

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

September 2018



Filling Operational

Capability Gaps in Theater



***Planning considerations for leveraging
Over the Horizon Units***

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Approved for Public Release

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News from the Front:

Over the Horizon

III Corps

Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve

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Forward

This News from the Front (NFTF) describes how the Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) worked toward implementing the Over the Horizon (Oth) concept. In a changing operational environment (OE) with limited resources and the need to seize opportunities, CJTF-OIR utilized available theater forces as an expeditious means to surge capacity where and when needed.

Observations, Insights, and Lessons came from:

1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division After Action Report (AAR)

2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division AAR

3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division AAR

COL Charles Lombardo, 2nd ABCT, 1st Armored Division Commander

LTC Matthew Bacon: 35th Engineer Brigade S3

LTC Andrew Inch: 28th Infantry Division G3

CPT Douglas Dietrich: 28th Infantry Division G3 TCA Manager

Information from AARs and interviews have been paraphrased to enable public release and usefulness to future CJTFs. The full AAR from 2/1 AD is posted to the Joint Lessons Learned Information System (JLLIS) at <https://www.jllis.mil>. The Marine AARs are posted at: <https://www2.mccl.usmc.mil/index.cfm>. JLLIS and MCCL sites are accessible by authorized users possessing a common access card.

Front Cover: U.S. Soldiers gather for a brief during a combined joint patrol rehearsal in Manbij, Syria, Nov. 7, 2018. Continued assistance to partner forces is essential for setting conditions for regional stability. The Coalition and its partners remain united and resolved to prevent the resurgence of ISIS and its violent extremist ideology. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Zoe Garbarino) (Spc. Zoe Garbarino)

Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve: 2017-2018

LTG Paul E. Funk II, Commander III Corps from Fort Hood, Texas, took command of CJTF-OIR in September 2017. Operation Inherent Resolve recently concluded a major nine-month battle in Mosul, but was still in the midst of liberating the remaining pockets of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). During a dangerous and unpredictable year, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) directed a headquarters (HQ) evolution to a smaller footprint. CJTF-OIR, overcame challenges (force management levels, international politics, etc.) and leveraged capabilities exploiting opportunities and the development of the Over the Horizon (OtH) concept.

As a result of the HQ evolution, the CJTF-OIR headquarters took on OtH-like characteristics when the 10th Mountain Division ceased to be the Combined Joint Force Land Component Command – Iraq (CJFLCC-I) in early 2018. LTG Funk and his headquarters leaders moved to Baghdad, Iraq splitting the staff between Iraq and Kuwait. Staff members often traveled between the two countries to better manage efforts that now includes the “down and in” functions previously overseen by CJFLCC-I.

Army doctrine does not define “over the horizon.” However, FM 3-22, Army Support to Security Cooperation, January 2013 defines Regionally Aligned Forces as: “Those forces that provide a combatant commander with up to joint task force capable headquarters with scalable, tailorable capabilities to enable the [geographic] combatant commander (GCC) to shape the environment. They are those Army units assigned to combatant commands, those Army units allocated to a combatant command, and those Army capabilities distributed and prepared by the Army for combatant command regional missions.” It goes on to define Security Cooperation as: “interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships” that support US interests and assist allied military capabilities. Security Cooperation is similar to Foreign Internal Defense as these operations can occur during peacetime, unlike CJTF-OIR’s concept of OtH.

To understand what OtH is, it may also be helpful to understand what it is not. Just because United States and foreign partner nations are living or training together does not necessarily equate to OtH. The 8th Army operations, activities, and actions in the Republic of Korea is not OtH as indicated by its existence on the peninsula throughout the Cold War. Operation Bright Star in Egypt or Operation Nautical Horizon in Kuwait, which has a maritime component are not accepted by CJTF-OIR as an OtH element. Similarly, a Marine Expeditionary Unit on a US Navy amphibious ship is not OtH, *per se*. International defense agreements require US Army elements to be stationed in Kuwait, but that is an enduring and large footprint and is not what OtH is about from US Army Central’s (ARCENT) perspective.

OtH is generally not:

- A Humanitarian Aid mission
- A rescue operation or Global Response Force
- A routine, enduring, and multinational military exercise

Examples that could define OtH:

- Regionally Aligned Forces stationed in their GCC's AOR, but not in the same country they could conduct an OtH mission.
- Security Force Assistance Brigades deployed from the US and stationed outside their assigned CJOA.
- Marines on ships in a theater of operations and near the designated country and assigned CJTF/CJFLCC.
- Any military element in the theater of operations that can provide a variety of capabilities ranging from offensive/defensive operations to training lasting from a few days to several months in support of a CJTF/CJFLCC.

CJTF-OIR considers the ground forces in Kuwait that will deploy forward to Iraq or Syria as OtH units. These ground forces include units that are organic (enduring) and units that are not organic (but still a viable option to fill a requirement). A critical component is to ensure organic units possess the legal authorities (established by the Secretary of Defense) to conduct operations in Iraq or Syria. Non-organic units require a Theater Coordinated Assistance (TCA) which is not CJTF-OIR's optimal OtH solution. The CJTF-OIR Future Operations Cell conceptualizes several company-sized units (150-200 soldiers) with a battalion element as part of Advise, Assist, Enable (A2E) missions. The companies do not have to be from the same unit as the battalion headquarters as they are likely to deploy on different missions.

