



**INTEGRATING CIVIL AFFAIRS IN
LARGE-SCALE COMBAT OPERATIONS:
TRENDS FROM THE COMBAT TRAINING CENTERS**





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Integrating Civil Affairs in Large-Scale Combat Operations

INTRODUCTION

World events demonstrate the destruction that military conflict can wreak on civilian populations and the reciprocal effect of civilians, civil organizations, and infrastructure on the conduct of large-scale combat operations (LSCO). Current Army doctrine reflects this reality.

“To make timely decisions, commanders must understand the effects of their decisions in the context of their operational environment (OE). They must understand enemy capabilities, the terrain and weather, and their impact on operations. Understanding an OE includes civil considerations—such as the population (with demographics and culture), the government, economics, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and history.”

— Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations*, 31 July 2019, Paragraph 3-51¹

Civil affairs (CA) forces provide capabilities to help commanders understand civil considerations and operate in the civil environment. “The CA capability is vital to all operation types—across the competition continuum, in crises or conflict. ...CA forces neutralize or disrupt adversaries by leveraging civil networks, resources, capabilities, and relevant populations.”² This publication explores trends related to the integration of CA capabilities in training for LSCO at the U.S. Army combat training centers (CTCs) and identifies common gaps, best practices, and recommendations provided by observer coach/trainers (OC/Ts) and rotational-unit CA staff.

CIVIL AFFAIRS FORCES AND ENABLERS

The S-9 (civil affairs operations staff officer) is the staff lead at the brigade combat team (BCT) tasked to understand and synchronize all matters concerning civil affairs operations (CAO). A BCT may be supported by a CA company that is authorized five civil affairs teams (CATs) and staffing for a civil-military operations center (CMOC).

CMOC Tasks

- Receive civil information.
- Analyze, develop, and manage civil information.
- Disseminate civil information.
- Make recommendations and influence the civil component.
- Integrate resources and capabilities.
- Synchronize and coordinate resources and capabilities.
- Conduct transitional operations.

— Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-57.70, *Civil-Military Operations Center*, 5 May 2014, Page 4-1³

Other forces that contribute to CAO include psychological operations (PSYOP), human intelligence (HUMINT), special forces (SF), public affairs, engineer, military police, medical, and transportation assets.

CAT Tasks

- Work with and through civil networks.
- Conduct CA projects and programs.
- Coordinate and direct humanitarian aid provision and distribution.
- Provide governance expertise and support to civil administration at the local level.
- Conduct other CAO meant to interact directly with civilian populations.

— Field Manual (FM) 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Page 4-27⁴

CIVIL AFFAIRS STAFF INTEGRATION

FM 3-57 defines civil network development and engagement (CNDE) as “the activity by which the civil network capabilities and resources are engaged, evaluated, developed, and integrated into operations.”⁵ The intent of CNDE is to provide the commander with a greater understanding of the OE and access to networks that shape operational outcomes. Effective CNDE relies on close cooperation between the S-9; CA forces and enablers; and BCT and subordinate staffs.

“Teamwork within a staff and between staffs produces the staff integration essential to synchronized operations. A staff works efficiently with complete cooperation from all staff sections. A force operates effectively in cooperation with all headquarters. Commanders and staffs foster this positive climate during training and sustain it during operations. However, frequent personnel changes and augmentation to their headquarters adds challenges to building and maintaining the team. While all staff sections have clearly defined functional responsibilities, none can operate effectively in isolation. Therefore, coordination is extremely important.”

— ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, Paragraph 4-27⁶

The following are CA staff integration trends observed at the CTCs:

- Commanders and staffs do not understand CA roles and capabilities in LSCO.
- S-9s are not proficient in BCT operations and staff products.
- BCTs arrive with no assigned S-9. The role is often assumed by the commander of the attached CA company, degrading effectiveness in both demanding positions.
- CA attachments lack communication platforms that synch with the BCT and are often reluctant to request communications support from BCT units.

- CA forces are assigned to perimeter security, reducing opportunities to build rapport and coordinate with supported units.
- CMOC staffing does not include all participants needed to effectively collect, analyze, and disseminate civil information.

“Integration with CA conventional/unconventional, PSYOP, HUMINT, SF, PAO, to include providing a permanent workstation in the CMOC, is invaluable to the BCT commander as it provides an internal thinktank at his disposal. . . . What is required is uninhibited integration of all CA elements to collect, analyze, and disseminate pertinent civil information.”

