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## *“Reversing Trends for U.S. Army Reserve Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs Forces Deploying to the Joint Multinational Readiness Center”*

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As the Senior Psychological Operations (PO) and Civil Affairs (CA) Observer Coach Trainers (OCT) for the brigade OCT Team at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC), one of our many tasks is to observe and record trends during rotations. We observe, coach and train Reserve PSYOP and CA units rotating through JMRC in support of U.S. and/or Multinational brigades. This article provides a brief background of training, addresses a series of trends observed and offers recommendations to reverse said trends. The intent of this commentary is to increase awareness throughout the Army and provide a road map to improve training and readiness within Reserve PSYOP and CA formations.

### **PSYOP and CA at JMRC**

PSYOP and CA units are one of the few U.S. Army Reserve Component (RC) units that train at JMRC. They are drawn from United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) or USACAPOC(A). As RC Soldiers, PSYOP and CA leadership face unique challenges not experienced by their active duty counterparts. They are limited by time, funding and geographic separation from the supported brigade. Additionally, training one weekend per month and two weeks per year significantly limits what training can be executed. Soldiers need to be tactically proficient, know their MOS specific tasks, and remain current with mandatory annual training. Hence, there are limits to what they can accomplish. Prioritizing unit training alone can be a formidable task in and of itself.

### **Integration with the Brigade**

Lack of integration happens for various reasons including absence of skilled advocates (brigade S9 and/or PSYOP planner), lack of proficiency/experience, misunderstanding, or sometimes just plain ignorance. This results in marginalization or ineffective employment of PSYOP and CA capabilities degrading the training that they were sent to conduct.

### **Recommendations:**

**1) Develop a cogent capabilities brief.** This should include all of the five W's (Who, What, Where, When and Why, while prepared to articulate the How) very succinctly by explaining to the supported leadership, what they bring to the fight and why this is important to the commander. The brief should always address the Brigade Commander's priorities. Finally, it must be rehearsed by everyone on the team until it is second nature.

**2) Plan with the brigade.** It is imperative to be at the planning table (both at the planning conferences and during the exercise). PSYOP and CA units that plan with the brigade become valuable to that Brigade Commander and his staff since they approach planning through different lenses. More importantly, when PSYOP and CA plan with the brigade, their activities are integrated into the overall plan to enable, inform, and/or enhance the brigade plan.

### **Tactical Proficiency**

The next trend is lack of tactical proficiency within RC units. This can be for a variety of reasons, but is primarily attributed to limited training at home station. Upon arrival to JMRC, RC personnel should be ready to fight as if they were deploying to a theater of operation. Tactical proficiency is a perishable skill and RC Soldiers have day jobs that limit their ability to focus on military training tasks. To complicate matters, RC units will be judged on their performance of tactical tasks in accordance with the supported unit. Depending on their level of training, this can put RC PSYOP and CA Soldiers at a tremendous disadvantage when training with an active duty brigade.

#### **Recommendations:**

**1) CA and PSYOP units need to fight like the supported unit.** This starts with the planning events previously discussed. The supporting unit needs to be familiar with the supported unit's SOP and communications plan, know their role in the operation and be able to explain how their respective capability can enable, inform or enhance brigade efforts. Every interaction is a capabilities brief. PSYOP and CA units need to promptly make the impression that they are a force multiplier not a liability.

**2) Tactical training and Soldier skills.** RC PSYOP and CA units should adjust their training plans in garrison accordingly so that the Soldiers are training more on basic Soldier skills. This will help ensure that they can operate effectively in a field environment with the brigade thus bolstering the Brigade Commander's confidence and allowing for increased employment on the battlefield.

### **Show Value to the Brigade**

As with any organization, the boss wants to see value. Showing value to a Brigade Commander includes finding and killing the enemy and/or protecting the force. If PSYOP and CA forces are unable to do one or both, they are of no immediate value to that Brigade Commander in a tactical fight. There are multiple recommendations for showing value. For brevity's sake, we address only two.

#### **Recommendations:**

**1) Understanding the Commander's Intent.** When considering planning, the brigade commander's intent is paramount. PSYOP and CA units must listen to what the commander is trying to achieve. Simultaneously, as the subordinate unit, they must think of what they can do to enhance and enable brigade plan. Ultimately, they need to provide input that contributes to the achievement of the commander's end-state.

**2) PSYOP and CA as a Force Multiplier Under Article 5 Conditions.** In the JMRC scenario, the local population wants to do everything in their power to assist the brigade in achieving their goal of ousting the enemy and reinstating international borders. Based on this assumption, the civil populace becomes an invaluable force multiplier. PSYOP and CA are key conduits to

engaging with the population. A brigade usually has organic human intelligence (HUMINT) assets eager to gather intelligence. However, PSYOP and CA have a marked advantage over HUMINT because they consistently meet with unified action partners (UAPs) and civil leadership fostering a symbiotic relationship of mutual concern. This relationship often pays dividends when the local populace tips, cues or confirms intelligence.

