Members of the 2503rd Digital Liaison Detachment (DLD), U.S. Army Central, work out of a simulated austere location 9 February 2019 during a command post exercise at McCrady Training Center, South Carolina, where they joined members of the 206th DLD, South Carolina Army Reserve, and the 151st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, South Carolina National Guard. The training provided an opportunity for these units from three different Army components to apply the Total Army concept as they established connectivity and tested their mission command systems. The sister 2501st and 2502nd DLD units provide similar support to the Eighth Army and the Republic of Korea Army. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Matt Britton, U.S. Army Central)

Mission Essential

Digital Interoperability during Multi-National Joint All-Domain Operations

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As attacks by multiple North Korean army divisions across the border are reported by the diverse spectrum of American intelligence assets, the situation in the bunkers at Camp Humphrey's is one of confusion. While the United States Forces–Korea (USFK) commander attempts to assess the situation, a state of confusion reigns about what is happening with the Republic of Korea (ROK) forces along the military demarcation line. Although the joint chiefs of staff of the Republic of Korea are responsible for the initial defense against North Korean aggression, the presidents of the Republic of Korea and the United States are already on the phone agreeing to the activation of Combined Forces Command (CFC) to execute its assigned defensive mission. The USFK commander's frustration skyrockets as he asks his staff about the situation at ROK's Ground Operations Command (GOC), which also serves as CFC's Ground Component Command (GCC). The USFK staff tries to explain to the USFK commander that they are awaiting a phone call from the liaison officer (LNO) to GOC/GCC, but the USFK commander is less than thrilled with that answer. In frustration, as he looks across his diverse digital capabilities displaying U.S, reporting, the USFK commander asks, "Why do I not have a digital capability to see exactly what the GCC commander sees? Why am I depending on a phone call to know what is going on like this is 1950?"

The answer to the commander's question is simple. In the name of saving less than one hundred manning positions, the U.S. Army gave away its dedicated ability to synchronize land operations immediately on the Korean Peninsula.

But long before the first North Korean troops crossed the border, the trust between ROK and U.S. forces had already been on a downward trend. The slow departure of U.S. ground combat forces had cut into the ROK military's faith that the United States remained committed to the defense of the ROK. The removal of the two digital liaison detachments (DLDs) had only been the latest in what was seen by ROK military as a lack of commitment by the United States. Until the DLDs inactivated, ROK Army senior leaders held to the belief that even though they did not have access to large numbers of American infantry and armor units, they were at least digitally connected with what they really needed from the Americans—enablers. Despite having one of the largest armies in the world, the lack of enablers within the ROK Army is a limiting factor for their combat effectiveness. Instead of having a complete suite of communications systems to integrate U.S. enablers, the ROK Army will be forced to try to communicate the best it can with whatever means available, eventually reverting to unsecure phones and emails as the limited availability of the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System-Korea (CENTRIXS-K) below the GOC/GCC level begins to cause a logjam of communications. This interoperability issue raised itself recently in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as Russian forces used any communication means available to try to communicate with Donetsk and Lugansk separatists as well as Chechen National Guard and Wagner group forces.[1] Communication will still occur; it just will not be secure if it is not a focused effort during peacetime.

Joint and Combined Warfighting

In developing an Army of 2028 that "will be ready to deploy, fight and win decisively against any adversary, anytime and anywhere, in a joint, combined, multi-domain, high-intensity conflict, while simultaneously deterring others and maintaining its ability to conduct irregular warfare," the U.S. Army will

