They understood the situation and their Commander's intent. They knew help wasn't coming. The Troop Commander told the two Company Commanders where the OPFOR had penetrated. Two Company Commanders from two different Battalions rallied their forces to blunt the OPFOR counterattack. When the sun rose the next morning, the Brigade still controlled Razish.



Think of it this way: In the heat of battle, on their worst day, when things aren't going well, can you communicate with your tired, hungry Soldiers to accurately tell them what has to be done? Can you calmly and succinctly provide them intent which gives the entire organization a purpose? When they don't understand or start to move in the wrong direction, can you communicate in a manner that corrects their behavior without demeaning them? Can you provide the inflection and emphasis needed without degrading others in the heat of the battle? Effectively communicating with other human beings is an art – not an equipment centric scientific effort.

Good leaders effectively communicate up, down, and across the chain of command. Because they are trusted and because others look up to them, Soldiers pay attention to them. Keeping a Soldier's attention requires that you effectively communicate in a method that continues to inspire and motivate others to act in a manner that accomplishes the mission.

Developing Leaders

A Positive Climate Makes All The Difference: Given that you have begun to build trust within your formation, work to set a personal example, and consistently strive to effectively communicate with your subordinates, many leaders in the heat of battle often overlook the power of a consistently positive climate.

Battlefield leaders are not cheerleaders; however, the best leaders always strive to maintain a positive tone within their formation. Regardless of the circumstances, they constantly see the positive in their organization, and they reward it often. While they combat unit shortcomings and problems head on, they do not dwell on the negative to the point it spreads like a sarcastic, excuse riddled disease. They understand the training battlefield is simply a replicated contest of wills...where their job is to bring out the best in their organization.

At the NTC, many rotational commanders (the vast majority) are tactically competent. Sure, some are better than others; however, the vast majority understand basic tactics, doctrine, and the operations process. Most have invested similar amounts of training into their formation. Yet, different BCTs perform in a different manner. Some get exponentially better in a two week period. Others achieve marginal gains. Why?

Having watched many different Commanders in multiple venues throughout the years, I contend one of the primary factors affecting unit performance in replicated combat is simply a positive leadership climate that creates a sincere desire to get better each and every day with the ultimate goal of winning against a determined enemy.

“... one of the primary factors affecting unit performance in replicated combat is simply a positive leadership climate.”

We want our Soldiers to be competitive. We want our Soldiers to train hard. Ultimately, we want our Soldiers conditioned to take on any challenge life can muster and claim victory. Great. You don't get that without being respected, known for being fair, empathetic, and the type of positive role model that others are willing to fight to be around.



Be Interested In Your Own Development: The better leaders at the National Training Center are keenly interested in their own development. The great BCT Commanders realize their NTC rotation might be the last time they have the opportunity to command their entire unit outside of a wartime setting. They sincerely desire to know where they can possibly improve, where they are strong, and where they can possibly accept risk.

We make a lot of jokes about new Lieutenants in the Army. Maybe the Army would be a lot better off if more field grade officers acted like our best new lieutenants. Think about it. When you were a new Lieutenant, you KNEW that you didn't know everything your job entailed. You KNEW your subordinates provided valuable input. You KNEW that without help, you could not accomplish your job. What's different now? You might know more, but you don't know everything. You still can't accomplish the mission without input and advice.

In order to be successful, you've got to be curious, interested in making yourself a better leader for the sake of your subordinates, and willing to listen to others. Good leaders in battle are no different. To understand, you must first listen. To listen, you must stop talking. To stop talking, you've got to understand that you might not have all the answers.

Work to Create Shared Understanding: Often, we assume, as Commanders, that because we say something, our subordinates understand. The chaotic environment at the National Training Center demonstrates otherwise nearly every rotation. Sometimes, units walk away from a Brigade level rehearsal more confused than they were before. Often, units get orders that have little/nothing to do with their current situation.

However, the better leaders deliberately work to create shared understanding. By creating a positive climate, building trust, and effectively communicating, these leaders create venues to allow for routine collaboration, discussion, and debate. Whether it is an evening update, battlefield circulation, or simply calling a subordinate on the radio, these leaders work to ensure that everything continues to move along the correct general azimuth. When the situation dictates, they centralize control. Other times, when the demands of combat take their toll, they power down decision making. Regardless, they always work to create constant discussion within their unit to create shared understanding.

Achieves

Standards and Discipline: Let's turn this one around. How many un-disciplined units incapable of enforcing standards have you seen execute successful operations? I'll hazard to guess very few. Sure, there's always that one exception, but generally, disciplined units achieve a higher degree of success given shared understanding, a desire to learn, and a positive command climate.



The true test of discipline in battle isn't whether or not your Soldiers flawlessly pass a pre-combat inspection. True discipline isn't a matter of your Soldiers having a good haircut. The truest test of discipline in a unit is what happens when nobody else is looking.

"The truest test of discipline in a unit is what happens when nobody else is looking."

It might be on an Observation Post at 0200 in the morning. It might be in a single room of an isolated building during a night attack. It might be before dawn as the unit prepares to conduct stand to.

True discipline is measured by the actions of your Soldiers and their ability to self-correct in a dynamic battlefield environment. It is the result of empowered small unit leaders leading by example and correcting deficiencies routinely.

If you want to put your unit on the path to success in battle or at the National Training Center, start with the discipline of your formation. You won't get far without it, and acts of indiscipline will take valuable time your leaders could spend working to ensure their Soldiers remain alive and able to accomplish the mission.

The Power of Getting Results: We've all heard the phrase, "success breeds success." A good training program is designed to push individuals and units to the brink of failure - with the ultimate goal of recognizing weaknesses and getting better. Good units at the National Training Center build upon small victories to achieve amazing results in the midst of a rotation. They recognize that by fixing weaknesses and building upon successes, their unit gets exponentially better.

Personally, I've witnessed the mood, morale, and attitude of an entire organization change because of one successful tank crew...one successful dismounted squad...one deadly friendly indirect fire mission.

Your Soldiers, both in war and at the National Training Center, want to do well. Nobody goes to war wanting to fail. That isn't an option for the American Army. During the COIN era, a small success in Tal Afar Iraq turned into a larger success in Al Anbar Province. Those "successes" led to a momentous shift in operations that stopped the bleeding of American Soldiers and provided the leaders of Iraq an opportunity. It's no different today.

Leaders that have the ability to understand the significance of small unit successes, cross talk, and develop more meaningful plans do better at the National Training Center. Leaders who are willing to seize the moment, capitalize on opportunities, and make bold decisions to alter the course of the fight do better than those who consistently focus on everything going wrong amid the chaos of modern warfare.

Conclusion

Units who do well at the National Training Center have a particular type of leader. Not surprisingly, it's the same type leadership we expect according to our doctrine. These leaders invest in their people and start building mutual trust the day they assume command or



responsibility. They simply “are” the type of person our Soldiers admire. They communicate effectively with their formation. They do all of this under the veil of a positive command climate that creates an atmosphere Soldiers want to be around. They are humble enough to know that they don’t know everything, but smart enough to know when to be directive, and they work tirelessly to ensure that there is shared understanding across the entire formation at echelon. They understand how to discipline an organization and maintain standards without becoming overbearing. Most of all, they understand that, in the end, in our profession, results matter more than anything else.

If you want to be a good battlefield leader you’ve got to train for it. If you want to practice battlefield leadership, you’ve got to do it daily, in contact, practicing your craft. Every leader arriving at the National Training Center has an opportunity to excel. If you’re the type of leader who wants to excel, start with these points and work to get better every day. Your Soldiers will thank you for it.





**Moments that Matter:
Leading in Crucial Moments at the National Training Center**

By

Lieutenant Colonel (Promotable) Andrew Steadman, Bronco 07

During the crucible of training for Large Scale Combat Operations at the National Training Center (NTC), leaders face conditions that are impossible to replicate at home station. Time, distance, the pace of operations, the desert environment, and a ruthless, thinking opposing force combine to challenge the Brigade Combat Teams in unforeseen ways.

To be successful, units must respond by growing to new levels of effectiveness. With good leadership, commanders can serve as catalysts for that unit growth. Conversely, poor leadership methods will slow a unit's growth by creating friction, frustrating subordinates, stifling initiative, and producing an overall painful experience for the team.

“Rotation after rotation at NTC has shown that there tend to be common, predictable moments where the commander can make an outsized difference on the unit's performance.”

Rotation after rotation at NTC has shown that there tend to be common, predictable moments where the commander can make an outsized difference on the unit's performance. Fail in those moments and the rotation will be difficult for every echelon. Succeed in those moments, however, and the unit is primed to not only grow, but win.

Below are but a few of those moments at NTC that commanders should deliberately consider, rehearse in their minds, develop SOPs for, and strive to employ the best version of their leadership.

The Commander's Huddle

Perhaps no other discrete session can generate drastic change and mountains of friction like the Commander's Huddle.

Situation: At NTC, this often looks like a Brigade Commander bringing in Battalion Commanders to discuss (rather, alter) the upcoming operation over a map in the BDE Plans Tent. The BCT S3 or XO are sometimes included but are often out of earshot as the Brigade Commander pulls the Battalion Commanders in close to the map. This huddle sometimes occurs after the Mission Analysis Brief or the Brigade Operations Order Brief, but too often occurs after the Combined Arms Rehearsal, when units have already begun setting conditions for the operation. The leaders discuss maneuver timing, the information collection and fires plan, mission objectives and boundaries, communications plans, sustainment, and so on. Sessions can surpass 90 minutes.



Result: The leaders engage in what amounts to a Wargame session for the operation already in motion. Unfortunately, the changes to the plan will rarely go out in an order, the staff will likely not synchronize them, and there will be little time to properly rehearse. If a notetaker was present, the staff will scramble to get the summary of changes and incorporate them before crossing the Line of Departure. Meanwhile, Battalion Commanders disseminate their own version of what was discussed and decided upon. Multiple avenues of change propagate through the formation, creating confusion among staffs and subordinate leaders as they struggle with version control on fighting products. The resulting friction only reinforces the temptation for commanders at every echelon to dismiss staff efforts at synchronization and control the fight themselves.

Recommendation: Commanders must be intentional about when to invite feedback and collaborate. Unless a crisis is approaching, impromptu wargame sessions often cause more harm than good. Decide upon acceptable windows in the Operations Process for making changes to the plan. If you are keen on bringing in commanders to collaborate, do it early in MDMP, like after the Mission Analysis or the COA Development Brief. Frame the session with a time limit, a framework for input, and an idea of desired output (e.g. executive summary, FRAGO, etc.). Incorporate as many staff members as possible so they can not only follow the developments, but also so they can understand how commanders think and what is important to them. The commander's timely leadership during this crucial dialogue can align commanders and staff as they Plan, Prepare, and Execute operations.

The Combined Arms Rehearsal

"The rehearsal is a coordination event, not an analysis." (CALL Handbook 19-18, 1) Commanders can derail the CAR by micromanaging the process or by turning it into a Wargame.

Situation: The Brigade CAR for major operations at NTC usually occurs in vicinity of the Brigade Main Command Post 12-18 hours before crossing LD. Brigade and battalion leadership, key staff, attached enabler leaders drive or fly in from across the area of operations and spend hours away from their units. Some brigades require company commanders, which can push the audience to well over 100 people crowding around the routinely undersized terrain model. Good units have distributed a CAR script to guide the exercise and leaders know what the commander expects them to brief. As staff and commanders brief, however, the BCT Commander senses something he doesn't like and stands up to clarify what's being said. His question draws a few battalion commanders into the conversation as the Brigade S3 steps forward to clarify what was in the order. Getting frustrated and wanting to take charge of the situation, the BCT Commander walks onto the board and starts giving refining guidance.

Result: In a matter of minutes, the CAR is reduced to a Wargame and then digresses to a COA Development session as the BCT Commander walks over the crowded terrain model issuing changes to the plan. Then, as battalion commanders point out friction points in this undeveloped plan, they draw closer and closer on the terrain model until the CAR is reduced to



100 people standing around watching several commanders have a private conversation. At one NTC rotation, one BCT Commander followed this path and, ironically, huddled the commanders around his personal plexiglass mapboard instead of the full-sized terrain model they were standing on.

Recommendation: Develop an SOP for the CAR. Refine and rehearse it. Stick to it. (That goes for commanders, too – do not take over the CAR.) A CAR SOP should be a guide that helps keep the event moving, avoids tangents, and provides the commanders with enough visualization to identify friction and risk. As a general rule, avoid using a word for word script or following a line-by-line execution checklist. These products tend to turn the CAR into a rote recitation instead of a synchronization exercise. As stated in the *Commander and Staff Guide to Rehearsals*, the CAR is an opportunity for leaders to confirm the synchronization of the COA the commander has already selected, making “*only those changes essential to mission success and risk mitigation*” (1). Commanders must be patient and avoid trying to remedy every friction point the CAR reveals. It’s more effective to capture a note in the moment, staff a solution following the CAR, and issue a FRAGO.

Creating and Maintaining Tempo

“Commanders build the appropriate tempo to provide the necessary momentum for successful attacks that achieve the objective... A rapid tempo allows the BCT to deliver multiple blows in-depth from numerous directions to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Blows from multiple directions cause a multidimensional dilemma for the enemy” (FM 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team*, 6-6).

“Momentum is not a natural occurrence in military operations. The individual fatigue that each Soldier feels is multiplied across the formation, resulting in a unit that is content to sit and wait for the next operation.”

Situation: Momentum is not a natural occurrence in military operations. The individual fatigue that each Soldier feels is multiplied across the formation, resulting in a unit that is content to sit and wait for the next operation. This tendency is especially true at the NTC after a major operation like the seizure of the urban objective of Razish. “*The platoons did good but they’re whooped - we need time to recover*” is a familiar narrative. Similarly, units tend to view upcoming major operations as discrete fights that will occur at the “no later than” time. They fail to understand that major objectives will require conditions-setting with smaller fights for key terrain – the unit must build momentum before the big fight.

Result: Few BCTs who come through NTC are able to put real pressure on the enemy. Their application of combat power tends to surge and wane, creating tempo that feels more like a sine wave than a steady stream of effects that shape the enemy and set conditions. BCTs rarely



surprise the enemy with unexpected attacks or rapid tempo. Consequently, the unhindered enemy has significant freedom to prepare defenses and attack the BCT in multiple domains.

Recommendation: All momentum starts with leadership. For a unit to overcome the drift towards stagnation, leaders must constantly drive the team to seize the initiative. Momentum comes from creating demands that push organizations beyond what they think they're capable of and at a pace they're not ready for. One successful BCT Commander at NTC defended the Brown-Debnun Pass Complex in the afternoon and ordered a dismounted attack on the urban center of Ujen only hours afterwards. The attack occurred a full 24 hours prior to when the Division had directed and caught the enemy off-guard. Commanders who maintain tempo at NTC visualize the fight as a constant march to seize key terrain and apply sustained pressure on the enemy. They don't let off the gas. They use mounted and dismounted maneuver in tandem while aggressively collecting information and combining arms to support both the deep and close fights. These commanders also recognize (and lead subordinate commanders to understand) that a major operation is a success on which to capitalize, not an excuse to consolidate and recover.

Leading on the Move

It is hard to overstate the importance of commanders performing face to face leadership and visiting the lesser known areas of the organization.

Situation: As the rotation progresses at NTC, it's not uncommon to see commanders narrow their presence on the battlefield. The pace of operations quickens and they become less intentional with their time. They dart from one briefing to the next, from one rehearsal to the next, with little engagement elsewhere. Then the enemy "votes" at the most inopportune times to further derail the planned battle rhythm.

