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Refocusing Counterinsurgency (COIN) Centric Fire Support



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Refocusing Counterinsurgency (COIN)-Centric Fire Support

"Only the dead have seen the end of war."

-George Santayana

With the ever-changing world dynamic, the US military and its unified action partners must continue to refocus on large-scale combat operations against a regional peer threat after over fourteen years of COIN. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs made this point clear and additionally identified potential adversaries to include Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.ⁱ Additionally, the United States and its unified action partners must continue with the challenge of global terrorism and not forget the lessons of COIN warfare. However, over fourteen years of protracted COIN warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan and a reduction in the force over the last eight years has atrophied the military in terms of training, equipping and readiness for a large-scale combat operation.

Potential large-scale conventional adversaries to the United States and its allies have adapted, modernized and advanced their capabilities since the Cold War. Additionally, these adversaries manifest themselves in the form of a continued expansion of their militaries. For example in a comparison to the United States military, China boasts 2,335,000 active military personnel while the US 1,400,000; China has a tank strength of 9,150 while the US has 8,848; China has 6,246 towed artillery systems while the US has 1,299; China has 1,710 Self Propelled Artillery systems while the US has 1,934; China has 1,770 Multiple Launch Rocket systems while the US has 1,331; granted the US outmatches China with overall aircraft with China at 2,942 while the US has 13,444.ⁱⁱ Although the aircraft gap is to our advantage, the downsizing of the military over the last eight years has resulted in a shortage of pilots. You would find a similar gap if compared to Russia and North Korea.

The United States and its allies must close the fire support gap to achieve a position of maneuver advantage if faced with a large-scale combat operation against a conventional peer threat. The gap must not only be closed in terms of organizing, equipping and manning. Commanders and their staffs must close

this gap by refocusing the COIN-centric fire support mindset and begin to synthesize the targeting effort through the lens of a combined arms formation. To accomplish this, Commanders must fully integrate the division artillery (DIVARTY) into the division as the force field artillery headquarters; implement the D3A targeting methodology as a synchronizing function; reshape overly restrictive Rules of Engagement (ROE); and fully integrate the Joint Air Ground Integration Center (JAGIC) into the division Current Operations Integrating Cell (COIC).

Division Artillery (DIVARTY) Integration

Army Forces Command's (FORSCOM) decision to implement DIVARTY's into divisions without organic field artillery battalions and a Brigade Support Battalion (BSB) proves problematic in the ability to fully integrate the DIVARTY. The FORSCOM implementation order included the attachment of the BCT field-artillery battalions to the DIVARTY while the battalions remain organic to the Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) no later than January 2016.ⁱⁱⁱ Many division commanders are empowering DIVARTY commanders to standardize training and further certify the direct support battalions. However, an attachment relationship rather than an organic relationship limits the DIVARTY commander's ability to accomplish this task. For example, each of the BCTs have different training and deployment schedules that proves problematic in synchronizing and standardizing the training across all three brigades. This situation challenges the DIVARTY commander in achieving massed fires across the division. Historically, artillery battalions had a habitual working relationship with maneuver brigade but were not organic to maneuver brigades.

In pre-Iraq/Afghanistan large-scale combat operations this habitual relationship mostly worked well as shaped around the roles of direct support, general support, reinforcing, and general support reinforcing making indirect fire a significant combat multiplier. It was not until modularity and the formation of modular brigades did we decide to make direct support battalions organic to BCTs (much of which was promulgated through the book *Breaking the Phalanx* by Douglas A. Macgregor) to make the BCT look like the Armored Cavalry Regiment. This allowed the BCT commander to own the artillery battalion and therefore train them. While this worked well for brigade level operations, it proves problematic for division level operations concerning massing of fires to shape the division deep fight.

This further manifested into the integration of the Security Forces Advisory Teams (SFATs) and contributed to successful COIN operations, and we should not forget the lessons learned from those COIN experiences. However, now it is time to get back to the basics and prepare to fight a peer conventional threat at the division level. And to accomplish the fires aspects of this kind of fight, the DIVARTY commander needs the proper authority and organization to fully implement these basic and collective skills so not to have a continued atrophy, lack of training consistency and standardization across the division artillery formation.

