

A REVOLUTION (IN MILITARY AFFAIRS) IN IRAQ

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There is a revolution in military affairs underfoot, and it can be seen today in combat operations conducted in the Iraq theater of operations. The necessity of the fight drives this change, and the mission and the leaders fighting it at the company level make it happen. I stress the company level because I watch it around me as my platoon leaders and squad leaders take the weapon systems at their disposal and employ them to meet their purpose. Witness the future of the Army as leaders, branch/MOS immaterial, take the tools that the Army makes available and execute their missions. This article will cover my situation (METT-TC [mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available, civilians]) and what actions I am taking as a commander to enable my subordinates. I'll review the challenges and obstacles I am encountering and what I'm doing to overcome, reduce, and bypass those obstacles. I'll close with my observations.

Situation (Friendly)

I deployed my company, pure, to Kuwait in February. Upon arrival, the division task organized and my company became part

of an armor task force. Subsequently, I gave up a mechanized infantry platoon and received an armor platoon minus tanks. While in Kuwait, we drew three M1114 HMMWVs and would subsequently draw an additional M113, one M1197 (Air Force armored HMMWV), and two more M1114s while in Iraq. My initial task organization looked something like Figure 1.

Situation (Terrain)

The task force (TF) area of operations (AO) terrain is quite diverse. Much of the diversity comes from the Tigris River, which bounds our task force AO to the north and east, and the canal system. These two phenomena affect all components of OCOKA (observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles and movement, key terrain, and avenues of approach).

Observation ranges from two kilometers to 200 meters. Where the canals are present, vegetation can be quite dense. Likewise, where there are no canals, near-open desert results. There are also random rises in elevation throughout the AO, which tend to limit observation around the

avenues of approach to 200m.

The canals facilitate cover and concealment directly because they allow individuals to utilize them for concealed movement and hiding caches. The vegetation can also get dense enough to obscure thermals from both Bradley fighting vehicles (BFVs) and also unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The irrigation canals that run throughout the terrain with no discernible pattern or plan are obstacles to traffic. The canals vary in size from hand/spade dug to concrete reinforced. Most canals have bridges of varying types spanning their width with as much variety as the canals themselves. Some can support a 38-ton vehicle and some cannot. These bridges can easily become choke points for improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and/or ambushes. The terrain that is laced with the canals also tends to be wet and soft, creating restrictive terrain for nearly all traffic except dismounts. The areas without canals tend to be dry, arid desert and can support all sizes and shapes of vehicles.

There is not any key terrain in the AO that we are determined to hold on a permanent basis. There are aspects or terrain features which have importance during operations. These include the bridges over the canals and rivers.

There is a main high-speed avenue of approach, the ground line of communication (GLOC) in my area of responsibility. This highway is the main focus of IEDs and small arms fire (SAF), but occasionally IEDs and SAF occur on other roads and areas in the TF AO. The river itself is also an avenue of approach for the enemy, particularly from its far side. We also identified the tendency for roads and trails leading from the river to the GLOC to be key avenues of approach.

There are two main civilian population

Figure 1 - Prior to Team Task Organization

HQ PLT	RED	GREEN	BLUE
2 x M2A2 ODS 2 x M998 2 x M923 M113 Medics M113 Maintenance M88 M113 2 x M923 Additional 2 x M1114 M1197 M113 Total Soldiers: 30+	4 x M2A2 ODS Medic 3 Squads Total Soldiers: 40+	2 x M1114 Medic 1 Squad Total Soldiers: 17	4 x M2A2 ODS Medic 3 Squads Total Soldiers: 30+

centers in my AO. One town numbers approximately 2,000 people, while the smaller town has a few hundred. The rest of the population lives throughout the AO on farms in varying types of dwellings. Some of these dwellings are built into compounds with several buildings surrounded by a wall.

Situation (Enemy)

My area of operations has mostly Sunni Muslims. There are as many as 13 tribes spread throughout. The enemy uses the living conditions and Arabic culture to his advantage. He readily blends in with his surroundings. He can move freely, staying where he wants, not because the population directly supports him, but because the Arabic culture does not directly deny him freedom of movement.

The enemy's main choice of weapons in my AO are IEDs along the GLOC. The enemy uses a very deliberate technique for emplacing IEDs. He tends to use SAF as a technique to influence an area in order to facilitate emplacing an IED. He favors this weapon because it reduces the risk to the enemy himself. The IEDs vary in sophistication, with detonation methods varying from wireless remote control to hard wire command detonation. These require a deliberate plan for their emplacement; therefore the enemy must expose himself in order to do so.

