

# **Toward a Common Cultural Bias: The Operational Art and CFLCC Planning for OIF**

**A Paper  
by  
LTC Christopher P. McPadden  
US Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
First Term AY 03-04**

**Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited**

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

LTC Christopher Paul McPadden

Title of Monograph: Toward a Common Cultural Bias: The Operational Art and CFLCC Planning for OIF

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. James J. Schneider

Monograph Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert H. Berlin, Ph.D.

Professor and Director  
Academic Affairs,  
School of Advanced  
Military Studies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Director, Graduate Degree  
Program

## Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>26 MAY 2004</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED -			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Toward a common cultural bias: the operational art and CFLCC planning for OIF</b>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>Christopher McPadden</b>		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>US Army School for Advanced Military Studies, 250 Gibbon Ave, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 66027</b>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER <b>ATZL-SWV</b>			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>The overall intent of this monograph is to examine an operational warfighting headquarters (CFLCC) in order to show the degree to which its contemporary commanders and core planners exhibited a 'common cultural bias' or operational mindedness in their operational design for execution. In doing so, it suggests that not only does this 'common cultural bias' exist, but that future success in the US Army's ability to design and execute operational warfare will continue to be a function of its ability to further develop this operational mindedness within the future officer corps. This paper should therefore provide the reader with in increased understanding and appreciation for the US Army's ability to conduct operational art as a function of an operational consciousness, which manifests itself through commanders and planners who create operational designs in adherence to theoretically and historically informed doctrinal principles which are descriptive and not prescriptive. Such principles are inculcated through the service by means of education, training and practice in preparation for execution. The author's hypothesis is that the US Army's overwhelming success in the execution of OIF phase III Decisive Operations, was not a function of haphazard coincidence. Instead it was largely due to the existence of a developed 'common cultural bias' or operational mindedness, which was envisioned in the early 1980's, and is now being manifested in real world operations like OIF.</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>1</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>64</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## **Abstract**

Toward a Common Cultural Bias: The Operational Art and CFLCC Planning for OIF by LTC Christopher Paul McPadden, US Army, 58 pages.

The overall intent of this monograph is to examine an operational warfighting headquarters (CFLCC) in order to show the degree to which its contemporary commanders and core planners exhibited a 'common cultural bias' or operational mindedness in their operational design for execution. In doing so, it suggests that not only does this 'common cultural bias' exist, but that future success in the US Army's ability to design and execute operational warfare will continue to be a function of its ability to further develop this operational mindedness within the future officer corps. This paper should therefore provide the reader with an increased understanding and appreciation for the US Army's ability to conduct operational art as a function of an operational consciousness, which manifests itself through commanders and planners who create operational designs in adherence to theoretically and historically informed doctrinal principles which are descriptive and not prescriptive. Such principles are inculcated through the service by means of education, training and practice in preparation for execution. The author's hypothesis is that the US Army's overwhelming success in the execution of OIF phase III Decisive Operations, was not a function of haphazard coincidence. Instead it was largely due to the existence of a developed 'common cultural bias' or operational mindedness, which was envisioned in the early 1980's, and is now being manifested in real world operations like OIF.

## **Chapter One – Sowing a “Common Cultural Bias”**

### **for Operational Warfare**

Approximately 500 B.C., Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*, “the general who understands war is the Minister of the people’s fate and arbiter of the nation’s destiny.”<sup>1</sup> His words have proved amazingly prescient considering how many nations’ destinies have been determined by the prowess of their militaries. So prescient, one might consider their applicability to the United States military’s conduct of decisive combat operations during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Iraq fell faster than the German blitzkrieg swallowed Poland and France. Shock and Awe, Precision Guided Munitions, Joint and Combined arms operations all resulted in Combined Forces Land Component Commander (CFLCC) tanks streaming through downtown Baghdad in weeks. One Iraqi logistics officer was so surprised by the attack he was on his way to work when he was picked up by US Army mechanized forces.<sup>2</sup> As early as 11 April 2003, Victor Davis Hanson wrote in an online article *The Ironies of War* that:

Great marches often entail enormous risks because, as columns slam deeply into enemy country, supply lines thin and the enormous convoys that bring up food, water, and fuel from an increasingly distant rear sometimes in transit nearly devour the very supplies they carry. Napoleon, the Panzers of 1941, and even George S. Patton all were plagued by the very rapidity and extent of their own advances. They all eventually ran out of supplies...Thus it is nearly impossible to recall a similar advance that has traveled so far, so fast, with so few losses, without major shortages of fuel, ammunition, and food — and without being parasitic on the surrounding countryside. *What happened the last three weeks is unprecedented in military history.*<sup>3</sup>

Echoing this sentiment, well-known Military Historian Dennis Showalter wrote to one of the CFLCC planners:

---

<sup>1</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963, pg. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Fontenot, Gregory, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Final Draft), pg. 409.

<sup>3</sup> Hanson, Victor Davis, *The Ironies of War*, [www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson041103.asp](http://www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson041103.asp), 11Apr03

“You guys may not quite know what you've done. I can tell you there's been nothing like it in the modern history of war. A whole COUNTRY, 30 million people, conquered in three weeks, by three divisions and some change, plus SOF...Guderian, Rommel, and Patton are going to be lining up in Valhalla to buy the drinks--I'm damn glad you guys are on our side!”<sup>4</sup>

The threat of war with Iraq, which loomed for more than a decade following Desert Storm, became a reality commencing with a thunderclap on 19 March 2003. Three days later, the CENTCOM commander, General Tommy Franks, conducted his initial Press call where he explained his vision for conducting the complex joint operations of the unfolding campaign. Lauding the plan's flexibility, he described the conceptual synchronization and interoperability of air, sea, and ground forces as a “mosaic” of assets, which he could employ through an operational design based on specific desired end states.

His explanation of the “mosaic” was really a description of operational art, which is defined as the “use of military forces to achieve strategic goals through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of theater strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles.” Affecting the where, when and why of deployment and employment of forces to achieve operational and strategic objectives, such operational art, “provides a framework to assist commanders in ordering their thoughts when designing campaigns and major operations.”<sup>5</sup> By means of Operational Art, engagements become interconnected in ways that maximize their effectiveness, precluding them from resulting in wasted resources, efforts and ultimately lives.

Operational art is extremely complex and yet in broad terms finds its focus on two major components – executable operational design and a commander with his staff. Executable operational design links the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war in ways that achieve

---

<sup>4</sup> Email message from Dennis Showalter to Major Evan Huelfer, CFLCC Plans Officer, April 2003.

<sup>5</sup> “A *campaign* is a related series of military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space.” “A *major operation* is a series of tactical actions (battles, engagements, strikes) conducted by various combat forces of a single or several services, coordinated in time and place, to accomplish operational, and sometimes strategic objectives in an operational area.”

an overall campaign end state. It enables the commander to seize the initiative and obtain decisive results through the integration of, “unilateral, Joint, and or multinational assets in simultaneous or sequential attacks against the enemy’s center of gravity through decisive points.”<sup>6</sup> Designs are contingent upon well educated, trained and experienced commanders and staffs who “determine what objectives will achieve decisive results; where forces will operate; the relationships among subordinate forces in time, space, and purpose; and where to apply the decisive effort.”<sup>7</sup>

Until the 1970’s, operational warfare had never been a part of formalized US Army doctrine. But in the aftermath of Vietnam, the US military shifted its focus to Cold War Europe. The challenge of fighting outnumbered and winning mandated a ‘learn and live’ approach to operational warfighting. In response to this challenge, General DePuy introduced the Active Defense doctrine in the 1976 version of FM 100-5. Paul H. Herbert’s *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5*, details that while General DePuy’s forced-fed, top-down approach to doctrinal change was widely rejected, it opened much needed intellectual debate on the conduct of conventional operational warfare as an art. Six years later, TRADOC published the 1982 version of *100-5: Operations*, which formalized operational warfare into US Army doctrine for the first time in its history.

John L. Romjue conveys in his work, *From Active Defense to Airland Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982*, how the creation of this historical doctrinal manual was largely the work of several visionaries: LTC Huba Wass De Czege, LTC L. D. Holder, LTG William Richardson, and General Donn A. Starry who focused on at least four things specifically. First they sought to base the doctrine on timeless applicable continuities in warfare distilled from the classics of military theory and history. Second, in contrast to General DePuy’s *forced-fed*

---

“These actions are conducted simultaneously or sequentially under a common plan and are controlled by a single commander.”

<sup>6</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C: HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-2, Section 7-4

approach, they produced a *force-fed* malleable doctrine, which they developed through input from both the institutional and field Army. Third, they worked to produce a proscriptive versus descriptive doctrine which was based on a ‘how to think’ versus ‘what to think’ model. Such doctrine would provide a common language for the Army geared toward informing the judgment of leaders who faced the likely prospect of conducting operational warfare. And finally, they envisioned coupling this doctrine with a system of education and training to inculcate its precepts in preparation for real world practice in ways that would produce a “common cultural bias,” or operational mindedness in the US Army officer corps. Formalized doctrine would no longer consist of simply unstudied ideas on paper. Instead, through education, training and practice, doctrinal concepts would be communicated through a common language producing a “common cultural bias” for operational thinking and execution in the form of design at the hands of commanders and their staffs.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, just after the 1982 version of FM 100-5 went to the field, the US Army War College held a professional colloquium at Carlisle barracks, Pennsylvania, focusing on the development of a “common cultural bias” within the US Army. The first speaker, Colonel Wallace Franz, a member of the War College Faculty, presented a paper entitled *Intellectual Preparation for War*, in which he stated, “Not since the Civil War has the United States had the most professionally effective Army in the world. We have the opportunity to create such a force again if we can develop the intellectual basis through education, study, and practice (application).”<sup>9</sup> He provided a clarion call for US Army officers to deliberately engage the operational level of warfare. He was concerned that that the Army’s operational warfighters were

---

<sup>7</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C: HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-2, sec 7-3.

<sup>8</sup> While it is not the purpose of this monograph, it should be noted that The United States Army currently has a very iterative and participative process of doctrinal development which includes numerous drafts and input from the field regularly. The proponent for doctrinal development, particularly FM 3-0 no sooner publishes the document and immediately starts to gather input for the next iteration of the manual. The creation of this manual as a voice of the force has become one of its greatest strengths which in turn makes it the touchstone for the Army in terms of operational training at CTCs and BCTP, educating through all Army schools and warfighting as we have seen in Desert Storm, OEF and OIF.



not yet prepared to satisfactorily deal with greatly increased, speed, tempo, and lethality of the battlefield noting that, “soldiers are usually close students of tactics, but only rarely are they students of strategy, and practically never of war.”<sup>10</sup> Colonel Franz challenged his listeners to heed the words of Marshall Ferdinand Foch, “What is the form of this teaching born from history and destined to grow by means of further historical studies? It came out in the shape of a theory of war which can be taught—which shall be taught to you—and in the shape of a doctrine, which you will be taught to practice.”<sup>11</sup>

The second speaker at the colloquium, Colonel Wass De Czege, echoed Colonel Franz’s comments as he conveyed a vision for developing a “common cultural bias.” Formalized operational doctrine would be malleable and yet substantiated by military history and validated by classical military theory. It would then be inculcated through a system of education and training for the eventuality of practice. The Army’s educational system would hold the banner for informing the force, namely through schools like the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, the Command and General Staff College, and the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) which was incidentally founded in 1983 by COL Huba Wass De Czege and COL L. D. Holder. SAMS was specifically founded with the intent of developing masters of the operational art by providing select military officers with a year of intensive study focused on the pillars of classical military theory, military history and doctrine. Its graduates would go to every MACOM, Corps and Division in the Army serving as a leavening of operational “common cultural bias” throughout the Army.<sup>12</sup>

In turn, institutional education would be honed through training in various forms including the Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) and their attending Warfighter

---

<sup>9</sup> Franz, Wallace P. Colonel USA, *Intellectual Preparation for War*, The Art of War Quarterly, presented at the Art of War Colloquium, US Army War College, June 1983, pg. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pg. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pg. 9.

exercises which would become commonplace in every US Army operational headquarters. Other forms of training and organizations for addressing the linkage between operational and tactical levels of war would include the Combat Training Centers (CTCs) in the form of JRTC and NTC along with the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), which captured lessons from past exercises and operations for incorporation into future revisions in doctrine and missions.