Result: The commander gets stuck in an engagement loop rotating from TAC to Main to Higher HQ, losing touch with important areas of the operation. During one rotation, the BCT commander had intended to confirm each of battalions' engagement areas during the preparation for the defense. However, an enemy spoiling attack tied him up for six hours and he never got the "feel" of the defense that he sought. At other times, without a disciplined staff to push the process, MDMP can grind to a halt as the commander is pulled elsewhere. And inevitably, problems like failing maintenance and insurgent threats will arise in the Consolidation Area and can undermine the BCT's combat power. Commanders who become locked in the close fight tend to underappreciate these challenges and because they rarely visit the Support and Engineer Battalions, never seeing the effects firsthand.

Recommendation: The commander is responsible for and must lead all parts of the organization. Identify key areas by phase where the commander could benefit from a firsthand glimpse of the situation and build them into the battle rhythm. Visit the anticipated decisive point of the upcoming operation, then perhaps a maintenance meeting, a battalion Main CP, the Field Artillery gun line, or an Information Operations effort like the Civil Military Operations



Center. Additionally, assign clear roles and responsibilities for key leaders like the BCT XO and S3, so they can keep the fight going while the commander engages other areas of the team. Build a PACE plan for battle rhythm events so the commander can engage when not in the Main CP and prevent delays in key efforts like MDMP planning. Finally, recognize how meaningful it can be for subordinate leaders to see the commander in person, have an opportunity to give their perspective of the fight, and hear him personally reinforce guidance. The commander can make an impact for the team, too, by recognizing and motivating lower echelon effort, then giving them “the big picture” perspective.

Conclusion

People are the most important asset in the US Army. And because “leadership is the activity of influencing people,” leadership is the most decisive element in Army operations (ADP 6-22, 1-15). Successes and failures. Action and inaction. Victory and defeat. It all rests on good (or bad) leadership. As commanders navigate the crucible of NTC (and eventually in LSCO), the demands of the complex fight occupy their attention and degrade their effectiveness in expected ways. The commander’s huddle, the CAR, while fighting for tempo, and while circulating the battlefield are but a few of those moments. Commanders must lead through with intention and disciplined execution if they are to enable their formations.





The Importance of Relationships and Their Effects on the Battlefield

By

Lieutenant Colonel Jonathon M. Genge, Cobra 07

It was a dry, hot day in August 2017 at the U.S. Army's National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. I was a Squadron Commander on mission in the middle of my unit's rotation. Located on the key piece of terrain known as Hill 760, the position provided a good perspective of the battlefield as my Squadron conducted a zone reconnaissance from the Siberian Ridge, reconnoitering several avenues of approach towards Hill 780, Hill 800 and the Iron Triangle. The brigade was attacking to seize its main objective - the city of Razish. At this moment, two battalions were locked in a street to street, corner to corner fight inside the city. A crackle came over the radio with the brigade commander ordering the brigade reserve into the melee and for my Bravo Troop to assume the mission as the new brigade reserve.

At the same time, two of my Cavalry Squadron's troops were exploiting their success in the destruction of enemy forces located vicinity of the Iron Triangle and continuing their zone reconnaissance towards the infamous pass complex running from the Sawtooth in the north to Debnam Pass in the south. Both commanders saw an opportunity to extend the brigade's security area further providing reaction time and maneuver space concerning the certain OPFOR counterattack that would come. As they maneuvered across the open terrain, elements of both units were engaged by effective OPFOR direct and indirect fire, which resulted in an immediate reduction in BLUFOR combat power by at least six M2A3 Bradley fighting vehicles. With a little over a troop's strength of tracked vehicles spread between two troops left in direct contact, the ability to gain control of the key terrain and position the Squadron to provide early warning with "eyes" focused deep into the enemy's support zone was in jeopardy. I needed to commit more combat power if I wanted to maintain the momentum and accomplish the Squadron's reconnaissance objective. My tank company was not an option. In a tough fight with Blackhorse, it emerged with only two M1A2 tanks remaining and holding the Racetrack. What about my Bandit Troop?

Moments before when ordered to reconstitute the brigade reserve with Bravo Troop, I failed to provide a convincing argument to retain the troop under my control and avoid violating the Fundamentals of Reconnaissance principle of not keeping reconnaissance assets in reserve. Both my Bravo Troop commander and my Observer Controller/Trainer counterpart saw the opportunity awaiting. My Bravo Troop commander felt he was still positioned to support his fellow troop commanders with time left to rescind the earlier order to assume the reserve mission. Seeing my earlier error and receiving the feedback from my troop commander, I quickly reengaged the brigade commander. After a brief discussion, I again was unsuccessful persuading him. Bravo would hold its position and remain the reserve.



In the end, the brigade was able to seize Razish without any further combat power. Bravo Troop remained intact vicinity of Hill 780; though the opportunity to gain control of the pass complex was lost. Alpha and Charlie Troop remained on the east side of the passes with their observation to the west blocked by the eight-kilometer-long natural barrier formed by the terrain. The remainder of Delta Company, my armor company, continued to hold the Racetrack.

How did I miss the opportunity to seize the key terrain? Did I not push hard or quickly enough to have Bravo Troop reattached to the squadron to assist? Why did the Brigade Commander so quickly deny my request? Could he not trust me? Was I not communicating well enough? Was my input not valued?

“Relationships amongst Soldiers throughout organizations at echelon can have a major impact on their unit’s successes on the battlefield and can lead to direct mission accomplishment or failure.”

Among all of the tactical and doctrinal lessons that I and others can dissect from my experiences above, one that I feel is worth highlighting and discussing is the role relationships played in the scenario and how they could have impacted the outcome of the fight. Relationships amongst Soldiers throughout organizations at echelon can have a major impact on their unit’s successes on the battlefield and can lead to direct mission accomplishment or failure. Relationships developed amongst leaders and their subordinates specifically, are formed on communication, trust, and time which facilitates the mission command principles of mutual trust, disciplined initiative, and shared understanding.¹

The decentralized execution of operations in combat that leads to successful missions is gained by fostering the key components of relationships and their facilitation of mission command principles. Relationships impact operations on the battlefield through the strengthening of mission command, specifically mutual trust, disciplined initiative, and shared understanding resulting in effective decentralized execution.

Relationship attributes: communication, trust and time

Healthy and strong relationships are built upon several aspects, but three foundational elements include communication, trust, and time. Leaders utilize numerous ways to encourage open and candid communication with the intent of learning about and developing their subordinates which enables the growth of relationships. Initial counseling, specifying priorities, publishing command and leadership philosophies, and establishing periodic touchpoints with key personnel and the unit are just some of the avenues that leaders use to open communication lines and build rapport with their subordinates and superiors. Ensuring team members remain

¹ Army Publishing Directorate. Army Doctrine Publication Number 6-0 Mission Command (Command and Control of Army Forces) 1-3 (2019). Washington, D.C.



“Communication and establishing trust within a relationship requires the repeated interaction between parties over time.”

informed assists in building trust, another key aspect of positive relationships.² When someone can trust another individual, they are comfortable delegating responsibility and more latitude to accomplish their assigned tasks thus empowering them to act. Communication and establishing trust within a relationship requires the repeated interaction between parties over time. Strong bonds amongst team members are not forged instantaneously. They require recurring interactions and memorable, shared experiences.

Consistent exchange of guidance and priorities from leaders to subordinates and the corresponding routine feedback from subordinates is essential in fostering relationships. These building blocks of relationships intertwine reinforcing each other and support several tenets of mission command and its aspect of decentralized execution of operations.

Mutual trust

The Army defines the shared confidence established between leaders and their subordinates as mutual trust.³ Trust is essential to relationships as previously discussed. It is established over time as members of units conduct training events such as live fire exercises and during rotational deployments and combat operations. These collective experiences and shared hardships instill confidence within each Soldier, building bonds amongst all, while fostering the ability for them to overcome fear and the stressors of combat. Engaged leaders will discover the strengths and weaknesses of their Soldiers. From these observations, leaders gain faith and identify who they can rely on resulting in the leader’s willingness to bestow larger amounts of responsibility upon subordinates.

Empowering subordinates and disciplined initiative

Subordinates, as a result, feel confident in making decisions and are empowered to seize the initiative on the battlefield. This is the embodiment of commanders empowering their subordinates and subscribing to the mission command principle of disciplined initiative. Once a leader earns their subordinate’s trust, Soldiers feel encouraged to act, a critical principle in obtaining mission accomplishment on the battlefield. Soldiers who do not feel supported by their higher headquarters and leaders will hesitate to act when the situation presents itself during combat. Leaders who fail to develop an environment conducive to empowerment and disciplined initiative are destined to mire themselves in minutiae and cloud their ability to make clear decisions. Both result in slow and unreactive units certain to fail. Strong relationships, on the other hand, are key in encouraging subordinates to take calculated risks on

² Army Publishing Directorate. Field Manual Number 6-22 Army Leadership (Competent, Confident, and Agile) 7-15 (2006). Washington, D.C.

³ Army Publishing Directorate. Army Doctrine Publication Number 6-0 Mission Command (Command and Control of Army Forces) 1-7 (2019). Washington, D.C.



a rapidly and ever-changing battlefield, expanding the organization's ability to set favorable conditions for friendly forces by presenting numerous situations that an enemy must react to and address.

Shared Understanding

“The flow and understanding of information are accelerated through relationships. In combat, staffs must establish positive relationships to efficiently collaborate. Collaboration requires the candid exchange of ideas and opinions free from reproach and criticism.”

In addition to establishing mutual trust and empowering subordinates aimed at disciplined initiative, the creation and cultivation of shared understanding facilitated by relationships through open and consistent communication aids in obtaining effective decentralized execution on the battlefield. A leader who clearly communicates his priorities and intent along the lines of creating understanding, supported by the mutual trust established between his Soldiers and himself, empowers individuals to assess ongoing operations on the battlefield, calculate risk and seize opportunities quickly when and where

possible. Subordinates can successfully assess, decide, and act rapidly when they are apprised of the current situation. The flow and understanding of information are accelerated through relationships. In combat, staffs must establish positive relationships to efficiently collaborate. Collaboration requires the candid exchange of ideas and opinions free from reproach and criticism.⁴

Conclusion

Relationships impact battlefield operations through their facilitation of decentralized operations, a key aspect of mission command - the Army's approach to command and control.⁵ Positive relationships are built upon open and consistent communication, solidified trust, and nurturement over time. The above events took place less than one month into my command; I assumed command two weeks prior to deploying to NTC with my unit. At that time, the development of my relationships with my brigade commander, fellow battalion commanders, and amongst my troop commanders and unit were still in the early, infant stages. In an effort to develop shared understanding, mutual trust and empower my subordinate leaders, I had communicated my initial squadron vision, held my commander in-brief with each troop, and was still conducting initial counseling with members of my team. Despite this, my troop commanders were still not fully sure of my expectations and how I would fight. The confidence to professionally discuss dissenting views or alternate courses of action was not present or possessed by my leaders. More time filled with at least one home station training event or my

⁴ Ibid. 1-8

⁵ Army Publishing Directorate. Army Doctrine Publication Number 6-0 Mission Command (Command and Control of Army Forces) 1-3 (2019). Washington, D.C.



attendance with the unit to the Leader Training Program at NTC would have assisted in strengthening our relationships. Like the relationship between my troop commanders and myself, I was still far from being comfortable in my position and role within the brigade and my relationship with my brigade commander. I felt that I could engage my commander, but I did not fully understand how he thought and would fight in order to enable myself to plan and react accordingly on the battlefield. The relationship between a commander and his subordinates is critical and aids mission accomplishment.

So what are your relationships like within your unit?





Battlefield Leadership Starts Before the Battle: “Failing In Order To Succeed”

By

Lieutenant Colonel Neil J. Myres, Tarantula 07, Light Task Force (Airborne) Senior Trainer

In today’s operating environment, we are challenging leaders with more complex scenarios that exercise the implementation of additional enablers across all warfighting functions. Bringing these enablers and internal assets to bear at a decisive point on the battlefield is the training objective, and failure is not an option. In most cases, this the first time these challenges are presented and expectations are high. Great units and leaders achieve success, and that is expected. Success breeds success, but what if, just what if, we changed our thought process and implementation of lessons learned throughout our careers? What if in fact failure breeds success and this thought process changes our perception of what makes a great unit or great leader. What if failure IS an option?

Units that arrive at the National Training Center are inherently at the height of their training and readiness and are more than capable of attacking the mission set placed before them. They have gone through countless hours of preparation for their rotation, their mission has most likely been rehearsed multiple times, and success is at the forefront of their mind. From the moment they disembark at the Rotational Unit Bivouac Area (RUBA), their perception of the battle is changed, the enemy now has a vote, and success begins to have a new meaning. Over time, operations become more decentralized and success begins to fade. In this instance, reality sets in, it is too late to change, and units adapt to simply surviving.

“The implementation of a mission command culture early in a unit’s training progression can and will have significant impact on a unit’s success.”

Leaders begin to descend upon key points of friction on the battlefield to give specific guidance and in some cases, take over completely. There is a missed opportunity to prove you are truly a learning organization, which started well before their arrival at the National Training Center. The implementation of a mission command culture early in a unit’s training progression can and will have significant impact on a unit’s success. In the following few pages, I will outline

why the most successful units succeed at the National Training Center, and discuss the importance of practicing mission command while accepting risk and exercising disciplined initiative. It is hard to do, it takes commitment, and probably the most important takeaway, you MUST fail in order to learn.



What is Mission Command?

We are all familiar with Mission Command and ADP 6-0. In recent months, the Army has adapted its definition of Mission Command. Mission Command was previously defined as “the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations,”¹ but has since morphed to include command and control. Current doctrine “defines and describes mission command as the Army’s approach to command and control that enables unified land operations.”² Although the definition has changed, the key elements and principles of Mission Command have not. The Army has adapted the principles a bit, but some of the favorites are still included. “Successful mission command is enabled by the principles of Competence, Mutual Trust, Shared Understanding, Commander’s Intent, Mission Orders, Disciplined Initiative, and Risk Acceptance.”³ In

“Although the definition has changed, the key elements and principles of Mission Command have not.”

accordance with the new doctrine re-write, mission command now incorporates competence into the equation, amplifying the significance of a leader’s ability to do something successfully. We find success through repetition in a mission command oriented organization, and through repetition, there will be accepted failures. This is where risk acceptance becomes a focal point.

Risk Acceptance in Training

A unit that accepts risk at the appropriate level is a unit that can grow and ultimately achieve success. Accepting risk is probably one of the hardest things I did as a commander because it placed success and failure in a balance. Underwriting the risk down to the company level was a conscious and difficult decision to begin with that grew easier with time and experience. Allowing subordinate commanders to accomplish the mission at their own discretion as long as they met the task, and more importantly the purpose, was a perceived risk. Whether the commander was successful along the way or encountered failures was irrelevant to the growth of the organization. In fact, I would argue that the commanders who had failed learned the most and ultimately became the most successful. Empowering your subordinates to lead while they know you have their back is one of the most undocumented combat multipliers I have seen during command and while covering down on multiple rotations here at the National Training Center. It is impossible to be everywhere during training and on the battlefield, but subordinate commanders who accept risk at the lowest level see the most dividends.

¹ (Outdated) Army Doctrine Publication 6-0: Mission Command, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 17 May 2012, p. 1.

² Army Doctrine Publication 6-0: Mission Command, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 31 July 2019, p. 1-1.

³ Ibid., p. 1-7.



I had the luxury of building on a battalion vision over the course of 18 months prior to a combat training center rotation, and the acceptance of risk I gave my subordinate commanders had developed their organizations into free-thinking, purpose-driven machines, built for meeting the commander's intent. This luxury did not come without failures. Our brigade commander had built this mission command driven organization vision long before we all assumed command and it carried into execution long after we took the guidons. Understanding that risk acceptance is probably the most difficult part of being a commander, I paid more attention to it than anything else.

