



NEWS FROM THE FRONT

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COMMANDER'S PERSPECTIVE: CJFLCC OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

**INSIGHTS FROM MG JOSEPH M. MARTIN
COMMANDING GENERAL
1ST INFANTRY DIVISION**

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Executive Summary

This News From the Front paper summarizes the key insights from an end of tour interview with MG Joseph Martin, Commanding General (CG), 1st Infantry Division and Combined Joint Force Land Component Command - Operation Inherent Resolve (CJFLCC–OIR). The interview, conducted at the conclusion of his tour, in Iraq on July 12, 2017, contained focus areas that capture best practices and lessons learned during his tenure as the CG.

The interview questions highlighted but were not limited to:

- Force protection
- By, with, and through environment
- Deployment of forces
- Tactical Directive #1
- Targeting
- Training
- Intelligence

Key Insights

Force protection: Force protection is the number one priority when embedded. Effective force protection included 1st Division teammates as well as coalition and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) partners. We faced internal hazards that included everything from a lack of resiliency to physical injury. At the same time, the enemy presented threats ranging from indiscriminate to discriminate direct and indirect fires and everything in between. We had to prepare for all the capabilities the enemy could bring to bear.

Security and communication were also among our top priorities. Our advisors were embedded with ISF infantry platoons, partially because we had to demonstrate that the U.S. was committed to working and living with our partners. It was important for advisors to immerse themselves into the environment to serve as sensors and enablers, while also protecting themselves.

Tactical Directive #1: Tactical Directive #1 released some unrealized potential. Because a ground-force commander could now authorize the approval of fires, we needed to emplace an advisor next to that commander. It allowed the advise and assist effort to access ISF brigade commanders who otherwise would have been outside normal communication channels. That type of access allowed us to understand the functional relationship between ISF divisions and brigades, vastly improving situational awareness.

Targeting: During one of his first visits, United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Commander said: "I am in the process of delegating everything down to your level or the lowest level possible." The responsibility was placed in the hands of the commanders on the battlefield so they can make timely decisions. Previously, every target struck had to be approved by a brigadier general, which didn't make sense. You have to delegate authority in order to get things done. You must trust your subordinates!

Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)/Combined Joint (CJ) 34 (Fires): We were able to leverage joint coalition fires to an impressive extent. We had fires delivered from French cannons, U.S. Paladins, M777 howitzers, and M270A1 GMLRS, and bombs dropped by a multinational air component. The J34 section oversaw the enterprise, managed prioritization requests for the air tasking order (ATO), and were our link to the CJ34 and to the CJTF staff (our higher HQ).

Train, Advice and Assist (AA) Mission: Most of the trainers are coalition members, so we owe them notification of required training and certification six months in advance. The requirements are created at the CJFLCC, then sent to the CJTF, and finally on to USCENTCOM. USCENTCOM seeks input from all the contributing nations before finalizing the on-the-ground requirements. The key to TAA is a relationship built on trust and mutual respect, which in turn is based on coalition-wide shared understanding and on empathizing with the Iraqi security forces. Leaders have to invest time to build that relationship.

MG Joseph M. Martin

Commander, 1st Infantry Division

Summarized Interview

Q: The task organization and geographical dispersion created challenges to commanders. What capabilities, arrangements, and mitigation was taken to minimize risk to forces embedded and deployed with ISF?

MG Martin: Force protection is the number one priority when embedded. Effective force protection included 1st Division teammates as well as coalition and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) partners. We faced internal hazards that included everything from a lack of resiliency to physical injury. At the same time, the enemy presented threats ranging from indiscriminate to discriminate direct and indirect fires and everything in between. We had to prepare for all the capabilities the enemy could bring to bear.

Security and communication were also among our top priorities. Our advisors were embedded with ISF as infantry platoons, partially because we had to demonstrate that the U.S. was committed to working and living with our partners. It was important for advisors to immerse themselves into the environment to serve as sensors and enablers, while also protecting themselves. With 24/7, multi-faceted, cohesive security, the advisors and supporting staff could effectively do their mission. Along the same lines, communications were also crucial. The ISF had access to our mission command systems, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and most importantly, the ability to ask for joint coalition fires. All of these measures enhanced our ability to get after the enemy.

Q: How do we sustain that relationship of trust in a “by, with, and through (BWT)” environment? You are departing, so what do you tell the 1st AD?

MG Martin: The CJFLCC was the ISF Commanding General’s (CG) partner. I couldn’t be with my partner at all times, but there was an advisor with him at all times. Because of the constant advisor presence, I had excellent ISF situational understanding. The advisor would be fully engaged until around 2100 or 2130 hours. Then he or we would meet with ISF CG. Afterward, the advisor wrote a summary report to keep records of the discussions and progress.

