

PROFESSIONAL FORUM



Peacekeeping Operations One Infantry Leader's Experience

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When I was alerted in July 1994 to prepare my company for deployment to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, I had to do what many U.S. Army leaders find themselves doing nowadays—get an atlas to find out where in the world we were going.

My company of the 3d Battalion, 5th Cavalry, deployed for a six-month rotation in support of Operation *Able Sentry III* as one of two rifle companies in the battalion task force. For all the leaders in the company, but especially the junior noncommissioned officers, this mission of United Nations duty was both rewarding and challenging. Although our mission and the threat may have been unique, it will illustrate tasks and leadership challenges that an infantry company can expect to face in today's peacekeeping missions.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia early in 1992 after the fall of the communist central government. The military forces in Macedonia at that time were mostly ethnic Serbians who, after the declaration, took their equipment and most of the military assets north to join the Serbian Army in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. The Serbian leadership in that region had periodically threatened military action against Macedonia and

against the ethnic Muslims in Kosovo, a region of southern Serbia. Under the threat of ethnic violence spreading into Macedonia and the possibility of a flood of refugees from Kosovo, the UN undertook its first preventive deployment of peacekeeping troops to maintain stability in Macedonia.

Soldiers from Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden—later joined by a U.S. Army task force—maintained a presence

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along the Macedonian side of the border. The mission of the UN force was to observe, monitor, and report any activities in the border area that could undermine confidence and stability in Macedonia or threaten its territory. Permanent squad size UN observation posts (OPs) and temporary team size OPs and patrols monitored the border area.

The daily situation for the UN soldiers was mostly peaceful, with a low level of threat from both sides of the border. The only major event that threatened the success of the mission was a military con-

frontation in July 1994 between Yugoslav and Macedonian army units at the strategic border location of Hill 1703. The UN commander negotiated a settlement that led to the establishment of a UN monitored buffer zone called the "Blue Zone." Because the Blue Zone was in my company's sector, and because of the Serbs' sensitivity to the U.S. Army presence, this zone was monitored during our rotation by a Scandinavian squad OP under my tactical control.

Company A monitored UN Sector East in the U.S. battalion area, approximately 60 kilometers from the border. We manned either four or six OPs (depending on the platoon rotation) all within 100 to 2,000 meters of the Serbian border. The company CP or forward command post was on a hilltop on the main logistical route 25 kilometers from the border and 70 kilometers from the task force base camp called Camp *Able Sentry*.

At the base camp, the rifle platoons performed one of three platoon activities: base camp guard/force protection, reaction force/quick reaction force, or were on leave or pass status.

The nine-man rifle squads, each with an attached medic, had the primary task of manning their OPs while they were in sector. The daily schedule, which the squad leaders had to manage and control,

was almost completely filled for all of the soldiers who were not currently preparing for or on patrol with OP support and maintenance. Each OP was assigned six patrols per week from a battalion patrol matrix. Each squad conducted a mix of the four types of patrols: route reconnaissance, community patrol, helicopter screen, and establish temporary observation posts (called OPTs). All but the helicopter screens were directed as either mounted or dismounted patrols, depending on the distances involved.

The company commanders certified every patrol leader before his first patrol on his knowledge and execution of the patrol drills, rules of engagement (ROEs), reaction drills, patrol standards, and operations order (OPORD). This was done in Macedonia on a full patrol with OPORD and pre-combat inspection (PCI) run from the OP to which the team leader was assigned. This process was demanding but beneficial in preventing accidents, incidents, injuries, or border violations in more than 750 patrols.

We learned valuable lessons in several areas during this operation that I would like to share with you:

Leader Location on the Battlefield. Our doctrine clearly states that leaders should go to the location on the battlefield from which they can best command their forces. Although this simple guidance is also true for a peacekeeping mission, it is different in its application.

In peace operations, the unit sectors can be large and the units widely dispersed. This gives rise to the temptation to remain at the CP for control and communication purposes, which we discovered to be the opposite of what was required. At the first hint of trouble (spotting a non-UN patrol, reports of gunfire, a vehicle accident, irate local people), go to that location immediately. Moving toward a trouble spot is not a sign that you don't trust the subordinate leader on the scene. You are just commanding action on the basis of what you know to be true, not what someone else is describing, or worse, what someone assumes is happening. Even if the event will be over by the time you arrive, you (in whatever position in the chain of command) are the one

who will have to tell the boss what happened. You can report confidently only if you have all the facts. During routine activities (which is 95 percent of the time), get out, visit soldiers, inspect road conditions, security, force protection, maintenance. At the first hint of trouble, go see the ground yourself, and interview everyone involved. In this context, it is important for all leaders to plan all movements to reduce the chance of losing radio contact.

Interaction with Local Authorities. This interaction must occur at all levels. I had periodic face-to-face meetings (at least monthly) with the mayor of the local city, the Macedonian army border battalion commander from my sector, and adjacent UN unit commanders. This was vital to success, but it paled in importance when compared to my squad leaders' periodic meetings with their local village mayor, the closest border station's platoon leader, and UN small-unit leaders oper-

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ating near their OP. It was this interaction that led to cooperation and a quiet and troublefree sector. It defused numerous incidents that could easily have led to highly visible mission-threatening incidents.