“Here at the National Training Center, I have seen the level of risk acceptance remain higher than necessary, which has ultimately led to poorer execution of mission sets and less successful operations.”

As difficult as it was to relinquish risk down to the lowest level, I believe it developed a generation of leaders that were primed to take over in my absence. Here at the National Training Center, I have seen the level of risk acceptance remain higher than necessary, which has ultimately led to poorer execution of mission sets and less successful operations.

While attacking across the expansive terrain at the National Training Center, it is impossible for battalion commanders to be everywhere, every

time. Battalions rely heavily on the actions of their subordinate leaders to change the outcomes of the battle. More often than not, units struggle at the lowest level because leaders lack the ability to conduct operations that have risks associated with them. We find that these units have not empowered their subordinates to lead, and in fact, the units who struggle to identify and mitigate risk at the lowest level are less successful than those who do. Some of the most successful units that have come through in recent rotations have not only empowered their subordinate commanders and leaders to lead, but have underwritten risks associated with their actions.

Following successful units leading up to their rotation and communicating with leaders at the company level prior to their arrival, we have found that risk acceptance started early on in their training progression and built confidence in the unit's execution. Successful battalion commanders have expressed their confidence in their subordinate leaders and explained the process by which they gained such confidence. They have empowered their leaders to identify and mitigate risk at the lowest level, and have underwritten their failures. With decentralized operations occurring more frequently at the National Training Center, powering down the level of risk acceptance remained a focal point for operational execution on the battlefield. To be clear, this training progression starts long before arriving at the National Training Center, and requires a conscious decision, deliberate plan, and most importantly, a whole lot of patience. It



requires discipline to execute over time in order to build upon this principle of mission command.

Disciplined Initiative vs. Disciplined Disobedience

As important as underwriting and accepting risk is at the lowest level, disciplined initiative goes hand in hand. Disciplined initiative is described as “when subordinates have the discipline to follow their orders and adhere to the plan until they realize their orders and the plan are no longer suitable for the situation in which they find themselves.”⁴ This best way I can describe this is having mission execution flexibility. Units that struggle at the National Training Center lack subordinate leaders who exercise disciplined initiative.

As mentioned earlier, with the frequency of decentralized operations, leaders are finding themselves farther and farther away from the decisive point at particular phases of the battle. It is here that the subordinate leaders are trusted with making the right call and utilizing

“We find that most units fail to train under this philosophy at home station and also find leaders at significant points of the battle stopping short of overwhelming enemy forces simply because their last orders and instructions did not take them to that point.”

disciplined initiative. We find that most units fail to train under this philosophy at home station and also find leaders at significant points of the battle stopping short of overwhelming enemy forces simply because their last orders and instructions did not take them to that point. There is an affinity from my perspective of leaders “waiting on the word” to execute versus using disciplined initiative to go beyond the last order to achieve success. This correlates with home station training and the centralized execution of METL tasks.

Units that are the most successful integrate decentralized operations into home station training and allow their subordinate leaders to make decisions outside the scope of the set parameters of a particular training event. We have seen situational training exercise development at home station integrating decision-making exercises into the overall scenario as a way to get after this. This builds the comfort level of subordinate leaders in training to make decisions and learning from their mistakes while advancing the trust commanders have in them. Building upon this principle at home station gives an enormous advantage to a rotational training unit upon arrival. Whereas a significant amount of units rarely train disciplined initiative and demonstrate mediocre success, those who commit to training disciplined initiative while focusing on their METL tasks see a higher level of success during decentralized operations at the National Training Center.

⁴ Army Doctrine Publication 6-0: Mission Command, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 31 July 2019, p. 1-12.



"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

-General George S. Patton, Jr.

This relates closely with task and purpose. Which is more important, the task or the purpose? I would offer that the task is a way to get after the purpose making the purpose the single most important part of the mission. It may appear the best way as your staff plans a mission and may make sense at that given point in time, but taking battlefield effects into account and then enemy reactions, operations and operational execution must remain flexible and disciplined initiative will be required. Initiative must be disciplined, but we can account for some level of disciplined disobedience.

"We're the military, so you're supposed to say, "Obey your orders." That's kind of fundamental to being in the military. We want to keep doing that. But a subordinate needs to understand that they have the freedom and they are empowered to disobey a specific order, a specified task, in order to accomplish the purpose. It takes a lot of judgment."

- General Mark A. Milley

In order for a unit to succeed, this judgement will be built through repetition, and along the way, through failure. In order to trust your subordinates to make the right call at the right time, you must test their aptitude in training and force them to make any call, right, wrong, or indifferent, and learn what does and does not work for their formation. Other than the enemy on the battlefield at the National Training Center, we have observed indecisiveness as a root cause for casualties in the arena. Leaders that feel they cannot make a decision without being told exactly what to do becomes detrimental to a unit's mission accomplishment.

We see the most successful units adapting to the situation while leaders at the lowest level are making decisions at the decisive point in the larger battle. The units that adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of the fight and power down their decision-making abilities to the lowest

"The units that adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of the fight and power down their decision-making abilities to the lowest level have higher success rates during their rotation."

level have higher success rates during their rotation. It is imperative for a battalion commander to decide early on in training what decisions they are willing to power down and what decision they retain at their level. Once this is clear and training in this manner progresses, the disciplined initiative of an organization will thrive and initial failures will develop into future success.



Conclusion



In a mission command led organization, emphatic trust must be placed in our subordinate leaders to execute missions in a decentralized manner in future large-scale combat operations. Risk acceptance and disciplined initiative is maximized during training. Many units operate under the thought that success breeds success and for the most part this is true. In order to arrive at these initial successes, units and leaders will fail, and risk acceptance must include the risk of failure. Leaders must accept the fact that these failures will ultimately lead to success.

It will be an uncomfortable process for most as we rarely accept failure. In fact, our evaluation system demands success through its focus on achieving to get results. What we rarely capture is the process along the way that got us to the desired endstate, to the desired level of success. In 20 years of service, I have rarely succeeded without failing at some point. Those failures have taught me valuable lessons and in turn adapted my approach to executing similar tasks and missions moving forward.

As unit commanders plan training to support success at the National Training Center, consider failure as a lesson rather than a rule. More often than not, we see rotational units conducting operations with limited success against a formidable enemy. If units fail to conduct an operation to a desired level, that unit is given an additional opportunity to achieve mission success. They initially failed at some or all of the key tasks, are re-introduced to the same scenario, and they now have experience on their side. Their initial failures have adapted their execution and during secondary execution of their mission, they succeed. In these cases, failure bred success. The lessons learned from failure shape the battalion's future operations and their growth during a rotation. As units fail, they learn, and along the way morph into a more cohesive fighting organization. Success eventually breeds success.

Battlefield leadership is tested at the National Training Center, but is developed long before the battle. Every day is a lesson, and as students of our craft, we never stop learning. As most successful units have learned at the National Training Center, and long before they arrive, you must fail in order to learn, but you must never learn to fail.



Commander's Decisions

By

Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Barta, Scorpion 07

One of the eight elements of combat power, leadership, can turn the tide of the complex battles in simulated combat operations at the National Training Center (NTC). Commanders have been groomed their entire careers with the leadership attributes and competencies to enhance their unit combat effectiveness in this crucible training environment. One important facet of a commander's leadership are the decisions that he or she makes to best posture the formation. Below are three recommendations that commanders can include in their personal practices observed at NTC to help enable success.

- Plan for decisions through all stages of the operations process
- Incorporate five common decisions early in planning
- Make the decision support template (DST) in fighting products.

Planning for decisions

The large scale combat operations (LSCO) training scenario at NTC is complex and challenging in order to induce friction that provides units with developmental opportunities. The constant contact with a thinking enemy in a host nation environment along with extended lines of communication compress and interfere with planning timelines. This challenges the battle staff

“The constant contact with a thinking enemy in a host nation environment along with extended lines of communication compress and interfere with planning timelines.”

and commanders to find touch points to create shared understanding of the commander's visualization of the battlefield and the staff's analysis of the mission. This has produced an outcome where many commanders provide the staff with a singular directed course of action (COA) to save planning time and preserve staff effort for current operations.¹ The result is a singular scheme of maneuver which is not flexible enough to account for changes in the enemy or the environment. Figure one depicts the decisions that will occur during an operation in order to reach the commanders desired end state.

¹ Author's personal observations from discussions with rotational unit commanders.

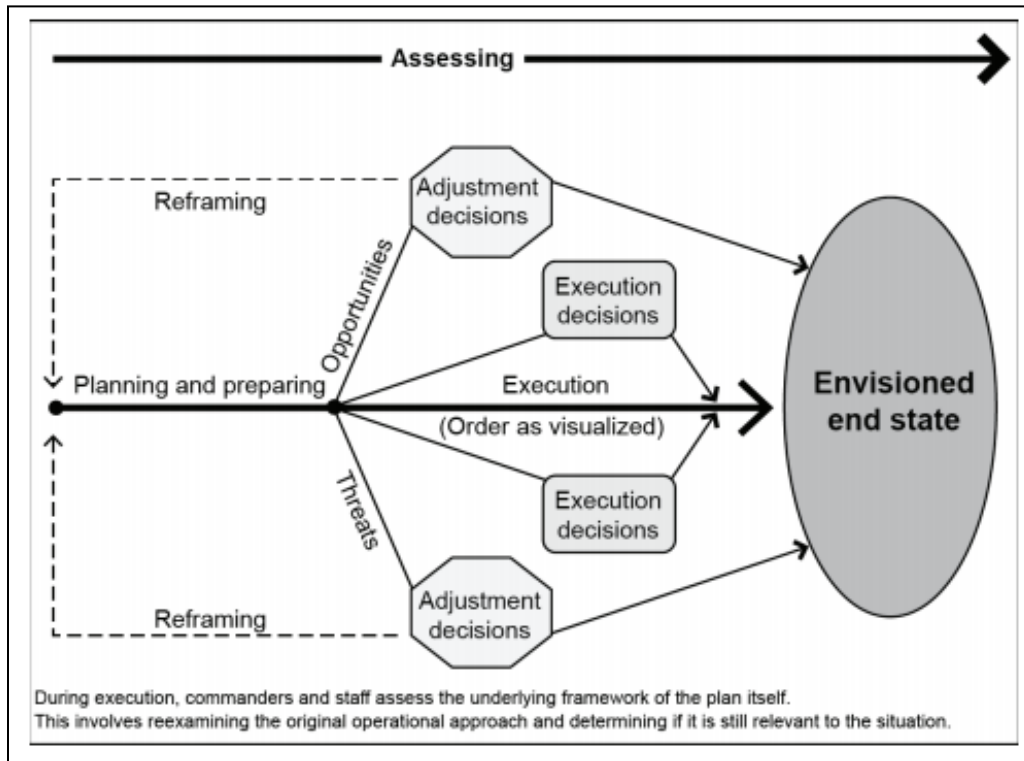


Figure 1: Execution and Adjustment Decisions help redirect the fight towards the desired end state.²

While adjustment decisions occur during the course of an operation due to unforeseen circumstances, execution decisions should be planned to keep the operation on track. When defining the enemy's plan, Army doctrine discusses an evaluation of the most likely (MLCOA) and most dangerous (MDCOA) courses of action³. When a commander directs a singular COA against either the MLCOA or MDCOA, then the formation is at risk when the enemy conducts the opposite. This triggers a hasty adjustment decision, often while in contact, and leaves subordinates little time to change their actions. Developing execution decisions with potential branch plans during the planning and preparation phase will provide the flexibility necessary to achieve success.

A recommendation is to include the decisions that a commander will make much earlier into the military decision-making process (MDMP). Traditionally an output of the COA Analysis wargame⁴, potential decisions should be included in the commander's visualization, then described to the staff with the commanders planning guidance. Creating a decision point section on the commanders planning guidance template is a helpful method to do this. Following COA Analysis, the staff may still find further decisions and refine the previously

² Figure 4-2 from *ADP 5-0, The Operations Process*, July 2019

³ Step four of the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield Process. *ATP 2-01.3*, March 2019.

⁴ Chapter 9, MDMP of *FM 6-0 Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*. March 2014



directed ones into the decision support matrix. Thinking about decisions earlier will prevent them from being skipped entirely and make them more effective during the course of the operation.

The Five Common Decisions

Including a commander's potential decisions into the planning process prior to COA development can make the resulting scheme of maneuver much more effective, but this exposes a potential problem wherein the conditions requiring a decision may not yet be fully understood. However, there are five common decisions which have evolved through numerous repetitions of simulated battles and were previously included in both doctrine and professional military education. These common decisions are listed in figure two.

Common Decisions
1. Executing a branch or sequel
2. Changing a boundary
3. Altering the task organization
4. Transitioning between phases
5. Commitment of the reserve

Figure 2: Five Common Decisions ^{5,6,7}

Including these common decisions during the commander's visualization can help his or her view of the battle and help shape the staff's development of COAs. Many of these common decisions can be used to produce standard operating procedures (SOPs) to account for the resulting action or a playbook of branch plans with pre-designated subordinate units that are trained and prepared in advance to execute the action. For example, a unit preparing for a movement to contact may develop in their SOP a tactical maneuver formation with branch plan tasks, habitual task organization changes, and boundary change naming conventions which help improve shared understanding of the commander's decisions in the transition following contact. While these five common decisions may not ultimately be included in the decision support matrix (DSM) nor occur in every operation, they can serve as a solid starting point to

⁵ Former Armor Captains Career Course SGI, COL Thomas Feltey and former CLC SGI MAJ Matt Mattingly detailed historic common decisions in: "Initial Commander's Critical Information Requirements and the 5 Common Command Decisions", *Armor Magazine*. Fall 2017.

<https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/earmor/content/issues/2017/Fall/4Feltey-Mattingly17.pdf>

⁶ 2012 version of *ADRP 5-0* section 4-32 listed four potential execution decisions: "changing a boundary, altering the task organization, transitioning between phases, and executing a branch are execution."

⁷ Current, 2019 version of *ADP 5-0* lists three in section 4-28: "changing a boundary, committing the reserve, or executing a branch plan"



begin a commander and staff's integration of decisions into the plan and better develop COAs which account for threats and opportunities on the battlefield.

The DST As A Fighting Product

The DST is "is a combined intelligence and operations graphic based on the results of wargaming that depicts decision points, timelines associated with movement of forces and the flow of the operation, and other key items of information required to execute a specific friendly course of action"⁸. Consolidating the enemy event template, the DSM, and templating a location of the decision points into a singular fighting product is a highly effective technique to help both commanders and subordinates execute the mission. Observations of task force and company team echelon leaders at the NTC show that very few utilize this tool on their map boards, leaders' books, or other visual products during the conduct of the operation⁹. In fact, less than 30% of sampled leaders even placed enemy graphics on their fighting products¹⁰. There is very little red on many graphics. Similarly, in less than 10% of battles at the NTC, did task force level command posts display, or reference a DST, DSM, or decision points on the common operating picture used by the current operations staff¹¹.

The use of a DST fighting product further enables decision point tactics (DPT), which the opposing force (OPFOR), 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment employs effectively to include multiple branch plans and sequels into a singular COA¹². In practice this technique has proved highly effective to allow the OPFOR commanders to "fight the enemy not the plan" and can be employed by all units to more effectively use the commander's intuitive understanding of the enemy and environment to best employ his or her unit¹³.

⁸ JP 2-01.3. *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment*. 21 May 2014.

⁹ Authors personal observations.

