Introduction

Recent Chinese literature describes the People's Liberation Army (PLA) vision of attacking enemy systems through system destruction warfare, focusing on degrading or disrupting information flow, operational systems, operational architecture and operational tempo.[1] The PLA places a high priority on targeting command posts (CPs) in all four areas, indicating a clear intent to disrupt the very core of our operations. In response, U.S. Army divisions must prioritize the survivability of their CP through dispersed operations while conducting targeting of the adversary successfully. Targeting in Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) relies on survivability of the CP through dispersed operations. Divisions must accept new challenges and mitigate risks to achieve success.

When leaders describe building the Army of 2030, a common frame of mind is "the world is changing, and the Army is changing with it."[2] The Army is refocusing its mindset from a Global War on Terror to Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). This shift ensures the Army maintains a competitive advantage compared to our growing near peer threats of China and Russia. Command post survivability was of minor concern in the Global War on Terror as the Army had multiple advantages compared to a less threatening adversary. The Army had a general sense of security behind reinforced buildings and compounds and conducted business relatively unimpeded. The next fight may be against a near-peer threat in areas where we do not have those advantages, and we may be forced to fight in other ways.

Dispersed Command Posts in Large-Scale Combat Operations: Accepting New Challenges and Mitigating Risks to Achieve Success
By CW2 Mathias Kitz

In February 2023, the Army of 2030 initiative became official. This series of Force Design Updates (FDUs) aims to reorganize and equip divisions as the tactical decisive formation in LSCO.[3] Army 2030 has nearly 40 FDUs that support over 30 modernization initiatives, and as the force develops, these initiatives are fulfilled.[4] The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Proponent Office-Echelons Above Brigade (TPO-EAB) has developed a list of Army 2030 learning demands that influence decision making and modernization initiatives. One learning demand is "command and control," which addresses CP survivability and data and decision making.[5] Dispersed CP operations will include command and control challenges that divisions should train for now. Accepting new challenges will serve as building blocks for future success.

Accept New Challenges

Field Manual (FM) 3-60 depicts an example of a Division/Corps Targeting Coordination Board.[6] This specific example highlights over 39 key participants that should be in attendance and located at the division or corps main command post. Despite historical norms, divisions must adapt their approach to targeting in LSCO to ensure the survivability of CP members. The traditional method of conducting targeting from a single, large CP may foster synchronization and collaboration, but it is not reflective of the Mobile Division Army 2030 envisions. The targeting community has become accustomed to this approach, evidenced by multiple in-person meetings for coordination. A fight against a near-peer threat does not guarantee the luxury

of the close, physical proximity divisions take for granted. Targeting members must break free from the comfort of traditional targeting practices that rely on in-person meetings among different staff sections to navigate the complexities of multi-domain operations and distributed means.

Command posts replicating dispersed operations often lack the necessary level of training and preparation, especially while executing a dispersed targeting process. The level of integration that must be reached between targeting members is difficult to achieve when proximity is altered. Divisions may engage in field exercises or operations, setting up staff sections in mobile CP vehicles or smaller cells under the premise of being separated in time or space but still operate within proximity. Challenges arise when integration becomes problematic and individuals resort to familiar methods and physically move from one location to another. These situations are difficult to replicate because they are not the main training objectives, but they should be. Divisions must train for the fight they may face and do so with the Army 2030 framework in mind.

Mitigate Risks

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 6-05 emphasizes the critical role of CP functions in providing commanders with essential support in understanding, visualizing, directing, leading and assessing operations.[7] Successful targeting hinges on the decision-making abilities of commanders, who rely on the information and analysis provided by their staff within the CP.[8] Commanders must carefully assess the risks associated with executing dispersed operations. Situational understanding, controlling operations, and maintaining situational awareness are vital to all types of CP and may be compromised if operations are dispersed.

The Army's 2023-2024 Acquisition Program Portfolio highlights the Command Post Integrating Infrastructure (CPI2) as a replacement for the large CP of the past.[9] This concept was originally tested by 4th Infantry Division in 2021 as an effort to modernize tactical CP.[10] Initial tests proved that the new version of the CP could emplace and displace faster than ever before allowing FDU milestones to progress. Emplacement and displacement of the CP is only part of the remedy for disbursed operations. The other half of the

equation is how staff sections integrate while using the CPI2. Targeting professionals must start using capabilities like CPI2 to determine how to effectively integrate amongst themselves while still targeting the adversary successfully.

