

Joint Deployable Training Teams: Helping to Focus the Effort

By Andrew Straley

“Gentlemen, we have run out of money. Now we have to think.”

- Winston Churchill -

While he was First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill once stated, “Gentlemen, we have run out of money; now we must think.”¹ Conducting increasingly diverse, global operations while simultaneously fighting on multiple fronts has become more challenging due to constrained budgets. Conditions where the United States could simply throw large amounts of resources at a problem and solve it through sheer volume no longer exist. This new reality has forced combatant commanders and combined joint task force (CJTF) commanders to be more effective with limited resources when conducting operations across their joint operational area.

The Joint Operational Environment (JOE)

The 2010 *Joint Operating Environment* report describes current threats to the US and extrapolates those threats through 2030.² As depicted, today’s JOE is chaotic, complicated, and inherently unpredictable; combatant and CJTF commanders operate in complex battle-spaces affected by violent struggles among state and non-state

actors vying for influence. Threats range from single individuals and loosely organized networks to full-scale border stand-offs such as found on the Korean Peninsula. Threats are especially prevalent within weak and failing states that offer fertile ground for violent extremists. Today’s joint force must therefore be prepared to conduct a wide range of military operations ranging from traditional and irregular warfare, defense support

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of civil authorities (DSCA), foreign humanitarian assistance, and even countering threats from cyberspace.

Winston Churchill also stated, “There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies—and that is fighting without them.”³ The days of unilateral military initiatives throughout the world are gone. Conventional and nonconventional threats can only be countered through “unified action” involving whole-of-government, multilateral, international, and coalition efforts, also known as inter-organizational efforts. This unified action will involve all elements of national power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic—and will seek to balance regional and international stakeholders, including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

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As noted above, combatant and CJTF commanders operate throughout the world in very complex environments. They deal with what are often called “wicked problems” in order to meet US strategic objectives.⁴ These commanders and their staffs must consistently learn, adapt, and execute within this environment as adversaries rapidly change their methods and objectives. In addition, joint task forces such as JTF Haiti (formed in response to the 2010 Haiti earthquake), CJTF Horn of Africa (a standing JTF focused on regional issues), and JTF Tomodachi (formed in response to the 2012 Japan earthquake and tsunami) provide examples of how joint forces have responded to diverse missions and humanitarian assistance

challenges, always working in concert with other US departments and agencies and often in support of other nations or organizations.

As discussed above, the environment (JOE), the method (Unified Action), and the current fiscal reality combine to create a perfect storm. This storm requires us to challenge the way in which we currently do business. We must consistently look at how to operate more efficiently while simultaneously becoming more effective. How joint force commanders and their staffs organize and manage their headquarters provides multiple areas for improvement. Their internal and external collaborative efforts across all warfighting functions are force multipliers, which, if executed effectively, will enable mission success. Strategic communications, sustainment (manning and logistics), intelligence, planning, operations, command and control, and targeting are just a few of the critical joint functions that must be vertically and horizontally integrated within the inter-organizational, multilateral landscape. An important factor is how these staff functions support the commander’s decision cycle and how they enable educated decisions. In the eye of this perfect storm, commanders and staffs must consistently adapt and learn in order to maintain mission success.

Joint Staff J7 Deployable Training Teams

Fortune 500 companies spend millions of dollars on external teams to study and evaluate numerous aspects of their business functions, operations, and industry in order to get an alternate view or additional perspective on their unique challenges. Because it is often those who are too close to the problem that have the hardest time identifying the solution, outside agencies can offer powerful recommendations based on industry best practices, which can yield a significant return on investment. This is very similar to the Joint Staff J7 Deployable Training Team (DTT) approach.

To understand who and what a DTT is, a good place to start is to describe what they are



(U.S. Army photo by Master Sgt. Kevin Doherty, U.S. Army South Public Affairs)

U.S. Army South commanding general at the international bridge connecting Guatemala and Mexico.

not. For many years the DOD establishment had what are called exercise controllers, evaluators, or inspectors to provide feedback on the performance of individual units. They often operated with a zero-defect approach that ultimately ended with either a thumbs-up or thumbs-down grade on performance. They arrived at exercises with detailed check lists, point systems, and rubrics to objectively measure and grade how well a unit performed, along any number of functions or events. This approach often resulted in an adversarial relationship and lack of trust between all parties. The inspectors were well-intentioned professionals who simply followed the prescribed regulations for their functional area. The inspected units, often operating under constrained timelines and juggling multiple priorities and real-world contingencies, would do what they could to check the box, conceal problems, and/or placate the inspectors. In the end, the grade would ultimately mean very little to the operational readiness of the unit, and

did little to help the commander and staff think through the problem-set they faced. Instead of looking “up-and-out,” they were often times forced to look “down-and-in.” In addition, the findings from these reports and inspections were used more as a grading tool for a specific time-in-place instead of an aid to heighten the operational capabilities of the unit. These approaches, while well-intended, often stifled the trust necessary for the commander and staff to build a learning organization and rapidly improve while executing operations. This inefficient system often did more harm than good. This is precisely why the Deployable Training Teams are different.