¹⁰ Scorpion Team analysis of pictures of leader graphics prior to LD over five rotations in FY 20.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Former OC/Ts from JRTC and NTC Majors Gary Klein and Alan Hastings. "Decision-Support Planning and Tools:

Planning to Support Decision-Making" *Armor Magazine*. April 2016.

https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/eARMOR/content/issues/2016/APR_JUN/2Klein-Hastings16.pdf

¹³ Former 2/11ACR Commander LTC Peter J. Palmer, "Decision-Point Tactics (Fighting the Enemy, Not the Plan!)," *Infantry Magazine*, January 1997.

<https://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/magazine/issues/1997/JAN-FEB/pdfs/JAN-FEB1997.pdf>

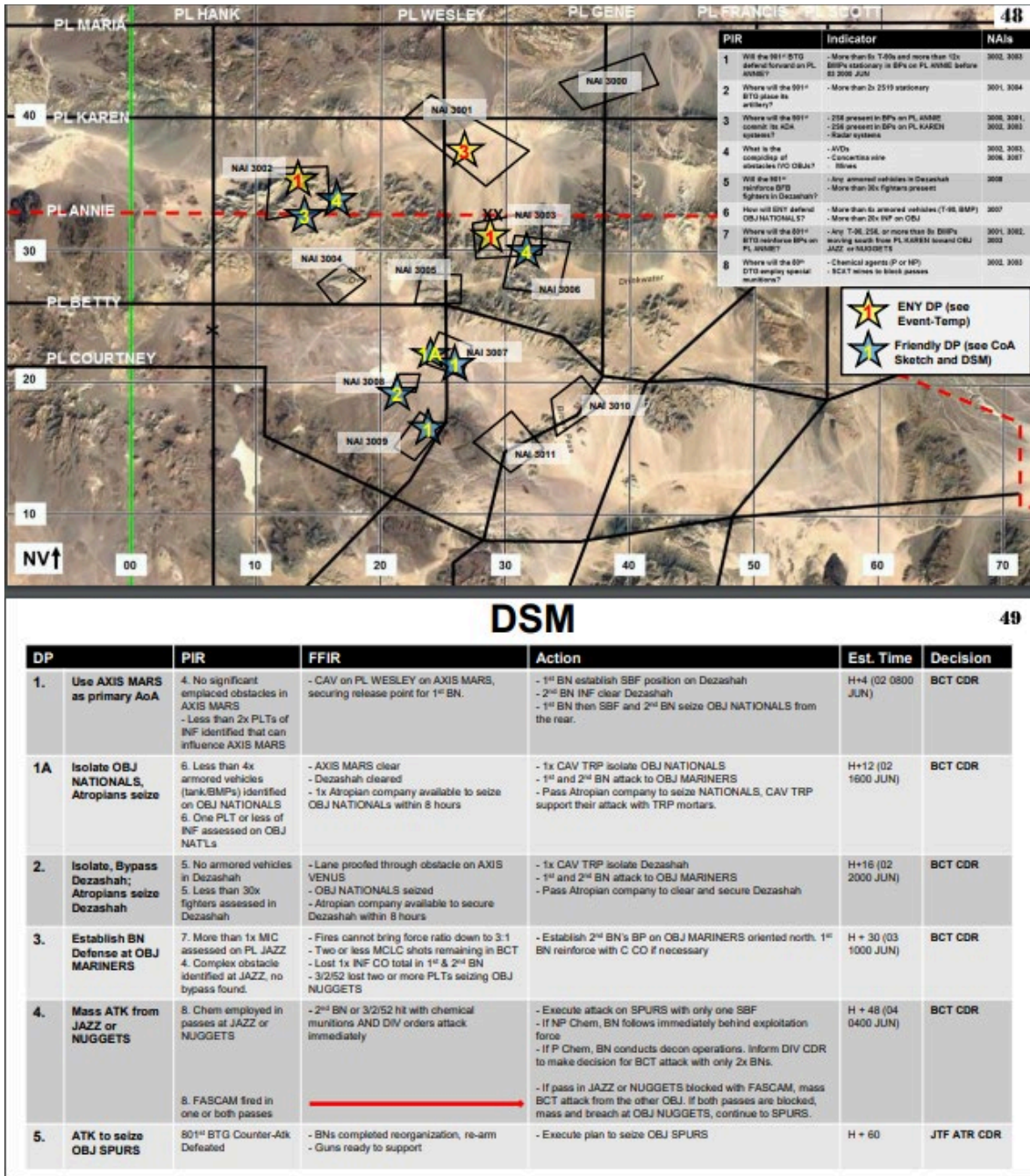


Figure 3. Example DST for a BCT attack ¹⁴

Commanders should also ensure that subordinate commanders and leaders possess a shared understanding of the decisions involved through mission orders and rehearsals. Reviewing subordinate fighting products for completeness and accuracy during pre-combat inspections is

¹⁴ Ibid



another method to ensure that the entire unit is synchronized with the plan. This can be executed simply when subordinates are gathered at a rehearsal or while the senior commander is moving throughout their formation. Regardless of the method, the DST is an important tool to allow the commander to make timely and accurate decisions as well as keep the organization focused on the decisions that its leader will make and enable subordinates to execute disciplined initiative within the commander's intent.

Adjustment and execution decisions are doctrinally part of the operations process and necessary to gain the advantage towards winning on the battlefield. The training scenario at NTC has shown that the ability of the commander to make effective decisions and for their formation to execute them is often challenged with the complex facets of LSCO. However, planning for decisions through all stages of the operations process, incorporating five common decisions early in planning, and including the DST into fighting products will help a unit to best achieve success. Deciding how to employ their unit is one of the most fundamental aspects of a leader's actions and when applied can amplify the effects of leadership through all of the other elements of combat power.





Indirect Influence: Considerations for Organizational Leadership

By

Lieutenant Colonel Justin D. Harper, Panther 07

Commanders at all echelons must be experts at providing Indirect Leadership across their formations. They must visualize how they want to fight and instill their intent directly into their subordinate commanders and indirectly into their entire formation. ADP 6-22 states that indirect leadership and methods are essential for organizational leaders although it does not explicitly define the term Indirect Leadership.¹ I propose that many leaders are unprepared for this reality despite untold resources spent on Professional Military Education (PME), Combat Training Centers (CTCs), Operational Deployments and self-development. We fail when we overestimate our personal ability to control our unit and inadvertently disempower our subordinate leaders.

Fortunately, we have the tools and the talent to effectively manage their organizations and keep our Army ready for war. Our Army expects Commanders to lead dozens, hundreds or thousands of Soldiers distributed over extended distances in the face of very capable adversaries. The Commander and his representatives cannot be everywhere at once and may be unable to recognize the Decisive Point of an operation no matter how detailed the plan. The same is true of every echelon; even the tank company Commander with only 63 Soldiers assigned to their organization cannot direct action inside every turret. Our organizational design and philosophy requires trust from the first day.

Throughout my 18 years of commissioned service I have come to learn that significant disparity exists, even amongst doctrinally astute leaders, regarding the terms and language commanders use to describe their visualization. *Shared understanding underpins everything we do as a profession. We risk failure when we assume that following the approved checklist will guarantee success or that all of our subordinates, peers and superiors see the world in the same way.*

The best leaders generate a mental picture of what is actually happening throughout their formation.² They leverage usable fighting products to ensure sufficient, but not excessive control measures are in place. The following examples are a synthesis of observations throughout my career before and during my service as a Senior Task Force Observer Controller Trainer at the National Training Center. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Operations Group or the NTC.

We set the conditions for effective Indirect Organizational leadership by establishing common terms, defining how we fight at echelon and by instilling an expectation that our subordinate

¹ Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Leadership and the Army Profession* (Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office, July 2019)

² Dr. Gary Gregg. 2020. Panther Professional Engagement Program Webinar, 28 April 2020.



“The Army cannot truly apply indirect leadership methods without confident leaders that display a bias for action.”

leaders are empowered to take action without specific direction from their higher headquarters. Our ability to conduct direct leadership is limited even with access to the Army’s most advanced Command and Control Systems. The Army cannot truly apply indirect leadership methods without confident leaders that display a bias for action.

Indirect Organizational Leadership Considerations

Leaders must have a common frame of reference and shared understanding before they can be proficient in any collective action. All leaders have some familiarity with the terms below but many have their own unique perspective on what they really mean for a particular organizations. Army forces conduct training individually and collectively to develop military expertise.³ How we think about terms like Expert, Standards and Perspectives is not uniform across our profession. It is a Commander’s responsibility to build shared understanding with their staff and other organizational leaders.

“It is a Commander’s responsibility to build shared understanding with their staff and other organizational leaders.”

Expertise: Leaders are either *Experts or Aspiring Experts*. Expertise can be either a goal or a standard depending on the context. A Soldier qualifies as “Expert” on their assigned weapon if they hit a certain number of targets on a range. Vehicle Crews can be “Distinguished” (here a synonym for expert) if they achieve certain requirements during crew gunnery. Units sometimes publish training guidance that explicitly states that the organizational standard is “Expert” for a given task and that all leaders should be “Experts” in their field. We lack a clear definition of expertise for areas that are not easily quantifiable.

Standards: Standards should be achievable and not merely an aspiration. We are lying to ourselves if we say something is a standard that we are not resourced to accomplish.⁴ We establish, learn, enforce and refine standards in support of our organizational mission in the Army. Some standards are very clear. Regulations, General Orders, Command Policy and sometimes unit Standard Operating Procedures may clearly define what we mean by a standard. Be clear about the difference between standards and goals; they are not always the same thing.

Doctrine and Definitions: Not everyone understands doctrinal terms. Those who do may differ in their understanding and application of terms. Just as we can easily define what constitutes an expert in rifle qualification, we can determine if a Company Commander complies with

³ Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 7-0 *Training*, (Washington D.C. U.S Government Printing Office. 31 July 2019), 4-1

⁴ Leonard Wong and Stephen J Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves; Dishonesty in the Army Profession* (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2015)



Army Regulation governing Command Supply Discipline without any great difficulty. However, how do define what constitutes an expert at leadership in LSCO while in command of a Company, Battalion, Brigade or higher echelon. Given the dynamic nature of combat, agreeing upon a set of common measures of success proves significantly more challenging recording an Army Combat Fitness Test score.

Perspective: Although we live in a resource constrained world, our military is among the most well funded in history. The equipment, training resources and personnel we have at our disposal far exceeds that of our closest adversary. Leaders at all levels hone their craft in a myriad of PME courses, our CTCs are the envy of the world, the education level of our Soldiers is above the historical norm and we draw talent from most physically fit portion of the U.S. population. Our glass is more than half full when judged against any reasonable measure.⁵

Leaders are rightly hesitant to tell their boss that they lack expertise or have not mastered their particular career field in some way. I propose that achieving anything like Malcolm Gladwell's standard of 10,000 hours of experience in executing collective tasks proves impossible for most Soldiers and leaders.⁶ Ask yourself if it is reasonable for the armor captain who served in a Stryker brigade as a lieutenant to truly be an expert in tank crew gunnery given how few opportunities they will receive in 12-18 months of command. We need to re-frame how we think of expertise.

The Army ultimately relies on the sum total of operational, institutional and self-development models to provide the leader with sufficient time.⁷ In our previous example, the armor captain closes the gap in his knowledge by the totality of these experiences across all three training domains. We should recognize his "expertise" not in terms of the number of gunneries he completed, but instead against what he may be called upon to execute as a combined arms leader in combat. They must be empowered to lead and train their formation; to command with the implicit assumption that their experiences give them the ability to lead in the most dynamic and high pressure scenarios available.

The following truisms underpin our thinking for the future and are worth highlighting before we continue.

- You cannot be everywhere at once and must rely on your subordinates to conduct their duties with minimal supervision.
- A commander's presence at the decisive point depends on the commander correctly identifying what the decisive point will be and is *not* a foregone conclusion.
- The commander might place themselves at the correct decisive point and still be unable to prevent failure.

⁵ Cebul, Daniel. 2018. "US Remains Top Military Spender SIPRI Reports" Defense News, May 2, 2018. <https://www.defensenews.com/industry/2018/05/02/us-remains-top-military-spender-sipri-reports/>

⁶ Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers* (Little, Brown and Company, 2008), 41

⁷ Army Doctrine Publication 7-0 *Training*, (Washington D.C. U.S Government Printing Office., 31 July 2019), 4-1



- The commander's presence might inadvertently have a negative effect by causing subordinate leaders to focus on the higher commander rather than executing the task at hand.

The Army will fight the next war under uncertain conditions with an imperfect level of training. We must be mentally prepared to fight LSCO regardless of when our most recent CTC rotation occurred, how proficient our leaders might be at their assigned tasks or who attended the last collective training event. Opting out will not be an option.

Understanding The Human Reality - Risk And Failure

Years ago one of my Platoon Sergeants relayed to me his experience as a young NCO deployed to Bosnia. During his deployment, breaking a mirror on a HMMWV driving through a narrow village street was enough to merit a field grade article 15 from the battalion commander. Think of the message that this punishment sent to every leader in the formation. Minor mistakes can have career ending consequences. If this sounds like your unit, know that you are not building trust nor preparing junior leaders to lead with confidence in combat.

Imagine yourself as a junior leader executing a rotation at the National Training Center. Now imagine yourself doing the same thing without the benefit of the Operations Group and the standard CTC control measures present at every rotation. In both cases we make mistakes even when we have conducted a doctrinally sound training progression and implemented robust risk reduction measures. We cannot fully eliminate risk and we increase risk over time when we don't trust our subordinates to act without direct supervision.⁸

Now imagine yourself conducting operations in LSCO. You could do everything right, follow every step of the troop leading procedures, check every box in the applicable training and evaluation outline and still face catastrophic failure. After this failure, you must instantly recover and continue to make life or death decisions. Failure and recovery are an inherent part of our business. Human mistakes come with the territory at every echelon.

“Failure and recovery are an inherent part of our business. Human mistakes come with the territory at every echelon.”

You Can Make More Time For Your Organization

The most effective division, brigade, battalion and company commanders create time for their subordinates and superiors alike. By defining how they want to fight from the outset, they don't keep their subordinates [or superiors] guessing. I credit COL/R Tim Ryan for introducing me to the “Good Idea Cutoff Time”.⁹ In practice, you issue the minimal essential

⁸ Army Doctrinal Publication 6-0, *Mission Command; Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington D.C. U.S Government Printing Office., July 2019) 1-14

⁹ COL John T. Ryan, From his statements as Commander of Task Force 2-12 CAV, OIF 2, 2003-2005



elements of your order with fighting products and give time back to your subordinates. Don't waste time making the perfect plan, you are just preventing your subordinates from rehearsing, inspecting and preparing their formations.

“You cannot control as much as you think you can. Provide the minimum essential fighting products as quickly as possible and then move out. Don't dither!”

I hear someone saying “The NTC fight isn't multiple battalion fights, it's a brigade fight...the brigade has to set the conditions”. Although this is true, a major caveat warrants discussion: a perfect product that is not issued in a timely manner or executable with the talent and resources at hand only hinders your subordinates. You cannot control as much as you think you can. Provide the minimum essential fighting products as quickly as possible and then move out. Don't dither!

What are the minimum essential fighting products you ask? While opinions vary, I start with a formally published task organization. Orders, sync matrices, SITTEMPs, target list worksheets, digital and analog common operating pictures are all critical. But they are of limited utility if commanders don't know who works for them and ISGs don't know who to feed. Units should be able to deliver the mail based on the task organization and yet we often fail this very basic requirement.