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Eighth Army's 2501st Digital Liaison Detachment leaders present a leader professional development lecture to the First Republic of Korea Army (FROKA) commanding general and his staff at FROKA headquarters in Wonju, South Korea, 21 October 2014. The topic of the lecture was the U.S. Army warfighting functions—specifically intelligence, sustainment, and their respective centers of excellence. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army)

remove its capability to conduct joint combined operations at a moment's notice from the active force as it removes the Active Component DLD from the Middle East and on the Korean Peninsula.[2] These digital capabilities have been critical in understanding U.S. partners and providing daily coordination with its allies. The capability will not be completely lost as the Army Reserve and Army National Guard will retain several of these vital digital capabilities. But who knows what the future holds? Maybe the Army will be extremely fortunate, and the North Korean regime will provide at least a month's notice to allow the Army to activate a Reserve or National Guard DLD so it can mobilize, fly personnel and digital equipment across the Pacific Ocean, and integrate with allies with whom it has never worked to execute those functions. Of course, these units will not have the developed relationships that the current Korean DLDs have, but at least they will have the digital capabilities to connect ROK and U.S. forces.

The ability to communicate and coordinate within military coalitions has been essential to martial success in Western warfare since Greek forces united under Spartan commands to defeat the Persian forces under Xerxes.[3] If communication is an obstacle, then a leader cannot effectively employ the coalition as one force, and those units become separate elements sharing the same battlespace. The integration of alliance forces under a unified command allows for the optimization of the combined force to operate as a cohesive unit. In today's modern age, this means digital connectivity between organizations to share information rapidly and efficiently across the warfighting functions. Homogenous organizations that only consist of US Army units do not require additional communications infrastructure to communicate within its organizational structure as the systems are designed to work together. But when allies are added to the force, the additional communications structure is required if there is any intent for the organization to function as a collective unit. Because each nation buys its own digital systems to meet its individual requirements, there needs to be a digital bridge that connects the U.S. digital systems with the digital systems of its allies and partners.

The U.S. Army currently utilizes DLDs to fulfill the functions of crossing the digital divide. DLDs

Table. Levels of Interoperability

Level	Risk
Level 0 (Not interoperable)	Unified action plans (UAPs) have no demonstrated interoperability. Command and control (C2) interface with the Army is only at the next higher echelon. UAP formations must operate independently from U.S. Army formations and operations.
Level 1 (Deconflicted)	U.S. Army and UAPs can coexist but do not interact. Requires alignment of capabilities and procedures to establish operational norms, enabling UAPs and the U.S. Army to complement each other's operations.
Level 2 (Compatible)	U.S. Army and UAPs are able to interact with each other in the same geographic area in pursuit of a common goal. U.S. Army and UAPs have similar or complementary processes and procedures and are able to operate effectively with each other.
Level 3 (Integrated)	U.S. Army and UAPs are able to integrate upon arrival in theater. Interoperability is network-enabled to provide the full ROMO capability. UAPs are able to routinely establish networks and operate effectively with or as part of U.S. Army formations.

(Table created from Army Regulation 34-1, *Interoperability* [2020])

are table of organization and equipment units that have larger strategic implications. Not only do DLDs provide essential systems integration with U.S. allies to drastically improve digital operational awareness, but they also show the commitment of the U.S. Army to its partners that it is willing to share what it knows and that it is ready to support its operations as part of its coalition. The communication also works the other way as well, as U.S. forces gain a better appreciation for what the allied force sees.