— MAJ Jon Williams, recent CA and PSYOP training detachment commander at JRTC⁷

The military decisionmaking process (MDMP) is an intensive staff integration effort that drives planning and execution of the operation. Failure to fully integrate the BCT S-9 in the MDMP will invariably result in less effective use of CA forces and degraded operational effectiveness in the civil environment. Table 1-1a shows the first three steps in civil affairs inputs and outputs to the MDMP.

**Table 1-1a. Civil affairs inputs and outputs to the MDMP steps 1-3
(FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Figure 4-1)⁸**

Step in MDMP	Inputs	Outputs
Step 1: Receipt of mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Higher HQs’ plan or order of a new mission anticipated by the commander ● Open source resources ● Initial estimate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Initial guidance from commander ● Initial allocation of time ● Review of area study
Step 2: Mission analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Higher HQs’ plan or order ● Higher HQs’ knowledge and intelligence products ● Knowledge products from other organizations ● Army design methodology products ● Civil considerations from the area of study ● CA input to restated mission statement ● Identifications of mission and operational variables and potential centers of gravity ● Trend verification ● Civil vulnerability identification ● Layered geospatial information ● Civil information for the COP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Problem statement ● Mission statement ● Initial assessment ● Initial commander’s intent ● Initial planning guidance ● Initial CCIRs and critical information ● Updated IPB and running estimates ● Initial CAO running estimate ● Assumptions ● Restated mission statement ● Identification of civil information requirements

<p>Step 3: COA development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mission statement ● Initial commander’s intent, planning guidance, CCIRs, and critical information ● Updated IPB and running estimates ● Assumptions ● CAO running estimate ● Continued and refined center of gravity analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CAO statements and sketches such as— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tentative task organization ○ Tactical tasks assigned to CA forces ○ Broad concept of operations ○ CAO concept of support ● Revised planning guidance ● Updated CAO running estimates ● Updated assumptions ● Identification of MOEs and MOPs ● Identification of center of gravity ● Initial civil information collection plan
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S-9 involvement in mission analysis sets the stage for effective CAO integration. This is where the S-9 makes an initial assessment of the civil environment; provides civil information for the common operational picture (COP); assists in identifying mission and operational variables; and produces the initial CAO running estimate. CAO running estimates should provide the commander a basic understanding of the current civil environment, capabilities of systems that friendly forces can employ to shape that environment, and the enemy capabilities and likely activities that will impact friendly operations.

CA staff integration in course of action (COA) development ensures the effective use of CA capabilities throughout the operation to assist the unit to achieve the commander’s desired end state with respect to the civil environment. CA outputs to COA development include the CA concept of support, tasks to CA forces, and the civil information collection plan.

Table 1-1b shows steps 4-7 in civil affairs inputs and outputs to the military decisionmaking process (MDMP).

Table 1-1b. Civil affairs inputs and outputs to the MDMP steps 4-7 (FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Figure 4-1)⁹

Step in MDMP	Inputs	Outputs
Step 4: COA analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refined and updated center of gravity analysis ● Updated running estimates ● Revised planning guidance ● COA statements and sketches ● Updated assumptions ● Updated COA running estimates ● Tactical tasks assigned to CA forces ● Civil information collection requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refined COAs ● Potential decision points ● Civil considerations for wargaming ● War game results ● Initial assessment measures ● Updated assumptions ● Refined civil information collection plan
Step 5: COA comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Center of gravity analysis ● Updated running estimate ● Refined COAs ● Evaluation criteria ● War game results ● Updated assumptions ● Civil considerations from initial assessment ● COA concept of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluated COAs ● Recommended COAs ● Updated running estimates ● Updated CAO running estimate ● Updated assumptions
Step 6: COA approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updated running estimates ● Evaluated COAs ● Recommended COA ● Updated assumptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commander-selected COA and any modifications ● Refined commander's intent, CCIRs, and critical information ● Updated assumptions

<p>Step 7: Production, dissemination, and transition of orders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commander-selected COA with any modifications ● Refined commander’s intent, CCIRs, and critical information ● Updated assumptions ● Refined CAO concept of support ● Tasks to CA forces ● Civil information collection requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approved OPLAN or OPORD that— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Produces Annex K ○ Assists in the production of Annex V ● Understanding of plan or order by subordinates ● Revised civil information collection plan ● Any CA-specific FRAGORDs ● Updated restricted target list ● Updated no-fire area
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S-9 participation in COA analysis through order production ensures civil considerations are included in analyzing, comparing, and approving COAs and tasks related to CA are clearly defined in the operation order (OPORD).

