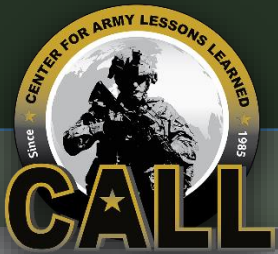


NEWS FROM THE FRONT

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Multinational Interoperability

Tactical-level considerations in Afghanistan



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News from the Front:

**Multinational Interoperability: Tactical-level considerations in Afghanistan
Task Force Manchu
Operation FREEDOM SENTINEL**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) collected observations, insights, and lessons from Task Force (TF) Manchu during its deployment in support of Operation FREEDOM SENTINEL (OFS). CALL Military Analyst Forward (MAF) also conducted key leader interviews with TF Manchu command team (Commander, LTC David Uthlauth and CSM Charles Pittman). This News from the Front (NFTF) highlights TF Manchu operations, activities, and actions (OAAs) focusing on deployment train-up, mission planning, and mission execution. The TF executed three lines of effort (LOE) in support of OFS: 1. protecting the largest base in Afghanistan (Bagram Airfield), 2. disrupting the enemy, and 3. enabling their Afghanistan partners. The seamless execution of these LOEs facilitated TF Manchu to excel at multinational interoperability.

Key takeaways:

Multinational Interoperability: Partner with key multinational forces, NATO allies and joint partners. TF Manchu deployed a wide range of security forces that protect the Bagram Ground Defense Area (BGDA).

Mission Command: Provide command and control of the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC), Military Working Dogs (MWD), Air Defense Artillery (ADA) and civilian contracted guards.

Train, Advise and Assist: Develop relationships with Provincial government leaders and Afghan National Army Senior Leadership to include local police.

These items address the adaptability and flexibility inherently needed in military operations. Additional details and insights are included within the base document.

CALL Publications of Interest

- 16-18 Multinational Interoperability Reference Guide, July 16
- 15-06 MDMP Handbook, March 15
- 15-02 Leader's Guide to Team Building Handbook, January 15
- 14-01 Security Force Assistance, October 13 (Available to authorized users only)

Front Cover: Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, NATO Forces and the Afghan National Army conduct a patrol in Afghanistan, September 26, 2018. Soldiers often conduct patrols to let the locals know the U.S. Army is here to help and to let the enemy know we are still fighting. Photo by Spc. Markus Bowling, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs

“Attack at the ECP (entry control point)”

The receipt of this message over the radio in the BDOC sent the TF into a well-rehearsed battle drill. The quick reaction force is activated, medical evacuations are being prepared and additional resources are being allocated. This scenario is a challenging situation and likely represents a base Commander’s most dangerous course of action during the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP).

Most units conduct training to react or counter these attacks when tasked with the responsibility to defend a base. When training for a field training exercise or preparing for deployment, Commanders who assume the responsibility of a base defense must carefully consider all factors and adjust as needed to deter enemy actions. Being tasked with the mission for base defense and preparing does not compare to the reality of having to execute on the ground.

Any attack against a base or its personnel is given the highest considerations for any unit operating in an area teeming with enemy forces looking to exploit gaps in security. Defense in depth that is layered with multiple force protection measures is the key to success. TF Manchu, with a complex task organization is conducting these OAs on a daily basis.

A True Definition of Multinational Interoperability

Army leaders at Echelons above Brigade (EAB) rely on staff members with diverse military specialties to accomplish a mission. TF Manchu relies on different branches of the military and various coalition partners to accomplish their mission. This mission may rival some of the most important objectives being conducted in Afghanistan.

Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan is the primary hub for military operations and provides a safe and secure environment for U.S. Forces-Afghanistan to command from. The base houses service members, civilian contractors and coalition partners. The daunting mission of protecting the population falls on TF Manchu.

In alignment with the Army of 2025 vision concept, U.S. forces must be able to interoperate and employ multinational forces in order to defeat enemy forces on the battlefield. TF Manchu partners with Poland, Czech Republic and Georgia forces and focuses on each countries’ depth and strong suits, enabling them to employ a superior force structure to accomplish its mission.



Afghanistan – 11.29.2017: Georgian Army Officer (left) and U.S. Marine, talk to two of the boys they helped save after a Taliban suicide bombing attack. Both men are part of the Georgian Liaison Team - a joint Coalition Patrol Team - who were the first responders and provided life-saving aid to the children. Photo by Master Sgt. Sheryl Lawry

Mission Preparation

Prior to deploying, the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colorado conducted several training exercises. These included live fire exercises (individual through company combined live fire exercise). The unit also conducted a combat training center rotation at Ft Irwin, CA where they honed their warfighting abilities.

LTC Uthlaut stated, “while these exercises prepared 4-9 IN leaders to conduct mission command and solve complex problems, it did not fully prepare them for the challenges of leading a joint and multi-national task force.” LTC

Uthlaut during his pre-deployment site survey (PDSS) learned the mission requirements and area of operations (AO) layout. His staff then prepared the task organization and assigned missions to his subordinate commands.