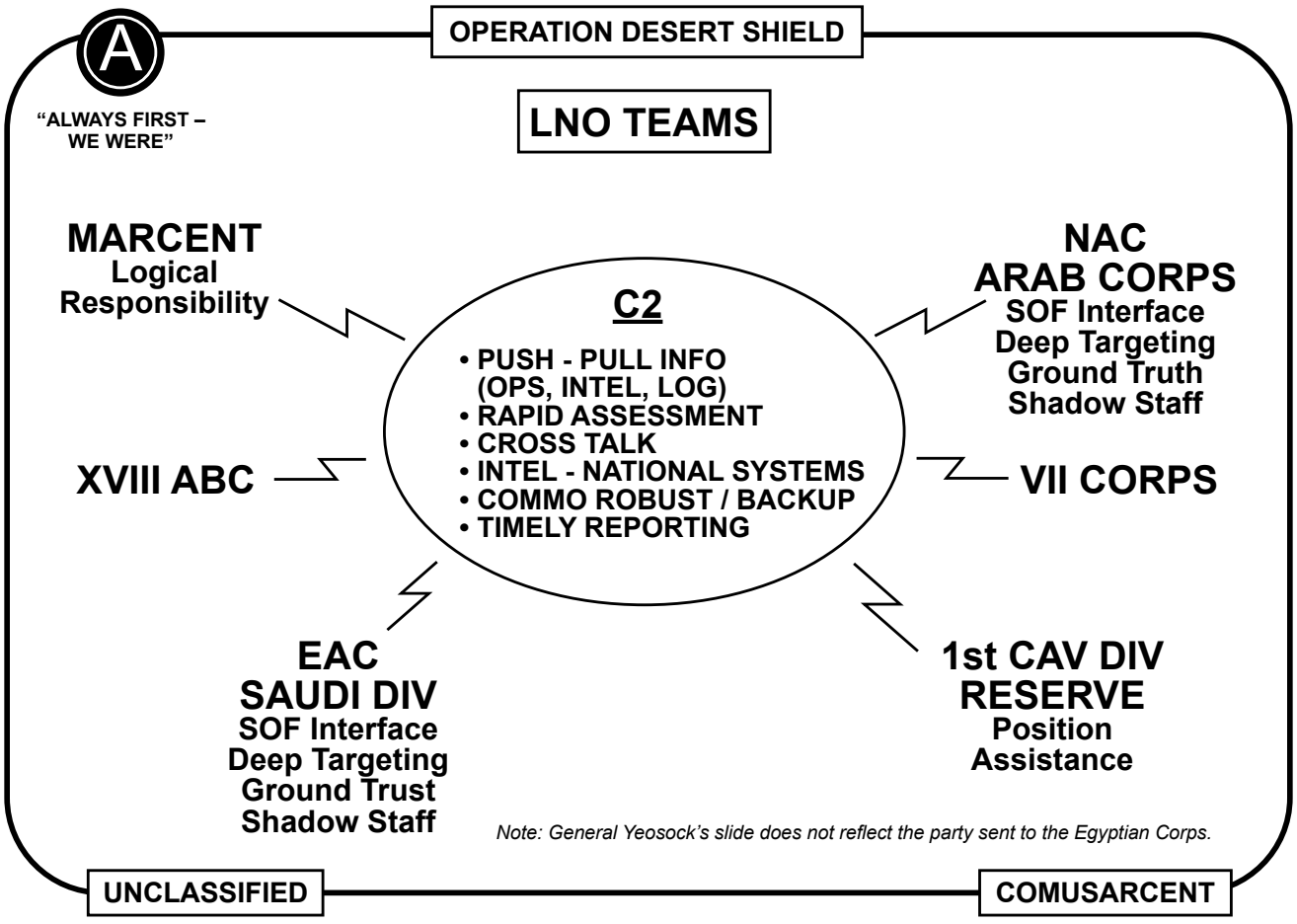
Displaying commitment to a partner nation is essential to interoperability. Seeing the DLDs' equipment set up and the soldiers working hard to support U.S. allies reinforces that the United States is committed to their success. Partner forces who have access to DLDs are quickly able to understand that they also provide a secondary benefit of having a stronger advocate for the partner nation in U.S. forces. LNOs are fantastic but often do not carry the same amount of weight with a partner as the commander of a DLD and his supporting staff. Green tabs mean something in the Army, and they do to U.S. allies as well.

The DLD is the Army's current method of enabling digital interoperability to enhance operational understanding. But what are DLDs? Why are these little-known units so important to the Army's ability to ensure interoperability during combined operations? Why is it essential that this digital capability remain within the Active Component? Because if the Active Component does not conduct the function, then it often does understand and appreciate it because it cannot have it today. This results in DLDs becoming afterthoughts until they really need those functions to conduct combat operations. But by then, it will be too late, and the United States will have wasted time, effort, and opportunity that it will not get back.