The following are military decisionmaking process (MDMP) trends observed at the CTCs:

- S-9s give little or no input into the initial assessment and restated mission.
- Civil considerations are not sufficiently defined in mission analysis. S-9 and S-2 (security officer) staffs have minimal interaction, precluding S-9 support during information preparation of the battlefield (IPB).
- CA analysis is often disconnected from the defined COAs.
- CA running estimates are often not produced or are insufficient. MAJ Jon Williams, a recent CA and PSYOP training detachment commander at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), assessed that only one unit maintained a doctrinally correct CA running estimate¹⁰ in the three years he was assigned to JRTC.
- Insufficient analysis of the civil environment precludes meaningful inclusion in COA development. Failure at this early stage ensures civil considerations will not be fully addressed and CA forces will not be effectively tasked in the resulting OPORD.
- Lack of an assigned BCT S-9 during home-station training often contributes to a unit’s difficulty integrating CAO considerations during MDMP.

“Most BCTs (approximately 90 percent) arrive without an organic S-9. This results in the United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command [USACAPOC(Airborne)] company commander or CMOC chief filling that role. The CA company typically does not arrive until day five, concurrent with OPORD release and is not prepared to effectively integrate into the MDMP for the first phase of the operation. Although representatives do integrate into the BCT staff, U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) augmentees often are challenged through the shortened and intense training period to adequately provide CA staff products and inputs into MDMP.”

— LTC Brian W. Burbank, National Training Center (NTC) senior information operations trainer¹¹

Units deploying to the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) generally have follow-on missions or permanent stationing in Europe that result in earlier staffing and arrive with an S-9 who has been a part of a unit’s training. CA OC/T MAJ Thomas Howard noted that most S-9s are involved in MDMP and related staff processes to some degree.

“One of the S-9s that we had come through was not only a key member of the staff, but I would say he was acting as the assistant S-2. He was running the targeting working group (TWG) and he was doing all of the public affairs and civil affairs for the brigade.”

— MAJ Thomas Howard, CA OC/T JMRC¹²

Early assignment of an S-9 does not remove all barriers to integrating CA in the MDMP. MAJ Howard noted that organic S-9s training at JMRC often have great CA credentials, including successful deployments, but seldom have relevant staff experience. Another identified challenge is that staffs often lack understanding on S-9 and CMOC functions and how they contribute to the BCT mission.

INFORMATION COLLECTION

FM 3-57 defines CA roles and methods for information collection. These include civil engagement (CE) and civil reconnaissance (CR). CE, a component of all CA core competencies, is the deliberate or spontaneous engagement of individuals and groups aimed at collecting civil information or achieving effects in the civil environment. CR targets specific civil factors in the OE for coordinated observation and evaluation.¹³

“CA forces are a valuable information collection and management capability because of their interaction with populations, government institutions, and inter-organizational partners.

CA forces collect information through physical engagements such as CR, CE, area studies, and assessments...CA forces also collect information through integration, coordination, and synchronization with unified action partners.”

— FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Paragraphs 4-15 and 4-16¹⁴



Figure 1-1. CA Team Simulates CE at Dragoon Ready, Hohenfels Training Area¹⁵

The following are information collection trends observed at the CTCs:

- Civil information collection tends to focus solely on dislocated civilians (DCs) and does not address the commander’s other information requirements.
- CA teams are not positioned where they can answer relevant information requirements.
- Most of the brigade does not understand the DC plan or when information requirements are answered.
- S-9s do not understand how to produce a civil information collection plan, as described in FM 3-57¹⁶ and outlined in ATP 3-57-50.¹⁷

TARGETING

CA forces leverage civil information and knowledge developed through CR and CNDE to provide lethal and nonlethal effects that support the commander’s lines of effort. CAO staff should actively engage in fires warfighting function tasks as part of the TWG and nominate restrictive-fire areas and no-fire areas to minimize unnecessary damage to the civil infrastructure and culturally sensitive sites.

To enhance targeting, the CAO staff provide the following:

- Options for engagement and effects using CA forces
- Identified, developed, and integrated civil networks
- Validated survey control points
- Enhanced governance capability
- Services and recommendations for populace and resources control (PRC) that protect the following:
 - Civilians
 - Critical infrastructure
 - Resources
 - Other noncombatants

— FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Paragraph 4-85¹⁸

The following are targeting trends observed at the CTCs:

- S-9s often do not participate in the TWG.
- When S-9s do participate in the TWG, it is usually limited to minimizing damage to civil infrastructure and injury of DCs or keeping civilians from impeding brigade operations.
- S-9s seldom directly nominate restrictive-fire areas and no-fire areas to minimize unnecessary damage to the civil infrastructure and culturally sensitive sites.
- S-9s generally consult with the brigade legal team on the no-strike list and restricted strike list, but often with minimal effect on the resulting products.