The CPI2 will be fielded to ninety-two units in fiscal year 2025; divisions must consider how to integrate and synchronize staff sections using CPI2 capabilities to see success in dispersed operations.[11] The CPI2 consists of three main components: the Mission Command Platform (MCP), the Command Post Support Vehicle (CPSV) and the Integrated Support System (ISS). The MCP provides digitally connected workstations for staff members; the CPSV hosts mission command servers, communications, and a Unified Voice Management System (UVMS) for conferencing; and the ISS ties the systems together using the Command Post Display System.[12] The combination of these systems allows the commander to gain situational understanding, control operations, and maintain situational awareness. Systems like the CPI2 will promote success if unimpeded, but there are associated risks.

The biggest risk in dispersed operations is the dependence of an uncontested network. Adversaries will try to degrade our capabilities, and we will have to adjust to achieve success.[13] Divisions can mitigate this by implementing Digital Sustainment Training (DST) at all echelons. DST should focus on exercising communications plans which may be leveraged in a contested environment. There may be times when those plans are simply not enough, and decisions must be made.

In 2012, GEN Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), published the Mission Command White Paper. In the paper, he suggests that commanders must use mission command to combat threats in the future.[14, 15] Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 states, "successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons exercise disciplined initiative and act aggressively and independently to accomplish the mission."[16] This is an important specification especially regarding the targeting process.[17] There will be times that decisions must be made, and the commander may not be around to make these decisions. This is when mission command is used to make decisions. Mission command must be coupled with authority matrices to ensure that

the right people are making the best decisions at the proper levels. Commanders can replicate instances by conducting realistic training wherein these methodologies are practiced. Although there is risk associated, rehearsals and authority matrices help to minimize this level of risk.

Conclusion

The Army of 2030 initiative is indicative that the potential to face a near-peer threat in the future could be a reality. The 2022 United States National Defense Strategy (NDS) codifies this further prioritizing the People's Republic of China (PRC) challenge in the Indo-Pacific region as well as the Russia challenge in Europe as high priorities.[18] These threats plan to target one of our biggest vulnerabilities, the command post. As the Army competes in Multi-Domain Operations, divisions will be presented with dilemmas they have never faced. Commanders must be willing to accept new challenges and risks while effectively finding ways to integrate and synchronize their staff. Training for dispersed operations requires critical and creative thinking to exercise and become efficient with new equipment. This is especially important when implementing the targeting process while dispersed.

Commanders must find ways to mitigate the risks associated with a dispersed targeting process. This must be the focal point for training, and risk mitigation measures should be employed. Exercising a combination of mission command coupled with authority matrices will serve to mitigate that risk. One thing is for certain, a fight against a near peer threat will not be fought from the large CP traditionally employed. Divisions must be able to survive and defeat the adversary with effective targeting. Targeting in LSCO relies on survivability of the command post through dispersed operations. Divisions must accept new challenges and mitigate risks to achieve success.

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Endnotes

1   (Engstrom 2018)
2   (U. S. Army 2022)
3   (LTC Kevin Hadley 2023)
4   (LTC Kevin Hadley 2023)
5   (LTC Kevin Hadley 2023)
6   (H. D. Army, Army Targeting 2023)
7   (H. D. Army, Command Post Organization and Operations 2017)
8   (H. D. Army, Mission Command, Command and Control of U.S. Army Forces 2019)
9   (Assistant Secretary of the Army Acquisition 2023-2024)
10 (Spencer 2021)
11 (Assistant Secretary of the Army Acquisition 2023-2024)
12 (Assistant Secretary of the Army Acquisition 2023-2024)
13 (Creviston 2015)
14 (H. D. Army, Mission Command, Command and Control of U.S. Army Forces 2019)
15 (Creviston 2015)
16 (Staff 2022)
17 (Staff 2022)
18 (Austin III 2022)

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