The Mission and Functions of Digital Liaison Detachments

The requirement to provide digital support functions is directly aligned with Army Regulation 34-1, *Interoperability*, and how the Army plans to integrate with its partners.[4] While the ideal would be a "plug and play" of like systems, this is still a connectivity aspiration for the far future. Using the levels of interoperability as a guide, it becomes quickly evident for the requirement of digital liaison functions in level 1 (deconflicted) and level 2 (compatible) as we move toward integration (see the table).[5] We are likely to see slow progression up the levels as we work through the national digital connectivity, national caveats, and trust challenges that stand in the way. This is not surprising as our current digital architecture barely has the Active Component level 3 (integrated) with the Army Reserve and National Guard, let alone with the other services or other nations.

Army Techniques Publication 3-94.1, *Digital Liaison Detachment*, describes the mission of the DLD, which is to provide digital liaison capability to Army units with allied and multinational forces as well as other U.S. services. DLDs also provide functional area expertise, digital



C2–command and control

EAC–echelons above corps

MARCENT–Marine Corps Forces Central Command

NAC–Northern Area Command

SOF–special operations forces

XVIII ABC–XVIII Airborne Corps

(Figure from Richard Swain, *"Lucky War": Third Army in Desert Storm* [U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994])

Figure. Operation Desert Shield Liaison Teams

information management, communications interface, and thirty highly qualified U.S. Army subject-matter experts, and any required additional signal personnel, who are capable of further enabling interoperability by providing access to U.S. Army mission command systems as well as advice and guidance on both the systems and how the U.S. Army doctrinal functions. DLDs ensure interoperability by performing the liaison function provided by traditional liaison officers but further enabled by its crossfunctional staff who can advise across the warfighting functions. They serve as the information exchange and coordination center for bringing U.S. Army capabilities to the partner organizations.

The Genesis of Digital Liaison Detachments

While the use of liaison officers has been a long military tradition, the modern use of liaison teams equipped to provide systems capabilities comes from the Persian Gulf War. As the American military became more technologically driven, it needed to be able to share its vision of the battlefield with its partner nations to improve the overall coalition common operating picture. Designated by Third Army (now U.S. Army Central Command [ARCENT]) as mobile liaison teams, these ad hoc mobile liaison teams provided combat and combat support functions to decrease confusion and misunderstanding across

the coalition.[6] Not only did they help frame U.S. operations for their coalition partner commanders, but they also showed the willingness and commitment of Army resources directly to the support of coalition partners. They allowed ARCENT to have a better understanding of the units that the mobile liaison teams were supporting as well, completing the information loop on ground truth from ARCENT's perspective instead of what the coalition partners were saying in the higher-level briefs. The organization of the mobile liaison teams were viewed by Lt. Gen. John Yeosock, then ARCENT commander, as one of the essential elements for the coalition's success during the Persian Gulf War (see the figure on page 88).[7]

Because of the success of these mobile liaison teams, the Army decided to permanently maintain the capability to provide liaison support to its allies and sister services when conducting joint and combined operations. The use of the mobile liaison teams with added digital capabilities started to spread across the Army as commanders wanted that capability within their organization to support and encourage digital information sharing. Eighth Army in Korea did not need this capability because it was already there, long before the Persian Gulf War.

Since the 1970s, combat support coordination teams were part of the table of distribution and allowance organizations assigned to Eighth Army with the added benefit of joint augmentation.[8] Each of the ROK's three field armies had a combat support coordination team assigned to provide coordination and liaison back to U.S. Forces Korea, Eighth Army, and eventually in 1979, Combined Forces Command. The First and Third ROK Armies that would eventually become GOC/GCC were tactically focused on defending against North Korean threats, while the Second Field Army transitioned to the Second Operational Command with rear area force protection and sustainment missions of the combined rear area. The combat support coordination teams provided coordination between ROK and U.S. forces but without digital equipment until they were dissolved in 2008 to make way for the current DLD structure.