Most forces deployed forward in an OtH-like role were TCA as they were already deployed to CJTF-OIR's theater, but supporting another CENTCOM operation. When a requirement is identified and the capability is confirmed to exist in the theater of operation (TOO), the CJ38 (Director, Force Management) submits the TCA request to CENTCOM. The request is staffed to the service components to validate and endorse the TCA. If the CENTCOM commander approves the TCA, the J3 cuts an order for 120-days. The entire process takes one to eight weeks.

Several Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) battalions deployed to Syria and Iraq. The Marines were actually stationed in Kuwait and requested through CENTCOM based on the conditions in Iraq and Syria. The advantage of Kuwait is a better quality of life on enduring US bases and sufficient training areas to maintain combat readiness. While Marines typically embark and deploy on US Navy ships, the staging of Marines in Kuwait did not constrain CJTF-OIR to an Amphibious Readiness Group's availability and proximity to the CJOA.



Caption: U.S. Marines, in support to CJTF-OIR, debark from an MV-22B Osprey at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, June 4, 2018. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jered T. Stone)

In CJTF-OIR's TOO, Task Force (TF) Spartan has several brigades as part of a Theater Security Cooperation¹ for the region. They are the most convenient source of combat power that can also fulfill operations or training across all the warfighting functions and range of military operations. TF Spartan units conduct training on the gunnery ranges and support exercises throughout the CENTCOM AOR. A TCA is not a doctrinal term and other GCCs may have their own naming convention for identical means of sourcing combat or stability operations.

Currently, the 28th Infantry Division leads Task Force Spartan. They conduct thorough mission analysis when a TCA "chop" comes down prior to CENTCOM cutting an order. If the TCA imposes too much risk to their mission, they would not concur with the request. The command relationship of a TCA is such that the OtH element that goes forward is under Tactical Control to CJTF-OIR, but remains under Operational Control to the 28th ID, so they have some amount of rapid means of recalling the unit if necessary.

Observations, Lessons, and Insights

If you are a planner on a Combined Joint Task Force or Combined Joint Land Component Command staff, the first thing to determine is if the OtH must be only US or if coalition forces can be deployed OtH. One of the driving requirements behind OtH for CJTF-OIR was the maximum limit, or capacity in accordance with national policy, of US forces in Iraq. Some other things you may want to consider are:

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- CJTF-OIR's OtH concept is a deliberately planned, non-urgent mission. You will have to define the parameters for your OtH based on the commander's intent. Because it is not doctrinal, you can make it what the commander wants.
- Anticipate transitions in the military campaign or political atmospherics that makes an OtH a viable course of action. The CENTCOM AOR is fortunate to have Kuwait for an enduring staging area, but not every future CJTF/CJFLCC will have the luxury of a secure and stable country to stage immediately outside the CJOA, therefore navy ships may be the only option.
- A Request for Forces (RFF) is used when the capability does not exist in the AOR or the Service Component Command needs that capability for other operations. However, changing priorities in US national strategies may require the Joint Staff to deny your RFF. CJTF-OIR still uses RFFs when necessary, but they can take longer to put forces on the ground.

¹ Theater Security Cooperation is a nation to nation agreement in which US forces train with foreign partners or provide some sort of US power projection to the region. It includes a variety of things to include Foreign Military Sales and the US National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program (See FM 3-22). TCAs are US military service component to service component arrangements within a GCC to enable mission success.

- Theater Coordination Assistance can be challenging and limited in exact location, function, and duration. Requesting and using units assigned to other theater operations can pose a dilemma for the risk the parent unit accepts by giving up a resource, capability, and equipment.
- Better Staff Work: Know exactly what you want; clearly define your requirement. Ask yourself what the second and third order effects of what you want will be on the force provider and funding. This may require you to network among the staff sections, especially the CJ8, and service component commands, so put effort in learning the joint staff—it is not like an army division staff. Panels that endorse an OtH requests can be more user-friendly if you do the staff work and pre-coordination in advance.
- “To plan a TCA, first we would submit the requirement to the Capabilities and Requirements Working Group. Then if validated, the requirement goes to the Requirements and Sustainment Council of Colonels for endorsement. Afterwards, the request goes to the Requirements and Decision Board, which is chaired by a 1 or 2-star general officer. This whole process can take 3-5 weeks.² This timeline can be hastened for valid operational reasons, rather than poor anticipation/staff work.”³
- Because TCAs are not doctrinal and the force provider has the ability to decline to support, the 28th ID maintains constant awareness of its forces to ensure mission creep does not become a problem. They treat the TCA as a contract to avoid misuse.⁴ CJTF-OIR also voiced that their OtH would not perform certain duties simply because they are armed and could do something the Iraqi Army should already be capable of providing.
- Information Operations and Public Affairs messaging may also contribute to planning an OtH as the host nation may have concerns of US and coalition forces permanently stationed there. Just about any maneuver operation has messaging effects and the physical operation should be in parallel to the information operation the CJTF executes.⁵
- Depending on how austere your staging base is and necessary construction and life support, you may need to include Army Materiel Command assets like Logistics Civilian Augmentee Program (LOGCAP) and Operational Contract Support personnel in your planning.
- Long missions that surpass a unit’s Relief in Place require Theater Provided Equipment to facilitate redeployment of the unit’s equipment to the US.⁶ Some TCAs have been

² This 3-5 weeks is internal to CJTF-OIR and is the amount of time the request can clear the Requirements and Decision Board because it and the Council of Colonels do not meet every week. The TCA will still have to go to CENTCOM for staffing and approval or disapproval.

