

Combat Support Roles for USF-I CBRN Soldiers

By Lieutenant Colonel Michael Walker

In many ways—even under recent security agreements such as the “Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq” (or simply the “Strategic Framework Agreement”)¹—Iraq remains a dangerous place. The relocation of an entire joint operating area (JOA) “four-star” headquarters is a rare occurrence in such a hazardous-fire region. Based on a review of operations research literature (or literature regarding the historical research methodology that supports effective operational effects analysis), operations would be expected to continue at all times during the U.S. Forces–Iraq (USF-I) transition.² The skilled chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) Soldiers in Iraq proved to be up to the task.

The reconfiguration of a JOA not only involves a repositioning; it also involves the careful consideration of the combined presence of sizable, irregular and, oftentimes, hybrid enemy forces in executing operational maneuvers. Any USF-I transition operation would necessarily be accompanied by extensive planning, synchronization, and execution at all command echelons.⁴ Therefore, USF-I ordered Task Force Dragon, XVIII Airborne Corps, to provide direct support for the extensive USF-I headquarters relocation effort. The strategic effect of this operational battlespace maneuver on CBRN operations is still under study. However, for CBRN Soldiers assigned to USF-I, combat support to the warfighter ultimately depended on maximum CBRN Soldier flexibility. Without reservation, CBRN Soldiers marshaled all of their skills, competencies, and experience to effectively maintain Iraq joint operating area (IJOA) command and control (C2) throughout the transition.

Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*, describes the exercise of joint command authority using C2 terminology.⁵ However, Army Chemical

Corps troops operating solely under Army commands follow Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (in conjunction with Change 1), which describes the Army’s operational preference for *mission command* terminology.⁶ Operations that take place under a joint force commander (JFC) remain governed by JP 3-0. In transitioning to joint operations, two significant concepts related to current Army doctrine and practice are *design* and *understanding*. FM 3-0 (in conjunction with Change 1) positively correlates with the joint C2 philosophy regarding the specified command elements of design and understanding. Design permeates all aspects of mission command. FM 3-0 (in conjunction with Change 1) is aligned with the FM 5-0 explanation of design.⁷ Design describes the framing of an ill-structured problem in an operational context that leads to an actionable planning guide. Commanders drive the Army operational process. In establishing the context of a situation, Army commanders develop a depth of understanding through physical factors, human factors, and information fidelity. The chance of success improves when the degree of understanding increases through information management.

“A joint force that is linked and synchronized in time and purpose is considered networked. The joint force capitalizes on information and near simultaneous dissemination to turn information into actions. . . . An effective communications system helps the JFC conduct distributed operations in a nonlinear battlespace. To do this, the communications system must be interoperable, agile, trusted, and shared.”

—JP 6.0³



Knowledge management enhances situational understanding and information relevance in the joint command dimension. The encompassing C2 tasks of “Communicate and maintain the status of information” and “Coordinate, synchronize and, when appropriate, integrate joint operations with the operations and activities of interorganizational partners” are included in JP 3-0.⁸

The USF-I IJOA consists of the U.S. Division (USD)–North, USD–Center, and USD–South; therefore, a synchronization of effort is required. These U.S. Army divisions and other units of the command execute the joint commander’s directives. During the repositioning of the JOA, CBRN Soldiers faced the enormous task of CBRN logistics planning and execution in each of the USDs. Supporting CBRN units and individuals were challenged by the high level of uncertainty accompanying the mission.

Three major factors are at work in the background of CBRN operations in the IJOA—the extreme weather conditions of Iraq, the natural resources available for conducting specified CBRN missions, and the large-scale information and communications systems necessary to maintain effective C2 of CBRN forces. The weather of Iraq is of particular interest to the CBRN Soldier. The northern part of the country is the cooler, more elevated region where terrain features support greater amounts and more frequent instances of vegetation. The central and southern portions of the country are extremely hot, very expansive, and largely inhospitable desert areas; the high temperatures and accompanying low humidity exist nearly year-round. The overall persistency of toxic industrial chemicals and potential battlefield chemicals is generally reduced by the heat of Iraq’s deserts, with the soil type acting as an additional persistency assessment planning factor. Prevailing winds differ regionally within Iraq, requiring the reexamination and reevaluation of the CBRN operating environment upon movement through, and to, different locations. The imminent threat of Iran’s potential nuclear capabilities lies to the east of Iraq. The diffusion of battlefield smoke generation operations would likely provide greater obscuration and concealment effects in the more vegetated areas of northern Iraq than in the south.

The eight military mission areas for combating weapons of mass destruction listed in JP 3-40, *Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction*,⁹ are derived from the *National Military Strategy for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction*, which depicts strategic communications as influential in carrying out the military mission areas.¹⁰ The Joint Staff Operations Directorate (J-3), USF-I Joint Operations Center, maintains a CBRN protection function, and distinguished USF-I staff positions are frequently filled by CBRN officers and noncommissioned officers. The USF-I CBRN staff advises the J-3 and, ultimately, the JOA commander regarding matters that require CBRN subject matter expertise, such as consequence management.¹¹ Perishable CBRN stock, individual protective equipment, and Office of the Surgeon General-related CBRN medical supplies require administrative oversight. Various theater level CBRN actions, such as the maintenance and movement of prepositioned CBRN stock for replenishment of the entire IJOA, illustrate the level of responsibility entrusted to CBRN leadership.