## **Targeting Training**

The final trend is a lack of training and understanding of the targeting process. Targeting is the engine that drives the brigade. This being the case, it begets the question, how does PSYOP and CA fuel the engine? The problem... PSYOP and CA personnel are not formally trained in targeting when they attend the qualification course. Therefore, in practice, although PSYOP and CA personnel have tremendous access and placement on the battlefield, the information that they obtain does not make it back to the brigade and into the targeting process for the brigade to action. As OCTs we use stop-gap techniques like impromptu targeting classes and providing example products to the unit, but it is regrettably not enough. The unit completes the exercise, but true learning does not occur.

### ***Recommendations:***

**1) Train the Targeting Process.** Targeting could be trained in a multitude of different ways. First, include the training in the PSYOP and CA qualification course. Second, conduct training at home station. Third, conduct an abbreviated course at the CTC. Fourth, attend the Information Operations Fundamentals Course (IOFC) or the Army Information Operations Planners Course (AIOPC) at 1st Information Operations Command. None of these options are perfect, but would help to stem the knowledge gap.

## **External Influencers**

A multitude of external influencers exist that can unfortunately derail PSYOP and CA support to the brigade. These factors are usually out of PSYOP and CA's control, but have been consistently observed over the course of the last two years.

*Brigade Commander and the Staff* – The first and most significant external influencer is the Brigade Commander. A Brigade Commander can sideline PSYOP and CA elements before the brigade even leaves staging area. This is usually for one of three reasons. First, he/she had a bad experience in the past with PSYOP or CA forces. Second, he/she does not know how to effectively employ the capability. Third, the unit is not tactically proficient and pose a liability to the mission or force. The second most significant external influencer is the brigade staff. Key members on the staff can marginalize a PSYOP or CA element very quickly since they answer directly to the Brigade Commander. This again highlights why integration is so important.

*No Advocate(s)* – Not all brigades have a PSYOP Planner and/or S9 organic to their staffs. When they do, there will be advocates that can educate and prepare the Brigade Commander and the staff regarding PSYOP and CA capabilities; specifically, what they bring to the fight and why they are important to the Commander. Similarly, the Tactical PSYOP Detachment (TPD) commander and CA commander must do the same. Properly integrating with and informing the staff significantly increases the chances of being properly employed.

*Information Officer (IO)* – In 2014 the Army removed all Information Officers from brigades. The purpose of an Information Officer is to coordinate and synchronize all information-related capabilities (IRCs) at the brigade in order to align messaging and avoid information fratricide. By not having an IO on staff, this function is often tasked to someone else on the staff who is not trained, qualified or has the time to oversee the duties associated with the job. Other than information fratricide, the biggest risk with having no IO degrades targeting - specifically not conducting an Information Operations Working Group (IOWG). Not doing so cheats the commander and his staff of the information PSYOP and CA *could* have brought to the fight.

*Time & Measures of Effectiveness* – The average exercise at JMRC is between 18 to 20 days long. A harsh reality of PSYOP and CA is that they both require time to yield results. A common maxim used at JMRC is that we can replicate, but not duplicate. This concept applies to time and *Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)*. For scenario and training purposes the numbers are often skewed and in some cases fabricated in order to facilitate training. Although this is effective when applied to force-on-force, it does not accurately depict the operational environment to a level of accuracy required to maximize training value for PSYOP and CA forces. More importantly, this skewing of time and MOE does not effectively portray the true power of PSYOP and CA to the brigade leadership.

PSYOP and CA units play a critical role in supporting a brigade during large-scale ground combat operations. They are forces, which more often than not, are misunderstood and as a result, are improperly employed. It is incumbent on and critical for these units to showcase their capabilities and prowess on the battlefield. Doing so will raise Brigade Commanders' awareness and adeptness at managing these exceptional capabilities. This article has focused on four trends consistently observed at JMRC - Trends that can and should be addressed. For doing so is not only a sound investment in the RC PSYOP and CA units, which perform such a critical role during large-scale combat operations, but the Army writ large.

## About the Author(s)

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**PICTURES:**



The CA and PSYOP Commanders meet with the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Brigade (Germany) Civil Outreach Operational Liaison (COOL) chief during Allied Spirit X.



The CA Detachment Commander meets with the civilian leadership in Kittensee, Germany during Allied Spirit X.



The PSYOP and CA Commanders attend a meeting with the Commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Panzer Brigade (Germany).