³ COL Gavin Stanford, Australian Army. Email and phone interview between COL Stanford and CALL. AUG 2018.

⁴ Conversation with 28 ID G3 and G3 TCA Manager, Camp Arifjan, Kuwait 21 August 2018.

⁵ Summarized from an interview with CJ39 Future Plans MAJ David Mortimer (UK) at Camp Arifjan, 25 August 2018.

⁶ Ibid. Pg 3.

extended multiple times so planners and parent units may need to consider this when tasked to support an operation.

- The base you deploy to may or may not have the level of maintenance support you have in the rear. Logisticians have to be creative to disseminate parts to units forward deployed.⁷
- Transporting equipment across international borders may require days or weeks. Each country has different requirements.⁸ Participating in multi-national exercises while also supporting an OtH will require deliberate planning and coordination with local national transportation resources.
- There are possible 2nd and 3rd order effects when a unit deploys forward with scarce resources. Either the OtH force or the remainder of the unit in Kuwait may have to process an Operational Needs Statement to acquire replacement equipment for things that are now in Iraq or Syria.⁹
- Advise, Assist, Accompany, Enable (A3E) missions require an officer in charge of appropriate rank to shadow a general officer of the host nation. Request a Worldwide Individual Augmentation Support (WIAS) requirement so a battalion commander is not removed from his command for prolonged periods of time.¹⁰
- Both the US Army and Marines have developed and implemented over the past several decade the Company Intelligence Support Team (Army) or Company Level Intelligence Cell (Marines). If a company is going forward as a SECFOR or to conduct offensive missions, this capability will be value-added to an OtH element.

⁷ Paraphrased from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division. After Action Report for Ground Combat Element Special Marine Air Ground Task Force-Crisis Response-Central Command 17.2B – 18.1, 16 May 2018. Pg 13.

⁸ Paraphrased from 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. Operation Spartan Shield After Action Report, 17 JUN 2018. Pg 11.

⁹ Conversation with 28th ID G3 and G3 TCA Manager. Camp Arifjan, Kuwait 21 August 2018.

¹⁰ Paraphrased from 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division. Operation Spartan Shield After Action Report, 17 JUN 2018. Pg 4.

As III Corps transitions out of Iraq, CJTF-OIR is making progress to establish OtH as they envision it. Certainly, TCAs and RFFs will continue to be a means of putting capabilities and forces in the CJOA, but OtH with organic forces is the preferred course of action. Leadership, CJ3, the planners in CJ35, and the CJ38 team have worked hard to implement LTG Funk's vision and satisfy changes in national policy while continuing to conduct a variety of operations. Because of OtH's contribution, Iraq was mostly cleared of ISIS by the Iraqi Security Forces, with CJTF-OIR's support, and through the authorities granted from TCAs over the past twelve months.



Caption: U.S. Army Lt. Gen Paul E. Funk II, the commander of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve conducts a key leader engagement with Jazirah Operations Command in Haditha, Iraq, July 18, 2018. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Zakia Gray)

Despite the cost to Task Force Spartan, TCAs and other exercises under the umbrella of Theater Security Cooperation do provide these units with opportunities to execute all the warfighting functions in a real-world environment. The recent 155th ABCT equipment draw from Army Prepositioned Stocks also provided an opportunity for the Army through the 401st Army Field Support Brigade to exercise a major logistics operation that has its own lessons learned that are applicable in other combatant commands.

There will always be leadership challenges and planning obstacles so the best lesson learned with respect to OtH is to be agile, resilient, and creative. A resource constrained environment requires leaders and staffs to adjust to changing priorities, exercise due diligence in staff work, and be resourceful to find solutions.

Planning and executing an OtH force can be challenging enough, and TCAs are not always guaranteed. Some of these challenges are dispersion of mission command; equipment availability, transportation, and maintenance; and timeliness to take advantage of opportunities to place forces when needed. Despite the learning value in executing a major operation or participating in large-scale exercises, OtH or TCAs do come with a cost to their parent headquarters and operation and the void that is now created. There will always be leadership challenges and planning obstacles so the best lesson learned with respect to OtH is to be agile, resilient, and creative. A resource constrained environment requires leaders and staffs to adjust to changing priorities, exercise due diligence in staff work, and be resourceful to find solutions. Despite the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the CJTF-OIR staff had to balance uncertain threats with changing priorities. Taking advantage of significant combat power in the theater of operations, the staff found ways to leverage CENTCOM assets to seize opportunities and achieve training milestones with the Iraqi Army.