By means of these sources of education and training, the Army would develop a “common cultural bias” or what might be called an operational mindedness or an operational consciousness. US Army officers would be so steeped and familiar with doctrine as a common language, it would essentially become an inherent part of their thinking about military operations, in essence an operational consciousness. Noted historian of operational warfare, Shiman Naveh understood this well when he remarked that the formalization of operational doctrine in 1982 was the initial manifestation of the US Army’s ‘operational consciousness,’ a consciousness in concert with other noted operational thinkers and warfighters of the twentieth century such as Tukhachevsky and Triandafilov.

In 2004, twenty-two years later, this “common cultural bias” arguably exists particularly as one examines the way Army officers think about operations, and more specifically US Army operational design for OIF resulting in recent operational decisive combat operations in Iraq. This monograph examines the CFLCC Commanders and planners as they designed the operational offensive of OIF to see if they truly exhibited an operational mindedness or ‘common cultural bias.’ The author’s hypothesis that the CFLCC commanders and planners clearly exhibited an operational mindedness in their operational design of OIF. So while contemporary sages like Victor Hanson and Dennis Showalter record the manifestation of this developing operational consciousness, military professionals should see that the sowing of this “common

---

<sup>12</sup> Wass De Czege, Huba, Colonel USA, *Toward a Science and Art of War*, The Art of War Quarterly, presented at the Art of War Colloquium, US Army War College, June 1983, pg. 12-27. BG Wass De Czege, Huba, Interview with author, 11 Jan 2003.

cultural bias” is being reaped in an operational harvest having implications for the future of all US Army officers and their role in operations.

The existence of this “common cultural bias” or operational mindedness, greatly enables commanders and planners to work through the tensions of conceptual aspects of military art and practicalities of military science, to establish a framework for understanding, designing and executing operational art, and for adhering to a common doctrinal language which is published, accessible and ideally studied and understood by all officers in the US Army who are then prepared to put it into action. In a broader sense, this consciousness as a function of inculcated doctrinal concepts must be based on the continuities of classical military theory and history while remaining flexible enough to adjust to future changes in warfare. As such, an awareness and understanding of this consciousness should motivate US Army officers to better understand the past in order to most effectively inform their vision for the future of warfare, since the way we as an organization conceptualize warfare will directly correlate to our future execution of it.

This paper addresses one major question and several supporting questions. The first is in what ways did the CFLCC Commander and core planners exhibit a “common cultural bias” or operational mindedness in their design of OIF? One supporting question is how did the Commander and staff reconcile the tension between operational concepts and practical limits of military science, particularly with respect to the characteristics of the offense and the elements of operational design? Another supporting question is how did the operational commander and his staff exhibit operational consciousness in their preparation for designing and executing operational warfare? Finally, what are the implications of the existence and further development of the US Army’s operational consciousness?

These questions will be answered in five chapters, which focus on the manifestation of the US Army’s operational consciousness in the design and actions of the operational commander and staff in preparation for the execution of decisive combat operations in OIF. Chapter Two – *CFLCC Operational Design – Destination Downtown Baghdad* focuses on the initial operational

design of OIF as a sequential attack. It will use the lens of the operational characteristics of the offense: audacity, surprise and tempo. Chapter Three – *CFLCC Operational Design – Getting There from Here* – goes a step further to show how the sequential attack transitioned into a simultaneous attack and its relation to the operational characteristics of concentration and flexibility. In both of these chapters, operational mindedness is particularly evident as a function of how the Commanders and planners constantly dealt with the tension between operational concepts and the practical limits of military science. Chapter Four - *Operationalizing the CFLCC* shows how the CFLCC Commander – namely LTG David McKiernan and his staff manifested operational mindedness in the design and preparation for execution of operational warfighting in OIF. Chapter Five – completes this monograph with some analysis and a conclusion.

The sources for this monograph are both primary and secondary in type. While it is based on many secondary sources, its bulk of evidence of evidence is primary source material from interviews with the CFLCC Commander and his core planners. The interviews took place prior to and just after the conduct of Phase III: Decisive Combat Operations, and were the work of several groups of people including field historians, members of the OIF Study group at FT Leavenworth and the author. The commanders and planners upon which this work focuses specifically included the ARCENT/CFLCC Commanders LTGs Tommy Franks, Paul T. Mikolashek, and David McKiernan. The core ARCENT/CFLCC planners were Colonel Kevin Benson, LTC Thomas Reilly, and Majors Evan Huelfer and Frank Jones. It should be noted that the author’s intent is not to provide a great man or great unit approach to evidence, but merely to address how a vision for the creation of a “common cultural bias” or operational mindedness was conceived two decades ago, and whether or not this vision has come to current reality in the designing of operational warfare for the United States Army. In terms of time period, this paper deals mainly with the origins of the design of OIF up to the commencement of its execution on 19 March 2003.

In sum, the overall intent of this monograph is to examine an operational warfighting headquarters in order to show the degree to which its contemporary commanders and core planners exhibited a “common cultural bias” or operational mindedness in their operational design for execution. In doing so, it suggests that not only does this “common cultural bias” exist, but that future success in the US Army’s ability to design and execute operational warfare will continue to be a function of its ability to further develop this operational mindedness within the future officer corps. This paper should therefore provide the reader with an increased understanding and appreciation for the US Army’s ability to conduct operational art as a function of an operational consciousness, which manifests itself through commanders and planners who create operational designs in adherence to theoretically and historically informed doctrinal principles which are descriptive and not prescriptive. The author’s hypothesis is that the US Army’s overwhelming success in the execution of OIF phase III Decisive Operations, was not a function of haphazard coincidence. Instead it was largely due to the existence of a developed “common cultural bias” or operational mindedness, which was envisioned in the early 1980’s, and is now being manifested in real world operations like OIF.

## **Chapter II:CFLCC OIF Operational Design-**

### **Destination Downtown Baghdad**

Creating effective operational design depends greatly on the successful reconciliation of the tension between operational concepts and the practical limits of military science through the efforts of knowledgeable and experienced commanders and staffs. In creating effective operational design, operational commanders and their staffs must possess the ability to “recognize what is possible at the tactical level and design a plan that maximizes chances for success in battles and engagements that ultimately produce the desired operational end state.”<sup>13</sup> Doctrine asserts rightly that ineffective operational design is destined to fail in the accomplishment of operational goals and waste precious war fighting assets.<sup>14</sup> But effective design accomplishes just the opposite, and OIF design for decisive combat operations is a good example, particularly when one examines this design through the lens of the doctrinal characteristics of the offense. At their initial introduction into formal doctrine in the 1982 version of FM 100-5, these characteristics included: audacity, speed, surprise, concentration and flexibility. They remain virtually intact today except that speed is now tempo and interestingly flexibility is no longer a doctrinal characteristic of the offense.

This chapter and the next will address all five characteristics, and will show how the ARCENT/CFLCC Commanders and planners understood these characteristics well. The design which the commanders and planners created shows that they clearly shared a common operational understanding of these characteristics and their relationship to other key operational concepts such as centers of gravity, end states, lines of operation and culmination. This chapter focuses specifically on the initial design of OIF up to the point that it transitioned from a sequential to a simultaneous attack and it specifically addresses the characteristics of audacity, surprise and

---

<sup>13</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C: HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-2, Section 7-4

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 7-3 thru 7-7.

tempo. The chapter which follows this one will continue with a focus on these three characteristics as they relate to the remaining two – concentration and flexibility.

While this paper focuses on the characteristics of the operational offense, it should be noted that operational consciousness could be assessed as a function of many aspects of doctrine, as doctrine proved to be the lens through which the CFLCC Commanders and planners consistently looked at campaign design. The Chief of CFLCC Plans asserted that doctrine certainly informed the operational design for OIF directly when he remarked, “We had to refer back to doctrine to ask the questions. What do we mean by lines of operations? What do we mean by the decision point? If we’re going to use decisive point, what do we mean by that? If Baghdad was the operational and strategic center of gravity, what did we mean by that? Did it meet the criteria outlined in doctrine? Yes, we believed so. We wanted to make sure we were using precisely the right words...language took on a great deal of importance. We had to use doctrine because that was our common language.”<sup>15</sup>

During the planning effort, the planners actually started the habit of citing the service or joint doctrinal reference for all of their products. In their minds, while many theorists and historians had written about war, it was published service and joint doctrine that served as the common reference point or language for everything they did.<sup>16</sup> This coupled with the multitude of graduates from the service operational warfare schools such as SAMS (School of Advanced Military Studies, SAW (School of Advanced Warfighting), and SAS which were at almost every headquarters, made for a shared understanding in operational language and communication. According to the Chief of Plans, “Our common language was the doctrinal language. The common language was the joint language.”<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, CFLCC C5, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher McPadden on 23 December 2003 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Length of the interview is 0:53:55. George Knapp and Corey Aylor, OIFSG contractors, did the transcription.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Observing OIF through the doctrinal lens of the characteristics of the operational offensive, elements of OIF's (OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM) genesis can be traced back to the conclusion of DESERT STORM, when ARCENT (Army, Central Command), the Army component CENTCOM (Central Command), planned for the defense of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in case Iraq attacked again.<sup>18</sup> The operational concept of this defense, lasting from 1991 to 1996, was that if Iraqi attacked, US forces would conduct a fighting withdrawal followed by a counterattack to retake Kuwait and a counter offensive to remove the Iraqi Regime.<sup>19</sup> This concept changed in 1997 when the new Third Army Commander – LTG Tommy Franks - went to Kuwait and provided his chief planner with new guidance. His chief planner, then LTC Kevin Benson, recalled that General Franks, “stood on a dune looking into Iraq and he told me that the next time we re-wrote [OPLAN] (Operation Plan) 1003, our portion of it, he wanted us to assume that we would not start from Saudi Arabia, that we would start from Kuwait, and it would be all offensive operations.”<sup>20</sup> The resulting plan was OPLAN 1003V-98.<sup>21</sup> Based on a force structure of five divisions, several Armored Cavalry Regiments (ACR) and seven National Guard e-Brigades, the operational concept was that if Iraq attacked again, United States forces would not withdraw from Kuwait, but instead go on the offense with a follow-on counterattack aimed at removing the Iraqi regime.<sup>22</sup>

From 1997 to 2001, OPLAN 1003V-98 was merely a contingency until 911 when the ARCENT planners were tasked to rework the base concept in light of the new threats of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).<sup>23</sup> Immediately the planners converted planning factors into operational realities and within weeks they presented their draft revision -

---

<sup>18</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, C-5, CFLCC [Coalition Forces Land Component Command], interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, USA, on 20 November 2003 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Length of interview is 0:59:51. Verbatim transcription done by James L. Speicher, Operation Iraqi Freedom Study Group (OIFSG) contractor.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, Lead Planner for Land Operations against Iraq, interview conducted by Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003 at Camp Doha, Kuwait covering Sept 2001 to 16 March 2003.



OPERATION VIGILANT GUARDIAN. This plan was very limited in its objectives due to a very limited real-world force structure of one division and several ACRs. In this plan, if Iraq attacked, one US Corps (I Marine Expeditionary Force - MEF) would attack, “with a limited objective to create battlespace and secure the southern Iraqi oilfields.” The intent was to prevent Saddam from exporting oil through the Gulf, forcing him to use the pipelines through Jordan and Turkey.<sup>24</sup> It amounted to, “a limited attack up to the Euphrates River line.”<sup>25</sup> Once the draft plan was complete, the ARCENT planners deployed to the theater of operations where they became the CFLCC and planned OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM through December 2001.

The tension between operational concepts and practical limits of military science was evident as early as December 2001 when CFLCC had only a single Brigade Combat Team from the Third Infantry Division on the ground, hardly a robust force to go against eleven Iraqi divisions. But the strategic understanding was that this force, comprised of 7500 soldiers and equipment, was ample combat power for securing the oil fields and the isolation of Baghdad itself. This was in direct conflict to what the planners had assessed as being feasible.<sup>26</sup> In the words of one planner, “An entire division cannot carry enough food, fuel and ammunition to cross 500 kilometers by themselves.”<sup>27</sup>

In January 2002, the CFLCC Commander and planners resumed their full focus on Iraq in a planning effort that would span fourteen months. Within a month, the tension between operational concepts and practical limits of military science went to a new level when CENTCOM provided its components, including CFLCC, with a briefing on an operational concept called ‘Shock and Awe.’<sup>28</sup> According to one of the core planners, the concept of ‘Shock

---

<sup>23</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, Deputy C5/Chief, War Plans, CFLCC, interview conducted by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 50<sup>th</sup> Military History Detachment, Military History Group, CFLCC, on 15 May 2003 at Camp Doha, Kuwait. The interview is 1:25:24 long. Summary transcription was prepared by John M. Hammell, OIFSG contractor.