Why do we fail if task organization is an inherent part of the military decision making process and something we do all the time in almost every unit in the Army? One reason is that we are wedded to “our unit” and are unwilling to formally hand responsibility for our Soldiers and equipment to someone else. We let our emotion cloud common sense and Army requirements.

“You lack the authority and time to retrain everyone until you are satisfied with the level of competence of your colleagues. Commanders will be called to act with imperfect knowledge and without the benefit of an optimal solution.”

We have to trust that the leadership in the other brigade, battalion or company will do their duty. Our sister units are inherently members of our “Circle of Trust” based on their membership in the profession of arms.

Didn't Ronald Reagan say “Trust but verify”?¹⁰ Yes, but the reality of our situation is that we have to trust that the sum total of operational, institutional and self-development experiences of our subordinates, peers and superiors make them trustworthy leaders that are competent to carry out their duties. You lack the authority and time to retrain everyone until you are satisfied with the level of competence of your

¹⁰Swaim, Barton. 2016. “Trust But Verify; An Untrustworthy Political Phrase” Washington Post, March 11, 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trust-but-verify-an-untrustworthy-political-phrase/2016/03/11/da32fb08-db3b-11e5-891a-4ed04f4213e8_story.html



colleagues. Commanders will be called to act with imperfect knowledge and without the benefit of an optimal solution.

Army doctrine suggests that the span of control is situation dependent but is generally recognized as 3-5 subordinate elements.¹¹ A brilliant commander might be able to manage more but don't assume that you are that genius. Every action that requires us to drill down multiple levels and directly intervene in our subordinate units comes at the cost of doing our job. Our doctrine says we train one level down and certify two levels down.¹² Commanders who reach too far down on a routine basis disempower their subordinates and are likely not doing something inherent to their particular echelon.

Isn't a commander responsible for everything his unit does or fails to do? Absolutely! I am not advocating a change to Army command policy. I am suggesting that senior leader interventions should be exceptional. The norm should involve ensuring that the right leader, at the right echelon, is formally designated with responsibility for their unit and is empowered to execute. Commanders must be empowered to command or they are nothing more than glorified hand receipt holders.

Leading Up

Help your higher headquarters by looking at the problem from their perspective. Units and leaders can solve problems for their higher headquarters. Anticipate what the higher level requirements are and then meet them without being asked. If time allows and you have a concept that will work then provide it to the higher unit staff and save them time. I am not proposing a new concept; watch the movie Patton and see how the 3rd Army's Commanding General solved a problem for his higher headquarters and thus saved the day.¹³

Your Division, Brigade or Battalion Headquarters will not deliver perfection. If you pay attention you will see that they are all likely doing their job for the first time and don't have all the answers. Your complaints are more likely to build adversarial relationships, waste time and ultimately make the unit less effective.

Your higher headquarters is not incompetent nor ill of motive. That said, you should not try to fully assume the duties of your higher staff counterpart. You can help by sharing honest feedback, useful concepts or helpful products but if you step in and perform others' duties on a routine basis you have set the conditions for a non-functioning organization. Be a good subordinate [and peer] and you will help every echelon of the organization.

Use precise and clear language so that everyone understands what you mean. I can give countless examples of organizations where leaders thought that they were in a contest to see who could speak the longest in an update or who could add the most slides to a briefing. You

¹¹ Army Doctrinal Publication 6-0, *Mission Command; Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office., July 2019) 4-14

¹² Field Manual 7-0, *Train to Win in a Complex World* (Washington D.C. U.S. Government Printing Office., 2016), A-2

¹³ Franklin J. Schaffner director. 1970, *Patton*, 20th Century Fox



are stealing your commander's time and hampering unit performance. Make your words count and keep your updates succinct.

Setting the Conditions

"Setting the Conditions" starts when you arrive at the unit and continues even now as you read this article. If you haven't thought about how you will lead your particular type of unit and how you intend to fight then you are behind the power curve. You must also have a mental model of how you would command or lead the next higher organization. If you doubt this then ask yourself why we publish the succession of command in an operations order. Leaders must be instantly ready to assume command with confidence without hesitation.

Define how your organization fights: The best units provide not just a training focus but discuss how they will fight at the appropriate echelon well before they arrive at a CTC rotation. Publishing a Tactical Standard Operating Procedure (TACSOP) and conducting Leader Professional Development (LPD) sessions are insufficient. Commanders have to know how they are going to fight and need to reinforce this in a constant series of formal and informal touch points with their subordinates. Commander's dialogue takes many forms but it is imperative to achieve both trust and shared understanding.

Build a doctrinal template for your organization: All leaders, including those centrally selected, possess their own unique experiences. Although these experiences prepare them for their position, they are not universal and inevitably cannot cover every possible contingency. Start with your unit's Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE).¹⁴ It is surprising how many leaders don't know the assets that are organic to their unit.

Formally issue your standard operating procedures: Many units have well developed, highly detailed SOPs. Few units formally issue their SOPs in the form of an order to ensure dissemination occurs prior to execution. Almost every unit arrives at NTC with a solid SOP of some sort; however, few leaders are actually familiar with the document. Ask yourself how many actions we say are executed according to SOPs and then consider how your unit SOPs were issued. Have you read all parts of your unit SOPs, for maintenance, drivers training, command supply discipline, planning, main command post operations? Even if you have read them it's likely that some of your subordinates haven't.

Execution: You will execute in time and resource constrained environments without the benefit of battlefield systems and contracted support. Your subordinates won't have time to ask permission. If they are trained to ask "Mother May-I?"¹⁵, then you haven't trained them and are playing not to lose. This is the leader development equivalent of deferring risk into the future.

¹⁴ COL Patrick S. O'Neal, Compilation of group discussions with Battalion Commanders prior to and during his Command of 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, various dates 2017-2019.

¹⁵ COL Michael Simmering, Commander, NTC Operations Group, stated in multiple Brigade Combat Team After Action Reviews, various dates 2019-2020.



We will lose the first fight of the next war if we are afraid to act without Operations Group as a security blanket.

Command and Control: No commander is in total control of their unit. But every commander can clearly define roles and responsibilities associated with the organization of their. Assigning commanders to mission sets and giving them the required resources is how we “control” the fight. We set ourselves up for total failure when we cannot explain to our subordinates who and what they have to work with.

Although no magic bullet guarantees success in every environment, commanders and leaders who know their task organization and understand how their higher commander intends to fight have an immense leg up on their competition. They can act decisively with minimal orders in a way consistent with how their higher headquarters wants to fight. They are ready for war.

Conclusions

Commanders and other Leaders can be successful if they use their imagination and recognize what they can control and what they can merely influence. The commander who can visualize not only how his unit fights but also sees his own personal limitations is immensely powerful. The commander that doesn't waste time trying to over-control his subordinates can focus on doing those things that only a commander can do at the appropriate echelon. I'll briefly review key points here before we conclude.

Experts: We have an incredibly well-resourced system for education and training; one of the best ever devised for a military force. The time and money spent educating and training us are likely to decrease. If we cannot trust our current system to develop experts given our resource level then we should jettison both our leader development model and mission command as a philosophy.

Standards: We set the standards for our formation. Making perfection the “standard” is impossible and enables us to lie to ourselves. Set and enforce realistic standards, Army standards, and make allowances for the inevitable human failure that occurs in every organization.

Definitions: Use doctrinal terms and clear language everyone understands. Many of your subordinates don't understand the analogy when you use a reference from sports, hunting or your favorite hobby. Some of your leaders will be afraid to ask for clarification and will blunder towards execution with an incomplete understanding of your intent.

Perspective: You will not get more resources. So do not ask unless it is something your higher headquarters can realistically provide. Instead consider articulating the risk associated with that shortfall so that your commander can make an informed decision. We are more capable, even in a degraded state, than we realize.



Limitations: Commanders cannot be everywhere and must rely on their subordinates; they must trust subordinate leaders no matter where the unit may be in the training cycle. A Unit Training Plan (UTP) that perfectly conforms to the Integrated Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS) and other applicable doctrine and regulations does not guarantee success and only partially mitigates the risk of failure. We must be mentally prepared to fight our organization without the benefit of a standard unit training progression that culminates in a CTC rotation.

The way forward: Leaders of all echelons must define how they want to fight and explain in detail to their subordinates well before they receive a particular mission. This holds true for whether in a CTC rotation, home station training or combat. The amount of time spent preparing orders at a higher headquarters has diminishing returns that can significantly impact subordinate units' understanding and execution. Get the plan out quickly and rehearse early; you cannot have common understanding if you haven't at least issued a verbal order.

Our profession demands that we be ready to operate in unfamiliar environments with imperfect knowledge of both friendly and enemy forces. Mission command is the philosophy that supports the command and control warfighting function for a reason. It is the only viable way we can operate against a peer level adversary and have any chance of success. Ask yourself how well your subordinates understand how the organization fights and what steps do you plan to take to improve your position.





Leadership of the Brigade Combat Team Joint Fires Enterprise

By

Colonel Thomas A. Caldwell, Wolf 07, Senior Fire Support Trainer

One can confidently assume that all organizational leaders at some point, especially during a Combat Training Center (CTC) rotation, have experienced and observed the frustrations of deliberate or undeliberate selective compliance or noncompliance of actions and orders by individuals or groups. Numerous times at National Training Center (NTC), I have witnessed organizational leaders, specifically the BCT Fire Support Coordinator (FSCOORD) in frustration state, *"I told them to do that; we discussed or talked about that; I don't understand why it didn't happen; why didn't they report that; I don't understand why that happened, AGAIN!"*

The purpose of this article is to provide a Fire Support leader's testament to the application of the tenets of Mission Command (Competence, Mutual Trust, Shared Understanding, Commander's Intent, Disciplined Initiative, Risk Acceptance) within a Brigade Combat Team's Joint Fires Enterprise. The content is themed on circumstantial employment of the principles of Mission Command, and elements of Command (Authority, Responsibility, Decision Making, Leadership) and Control (Direction, Feedback, Information, Communication) at echelon in order to achieve or exceed the Commander's Intent. As a former Direct Support Field Artillery Battalion Commander (DS FA BN CDR) / ABCT FSCOORD, and NTC Senior Fire Support Trainer (Wolf 07), I have experienced and observed the Fires Community's challenges of leaders at echelons ability to understanding how to appropriately communicate capabilities, limitations, constraints, and achievable options with their formations within their respective areas of operation and collective BCT operational environments.

References:

- FM 3-09 Fire Support and Field Artillery Operations 30 April 2020
- ADP 6-0 Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces 31 July 2019
- ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession 31 July 2019

FSCOORD Reflections

Reflection upon my time as a DS FA BN CDR and ABCT FSCOORD brings to mind my unique relationship with my Maneuver Brigade Commander. I distinctly remember his guidance during my initial counseling just "one" week after my assumption of battalion command and approximately "ten" days prior to us deploying to our Decisive Action NTC Rotation. He completely understood that I was only a weeks in command and that I did not have the context of my organization from their home station training in order to transition to our NTC rotation. With a basic mutual understanding of my reality and the mission at hand he simply ended my counseling with following statement, *"You are my FSCOORD and Fires is a hard and*



complicated endeavor that I do not completely understand, but I know it is your job to make it work and I trust you to do your job to meet my intent.” In retrospect that is all I needed to hear from my BCT Commander because him saying the word “**trust**” both charged and empowered me to control the BCT Joint Fires Enterprise narrative and employment with confidence. I was empowered to generate relevant dialogue with him and fellow commanders in the proper employment of fires at echelon (organic mortars to FA Cannon to Echelon Above Brigade rockets) to meet the Commander’s desired end state.

During my time as the NTC Senior Fire Support Trainer, I have summarized this endeavor into the following problem statement that identifies effective fires as holistic brigade team problem.

“How do Brigade Combat Teams establish, maintain, and transition a “Permissive Joint Fires Environment” at echelon within a Decisive Action Training Environment (DATE) in support in order to shape the BCT Deep fight and mass effects in the Close Fights in support of tactical and operational objectives.”

The Science and Art of Fire Support

“The role of the field artillery is to suppress, neutralize, or destroy the enemy by cannon, rocket, and missile fire and to integrate and synchronize all fire support assets into operations.”

FM 3-09 Fire Support and Field Artillery Operations 30 April 2020

One of the first principals that a Fire Supporter is taught at the Fires Center of Excellence, Fort Sill, Oklahoma is the role of the Field Artillery on the battlefield. The fundamental principles of achieving our role is executed through the Science and Art of Fire Support. The delivery of indirect Fires via cannon, rocket, and missile fire in accordance with the Five Requirements for Accurate Predictive Fires (FRAPF) equates to the “Science.” Fire Support in the aspects of Fires planning, targeting process (Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess: D3A), Observer Post planning, and sensor integration/ employment at echelon is considered the “Art.” I have a level of confidence after observing over 20 NTC active duty and National Guard that our ability to consistently accomplish the science of Fire Support is, for the most part, certain. This assurance comes through the disciplined execution of crew drills and mandated regimen of section, platoon, battery, and battalion gunnery table certifications. The art of Fire Support and discipline required to accomplish the science is paired with a leader’s ability to affectively lead and influence their organizations at echelon.

Observed Expectations of Fire Support By Those Within The BCT

“The speed, accuracy and devastating power of American Artillery won confidence and admiration from the troops it supported and inspired fear and respect in their enemy.”

-General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander WWII



Since the inception of modularization the Field Artillery Battalion has become a direct support asset to the BCT with the expectations of:

- Responsive preplanned and dynamic Fire Support within the BCT Area of Operations with effects beyond the Coordinated Fire Line (CFL), specifically in support of the Calvary Squadron's reconnaissance objectives and designated unit with Priority of Fires.
- Processing of Fire Missions Sensor to Shooter via digital Fires Network (Frequency Modulation and / or Upper Tactical Internet).
- Provide timely and accurate delivery of conventional killer munitions (High Explosive and Dual-Purpose Improved Conventional Munition (DPICM) in accordance with the defined High Payoff Target List (HPTL).
- Provide responsive organic and EAB Counter Fires.
- Provide timely and accurate delivery special munition fires (Obscuration, Screening Smoke, Family of Scatterable Mines (FASCAM).
- Provide timely and accurate delivery of precision guided munitions.
- Suppression of enemy Air Defense systems.
- Maintain the Five Requirements for Accurate Predictive Fire.

The Challenge of the FSCOORD

The challenge I faced as the BCT's defined "Chief of Fires" was, "How do I as an organizational leader accomplish the aforementioned Joint Fires problem statement via the science and art of Fire Support, achieve the above expectations for fires and convey that same trusting sentiment I received throughout the BCT Joint Fires Enterprise based on my defined span of control"

Span of Control

"The average human brain finds its effective scope in handling three to six other brains."

General Sir Ian Hamilton

"Organizations should ensure reasonable span of control, which refers to the number of subordinates or activities under the control of a single commander. A commander's span of control should not exceed that commander's capability to command effectively. The optimal number of subordinates is situation-dependent. The more fluid and fast-changing the situation, the fewer subordinate elements a commander can supervise closely. Within this situation-dependent range, a greater number of subordinates allows greater flexibility, and increases options and combinations. However, as the number increases, commanders, at some point, lose the ability to consider each unit individually and begin to think of the units as a single, inflexible mass. At this point, the only way to reintroduce flexibility is to group elements into a smaller number of parts, creating another echelon of command."

Paragraph 4-83 ADP 6-0 Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces 31 July 2019

I had to balance and maintain my two roles as the as the BCT Direct Support Field Artillery Battalion Commander and BCT Fire Support Coordinator. These two roles found me with a defined and necessitated span of control of "**~27 Leaders**" that are networked and woven in the



BCT, with some easily assessable and others not so assessable due extended lines of communications. *Note the number of leaders had the potential to increase based on points of friction and levels of competency.

