

Diverse Career Experiences Benefit the Signal Regiment

Stewarding the profession

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Dr. Seuss wrote a book, “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” I sometimes think of this when reflecting on my Army career.

Many company-grade officers and majors are told they must perform certain duties or follow a specific path to remain competitive for promotion and Centralized Selection List (CSL) assignments. Looking back, I realize that I have benefited from a diversity of assignments in support of the Signal Regiment, the Army, the Joint Force, and U.S. Allies. By sharing my experiences, I hope officers, NCOs, and civilians can learn about different opportunities and understand that military careers do not follow a “cookie cutter” model. Rather, many opportunities exist if you are willing to seek them out and convey to your career manager, your mentors, and your leaders that you desire diverse career development.

I have had opportunities to serve in many commands, including U.S. Army Forces Command, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), U.S. Army Network Enterprise Command (NETCOM), U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), and, most recently, NATO.

Currently, in NATO, I apply my Army background to the joint and combined force in support of service delivery that directly enables command and control for Headquarters, Allied Land Command in Izmir, Turkey. This is a unique opportunity. When I began my service as an Army officer 17 years ago, I did not picture myself in Turkey providing command and control (C2) for a four-star NATO organization. My experiences at the tactical and operational levels helped shape me into the field-grade signal officer and leader I am today and serve as a model for others who may be considering their next career steps.

I began my career as an infantry officer, building a tactical foundation as a platoon leader, assistant operations officer, and company executive officer in 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, in Hawaii. As an infantry platoon leader operating at the National Training Center (NTC) and while deployed to Iraq, I became proficient in communications such as Blue Force Tracking (BFT) and frequency modulation (FM) radios operating on frequency hopping and cipher text. I learned how the Warfighter received and transmitted data to accomplish the mission. This experience as a leader in a maneuver formation benefited my transition to becoming an officer in the Signal Corps. After completing the Signal Captains Career Course (SCCC), I was assigned to another

brigade combat team (BCT) and served as a signal company commander in 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division (ID). There, I focused on training and readiness to execute our mission-essential task list in support of the brigade’s mission command capabilities. I understood the importance of providing formations with multiple communication options, from the company’s retransmission teams that could extend lower-tier communications to the upper-tier networks that defined the Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) concept of the early 2010s.

In 2014, I sought an opportunity to support special operations forces (SOF) and reported to USASOC at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where I served as the battalion S6 for 9th Psychological Operations Battalion (Airborne). I had some mentors that helped steer me in this direction, and the visibility of SOF in the middle of the Global War on Terror was also prevalent in my mind. It seemed like a logical step for development, given I had already served two tours in BCTs.

In the SOF support community, I immediately noticed two stark differences from brigade combat teams. First, SOF battalions prioritize small teams below the company level, as they operate independently and require specialized support. Secondly, the equipment sets are very different. Despite these differences, my tactical experience served me well because I knew to listen to the battalion S3, company commanders, and team leaders about their specific missions and how the S6 could support them.

My background in tactical satellite communications from SCCC and 1st ID was invaluable, as the communications protocols for transmission – such as time-division multiple access and fixed-division multiple access operated the same in SOF, albeit with different equipment sets. This knowledge helped me translate operational requirements for teams operating in geographically disparate areas of responsibility to satellite engineers and technicians, ensuring mission success for key SOF operations worldwide.

After serving in USASOC, I had the opportunity to serve as a company commander in U.S. Army Recruiting Command for a large, rural area in Redding, California, with eight recruiting stations covering Northern California and Southern Oregon. I had been a battalion S6 in USASOC for 28 months and was encouraged to stay in the SOF community and possibly another battalion S6 billet. However, I felt that broadening outside of the Signal Corps was important for me at this point. I chose this assignment for two reasons: it provided another opportunity to command and offered broadening experience as a captain to understand the intricacies

of the Army's recruiting mission – arguably one of the most critical tasks the Army's Generating Force performs daily. Recruiting is a leadership challenge, involving geographically dispersed locations, monthly and annual missions with daily visibility at the brigade level and above, and engagement with civic leaders. As the face of the Army in areas with limited familiarity with the military, often beyond veterans and media portrayals, this role requires significant interaction. In many ways, recruiting was the most challenging job I've had in the Army due to these factors. However, the reward of this assignment was gaining insight into one of the Army's most vital missions: generating the force and providing strength for the operating force.

In 2019, I served in Korea with 41st Signal Battalion, 1st Signal Brigade. This was also my first experience serving in Korea and working within NETCOM. I was the battalion S3 and later the battalion executive officer (XO). I assessed that it was important to get experience within NETCOM, and although it was out of my comfort zone, I knew it was important to understand strategic signal support at this time in my career. My time in Korea was more challenging than I could have anticipated, but it prepared me well for the rigorous expectations placed on the Signal Regiment today.

That year, 41st Signal Battalion was tasked with stabilizing the massive move of strategic communications infrastructure from Yongsan Garrison to Camp Humphreys (South Korea). This effort coincided with the simultaneous opening of the new 8th U.S. Army Headquarters, United States Forces Korea (USFK) Headquarters, and 2nd Infantry Division Headquarters at Camp Humphreys, along with the modernization of numerous joint and combined communications systems that had suffered from years of deferred maintenance. On top of these challenges, Korea was one of the first major countries outside of China affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020. This was followed by a furlough of the Korean national workforce in March 2020 (during a renegotiation of the Special Measures Agreement), lasting 75 days and requiring Soldiers to fill positions typically held by technical subject matter experts.

I will never forget the incredible efforts of the entire 41st Signal Battalion team. Soldiers, Army civilians,

Korean national workforce members, Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army (KATUSA) soldiers, and contractors all played vital roles. The most important lesson I learned was the value of communication, collaboration, and support between the battalion, 1st Signal Brigade, 8th Army, and USFK to overcome these challenges. Leaders who endured this crucible emerged better prepared to ensure the Signal Regiment remains ready to support future crises.

Most of my experience comes from the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to serving with 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii and 1st Signal Brigade in Korea, I spent three years at U.S. Army Japan (USARJ) serving as a command, control, communications, and computers (C4) network officer and later as the G6 director. My primary focus at USARJ was interoperability human, procedural, and technical levels.

I participated in numerous joint and combined exercises involving USARPAC and INDOPACOM, working directly with partners such as the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, and the Australian army. We often wrestled with mission partner environment challenges but always found ways to establish bilateral and multi-lateral communications that supported theater campaign plans and exercise objectives. Later, as the G6 director, I coordinated extensively with incoming multi-domain task forces, division and corps G6s from USARPAC, and other elements to support exercises and real-world requirements. We assisted in establishing communications infrastructure that we could host and secure in Japan, thus increasing readiness for USARPAC units in theater and setting joint interior lines for command, control, and communications throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

Delivering continuous transformation and robust signal support to the Warfighter in today's security environment requires personnel with diverse perspectives and experiences. I encourage all officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians affiliated with the Signal Regiment to pursue diverse career opportunities, seek a variety of perspectives from across the force, and engage in discussions with those who have served in key positions before them. Those bold enough to venture into new career opportunities will find the experience both personally and professionally rewarding.

About the author

Lt. Col. Daniel Murdough is the land C2 coordination officer for NATO Communications and Information Agency in Izmir, Turkey. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Providence College, Master of Arts in Information Technology Management from Webster University, and Master of Business Administration from North Carolina State University. Murdough has served with the 25th Infantry Division, 1st Infantry Division, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, U.S. Army Recruiting Command, 41st Signal Battalion, and U.S. Army Japan.