Reporting Standards. The success of an *observe, monitor, and report* mission can depend upon the quality, timeliness, and accuracy of your reporting. We had a lot to learn on SALUTE reports and should have done more training on accurately reporting what was observed. This is simple squad-level training that can be done over and over again without any resources.

We started out with the level of accuracy required by SALUTE reports in combat operations of "two tanks at checkpoint three" and continued training (and retraining) until all soldiers were virtually able to recreate a picture of what they were seeing.

An acceptable spot report would be:
Size—Three bravo-twos. (Codes help brevity and communications security.)

Activity—Moved south along route echo four, halted at road intersection, looking down roads, talking on radio.

Location—EM123456 (off the global positioning system) *at road intersection of routes golf two and echo four.*

Uniform—Brown and green pattern BDUs, black boots, black berets, subject two has round silver emblems on front of beret and black pistol belt.

Time—First sighting 1237; halted at 1245.

Equipment—Subject one: one AK-47, backpack radio unknown type, paper in hand possibly map. Subject two: pistol belt with pistol holster and pistol unknown type, binos on strap around neck, one canteen on belt. Subject three: one AK-47, one dark green backpack. Recorder's battle roster number is Alpha 1234, out.

A SALUTE report like this is a detailed, timely, and accurate rendering of the event. With anything less accurate or timely, you will get repeated calls from higher headquarters asking for more information—and then *more* repeated calls as your incomplete report goes higher.

Scenario Training. We found through experience that scenario training is the only reliable way to train for a peacekeeping mission. After classroom instruction on drills, ROEs, and the situation in the area of operation (report requirements, uniforms), each squad or fire team would have to execute a drill out of our task force SOP. At any stage of execution or any time after its completion, role players of any of the factions or even non-belligerent civilians might enter the drill lane. The squad or team would be evaluated not only on the drill execution but also on their reaction and their reporting.

We found that the key to this training was the preparation of the role players. They must have the freedom to react to the squads' actions, but they must behave in accordance with human nature and the expected threat, belligerence, and mission of the personnel they represent. This included role players during patrol training as well. *Before* his soldiers deploy, a commander must be confident that they will

react in accordance with the ROEs and his intent. We also conducted this training during our deployment to ensure that we did not get rusty in ROEs and force protection.

Communications and Maintenance.

This sounds obvious, but if you're not doing communications and maintenance by your SOPs and by the regulations, you are sure to have problems on a deployment. The enlisted soldiers will have to do almost all the maintenance without supervision, and they must know how to do it right, the first time. We had a hard time initially with doing our peacekeeping tasks and sustaining at the same time. The key, we discovered, was to establish a simple SOP and enforce it vigorously. For example, even with the huge task force sector, every wheeled vehicle went back to the base camp weekly for a dispatch/safety check. It was a rule that we were all occasionally tempted to violate at times, but did not, and the payoff was a six-month deployment with no fatal accidents or major injuries.

Relationship with other UN forces.

The workings of a UN organization are too complex to explain here, but we did discover one key to success: If you cooperate with other nations' forces informally, the trust and communications you build can save you when you don't have time for formal requests. We had a Danish company commander in a sector next to our company's sector. He and I became good friends (my executive officer and his second-in-command became friends, and so on down the line), and we never had to communicate through the liaison officer or have the UN commander tell us to coordinate our activities. We recovered each other's vehicles, used each other's facilities, conducted a popular weekly soldier exchange, and traded food items. All of this was coordinated at company level or lower, and all greatly benefited our company. But you must clearly understand your chain of command and the limitations of your authority with other non-U.S. forces as well as the non-U.S. leaders' authority over you. When in doubt, ask.

Force Protection and Safety. We were lucky to have a low threat from the factions in our area of the border, but this

only increased our awareness of the everyday hazards we would face. Patrolling in the mountains, driving on poor roads, surviving weather extremes, and numerous other things all threatened our soldiers daily.

Talking about safety is not enough; you must incorporate safety as a part of force protection. Therefore, you need a safety plan or SOP, which for us included safety standards and checks and a system of inspections. Peace operations can become so routine that if there is no planned system of safety checks, soldiers can go on missions with vital checks forgotten. All the work on safety and force protection is easier than writing a letter to parents explaining why their son or daughter is not coming home.

Company and Squad Tactical Operations Centers (TOCs). This is a task that was vital to mission success and included training the company's NCOs and

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soldiers on radio procedures, reporting standards, and basic TOC discipline. Each squad leader ran his OP's operations center and had to learn to manage a schedule to control his squad members' time. We were lucky to have a company master gunner whose previous S-3 and TOC training and strong organizational skills freed the first sergeant and me to run the company. He served as the company CP/OP commander and managed all TOC requirements and quality control for the entire sector's reporting.