Situation (Equipment)

We deployed with the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) for a mechanized infantry company. As the task organization shows, there were some changes with regard to the weapon systems and weapon platforms. Each vehicle has inherent advantages and disadvantages. Some of these advantages and disadvantages became more apparent or transparent based upon the mission and use in a combat environment.

I considered a variety of things in analyzing each vehicle. The criteria for evaluating the different vehicles available in the AO were (in order of importance decreasing from top to bottom):

- ★ Maneuverability,
- ★ Troop capacity,
- ★ PLL (prescribed load list) on-hand,
- ★ Night capability,
- ★ Field of vision,
- ★ Survival,
- ★ Vehicle signature,
- ★ Weapon capability, and
- ★ Maintenance impact.

I put these criteria into a relative values decision matrix. The criteria weights are noted below the matrix as well as the sensitivity

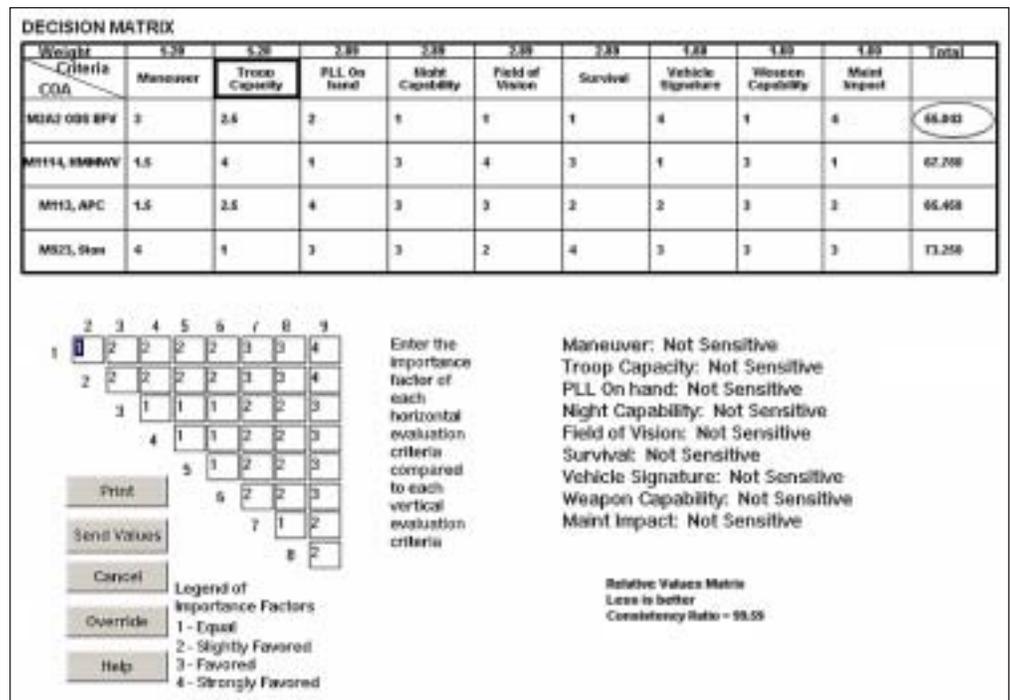


Figure 2

analysis. (See Figure 2.)

Maneuverability is vital in this area of operations. I defined it as the ability of the vehicle to negotiate the canal systems and narrow roads off the main supply routes (MSRs). Troop capacity is the amount of Soldiers, not including the vehicle crew (driver, TC, and gunner) that the vehicle can carry. PLL on-hand is the readily available nature of parts that the forward support battalion (FSB) keeps on hand for the maintenance teams to fix the vehicles. Night capability reflects the vehicle's inherent capability for scanning and acquiring targets during hours of limited visibility. The field of vision relates to the perspective of the TC and his ability to command and control the vehicle. (A note on this: the M114 offers terrible fields of view. The only person with effective scanning ability is the gunner.) Survivability is the effect of the armor and protection provided for the Soldiers. Vehicle signature is the amount of noise the vehicle creates and its ability to move stealthily along the terrain. Weapon capability is the capacity for the vehicle to transport different weapons of varying magnitude. Finally, the maintenance impact is the observed durability of the vehicles to the excessive usage rate per week.