<sup>27</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

and Awe’ consisted of “ piling on the enemy so quickly and so early, that essentially you paralyzed their ability to react. The general concept...was to synergistically integrate all operations to overwhelm the enemy’s ability to deal with multiple, simultaneous crises.” ‘Shock and Awe’ translated to a simultaneous and synergistic integration of Joint operational warfighting assets with the intent of getting tactical ground forces to Baghdad as quickly as possible. The conceptual result was that was that “with the weight of all these synergistic effects, you could shock the regime into immediate collapse, like a house of cards that comes tumbling down. The challenge to that is flowing just enough forces to achieve surprise, but you’ve also got to have enough weight of force to accomplish the “shock and awe” piece.”<sup>29</sup> The reality was that CFLCC did not yet have the necessary force structure to support such an audacious objective.

This initial guidance from CENTCOM initiated a sequence of nearly monthly Commander and Time-phased force and deployment data (TPFDD) Conferences to work the details of war gaming and force flow.<sup>30</sup> One involved planner recorded, “about every month or six weeks, all the component commanders would meet with General Franks and his staff and we would re-validate the current planning concepts.”<sup>31</sup> Overcoming the initial practical limits of the science of the plan, the initial conference revealed a much more robust force structure closely replicating OPLAN 1003V-98. It amounted to: five Army divisions, a MEF, two ACRs, an Attack Helicopter Regiment, and two Airborne Brigades. Such a force structure made the audacity of isolating Baghdad more reasonable than it had been.

As a characteristic of an operational offensive, audacity is marked as the foundation of ‘bold inventive plans’ which effectively mass combat power to achieve decisive results. By definition, it is characterized by “a simple plan of action, boldly executed.”<sup>32</sup> Audacity relates directly to the mentality of commanders who understand but do not balk at risks, and who create

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

operational designs, which focus on seizing initiative and maintaining operational momentum in the face of uncertainty.<sup>33</sup> Audacity affects entire military organizations and often inspires and infuses subordinates with motivation to go and do things they never thought possible. The design for OIF certainly fit this doctrinal description, as one planner put it, “Audacity? I think we were pretty damned audacious. I really do.”<sup>34</sup> In particular, the overall audacity of this plan would have to be highlighted by its relationship to several key elements of operational design - end state and center of gravity in relation to isolating Baghdad.

With respect to end state, the CFLCC Chief of Plans, commented that, “For an operation like this it is absolutely necessary to start with the end state in mind. The end states were stated at the beginning and did not change...when we went back to doctrine to talk about the elements of operational design, we started with the end state in mind.” General Franks himself stated the desired end states in his initial press conference on 22 March. These end states were in the campaign plan because the commanders and planners had them in mind and they did not change.<sup>35</sup>

An additional element of operational design, the center of gravity, was equally clear for the commanders and planners. There was no question in any of their minds that Baghdad was the center of gravity. The CFLCC chief planner clearly saw Baghdad as the center of gravity when he commented, “We labeled Baghdad as the operational and strategic center of gravity. It’s a dictatorship. All the reins of power end in Baghdad. All our analysis led us to believe that if we displaced the regime itself from Baghdad we would dislocate the center of gravity. All our operations were focused on getting to Baghdad, either leaving detachments in contact at some of these other towns, or masking the towns and the forces inside.”<sup>36</sup> Supporting this notion, the

---

<sup>32</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C: HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-6, Section 7-20

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

CFLCC Commander who actually conducted the operational fight remarked that, “the intent was always to get to the center of gravity of this regime, which was always Baghdad, physically, spiritually, emotionally, command and control-wise,”<sup>37</sup>

With the need for audacity well in mind, in February 2002, CFLCC began their Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). The commander told his planners to start with a clean slate without being tied to existing plans. They accordingly worked options based on known terrain and enemy factors, while providing a new assessment of Iraqi vulnerabilities to determine how to get to Baghdad with maximum surprise and speed.

Figuring Saddam would anticipate a long-term build up of forces in the AOR, the planners seriously entertained the idea of initiating operations with only a single division.<sup>38</sup> In the words of one planner, “knowing that Iraq had 23 divisions in its order of battle -- six divisions in the south and four Republican Guard divisions defending Baghdad -- we felt there’s no way he (Saddam) would believe that we would attack with just one division on the ground.”<sup>39</sup> With such an attack, APS sources in Kuwait, Qatar and afloat would enable CFLCC to quickly amass forces for an attack that would achieve immediate surprise by trading space for time with the likely result of “a division sitting outside of Baghdad within about a ten day period.”<sup>40</sup> As they went through the MDMP, the final COA was based on getting forces to Baghdad most quickly as a function of surprise and speed, both of which are also characteristics of the operational offensive.<sup>41</sup>

Surprise, would be crucial but difficult to achieve. Doctrine affirms this difficulty due to the realities of modern technological systems, media, and readily available imagery. But surprise

---

<sup>37</sup> LTG David McKiernan, Commander, Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) and Third Army ARCENT, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot at Fort McPherson, Georgia on 8 December 2003. Length of interview is 1:11:00. Verbatim transcription done by James L. Speicher, Operation Iraqi Freedom Study Group (OIFSG) contractor.

<sup>38</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

provides the commander who attains it with a decided advantage. It can greatly disrupt enemy defenses by overwhelming and confusing his Command and Control (C2), causing psychological shock and hesitancy in the actions and decisions of enemy leaders and soldiers.<sup>42</sup> Through surprise, commanders can often exploit enemy weaknesses in ways that produce both operational and tactical success by attacking at varied times, in unexpected directions, or unanticipated manners to catch an enemy off guard.<sup>43</sup> These aspects of surprise were all considerations in the design of OIF.

The planners felt that it would be very difficult to achieve surprise at any level of war in this operation since Iraq had been “desensitized” by the approach of conducting a major build up of forces followed by an Air war and then a ground attack.<sup>44</sup> Addressing the strategic and tactical levels of war, the Chief C5 planner asserted, “We knew we would not be able to use strategic surprise because we were there. The enemy could watch us build up. What we felt that we could obtain were the effects of tactical surprise, which is why...I went on a crusade to have D-Day, H-Hour be the beginning of land operations and let the Sunday punch of the extended air operations follow land operations in time.”<sup>45</sup>

Operational surprise was thought to be achievable through several means, but a primary one became known as the Northern Option. This idea had its genesis in a March 2002 CENTCOM Planning Directive tasking CFLCC to consider putting a Brigade Combat Team as a deception option on Turkey-Iraq border. The CFLCC commander, LTG Mikolashek had his planners test the feasibility of this option with the guidance, “to wipe the slate clean and see what we can do -- put no constraints on it and consider all the way up to the main effort coming out of

---

<sup>42</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C: HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-4 to 7-5.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 Dec 2003.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

the north -- multiple divisions coming through Turkey.”<sup>46</sup> He saw this as a means of opening a second front from the north and then to shifting effort to a single point of entry in the south.<sup>47</sup>

The core planners were very open to the operational concept as they felt they were “grossly underutilizing the strategic and operational capabilities and the door that we could open in Turkey.”<sup>48</sup> But they also instantly realized that practical limits of military science would make this very difficult to accomplish requiring the opening of more APOD and SPOD in Turkey and moving forces 700 kilometers over very difficult terrain before they could even get to a line of departure for attack. One planner commented, “It was hard, but it was not impossible.”<sup>49</sup> A feasibility test revealed the maximum size force allowable would be a single heavy division requiring approximately sixty days to flow to the Turkey- Iraq border.<sup>50</sup> CFLCC would use PSYOPS and information to make this look like a much more robust force. Then this force would attack across the Tigris River and through to Tikrit resulting in “a classic military turning movement.”<sup>51</sup> CFLCC responded to CENTCOM’s directive with their concept for not just a deception, but an actual attack from the North.”<sup>52</sup>

With this draft design for the Northern Option, LTG Mikolashek flew to Afghanistan to brief General Franks, who concurred in May.<sup>53</sup> LTG McKiernan would share in his commitment to this option. Well before combat operations, he remarked that he always wanted to have such an attack from the north that would make:

Saddam Hussein and the regime have to look...in all directions for conventional, unconventional, and air...I want sufficient combat power out of the north that we can quickly present the regime with a collapse of the northern front, as well as the southern front, isolate Tikrit, preclude any regime leadership movement between Baghdad and Tikrit, deal with the northern

---

<sup>46</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>47</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

oil fields as we want to deal with the southern oil fields, secure them and if required, seize them.<sup>54</sup>

Specifically this force could serve to balance likely ‘friction points’ between the Kurds, Turks and Iraqis along the green line in northern Iraq.’<sup>55</sup>

In April 2002, the CFLCC planners briefed their newest revised OPLAN - OPERATION BLUE, at Camp Doha, Kuwait to the CFLCC, V Corps and I MEF Commanders and approximately twenty other general officers. It would also become known as “generated start,” and consist of a two corps sequential attack led by I MEF followed by V Corps designed to seize southern Iraqi oilfields and isolate Baghdad.<sup>56</sup> It would take six months to execute after notification: one month to prepare the force flow, two months to flow forces, and three months of operations to remove the regime. This plan lasted until June of 2002, but changed due to growing strategic concerns that Iraq would not permit three months of build up in theater.<sup>57</sup>

CFLCC revised the operational design again and produced OPLAN – IMMEDIATE BADGER II or ‘running start.’<sup>58</sup> This plan had coalition forces attacking as early as one month after notification and no later than forty-five days followed by continued strike operations during force flow. The obvious trade off was a smaller initial attacking force, which would be quickly reinforced to increase its combat power, and the logical result would be decisive combat operations of longer duration. Considering both approaches, the planners were challenged with finding the optimal time to attack within the thirty to forty-five day build up window.<sup>59</sup> This plan lasted through July 2003.

At the crux of these two plans was the operational offensive characteristic of tempo. Tempo essentially equates to the speed with which commanders execute their operations, and it is

---

<sup>54</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 19 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>57</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

largely focused on the integration of assets throughout battle space to achieve desired effects. Conceptually, operational offensive commanders execute violent attacks with a tempo that properly employs reconnaissance to identify exploitable gaps, taking advantage of any penetration or assailable flank quicker than the enemy can recover, ideally attacking and disrupting the commander's C2 without undoing his own.<sup>60</sup> Affecting tempo directly impacts the maintenance of and operation's initiative and momentum.<sup>61</sup> It directly relates to surprise as it can be "slow at first, creating the conditions for a later acceleration that catches the enemy off guard and throws him off balance."<sup>62</sup>

Rapid tempo requires quicker decisions, but it also enables operational offensive commanders to better, "disrupt enemy defensive plans by achieving results quicker than the enemy can respond."<sup>63</sup> Commanders optimize tempo by initiating offensive operations with relentless violent attacks aimed at achieving decisive results, while simultaneously precluding effective enemy retaliatory attacks.<sup>64</sup> Such commanders pursue the best lines of operation, fight through the depth of the battlefield, and seek optimal times and locations for transitions in relation to their concentration of forces.<sup>65</sup> And their attacks are designed with in-depth "fires and maneuver to shatter the enemy's coherence and overwhelm his C2."<sup>66</sup> The right tempo will deny, "the enemy the chance to rest and continually creates opportunities."<sup>67</sup>

CFLCC was well aware that tempo would be a key characteristic in this fight. Proper tempo in OIF would contribute to operational surprise as coalition forces would get to Baghdad

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid..

<sup>60</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C: HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-6, Section 7-17 thru 19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C:HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-4 thru7-7.