In my role as the BCT Direct Support Field Artillery Battalion Commander I defined my minimal span of control as the following **8** x Leaders:

1. Battalion Command Sergeants Major
2. Battalion Executive Officer
3. Battalion Operations Officer S-3
4. Headquarters and Headquarters Battery Commander
5. Alpha Battery Commander
6. Bravo Battery Commander
7. Charlie Battery Commander
8. Forward Support Company Commander

In my role as the BCT Fire Support Coordinator I defined my minimal span of control as the following **12** x Leaders:

1. BCT Fire Support Officer
2. Brigade Aviation Officer "BAO"
3. Brigade Air Defense Officer "ADAM Cell"
4. Brigade Aviation Liaison Officer "ALO"
5. BCT Lethal Targeting Officer
6. BCT Non-Lethal Targeting Officer
7. Field Artillery Intelligence Officer
8. Cavalry Squadron Fire Support Officer
9. Maneuver Task Force #1 Fire Support Officer
10. Maneuver Task Force #2 Fire Support Officer
11. Maneuver Task Force #3 Fire Support Officer
12. Combat Aviation Battalion Fire Support Officer

As the BCT Fire Support Coordinator I also beholden a responsibility to influence the BCT Staff fundamentally due to the required attendees to the BCT Targeting Working Group requisite of the following **7** x Leaders:

1. BCT Executive Officer "BCT Chief of Staff"
2. BCT Operations Officer S-3
3. BCT Intelligence Officer S-2
4. BCT Information Collection Manager
5. BCT Electronic Warfare Officer
6. BCT Staff Judge Advocate "Lawyer"
7. BCT Signal Officer S-6 "SIGO"



As it is doctrinal that a lower headquarters should know and understand the mission of the higher headquarters two levels up, I deemed it as important that we needed to consistently maintain access, dialogue, and shared understanding at least two levels down.

Organizational Leadership

“Organizational leaders exercise leadership through subordinate leaders responsible for leading the various organizations that make up the larger organization. Organizational leaders establish a **climate** that supports their subordinate leaders.

Subordinate units and organizations do not depend on daily guidance from their higher-level leaders to be successful. Organizational leaders, particularly commanders, are responsible for communicating intent two echelons down and understanding intent two echelons up. Organizational leaders operate within commanders’ intent and communicate that intent to subordinates as a means of providing room for subordinate initiative and decreasing the number of decisions they must personally make to keep the organization operating effectively. Organizational leadership includes responsibility over multiple functions, such as leading and synchronizing combined arms operations.

Organizational leaders regularly and personally interact with their subordinates. They make time to verify that reports and briefings match their own perceptions of the organization's progress toward mission accomplishment. Organizational leaders use personal observation and visits by designated personnel to assess how well subordinates understand the commander's intent and to determine if they need to reinforce or reassess the organization's priorities.”

Paragraph 1-128-29, ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession 31 July 2019

I also demanded that my subordinate commanders and leaders do the same with the intent of every Fire Support related Soldier was properly informed to execute and react appropriately. I expected all of the aforementioned 27 Leaders along with their NCO counterparts, FA BN Staff to include special staff, Platoon Leaders, and Platoon Sergeants to fully understand my and the BCT Commander’s Intent. **I authored my own Commander’s Intent** for every mission and demanded that it be translated into a **direct leadership** scope with “task and purpose for every section chief and 10 level Soldier. When out conducting battlefield circulation I would engage leaders and 10 level Soldiers and gauge their understanding of my intent and the mission at hand. Any complete ignorance, lack of understanding, or situational awareness immediately triggered me to engage their supervisors.

Direct Leadership

If I had to offer one takeaway from this article it will be the “**culture**” of your organization matters and culture starts with those at the top. Understanding this we needed to collectively create a culture in Field Artillery Battalion and BCT Joint Fires Enterprise that a relentless “**GIVE A DAMN FACTOR**” was going to gain us the success we desired as a team. I strongly believe stakeholders in a mutual goal are gained through empowerment of how every member of the team fully understands how they play a part in the big picture of our success and failure. The simple failure of a 10 Level task(s) not being performed or performed to standard can bring a BCT to a halt or commit it to undesired actions in response.



1-124. Direct leadership is face-to-face or first-line leadership that generally occurs in organizations where subordinates see their leaders all the time such as teams, squads, sections, platoons, departments, companies, batteries, and troops. The direct leader's span of influence may range from a few to dozens of people. The leader's day-to-day involvement is important for successful unit performance. Direct level leadership covers the same type of functions, such as those performed by an infantry squad or a graves registration unit.

1-125. Direct leaders develop others through coaching, counseling, mentoring, and setting the example. For instance, company grade officers and NCOs are close enough to Soldiers to exert direct influence when observing training or interacting with subordinates during other functions.

1-126. Direct leaders generally experience more certainty and less complexity than organizational and strategic leaders because of their close physical proximity to their subordinates. They direct actions, assign tasks, teach, coach, encourage, give guidance, and ensure successful completion of tasks or missions. They must be close enough to the action to determine or address problems. Examples of direct leadership tasks are vehicle maintenance, supervision of creating of fighting positions, and performance counseling.

1-127. Direct leaders understand the mission of their higher headquarters two levels up and when applicable the tasks assigned one level down. This provides them with the context in which they perform their duties.

Paragraph 1-124-27, ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession 31 July 2019

My desire was that identification, accountability, critical thinking, problem solving, and achievable options be generated at the lowest level at the point(s) of friction. I wanted every Soldier to feel a sense of disappointment when they were not able to perform their defined task and purpose with quantifiable results and feedback in order to improve. I also wanted leaders who took their example from myself, understanding that-

- You have to earn respect and confidence every day you wear the uniform and fulfill your assigned duties.
- The privilege to rest in any capacity is earned as well.
- Decisions are informed and not made based on your emotional state, convenience, or comfort. There is no fault given for making informed decisions within your scope.
- Make the BCT's problems your problems or the HHQ's problems your problems.
- Don't walk away from a problem or situation that you can offer "any" assistance or accountability to.
- Don't be afraid to act, speak, and report honestly due to the threat of displeasing others.
- Soldiers at all levels will respect you in the end for pushing them to do better and fulfill their potential.
- EVERYBODY matters and does each teammate know that?

Getting After It

In the Fires Community (sensor to shooter) we are challenged in our abilities to operationalize the following requirements at echelon to maintain a stance that is factual or advisory, in order to be properly employed by the HHQs-

- The Targeting Process: Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess (D3A)



- Trigger, Location, Observer, Delivery System, Attack Guidance, Communication (TTLODAC)
- Five Requirements for Accurate Predictive Fires:
 1. Target Location
 2. Firing Unit Location
 3. Ammunition Data
 4. Metrological Data
 5. Computational Procedures

I found myself challenged as a DS FA BN CDR and FSCOORD in my ability to provide real time options to the BCT CDR. Options that equate to decisions outside of the prescribed Decision Support Matrix that could capitalize on a permissive tempo that gives the enemy multiple dilemmas and exploit advantages. I approached this challenge from a “Science” stance with the belief that there are not many real time options that a FA Battalion can provide to a BCT Commander that are outside of an expected stance of being in the right place, at the right time, with the right ammunition, with the right optics, and being able to talk FM Voice and Digital. I wanted to ensure that we maintained the best deliberate stance upon LD and transition to another deliberate stance when triggers were met.

In pursuit of this stance my teammates and I had to answer the following questions about our organization’s cultural in order to influence the realms of executing the art of Fire Support and the discipline (**organizational and direct leadership**) required to accomplish the science. * The answers to these questioned constantly changed IAW METT-C at a minimum.

1. Where and when does the FSCOORD best place them self on the battlefield to influence Fires?
2. Where and when do Task Force (TF), Company and Troop FSOs place themselves on the battlefield?
3. How are each respective Fires Support Element incorporated into the BCT and TF TOCs and TACs?
4. How are the Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC) incorporated into the BCT and TF TOC and TACs?
5. Who facilitates the Fires/Intelligence Collection Rehearsal, Fires Technical Rehearsals, and Targeting Working Groups?
6. Who attends the Fires/Intelligence Collection Rehearsal, why, and are they invested in the process and see it as a compliment to MDMP and Six TOC Functions?
7. Does our organization set conditions to ensure that every rehearsal and working group is one of “Quality?”
8. How does our organization define “Quality” and who ensures it?
9. Who has release authority for precision strikes and re-tasking of EAB assets?
10. How germane is the traffic on the Fires Voice Network; how do we gauge the quality of collaboration; how often do the TF FSOs have dialogue with the FSCOORD?



11. Do TF, Company and Troop FSOs have a good rapport with their Maneuver CDR's and Field Grades? Do they feel empowered to communicate any issues to the FSCOORD that deal with unachievable expectations or opportunities?
12. How do Fire Direction Officers, Platoon Leaders, Battery and Company Commanders make decisions and do they provide options to the higher echelon leaders?
13. Has our organization defined pacing items at echelon with the Joint Fires Enterprise beyond Howitzers and BFIST, i.e. radios, AFATDS, TACLINKs, antennas, optics, data cables?
14. Does our team fundamental understanding reporting expectations of designated or unidentified Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIR), specifically Friendly Force Information Requirements (FFIR)? That when not properly processed through the Six TOC Functions cannot be effectively incorporated into deliberate or situational decision making IAW Command and Control of Warfighting Functions. This FFIR should be expanded to our ability to maintain the aforementioned "**Observed Expectations of Fire Support by those within the BCT**" specifically a seamless Fires network P.A.C.E Plan digital and voice and the Five Requirements for Accurate Predictive Fire.

Things Only the DS FA BN CDR/BCT FSCOORD Can/Must Do

1. Advise the BCT Commander on their intent for Fires. The BCT Commander's intent for Fires sets the tone, sets expectations, and enables the entire BCT Joint Fires Enterprise.
2. Speak candidly and advise the BCT Commander and fellow TF Commanders on the capabilities, limitations, and constraints of the BCT Joint Fires Enterprise to include the employment of TF level sensors and deliver systems (mortars).
3. Write "your own" Commander's Intent. Define what risk(s) you are willing to assume and not assume.
4. Adamantly define the decision that only you can and want to make.
5. Force your staff, Battery/Company Commanders, and TF FSO to provide you with options.
6. Ensure every rehearsal Fires/IC, Fires Technical, and FA Tactical are of "Quality." Examples: All attendees are present prepared with the proper Fighting Products, the rehearsals begin and end on time, and provide relevant injects that identify and fill plan gaps.
7. Empower the BCT FSO in order to be credible and respected by the BCT Staff (CUOPS and FUOPS). Also to ensure the Fires Plan is fought to expectations IAW the High Payoff Target List, Target Selection Standards, and Attack Guidance Matrix.
8. Instill confidence in the BCT Joint Fires Enterprise Community by owning and engaging every Fires venue at least two levels down.
9. In person inspections of Fires ISO Defensive Operations Engagement Area (EA) Development. Visit each EA and have the respective TF FSO brief their Fire Support plan to you.



10. Define and enforce mandated rehearsals, PCCs and PCIs based on previous shortcomings, and defined risk to force and mission.

Conclusion

The word "Enterprise" is defined as = *A project or undertaking, typically one that is difficult or requires effort.* The BCT Joint Fires "Enterprise" is no exception to this definition and the level of shared understanding of how to accomplish a deliberate lethal stance must be properly communicated for appropriate application, constantly. Necessary tasks within the Joint Fires Enterprise do not solely happen because we have identified, planned, tasked and ordered accordingly. The BCT Joint Fires Enterprise must establish and maintain the confidence of the BCT. Confidence is easily lost if we cannot perform the expected functions of Fires and if we create a perception that every lack of capability is rooted in excuses, inability to properly manage expectations, and complement opportunities. A culture must be established and fostered throughout the enterprise at the top to lowest echelons. The DS FA BN CDR / BCT FSCOORD sets the tone he or she is responsible for visualizing, describing, and directing the efforts required to achieve success in the difficult and meticulous pursuit of fires. They are the steward of the "GIVE A DAMN FACTOR!" Perfection in any endeavor of warfighting is unachievable, instead the desire should be an organization that is uniformly self-aware and purposeful.





Where does the Aviation Task Force Commander Fight From?

By

LTC Timothy Jaeger, Eagle 07, Aviation Task Force Trainer

During the continuous operations an aviation task force will encounter at the National Training Center, many task force commanders struggle with where they will be most effective fighting their organization from. The Eagle Team OC-Ts will see commanders at echelon ask themselves the same questions rotation after rotation.

- How well have I trained my subordinates to handle the pace of operations and multitude of tasks required of my unit?
- Where can I be the most effective commander right now and where will I fight from?

These two questions are only a fraction of what aviation commanders must think about as they prepare to execute operations in a decisive action training environment preparing their unit for large scale combat operations. Like many complex questions; the answer(s) is/are often just as complex, or potentially, lead to additional questions. Aviation Company/Troop and Task Force commanders need to identify the pros and cons of where he/she chooses to fight from. Specifically, when the aviation task force commander is making that decision he/she has three options, (1) an aircraft, (2) the tactical command post (TAC), or (3) the main command post (CP). All viable and all with separate variables to consider when making the decision of where to fight an aviation task force and execute command and control.

The aviation task force commander must clearly communicate how he/she envisions their formation executing an achievable and progressive training strategy at echelon. Commander's dialogue, in the planning process with senior leaders and company/troop commanders is paramount in the decision of where he/she will fight from. The vision of the commander should take their formation from individual through collective training at the battalion/task force level. Air Mission Commanders and pilots-in-command must be developed and trained. Platoon leaders need the repetitions and sets to maneuver their platoons and company commanders need to maneuver companies under load and stress, culminating with the aviation task force commander maneuvering multiple companies. All of these repetitions need to be supported with the appropriate maintenance and sustainment enablers. Multi-echelon training repetitions at each leadership level from squad leader to company commander will allow the required staff training opportunities and repetitions to afford the task force level commander the opportunity to identify where he/she needs to fight from during the various missions they will encounter at the National Training Center.

The aviation task force commander must continually assess his/her leaders throughout their training glide path. Identify company commander strengths and weaknesses at maneuvering



their formations and direct retraining when required. The commander must also determine if the forward support company commander can execute multiple FARPs simultaneously. If your home station training plan doesn't include attachments, is your distribution platoon trained and prepared to establish multi-mission design series FARPs? What training events afforded the operations officer the repetitions to identify the correct members of the staff to move forward in a TAC? Has the staff executed command and control iterations from both the TAC and Main CP at pace? Does the XO have the repetitions in the main CP when the S3 is absent at the TAC?

The trust built within the team during multiple training repetitions at home station and the team's ability to gain shared understanding of the commander's intent through multiple iterations will allow the commander to move about the battlefield, trusting his subordinates will act and make decisions in accordance with his guidance. Clear commander's intent/guidance and well thought out commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) that defines when/how to notify the command of pending decisions are critical to allow a commander the freedom of movement to attend the various briefs/mission rehearsals they will encounter or be required to attend. If the CCIR or commander's guidance is too verbose, unclear, or restrictive, the task force commander will spend just as much time directing the next action versus commanding the formation as a whole. On the contrary, too much guidance or too many key tasks stymies initiative. When subordinate commanders and leaders are trained and understand intent, their ability to lead their formations will allow the aviation task force commander options to lead his/her formation.

At the National Training Center, the Eagle Team has seen battalion task force commanders choose several different locations to fight from, each with their own list of advantages and disadvantages. Oftentimes, commanders will send the S3 forward to fight from a TAC co-located with a jump-forward Arming and refueling point (J-FARP) while the commander flies and fights in support of the current operation.