The outcome from the matrix is that of the available vehicles the Bradley fighting vehicle is the optimal choice available at this time to my team. The second choice is the M113.

Execution

My first concern was to create flexibility in my platoons with regard to missions and tasks. The task organization that I inherited dictated that my mechanized infantry platoons would conduct certain missions and my armor (less) platoon would conduct other missions. The problem with this is twofold. First, one unit dedicated to one task is just that — one-dimensional. The enemy in this sector, if not throughout all of Iraq, is multi-dimensional and requires many different tactical approaches. This original

Figure 3 - Proposed Task Organization			
HQ PLT	RED	GREEN	BLUE
CDR 2 x M2A2 ODS M998 1SG M998 2 s M923 M1114 Medics M113 Maintenance M88 M113 2 x M923 Total Soldiers: 30+	3 x M2A2 ODS M1114 M1197 Medic 2 Squads Total Soldiers: 30+	2 x M2A2 ODS 2 x M1114 M113 Medic 2 Squads Total Soldiers: 30+	3 x M2A2 ODS M1114 M113 Medic 2 Squads Total Soldiers: 30+

task organization hampered our ability to react to actionable intelligence. Secondly, a unit executing the same mission repeatedly for a yearlong deployment would quickly succumb to complacency. Complacency breeds many problems, accidents, and timidity.

Any patrol cycle based on this task organization would be unbalanced. This leads to my second concern, which was to establish a coherent and stable patrol cycle. I wanted my platoon leaders to manage their own manpower and maintenance. One assigned task per platoon for 360 days would lead to burnout and low morale. That is too much predictability. There needs to be variety and change. I wanted to build some expectation for the Soldier, so he could forecast when he would get a change. It would provide the Soldier something to look forward to every two weeks.

My third concern was to build a team. I wanted for the platoons to look at themselves as one team. One platoon executing every raid might think of itself as superior, while another platoon executing nothing but TCPs might think of itself as inferior. A parity of platoon strengths and weaknesses would allow the platoons to compete with each other on an even playing field and create an esprit de corps. Further, a balanced task organization would allow the platoons to learn from each other. Each platoon would find itself bounded only by the limits of its own leadership and their imagination.

In order to accomplish this I organized the company as shown in Figure 3.

The M2A2s that I attached to the Green

PLT came with crews. The platoons accepted full responsibility for all other vehicles and equipment that they gained. The platoon leader then had the task to manage this manpower and equipment to the mission. I aided him a bit further by providing him with the patrol cycle shown below. This cycle would rotate platoons

every two weeks (platoons rotating A to C and B to A). At the end of every two-week period I conduct a patrol cycle after actions review (AAR). This allows the platoons to learn from each other and permits the first sergeant and me to get a pulse on how mission is straining our manpower and equipment. The lessons and comments from these AARs would direct missions for the next two weeks. (See Figure 4.)

Executing missions with this task organization and patrol cycle demonstrated its worth. Regardless of what platoon is executing which patrol cycle, when the task force tactical operations center (TOC) calls up at 2200 hours for a platoon to conduct a cordon and search on actionable intelligence, I have only to call the "C" Patrol, the quick reaction force (QRF). Platoons can execute any role in a company cordon and search because they all have the capability for assault, support, and security. The platoons have the resources to execute and day-by-day the platoon

Figure 4 - Example Patrol Cycle

TIME	DAILY		
0500-0600	"A" PLT AM Patrol		"C" PLT RED2
0600-0700			
0700-0800			
0800-0900			
0900-1000			
1000-1100			
1100-1200			
1200-1300		"B" PLT PM Patrol	
1300-1400			
1400-1500			
1500-1600			
1600-1700			
1700-1800			
1800-1900			"C" PLT RED1
1900-2000	"A" PLT PM Patrol		
2000-2100			
2100-2200			
2200-2300			
2300-0001			
0001-0100			
0100-0200		"B" PLT AM Patrol	"C" PLT RED2
0200-0300			
0300-0400			
0400-0500			

"A" PLT

- * Conducts flash TCPs.
- * Focuses upon dismounted patrols through sector.
- * Enforces Ishaqi curfew.
- * Conducts LP/OPs at NAIs.
- * Provides observers for TF fire missions.

"B" PLT

- * Conducts flash TCPs.
- * Supports ICDC.
- * Conducts direct reconnaissance.