“I would have personally spent more time on language training, with a focus on learning basic phrases to communicate with all of our partner Coalition and Afghan Forces”

*LTC David Uthlaut, Task Force Manchu Commander
Bagram, Afghanistan.*

Nearly seventy-five percent of TF Manchu is spread across the AO conducting operations not under LTC Uthlaut’s command and control. LTC Uthlaut and his staff focus on the Bagram Ground Defense Area (BGDA).

Priority # 1: Protect the Force

TF Manchu’s number one priority is to protect the force, which includes the BGDA and all of its inhabitants. TF Manchu and their multinational partners are challenged with inner and outer security including base access, protection assets and an airfield that serves as the primary hub in and out of theater.

Each multinational partner encompasses its own personnel, equipment and support. Support to each country requires linguists that must speak the respective language and local languages within Afghanistan. Depending on the mission set, some countries are partnered with U.S. Marine advisors to provide tactical assistance during operations.

Most Commanders tend to focus on outside the wire patrols, yet inside the wire missions serve just as crucial to the overall safety of the base. TF Manchu coordinates with a civilian contracted guard force to ensure personnel on the base are safe. These efforts often go unnoticed by the service member or civilian populace. TF Manchu regards this as a sign of success, knowing they are secure day in and day out.

Priority # 2: Disrupt the Enemy

The BDOC oversees all missions and tasks that fall within the BGDA. They coordinate support as required including Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Teams, verifying fire missions and work closely with the Air Defense Artillery to disrupt enemy forces.

Route Clearance Packages support coalition partners during missions to provide safe passage to friendly forces. Typical patrols combine multinational forces with U.S. forces to bring a diverse fighting element to the AO.

Aside from patrols, TF Manchu disrupts the enemy through multi-faceted approaches. They conduct terrain denial fire missions in which they use indirect fires into areas to deny enemy positions in the BGDA. This deters the enemy from firing from a known or preferred location, making them less accurate.

TF Manchu leverages support from aviation assets, TF Shadow. TF Shadow provides support to ground patrols, and conduct their own missions throughout the BGDA to include aerial patrols and false infiltration, further disrupting the enemy decision making process.

TF Manchu aggressively employs their organic sensors to find, fix, and destroy the enemy. On numerous occasions, the Soldiers in the BDOC identified Taliban firing direct weapon systems and directed local authorities to either eliminate or detain them.

The BDOC also provides assistance with Air Force partners ensuring security of the flight line, preventing the enemy freedom of maneuver or causing harm to personnel and equipment located on the base.

Priority # 3: Enabling their Afghan Partners

LTC Uthlaut leads the task of training, advising and assisting (TAA) the local provincial leaders and Afghan National Army (ANA) partners. His efforts focus on increasing ANA ownership of security within BGDA, increasing their warfighting function capacity and supporting their



Afghanistan – 09.26.2018, A Soldier from 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division provides security while on patrol in Afghanistan, September 26, 2018. Soldiers often conduct patrols to let the locals know the U.S. Army is here to help and to let the enemy know we are still fighting. Photo by Spc Markus Bowling, 1st SBCT, 4th ID PAO

actions that increase security. He coordinates between different echelons of government while enabling ANA operations being conducted within the BGDA.

U.S. national strategy makes clear that the U.S. Armed Forces will seldom, if ever, fight alone.

“Multinational Interoperability Reference Guide” CALL Handbook 16-18, Jul 2016

According to the LTC Uthlaut, he communicates at least twice a week in person with his Afghan Partners and holds a weekly Shura¹. These face-to-face meetings go a long way in building relationships with the forces they are advising.

The TF Command Sergeant Major, CSM Charles Pittman, leads the initiative of hosting dinner gatherings with his Coalition senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs). This helps reinforce standards and discipline, while also raising issues that the Soldiers might be facing. CSM Pittman also incorporates the senior enlisted advisors along with his TF senior NCOs in bi-monthly meetings.

Lessons Learned while fighting in a fluid operational environment

TF Manchu recognizes their first 30 days were challenging and required an effort to maximize partnerships. They had to adjust to a new higher headquarters since they were based out of Fort Carson, Colorado, and were a part of the 4th Infantry Division. They fell in on current operations of their predecessors, and spent a fair amount of time understanding their subordinate units to learn their various backgrounds and capabilities.

TF Commander quickly stated “face-to-face communications” as the most important lesson learned in their first 30 days. The team realized it needed consistency to facilitate the ability to communicate intent and to fully understand their partners’ issues or concerns.

Another lesson was understanding what “off-duty” activities meant to his coalition partners. Some of the types of activities include celebrating each other’s national holidays and playing sports. TF Manchu used the activities as a great way to build the team and bridge cultural gaps.

Final Thoughts

Throughout history, militaries have allied with one another to defeat enemy forces and achieve strategic objectives as a unified fighting force. While often unadvertised, TF Manchu continually excelled at seamless multinational interoperability which integrated conventional and unconventional assets to fight and win the nations wars. This mutually beneficial approach continues to be implemented by TF Manchu, in its service to OFS, despite the many challenges of this theater.

¹ A Shura is a consultation or conference generally held by senior leaders.