

Intelligence & Combat:EO 3.3b(3)
PL 86-36/50 USC 3605**Some Lessons From DESERT STORM**

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(FOUO) We in the SIGINT business have long recognized that direct access to the principal player in a given scenario is far more likely to yield accurate and reliable assessments than would be available if we're reduced to listening to what other interested, but perhaps not all that well-informed, sources have to say about that same situation. It was with great anticipation, therefore, that an overflow crowd turned out on 15 April to hear an address in the Friedman Auditorium by United States Air Force Colonel Chris Christon, then the Director of Intelligence, USAF SPACE COMMAND and formerly the Air Intelligence Officer for Lt. Gen. Charles Horner, Commander, Coalition Air Forces, Gulf Theater, during Operation DESERT STORM. Col. Christon—by any definition a principal player during the allied operation to drive the invading Iraqi forces from Kuwait—shared with the assembly his experiences in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the intelligence successes but, more important, driving home some lessons learned about how to use intelligence to support the kind of warfare that our national security strategy and our force posture will dictate in the future.

How good was intelligence support to DESERT STORM...

"In combat, everything starts and ends with intelligence." —Lt. Gen. Charles Horner

(FOUO) Allied combat decisions during DESERT STORM were predicated on having large volumes of timely, usable intelligence available at the points where decisions had to be made—whether those points were the cockpit, the bridge, the NMCC, or the White House. Intelligence was critical to the success of the information-intensive actions that had to be conducted and, according to Col. Christon, the timeliness and quality of the intelligence available during DESERT STORM made the Gulf War the "most responsive warfare ever

"[The Gulf War was] a colossal intelligence success."

— Col. Christon

conducted." Citing some examples, he explained that because of intelligence—and Signals Intelligence in particular—U.S. planners had available to them a detailed picture of the Iraqi air defense system, which the allies were able to render combat-ineffective within 10 hours of the time the first bomb was dropped. The air campaign, when judged in terms of keeping Iraqi planes on

the ground (or sending them fleeing to safe havens in third countries), was virtually 100% effective, and fewer than 40 allied aircraft were lost out of some 112,000 combat sorties flown during the course of the war. The bombing also succeeded in isolating and demoralizing the Iraqi troops in Kuwait (a state of mind that was readily apparent [redacted] rendering them completely ineffective once the ground portion of the war began. Col. Christon also spoke of the allied forces' ability, thanks to the quality of the intelligence being received, [redacted]

[redacted] a tactic virtually unheard of heretofore. Perhaps most impressive, though, was the four-to-one sortie-to-aimpoint-destroyed ratio established by allied pilots. Although still short of the "Holy Grail" of the ground-attack fighter pilot and his mission planners of one sortie per aimpoint destroyed, the four-to-one ratio is still light-years better than the 130-to-one rate established during the Vietnam conflict. In sum, the colonel described the Gulf War as a "colossal intelligence success."

...and where does that support need to be improved?

(FOUO) The community demonstrated throughout DESERT STORM what kind of precision intelligence support it can provide to the war-fighter, but America's force structure as it will exist in one to two years will absolutely require this same sort of precision intelligence. Indeed, having learned from our mistakes and having seen where our shortcomings lie, the community reasonably should be expected to perform even better the next time we're called on in a combat situa-

tion as we refine the process by which we deliver precision intelligence. Turning to some specific areas in which intelligence support could be improved, Col. Christon listed:

- ◆ *adding collection resources*
- ◆ *integrating national- and theater-level resources*
- ◆ *making theater assets capable of supporting modern air warfare*
- ◆ *revamping the tasking system to provide closer support to the field commander*
- ◆ *convincing analysts of the need to come to hard decisions that the war-fighter can use*

