

Running head: WAS THE U.S. MILITARY PREPARED FOR DESERT STORM

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Abstract

This paper is a summary of training in the military and the 1st Armored Division in particular prior to deployment to Desert Shield/Desert Storm. This paper also includes events of 1st Armored Division occurring during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. This paper concludes with Lessons Learned that have been incorporated into the Combat Training Centers.

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Preparation for Desert Shield/Desert Storm

In August, 1990, our ground forces had not yet deployed but, officials thought them better prepared than ever to fight and win. However, our forces also had several areas where additional training was needed because they had exhibited some repeated performance weaknesses during unit training exercises. Although Operation Desert Storm ground operations proved to be a war of short duration, this outcome was not known as we prepared for war. The months of preparation leading up to battle provided important insights into future training needs and priorities. U.S. training manuals recognize that soldiers and marines must train continually to develop and maintain combat skills. In addition, senior military leaders recognize that rigorous, repetitive training is essential if the military is to be prepared to fight and win the first battle and minimize casualties. Winning the first battle has proven difficult and costly in past wars. History has shown that when military forces are sufficiently trained to win the initial battles, their chances of success and for minimizing losses in later battles increases significantly. Most of our peacetime training takes place at the individual and unit levels at home stations and through periodic rotations to combat training centers. These centers magnify the intensity of training and provide as much realism as is possible in a peacetime environment. Many military leaders see rigorous peacetime training as a key to the heightened proficiency of today's military. From August 1990 until the onset of the ground war in February 1991, U.S. military forces trained with perhaps greater motivation and intensity than ever before amid strong prospects for ground combat but uncertainty over when it would begin (General Accounting Office, 1992).

The emphasis on battle staff training has been given credit for much of the success in the command and control of maneuver forces. Several approaches to training received heightened

use and recognition, increasing their potential for use in peacetime training. These included the importance of rehearsals and repetition in training, the use of noncommissioned officers as trainers, and the growing importance of computer simulations. Although actual Desert Storm ground operations were of short duration, they showed the need to strengthen peacetime emphasis on joint training, training for deployment, and training involving logistical and other support functions. The lessons learned also suggest the continuing need for a strong emphasis on training and readiness during peacetime as a precaution against skill deterioration. In many respects those lessons were not new lessons but old ones revalidated. Commanders made extensive use of noncommissioned and junior officers to train individual soldiers, marines, and small units—an area of emphasis Army and Marine Corps officials had recognized as needing increased emphasis in peacetime. They used some innovative training approaches, such as substituting wheeled vehicles for tanks in some maneuver training, that while not a replacement for more traditional training, offered important advantages in a resource-constrained environment. Battle Staff Training Army and Marine Corps officers cite the emphasis given to battle staff Accounted for Much Success training as critical to the success they enjoyed in commanding and in Command and Control controlling large-scale maneuver forces in the desert. The importance of battle staff training, including the use of computer simulations, has received increasing recognition in recent years, particularly within the Army, and by many accounts, should receive even greater emphasis in the future. Such training is especially important for officers who command and control large-scale combat operations (General Accounting Office, 1992).

The remainder of this paper explains the actions of 1st Armored Division including train up, deployment and redeployment during Desert Shield and Desert Storm from my point of view.

These views are solely my own from my perspective as the NCOIC of the Airspace Management Element of the G3 Air section.

Pre-Deployment Training

I was assigned to Germany in September 1983 and had been working on the Division Staff in the G3 Air office for a little over three years prior to deploying to Desert Shield. In garrison, my job mainly consisted of coordinating for helicopter support for Air Assault Training missions, lift assets and General Support aircraft for Brigade Commanders and Division staff members. The tactical mission included those missions and Army Airspace Command and Control (A2C2).

Prior to 1st Armored Division being notified that they would deploy to Desert Shield, our training had always been to train for defense of the German border around the Fulda Gap against a Soviet invasion. There had never been any discussion of our deploying anywhere other than our GDP and no training for any other mission that I was aware of.

Deployment

To the best of my recollection, we received notification that we would deploy to Saudi Arabia sometime in late August or early September 1990. At that time, we then began to concentrate our training on operations in a desert environment and what we believed we would need to know to co-exist with our Saudi hosts.

Other than the specific training I just mentioned, we also concentrated a lot more on NBC operations, believing that Saddam Hussein had chemical weapons and would probably not hesitate to use them against us. Much of the next few months were filled with this training in conjunction with the preparation and deployment of all our equipment. Then we began the wait to be called forward for transport of our troops to Saudi Arabia. Several times we were alerted

and told we would deploy on or about a specific day, only for the order to be changed at the last minute. Finally, the call came for the Division Headquarters, which I was a part of, to leave on 22 December 1990 and this time the date did not change.

Actions in Saudi Arabia Before the War

Upon arrival in Saudi Arabia, we were all brought to a huge marshalling area and waited to draw our equipment which had been shipped ahead of the troops. At that time, the biggest concern seemed to be, get our equipment and get out into the desert. The assumption was that Saddam probably knew where we were marshalling our troops and it would be a perfect opportunity for him to hit us with a SCUD missile or two. The second and probably more realistic concern was, there had already been several cases of dysentery going around and the living conditions with so many people in such a small area were terrible. The quicker we could get out on our own, the better.

As with many cases, with the passage of time, the details of the next few days, weeks and even months begin to blur together and I cannot remember exactly how many days we waited to move into the desert but it seems it was between three and five days.

After moving into the desert, we began to set up our Division TOC and Assembly Area. We had Engineer support to help build a mound of dirt/berm around our entire area and I think after about two days we were pretty much settled in to our first location. Setting up our TOC and Assembly Area was something that was also to become routine over the next few weeks as we jumped from one location to another, never staying in one spot for more than two weeks, We were told this was done to prevent the likelihood of a SCUD missile attack. If we kept moving, it would be harder for the enemy to pinpoint our location. This then became our routine until 24 February, 1991, the day we finally started the round attack.

Lessons Learned and Summary

As I look back on this experience, I can only think how lucky we were. Lucky we had enough time to build up our forces before crossing the border into Iraq. Lucky we had the time and resources to soften the enemy up with aerial bombardment before we crossed the border. Lucky the war only lasted for four days. We were going pretty much non-stop with very little sleep. We broke our own training standards for crew rest and looking back, not knowing how long the ground war was going to last, again, lucky.

Today we are fighting a different kind of battle in Iraq, a battle where the TTPs are continually changing. Because of this, we must constantly change our tactics and ensure the next group of Soldiers coming is as up to date as possible on how to fight this war. Our Combat Training Centers are doing a great job of preparing our troops, however, we cannot forget some of the lessons we have learned in the last war where we weren't moving into already prepared positions. We don't know when or where our next fight might be but, we must not forget our lessons learned in how to get to that fight.

Reference

Paul L. Jones for General Accounting Office. (1992). *OPERATION DESERT STORM: War Offers Important Insights Into Army and Marine Corps Training Needs* Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office.