The Joint Staff DTTs are located in Suffolk, Virginia, under the newly realigned Joint Staff J7. DTTs are organized across the key functional areas of plans, operations, information sharing, intelligence, sustainment, assessment, legal, communications strategy, inter-organizational/inter-agency, and cyber operations. The teams consist

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Bobby J. Gonzalez/Released



U.S. Marines with Maritime Raid Force, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, listen to a brief after completing gas and oil platform seizure training during Exercise Leading Edge 13.

of professionals from across the military Services, with significant and proven experience in their respective functional area of expertise. Individual team members, called observer/trainers, or O/Ts, are graduates of Joint Professional Military Education, Phase II (JPME II), who undergo a rigorous training and certification regimen once assigned to the DTT. They are subject matter experts (SMEs) trained within their specific functional area and experienced through multiple deployments to both contingency operations and major exercises around the globe. They focus on the strategic and operational art of joint operations in order to enhance the readiness of combatant commands and JTF headquarters. The 2011 publication of *Joint Operations, Insights and Best Practices* describes the DTT as:

“...afforded the unique opportunity to visit and support commanders and staffs of joint headquarters worldwide as they

prepare for, plan, and conduct operations. We [the DTTs] gain ‘insights’ into their challenges and derived solutions. We also analyze and compare techniques and procedures among the different headquarters, reflect on their various challenges, collaborate with other agencies and the Services, and subsequently draw out and refine what we term best practices.”⁵

The teams are formed and deploy globally to support standing exercises, mission rehearsal exercises (MRXs), staff assistance visits (SAVs), and academic seminars. Prior to deploying, the DTT chief will study the supported command’s mission and get guidance from its senior leadership and/or commander on where the team should focus its efforts. The team is then tailored to the supported command’s request and requirements. Once the team is formed, early interaction between the functional O/T and the supported staff counterpart

allows further focus before an event begins. The direct interaction between the O/Ts and their counterparts on the supported command staff enhances the value of the DTT recommendations. These recommendations often come in the form of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) based on insights and best practices observed at other combatant commands and/or JTFs, allowing a “cross-pollination” of best practices globally. O/Ts gather information for future events relative to the supported headquarters and capture positive and successful techniques or methods being applied by the unit under observation. They also note concerns or issues where the supported unit may be struggling—and they can convey those concerns or issues to higher or adjacent units for resolution without judgment.

Every combatant command conducts one or more major exercises per year, which are often supported by the Joint Staff J7. These exercises include US Pacific Command (PACOM) TERMINAL FURY, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) JUDICIOUS RESPONSE, and US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) GLOBAL LIGHTNING. These annual events serve as the framework for command headquarters to exercise joint mission essential tasks (JMET), cross-functional collaboration, and complex problem solving. The DTT offers academics leading up to the exercise, provides direct observational training and support during the exercise, and for UNITED ENDEAVOR events,⁶ follow-up with assistance 60 to 90 days after the headquarters has deployed forward to theater. This support provides commanders with multiple touch-points over a period of time as the command transitions through training, work-ups, and deployment. The DTT also works closely with the Service training organizations such as the Army’s Mission Command Training Program (MCTP), the Navy’s Maritime Operation Center (MOC) Training Team, and the Marine Corps’ MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP) to provide a comprehensive framework for the supported command’s joint training efforts. Whether the command is training

for deployment or preparing for major contingency operations, the DTTs provide support.

At the end of an event or exercise, the DTT, along with the command leadership, conducts a facilitated after-action review (FAAR). This venue allows continued learning as the commander and his staff discuss the various topics and issues identified during the event. In addition, the DTT provides the commander with a commander’s summary report (CSR) outlining specific recommendations based on observations of the event. The CSR is provided only to the commander and does not belong to the DTT; the supported command has complete control over any further distribution of the report. This requirement is strictly enforced in order to maintain trust and confidence between the supported command and the DTT. As previously noted, the DTT is not an exercise controller or grader. The DTT does not certify the command or issue a performance evaluation on anyone. The DTT simply provides recommendations based on best practices, along with functional area coaching and mentoring.