The ability to standardize artillery battalion training across the division remains the DIVARTY commander's responsibility; however, the commander is limited in achieving this endeavor. The 2014 FORSCOM DIVARTY implementation order gives the DIVARTY commander authorities to plan, execute and assess all field artillery (FA) individual and collective training to include training guidance and approval of unit training plans and programs. Additionally, this includes Mission Essential Task List (METL) guidance to ensure FA Battalion METL supports the Brigade Combat Team's METL, and unit and section training and certifications.^{iv} However, the current command authority and the attached relationship limits the DIVARTY commander's ability to achieve these ends. For example, while one BCT artillery battalion might have codified and standardized training procedures that work well, the other two could likely be struggling.

Allowing the DIVARTY commander to standardize training across the division requires division level standard operating procedures in the form of a Red Book or similar document; and can best be accomplished through an organic relationship. An attached relationship could work if the DIVARTY commander can have authority over the BCT artillery battalions through section level certification. Using the Red Book standards and the artillery table training methodology, once trained and certified through individual and section level, the artillery battalions should be attached back to the BCTs for collective training and certification leading up to a Warfighter, CTC rotation, or deployment. It is at the collective level of training (above battery) that we struggle to achieve massing and focused fires. The discussion point becomes one of: Can we best achieve this with battalions organic to the DIVARTY or organic to the BCTs?

The primary responsibility of the DIVARTY commander as the Fire Support Coordinator (FSCOORD) is to coordinate, integrate, synchronize and employ fires for the division commander. Moreover, the DIVARTY must be able to mass fires, employ radars, plan and oversee resupply rates and execute division-level suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD). The DIVARTY provides mission command for training management and certification for the Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) field artillery battalions and fire support cells. Finally, the DIVARTY oversees the training and certification of the division fire-support cell to achieve coordination, integration and synchronization of fires.^v These responsibilities are a tall order under the current organization and command relationship.

These responsibilities require the full integration of the DIVARTY into the division unlike assigning a field artillery brigade as a Force Field Artillery Headquarters; and to achieve full integration, the DIVARTY commander must possess organic cannon and/or rocket battalions. Changing support relationships such as attaching the BCT artillery battalions or receiving corps artillery battalions for support significantly limits the DIVARTY commander's ability to achieve all of the aforementioned responsibilities. The DIVARTY must be fully integrated into division level operations and held accountable as the Force Field Artillery Headquarters for synchronized, timely, and focused fires across the division to include counterfires and achieving mass on enemy high payoff targets.

Highly trained DIVARTYs with organic artillery battalions remains critical to achieving timely indirect fires coordinated to achieve mass and synchronized with the other warfighting functions against a peer threat. A compromise could be to leave the FA battalions organic to the BCTs and assign additional rocket battalions organic to the DIVARTY. With this situation, the DIVARTY can focus on the division deep fight leaving the BCT artillery battalions to focus on the close fight. Based on observations of Warfighters, consistently fires are not timely, artillery units are out of position to support the fight, or they move too aggressively forward of maneuver and find themselves in a direct fire fight.

Artillery training with all warfighting functions leading up to a Warfighter and with organic field artillery battalions remains omnipotent. Army units achieved this in the past through the artillery table training methodology integrated with the

maneuver training tables. Moreover, Fires elements from sensor-to-shooter must conduct routine digital sustainment training to reduce fire mission processing times at each level. Finally, staffs must conduct a fires rehearsal, digital fires rehearsal, and a combined arms rehearsal with all warfighting functions and supporting element involvement. Sustainment proves to be challenge for DIVARTY as well.

The Army's decision to field DIVARTYs without an organic sustainment battalion further challenges the DIVARTY to achieve sustained indirect fires in support of the deep fight. In a combined arms operation against a regional peer threat, any organization where Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) or High Mobility Artillery Rocket System battalions (HIMARS) are task organized to the DIVARTY, the DIVARTY will be challenged with sustaining these additional battalions (mostly concerning Class V) without a sustainment battalion. The ADP 3-09.90 indicates that division artillery can be task organized with up to five cannon or rocket battalions. Unlike a field artillery brigade, the division artillery does not have an organic sustainment battalion. This requires a close relationship between the division artillery and the sustainment brigade supporting division operations.