(S-CCC) The colonel, noting that the allies struck some 400 targets daily during DESERT STORM, stated the obvious when he observed that the 225 imagery shots and 150-170 radar shots taken each day simply couldn't satisfy the Air Force's Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) requirements, not to mention the ground forces' requirements. He also observed that even though the community had watched the Iraqis operate their Scud system against the Iranians for years, he still did not have available to him in the field a good, actionable picture of how that system operated. Despite the successes of the Patriot anti-missile missiles in Saudi Arabia and Israel, the commander can't be expected to deal with missiles once they're airborne, especially given the types of warheads available to the enemy. The problem has to be dealt with at the source by taking down the missile systems' command and control and by interfering with its logistics, maintenance, and mating processes. But to get there from here, the community must come up with a plan for typing how the Scud systems work and a better way to tackle this multi-sensor targeting problem. Since we're dealing with a multi-sensor problem, we must be able to integrate in a timely and responsive fashion the national and theater-level information assets—something that today's intelligence tasking system doesn't allow us to do. Given the weapons systems and the tactics that today's field commander has at his disposal, we must revamp the intelligence tasking process, along with our supporting technologies, so that it provides the war fighter with the capability to integrate national- and theater-level assets.

(S-CCC) America, however, hasn't made the investment in theater systems over the past decade that would have brought us even close to supporting modern air warfare with theater assets that any of the military services have purchased. Space assets demonstrated their potential for combat support during DESERT STORM, but we're a long way from full exploitation of

these resources because our systems haven't been structured to handle them. In DESERT STORM, Col. Christon found himself using the same theater photo system available to him in Vietnam, only the equipment was older and he had less of it. Moreover, the dissemination system he was asked to use was also the same one he used in Vietnam. National systems must be integrated into the fight, he urged, and we're far from being able to accomplish that at this point. NSA has led the way for a long time on how to bring near-real-time intelligence into the fight, and the colonel implicitly challenged us to help bring the processes that we have perfected in our field over to the other "INTs."

(S-CCC) Continuing with this theme, Col. Christon reiterated that our tasking mechanism is not structured to support the timeliness that modern combat demands. Within minutes and sometimes seconds we must execute a flexible, mobile strategy that our force posture and the weapons we are buying dictate. He referred specifically to the commanders' need to be able to go directly to the field sites and levy last-minute changes in tasking when the situation requires it. In DESERT STORM, the results could have been far more

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— Col. Christon

effective if we had only had a mechanism in place that would have allowed such timely retasking. New weapons systems and tactics being developed are information-intensive, and that information is as vital a component as any other part of the commander's battle plan. Yet this information is the one thing that we in large part have been denying commanders.

