



Case Study

Gen. Patton's Armored Force and Security Force Assistance Teams

Major Timothy Meadors

Major Tim Meadors is a 2001 graduate of the United States Military Academy. Following his commissioning as an Infantry officer, Meadors was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division in Fort Hood, Texas. Over the course of his career, Maj. Meadors deployed four times for a total of 42 months in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. Meadors also served as an Army Congressional Fellow; as part of the Army Congressional Fellowship Program, Meadors earned a graduate degree in Legislative Affairs from the George Washington University.

The military's rapid approach to the post-2014 mission in Afghanistan, provides a unique opportunity to reflect on Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). These reflections will significantly contribute to the development of a stronger and more adaptable force. Tactical, operational, and strategic experiences over the duration of both operations will undoubtedly contribute to the country's future employment of the military. Training, educational requirements, and standards for military formations will potentially morph as the OEF and OIF reflections are consolidated, published, and incorporated into doctrine. Infusion of the OEF and OIF lessons with previously established norms, will usher in both incremental and drastic changes to ensure the United States possesses a military solution to potential scenarios across the spectrum. Tomorrow will require a force composed of leaders with tactical prowess, broadened experiences, and diplomatic dexterity that successfully execute campaigns generated using design methodology while leading highly adaptable formations in hostile, non-hostile, nuclear, and devastated environments around the globe.

Identifying Requirements in an Abiguous Future

Building tomorrow's force following the longest era of persistent conflict is a monumental task. The uncertainty of resources and manning levels, the political budget battles, and instability around the globe is an unprecedented landscape for senior defense officials. The Honorable Bob Gates, former Secretary of Defense, best outlined the future when addressing cadets at the United States Military Academy for the last time on February 25, 2011. In his comments he noted:

"We can't know with absolute certainty what the future of warfare will hold, but we do know it will be exceedingly complex, unpredictable, and – as they say in the staff colleges – "unstructured." Just think about the range of security challenges we face right now beyond Iraq and Afghanistan: terrorism and terrorists in search of weapons of mass destruction, Iran, North Korea, military modernization programs in Russia and China, failed and failing states, revolution in the Middle East,

cyber, piracy, proliferation, natural and man-made disasters, and more."

The Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership:

Priorities for 21st Century Defense published in January 2012 by the Honorable Leon Panetta, Secretary Gates' successor, provided some clarity on the future. The document lists the U.S. Armed Forces' 10 primary missions. Each mission is complex, diverse, and relevant in the current and future context. Potentially, each of the 10 missions could exist as a single operation or as a hybrid requiring the military to execute a function of each of the ten simultaneously.

The listed missions are:

- ♦ Counter Terrorism and Irregular Warfare.
- ♦ Deter and Defeat Aggression.
- ♦ Project Power despite Anti-Access/Area Denial Challenges.
- ♦ Counter Weapons of Mass Destruction.
- ♦ Operate Effectively in Cyberspace and Space.
- ♦ Maintain a Safe, Secure, and Effective Nuclear Deterrent.
- ♦ Defend the Homeland and Provide Support to Civil Authorities.

- ♦ Provide a Stabilizing Presence.
- ♦ Conduct Stability and Counterinsurgency Operations.
- ♦ Conduct Humanitarian, Disaster Relief, and Other Operations.

Both Secretary Gates and Secretary Panetta contributed considerably to a description of the environment the nation and the military will face in the future. Collectively, they defined a future requiring an adaptable force able to succeed in vastly different settings. OEF and OIF reinforce their predictions with structured caveats of versatile forces dominating in an array of different environs. Defense officials must accept Gates and Panetta's predictions, and align them with a diligent study of past military transitions. Such an endeavor adequately generates the framework to transition today's military force into an adaptable and decisive force ready for the "next" mission.

Gen. Patton's Case Study

Analyzing the "now" in preparation for the "later" must include historic vignettes and a comprehensive review of the post-9/11 military operations. Throughout the 20th Century,

change followed each use of the U.S. military in a combat role. The U.S. Army's transition following World War I epitomized change that equipped the military to succeed in the "next war." Gen. George S. Patton served as one of the key catalysts for change following World War I. In *The Patton Papers*, Martin Blumenson chronicles Gen. Patton's campaign to build an armored force following the lessons he learned in World War I. His ascension to military prominence was founded on his willingness to embrace a fledgling concept. As a division and corps commander, Patton built a formation based on his persona, validated his theories during training, and deployed the division and eventually led an Army through the North African and European Theaters of Operation during World War II. Patton relied heavily on his experiences as a company and field grade officer in combat while developing new tactics for employing tanks. The mentorship he received from leaders like Gen. John Pershing and others, broadened his perspective

and helped balance the tenacity, sound tactics, and decisiveness he demonstrated in combat. Patton theorized that a dominant armored force channeled against the enemies' vulnerabilities and destroying their rear elements was the primary requirement for the nation's next military engagement. However, his victories and reputation were not built overnight. Patton's success was the result of a deliberate investment to learn from World War I; incorporate experiences from his youth, the Olympics, and his mentors; and build a force structured to dominate in World War II.