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Over the course of fiscal years 2013 and 2014, the DTTs anticipate supporting 56 events around the world, including combatant command exercises, deployments to commands throughout Afghanistan, and multiple joint task force events. In addition, members of the DTT continue to support the UNITED ENDEAVOR series of exercises to train units prior to rotation into Afghanistan, including MRXs and SAVs.

Insights and Best Practices

One of the greatest benefits the DTT brings to a combatant command or CJTF are the insights and best practices captured from other commands. The DTT can shorten the delay between current

practices and doctrine development. As the former JFCOM and CENTCOM commander, General James Mattis, often remarked, “Doctrine is the last refuge of the unimaginative.”⁷ The DTT is not doctrinally “bound” but uses doctrinally “sound” practices. The DTT looks at doctrine as a starting point that establishes a common frame of reference. From there, the DTT tries to fill the gap between the necessities and current best practices being used on the ground and what current doctrine has to offer. The DTT also publishes focus papers on insights and best practices captured from combatant commands and CJTFs within each of the above listed functional areas. Not every JTF or combatant command is the same; each has its own unique challenges within its area of responsibility (AOR) or functional responsibilities, and with those difficulties come unique approaches to addressing challenges. The DTT’s goal is to capture those approaches and share them across the combatant commands and JTFs.

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Recent DTT support to both US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and US Army South (ARSOUTH) during their INTEGRATED ADVANCE exercise in February 2013 proved beneficial to both commanders. INTEGRATED ADVANCE was a humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HADR) exercise based on a scenario of mass migration within the Caribbean waters. This exercise required both HQs to collaborate and integrate their efforts with US Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other US departments and agencies. Numerous recommendations from the DTT helped the DOD commanders make significant decisions in preparing their headquarters for potential support to humanitarian operations. Major General Frederick Rudesheim, the ARSOUTH commander who led

the JTF HQs during the exercise, stated, “We knew we could always improve if required to execute a JTF-level HADR operation. The question was where and how could we focus our efforts in order to prepare. The DTT was an integral partner in helping my staff self-assess and take our training to the next level.”

The complexity of the INTEGRATED ADVANCE exercise required significant collaboration at multiple levels, between numerous stakeholders. Having two DTTs observing the exercise at both commands enabled a vertical, integrated view for the commanders and their staffs during this high-operational, unified-action event. After the exercise, both commanders and their staffs were able to pinpoint required training and specific process development, in order to increase the speed and accuracy of the commander’s decisions during these complex operations. Major General Rudesheim also stated, “The significance of the observations and recommendations provided by the DTT can’t be overstated. Having an external eye during the exercise enabled my staff to focus their valuable time on improving specific processes and procedures.”

The Future

Today’s joint operating environment is rapidly changing and increasingly more complex; it will continue to challenge our efforts, regardless of the geographic location of the combatant command or JTF. U.S. military forces must remain committed to operating in a unified-action manner, in a fiscally constrained environment. Joint force commanders and their staffs should leverage every tool available to them to effectively respond to these challenges – the DTT is one of those tools. The DTT enables combatant commands and JTFs to assess their processes and capabilities and offers best-practice improvements.

Governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations can also leverage the DTT in developing ways and means to synchronize their efforts while collaborating with combatant

commands and JTFs. Involving the DTT in inter-agency and multi-organizational exercises will enable heightened learning for future civil-military cooperation, especially as the DTT will ensure the capture and sharing of observed best practices and lessons learned from these events. During major exercises and multi-tiered headquarters training events, joint commanders and their staffs could benefit from DTT insights while involving multiple stakeholders. More importantly, before and during the forward deployment of joint headquarters, the DTT will offer unique and innovative methods that have proven results within a battlespace. **PRISM**

Notes

¹The quote is attributed to Winston Churchill and was accessed on 2 January 2012 at <http://www.military-quotes.com/Churchill.htm>.

²Joint Futures Group J59, *The Joint Operating Environment* (US Joint Forces Command, 2010).

³The quote is attributed to Winston Churchill and was accessed on 2 January 2012 at <http://www.military-quotes.com/Churchill.htm>.

⁴C. West Churchman, "Guest Editorial," *Management Science*, 14, no. 4 (December 1967).

⁵General Gary Luck (Ret), *Joint Operations Insights and Best Practices*, Third Edition (Suffolk, Virginia: US Joint Forces Command, Joint Training Division, Joint Warfighting Center, 2011).

⁶UNIFIED ENDEAVOR series exercises are semi-annual, joint, operational-level exercises designed for joint task force component commanders and their staffs.

⁷General James Mattis, "Keynote Speech," *Joint Warfighters Con*

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. William T. Greeson Jr./Released



U.S. Marines en route to stabilization operation, May 25, 2009