How They Are Different from Normal Liaisons

As we look across the levels of interoperability, the need for digital connectivity with our partners is clear. Level 0 (I-0) is the normal level when the U.S. Army is operating with most armies around the world in which we do not have a long-standing relationship and coordinated processes for digital communication transfer. Only through national-level engagements, usually through the theater army, is there any command-and-control connectivity with a partner nation. Since each sovereign nation's military's duty is to execute its own national policy, the hope that they will all be utilizing U.S. Army standard communication equipment is a fantasy at best and negligence at worst. Normally, small liaison teams exist here as they coordinate to assist in developing strategic and upper operational situational awareness, but they lack the digital systems required to provide a more complete view of both the partner military and U.S. military operations, especially at the tactical level.

DLDs help bridge the gap with level 1 (I-1) and level 2 (I-2) where they serve as the crossover between the partner nation's systems and the U.S. Army systems so basic situational awareness and understanding can be achieved. Even if the partner does have rudimentary digital systems, the challenge of utilizing systems that can communicate across national caveats and restrictions ensures that U.S. Army forces often cannot directly talk to its partners on any system with even the most basic of security protocols. This quickly leads to the threat of operational security leaks as the Nation's attempts to communicate through any means necessary to ensure that the communication get through, even if unsecure. DLDs help prevent the undesired spillage of information by providing that secure means of communication between U.S. allies and the United States while preparing for and then conducting combat operations.

The DLDs can cover the communications gap by utilizing the mission command systems that are dedicated to the DLD to ensure communication access across the warfighting functions. The capabilities of these systems to bridge the digital divide provide an essential function that the LNOs by themselves cannot. Even more important than the digital systems themselves are the trained operators who are subject-matter experts in their assigned systems. Instead of trying to piece together whatever equipment and personnel are

available from an already understaffed headquarters, the DLD has its own dedicated personnel and equipment that do not pull from the U.S. Army headquarters they are supporting. This prevents the DLD from being an afterthought as a liaison team within a larger headquarters in which they need to compete with the theater or field army staff leads for personnel and additional equipment to provide a like capability. Currently, the 2501st DLD's integrated digital mission command systems are essential in providing near real-time situational awareness to the ROK GOC/CFC GCC as the supported headquarters.[9] Those mission command systems cross the gamut of warfighting functions and include operations/maneuver (Command Post of the Future and Blue Force Tracker), intelligence (Distributive Common Ground System-Army), fires (Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System, and Air and Missile Defense Workstations), and sustainment (Battle Command Support and Sustainment System). This information is vital to decision-makers throughout USFK and the CFC as it assists in closing the system's interoperability loop between partners in a challenging environment.

Korean Peninsula-Specific Challenges

The functions that the DLDs provide are essential in the Republic of Korea. The 2501st and 2502nd DLDs are daily clear indicators to our ROK allies that the United States is just as committed to defending the Republic of Korea as it has ever been. Because the families of all South Korean military personnel live within artillery and rocket range of North Korea, ROK personnel can view that the United States is not as committed because their families are not directly threatened as well. By sharing our digital capabilities, we are not only enhancing our digital interoperability, but we are reinforcing that we are committed to the safety and security of the ROK as a room full of digital mission command systems is more comforting than an LNO team at their individual laptops.

Another issue that arises is the technological capability and systems architecture of the ROK Army's tactical formations. While the ROK is one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world, the majority of the ROK Army consists of conscripted light infantry forces that lack digital compatibility within their own formations, let alone with their U.S. partners. While unlikely that the U.S. Army will ever be able to field and provide a DLD to every ROK division due to the sheer number of divisions, the United States has utilized DLDs within division formations when exercising with some of its NATO allies. While all ROK divisions may not get them, there may be select times during combat operations when a ROK division would need to be augmented with a DLD to support the accomplishment of specific missions that require extensive use of U.S. enablers. While the DLDs currently in ROK would likely be overwhelmed with their current taskings, activated and deployed Reserve DLDs could easily excel at that type of task.