Security Force Assistance Case Study

Reflections from World War I, mentors, and potential future conflicts were the building blocks for Gen. Patton's campaign to validate the need for an armored force. The completion of OIF and the pending transition of OEF provided me an opportunity to reflect on my experiences and theorize about the future. My

basis for analysis includes three deployments to Iraq (April 2003-March 2004, November 2005-September 2006, and September 2007-November 2008) and a six month Security Force Assistance (SFA) deployment to Afghanistan (June -December 2013). Primarily I will use experiences from my most recent deployment to Afghanistan. In Afghanistan my battalion "trained, advised, and assisted" the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The enduring value of the SFA deployment was the complexity of the environment, the unfamiliar task organization requirements, and the reliance on our partners for their success. Leaders' previous experiences, identifying the correct problem and designing a germane operational approach, and adaptable formations that were tactically sound emerged as the catalysts for my unit's success. The ANSF increased capacities to independently secure their province and their increased capabilities to generate, operationalize, and sustain the warfighting functions following our departure were the key components for success. The scope of our mission evolved into validating their capacities to fight and win today while building their capabilities to sustain momentum and win tomorrow. Understanding the importance of the catalyst and components of my experience, provides a theoretical foundation to begin the process of introducing changes to meet tomorrow's requirements.

Broadened Leaders

The catalyst for our success began with diverse leaders. Although a light infantry brigade, those who primarily participated in the SFA mission did not follow traditional Infantry pathways. Like Patton, the nucleus for the advisor mission, was composed of proven warriors, and included the brigade commander and

brigade operations officer along with the commander, executive officer, and operations officer from my SFA battalion. Each deployed several times to both Iraq and Afghanistan in leadership and key staff roles from platoon leader through battalion commander. Collectively, their untraditional resumes included doctrinal studies in international relations, service in the Ranger regiment, a stint as a professor at the United States Military Academy, completion of the Naval War College and the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, and completion of the Army's Congressional Fellowship Program. Four of the five obtained graduate degrees.

Design Methodology

The diverse backgrounds and graduate level academic experiences broadened the leadership's perspective and enabled them to introduce a unique mentality to the ill-structured "train, advise, and assist" problem. Design methodology provided a process to maximize the varied backgrounds and address the ill-structured problem. The leaders with experiences from Capitol Hill to Iraq to West Point could easily digest the complex mission and comfortably operate within the design process. The process depended on relevant contributions from those involved to define the environment, higher headquarters' guidance to shape facts and assumptions, and a thorough description of the desired end state to propose feasible outcomes. These "inputs" generated a comprehensive problem statement to assist with the development of a relevant operational approach. Our design defined the environment, produced the right problem statement, and generated a campaign that solved the problem.

The complexity of our environment presented monumental challenges at the tactical level. Primarily, the relationships within the



Members of the Afghan National Army that participated in a partnered search operation with Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, in the Deh Chopan District of Zabul Province, Afghanistan. (Maj. Tim Meadors, U.S. Army).



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division shown establishing a secure perimeter in support of an operation led by soldiers from the Afghan National Army.

(Maj. Tim Meadors, U.S. Army)

Afghan security community were contentious. The contentious relationship in the security apparatus reflected the tension that existed between the people and the government. The three pillars of society were at an irreparable state. The Afghan Army, Afghan National Police, and the National Directorate of Security represented security but their interaction was hostile and ineffective. External influences like the pending Bilateral Security Agreement, the 2014 Afghan presidential elections, international aid, Pakistan, and sequestration influenced our Afghan security partners and their willingness to accept our help. Internal influences such as the perceived corruption in the government and localized insurgent activities plagued our efforts. Although not insurmountable, we recognized the environment had a number of de-stabilizing influences.

The command commissioned the staff to use design to identify the correct problem and generate a campaign plan to address the issues in the complex environment. By assessing the requirements to transition the current environment, we identified that equipping the security forces solved only the equipping problems

within our province not the instability caused by the lack of governance. Mending relationships to reunite the people, the government, and the security forces would solve the central problem and present a united front to stabilize the province.

The campaign plan incorporated sub-objectives to infuse governance into tactical missions to demonstrate the ability of the government to join with the security forces in support of the people. The union of two of the three pillars introduced a previously unseen cooperative relationship to the people. The unit continued to advise our counterparts and assist in their execution of tactical missions throughout the province. Tactical successes provided opportunities and momentum to insert a governmental function. Partnered air assaults to detain enemy elements included members of one or more of the ministerial representatives to offer government assistance once security forces neutralized Taliban presence. The infusion forced the development of relationships between security forces and the government in an effort to address the needs of the populace. Ultimately, the collaboration provided the

security needed for the government to offer the people consistent governance.