"C" PLT

- * Provides personnel for TM ROCK missions.
- * Train ICDC.
- * BPT provide personnel and vehicle IOT support CDR
- * REDCON 1.
- * REDCON 2.



Tech Sergeant Scott Reed, USAF

Soldiers with Task Force 1-77 patrol the city of Balad, Iraq, under the overwatch of an OH-58 during operations in May 2004.

leaders, the company commanders of tomorrow, are learning and becoming more confident with different weapon systems and vehicles.

Challenges

The road to this point is not smooth. Many of the obstacles and challenges arise from the old mindset and the rigidity of our own minds. This point is prevalent in all the items I will discuss below.

With any unit that has vehicles, maintenance is and must be a huge focus. We forecast correctly that maintenance would be a major challenge throughout our rotation. My executive officer ensured we had plenty of PLL on hand, loaded, and available for 60 days after our deployment. Based upon the nature of our AO, the vehicles easily put on about 700 miles per week. This has a huge impact upon the vehicles. It is simply above and beyond the historic trend for these vehicles, at least back the past five years. The BFVs and HMMWVs break despite the Herculean efforts of my maintenance team. With this in mind, 10-level maintenance becomes crucial. This problem leads to another that I'll discuss next, but it revolves around the crew and NCOs ensuring that preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) are done properly. As with most things, the basics are crucial for any mission success. The XO instituted a maintenance plan to ensure that vehicles get QAQC'd (quality assurance, quality control) on a weekly basis. The important part remains, though, that the platoon's leadership ensures PMCS of vehicles.

Training is not a peacetime issue. Complex, crew-oriented weapon systems like the BFV require particular attention to crew qualification and training. You will not have an effective force if one's primary weapon systems cannot engage and destroy the enemy. FM 23-1 has excellent standards, but they center around fighting on a linear battlefield against an enemy's mechanized forces. The enemy on this noncontiguous battlefield does not wear uniforms let alone ride in mechanized vehicles. They operate in

pairs and sometimes solitary. They will engage from close range and on the oblique angles. The focus of the Bradley gunnery must therefore change to adapt the Soldier's training on the weapon system to the enemy. The mission strain upon the crew also demands that the platoons train additional crews. My solution to this is for each platoon to train and battle roster three crews per BFV. This creates some flexibility when casualties occur.

The inherited task organization that I remedied for the short term while in Iraq reveals a more deep-seated issue: the MTOE. The MTOE dictates the amount of radios, crew-served weapons, nonexistent radios, individual weapons (pistols, shotguns, M240B tripods), and personnel. I have more vehicles than I have radios to put in them. I don't have enough crew-served weapons to put on every vehicle. Focusing though on personnel, I must get creative in order to execute mission. On a traditional HIC (high intensity conflict) battlefield, the XO would be my wingman. Here, I must move with two to three other vehicles. Where do those drivers, TCs, and gunners come from? Where do the vehicles come from? I utilize my

new task organization and my patrol cycle to remedy these problems currently, but these are short term fixes.

Observations

I do not believe that my company team is unique. As I look around this division (the 1st Infantry Division stretches its sector from Baji to just north of Baghdad), I see units of all branches conducting combat missions. Artillery units are executing combat patrols to find, fix, and finish the enemy, without howitzers or paladins. Armor units are executing combat patrols to find, fix, and finish the enemy, without their tanks. Sure, there are paladins and M1A1s in sector, but the old concept of branches and specialization is over. Speaking of specialization, the Infantry falls into this discussion as well. There are infantry units from the 1st Infantry Division, Fort Lewis' Stryker Brigade, the 25th Infantry Division, the 82nd Airborne, and random National Guard elements here in Iraq. Is the 82nd jumping? Is the 25th walking everywhere? Are the mechanized/motorized Soldiers staying on their vehicles? The answer is no. Leaders are taking the men and resources at their disposal, doing a METT-TC analysis with their TLPs, and executing mission ... every day. Sometimes they have M1114s, sometimes they have M2s, sometimes they have M113s, and sometimes they have M923s (5-tons). Sometimes they have a combination of all of these vehicles. The lynchpin is that not one of these vehicles is the savior of the Infantry or the combat arms or Iraq. They have their advantages and their disadvantages. The division and the Army is relying upon LEADERS to execute mission with the men and resources available. We are creating a branch of warriors. The warrior that can best utilize the men, vehicles, and weapons at his disposal, wins.

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