<sup>63</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C:HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-6, Section 7-17 thru 19.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.



very quickly without pausing to regroup or wait for any form of negotiations.<sup>68</sup> General Franks had made it clear to his component commands, “once we start we won’t stop. We go. We go fast. We employ while we deploy.” According to LTG McKiernan, “to get to Baghdad...the intent was speed...As General Franks has said, ‘Speed does kill’ and the intent was, with as much speed as we could muster, get the Fifth Corps to penetrate and move up and begin to isolate Baghdad while the MEF secured the southern oilfields...”<sup>69</sup>

The obvious challenge was to keep from having such high tempo that the force came to culmination, and the CFLCC Commander and planners worked to adjust tempo accordingly. With regard to the culminating point, Col Benson, the C5 commented, “We tried to build the operation so that we would not culminate before we got to Baghdad.” LTG McKiernan echoed this with the comment, “One thing we could not afford to do was run out of fuel or have a line of communication (LOC) that was cut so that we couldn’t get re-supplies or med-evac or anything else back and forth, so LOCs were very important to me.”<sup>70</sup>

Both Commanders and planners were well aware of the doctrinal assertion that effective operational design requires that while they work to exploit all opportunities to defeat the enemy, commanders and staffs must be constantly mindful of their CSS asset limitations and prevent them from coming to culmination.<sup>71</sup> FM 3-0 states, “Commanders adjust tempo as tactical situations, combat service support (CSS) necessity, or operational opportunities allow to ensure synchronization and proper coordination, but not at the expense of losing opportunities to defeat the enemy.”<sup>72</sup>

The planners realized that operational concepts were stretching the limits of the practical limits of military science as it was going to be very difficult to build up the necessary theater support command without which an attack could not take place. In the words of one planner,

---

<sup>68</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>69</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C:HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-4 thru7-7.

without a theater support command, “two corps do not attack to Baghdad. It doesn’t matter how many times you look at the numbers...an Army mechanized infantry division burns about 400,000 gallons of fuel per day that it is in the field. An unopposed move to Baghdad is five to eight days. You can do the math...to start this, we need several million gallons of fuel on the ground [minimum of 2 million gallons].”<sup>73</sup> In fact he found that “One of the funniest things but one that took us the longest to convince Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) of was, yes, we are sitting here in southwest Asia on what are arguably the largest oil deposits in the world. Oil deposits on the ground do not equal refined fuel that a vehicle can burn.”<sup>74</sup> So while the planners realized they needed audacity and surprise, tempo became a potential limiting factor particularly with respect to the threat of coming to culmination before getting to Baghdad.

Even so, there was no plan for an operational pause.<sup>75</sup> The planners were aware that during this up tempo operation there would be times when units would not actually be moving forward, but such pauses would be complimented by an increase in the intensity of fires. According to Colonel Benson, “If the weather had not happened, we would not have stopped, or slowed down as we did...”<sup>76</sup> The concept of the operational design was that “when maneuver slowed to a crawl, there would be an increase in fires while supplies were re-distributed.”<sup>77</sup> He further commented that the planners always knew that there would be points in the attack when forces would not actually be moving. However, when they did stop their maneuver, there would be a corresponding increase in fires. That is, “maneuver and fires were employed in ways that mutually reinforced the attack enabling supplies to be distributed when and where needed to maintain the necessary momentum of the overall operation.”<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C:HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-4 thru7-7.

<sup>73</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Based on the best intelligence available, the fastest they thought they could get to Baghdad was thirty days, and they never anticipated they would cut that time in half. The chief of plans commented that his, “ best estimate was that it would be thirty days to Baghdad. We were there in fifteen or sixteen. Even the most optimistic logistics planners used the 30-day model to plan their movements.”<sup>79</sup>

But as all planners must, the CFLCC planners dealt with an imperfect intelligence picture. One core planner recorded that from April 2002 and on, the report was that Iraq was like a balloon that would burst with the application of the right pressure at the right point. In his words, “ there was intelligence out there that Iraq is a balloon, that all we had to do was to stick our finger in it and it would blow up and we could take over the whole country...but I can tell you that the C5 and the Operational planning group (OPG) who built the plans were never given the detailed intelligence analyses and information that we were always told existed...” The fear was that the ‘balloon’ would turn out to be a “bowling ball.”<sup>80</sup>

With this unknown in mind, the commanders and planners worked to create an operational design producing the requisite balance between audacity, surprise and tempo. Planners must present the range of possibilities to the commander as not only a function of operational concepts, but practical military science. According to Colonel Benson, “in addition to the doctrine; we also have to understand the science of war. We have to be able to talk in terms of consumption rates, what it takes to deliver, the means to sustain an offensive...you didn’t want to just say it, you wanted to know...I had to go to GEN McKiernan to show him...if we move the theoretical one tank to Baghdad how much fuel is it going to need, presuming a moderately opposed rate of advance over 650 km and here’s how much its going to consume...And then you extrapolate that to the four hundred plus we hand, and then that informs us of how many truck companies we’re going to need. And knowing how many we were going to need, then juxtaposed

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

with how much we had.<sup>81</sup> In the conduct of this science, the commanders and planners exhibited their operational consciousness as they continued to balance the tension between operational concepts and practical limits of military science. In addition to working the tensions with audacity, surprise and tempo, other emerging factors would force them to also deal with concentration and flexibility.

---

<sup>81</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

### **Chapter III: CFLCC Operational Design - Getting There from Here**

The compromise between the ‘generated’ and ‘running’ start versions of the plan became the ‘hybrid’ plan which capitalized on the strengths of both predecessors. The idea was that, “you would have some build-up, initially, but not quite the Generated Start Force, but you wouldn’t jump as early as the Running Start concept.”<sup>82</sup> ‘Hybrid’ was officially OPLAN Cobra II, and was also characterized by two new distinguishing factors. First, this plan did more than isolate Baghdad to await its implosion; it was designed to seize Baghdad itself.<sup>83</sup> This significantly increased the importance of audacity and the need for surprise. Second, instead of being a sequential attack two corps attack, Cobra II would be simultaneous, which was really due to the characteristic of tempo. In order to go fast enough across the battle space to achieve the desired surprise and audacity, the commander and planners came to see the necessity of two Corps attacking simultaneously from the sheer point of retaining simplicity. In the words of one planner, “we wanted to keep this as simple as we could, stay operational in our focus, ...we asked ourselves why do we want to introduce the complexity of a battle hand over and the introduction of another corps headquarters...once we start the fight because we felt that once we started the fight...we were going to go real fast.”<sup>84</sup>

Conceptually, this plan was based on an ‘employment during deployment’ model requiring about two weeks to prepare for force flow, followed by three weeks of air attacks, followed by four months of ground operations for regime removal.<sup>85</sup> Ground operations would begin with both the Army and Marines conducting simultaneous operations to An Nasiriyah for the Army Brigades and Basrah for the Marine Regiments.<sup>86</sup> The characteristics of audacity,

---

<sup>82</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>83</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>84</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>85</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, interview Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

surprise and tempo not only increased in their relative importance, but they also impacted the characteristics of concentration and flexibility.

Concentration is defined as, “the massing of overwhelming effects of combat power to achieve a single purpose.”<sup>87</sup> By means of this characteristic, offensive commanders “balance the necessity for concentrating forces to mass effects with the need to disperse them to avoid creating lucrative targets.”<sup>88</sup> Throughout the conduct of offensive combat operations, commanders capitalize on every available asset and resource - whether Multinational; Joint; Fires; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR); Information Operations (IO) or other to optimize their concentration of forces while adversely effecting that of opposing enemy forces.<sup>89</sup> In short, “Commanders adopt the posture that best suits the situation, protects the force, and sustains the attack's momentum.”<sup>90</sup>

LTG McKiernan clearly understood the implications of concentration when he commented on the need for a simultaneous attack with the words that such an attack:

“is all based on getting the right force structure I have asked for in the south...V Corps would penetrate and attack towards Baghdad and carry out an up-tempo, continuous pressure attack toward the center of gravity, while the I MEF conducts a supporting attack in the southeastern part of Iraq which takes care of a multitude of other tasks that we are going to have to do: securing oil infrastructure, dealing with Basrah, establishing life support areas, getting across the Euphrates into the eastern part of Iraq, and dealing with the...Republican Guard divisions that are in the eastern part of Baghdad...So I wanted a two-corps attack instead of a sequential I MEF attack and introduce V Corps later.”<sup>91</sup>

As a result, concentration in OIF was less relative to a symmetric force structure comparison, and more relative to potential effects which the CFLCC could bring to bear on Iraqi forces, since the

---

<sup>87</sup> *Field Manual 3-0: Operations*, Washington, D.C.:HQTRS, Dept of the Army, June 2001, pg. 7-5 thru7-6.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 19 November 2002.

coalition was attacking eleven divisions with essentially two, the 3 ID and 1 Marines.”<sup>92</sup> According to the Chief of plans, “Concentration became more a function of ‘massed effects’ versus numbers on the ground.” The massing of effects was balanced against the anticipation of very high tempo and the idea that they would employ forces as they deployed.<sup>93</sup>

The commanders and planners clearly had a vision for concentration but it would be nearly impossible to achieve when they realized there would be no deliberate flow of forces through the traditional TPFDD process. Instead they would have to exercise the Request for Forces (RFF) system, the significance of which it is difficult to overstate.<sup>94</sup> Normally, planners create plans for the employment of forces, which are supported by TPFDDs, which deploy forces when and where required for employment. In short, employment determines deployment. The elimination of the TPFDD and requirement for RFF meant the commanders and planners had to create deployment packages case-by-case, and unit-by-unit, each request requiring individual approval at the OSD level. Just the manpower required to support the RFF process is impressive. Traditional time-phased force and deployment list (TPFDL) execution would have required about thirty-five persons; RFF required about one hundred twenty five persons. One planner commented, “Deployment approved by OSD drove employment,” as they were “flat out told that these force modules were not going to be pre-approved...we received a lot of pressure to define and defend everything in the force modules.”<sup>95</sup>

The reason for this was that the nation was not technically at war, so CFLCC had an invisible force mobilization line, which they could not cross. One planner reflected that General Franks had explained that, “there is a line out there that once we cross it, ...there will be a perception that it is irrevocable decision, that we’ve committed the nation to war and that would

---

<sup>92</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

be the mobilization of all the national guard and reserve units that would be needed to sustain the effort.”<sup>96</sup>

The commanders and planners found this to be quite a challenge. In the words of LTG McKiernan, the RFF system, “almost begs for a near perfect deployment... you have a G-Day force that is set and ready to go, attacks, and simultaneously you have the rest of the forces that you need for the campaign that are still somewhere in the deployment pipeline or the RSOI [Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration] pipeline. It means in order to have that rolling combat power that you better have that deployment and RSOI near perfect.”<sup>97</sup>

Gaining the necessary concentration would not only be hindered by the RFF process, it would also be in jeopardy due to the required mix of interdependent active combat units with supporting reserve CSS assets which make up the ‘total force’ concept.<sup>98</sup> CFLCCs theater support command, the 377<sup>th</sup>, was comprised of approximately 80% reservists who had a difficulty deploying quickly enough, as they had not been funded to be at the requisite go-to-war levels of readiness for immediate deployment.<sup>99</sup> Some units arrived at mobilization stations with 300-400 pieces of rolling stock per unit requiring major maintenance to bring them to the level required for combat readiness. The time and assets required to accomplish this would impact deployment timelines.<sup>100</sup>

Such an approach certainly impacted the efficiency and the effectiveness of the force conducting the fight. Due to limits in the number of deployable units and the requirements for audacity, surprise, tempo and concentration, priority had to rightly go to combat units. Phase III Decisive Operations had to be successful, without which no Phase IV would occur. But Phase III assets would initially preclude some traditionally Phase IV heavy assets such as MPs, engineers and Civil Affairs were held back. Due to the requirements for combat power concentration for

---

<sup>96</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>97</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>98</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>99</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.



decisive operations, one planner commented, “we took out MPs, we took out engineers, we took out Civil Affairs.”<sup>101</sup> The impact would be related to security for lines of operations and handling enemy prisoners of war.<sup>102</sup> This would be particularly significant as Phase III and IV became nearly simultaneous in some three-block war type scenarios.