With the current organization, the DIVARTY is lacking the sustainment battalion staff built around the DIVARTY, specifically the Support Operations Officer (SPO) in planning and coordinating the delivery of supplies. Without this staff support, the S4 is significantly challenged with sustainment operations. Currently commanders task organize the forward support companies alongside their habitually supported battalion when placed under the division artillery. This situation extends the Lines of Communication (LOCs) creating additional resupply challenges to incorporate the eight principles of sustainment into division artillery operations.^{.vi} Because of this situation, the DIVARTY sustainment leaders (mostly the Executive Officer and the S4) must develop a close supporting relationship with the division G-4 and supporting sustainment brigade to enable a sustained level of resupply in a an extended operation against a regional peer threat. With the DIVARTY fully integrated and trained, the next challenge becomes training the division staffs in using mostly deliberate targeting rather than COIN-centric dynamic targeting to avoid playing whack-a-mole, but rather shaping the deep fight before it becomes the close fight.

D3A Methodology as a Synchronizing Function

Differently than COIN, combined arms operations against a peer threat rely heavily on proactive fire support which requires synchronized and massing of fires in support of maneuver using a deliberate targeting process as well as a dynamic targeting process. In the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army largely used COIN-Centric targeting processes to include such methodologies as the Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze, Disseminate (F3EAD), and the Find, Fix, Track, Target, Engage, Assess (F2T2EA). While these processes work well for COIN operations and dynamic targeting, they do not work well when used alone in a large-scale combined arms operation against a peer enemy. The US Army's deliberate targeting process includes the Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess (D3A) methodology.^{vii} However, many of skills required for the D3A targeting methodology have atrophied over the past fourteen years.

At the US Army division, corps, and brigade level, staffs struggle with deliberate targeting in support of a combined arms operations on a linear, contiguous battlefield against a peer threat. Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) trends since 2014 clearly reveal this problem; "Division fire support cells are not effectively planning, coordinating, and synchronizing fires within the deep-close-security operational framework."^{viii} Divisions remain obsessed with the close fight and frequently neglect the deep fight, focusing on dynamic targets of opportunity, losing sight of critical deliberate high payoff targets deep in enemy territory that will shape the future fight. MCTP trends confirm this problem, "Targeting working groups often focus only on decisive operations and neglect shaping operations."^{ix} Keep in mind that these trends were in 2014, and the divisions and Corps continue to struggle with these same problems through 2017. Divisions continue to play Whack-a-mole with a COIN-centric targeting mindset.

Division staffs revert to a COIN-centric targeting mindset of reactionary targeting rather than proactive deliberate targeting. For example, a division staff will use a Gray Eagle with a hellfire rather than following the Attack Guidance Matrix (AGM) and the Target Selection Standards (TSS) which clearly shows rockets or artillery as the first priority delivery asset. There is a purpose for these products in that they provide the weaponeered ammunition requirement to achieve the desired

effect. Moreover, divisions will use inappropriate delivery assets such as fixed wing attack aviation on an enemy mortar section. This reactionary approach to targeting prevents timely, effective and proactive fires that shape the deep fight. The Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess (D3A) targeting methodology provides the framework for achieving planned targeting resulting in proactive focused fires that are massed on enemy high payoff targets. D3A starts in the decide phase with the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) in considering enemy High Value Targets (HVTs). To allow focus, let us consider one potential HVT to include enemy Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS).

Decide Phase, considering Near-peer Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS)

The Decide phase of the D3A becomes important in correctly identifying High Payoff targets whose destruction supports the accomplishment of the friendly force mission. COIN operations have not seen extensive usage of IADS by insurgent forces, and insurgents have sporadically used man-portable air defense (MANPADS) systems against coalition aircraft; however, peer opponents with air defense capabilities are on par with US forces and pose challenges to coalition forces in gaining air superiority or supremacy during initial operational phases.

Engaging peer threat IADS capabilities with firing Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD) targeting becomes a challenge in achieving air superiority and must first be identified during the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) process. Target value analysis yields these threats as high value targets (HVTs) based on the enemy courses of action (COAs). If HVTs affect or jeopardize the success of friendly courses of action, they become high payoff targets (HPTs). S2/G2 targeting, the Field Artillery Intelligence Officer (FAIO), and the S2/G2 intelligence collection manager identify named areas of interest (NAIs) and target areas of interest (TAIs) and assign intelligence disciplines.^x The guiding documents that manifest from the Decide phase include the Target Selection Standards (TSS), the Attack Guidance Matrix (AGM), and the High Payoff Target List (HPTL). Using only COIN-centric targeting methodologies and not the planned D3A methodology will prevent focused and massed fires on IADS. The subsequent challenge becomes one of locating these threats through the detection phase of the D3A.