DISLOCATED CIVILIAN OPERATIONS

DCs often affect rotational units at the CTCs by influencing the environment and disrupting operations. Civilians can affect operations because of the actions or inactions of training units or the enemy. Rotational training units plan for the effects of DCs and complete tasks to limit their effects with varying degrees of success.



Figure 1-2. 213th Regional Support Group Soldiers Train with Civilian Role Players at NTC¹⁹

The following are DC operations trends observed at the CTCs:

- Respondents from both NTC and JRTC reported that units often fail to redirect DCs that are inhibiting the operation. LTC Burbank (Ghost 7) reported the following trend at NTC: “While the plans are often briefed and disseminated, they often fail in execution. This is because the plans are made in a vacuum and do not incorporate analysis of likely civilian routes, the actual BCT scheme of maneuver, and because they are not understood by the platoons and companies that will be likely to make first contact.”²⁰
- The trend at JMRC is somewhat better, as described by CA OC/T MAJ Thomas Howard: “Since I’ve been here, units have done a pretty good job. Some of that is more dependent on the brigade and the messaging the brigade pushes out and the consistency of that messaging.”²¹ MAJ Howard provided examples of brigade commanders addressing the community crisis response council or using a press conference to inform the public of guidance regarding DCs, including designated routes and times. The public affairs officer (PAO), PSYOP detachment, and CA teams then echoed the brigade commander’s messaging in their respective engagements.

Several factors may contribute to the more positive trends seen in DC operations at JMRC. The most obvious is the early assignment of an S-9, which facilitates better staff integration to accurately assess the CE and develop integrated COAs. The unique missions of units training at JMRC are another likely factor. Assignments that are closer to the Eastern European conflicts, being fought in and around the civilian populace, may provide a greater impetus for CA integration than is experienced by their CONUS counterparts. MAJ Howard also credits extensive coaching from a well-coordinated information-related capabilities (IRC) OC/T team. “We are a tight team, so a lot of our coaching is synchronized, and every enabler is hearing the same thing from all of us.”

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rotational CA Company, JRTC

MAJ Williams identified a unit that provided CA support during a JRTC rotation as the most effective CA company that he observed at JRTC. Members who served in this unit rotation, led by LTC Michael Abercrombie, former CA company commander, collectively answered the following survey questions, and provided additional recommendations:

- **How did the S-9 contribute to the initial assessment and restated mission?** “The S-9 was an active-duty civil affairs officer. He translated civil knowledge integration (CKI) into actionable mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support, available-time available, and civil considerations (METT-TC) that assisted with the streamlining of assessment content in the context of mission analysis and design methodology.”
- **How did the maneuver staff integrate the CAO running estimate into COA development?** “Our running estimate interfaced with IPB, effects-based targeting synchronization, and task organization.”
- **How did your unit develop and execute the civil information collection plan?** “Our CKI collection was tied back to the maneuver unit’s lines of effort in populace control and resource control, and the associated specified and implied tasks. It continued to be shaped by analysis of the sources of instability and assessments of measures of effectiveness (MOE) and measures of performance (MOP).”
- **How did planning address the prevention of unnecessary damage to property and disruption of the civilian population within areas of operations?** “Participation in TWGs helped align effects with minimal long-term damage to infrastructure for transition to civil authority. Critical lifesaving infrastructure was restored to prevent civil unrest, with minimal impact on military assets. Curfews and checkpoints highly degraded enemy freedom of movement in the AO.”

Recommendation: CA enablers should not assume the maneuver element understands what they bring to the LSCO fight. Be prepared to convince the maneuver element of the value of CA enablers with examples of real-world CA results.

Recommendation: Ensure CA communications equipment and computer systems will talk with the supported unit before reporting to the CTC. There may not be enough time to troubleshoot once the unit arrives.

CALL Publication No. 22-276, *Civil Military Operations Targeting in Large-Scale Ground Combat Operations: Lessons from Warfighter 22-01*

MAJ Nick Ashley (S-9, 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade) and Mr. Robert Schafer (CALL) describe the V Corps G-9's "approach to CMO targeting and lessons learned during WFX 22-01." A few of these approaches are outlined below:

