

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A TASK FORCE DEPUTY COMMANDER

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From August 2004 to April 2005, I was afforded an invaluable opportunity to serve as deputy commander for Combined Task Force (CTF) Thunder, a maneuver brigade headquarters forward deployed in Afghanistan as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom. CTF Thunder was assigned the Regional Command (RC) East area of operations, a vast and diverse area comprised of 15 provinces, 32 districts, and 19 major cities. In comparison, RC East is about the size of the state of Iowa. The purpose of this article is to share my experiences as the DCO, outline duties and responsibilities pertaining to the position, and provide commanders and potential DCOs with planning considerations specific to the role.

Background

Combined Task Force Thunder is a maneuver brigade comprised of a headquarters element based at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Salerno; one U.S. Marine infantry battalion (3/3 Marine) based at FOB Salerno; one U.S. Army infantry battalion (2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division [Light]) based in Orgun-E; one U.S. Army National Guard infantry battalion (3-116th Infantry) based in Ghazni; and a total of eight Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The task force headquarters is formed around the Division Artillery (DIVARTY) Headquarters, 25th Infantry Division (L) with augmentation from the 125th Military Intelligence Division Intelligence Support Element (DISE) and individual augmentees, ranging from civil affairs officers to public affairs and staff judge advocate officers. The total number of personnel assigned to the task force is in excess of 3,200. I was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division in June of 2004, prepositioned as an infantry battalion commander select. The battalion I was slated to command was forward deployed in Iraq and my command was deferred 12 months. As a result, the DIVARTY commander requested my assignment as the DCO to assist in the tactical employment of infantry and to assist in command and control functions for the task force.

Terms of reference

In May of 2004, prior to my assignment to the division, I was afforded the opportunity to take part in a Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) Leaders Training Program exercise with the DIVARTY headquarters at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, which was designed to better prepare the unit for the impending deployment. This exercise proved valuable and allowed me to become familiar with the unit and impending mission in Afghanistan. During this exercise, the task force commander provided me with terms of reference that in general terms provided me with a point of departure from which I could focus my daily duties and responsibilities. This document included the following critical

areas of emphasis:

Maneuver Advisor — Provide advice and guidance pertaining to the tactical employment of the three assigned infantry battalions. Extend my experience as a senior infantryman and provide oversight of the staff planning process and current operations functions.

MDMP — Personally assess the feasibility and suitability of concepts developed involving the employment of combat power and ensure effective integration and synchronization. Additionally, ensure operations orders are coherent, complete, and executable.

Interface with the Task Force S3 and XO — Coach, teach, mentor, and assist them in their daily duties and responsibilities. Seek out opportunities to apply my experience to better enable staff effectiveness.

Battlefield circulation — Periodically, circulate throughout Regional Command East and meet with key leaders and Soldiers in order to better understand the operational environment and factors that impact the task force mission.

Afghan engagement — Periodically, assist the commander in interacting with key Afghan leaders within the area of operation in order to facilitate coordination, understand issues that impact populations centers, and achieve synergy between coalition forces and Afghan authorities.

What really happened

The above mentioned terms of reference served as a start point for my integration into the headquarters, and throughout the deployment proved valuable in providing focus and direction for my contribution to the headquarters. As in any duty assignment however, a number of factors both tangible and intangible emerged and became central forcing functions that contributed to defining my duties and responsibilities. Of these factors, interpersonal relationships between myself, the commander, the executive officer and operations officer, coupled with experience levels and the complex operational environment of the AO combined to add clarity to requirements. I spent the preponderance of my tour decisively involved in and driving the following functions:

Staff synchronizer of the deliberate planning process — Two factors drove this responsibility:

1) The complexity, uncertainty, and intensity of current operations combined with requirements to coordinate with the vast number of other organizations and units operating in our battle space quickly consumed the majority of the operations officer's time and energy.

2) Similarly, base operations functions and logistical requirements associated with an AO the size of Iowa consumed the XO's time and energy. As a result, the development and initial synchronization of deliberate plans presented itself as an area in

which I could effectively contribute and lead the staff's efforts. This became a good news story and in some respects was somewhat synonymous with handing over plans from a J5 type function to a J3 function for final refinement and execution.

Task force CCIR management and decision point refinement —

This is another area directly affected by the two factors of influence discussed above. Based on the complex nature and rapidly evolving operational environment we were forced to analyze and visualize our battlefield from the standpoint of seeing the friendly apparatus, seeing the enemy, and seeing the environment. As a result our CCIR took on a classic stability operations form. Within the headquarters, I led a planning group comprised of the brigade fire support officer (FSO), targeting officer, interagency representatives and intelligence planners that on a bimonthly basis refined CCIR and modified task force-level decision points that enabled the commander to visualize, describe and direct operations based on the complex and evolving environment.

Future planning — Again, the pace and complexity of current operations to a degree limited the ability for the operations officer and commander to focus on long range planning. As a result, we were able to put together planning cells and teams to develop concept for future operations. Typically we oriented our future planning two-three months ahead, based on predictive analysis and known emerging operational requirements. Our goal was to achieve a 70 to 80 percent solution from which the staff could then detail and synchronize to enable execution.