Such challenges led to significant concern on the part of the commanders and planners with respect to potential problems with LOC security.<sup>103</sup> In the words of one planner, “perceived threat to the LOC resulted from the fact that we did not have the force necessary to both push support forward and to secure the LOCs at the same time.”<sup>104</sup> In terms of multiple lines for a simultaneous attack, LTG McKiernan commented “it was my assessment that we needed a LOC for both Corps and it was going to be an extended LOC and the road distance, phenomenal road distance just to get from Kuwait border to Baghdad, and so we had to pay attention to securing those LOCs as we went.”<sup>105</sup>

LTG McKiernan understood the challenge of securing the LOCs perhaps better than anyone. For him, lines of communication were a “huge planning consideration from the time I first looked at this...I mean anybody knew that if you were going to maneuver to remove a regime centered in Baghdad...eventually you’ve got to account for the land space of Iraq, which happens to be the size of California roughly, that you’re going to have some huge LOCs, whether you come in from one direction or two directions or three directions and so LOC security was a consideration in planning from the very, very beginning.”<sup>106</sup>

The planners knew these challenges well and articulated them in “painstaking detail” for providing understanding within CFLCC as a whole.<sup>107</sup> At the same time, they also felt that there

---

<sup>100</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>101</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>102</sup> LTC Thomas P. Reilly, interview by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 15 May 2003.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>106</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

was a significant delta between their understanding of these potential challenges and that of strategic thinkers in terms of the practical limits of the designs military science. The forces allocated for this fight were adequate, but securing lines of communication would be tenuous at best.

As they dealt with the challenge of gaining requisite concentration, the commanders and planners also realized that the operational design would require great flexibility. There were a lot of ways it could go. The 1982 version of FM 100-5 had flexibility as one of the characteristics of the offense. It has since been removed, but should be replaced as it is evident that the CFLCC commanders and planners clearly understood the merits of having flexibility in their campaign design. In fact, LTG McKiernan commented, “You are what you’ve trained to be and whose influenced you. One of the great leaders that always drove this into my head was...Fred Franks who said, ‘Always keep your options open. Don’t run out of options. Be thinking about what are your branches.’” The CENTCOM commander felt the same way and asked LTG McKiernan about the options he was developing, particularly in light of unknowns like the role of Turkey in the plan. In fact as late as December, LTG McKiernan was even unsure of the actual size force that he would have for the execution of the impending operational warfight.<sup>108</sup> Such factors precluded the completion of the CFLCC ground campaign plan, so they were addressed with branch plans.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the unknowns, LTG McKiernan clearly understood his major tasks and purposes related to his mission of removing the regime in Phase III – Decisive Combat Operations. He saw his tasks as being the conduct of a simultaneous penetration that would have to move directly and very quickly to Baghdad while also conducting a myriad of other tasks in southern Iraq including: securing oil fields, keeping Basrah out of the fighting, developing logistics support,

---

<sup>108</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 19 November 2002.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

handling displaced civilians and enemy prisoners of war, crossing the Euphrates and other related tasks.<sup>110</sup>

While he knew his required tasks and had created an operational design with his staff for their accomplishment, he still felt like he needed greater flexibility than the single course of action in his campaign plan. In December 2002, he commented:

“I’ve got to have more options in the base plan. Right now, we have a really one course of action that is laid out in that plan. I’ve got to have options of attacking initially with two corps in the south. They might be small corps, initially. I’ve got to have the option of I MEF attacking with tasks and objectives in southeastern Iraq and V Corp having a much deeper focus. I’ve got to start to tie the northern attack as it is further developed and its relationship with the main attack to the south. I’ve got to see what additional forces I can get in and stage prior to A-Day that will allow me some more options. There are some branches that I want to develop in 1003V.”<sup>111</sup>

Such branches would be the means by which the commander and planners would develop flexibility in the plan. In the words of the chief planner, “That’s how we built flexibility into the plan. The way we wrote it allowed us to articulate effects desired in potential branches that might come up and how we would we would get back to accomplishing the effects desired in the phases of the plan as we wrote it. It was not a traditional way of writing a plan. Our paragraph three was different...we all had a hand it. Even General McKiernan personally got involved in writing paragraph three.”<sup>112</sup>

LTG McKiernan’s personal view on branch plans was that they were “based on the old adage that you can have a great plan, but the plan will change at the line of departure for a variety of conditions and facts that we don’t have that great deal of control over until the battle is won.” His belief was that successful branches were essentially a function of proper backward planning

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 30 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003.

<sup>112</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

and troop to task analysis along with having the right combat power set in the right place. With such, he felt that CFLCC would be able to have multiple options and decide on those, which were desirable as the fight developed in order to obtain and retain initiative throughout the fight.<sup>113</sup> Such branch plans were not battle drills, but instead anticipated options, which were well coordinated and synchronized from a service and joint perspective.<sup>114</sup>

Some of these branches or options included the oilfield infrastructure in both the south and the north and the potential for environmental catastrophe. There had always been concern about this as ““Saddam Hussein could create an environmental catastrophe with the oil fields either to take us off our focus on the center of gravity of Baghdad or to delay or disrupt the tempo of our operation or just out of pure revenge.”<sup>115</sup> In the commander’s words,

The oil fields are tricky because we don’t have the technical expertise in the military to know exactly how you turn on and turn off the oil fields and what you do to either preclude or react to catastrophes in the oil fields. We have got engineers who are somewhat familiar with some of the technical aspects, but what we’re going to have to do – we are in the process of doing it, is bringing oilmen in—subject-matter experts—who can help us with this problem.<sup>116</sup>

Baghdad had its own set of branches including the potential for early collapse of the regime would call for forces in Baghdad, even before conventional ground forces could close on the city.<sup>117</sup> If it did not collapse early, Baghdad, seen as the decisive part of regime removal, might happen under a variety of conditions to include: a permissive, semi-permissive or coherent fight to include demanding urban combat operations which would initially fall to V Corps which had Baghdad in their zone of action and the mission of isolating and eventually seizing that city.

---

<sup>113</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 19 November 2002.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

Another branch was seizing Saddam International Airport and operating out of it while V Corps was still in the city.<sup>118</sup>

Besides the oil fields and Baghdad, the commander and planner were also considering how the fight might develop after initial contact. There might be very little resistance, which would enable CFLCC to penetrate very quickly, “with as much combat power as we can to move to the center of gravity of the regime which is Baghdad.”<sup>119</sup> Or there might be any myriad of unavoidable factors requiring immediate proactive resolution, such as the possibility of a humanitarian crisis in Basrah tending toward chaos. In LTG McKiernan’s words, “if you have a city of some 1.6, 1.7 million and we have a steady stream of displaced civilians, and surrendering EPWs (Enemy Prisoner of War)—we’ve got to deal with that. We have to establish a logistic support area initially to sustain ourselves going north.”<sup>120</sup>

Overall, as he considered his operational branches, LTG McKiernan clearly kept the tactical commanders in mind, a fact validated by his comment that, “What I want to be able to do is develop a plan that gives both the V Corps and the I MEF (Marine Expeditionary Force) the right resources, the right shaping actions and allow them to operate with great flexibility within their respective zones of action. But we need to go through the planning of different branches or options so that they don’t become surprises to us.”<sup>121</sup>

As he went through additional war gaming of the plan and troop to task analysis, LTG McKiernan was becoming increasingly convinced that he needed more forces for a simultaneous attack in the fight which he was increasingly likely to conduct.<sup>122</sup> In light of the demands of the impending ground combat operation in relation to required tasks including the necessary force to

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

handle the possible branch of “Hasty Collapse of the Regime”, there simply was not enough combat power at his disposal.<sup>123 124</sup>

LTG McKiernan commented that he had learned long ago from General Cavazos, “You better pay attention to your stance at the beginning of the fight because, especially at the higher level, especially at the operational level, because you’re not going to re-task organize as easily as you think you are...”<sup>125</sup> His primary concern was based less on the numbers associated with main and supporting efforts, and more on the effects he wanted to achieve. In his words, “with the main effort/supporting effort business you’ve got to look at it in terms more than just numbers. What’s the effects, what are the other shaping effects that you’re loading up a main effort with.”<sup>126</sup>

He conveyed his concern during the CENTCOM Rock Drill in December 2002 in Qatar. He requested a significantly larger force than he had initially inherited taking it from a one to two Corps headquarters with the force he desired for G-day (Ground Day), the day ground operations would commence. It was based on his desire to attack “from as many directions as he could for all the right reasons...”<sup>127</sup> General Franks agreed with this assessment and CFLCC began the process of requesting the additional forces to obtain the additional combat power they needed to initiate the ground campaign when told to do so.<sup>128</sup> General Franks’ concurrence resulted in the flow of forces so large that it exceeded the ‘generated’ start’ structure, which was the initial starting point for planning.<sup>129</sup> Knowing that his primary mission was to remove the regime, LTG McKiernan felt that while he did not have all the forces that he would have liked to have had, but

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 19 November 2002.

<sup>129</sup> Major Evan A. Huelfer, Lead Planner for Land Operations against Iraq, interview conducted by Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003 at Camp Doha, Kuwait covering Sept 2001 to 16 March 2003.

he commented, “I felt I had sufficient forces to achieve at least my mission through phase three, and that was to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein.”<sup>130</sup>

The primary mission for all units concerned was certainly removal of the regime, which was the focus of Phase III Decisive Combat Operations. But the campaign did also include significant planning for Phase IV. LTG McKiernan commented that “part of the base plan, but there is lots of options involved in it on how we can transition to Phase IV tasks while we are still fighting Phase III—while we are still overthrowing the regime, and other parts either geographically or in terms of population or military, [where we] stop fighting and it is time to go into stability operations.”<sup>131</sup> In fact CFLCC had a team of planners working Phase IV which developed into a follow on plan of its own called OPLAN Eclipse II, based on historical examples of post WWII operations.<sup>132</sup> In LTG McKiernan’s mind, while Phase III would be the key phase for regime removal, there was more to the plan. As he came to find out, “We certainly removed the regime in Baghdad. In fact, I think most will say the regime was removed slash dissolved, evaporated, whatever. The question is whether you have enough forces at that point to now transition the campaign into the next phase, which is security, Stability and Support Operations. Somehow you’ve got to account for terrain and people throughout all of Iraq. That requires a lot of forces in my way of thinking.”<sup>133</sup>

CFLCC operational campaign design for decisive combat operations, particularly with respect to the characteristics of the offense – audacity, surprise, tempo, concentration and flexibility, was clearly difficult to create. Due to their “common cultural bias,” the commanders and planners clearly understood what they needed to do as they balanced the tension between strategic, operational and tactical factors and continuously reconciled the tension between operational concepts and practical limits of military science. The commanders and planners who

---

<sup>130</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>131</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 19 November 2002.

<sup>132</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>133</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

were involved with the creation of this design had to consider many factors, both known and unknown, to create a design that would not just be another warfighter exercise. CFLCC's design would send tens of thousands of soldiers across a real line of departure to execute the very design, which the commanders and planners had created. The results would be the conduct of some of the most decisive combat operations in the history of mankind. However, operational art is more than a design, it is also a function of a commander and staff who create the design for execution. The following chapter focuses on the CFLCC commander and staff as they planned and prepared for the conduct of operational warfare in ways that would facilitate the design which they had created exhibiting their overall "common cultural bias" about operational warfare.



## **Chapter IV: Operationalizing CFLCC for Decisive Combat**

Up to this point, this paper has focused on the design of the campaign, as is one of two major focal points of operational art. The second focal component consists of the commander working with his staff to create design for execution, which simultaneously links the operational level of war to the strategic and tactical levels. Such linkage enables commanders to focus deep in terms of time, space and upcoming events so that he can best affect or adjust operations in ways that “achieve theater-level effects based on tactical actions.” The ability of commanders and their staffs to effectively create operational designs is largely a function of knowledge, experience and natural ability as they attempt to “visualize, anticipate, create and seize opportunities” based on the key considerations of ends, ways, means and risks.<sup>134</sup>

While natural ability is inborn, knowledge and experience come through education, training and practice. As has been shown thus far, commanders and planners working at the operational level possess the requisite natural ability that has been honed and drawn out through education and training for the conduct of operational warfare, particularly with respect to their understanding of the characteristics of the offense and related elements of operational design. The CFLCC commanders and planners all exhibited a high degree of operational mindedness in the creation of the base design for CFLCC operational warfare. But this chapter will focus more specifically on LTG McKiernan and his staff as they prepared for the conduct of operational warfare.