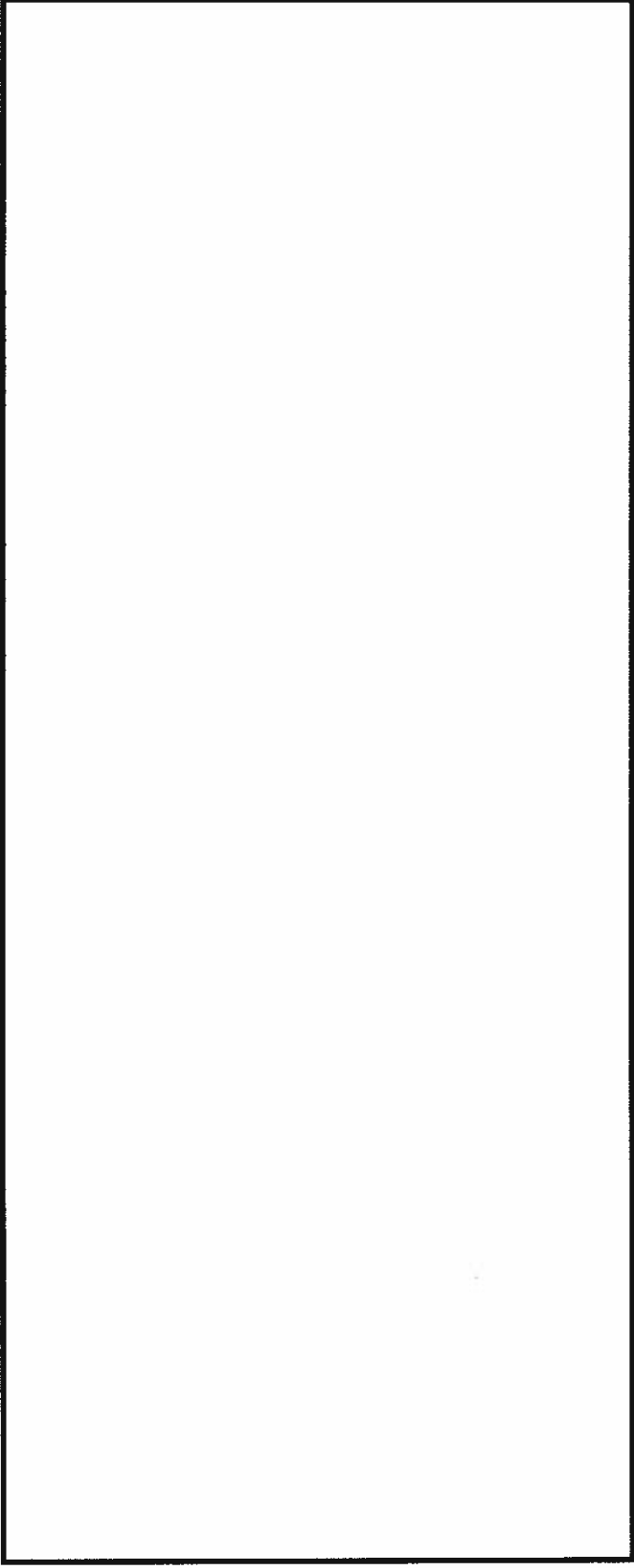
(S-CCC) With our imagery assets, we simply must find a way to install an on-call response capability. We don't have it yet, since information systems in the imagery world that are built to support intelligence analysis and assessment are not directly transferable in their current form to a military support mission. One can't get in-theater processing gear into the theater quickly enough either, so Col. Christon has urged that a strategy be developed that takes into account these limitations. Noting that dwindling space assets will only make the problem worse, he suggested that those who are pushing for tactical satellites may be on the right track. The basic problems with radar imagery, in the colonel's estimation, are that we haven't figured out how to use it well and the processing of the information needs to be

streamlined to a tactically significant time frame. This too is an area in which he thought NSA could help, given our experience in moving information to the point of application, and he repeated his plea that field commanders be able to talk to the ground sites. This is the only way to turn information around, he contends, since decisions are being made down around the 30-minute time frame and the commanders must know how the systems are being tasked in order to be able to come to informed decisions on what the threat environment looks like.

(S) The failure of intelligence analysts to come to analytic "closure" was an especially troubling phenomenon to the colonel, and he referred to the historical predilection of national-level analysts to count beans and leave themselves a way out rather than make a confident judgement. In the field, theoretical assessments don't get the job done because go and no-go decisions have to be made on the spot. Field commanders, he continued, also do not need day-old recaps from the national level of yesterday's good intelligence. What they require are timely predictions of the enemy's status now and what it will be two weeks into the future; this is something they weren't getting during DESERT STORM.

(FOUO) In closing, Col. Christon briefly touched on a matter that has him worried: the length of time it took the coalition forces to arrive in place and prepare to begin the effort to push the Iraqis from Kuwait. Early on, Saddam could have moved into the Saudi oil fields, assumed de facto control of the largest reserves of petroleum in the world, and forced King Fahd to negotiate. Instead, he gave the coalition the five months it took to bring its forces to bear, build the intelligence picture and dissemination systems, try out the tasking systems, and bring the necessary guys to the field to refine the entire system so that the strategy dictated by weapons procurement and military doctrine could be implemented. We were also faced with a threat environment that was largely a static one, which resulted in a significant reduction in dynamic intelligence requirements. The bad guys of the world can read, and we shouldn't expect the next Saddam to loiter in the desert until the allies have everything in place and ready to go.

The author would like to thank [redacted] of N53 for providing the videotape and slides of Col. Christon's presentation.



PL 86-36/50 USC 3605