Detect Phase of the D3A

It is in Detect phase that division staffs frequently become overly focused on the close fight and lack visualization of high payoff targets in the deep area. The G2 Collection Manager, in collaboration with the entire staff and considering the commander's targeting guidance, shapes information collection strategies necessary to detect and track high payoff targets through the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) plan.^{xi} MCTP trends since 2014 clearly support this assertion; in 2014, "Units provide inconsistent intelligence inputs that lack important details needed in the TWG (Targeting Working Group) to synchronize future fires;" in 2015, the trend continued with intelligence analysis related to "accuracy, and timeliness;" in 2016, the divisions continued with problematic shaping of the deep fight.^{xii} The trends clearly demonstrate division staff's limited understanding of the D3A methodology in the Detect phase which manifests itself into ineffective fires in the Delivery phase.

Deliver Phase of the D3A

In the Deliver phase, divisions frequently begin engaging dynamic targets in the close fight and lose sight of the deep fight. Many of these targets are not on the HPTL. This habit stems from a COIN-centric targeting mindset. Staffs lack targeting discipline in recognizing high payoff targets over targets with less value. The Deliver phase of the D3A includes the division's opportunity to execute the targeting plan in accordance with the governing documents to include the AGM, TSS, and the HPTL.^{xiii} If the Decide phase went well, the ISR assets will have accurately identified many of the HPTs during the Detect phase. Now, the division would likely be able to achieve the desired effect on these HPTs. MCTP observations identify inadequate fire support rehearsals followed by inadequate fire support planning as mentioned above. These inadequacies manifest into a staff's inability to maintain targeting tactical patience resulting in desynchronized, untimely, fragmented, unfocused, and ineffective fires. As a result, assessing the effects of these fires proves a significant challenge.

Assess Phase of the D3A

Divisions struggle with assessing damage to targets largely because they do not understand how to assess the damage, and they do not allocate assets to assess damage. Combat assessment includes Battle Damage Assessment (BDA), munitions effectiveness assessment, and reengagement recommendations. Assessments inform the commander in the targeting decision board to allow reattack decisions. BDA does not always have to include personal

observation of the damage to the engaged target to determine number of casualties or equipment destroyed. BDA takes other forms such as whether the targets continue to move, the cessation of fires from an area, or using a munitions effectiveness assessment.^{xiv} Targeting Working Groups (TWGs) frequently do not include briefings on assessments of engaged targets, measures of performance (MOP) or measures of effectiveness (MOE) of lethal or non-lethal engagements for executed targets. MOPs are discussed, but no review of a combat assessment to determine if the desired effect had been attained or if a reattack was necessary or recommended for a specific target or weapons system. Another limiting factor includes overly restrictive Rules of Engagement (ROE).

Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) and Rules of Engagement (ROE)

COIN-centric ROE result in overly restrictive measures that effect the timeliness of fires. Development of the ROE is rooted in the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) developed after the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The LOAC is a complex body of law created by Western countries that is governed by the principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction.^{xv} Divisions impose additional restriction on themselves when they shape the ROE for using military force. Rightfully so, the ROE became more stringent concerning lethal target engagement during COIN operations in the Global War on Terror. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff required that for Department of Defense, Services, Combatant Commands and their subordinate forces headquarters, combat support agencies and coalition partners all have target coordinate mensuration certification and accreditation programs for deliberate and dynamic targeting.^{xvi}

Divisions are now challenged with determining which targets must be handled sensitively due to potential political repercussions and major adverse consequences. These recent constraints to include high levels of target engagement authority (TEA) approval contribute to untimely and ineffective targeting. No doubt, these restrictions coupled with precision guided munitions (PGMs) rather than conventional munitions are necessary for targets with extensive collateral damage concerns. However, we must ask ourselves this question: Have we placed overly restrictive targeting measures as a result of COIN-centric targeting that will cripple us in a large-scale combat operation against a regional peer threat?