Adaptable Units

Higher headquarters dictated the transformation of our infantry battalion into an SFA battalion consisting of seven Security Force Assistance Teams (SFATs). The transformed formation now included advisors aligned against each of the warfighting function. Insider threats generated the need for the assignment of a security force to each team of advisors. The security force was an organic infantry platoon manned with the leadership and two to three infantry squads. The change resulted in about one-third of the battalion deploying in an advisor or security function.

The adaptability of the formation proved the third of three catalysts for success. Higher headquarters dictated the composition of the deployed force, design identified objectives to employ the force. The security forces secured the advisors and partnered with Afghan forces during missions while the advisors focused on increasing the ANSF's capacities and capabilities. The command pursued endeavors to combine the effect of the security forces and the advisors to mend the broken relationships in the society. The infantry platoons had to quickly adapt from a security role to planning kinetic missions with Afghan forces throughout the province. Advisors demonstrated adaptability by leading their counterparts through planning and resourcing in addition to accompanying them during missions. Mission command often provided command and control while also orchestrating the government's involvement. Each described catalyst was critical to setting the conditions for success. Broadened leaders relied on design to generate a campaign. Design introduced a

comprehensive approach that addressed fractured relationships, not solely building ANSF's capacities. The campaign required forces to adapt to create opportunities to bolster the people's confidence in the government.

Answering an Ambiguous Future with A Broadened Adaptive Force

Similar to Gen. Patton's entrance into the post-World War I era, the Defense Department must recognize the complexities of the future environment to structure a force limited by resources, budgets, and personnel.

The SFA case study presents several elements of a potential future conflict along with a template to succeed when faced with an ill-structured and wicked problem. During my experience executing the SFA mission, my unit was placed in a multi-national environment. We partnered with an indigenous security force, provincial and local government elements, and an apathetic populace; influenced by a neighbor with nuclear weapons; and impacted by international events. The 10 prioritized missions for the U.S. Armed Forces will force the military to operate in environments with similar factors but potentially increased uncertainty.

The template my unit developed to operate in the SFA environment should serve as a template for the future force. The Defense Department must invest heavily in broadened leaders as the norm and not the exception; build design methodology as a base staff requirement, and structure formations to operate in several environments executing multiple missions simultaneously. As the Defense Department invests in producing broadened leaders, the emphasis must be placed on senior non-commissioned officers (E-7 thru E-9),

senior company grade officers, and junior field grade officers that are proven warriors. The Army's Chief of Staff, Gen. Raymond Odierno, is leading an aggressive effort to broaden the Army's officer corps. In the 2013 Army Strategic Planning Guidance and his October 2013 Strategic Priorities, he emphasized the need for broadened and adaptive leaders for a complex world. The formative years of the broadened population must include tactical experiences that display the tenacity, decisiveness, and valor Gen. Patton displayed during World War I. Proven warriors must then undergo a process to broaden, not replace, the fierceness and creativity needed to operate outside of their core competencies. Broadening experiences must be defined as experiences at a strategic defense level, a national level of the

U.S. Government, a foreign location with an international partner, an academic institution as a student or instructor, or an industrial or corporate headquarters. Broadening partners receive essentially free labor by a high-quality member of the Department of Defense along with the associated work ethic, moral compass, and integrity. Design Methodology is primarily introduced to the military at the field grade level as a more cerebral approach to problem-solving. Understanding design should be a prerequisite to a broadening opportunity and evolve into a standard thought process and problem-solving methodology.

Future endeavors require military leaders and planners to initiate problem-solving not with courses of action but instead with a deliberate attempt to understand the environ-

ment. Understanding the obvious, hidden, and nuanced factors of the environment produces a valid understanding of the problem prior to attempting to resolve.

Finally, formations must maintain the lethality required to decisively fight and win while also growing the ability to function in a non-lethal or ill-defined environment. Formations must prepare to operate as maneuver forces, peacekeepers, partners, and security for fixed sites or advisors in hostile, non-hostile, nuclear, or devastated environments that include indigenous security forces, local governments, and international partners.

Conclusion

Gen. George Patton's will remain an indelible fixture in U.S. military history

because of his understanding of the environment and his vision. Patton combined his initiative and commitment with his mentors' advice to field a force that exceeded expectations. The 21st Century presents an era of unrest requiring an enhanced understanding of the environment and a vision to meet tomorrow's challenges. The Defense Department must determine the pathway that leads to an equipped, trained, and educated force that can dominate regardless of the conditions. The force requires broadened leaders with proven warrior credentials who can successfully generate campaign plans through design methodology while leading, training, and validating adaptive formations. ■

Notes

1. Robert Gates, 25 February 2011, taken from speech located at <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1539>.

2. Sustaining Global Leadership in the 21st Century,

January 2012, United States of America Department of Defense, pages 4-6, taken from www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf

3. Blumenson, Martin, The Patton Papers 1940-1945.

Boston: Da Capo Press. 1974.

4. The Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2013, Department of the Army, pages 13-14, taken from http://www.army.mil/standto/archive_2013-02-07/.

5. Odierno, Raymond, October 2013, taken from presentation located at http://www.army.mil/article/113256/CSA_lays_out_strategic_priorities_for_uncertain_future/.