- The V Corps G-9 defined targeted CMO as "the creation of a specific effect, at a specific time, in a specific place" and developed three targeting guidelines:²²
 - Guideline 1: Answer specific information requirements.
 - Guideline 2: Create effects in the information environment.
 - Guideline 3: Engage and develop human networks.
- On civil preparation of the battlefield (CPB): "The key to effective CMO targeting, and CMO in general, was the foundation of knowledge acquired during planning through CPB, which the G-9 continuously refined by way of bottom-up reporting, staff-to-staff coordination, and open lines of communication with unified action partners (UAPs). With this knowledge, the G-9 developed a robust civil common operational picture (CIVCOP) that provided inputs into the corps' overall COP, intelligence and targeting enterprises, and other battle rhythm events (e.g., working groups and decision boards)."²³
- On understanding the effect of targeting: "Targeting did not end with execution. Just as important was the need to understand impacts to the OE resulting from targeted CMO. This was essential for determining whether to build upon a successful operation or to 're-attack' a target after failing to achieve desired effects. While battle damage assessment provides a means for assessing lethal targeting effects, understanding the impact of CMO targeting was less straightforward. This category generally required more time to observe changes in the civil environment and often relied on the capabilities of others..."²⁴

CONCLUSION

The Army's training focus is shifting from limited contingency operations to preparing for LSCO. World events and the rapid development of combat capabilities by potential adversaries increasingly confirm the need for this transition. There are many parallels between the current state of the Army and the post-Vietnam War era when the Army adopted AirLand Battle Doctrine²⁵ to confront a growing Soviet threat. There are also many differences, including the ways in which civil considerations will affect the military outcomes for future conflicts. Understanding the effects of the CE and military capabilities to influence friendly and enemy operations will be a significant factor in LSCO. Changing communication technology creates an unprecedented level of information sharing and potential disinformation, which will affect civilians in future OEs at an accelerating rate. Battles won on the ground may be lost in the war for public and governmental support.

It is increasingly vital that commanders and CA forces understand CAO roles in LSCO and work to integrate CA capabilities toward achieving a desired end state. FM 3-57 introduced new concepts on CA capabilities in support of LSCO, such as CNDE, to support the warfighter during conflicts. It is equally important that CA forces supporting maneuver units are well-versed in FM 3-0, *Operations*; FM 5-0, *Planning and Orders Production*; and related publications to integrate CAO in the commander's concept of operations and support the lines of effort. Shared understanding and early integration of CA staff and capabilities in planning will result in more effective units at the CTCs and Soldiers who are better prepared to operate effectively in the CE.

Endnotes

1. ADP 3-0, *Operations*, 31 July 2019, Paragraph 3-51.
2. FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Page 3-1.
3. ATP 3-57.70, *Civil-Military Operations Center*, 5 May 2014, Page 4-1.
4. FM 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 28 July 2021, Page 4-27.
5. Ibid, Paragraph 1-18.
6. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, Paragraph 4-27.
7. MAJ Jon Williams, recent CA and PSYOP training detachment commander at JRTC.
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10. ATP 3-57.50, *Civil Affairs Information Management*, 6 September 2013, Appendix C.
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19. Defense Visual Information Distribution Service, SFC HollyAnn Nicom.
20. LTC Brian W. Burbank, the NTC Senior Information Operations Trainer.
21. MAJ Thomas Howard, CA OC/T JMRC.
22. CALL Publication No. 22-276, *Civil Military Operations Targeting in Large Scale Ground Combat Operations: Lessons from Warfighter 22-01*, August 2022.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. FM 100-5, *Operations*, 20 August 1982 (Obsolete).

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MAJ Jon Williams, recent CA and PSYOP training detachment commander at JRTC.

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GLOSSARY

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Army doctrine publication
AO	area of operation
ATP	Army techniques publication
BCT	brigade combat team
CA	civil affairs
CAO	civil affairs operations
CALL	Center for Army Lessons Learned
CAT	civil affairs team
CE	civil engagement
CIVCOP	civil common operational picture
CKI	civil knowledge integration
CMOC	civil-military operations center
CNDE	civil network development and engagement
COA	course of action
COP	common operational picture
CR	civil reconnaissance
CTC	combat training center
DC	dislocated civilians
DOD	Department of Defense
FM	field manual
HUMINT	human intelligence
IPB	intelligence preparation of the battlefield
IRC	information-related capabilities
JMRC	Joint Multinational Readiness Center
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
LSCO	large-scale combat operations
MDMP	military decisionmaking process
METT-TC	mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available-time available, and civil considerations
MOE	measure of effectiveness
MOP	measure of performance
NGO	nongovernmental organizations
NTC	National Training Center
OC/T	observer coach/trainer
OE	operational environment
OPORD	operation order
PAO	public affairs officer

PRC	populace and resources control
PSYOP	psychological operations
SF	special forces
TWG	targeting working group
UAP	unified action partners
USACAPOC(A)	United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)
USAR	U.S. Army Reserve



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NO. 23-755
2023

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