One of the most recent developments to directly affect the conduct of CBRN operations involves the concept and application of network-centric warfare (NCW). The NCW concept extends well beyond the mind-set of a localized, insular CBRN network. After a decade of operations in Iraq, there is little doubt that the emergence of a robust communication platform capability (and the accompanying power of information) enables spectacular battlefield effects. As USF-I conducted an operational maneuver for the entire IJOA during the July 2011 headquarters relocation, the question of how to continue the integration of interrelated command functions at current NCW levels surfaced. The issue of the security of battlefield systems presented another problem. Personnel from primary staff offices initially joined forces to provide physical security for the stand-up of the new USF-I headquarters and to achieve operating capability on a demanding timeline. The Joint Staff Intelligence Directorate (J-2) frequently worked in ad hoc fashion with the Joint Staff Logistics Directorate (J-4) (or the J-3 in conjunction with the J-4) to accomplish organizational objectives. The roles of officers and noncommissioned officers sometimes overlapped when

On the subject of unit integrity during deployment: “Cyberspace superiority may enable freedom of action throughout the operational area. Early superiority in the information environment also is vital in joint operations. It degrades the enemy’s C2 while allowing the JFC to maximize friendly C2 capabilities. Superiority in the information environment also allows the JFC to better understand the enemy’s intentions, capabilities, and actions . . .”

—JP 3-0¹²



key tasks required more effort than was feasible under normal circumstances.

Like other command entities, C2 for USF-I is a means of communication, and it is a cross-cutting enabler for many command and staff functions. In general, for every increase in communication power, a proportionate increase in C2 takes place across all eight combating weapons of mass destruction military mission areas. However, USF-I headquarters is atypical; USF-I C2 is defined by a variety of C2 communication types, including a staggering amount of minimum network capacity. This variety is necessary for CBRN NCW to “pull” information requirements from intelligence, transportation, and logistics sources. Accordingly, the rates and levels of fidelity of CBRN “push” communications are affected by communication degradation and outages. Although C2 enables battle-wise CBRN decision making at the team level, the command is not concerned with the substances of technology as the ultimate end; rather, the command is concerned with technology enablement merely as a facilitator to an end in order to better serve others.

In carrying the fight to the enemy, effective CBRN command depends on striking the right balance between “gizmo-ology” and an understanding of the common Soldier’s humanity. With regard to the debate surrounding the dramatic new levels of C2 available to warfighters, General William S. Wallace (Retired) considers *NCW* to be a descriptive and helpful term; however, he believes that the United Kingdom’s use of the term *network-enabled command* is more appropriate.¹³ Under U.S. military terminology, network capability is bifurcated into the fields of NCW and “network-centric operations.” NCW is present at the tactical, strategic, and operational levels of warfare; network-centric operations is a great enabler for the performance of CBRN garrison, maritime, and routine daily operations. General Wallace’s reservations about excessively focusing on the “gizmo-ology” factor of C2 systems at the expense of the human dimension of command weighed heavily on USF-I relocation planners. USF-I basically transformed what was a barren piece of desert with barely enough resources to sustain life into a bustling, fully operational, technical ecstasy. C2 serves as an embellishment to—not a replacement for—the commander’s presence. However, critical communication capability remained a high priority throughout the course of the USF-I transition process.

In addition to their combat support roles, CBRN Soldiers frequently consider CBRN logistics and related force protection requirements for Department of Defense (DOD) civilians and civilian contractors who are colocated in the many hazardous-fire areas of Iraq. The issues of multiservice support (which is characteristic of joint operations) and

interagency roles are challenges facing Chemical Corps operations in Iraq—now and into the future. Exotic command relationships within the IJOA only serve to add an element of complexity to an otherwise straightforward CBRN decisionmaking process. By committing CBRN combat support forces to USF-I operational maneuvers, CBRN Soldiers are undergoing a test in flexibility. 

Endnotes:

¹“Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq,” U.S. State Department, 17 November 2008, <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/122076.pdf>>, accessed on 7 October 2011.

²U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) Publication (Pub) 70-102-1, *History of Operations Research in the United States Army, Volume 1: 1942–1962*, Charles R. Shrader, 2006, <http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/hist_op_research/index.html>, accessed on 7 October 2011.

³JP 6-0, *Joint Communications System*, 10 June 2010.

⁴“Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces From Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities During Their Temporary Presence in Iraq,” U.S. State Department, 17 November 2008, <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/122074.pdf>>, accessed on 7 October 2011.

⁵JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, 11 August 2011.

⁶FM 3-0 *Operations*, 27 February 2008 (in conjunction with Change 1, 22 February 2011).

⁷FM 5-0, *The Operations Process*, 26 March 2010.

⁸JP 3-0, 11 August 2011.

⁹JP 3-40, *Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 10 June 2009.

¹⁰*National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., 13 February 2006.

¹¹JP 3-41, *Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives Consequence Management*, 2 October 2006.

¹²JP 3-0, 11 August 2011.

¹³William S. Wallace, “Network-Enabled Battle Command,” *Rusi Defence Systems*, Spring, 2005.

Reference:

JP 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, 11 August 2011.

Editor’s Note: At the time this article was written, FM 3-0, *Operations*, was in effect; it has since been superseded by Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, which was published on 10 October 2011.

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