In particular, LTG McKiernan demonstrated an exceptional degree of operational mindedness in relation to his staff in at least four distinct ways: his understanding of CFLCCs operational link to the strategic and tactical situation, his vision for preparing CFLCC for operational warfighting, his understanding of operational planning, and his focus on rehearsals.

---

<sup>134</sup> According to FM 3-0, Ends are the conditions for accomplishing strategic goals, ways are the order of events, means are the necessary resources, and risks the factors, which could preclude mission accomplishment.

The sum of these factors produced an operationally minded headquarters that was prepared to conduct a historically unprecedented operational warfight.

First, LTG McKiernan, as the incoming CFLCC commander, was prepared to link the strategic, operational and tactical levels of warfare in any future operational offensive. In September 2002, LTG McKiernan left his job as the Army G3 to command CFLCC feeling prepared for the challenges ahead when he told the Army Chief of Staff that he had “been trained and professionally developed for over thirty years to do this job.” Based on his extensive experience, he felt the Army could not have put him in a better place, stating, “What has helped me is being a G3 at every level of the Army. From battalion through G3 of the Army and having performed as a G3 in Joint and Combine Operations at peace and at war. I think that has given me a pretty good perspective on how to go about planning and preparing for this fight.”<sup>135</sup> He didn’t feel like he was just walking into this job wondering how to do it; his view was, “I know how to do it. It’s just the work and the devil in the details of doing the work.”<sup>136</sup>

His in brief with the CENTCOM Commander provided him with some key insights. He did not feel like he needed much coaching with regard to operational planning or warfighting. He remarked that he “was pretty well involved in understanding the dynamics of the planning process from my previous job as the Army G3...it was not what I would call a let-me-read you into the plan sort of approach. We didn’t need to do that; we were already beyond that.”<sup>137</sup> However the strategic insights helped as he commented that it was, “the strategic level perspective that was the real introduction.”<sup>138</sup> Knowing he had broad limits for planning, he also had respect for strategic limitations. In his words, “sometimes, if you don’t know strategic or

---

<sup>135</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 30 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>138</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 17 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003.

national level information you can be surprised later on.<sup>139</sup> The strategic perspective gave him a better appreciation for CFLCCs link to other services, allies, the Joint Staff, Department of Defense (DOD), and the White House as they related to his area of responsibility. This view increased his clarity for planning and preparing for potential operational warfare.<sup>140</sup>

Second, after gaining this strategic operational perspective, LTG McKiernan arrived at CFLCC with a vision for preparing his operational headquarters and subordinate units to conduct an operational warfight, but he did not know when or if such a fight might take place. Nor would he be able to determine the date or time of such an operation. He recalled telling his staff the one resource “that you can’t get more of, is time available. You can get more equipment, more money, you can get more people but you cannot get more than 24 hours out of the day...Never become complacent and think everything is ready and there is no improvements to be made with CFLCC.”<sup>141</sup> In his words, “It’s a question of taking a headquarters and creating an operational level warfighting headquarters.”<sup>142</sup> So with an attending sense of urgency, he proceeded to use the same model of the 1982 visionaries of doctrine, education, training, and practice to prepare CFLCC for the conduct of operational warfare by forming them into an operational team.

First he consolidated his 1500 person headquarters at Camp Doha. Comprised of various groups, which he called “tribes,” he brought these groups into one “CFLCC Tribe” or operational team. He also up-graded many of his principle staff officers to provide the necessary background and operational experience for the designing and conduct of operational warfighting.<sup>143</sup> In his words it was, “a real easy process...the blank checkbook process where the Chief of Staff of the Army acknowledged that this was the main effort for the service to support. He basically said tell me what you need, and within all possible reason that will be made available.”<sup>144</sup> In particular he

---

<sup>139</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>140</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 17 November 2002.

<sup>141</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>142</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 17 November 2002. .

<sup>143</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>144</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 17 November 2002.

consolidated his planners, precluding split base operations and providing for unity of effort in the creation of operational design.<sup>145</sup>

The plans group specifically had officers from a variety of experience levels with relation to operational warfare. The Chief of plans recalled that, “Within the operational plans group at CFLCC, we had a mix. We had a handful of Samsters. We had a handful of resident staff college graduates. We had a handful of non-resident graduates. And, we had some folks who had not completed staff college yet. We also had some captains newly minted from CAS3 (Combine Arms and Services Staff School). All working at the operational level of war...”<sup>146</sup> He found that with such a varied group that doctrine provided the means to the greatest amount of understanding and acceptance in their work as planners. This was certainly true of his “two most critical CGSOC (Command and General Staff Officers Course) graduates,” that worked for him, namely Major Frank Jones and Major Evan Huelfer.<sup>147</sup> They were able to assimilate the conceptual ideas and go back to doctrine, “not to become doctrinaire, but as a common frame of reference.”<sup>148</sup>

He then honed his “CFLCC Tribe” into an operationally minded team starting with doctrine as a touchstone. In his words, “What my instincts told me...is first, you have to start with a review of Joint, Combined war-fighting doctrine. In some cases there isn’t a lot of Joint and Combined War-fighting doctrine for some functions. But you have to start with a common doctrinal understanding and organizational principles.”<sup>149</sup> With doctrine as the touchstone for a common operational language, he followed an education, training and practice model for honing his staff’s operational mindedness. His vision was to, “build the foundation and then initiate multi-echelon training, battle drills, staff functions cells, cross-talking and coordination between

---

<sup>145</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>146</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 17 November 2002. .

those function cells and then collective exercises like LUCKY WARRIOR and INTERNAL LOOK.<sup>150</sup>

An initial educational step was to have the Battle Command Training Program's Joint Operations Team Delta conduct a seminar for CFLCC on operational warfighting. Team Delta is one of the most operationally minded training teams in the entire Army. They were so effectual LTG McKiernan made them part of his staff for the operation itself. LTG McKiernan's vision for developing operational mindedness in CFLCC was to, "do things like we did, like bring in one of the teams from BCTP and you have a seminar at first. It was sort of a common operational principles base that was discussed."<sup>151</sup>

Once the common base of operational doctrinal language and understanding was honed, he commented that, "You just keep building the operational competencies of the team on day-to-day operations. So, there's no one thing that triggers it but if you don't start with a common understanding at the principal staff officer, the general officer level, of how are we going to do operational level business. You would have very de-synched staff operations."<sup>152</sup>

Another precedent setting operational approach that LTG McKiernan took was to reorganize his entire C1 to C9 staff along operational functions – something that has not been done in the history of the US Army's staff organization. He explained this transition in the following words:

"one of the early on decisions I made was to re-organize the headquarters around operational warfighting functions as opposed to the traditional staff stove pipes, C-1, 2, 3 etcetera, through C-9. So we organized ourselves... functionally into, Operational Intelligence...Maneuver... Fires to include both kinetic fires and non-kinetic effects... Movement and Sustainment...Protection...and Command and Control, which is kind of the umbrella that tied all of those together."<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid..

<sup>151</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 17 November 2002.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> LT LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

But he didn't just want operational titles; he wanted operational thinkers. Officers representing these functions would be required to think in ways that optimally contributed to CFLCC operational warfare design and execution.

In his own words, "what I am interested in, is battle staff officers using their minds..."<sup>154</sup> He wanted his operational officers asking the right operational questions such as, "What are we doing right now? Where are we? Is everything in the right place? Where are we vulnerable to an opponent's actions? And where is the opponent vulnerable to what our actions could be?"<sup>155</sup> Uninterested in insignificant 'exact formats' for aesthetic briefings, he pushed for his staff to be operational "horses" that would produce candid assessments of the operational fight along with recommendations and decisions he needed to make."<sup>156</sup>

This approach would be facilitated through his conversion of the traditional Battle Update Brief to the Battle Update Assessment (BUA). During such BUAs, he wanted more than information, he wanted operationally minded officers engaging in actionable operational issues and talking, "about operational maneuver, operational fires, operational sustainment, protection, and movement."<sup>157</sup> He wanted them to be able to say, "Commander, you should think about this." In his mind, the BUA was the only way to harness all available information to make most accurate decisions. In his words, such briefings, help, "me achieve some clarity in mission, intent, tasks, purposes to subordinates headquarters, and decisions that I must make." Though he might make only six major decisions, his primary concern was making the right decisions based on the right information. In his view, "If there is one thing that I lie awake at night thinking, [it] is 'McKiernan, don't make the wrong decision.' Because you will only be able to make that sort

---

<sup>154</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

of decision one time; its got to be the right decision.’’<sup>158</sup> For him, making the right decisions would have much to do with the operational mindedness and prowess of his staff.<sup>159</sup>

The following is a description of how he was thinking as an operational commander. In his words:

“I think you’ve got to think in terms of space and effects and time...I’ve got to be thinking deeper in time...than a battalion commander or a brigade commander or even a corps commander. And so as we’re crossing the border on whatever it is...I’m not thinking about securing southern oilfields or crossing the Euphrates River. I’m thinking about getting greater fidelity on the regime’s actions around Baghdad and, oh by the way, what’s happening in the north since I can’t get a conventional attack up there. That’s where I’m thinking in terms of time.<sup>160</sup>

His desire was to have his staff in alignment with his operational thinking in time. His words testify to the importance of operational mindedness officers who can enable the commander to overcome his own limits in processing all information and allow him to focus on the important aspects of an operational warfight that effectively link the strategic to the tactical.

Conceptually he was driving toward his desire for ‘Decision Superiority,’ which is essentially harnessing information for its best use in the conduct of operational warfighting. In his mind, information must be:

“fused, analyzed, and made relevant to the operational level of war-fighting to provide me, the Commander, the right data points for situational awareness that will allow me to make operational war-fighting decisions. Knowing where every unit on the battlefield is through a common operational picture is important, but it doesn’t necessarily, by itself, give me the right information to make operational maneuver or operational fire decisions.”<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>161</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 17 November 2002.

Such harnessing of information through operational thinking and teaming is directly related to operational planning about which LTG McKiernan had some definite thoughts – further revealing yet a third major indicator of his operational mindedness and that of his staff.

LTG McKiernan and his planners stayed very focused on operational planning at the operational level of warfare. The previous chapters addressed the content of that planning, but LTG McKiernan specifically coached his planners to stay at the operational level reflecting that, “I have coached my staff not to plan the V Corps fight, not to plan the I MEF fight, but to shape it. Shape it at the operation level according to my intent but not get into the tactical detail that the V Corps and I MEF will do themselves.” He had complete confidence in his tactical commanders and the fact that they knew his intent and specified tasks when he commented, “both of the subordinate commanders are strong tactical guys. If there was a problem, they would surface it to me quickly.”<sup>162</sup> He therefore felt he did not need to be personally involved in their tactical planning. He went further to comment that “I’m constantly trying to make sure that I don’t impede their ability to have freedom of action within their zone.”<sup>163</sup>

While he kept his planners at the operational level in terms of the content of their planning, he also developed some ideas in terms of the process of operational planning for campaigns. Based on his extensive operational level experience, he knew the Army possessed great prowess in campaign planning through decades of education, training and practice. In his words:

“In our service, we all have grown up very proud of ourselves in our ability to do campaign planning. The Army prides itself at being able to do campaign planning. We are very good at it. What we have always done though, was focus on major theaters of war, whether it was the Cold War days or the post-Cold War or 1003, 5027 and we have schooled ourselves in what I will call the deliberate MDMP (Military Decision Making Process).”<sup>164</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.



However, he was coming to the conclusion that the Army's process was becoming too rigid and formalistic for the conditions of the contemporary environment.<sup>165</sup>

In short, he commented, this traditional approach to MDMP is simply, "not the world we live in." Instead he was seeing a transition in the operational planning process to what he has termed the adaptive planning process, a process he had begun to witness in planning for OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. This process is characterized as being less formalized and rigid in format, more collaborative in coordination both laterally and vertically, capable of embracing emerging changes, and conducted with an agile and anticipating mindedness. It adjusts to and can handle complexity and varied changing circumstances with respect to METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, civil considerations) without becoming overcome by them. In this process, commanders and planners accept that there are no specific static sets of conditions against which to complete a plan as a final approved solution.