Overtasking of the Multitasked Eighth Army

By removing the DLDs, the responsibility for conducting liaison coordination will revert to an already task-saturated Eighth Army. What is the actual likelihood that an overwhelmed Eighth Army is going to be able to maintain the existing digital interoperability if it must do it out of its own hide? What are the chances that Eighth Army is going to be able to put the talent and equipment required to ensure the successful coordination with ROK forces while it tries to accomplish its own overwhelming requirements?

Every senior U.S. headquarters assigned to USFK already fulfills multiple roles, and Eighth Army is not any different. Executing both administrative and tactical functions, Eighth Army is already overtasked and does not need the additional requirement of providing members and equipment of its own undermanned staff to support the digital liaison functions currently conducted by the existing DLDs. As the Army forces (ARFOR) headquarters, Eighth Army is responsible for the administrative support of every Army member on the Korean Peninsula, including the downtrace units such as 2nd Infantry Division and its brigades as well as all other Army units and the Army personnel assigned to USFK, UNC, and CFC. This accounts for roughly two-thirds of all U.S. military personnel on the Korean Peninsula. Eighth Army is also responsible for the coordination back to Headquarters, Department of the Army, which it works through U.S. Army Pacific. It is through this relationship that Eighth Army coordinates for resources to conduct and support its assigned tasks

The 2503rd Digital Liaison Detachment (DLD) and its Army Reserve counterpart, the 206th DLD out of Columbia, South Carolina, work together for the first time on 2 March 2018 at the Mission Training Center on Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. These units provide equipment and personnel to ensure digital interoperability between U.S. forces and foreign allies. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jared Crain, U.S. Army)

that it receives from its multiple higher headquarters.[10] This connection is a vital relationship to the success of Eighth Army and of USFK, but it does take time and effort to ensure the success of this coordination to ensure that Eighth Army has the personnel and equipment required to support and execute both its peacetime and wartime roles.

This brings us to the wartime missions that Eighth Army will have to accomplish. While its workload will include the tactical missions it is assigned as a field army or a joint task force, Eighth Army will also face a drastic increase in administrative responsibility from Eighth Army's vital role as the coordinator of the reception, staging, and onward movement of all Army assets deployed to the Korean theater of operations. And, the administrative responsibilities that Eighth Army does every day will not magically disappear but must be maintained even during combat operations but with more personnel and more challenges.

One of the huge challenges with tasking Eighth Army to provide separate LNOs to replicate the digital interoperability function is that the unit is already massively overtasked with its current responsibilities. A simple understanding of the roles of the Eighth Army commander can show how U.S. forces in the ROK are already an economy of force mission even before the active DLDs inactivate. First, start with the three previously mentioned roles of field army commander, JTF commander, and ARFOR commander. Then add on the Eighth Army commander's individual additional responsibilities he has as the deputy commander for GCC when CFC is activated. And then add to the joyous confusion with the Eighth Army commander also as the CFC chief of staff. With these responsibilities already consuming all the Eighth Army commander's time, when is he or she supposed to focus on selecting and ensuring the training of part of his or her staff to take over the digital liaison functions from the DLDs when they inactivate?

Cooperation between the ROK Army and U.S. Army

DLDs are some of the cheapest methods for maintaining positive military relations between the U.S. and ROK forces in terms of the cost and benefit to the U.S. Army. While requiring only minimal human and material support, the DLDs raise alliance situational awareness and reinforce U.S. commitment to the ROK. This vital asset consistently goes unappreciated, especially when things are going smoothly. As already stated, one of the issues is that Eighth Army, USFK, and CFC are all so incredibly busy doing their day jobs that they have little time to appreciate the coordination that the DLDs are doing. The only time that the DLDs are remembered is during the biannual exercises or U.S. key leader visits to their ROK headquarters. Once the great work of the DLDs is congratulated, it is just as quickly forgotten until the next exercise or visit.