Fighting from an aircraft allows the commander to rapidly gain situational awareness, communicate with higher and adjacent units, and be present on the battlefield, allowing him/her to make timely decisions. During planning, the staff needs to ensure the pace of operations, terrain flight, and potentially long distances between the mission area and other command nodes does not limit the commanders ability to communicate. Aircraft positioning is vital in determining if the commander will fight from the air. Options include, but are not limited to:

- Positioning the commander's aircraft in a holding area where either line of sight, digital, or over-the-horizon communication is possible
- In the vicinity of a higher or adjacent headquarters Main CP or TAC, to ease communications between organizations, or
- In between company commanders forward in an air assault or attack by fire position with communication to the operations officer in the TAC - serving as the vital link between the intelligence triggers for aviation employment



This scenario allows the commander to more clearly understand what tactical decisions are being made forward, still communicate with the vital staff WfFs in the TAC, and make informed decisions with respect to fires, intelligence etc. Fighting from an aircraft may be the most advantageous allocation of battalion task force leadership for larger company (+) or battalion level missions. However, having the commander fight from an aircraft, the operations officer dislocated from the main CP, and the executive officer running the main CP stretches an organization thin and could be considered the 'sprint' of command and control. At some point, the unit will have to consolidate and continue to plan for future operations.

When the task force commander chooses to fight from the main CP, he/she needs to identify what types of missions require immediate decisions. The commander most likely doesn't need to be on established resupply missions or platoon level attack or reconnaissance missions. The commander's time may be better spent providing planning guidance and intent for larger company (+) or battalion missions in the next 24-72 hours. By allowing trusted company commanders, the operations officer, or senior battle captain to exercise command and control over ongoing operations, the battalion senior leaders can properly focus the future operations. If it is determined that fighting from the main CP is feasible, advantages often include the availability of redundant communications and the ability for the commander to surround him/herself with the subject matter experts. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the command and control nodes will also allow the commander to have access to immediate intelligence updates, sustainment operations etc.

A less exercised course of action is for the task force commander to fight from the aviation TAC. Separate from spending time co-located with the TAC in an aircraft waiting for refuel, the commander's time can be better spent in the main CP or forward in an aircraft. This is not to say there is not a time when the commander may have to be at the TAC. Perhaps the TAC is serving as a control node for a holding area and the commander can use the resources available in the TAC to monitor a battle and time the launch for an air assault or deliberate attack without exposing aircraft to the enemy by managing aircraft REDCON status.

The ability for aviation commanders to move about the battlefield means there may be specific locations for specific phases of the operation for the commander and not a 'one-size-fits-all'. There is no single or simple answer to where the commander should fight from. An organization's repetitions and sets gained during home station training allow for shared understanding at echelon of commander's intent, allowing leaders to decide where to fight from. A commander in the correct location, with the appropriate PACE plan, enables communication and decision making throughout the formation and decreases risk to both force and mission.



The TACP - A Lesson in Incorporating Enablers

By

MSgt Aaron S. Cass, USAF, Raven 40

The Joint Fires Enterprise, and honestly, the Joint environment as a whole, recognizes the skillsets that the TACP brings. The rank structure (rightfully instituted) can be a limiting factor, especially for the SMEs. Oftentimes, the E-4/E-5 TACP has a deep seated mentality that thinks outside the box to combat typical maneuver warfare and how best to pummel the enemy. In my years of experience and 9 deployments, I have witnessed a general dismissal of an enlisted member that is a subject matter expert due in large part to a cultural mindset that differs in each Service. As an Enabler, the TACP has a wide-ranging capability that suits not just conventional but Special Operations as well. Quite a few senior enlisted have spent time on both sides and have a very unique view on the wars that we have been a part of for over 20 years and have garnered valuable lessons learned that have been glossed over by our Army brethren.

In order for the military units to be joint, staffs must recognize that TACP enlisted are just as knowledgeable as our Officer counterparts in the TACP community. Our officers go through the TACP schooling with the enlisted and train to the same degree from the schoolhouse all the way to the operational units that are at the BCTs. In order to best facilitate the staff, a mechanism should be in place that recognizes that you will not always know the enabler that you are working with, but understand that they are there for a purpose. I have imparted on my staffs in the past that in order to best affect the battlefield, each person within the construct of the military should be seen as part of a multi-tool.

The ground force commander (GFC) should be able to take the advice of each member in targeting working groups, intelligence collection working groups, and so forth and see that individual as a valued member to a joint environment. When in a joint environment, it is crucial that the GFC does not view a member as Army or Air Force. View them as what they bring to bear. Oftentimes I hear culture between services. What I say is, joint is its own culture, and recognize this to be an advantage. I encourage leadership to have an open mind about everything.

My best CTC rotation showcased what happens when allowed to think freely and work amongst the warfighting functions as a team. I made it clear that a TACP must be taken seriously (not just saying they do and then go around them to an "O" in the Air Force) and that a JTAC is qualified, certified member recognized in the DoD to perform all aspects of kinetic and non-kinetic activities. The GFC should know that the first priority is to advise and liaison. Take the information that they have and use it to the advantage of the Staff. When this happens, a clear path to success is made that much easier.



Making Your C2 Enterprise Facilitate Your Leadership

By

Lieutenant Colonel Rett B. Burroughs, Lizard 30, Senior Signal Trainer

What should Commanders focus on with regards to Command and Control systems that the S6 should be closely supervising and managing for the commander? Often times we see commanders ignore C2 systems and then arrive at the National Training Center without ever directly understanding his or her full communication capabilities. Once the team is on the ground at NTC it is too late for commanders to pay attention to what the S6 has or has not been doing in garrison and unfortunately, many units go into the box handicapped from a C2 perspective.

What should a commander do for the train up at home station? What should the commander expect the S6 to do to ensure communications platforms are operational and operators know how to operate them? The trends we see at the NTC are across a broad spectrum from, “my SIGO doesn’t know what they are doing,” to “We know how to use our systems and are ready to roll.” How does a Commander set him or herself up for success? What steps should you take to properly lead and mentor that S6 through the home station training experience to ensure the team is ready to roll into the box? *There are five different areas on which commanders should focus their attention while directing the S6 to educate the S3, XO, and Commander. Those five areas are RETRANS, ESR/Maintenance, PCC/PCI, Priority of Work, and Communicating up and down.*

Before we delve into each of the areas, let us define Fully Mission Capable. There is a divide between Signaleers and Combat Arms leaders when it comes to defining FMC. A Signaleer may define FMC when they are able to get a connection between nodes and then proceed to tell the commander that a comms check is complete without ever proving actual connectivity between nodes. This does not account for end user equipment and the validation that a person at one node can successfully talk to another human on the other side of the line. This is where we must be clear on our definition of FMC. Commanders can further validate FMC by directing the S3 to conduct the Mission Command Validation, ensuring all operators know how to use their assigned systems and can successfully perform their required missions.

“There is a divide between Signaleers and Combat Arms leaders when it comes to defining FMC.”

FM RETRANS is the most common platform used at the National Training Center by rotational units. While most units come with radios FMC in their vehicles, they will fail to anticipate the tyranny of distance and not prepare RETRANS teams for the rotation. Constant training and



validation of RETRANS is key to success. Commanders should expect the S6 to establish the RETRANS teams every week during motor stable Mondays. Verifying that all equipment is present, FMC, and the team knows how to deploy the entire system from the generator to the equipment needed for a minimum of 3 channels. Can your teams move at night? This continues to have a negative impact during rotations. Most importantly, the commander MUST enable the S6 by providing and protecting the time, resources, and personnel from other distractors that often consume the S6 at home station.

ESR/Maintenance – Understanding the ESR and maintenance is seen as shortfalls within the Signal community. The S6 does not know how to acquire parts for Signal systems or bench stock for the myriad systems in a BCT. Poor maintenance and failing to validate systems at home station is evident when Signal systems arrive at NTC, typically in poor condition. Have the S6 track and brief all Signal systems, from the JCR slant to pacing items (CPN, STT, HCLOS, etc.) and their status on the ESR. Is the JCR slant reflected on the ESR? Does the S6 attend the maintenance meetings? They must be present to ensure proper representation of the systems needing assistance. The S6 should be expected to turn on all Signal systems weekly. Protecting the S6 team from spending their time doing -10 level operator tasks such as turning on JCRs or filling COMSEC into radios will not only allow them to conduct proper maintenance on their systems, it will ensure operators are capable of maintaining their own systems when the S6 is not there to do it for them.

PCC/PCI – Pre-Command Checks/Pre-Command Inspections continue to hurt units at NTC. Commanders should not assume the S6 knows how to properly conduct PCCs nor that the Commo Chief understands PCIs. Layouts are no longer inherent in our culture and units pay the price each rotation, usually by leaving equipment at home station. Have the S6 explain how layouts are done and how PCC/PCIs are completed and followed through to complete sets. Have them show you a layout of your RETRANS team and provide your feedback on what right looks like. While this may seem petty, it could very well determine mission success out in the desert as you attempt to communicate with your unit at distance.

Priority of Work – Protect your S6 shop from -10 level tasks and expect your S6 to show you how they are establishing priority of work. What is important to the commander is important to the S6. Often we see Signaleers doing basic operator level tasks due to lack of training and command influence. Most units come to the National Training Center and never achieve higher than 50% FMC on their JCR platforms. The average is below 30%. And while the S6 spends all of RSO&I getting JCRs and radios filled and validated, they neglect their Signal 20 and 30 level tasks that you rely so heavily upon in an austere environment.

Communicate up and down – How often is the S6 talking to higher and lower? Is the S6 conducting a weekly or twice monthly S6 sync that is strictly enforced and synchronized with your staff battle rhythm? Have the S6 demonstrate to you what they are doing and who they are talking to when leveraging assets outside of the organization. If this is not done at home station, it will not happen at NTC.



Commanders who involve the S6 in their small group huddles, planning sessions, and day to day discussions will have better success when under the pressures that come with an NTC rotation. A commander who focuses on these five areas will have a better prepared organization when it is your turn. Your S6 should be able to explain to you where all of your communications equipment is in the formation, the status of each platform, and what is being done to get equipment to FMC and Signaleers trained and ready to fight. They cannot do that if you do not enable them through command influence down to the subordinate commanders. Having your S6 explain their understanding of the five areas covered here on a regular basis will allow you to provide continuous guidance with little time or effort on your part, will ensure you understand the capabilities and restrictions of your communications systems, and allow your S6 to adjust to your priorities. You provide the purpose, direction, and motivation, and your S6 will have the organization ready to communicate at the National Training Center.





The Intelligence Warfighting Function - Battlefield Leadership of a Team of Teams

By

Lieutenant Colonel Brendon K. Dever, Lizard 09, Senior Intelligence Trainer

Almost every Intelligence Warfighting Function leader at some point has asked some version of the following question: “What are the keys to success for an S2 (or other IWfF leader) during a Combat Training Center rotation?” Collectively as an Army, we have the experience of hundreds of rotations over the 40-year history of the National Training Center (and the other CTCs), countless lessons shared from experienced leaders through LPDs, articles, and even social media engagements. The question generates many responses: a well-established Intel architecture, thoroughly rehearsed processes and SOPs, integrated teams, effective transitions, etc. These topics are among many that any Intel leader desiring to be successful should give due diligence. But this particular paper won’t delve into staff processes, effective architecture, or SOPs. Its purpose is to tackle a topic that is on its surface much simpler, but in practice requires a much greater up-front investment than any of those to get right— effective battlefield leadership.

If it’s true (and it generally is) that we consider an S2 or other Intel leader good because they were effective/successful during an NTC rotation, we are acknowledging a couple of important points. First, that a CTC rotation is as close as we can get to the crucible of combat. The complexity of the Operational Environment (OE), competitive peer or near-peer enemy, and demanding conditions create challenges unequaled by any other training event. Hopefully, the 14 days in the box at NTC will be the most challenging an S2 will ever face. Consequently, the second point is that we validate good IWfF leaders based on their ability to excel in contact under these conditions. In other words, if you can succeed here, you can probably do it anywhere.

Large-Scale Combat Operations on Today and Tomorrow’s Battlefields

Easier said than done. Large-scale ground combat operations are characterized by complexity, chaos, fear, violence, fatigue, and uncertainty. BCTs, and specifically the Intelligence Warfighting function, face challenges greater than ever in terms of friction and stress. The threat forces on the battlefield today and tomorrow can effectively use integrated air defense systems, long-range fires, counter reconnaissance, cyberspace and electronic warfare operations, camouflage and concealment, and deception.¹ The concept of “fighting for intelligence” has never been tougher, yet it is more critical than ever to enable a commander’s decision making.

¹ p vii, ADP 2-0 (Intelligence), JUL 2019



The OE in a rotation at the National Training Center will present all of those challenges and more. From day one, the BCT will be in contact with the threat. Cyber and EW, enemy proxy forces intermixed with the civilian populace, micro UAS, Division Tactical Group reconnaissance elements, etc. As the rotation progresses, S2s quickly realize the enemy has mastered an ability to use the effects of the terrain to their advantage. They effectively use every available form of contact (direct, indirect, non-hostile, obstacles, CBRN, air, visual, and EW) and in so doing are able to mass combat power, usually at the decisive point of the fight. Detailed threat models, a well-executed Mission Analysis (including all four steps of IPB), a solid collection plan – even then it’s difficult to apply adequate predictive analysis to stay ahead of this enemy.

You Own the Problem but the Solution Requires a Team

As an IWfF leader in a BCT, you understand the challenges and complexity of trying to oversee the entirety of the Intelligence Process – plan and direct, collect and process, produce, and disseminate – and a constant turn of analyzing and assessing. It would be challenging enough if every Soldier and platform that has a role in this process was located in the same CP, working for a single person who had no other responsibility than to run it. But that isn’t the reality you face. Structure, and the very nature of collection and analytical requirements necessitate a federated approach to the Intelligence Process. Collection platforms, reconnaissance elements, battalion intelligence sections; they all work for someone else and often have different (even competing) requirements.

And that’s only touching on what is organic to a BCT. Large-scale combat operations are always multi-domain and a BCT is part of a much larger enterprise in fighting them. This is particularly true when it comes to the vast intelligence enterprise. Many of the capabilities required to compete in a multi-domain fight (even at the BCT level) aren’t Army capabilities. An inherently Joint, inter-agency “national to tactical” approach to intelligence is an absolute requirement for success on the battlefield today and tomorrow.

So where does that leave you S2? You have disparate formations and organizations, both within and outside the BCT, all with some role in your BCT’s intelligence process. They don’t work for you (and in some cases they don’t even work for your commander). Yet ultimately, it is your job to lead this intelligence effort. Yes, commanders own the intelligence effort – they are responsible for everything within an organization. But commanders have a whole lot on their plates. Intel leaders and every echelon must step up and take ownership of every aspect of the intelligence process. You must pull it all together to provide relevant, timely, predictive intelligence to your commander to enable effective decision making and mission success.

Case Study: Where is the Shadow?

It’s not easy – even with organic assets that are completely dedicated to the BCT’s information collection efforts. Imagine you are several days into the rotation and preparing for a significant



operation (attack to seize Razish for example). You have some critical intelligence gaps, so success during this operation will hinge on the BCT's reconnaissance and collection efforts over the next 12-24 hours. You walk in to speak with CUOPs to get an update on the NAI where you expect the Shadow to be actively scanning, only to discover that CUOPS has no idea where the Shadow is located. After 30 minutes of asking around, you discover that the Shadow Platoon broke down the launch and recovery site about an hour ago and are preparing to jump to a new location. It will be at least 18 hours before they are ready to begin operations again.