The company "operations sergeant" position was critical to our success and was the first one filled in our planning—with a promotable staff sergeant who otherwise would have been a platoon sergeant. We realized during the deployment that all our problems in this area had one cause: accepting sub-standard reports, radio procedures, and time management from the NCOs during training. It may

be painful to stop during training to correct simple reports, but it is easier than trying to correct real-world reports during a mission.

Continuous Operations. Only 30 days of our 179-day rotation were anything but routine, and 20 of those days were the first 20. It is tempting to lower your standards when the peacekeeping mission becomes tedious. We planned for this and set up our SOPs to be self-enforcing. We established clear standards for the OPs and for patrols and gave each soldier a copy of the task force SOP. The task force commander personally briefed each squad to ensure that they understood the patrolling standards. During the mission, much emphasis was placed on inspections to enforce the patrolling standards.

For example, every patrol had a standard OPORD and set of rehearsals to be conducted daily, regardless of the number of times the team had conducted the same patrol. The TF SOP contained a detailed PCI, including layouts, briefbacks, and rehearsals that were required and inspected for every patrol. The squad leader was the lowest ranking person to conduct the PCI, and every team, at least once, had the task force commander and command sergeant major drop in to conduct their PCI. The TF commander also held the squad leaders (and above) personally accountable for any deficiencies.

The first sergeant and I would each conduct two to five PCIs a week. I may have inspected the same four pairs of socks 100 times, but every patrol was prepared in accordance with the PCI checklist and the TF standards. This was not micromanagement; it was the only way to guarantee that standards remained high in an area that could mean the difference between life and death for a patrol.

Task Organization. Tasks organization must be done at the lowest level and by ability, not by rank and military occupational specialty. It is not enough to assign a group of medics to the company; we required every patrol and convoy to have a combat lifesaver or medic with it at all times.

You can rapidly discover who is a good mechanic, who used to be an electrician,

who knows how to make radios work, who understands recovery techniques; this is the information to use in task organizing for missions.

A big lesson we learned is that if you plan for the worst course of action, you will rarely be surprised or unprepared. Ensure that every element has the equipment, expertise, and training to deal with

accidents. Also remember that vehicle recovery is dangerous, and send the best team you can and prevent disaster.

Our company deployment to Macedonia was a challenge and a rewarding experience as well. The entire chain of command worked hard before and during the mission on these areas to ensure mission success and to meet every infan-

try commander's major responsibility to his leaders and his soldiers in peacekeeping operations—suffer no casualties.

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Urban Patrolling Experiences in Haiti

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When our battalion of the 10th Mountain Division deployed to Haiti to participate in Operation *Uphold Democracy*, we all knew what our mission was: to provide a stable and secure environment in which ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide could safely return to the country and reestablish a democratic government. But the nature of the tasks we would encounter on the island was vague and undefined. As platoon leaders in that operation, we would like to share some of the unique characteristics of patrolling in an urban environment.

When we first arrived in Haiti, our role as a country-wide reserve was fairly simple. If something went wrong, anywhere, we were ready to respond. Instead of waiting for things to happen, we conducted operations that would support the overall mission of establishing a safe and secure environment. One of these activities was to conduct patrols in and around the city of Port-au-Prince.

Patrolling the streets served several purposes. The most apparent of these were providing security for the populace, conducting reconnaissance, gathering intelligence, confirming named areas of interest (NAIs), and demonstrating a U.S.

presence in selected areas of the city.

During the first few weeks, we were sent out to the villages and slums to show the people that we were there to assist in the establishment of a new government. Their response to us ranged from neutral to positive. (On rare occasions, we ran into a person or group that was against the United States, and was quite vocal about it.) The overall positive interaction with the Haitian civilians, however, laid the foundation for a spirit of cooperation that would be the cornerstone of our intelligence gathering efforts.

The patrols created an atmosphere of trust just because we were Americans and were there to help. Many of the locals would openly approach the patrols and begin to divulge information about the *Attaches* (hired thugs who would commit random or planned acts of violence against the people), locations of headquarters of FRAPH (the political and paramilitary group of the party in power), and the locations of possible weapon caches.

A typical scenario would go like this: The patrol would stop, security would be established, and the interpreter would walk up to a group of Haitians and begin

to ask questions about the area. Invariably, someone would come forward and provide a lead. At this point, the interpreter and the platoon leader would further question the group, using a sort of questionnaire that was developed by the intelligence people. The answers given enabled the platoon leader to make an on-site decision whether or not the lead was worth pursuing. Right there, we would set up a meeting between the Haitian source of information and the counterintelligence team and inform higher headquarters.

The Haitians were motivated to do this for several reasons: There were significant monetary rewards for recovered weapons (up to \$800 for machineguns); and they would be helping rid their country of the perpetrators and their weapons that had created the current situations. Occasionally, some dubious types would give misleading information in an attempt to get back at someone for personal reasons. All of these "informants" would be processed through the counterintelligence teams, which would evaluate the validity of the information. Ultimately, this information would either prove non-critical or prove accurate, in which case