Q: *The BWT guidance involves personnel deploying in small groups. What have we learned about employing these forces?*

MG Martin: Doctrine instructs commanders to assess a situation, look at the hazards that exist in the environment, and then look at ways to mitigate or manage those hazards. For example: in a non-combat environment like Kuwait, advisors may be able to use minimal security, depending on the nature of the threat. Guidance should be prescriptive – describing what commanders need in these packages. These formations need security commensurate with the risk in the current operating environment; they need the ability to communicate; and the ability to care for themselves (i.e., medical capabilities).

On December 26, 2016, USCENTCOM issued Tactical Directive #1, which authorized ISF ground-force commanders to approve fires. This change allowed U.S. advisors to work with ISF counterparts at lower levels. The directive was a shift in policy from previous DOD policy that supported OIR.

Q: *Describe how Tactical Directive #1 impacted your authorities, targeting, and the execution of combined joint operations.*

MG Martin: Tactical Directive #1 empowered the ground force commander and released some unrealized advising potential. Under certain conditions, they had the ability to deliver joint coalition fires without having a one star approve the strike, as was the policy previously. Because a ground-force commander could now authorize the approval of fires, we needed to emplace an advisor next to his partner commander. This change allowed the advise and assist effort to access ISF brigade commanders who otherwise would have been outside normal communication channels. That type of access allowed us to understand the functional relationship between ISF divisions and brigades, vastly improving situational awareness. Every advisory team had its own security, mission command capabilities, and up-armored vehicles, allowing them to cover down on as many brigades as possible.

This environment allowed the philosophy of mission command to flourish; leaders had room to take initiative. The resultant responsiveness was tremendous and enabled a higher ISF tempo in the fight. Of the approximately 16,500 strikes performed over the year, 90% or more were dynamic. Deliberate targeting in this environment was not as useful as dynamic targeting. Most of the effective targeting was through the sequencing of action,

Longer term deliberate targeting in this environment was not as effective. Our best targeting was through sequencing action, reaction, and counter-action.

reaction, and counter-action. When the Iraqi Security Forces planned an operation we told them: "We have your back, we will not let you fail."

Q: Describe how the speed of the battle drove your deliberate targeting.

MG Martin: We did targeting at the "speed of war." The key was to strike as quickly as possible. When the targeting board approved strikes, the targeting officer would walk out of the meeting and into the JOC to begin immediate coordination. Often, he returned moments later with confirmation that the target was now being executed. By the end of the 40 minute targeting meeting, we would have struck all the targets that could not wait. When we had relevant real time intelligence and the ability to strike, we had to be decisive. It was an important aspect of this particular fight.

The evidence is the number: 16,574 strikes since 17 Oct 2016. Most important though, and more significant, was the momentum achieved. It was abundantly clear that ISF maneuver had to be complemented by joint coalition fires. The trick was to get systems, processes, and people in the right place.

Because we worked within a 72-hour air tasking order (ATO) cycle, it was important to ask for resources and weapon sets that allowed us to service a whole host of problems rapidly and efficiently. This is where the J34 section came in -- they patterned everything. Our targets rarely required 2,000-pound bombs, so we worked with the Air Force to modify the loads to carry 500-pound bombs, which is a more efficient use of capability. That kind of analysis and assessment allowed the J34 to manage its enterprise and helped us deliver the right ordnance at the right time.

Q: Describe how the command leveraged joint and coalition fires vis-a-vis your CJ34. Was the type/mix of personnel (coalition members from different nations and services) adequate to the task? Secondly, are there any gaps or long-term implications you would like to highlight?

MG Martin: We were able to leverage joint coalition fires to an impressive extent. We had fires delivered from French cannons, U.S. Paladins, M777 howitzers, and M270A1 GMLRS, and bombs dropped by a multinational air component. The J34 sections oversaw the enterprise, managed prioritization requests for the ATO, and were our link to the CJ34 and to the CJTF staff (our higher HQ).

In my opinion, deliberate targeting takes too long to deliver relevant effects in a partnered force combined arms maneuver fight. Intelligence becomes stale very quickly. Most of our CJFLCC targets were executed in seven days or less. If they weren't struck in seven days, the target had to come back for re-approval to validate that the intelligence was still actionable. The board met five nights a week where we approved deliberate targets. That approval was based upon the enemy capabilities, and wasn't driven by the forward line of own troops. We targeted capabilities such as vehicle-borne and suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED & SVBIED) and their production capability, command/control, and delivery, or things like

the enemy's indirect fire network, weapons caches, special military capabilities, and command and control facilities. We struck those targets in seven days or less. In most cases I approved a target on Monday night and it was serviced not later than Tuesday night, because that was the nature of the fight.

Q: Concerning the train, advise and assist mission, have we articulated to the training base and force provider the tasks/missions for which forces are being employed?

MG Martin: Most of the trainers are coalition members, so we owe them notification of required training and certification six months in advance. The requirements are created at the CJFLCC, then sent to the CJTF, and finally on to USCENTCOM. USCENTCOM seeks input from all the contributing nations before finalizing the on-the-ground requirements. We used the last combined joint statement of requirements as a basis for developing what our requirements will be moving forward. The process is complicated because it is difficult to predict that far ahead (6 months or more) in such a dynamic theater.