Some variation of this scenario happens far more frequently than you might imagine. What do we blame? A failure to plan properly? A lack of communication? Competing priorities and natural friction? Yes to all, most likely. Somewhere between plans, the Collection Management Element, the MICO Commander, the Shadow Platoon Leader, CUOPS, the BEB S3, or any number of others who have responsibility for the planning and execution of the Shadow collection effort things fell apart. It's very possible the Shadow Platoon had a very good reason to jump at that time. Upcoming weather, an increased threat to the current location, extended lines of communication, etc. But ultimately, through something completely avoidable, we failed as a team to provide essential information collection at a critical time in the fight.

This is one example of many that occur across the BCT during a typical rotation. The CAV squadron doesn't get an updated Annex L and begins movement to collect on NAIs that aren't synchronized with the BCT's IC plan, the HUMINT or signals collection teams end up in the wrong locations or attached to the wrong battalions, the Shadow is scanning NAIs from a 2-day old collection plan and is consequently behind the FLOT.



Leadership Competencies - Builds Trust, Extends Influence, Communicates

There is generally no single issue we can point to when these types of break-downs occur. There are a lot of hard-working Soldiers and leaders trying to do the right things – it's rarely a lack of effort. But the common thread is almost always that all that effort ended up pulling in different directions. At its core, it's fundamentally an issue of leadership.

Effective IWfF leaders in the fight understand the importance of all leadership attributes and competencies as explained in ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*. They master the “Be, Know, Do” model, and apply who they are (attributes) in what they do (competencies). Each is as important as any of the others, but the remainder of this paper will highlight three competencies of particular relevancy to leading the Intel Warfighting function in the fight – building trust, extending influence, and communicating.

Building trust starts long before the time arrives to load the train and head to the National Training Center. For an S2, this means working on building trust within the section, across the staff, and clearly with your commander. It also means building a similar trust with the MICO Commander and his or her team, the battalion S2s, and many others. Genuine trust between all IWfF stake holders often seems elusive – but successful units get it done. A unit with a climate where trust exists up, down and laterally will almost inevitably be successful. While intangible, it's very easy to observe from day one of a rotation. An S2 who has a lack of trust in his or her subordinate leaders or other members of the team will often try to do it all and will almost always be less effective. Sometimes when asked about it, S2s will admit they don't have a lot of confidence and trust in subordinates and it's easier to do it themselves. Junior officers, NCOs and Soldiers in organizations like this often feel marginalized and fear taking initiative. In most cases it isn't a lack of competence, it's simply a lack of effort in empowering subordinates, building trust over time. As Ernest Hemmingway said, “The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.” This isn't something you can do overnight, so start early!

Even an IWfF leader who has established trust with superiors, subordinates, and peers must also master the competency of extending influence beyond the chain of command. As highlighted earlier, almost every member of the IWfF enterprise in and outside the BCT work for different bosses. Achieving success requires unified action which means creating a shared purpose. Ultimately meeting the BCT commander's intent guides and directs this purpose, but there is a lot of leg work required to help the entire IWfF team work towards this purpose. Yes taskings, orders, task organization changes, etc., are all ways to formalize requirements and are necessary. But an S2 and IWfF team who rely solely on that to get the team moving in the same direction will fail almost every time. Far more effective is the S2 who learns to lead a team of teams – maybe in one instance a coalition of the CAV squadron, FA and AVN BN S2s, elements of the MICO, an attached CA team and a SOF LNO. Without formal authority over any of these, the S2 could potentially lead an effort capable of providing a truly common Intelligence picture that would provide the BCT Commander the best available information and intelligence to enable decision making.



Finally, the leadership competency of communication is paramount. As evidenced in the shadow platoon jump example, a breakdown in communication can sometimes lead to mission failure. We often blame our technical ability to communicate (not everyone is up on upper TI, don't have access to JBCP/JCR, etc.). Certainly, these challenges make effective communication difficult. But more often than not, we find a way to get messages to and from those who need it. Unfortunately, the message we thought we sent and the message received are not always the same. As ADP 6-22 reminds us, "communication as a competency ensures more than the simple transmission of information. Communication generates shared understanding and situational awareness." In other words, like trust, communication is a two-way street and requires clear messaging and active listening.

Conclusion

Back to a variation of the question that so many have asked over the years, "What does success for an S2 and IWfF team look like at NTC?" While there are many ways to answer that question, common to them all is a cohesive team that provided effective, timely predictive intelligence support to enable the commander's decision-making. If you dig a little deeper into an IWfF team that does that well, you will inevitably find leaders who reflect Army's expectations of attributes and competencies – particularly an ability to build trust, extend influence, and communicate.





A Training Relationship: How Sustainment Leaders and Units are Developed

By

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While combat arms battalion commanders and company commanders maneuver their units to accomplish battalion level objectives, the Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) Commander and his or her company commanders must maneuver their units to enable the breadth and depth of the entire Brigade Combat Team's (BCT) operation. The BCT's maneuver battalions fight to achieve BCT tactical objectives, and the Fires Battalion and Engineer Battalion shape for the maneuver battalions. Only the BSB, however, continually supports all seven organic battalions within a BCT.

The employment of an Armored Brigade Combat Team's sustainment units is born of the necessity to ensure an unbroken chain of supply across time and space. The Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) and Forward Support Companies (FSC) must keep pace with their supported units in austere environments and over difficult terrain. Sustainment units must accomplish this with vehicles, equipment and materiel that require a vast amount of space to employ and emplace. During Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO), this will require the BSB and FSCs to integrate and synchronize simultaneous sustainment operations over great distances while protecting themselves from the enemy.



Brigade Support Battalion conducting displacement operations at the National Training Center

In order for a BSB Commander and company commanders, to include the FSCs, to find success during LSCO, they must begin synchronization and integration with their training plans at home station. To be successful, the BSB Commander must have the trust and confidence of the maneuver commanders to allow him or her the latitude to do so.

Trust and Relationships

Often the first time the FSCs and BSB participate in combined training is during a Brigade-level home station exercise. Sometimes, it is even a CTC rotation. At this late stage, working together can meet with resistance; even with total buy-in, it is incredibly difficult to integrate the teams.



FSCs must participate in BSB training early on. From there, relationships form, and sustainers at all echelons gain proficiencies that will guarantee success in LSCO. This approach requires emphasis from Brigade Command Team leadership and buy in from maneuver battalion commanders. Trust in home station training leads to trust on the battlefield.

Successful units demonstrate the following when it comes to executing sustainment operations on the battlefield:

- 1) The Brigade Commander exhibits trust in the BSB Commander as he or she executes her role as the Senior Logistician within the Brigade;
- 2) The relationship between the BSB Senior Enlisted Leader and Senior Enlisted Leaders across the Brigade encourages NCO leadership during the execution of sustainment on the battlefield.
- 3) Shared understanding between the BSB Command Team and Supported Battalion Command Teams of the requirements to train and development the FSCs;

These relationships will enable decisions to be made at the speed of war and allow maneuver commanders to shift focus to their tactical tasks while having the confidence in their sustainers to have the right stuff, at the right place, at the right time.

The Senior Logistician

“The brigade support battalion (BSB) commander is the BCT’s senior logistician. The BSB commander is responsible for sustainment synchronization and execution across the BCT’s area of operation.” The BSB Commander should be viewed as the BCT’s lead sustainment coordinator in the same manner as the Field Artillery Battalion Commander serves as the Fire Support Team Coordinator (FiSTCOORD). In both cases, these battalion commanders serve as the BCT’s subject matter experts (SME) for their warfighting function, and exercise oversight over the Soldiers who execute it.

Within the BCT, the BSB Commander uniquely has the resident knowledge to direct technical and tactical training, as well as managing the talent of sustainers throughout the BCT. The BSB commander sees the BCT’s entire sustainment warfighting function holistically. Therefore, he or she is best suited to task organize, technically develop and provide recommendations on the training plan for sustainers across the Brigade. Successful BSB Commanders spend more than half of their time focusing up and outwards to the brigade level to ensure systems are working and sustainers remain at their maximum state of readiness. LSCO and its speed of operations across great distances will demand this degree of focus in order to sustain the brigade while in contact with a near-peer enemy.

“The BSB commander must understand the supported commander’s plan and then execute support so the supported brigade maintains freedom of action and maneuver. Synchronizing current and future support requirements with the supported brigade are the hallmarks of successful support.”



Interviews with rotational units at the CTCs suggest the training plan for sustainers is often neglected due to competing requirements at home station. Once arriving at the CTC, many BSB Commanders are held accountable for any lack of training and development of sustainers across the brigade. As the Senior Logistician, it is the BSB Commander's responsibility to ensure



Commander conducting a tactical movement brief in preparation for displacement operations

all sustainment units within the BCT conduct the required training and professional development. A BSB commander must put forth the same amount of time and effort to develop the FSC leadership as he or she would with the base companies. This means unit level training and professional development programs at home station, but also ensuring sustainment systems are established and enforced across the BCT.

The BSB Commander cannot accomplish any of this alone. Successful Support Battalion Commanders put forth extreme effort to establish a relationship that is built on trust with their peers. To completely ensure BSB Commander's success as the Sustainment Coordinator, the Brigade Commander must provide command emphasis on sustainment readiness and sustainment talent management, and empower the BSB Commander to oversee and execute them.

Without the BSB Commander assuming the responsibility of sustainment operations on the battlefield, the burden of sustainment falls directly on the FSC Commanders. Observations at the NTC show FSC Commanders simply don't have the requisite knowledge and experience to execute BCT sustainment on their own. They have difficulty anticipating all requirements, and do not have the experience or perspective to visualize operations. FSC commanders which lack the benefit of BSB coordination, integration, and synchronization often see the culmination of their supported battalions, and potentially the brigade.

The BSB Senior Enlisted Leader

The importance of the Sustainment NCO Corps cannot be understated. The key to establishing sound Senior Enlisted Leader relationships within a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) starts with the relationship between the Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) CSM and the BCT CSM. This relationship is the foundation on which all other BN CSMs will build their relationships with the BSB CSM.

Trust established between the BCT CSM and the BSB CSM allows for a number of things to follow, including successful sustainment manning management. The BSB CSM managing FSC manning is key to successful sustainment for the brigade. Successfully executing this process will ensure not only key personnel being placed in the right positions, but that personnel are distributed appropriately across the battalions. If the highest echelons of the brigade place



emphasis and support here, then the correct relationships across NCO leaders will form because the Senior Enlisted Leaders demand it.



Brigade Support Battalion CSM gives a safety brief prior to a tactical road march

The BSB CSM has the added responsibility of a command relationship with the FSCs. FSCs work directly for their supported battalions, and so fall under the leadership and oversight of their supported battalion CSMs. Interactions between all battalion CSMs must be established early and formed on mutual respect. Poor and unprofessional relationships among these senior NCOs potentially risks the entire battalion and brigade support structure. A balance must be reached between BSB leadership and the supported battalion leadership in order to ensure clear guidance is given to the FSC command team. Business practices and lines of

responsibility should be spelled out in a written memorandum of agreement or SOP. There is home station training and relationships that need to be established amongst these FSCs, the BSB, and the supported battalions in order for the sustainment trains to be successful in combat.

Strong CSM relationships within a BCT also increases the level of shared understanding. Having an understanding of what challenges the other battalions face and a general knowledge of their warfighting functions is very important when it comes to anticipating what is needed on the battlefield. Being able to anticipate each other's needs and the common issues seen during combat will lead to the ability to solve issues before they become problems. As an example, knowing there are heavy maintenance issues within a certain maneuver battalion allows the BSB CSM to emphasize placing the right mechanic talent within that battalion to ensure the maintenance program is properly managed from the start.

The BSB command team will also be able to work with supported command teams to make sure the right combination of Officer and NCO talent is spread to each of the supported battalions ensuring each battalion is manned appropriately. Actions such as this help form trust amongst the CSMs and other senior leaders.

Training and Developing the Forward Support Company

The FSCs are considered the link from the BSB to the supported battalions/ squadron and are the organizations that provide the BCT the greatest flexibility for providing logistics support. In order for FSCs to survive on the battlefield, it is imperative that they are allowed time to train on their sustainment tasks. It is also imperative they are allowed to train on their tactical tasks, warrior tasks and battle drills as much as their supported units.



Sustainment training takes place at echelon. As examples, fuelers must know the standard for grounding their vehicles, distro platoons must understand how to execute the BCT's standard for an LRP, and FSCs must be accustomed to drawing supplies from the BSB's companies. Much of this training can, and should take place within the course of sustaining supported battalions. The critical point is that the BSB provides standards and expertise to inform the FSCs



A Forward Support Company conducting tactical convoy operations in support of its maneuver battalion.

and that sustainment execution realistically matches the BCT's SOPs for distribution and maintenance. This includes the role of the FSC commander as the battalion or squadron senior logistician. Supported units who allow the FSC CDR to administer and train their unit but treat battalion sustainment in garrison as primarily the responsibility of their XO and S4 are units who lose the opportunity to train tactical systems.

Tactical tasks include significant training requirements such as weapons qualification and proficiency, Mounted Machine Gun Gunnery, Convoy STX Lanes, LRP/LOGPAC operations and participation in a Brigade Support Area Live Fire Exercise. These training events cannot be minimized to ease supported unit maneuver training. Supported maneuver units who understand their FSCs must be as well-trained as their combat arms Soldiers at employing their weapons and reacting to contact will ensure their FSCs can survive and sustain in LSCO.

The training and professional development of FSC leadership is a shared responsibility between BSB leadership and the supported battalion's leadership. The most successful combat arms units ensure their FSCs' professional development and treat them the same as their organic companies, batteries, and troops, ensuring FSCs understand and can support how their supported battalion fights. The BSB command team provides technical guidance, mentorship within sustainment career branches, and helps the FSC understand and manage talent internally in a technical manner that a maneuver battalion commander cannot.

In many cases, BSB Commanders are reluctant to provide guidance and direction to FSC Commanders because they do not want to create unnecessary friction with their peers. Even in the most tightly integrated BCTs, the BSB Commander may lack visibility on the FSC's day-to-



day activity because of the geographic separation unique to the BSB and FSCs. This means FSC CDRs have to take the initiative, and seek professional growth from their BSB Commander.



In successful units, supported battalion commanders encourage the relationship between the BSB and their supporting FSCs without hesitation. Supported battalion commanders should not fear that the BSB Commander is trying to assume control of their FSC, and BSB commanders should give them no reason to think otherwise. Good commanders of all branches understand there need for solid working relationships.

Maneuver commanders must ask themselves:

1. *What does tactical readiness mean for the sustainers?*
2. *Who is responsible for the training and developing the sustainers across the brigade?*
3. *How do I define sustainment readiness within the BCT?*
4. *Who is responsible for tactical sustainment readiness at echelon within the BCT?*
5. *Am I setting the same training expectation for my sustainment crews as my maneuver crews?*

Routine observations from the NTC include units neglecting the training requirements of the sustainment organizations to focus attention on sustaining maneuver training at home station. Many have a role in the training and professional development of their sustainers. But the BSB Commander must be provided the latitude to train and provide professional development of the sustainers in the BCT. This latitude starts with empowerment from the Brigade Commander and ends with the professional and trusting relationship between all Battalion Commanders across the BCT.

Leaders at the tactical level must understand the readiness of their people and equipment, to include the readiness of their supporting organization. Sustainers must be able to support and execute their warrior tasks and battle drills to standard. They must be proficient on their weapon systems and their sustainment platforms. Finally, they must and have a general understanding of the tactical tasks and endstate dictated to their supported unit. Without this understanding, they will be unable to nest their sustainment plan with the scheme of maneuver. Sustainment plans which synchronize with the scheme of maneuver will ensure tactical organizations can survive and win in LSCO.