As we see a shift away from COIN towards potential conflict with a peer opponent, adherence to the LOAC is still essential. To allow a level playing field, the ROE must be less restrictive and clear and concise for deliberate and dynamic targeting and counterfire in offensive and defensive operations during phases 0 (Shape), I (Deter), II (Seize the Initiative), and III (Dominate). The ROE must be simple rather than convoluted and left to interpretation. It cannot place unnecessary restrictions upon the use of military force that may potentially impede the success of friendly operations. The commander establishes restrictions within the targeting guidance, and the SJA ensures that these restrictions are articulated within the ROE. The ROE will and should become more stringent based on the operational environment as we have seen during COIN operations for phases IV (Stability) and V (Enable Civil Authority).

Joint Air Ground Integration Center (JAGIC)/Current Operations Integrating Cell (COIC)/Fires Cell integration and shared understanding

Integrating the Joint Air Ground Integration Center (JAGIC) into the division Current Operations Integrating Cell (COIC) and the Fires Cell proves critical to coordinating and synchronizing fires in support of the maneuver commander's objectives and intent and improved shared understanding. As a result of lessons learned in multiple warfighter exercises and named operations, the JAGIC allows the division commander to integrate and coordinate fires to synchronize Joint and Army fires.^{xvii} Based on MCTP Warfighter observations, divisions are challenged with integrating the JAGIC into the COIC and the Fires Cell.

The COIN-centric mindset results in the division COIC focused on such things as the Battle Update Brief (BUB) and dynamic targets rather than the execution of the deliberate targeting plan. MCTP trainers frequently observe the BUB becoming the priority over the execution of a time-sensitive High Payoff Target (HPT) that the JAGIC is attempting to engage. Moreover, many staffs do not have battle drills in place to ensure the Common Operational Picture (COP) remains updated across systems in the JAGIC, COIC, and the DIVARTY. Ineffective system integration results in fire support coordination measures not always updated to include critical measures such as the Coordinated Fire Line (CFL), the Fire Support Coordination Line (FSCL), and friendly troop locations.

Integrating the DIVARTY, JAGIC, and COIC proves critical to managing airspace to synchronize Close Air Support (CAS), Air Interdiction (AI), and surface-to-surface fires. The JAGIC provides a joint team to control division airspace for integrated and more efficient synchronization of fires.^{xviii} Training to achieve full integration of the COIC, JAGIC and the Fires Cell must start months before a Warfighter, CTC rotation or deployment. The COIC, JAGIC, and Fires Cell must train together. Much of this training to allow integration would include digital sustainment training and divisions many times do not support JAGIC training. Furthermore, the lessons learned in this training must be captured and codified in the form of doctrine, standard operational procedures (SOPs) and battle drills.

The JAGIC positions the Air Support Operations Center (ASOC) within the division instead of maintaining it at corps level. This allows the divisions to better shape their own deep area with more responsive fires. Now the divisions must understand how to best integrate the JAGIC to allow for division-level rapid execution and clearance of fires and airspace deconfliction. The integration of the JAGIC into 1st Armored Division's Division-Main (D-Main) CP provided improved airspace deconfliction and coordination. The division improved in their ability to dynamically retask previously distributed joint air assets in real time to support the division commander's priorities. The division was challenged with integrating the JAGIC with the division fires cell, air and missile defense (AMD) and G3/Aviation sections. Moreover, the division staff did not fully understand the roles, responsibilities and functions of each JAGIC member.^{xix}

Summary

All of the problems with fire support as mentioned above exist under the umbrella of a COIN-centric mindset. With targeting, the division command and staff must understand and implement the D3A methodology as a synchronizing function in order to change that mindset. Commanders and their staffs must deconstruct the habits associated with COIN-centric targeting through phases 0 (Shape), I (Deter), II (Seize the Initiative), and III (Dominate). However, they should not forget those lessons in phases IV (Stability) and V (Enable Civil Authority). Moreover, commanders and their staffs must fully integrate the division artillery (DIVARTY) into the division as the force

field artillery headquarters with preferably organic Multiple Launch Rocket Battalions. If not, then empower the Corps by assigning a JAGIC at the Corps level. These long-range shooters will allow the division or the Corps to better shape the deep area and achieve massed and focused fires. The additionally organizational adjustments to allow the DIVARTY to standardize training for the BCT field artillery battalions across the division will result in improved fire support in the close fight and brigade deep fight. Finally, fully integrating the DIVARTY, JAGIC, and the COIC proves critical to a shared understanding of the battlefield situation across the warfighting functions. This will in turn improve deliberate and dynamic targeting in support of maneuver operations to allow focused fires, and massing of fires.

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