Targeting — As a result of the significant assessment requirements associated with our mission, my integration enabled the brigade FSO to focus on the assessment process. This presented another opportunity for me to apply my experience and knowledge with respect to targeting

COUNTER NARCOTICS SYSTEM ANALYSIS

	TARGETS	ANALYSIS	CN EFFECTS DESIRED	
Support System	Population Centers	Provide labor and support infrastructure	* Afghan alternative livelihoods are successful * Populace does not support drug production	Decide Detect Deliver Assess
	Farmers	Provide labor, harvest the crops and transport raw materials to drug labs	* Afghan alternative livelihoods are successful * Farmers harvest alternate crops	
Production Network	Drug Lords	Direct the production and distribution networks	* ANA/ANP kill, capture, disrupt * Drug production and distribution networks disrupted * Facilitators, financiers killed/captured/removed	
	Chemists	Process the raw materials to final products	* ANA/ANP kill, capture, disrupt * Drug production network disrupted	
	Poppy	Provide the products	* ANA/ANP destroy poppy as soon as identified * Drug production network disrupted	
Distribution Network	Drug Labs	Processing and production facilities	* ANA/ANP destroy * Raw and processed materials destroyed prior to introduction into the market (bazaars)	
	Traffickers	Transport products to bazaars and other distribution centers	* ANA/ANP kill, capture, disrupt * Traffickers and transportation enablers removed/destroyed	
	Illicit Routes	Enable the transportation of raw materials and processed products to processing facilities and distribution centers	* ANA/ANP vehicle checkpoints established * Drug distribution network disrupted	
	Markets/Bazaars	Provide the sales and marketing hubs of finished products. Profits are used to increase harvesting and production capabilities and gain influence on local populace/economy	* ANA/ANP destroy bazaars as soon as identified * Drug distribution network disrupted/destroyed	

CARVER ANALYSIS - A JOINT TARGETING TOOL

CARVER Analysis —> High Payoff Target List (HPTL)

TARGETS	EFFECT	C	A	R	V	E	R	TOTAL
Population	Influence	5	5	5	4	3	5	27
Drug Lords	Kill/Capture/Influence	3	3	3	4	4	3	20
Opium	Destroy	5	4	4	5	3	4	25
Farmers	Provide Alternatives	4	4	3	3	3	5	22
Drug Labs	Destroy	5	3	2	5	3	3	21
Traffickers	Kill/Capture/Influence	3	2	3	4	3	2	17
Illicit Trade Rts	Interdict	3	4	2	5	4	4	22
Chemists	Kill/Capture/Influence	4	3	4	4	4	3	22
Markets/Bazaars	Destroy	3	4	4	4	3	3	21

CRITICALITY **A**CCESSIBILITY **R**ECUPERATE **V**ULNERABILITY **E**FFECT **R**ECOGNIZE

and lead the task force process. We applied traditional targeting techniques such as the decide, detect, deliver and assess methodology to our environment and identified targets and associated systems coupled with guidance to address factors that influenced the operational environment. Our process and methodology sought to integrate both kinetic and non-kinetic requirements to achieve desired effects. Critical to this effort was the

integration of interagency representatives into the process, which resulted in the achievement of unity of effort between coalition and interagency operations. Additionally we used techniques such as the CARVER matrix, a joint targeting tool, to identify a high payoff target list that enabled and drove our process. (See figure)

Other areas of emphasis:
In lieu of the commander — The

vastness of our area of operation placed a huge demand on the commander and required him to execute battlefield circulation quite often in order to effectively influence the fight. During his absence, I was presented the opportunity to perform normal and routine type functions ranging from chairing battlefield update briefs, participating in CJTF level commanders update briefs and a myriad of administrative functions. As the senior officer in the task force and on the forward operating base when the commander was away, I also interfaced with the FOB's leadership and met with local Afghan authorities to discuss operational and administrative issues that required command influence. Additionally, I involved myself in matters of concern with subordinate commanders typically dealt with by the task force commander.

Officer professional development (OPD) — Periodically, we sought to increase the professional development of company grade officers and executed OPDs. These opportunities proved not only valuable for my own professional development and preparation for positions of increasing responsibilities, but likewise enhanced the overall effectiveness and preparedness of our company grade officer population.

Recommendations — As is the case with any circumstance, specific roles and duties associated with a somewhat ambiguous position is largely dependent on personalities, capabilities, and requirements. This fact exemplifies the art of military leadership and requires that application in setting conditions for the integration of a DCO. The terms of reference developed early on by the commander served as a great an effective way ahead. As the mission and time evolved, the command group adapted and opportunities for my involvement and influence became clear. Long range planning and deliberate synchronization are both areas where the experience of a DCO has potential. Targeting requirements in a noncontiguous and uncertain battle also serve as a possibility for

application of the DCO. The position facilitates command and control flexibility and allows other key leaders freedom to focus on specific functions and requirements. Finally, with the presence and integration of interagency subject matter experts, another opportunity presents itself. Here the requirement to apply existing doctrinal techniques and procedures to exploit the presence of these SMEs and better enable mission accomplishment present yet another opportunity for employment of the DCO.

My tour as the deputy commander for Task Force Thunder and my role in the command and control BOS, characterizes the emerging nature of the Army's role in the spectrum of operations inherent in stability type missions. The position adds depth to any similar type organization, but requires patience and time to fully define. I encourage organizations considering the employment of a DCO to use this article as a guide in defining roles and responsibilities. For officer's being considered or identified as a DCO, I offer these takeaways:

- Have an idea on how you believe you can impact the unit and present those ideas to your commander.
- Confer with your commander up front pertaining to his expectations and thoughts serves as an invaluable template and a point of departure.
- Avoid gravitating to those things that you are comfortable with, as it will most likely cause friction and or conflict between you and the operations officer or executive officer.
- Focus on nontraditional roles and functions that require vision and direction to effectively influence the fight.
- Finally, be patient and look for windows of opportunity. to contribute, they are plentiful.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Mundell is currently serving as the deputy commander of Task Force Thunder, which is forward deployed to Afghanistan (FOB Salerno). His follow-on assignment is as battalion commander of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (Light).



Specialist Gul A Alisan

Soldiers from Task Force Thunder's 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment patrol the mountains of Afghanistan