In addition, the adaptive process requires that commanders and planners embrace the fact that constantly changing conditions will affect mission focus and that planning has to be about more than simply military related tasks. For instance, as LTG McKiernan envisioned the conduct of OIF, he saw future tasks including: regime removal tasks, sensitive site exploitation, civil military operations, and "a whole range of tasks that we traditionally have not necessarily focused on as to how we school ourselves."<sup>166</sup>

In this form of campaign planning, the enemy constantly changes.<sup>167</sup> So commanders and planners consider known and unknown factors about the enemy with regard to regular forces, militia and other internal security apparatuses who can also acquire and leverage technology in new and unprecedented ways. And they consider that while terrain might be considered an unchanging static, the enemy can also change terrain through his "ability to do tactical inundation

---

<sup>165</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>166</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

of his fields,” or “create a physical chaos somewhere by using his own means of power...”<sup>168</sup> The ability to anticipate, envision, preclude or respond to change marks adoptive planning whether it is in relation to coalition participants or time available for preparing for mission execution.<sup>169</sup> It is a form of campaign planning requiring mental agility and flexibility, and where planners “can’t settle on one course of action, become wedded to it, and then go execute that course of action. That is naïve to think that you would be able to do that.”<sup>170</sup>

As an example, as of November 2002, there was no commander approved formal CENTCOM base OPLAN 1003V, but to LTG McKiernan that did not matter.<sup>171</sup> With unknowns in mind, adaptive planners, “make some planning assumptions and continue to plan.”<sup>172</sup> So adaptive planning does not preclude written products such as plans, standard graphic control measures and fire support coordination measures, but it does require that they be addressed and created with a view to accepting flexibility for change. He commented, “It is imperative that we do write our plan and have graphic control measures and fire support coordination measures, [but] those have to be flexible and they are going to change. And we cannot be wedded to one particular campaign plan.”<sup>173</sup>

Another major aspect of adaptive planning relates to wargaming. In this process, wargaming is not just a phase of the deliberate planning process. In LTG McKiernan’s view, “you are mentally wargaming your fight, whether you’re in planning, preparation, or execution. You’re always mentally, as a commander, wargaming your fight. And our doctrine says wargaming is really nothing more than thinking through my actions, a enemy or a threat reaction

---

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

to my actions, and then what my counter actions would be so that I retain the initiative and keep my options open and I break this guy's will.<sup>174</sup>

The adaptive process requires commanders to be engaged with their staffs throughout the process. LTG McKiernan found that he could not just “walk in the beginning, give a set of guidance and intent and then just walk out, and not come back until somebody tells me that things have changed and they need additional guidance.” Instead, he and his staff had to stay constantly “plugged into the planning process,” and constantly cross talking with the other component commanders, other services and CENTCOM whether it was through personal interaction or by VTC. In his view, adaptive planning, “requires a mental agility that has caused us to change the way we do business around here, from doing what is called...Battle Update Assessments, where we are trying to look at current conditions, project out ahead, and achieve that Decision Superiority that we all talk about.”<sup>175</sup> In the adaptive planning process, information must move quickly and efficiently, it “cannot just sit here at headquarters before it is disseminated to subordinates...Communications is the only way to work our way through this adaptive planning process.”<sup>176</sup>

And finally, adaptive planning requires the commander's direct involvement in creating planning products, particularly intent and reading the entire order, short of which he felt was a big mistake on the part of commanders.<sup>177</sup> Planners might draft intent, but “the commander's got to be comfortable with his own intent, and at the end of the day its your words as the commander, so you best have bought into your own intent.”<sup>178</sup> He commented, “I personally created the commander's intent and I would urge all commanders to always do the same. Personally, shape your commander's intent.”<sup>179</sup> In fact as early as October 2002, he commented, “My

---

<sup>174</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.

<sup>175</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, 30 November 2002.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

commanders' intent probably won't change from the earlier version of the base plan that we've produced, but I might modify it a little bit to account for this, but my overall intent for the campaign won't change.<sup>180</sup>

He also felt commanders needed to read their orders so that they know what is in them. With respect to the CFLCC base order, he remarked, "I read it from page one to page eight, commanders have to read their order, they have to know what's in their order. To only read parts of it, and to assume that the rest of it's all linked, you could do that, but I think you take some risk, or a gamble, whether that order's really yours."<sup>181</sup>

He not only read the order, he did another operationally minded precedent setting decision - he changed the orders format to fit operational functions. The chief planner recalled that in December 2002, "After Internal Look General McKiernan signed Cobra II and the day he signed it he looked at me and smiled and said, 'Now I want you to re-write it.'" He and his planners re-wrote the order from 20 December to 13 January, "because he wanted us to recast it, not in terms of the way we had been schooled of the selected course of action in terms of deep, close, rear, reserve and risk security, he wanted us to articulate it in what he called the operational level in terms of starting conditions, end conditions for a phase and potential options based on enemy."<sup>182</sup> "There was this incredible realization in December of last year that someone was going to execute this thing. This was not a thought exercise. It was not a clean, pure, theoretical exercise. We were going to start cutting holes in the Kuwaiti border berms and send men into fire."<sup>183</sup>

Conceptualizing all of these operational ideas was one thing, but putting them into practice was another. One major key to bridging the gap between the two was found in the fourth major indicator of LTG McKiernan's operational mindedness - operational rehearsals. Such

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 20 November 2003.

<sup>183</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

rehearsals which produced an operational interoperability, and joint interdependence that resulted in one of the most decisive displays of operational offensives in the history of warfare. LTG McKiernan found personal relationships and interaction during the rehearsals to be absolutely imperative for preparing to conduct operational warfare. He commented that such interactions between the CFACC [Coalition Forces Air Component Command], the CFMCC, the SOC [Special Operations Command] were critical I think to helping to synchronize the planning and the execution of this campaign.”<sup>184</sup> In his estimation, it was through these interactions that the real difficulties of the operational plan were worked out.<sup>185</sup>

One of the reasons that the rehearsals worked so well was due to the operational mindedness that had been instilled in his subordinates through training events like CTCs. In essence, he capitalized on their existing operational mindedness when he commented, “at senior leader positions now you’re seeing the CTC [Combat Training Center] generation not having lost the CTC experience yet.”<sup>186</sup> He was fully confident that his subordinate commanders understood what he was doing with rehearsals, when he reflected, “I didn’t have to sell Scott Wallace or Jim Conway or any of those guys on this because they are all from the same school that commanders need to lead the rehearsals.”<sup>187</sup>

It was through such rehearsals that all involved units and commanders gained a shared understanding of operational interoperability enabling them to adjust the plan, as they got closer to execution. In LTG McKiernan’s words, the plan eventually moved to nearly simultaneous air and ground attacks, “in the case of this campaign there were very, very valid reasons why we converged air and ground attack and, in fact, moved the timeline somewhat to the left as we got close and that required some personal dialogue between CFACC and CFLCC.”<sup>188</sup> This required the CFACC to do six things at once including: strategic targeting, attack enemy air defense

---

<sup>184</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

systems, deep shaping fires, AI [Air Interdiction], the counter SCUD mission in the west, and provide close air support for the ground attack. While this was something that he would prefer not to do, because of the rehearsals and the existing understanding of operational interoperability, the air and ground commanders were able to accept mutual risk to achieve the effects they desired.<sup>189</sup> The result was a much more effectual joint fight. In his words, “when you can plan and coordinate and rehearse between those kinds of assets you’re bound to have a more joint warfight.”<sup>190</sup>

As a CFLCC commander, LTG McKiernan found the results unprecedented when he remarked that in both planning and preparation there were conventional air and ground assets, White and Black Special Operations Forces, “all on the same terrain board rehearsing task, purpose, locations, communications, lateral coordination together.”<sup>191</sup> The interoperability and interdependence resulting from operational rehearsals became so extensive that “it got to the point that if you were an OGA you knew what COMCFLCC’s [Commander, CFLCC] PIRs [Priority Intelligence Requirements] were so that you could try to help answer those PIRs in the course of your mission. Now I will tell you that in my experience that’s unprecedented.”<sup>192</sup>

Besides the utility and visibility of operational rehearsals, there was another significant factor which helped bridge all of LTG McKiernan’s ideas from concept to reality. LTG McKiernan had a myriad of officers who had graduated from SAMS. Each shared a “common cultural bias” which was operationally focused. Such a leavening throughout the CFLCC staff would make transitioning and focusing on the operational level of warfare a welcome proposition to many of his key leaders and planners. For instance, SAMS graduates permeated the CFLCC, V Corps, and MEF key command and staff billets. To name a few, at the CFLCC level, SAMS graduates included the Deputy Commanding General, the Operational Intelligence Officer (C2),

---

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

the Deputy Operational Maneuver Officers (C3), who was a Marine, and the Operational Planning Officer (C5).<sup>193</sup> At V Corps, the Deputy CG, Corps planners, 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR Commander, and a 4ID Brigade Commander were SAMS graduates. And in the MEF, the Chief of Staff and 11<sup>th</sup> Marines Commander were SAMS graduates.<sup>194</sup>

Putting all of these factors together with regard to the commander and his staff would result in an operational design, which CFLCC would execute. The result was operational art in the form of some of the most decisive operational offensive operations in the history of warfare. And while an understanding of the operational art was merely sown at its genesis in the 1982 US Army Operational Doctrine, twenty-two years later it proved to be firmly inscribed upon the minds of operationally minded commanders with their staffs.

The following quote, although lengthy, conveys quite clearly LTG McKiernan's acute understanding of operational wafighting in relation to tactical operations and strategic setting with the words: "this is not scientific, it's subjective of course, like most leadership things are, but there's certainly got to be a division of labor between the tactical level of warfight and the operational/strategic level warfight...I saw my role as spanning tactical to strategic, certainly in the planning and preparation. I was concerned and involved myself in tactical detail up through strategic level, regional level, in the planning and preparation but I did that with a mind that once the fight started, the kinetics started, that I needed to make sure that the Corps commanders...had the resources to affect what they wanted to do under a CFLCC OPLAN [Operations Plan] in their battle space...I didn't want to fight the Corps commander's fight but I wanted to stay at the operational level and help shape his fight and in terms of time and battle space and breadth, look at a larger picture than a Corps commander was looking at so they were operating within their higher headquarters', ...Now there are times where you must drop down and talk tactical level warfighting with Corps commanders and there are times that they're going to talk operational

---

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

level and strategic level warfight with me. It's not a clear hierarchy but the focus was to try to give them the resources and the planning that they needed and the shaping effects that they needed to fight in their Corps battle space.”<sup>195</sup>

Comments like this readily and comprehensive reveal that where there had only been a vision for creating a “common cultural bias” in 1982, it had become a reality in 2004. LTG McKiernan with his staff clearly showed his operational mindedness in a way that embodies the earliest articulation of what a “common cultural bias” would look like at the senior leadership level. Taken in concert with the CFLCC commanders and planners as a whole, particularly in relation to their understanding of the doctrinal characteristics of the offense with respect to overall operational design, one can see just how common of a ‘cultural bias’ truly existed.

---

<sup>194</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>195</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot 8 December 2003.



## **Chapter VI: Reaping the Operational Harvest**

The book *Young Men and Fire*, provides a gripping account of 12 smoke jumpers who fought the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire. What initially appeared to them as a routine forest fire, resulted in a deadly phenomenon called a ‘blowup,’ which claimed most of their lives. The author explained that “A blowup to a forest fire is something like a hurricane to an ocean storm.”<sup>196</sup> And he added that, “Not many have seen a blowup, even fewer have seen one and lived, and fewer still have tried afterwards to recover and record out of their seared memories exactly what happened.”<sup>197</sup> Overall, the premise of this monograph is that in OIF, the US Army’s demonstrated ability to conduct a decisive operational offensive as part of an operational campaign resulted in a Mann Gulch like ‘blowup’ experience for Saddam’s Regime.

The fact that the CFLCC Commander and staff were able to create such an effective design for the unleashing of an operational hurricane in such a complex combined and joint operational environment was not happenstance. Rather, it was largely due to the existence of a “common cultural bias” or operational mindedness of the operational commander and his staff and their creation of the operational design for execution. Their “common cultural bias,” existed because of a purposed vision, which was sown several decades ago by operational thinkers like LTCs Huba Wass De Czege, LTC L. D. Holder, LTG William Richardson and General Donn A. Starry. These visionaries not only produced a formalized, malleable and *force-fed* doctrine, which was informed by theory and validated by history. And this doctrine was coupled with a system of education, training and practice to inculcate its precepts to develop a shared “common cultural bias” or operational consciousness in the minds of the US Army officer corps. This operational mindedness, which was sown two decades ago, is being reaped in a veritable operational harvest. Because our concept of war directly correlates to our execution of it, our service’s ability to more successfully execute campaigns in the future will largely be a function of

---

<sup>196</sup> Norman MacLean, *Young Men and Fire*, (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1992) pg. 33.

our ability to sustain and propagate this “common cultural bias” through operational doctrine, education, training and practice.