Underappreciated is that the DLDs routinely have a better understanding of what is going on in their partner headquarters than just about any other organization because they see their ROK partners every day. DLDs can provide detailed answers that LNOs by themselves are not going to be able to answer with as much depth because they lack both the mission command systems and the technical and tactical expertise to engage with their ROK partners across all warfighting functions. This relationship also provides a benefit for the ROK side as well. ROK organizations with an attached DLD can establish relationships with U.S. Army personnel who can provide instantaneous digital awareness beyond discussion-focused LNOs. While they can hold conversations with their ROK partners, LNOs often lack the digital infrastructure to provide extensive situational awareness. Verbally explaining U.S. operations to ROK Army leaders is drastically less effective than explaining the situation to them in great detail using the most up-to-date common operating picture for U.S. forces in the Republic of Korea on actual U.S. mission command systems.

When compared to units such as a brigade combat team or a THAAD battery, the DLDs also provide reassurance at minimal political cost. While DLDs won't be shooting down North Korean missiles, they do provide peace of mind to the ROK Army, ROK JCS, and the ROK people that the United States is committed to the defense of the ROK. While additional U.S. combat forces and THAAD batteries are touchy subjects regionally, there have not been any known complaints from regional competitors regarding the deployment of the DLDs on the Korean Peninsula.

Maintaining Situational Awareness of the Main Effort (The ROK Army)

It must be remembered that during peacetime, ROK JCS has command of all ROK Army units through Ground Operations Command (GOC). The USFK commander has no authority over GOC as that it is a ROK JCS subordinate unit. Likewise, the USFK commander has no authority over CFC's Ground Component Command in his role as the USFK commander, though that same headquarters fulfills the role of the GCC for the CFC commander. Outside of exercises and planning, CFC is purposefully limited in what it can do during armistice so there is limited CFC oversight of GOC/GCC. The GOC/GCC commander is a ROK Army four-star who has a ROK GOC deputy and a U.S. Army three-star, the Eighth Army commander, as his GCC deputy.

The current strength of the ROK Army is its size. While efforts to upgrade and modernize the capabilities within the ROK Army are ongoing, the bulk of the force remains some twenty-five divisions, primarily light infantry. These organizations are light on communications technology compared to their American counterparts so the ability and requirement to communicate across domains with ROK forces are pushed to higher echelons of command. That information is then centralized through the currently eight, but soon to be six, corps headquarters to GOC/GCC. It is at this level where the true coordination to achieve interoperability occurs between ROK and U.S. ground forces.

What Will Happen When the Korea-Based DLDs Inactivate

Trust is the fundamental challenge in conducting combined operations, and interoperability is never easy. Even in the best of circumstances where nations share a common language, there are still cultural gaps that must be bridged to minimize friction. Within the context of the Korea challenge, drastic cultural differences and language barriers add to the confusion.

Alliances are always tricky, even more so when most of the U.S. personnel are on short-duration assignments; they only have a limited amount of time to grasp and

understand Korean culture and develop relationships with their Korean counterparts. Trust with anyone is earned and not a given right—even more so when the lives of their fellow soldiers, their country's sovereignty, and even their own families are on the line with every decision made.

Internal to the U.S. Army, an issue will arise with the loss of the Active Component DLDs. With the inactivation of the two DLDs in the ROK and the CENTCOM-focused 2503rd DLD, there will be no DLDs within the Active Component. This will likely result in a cascading repercussion on the DLDs overall. The Korea-based DLDs are arguably the most established of the DLDs as they have developed relationships and interactions with their coalition partners daily in a mature theater. This allows for the testing and adaption of tactics, techniques, and procedures for how the DLD is employed with partner forces. Reserve and National Guard DLDs do a fantastic job of accomplishing their assigned mission, but there tends to be little time for reflection on continuity of operations as units transition on and off exercises and the personnel are on to the next mission.