Q: Is ISF training standardized? What is the evaluation criteria across task forces?

MG Martin: The training has evolved over time and the coalition was getting pretty good at it. There are programs of instruction (POI) for just about every type of mission, task, or course; the POI library now is quite extensive. When ISF units arrived at our sites, we evaluated them to determine which POI they needed and what level of proficiency we thought they could reach before the end of training. We provided that recommendation to the ISF commander, who approved the POI. We built the training plan with the proficiency certification as the last exercise. After training was complete, we conducted a post evaluation of the unit and provided that to the ISF, as well. The Iraqi leaders have bought into this training. They requested formal evaluations of the proficiencies of the units, and methods for assessing that proficiency in the future. They weren't looking to pass a test, but for quality evaluation.

The training dynamic is continuing to improve as the Iraqi commanders buy into the system. There are two brigades in training at a time, one in Bismayah and one in Taji. Prior to the battle for Mosul, those units were there training brigade-level tasks for 8 weeks. Training started with the individual soldier and progressed to the battalion level. They did not receive ownership of their equipment until completion. This system appears to be successful in increasing Iraqi proficiency.

Q: So, we have this model that's working. How do we sustain it? Obviously, post-Mosul, post ISIS in Iraq.

MG Martin: Post ISIS, the model will sustain itself. Previously, the ISF felt they were too busy to train – they were holding terrain or defeating ISIS. The U.S. was asking the

commander to take risk in order to train his forces, which was a tough sell. They had to do an economy of force at the check points in order free up men to train.

Q: In terms of the CJFLCC joint manning document (JMD) process, do you feel that we have an adequate model to support the mission, and are we identifying the appropriate personnel to accomplish that task? Are there any areas that you think should be adjusted?

MG Martin: JMDs are tough to fine tune. In this operational environment (OE) they are very different from developing a joint force in a numbered war plan. Bottom line, we must be able to assess our future training cadre requirements six months in advance in order to properly document the CJFLCC JMD requests to CJTF and CENTCOM. Otherwise, we might find ourselves manned with a division-level training cadre, but responsible for brigade-level training.

Q: During joint Intelligence preparation of the operations environment, what were the lessons and insights that led to your success in putting together the joint operating intelligence picture?

MG Martin: This is a success story for the CJFLCC. We can demonstrate, statistically, how we destroyed the SVBIED threat as a byproduct of several factors.

Initially, eight out of ten SVBIEDs were making contact with ISF and causing casualties or damaging equipment. This was significantly impacting the will of the ISF. We decided the most effective course of action was to improve the ISF's ability to defend against the SVBIED and attack the SVBIED with our joint coalition fires. By December, that number had flipped. Eight out of ten SVBIEDs were destroyed during transport to the FLOT or in the factory. As a result of this effort, Iraqi casualties went down by 73%, and the SVBIED threat was not impacting the will or morale of the Iraqis anymore.

Q: Would you share any insights on the use of off-the-shelf UAS and the associated tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs)?

MG Martin: The ISF used similar or the same UAS that the enemy was using, minus the devices ISIS had to drop bomblets. We issued them to the Iraqis – they were a great investment.

The comfort level in terms of the joint intelligence preparation of the environment was very high – our J2 was a hunter. We gave him the requirements for his reconnaissance and he would come back with a multi-intelligence product that contained the information that we required to effectually target the enemy.

Q: *Previously, one might say the Iraqis resisted our TTPs. What's changed?*

MG Martin: “Assurance” is what changed. The philosophy was to quit trying to make them (Iraqis) us, they are not us. They are never going to be us. Their tactics are never going to be ours. They are the Iraqis.

My philosophy was...

“Quit trying to make them us. The Iraqis are not us, they're the Iraqis.”

MG Joseph M. Martin

The ISF CG would come up with a scheme and we would advise him with our best military advice. We would tell him: “we will support you, and you will not fail.” That's assurance – building a relationship on trust and mutual respect. The ISF CG would tell his people that the U.S. will always support him and not let him fail – that is powerful!

When they went into old Mosul, where the dense urban terrain was intimidating, the task seemed daunting. Still, they were extremely successful due to training, and the trusting relationship. The joint coalition fires were never better than they were in old Mosul.

Q: *So, what is the major take-away or the principle piece of advice you would give the next CJFLCC Commander?*

MG Martin: Understanding the purpose of the mission: the U.S. is there as advisors first and enablers second. This type of operation should not be transactional. It is reliant on a relationship built on trust and mutual respect, which in turn is based on coalition-wide shared understanding and on empathizing with the Iraqi security forces. We have to invest time to build that relationship. Trust and a committed relationship allows that to happen; investing in that relationship is critical. That's the true power of what we are doing right now. There's a lot that goes into it, but the most important things are investing the time, immersing ourselves in the culture, and adding value to what the Iraqis are trying to accomplish.