Therefore, operational commanders and staffs must know and understand Army doctrine as a living body of ideas that are based on timeless unchanging applicable principles, which are adaptable to changing conditions. And although imperfect, it is comprehensive enough to serve as the touchstone for the Army’s common operational language, which is published in doctrinal manuals to make it understandable for application in the conduct of operational warfare. Perhaps more than anything, it provides a means of establishing a framework for design that forces an awareness and reconciliation of the inherent tension between the art of operational concepts and the practical limits of military science. As has been shown, doctrine for the design of OIF at the CFLCC level served all of these purposes. It must continue to be all these things for the future of the Army and the military and cannot be relegated to a back burner of professional focus in its production or study.

Second, professional education matters, particularly in the form of SAMS which has produced a corps of operational thinkers who have permeated the services with a “common cultural bias” with relation to operational thinking or mindedness. Educationally, for the past two decades, doctrine has been a major focus of study in the career courses, CAS3, CGSC, SAMS, the War Colleges. The CFLCC Commander and core planners were at various levels in terms of their operational education, but all were able to learn and speak the same operational language and understand the same operational concepts as a function of their education in the Army. Educationally, doctrine must remain central to the curriculum of the US Army’s learning institutions for developing the force’s operational mindedness.

It should be added, in the creation of this operational design for OIF, there was a recognizable corps of officers throughout the commands and planning staffs who had spent an additional year of education at SAMS focused on the operational art through studying theory,

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, pg. 36.

history, doctrine and practice. Even coalition officers recognized the “common cultural bias” of the SAMS graduates on the staff when he remarked:

An education as an Advanced School graduate may be an advantage to a Coalition Planner who may quickly identify with other US Advanced School graduates, who within CFLCC included ten officers. In addition, during OIF a ready network of Advanced School graduates was available throughout CFLCC’s major subordinate commands, and other Component Commands. In the opinion of the author, the operational planning for OIF, with few exceptions, was led by US Advanced School graduates, and this was certainly the case at CFLCC, V Corps, and I MEF.<sup>198</sup>

This operational education needs to remain a critical investment producing honed operational thinkers who share a “common cultural bias” which serves as a leavening throughout the force.

Training becomes the outgrowth of doctrine and education. The Army has expended a lot of effort in the past two decades on BCTP Warfighter seminars and exercises, as well as CTCs and organizations like CALL which will continue to be a means of making a recognizable impact on developing an operational mindedness in the Army community. The CFLCC Commanders and staffs, were a function of this training system which was based on education and doctrine, and they continued to integrate the same model of focusing on doctrine, followed by education and training for operational warfighting. Such training needs to continue and must become increasingly reflective of contemporary complexities of warfare.

Finally, practice puts it all together. The CFLCC Commanders and planners all had a wealth of education and training for practice. In the words of the CFLCC C5, success in operational design is a “combination of operational experience, experience in units and SAMS.”<sup>199</sup> He had served in three planning jobs prior to becoming the C5 and had recognized the “common cultural bias” of planners. His background was “was reinforced by practical experience as well as

---

<sup>198</sup> After Action Review conducted by LTCOL C.A. Field, Australian Army, 17 June 03. A graduate of the US Marine Corps Command and Staff College (2001) and School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW)(2002), he was embedded in CFLCC as a planner for OIF design and execution.

<sup>199</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

continued associations with graduates of our school...I think the common, shared experience of an additional year of schooling plus the fact that the school has been in existence for 19 years means there are that many years of graduates who are in the force still on active duty who were talking to each other because we learned doctrine and referred to doctrine in school...<sup>200</sup>

The existence and application of our service's "common cultural bias" is needed in the current situation in Iraq more than ever. For two decades, our doctrine and system for inculcating its precepts through education and training have predominately focused on the conduct of conventional Phase III Decisive Combat Operations. After all, the Army's mission is to fight and win the nation's wars, and that has historically been during Phase III operations. In the words of During the Cold War, Phase III – Decisive Combat Operations was always the decisive phase. However, contemporary events in Iraq suggest that this may change.

With regard to Phase IV – Stability and Support Operations, particularly in relation to unconventional operations, our doctrine is still rudimentary, incomprehensive, and incoherent as a whole. And while the Phase III Decisive Combat operations in OIF proved to be unprecedented in the history of warfare in many ways, this success has not nullified the challenges of mastering Phase IV operations in reaching a stable and secure Iraq. And one does not need to be much of a history student to realize that some of the most conventionally decisive militaries of history have been suffered failure at the hands of much lesser unconventional forces, including the US Army itself. As such, our service has a well honed operational mindedness for the conduct of decisive combat operations, but we have further to go with regard to the full spectrum of operations – namely those relating to Phase IV.

In the big picture, it appears that the current state of Phase IV operational doctrine is much like that which existed for Phase III doctrine before the creation of the 1982 version of FM 100-5. But with the existing operational mindedness in the current US Army, there is likely to be a major turn around in the operational doctrine for Phase IV in ways that will enable our military

---

<sup>200</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

to soon understand and execute this phase as well as it has come to execute Phase III operations. This will be important, as future operations may be conducted in such a way that Phase III – Decisive Combat Operations will actually become a shaping phase for the truly decisive phase, which may be Phase IV operations. From the perspective of Colonel Benson, as the current director of SAMS:

“What I think is going to be the norm for the future, even if we get a near peer competitor, is we will try to structure of campaigns such that strike operations form the bulk of phase three, and if there is an extended land operation, it is done at such a rapid pace and at multiple points of entry because we will develop the technology to let us do that. Our land forces are going to have to be able to literally turn the switch to go from intense very high intensity strike operations to the decisive phase of the campaign, which is going to be Phase IV; which is completing the operation.”<sup>201</sup>

The challenge in such a situation will be training accordingly which will require our force to re-look doctrine, theory and history for examples of operations that were extended and involving combat and stability operations.<sup>202</sup>

The creation and execution of operational design by means of commanders with their staffs as an operational art will only become increasingly challenging in the future of combined joint warfare. Commanders and their staffs will need to understand more about warfare in order to accomplish more demanding missions with fewer assets under closer scrutiny than ever before. As such, the sustained development of a “common cultural bias” will remain critically important for our service and military as a whole. While he found one of the great points of OIF to be the “reinforcement that technology does count,” LTG McKiernan commented:

“But what is of greater value continues to be the better trained leaders, better training programs, jointness in terms of procedures and people, and all these human factors, to me, are still what clearly gives the United States military forces an inherent advantage in any terrain, in any weather, against any

---

<sup>201</sup> Colonel Kevin Benson, interview by author, 23 December 2003.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

opponent...if we lose sight of training and leader development at the expense of technology we make a fundamental and a fatal error.”<sup>203</sup>

The visionaries who formalized the doctrine of the 1982 version of FM 100-5 felt the same way when they sowed their vision for creating a “common cultural bias.” Systemically, their efforts may prove to be some of the most significant and far-reaching and effectual in the history of the US Army. They sowed an operational mentality, which has been reaping increasingly significant operational successes. The short-term results were the formalization of a radical shift in the way the US Army looked at operational warfare in preparation for conventional operations in the Cold War.

The long-term results have become a sowed mentality - a framework for operational thinking that will continue to reap operational harvests that have the potential to change the geopolitical landscape through operational campaigns. JFC Fuller asserted that while conditions may change, principles do not and it is by means of the formalized doctrine that the principles which have been developed in theory and which are substantiated by history have become common language for the US Army. The Army must continue to study and modify its doctrine coupled with education, training and practice if it hopes to sustain and propagate its “common cultural bias” and its growing mastery of the conduct of operational warfare as an art through design at the hands of operational commanders and their staffs. In doing so, it will best serve as a most effectual “minister of the people’s fate and arbiter of the nation’s destiny.”

---

<sup>203</sup> LTG David McKiernan, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, 8 December 2003.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benson, Kevin, Colonel USA, C-5, CFLCC [Coalition Forces Land Component Command], interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot, USA, on 20 November 2003 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Length of interview is 0:59:51. Verbatim transcription done by James L. Speicher, Operation Iraqi Freedom Study Group (OIFSG) contractor.
- Benson, Kevin, Colonel USA, CFLCC C5, interview by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher McPadden on 23 December 2003 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Length of the interview is 0:53:55. George Knapp and Corey Aylor, OIFSG contractors, did the transcription.
- Clausewitz, Carl von, *On War*, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Field, C.A. LTCOL Australian Army, Professional Paper: An Australian Defence Force Liaison Officer's lessons learnt from OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, dated 17 June 03.
- Field Manual 100-5: Operations*. Washington, D.C: Headquarters, Department of the Army, August 1982
- Field Manual 3-0: Operations*. Washington, D.C: Headquarters, Department of the Army, June 2001
- Franz, Wallace P. Colonel USA, *Intellectual Preparation for War*, The Art of War Quarterly, presented at the Art of War Colloquium, US Army War College, June 1983.
- Hanson, Victor Davis, *The Ironies of War*, [www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson041103.asp](http://www.nationalreview.com/hanson/hanson041103.asp), 11Apr 03
- Herbert, Paul H., *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DePuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations*, Leavenworth Paper Number 16, Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1988.
- Huelfer, Evan A., Major USA, Lead Planner for Land Operations against Iraq, interview conducted by Major John Aarsen, 16 March 2003 at Camp Doha, Kuwait covering Sept 2001 to 16 March 2003.
- Jomini, Antoine Henri, *The Art of War*, London: Greenhill books, 1992.
- LTG David McKiernan, interview by Major John Aarsen, (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 17 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003.

- McKiernan, David, LTG USA, interview by Major John Aarsen (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 19 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003.
- McKiernan, David, LTG USA, interview by Major John Aarsen (Military History Group) conducted at Camp Doha, Kuwait on 30 November 2002. Received from the US Army Center of Military History and formatted by Quentin W. Schillare, OIFSG Contractor, on 23 October 2003
- McKiernan, David, LTG USA, Commander, Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) and Third Army ARCENT, interview by Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot at Fort McPherson, Georgia on 8 December 2003. Length of interview is 1:11:00. Verbatim transcription done by James L. Speicher, Operation Iraqi Freedom Study Group (OIFSG) contractor.
- McLean, Norman, *Young Men and Fire*, Chicago: Chicago Press, 1992.
- Naveh, Shimon, *In Pursuit of Military Excellence*, London: Frank Cass, 1997.
- On Point: A History of the United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom Through April 15.* (Draft Book) under the control and being prepared for release by the US Army OIF research team.
- Reilly, Thomas P., LTC USA, Deputy C5/Chief, War Plans, CFLCC, interview conducted by MAJ Gregory A. Weisler, 50<sup>th</sup> Military History Detachment, Military History Group, CFLCC, on 15 May 2003 at Camp Doha, Kuwait. The interview is 1:25:24 long. Summary transcription was prepared by John M. Hammell, OIFSG contractor.
- Romjue, John L. *From Active Defense to Airland Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982*, TRADOC Historical Monograph Series, Fort Monroe, Virginia: TRADOC Historical Office, 1984.
- Schneider, James J. "Vulcan's Anvil" Theoretical Paper No. 4, SAMS
- Schneider, James J. "The Theory of Operational Art." Theoretical Paper No. 3, SAMS
- Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963.
- Showalter, Dennis, Email message to Major Evan Huelfer, CFLCC Plans Officer, April 2003, Personal records of Major Evan Huelfer, USA.
- Trianafilov, V. K., *The Nature of the Operations of Modern Armies*, London, Frank Cass, 1994.
- Tukhachevsky, Mikhail. "New Problems in Warfare." SAMS Reprint.



Wass De Czege, Huba, Colonel USA, *Toward a Science and Art of War*, The Art of War

Quarterly, presented at the Art of War Colloquium, US Army War College, June 1983.

Wass De Czege, Huba, BG USA, Interview with author, 11 Jan 2003.