Penny Wise but Pound Foolish

As *Chief of Staff of the Army Paper #2* discusses, competition requires investment.[11] The long-standing support of the United States to the Republic of Korea has continued to pay huge dividends in developing a reputation that the United States is a willing partner, but it must be constantly reinforced through deliberate investment of vital Army resources. This becomes even more important as the Army continually adapts its force posture in Korea. Organizations such as DLDs provide unique functions and leverage with our ROK allies that LNOs by themselves do not bring to the table. DLDs are force multipliers far beyond their individual numbers in one of the only places in the world where the United States does not provide most of the ground forces to a combined force. And if the ROK is the best-case example of working with an integrated partner, what happens when the United States is suddenly forced to conduct joint multi-domain operations with a nation that it has not worked with before?

When the U.S. Army considers its role regarding cooperation and competition in Korea, it seems to focus on units that look impressive tactically but have limited cooperation value and almost nothing to do with actual interoperability instead of on units that support interoperability daily. The advantage to the forward-stationed DLDs is that they currently have set mission requirements so they can be tailored to fit those requirements. The other digital liaison detachments do not have the luxury of focusing on a single mission.

The DLDs have not drastically evolved since originally approved in 2009, so there is an opportunity to enhance interoperability in fields that have been neglected but are vital to interoperability success. Maybe instead of inactivating the DLDs, the Army should consider expanding DLD capabilities to include cyber, aviation, engineering, and SOF personnel to further enhance interoperability across multiple areas. At the end of the day, maybe the DLD is not the answer to solving the digital coordination challenge. Maybe the existing DLDs need to morph their structure to better meet the constantly evolving interoperability challenges. In the Korea scenario, perhaps the 2501st DLD becomes the Combined Digital Operations Liaison Center to coordinate CFC operations and enhance defensive and offensive interoperability. Maybe the 2502nd DLD evolves from its current standard DLD structure to focus on being the Combined Digital Rear Operations Center to support the functions of 2nd Operational Command in securing and maintaining the combined rear area.

As we move forward in our interoperability efforts for the future force, the DLDs may not be the long-term answer. But whether the active DLDs disappear in the future or not, the requirement to conduct the essential digital coordination to enable interoperability in the conduct of strategic landpower will not be going away any time soon. We can either invest ahead of time and set ourselves up for success or we can play catch up after the bullets start flying. ■

Notes

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6. Additional information on mobile liaison detachments can be found in ATP 3-94.1, *Digital Liaison Detachment*, A-1.

7. Richard Swain, *"Lucky War": Third Army in Desert Storm* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994), 148.

8. Additional information on combat support coordination teams can be found in ATP 3-94.1, *Digital Liaison Detachment,* A-2. The functions conducted by the combat support coordination teams are fundamentally the same as those conducted by the digital liaison detachment with some updated systems.

9. "2501st Digital Liaison Detachment Strengthens Partnership through Discussion," Army.mil, 3 November 2014, accessed 7 July 2022, https://www.army.mil/article/137429/2501st_Digital_Liaison_Detachment_Strengthens_Partnership_Through_Discussion/.

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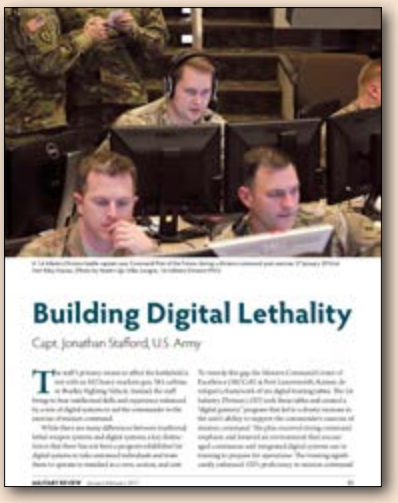

For those interested in additional information on digitizing initiatives, see "Building Digital Lethality" from the January-February 2017 edition of *Military Review*, available online at https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_2017228_art015.pdf.

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