

JOINT COORDINATION CENTER AFGHANISTAN

Joint Coordination Center Afghanistan

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Abstract

The mission for the Joint Coordination Center resulted from a meeting between the US government and members of the Pakistan Parliament, which took place on the aircraft carrier USS Theodore, Roosevelt, in August of 2008. As part of the Global War on Terrorism the Pakistani government asked for support from the US government to combat Al-qaida and the Taliban extremists in its Federal Administered Tribal Area. The members of the US delegation agreed to provide limited (ISR) support to Pakistani combat operations through-out Pakistan.

At the time of the agreement there was only one unit that had the capability and flexibility to rapidly move into the region and execute this type of mission. United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was tasked by the Joint Staff to execute this mission with-in 90 days of the agreement. USSOCOM has a joint Command and Control element (C2) called Joint Task Force SWORD (JTF SWORD) based at Fort Bragg North Carolina.

JTF SWORD received its mission in early October 2008 and quickly did its mission analysis and briefed back the leadership from USSOCOM and CENTCOM. The analysis was approved and the JTF was sent to Khyber Pass in mid January as part of the advanced party. The main body of the JTF arrived later that month. JTF SWORD started providing Pakistan with ISR support within 96 hours of hitting the ground. JTF SWORD stayed in Afghanistan for eight months until CENTCOM could backfill the JTF with JMD staff in early August 2009.

Back ground for me as the senior enlisted advisor for JTF SWORD started back in February 2007. At the time I was serving as the Command Sergeant Major for the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion when I received a phone call from the Command Sergeant Major of the United States Army Special Operations Command. He wanted to talk with me about a new requirement that had been levied on the command from USSOCOM. The Department of Defense wanted or better said told all Combatant commanders that they had to have a standing deployable command and control element no later than April 2008.

March 2006 USSOCOM told all of its components to provide a cost estimate for personnel and equipment list and have it back to USSOCOM within 180 days. USASOC along with the rest of the components provided its requirements back to USSOCOM. USASOC was the only command that could provide this type of C2 element with a realistic time frame and at a low cost.

The reason that I was called by the USASOC CSM was that I had served as the JTF-510 Senior Enlisted Advisor for Operation Enduring Freedom Philippines, and had joint experience as a SGM. When I accepted the leadership role for JTF SWORD there was only four Soldiers in the JTF, me, one COL, and two LTCs. We took a look at what USSOCOM was asking us to do and started building the JTF. The first thing that we had to look at was what size this C2 element needed to be. This has been tried before to have a standing deployable head quarters, but it is too hard to do with a full up staff and equipment. The cost of man power and equipment is enormous. We decided to build a small cadre of a joint trained staff of experts that would be ready to deploy very fast and with little cost to the command. The total number of soldiers of the JTF became 31 joint billets 24 Army, 2 Navy, 2 Marine and 2 from the Air Force.

The training for the JTF took almost 16 months before it became Initial Operational Capable (IOC) with individual training and collective training as a unit. Fully Operational Capable (FOC) was completed in October of 2008. The JTF had deployed on several JCS exercises and real world missions for SOCAFRICA to achieve its FOC. The JTF was now ready to take on any C2 mission that it was given

MISSION

JTF SWORD received its mission and started planning with the USSOCOM and CENTCOM staffs back in October of 2008 and it was determined that the JTF would need some augmentation from the other components; IE ISR Intelligence personnel, air space planners, and a CI team. We tasked the other components for the augmentees and they had 96 hours to arrive at Fort Bragg for training and prepare for deployment. During the mission analysis for the Joint Coordination Center it was determined that the best place for the JCC was in Pakistan with close proximate to the host nation general staff. As the mission went forward to the US Joint

Staff it had got information that the Pakistani government wanted the help but did not want the extra Americans in its country for political reasons. This created an extra problem as the where would the JCC be located if not in Pakistan then where?

A small team was sent to Afghanistan to look for a suitable location for the JCC. During the PDSS the team visited a new location at the Khyber Pass near the Torkham Gate Fire base. This seemed to be a great location for the JCC because there was a new facility being built at that location. At this location was the Khyber Border Coordination Center (KBCC) that was being used to resolve cross border disputes between the Pakistani Army and the Afghani Army and just a small number of new Soldiers would not bring a bunch of attention to that location.

The KBCC was manned by five US Soldiers, six Pakistani and six Afghani officers that lived and worked at this location for a one year rotation or at least that was the plan at that time. This was the first of six locations along the border that were to be built over the next two years, depending on how well this KBCC worked out. The building had all the life support in place that we needed to sustain our mission on this side of the border. The senior ranking US officer at the KBCC was a major and the senior ranking member of the JCC was a full bird Colonel. This did not seem to be much of a problem at the time because the commander of the JCC mission now became the commander of the KBCC also.

This one issue became one of the biggest problems for the JCC while in theater. The JCC was OPCON to SOCCENT and the KBCC was OPCON to USFOR-A and TACON to the 101 Airborne Division. This became a big problem with the battle space owner because he believed that he had control of the JCC, but the JCC answered directly to CENTCOM and the Joint Staff along with the SECDEF. The battle space owner was in direct support of the JCC for care and feeding at that was all, he did not even get to know what the JCC's mission was, which caused a bunch of issues between the two commanders. This is the kind of C2 issue that happens all over the AOR. This one issue is why General McChrystal was brought in to fix all the petty bickering that has been going on for a long time between SOF and Conventional forces.

Once the C2 issue was put to rest it was time for the JCC to start doing its real mission of providing ISR support to the Pakistani Army. It would seem that this would be easy for the US and SOF Soldiers, but it is not as easy as it seems. For one thing because we were now in Afghanistan the ISR feed was being showed on the JOC floor where the Afghani officers could see it and this made the Pakistanis mad but that is the price that they would have to pay for not letting the JCC in Pakistan. There seemed to be a lot of distrust between the two countries and there are good reasons for that. We worked with the Pakistani Officers more than with the Afghani Officers because our mission was to work with the Pakistan army not the host nation army. This was the only place or time that there was truly tripartite cooperation throughout the

whole AOR. There were always trust issues between all three countries but we worked hard to put it all on the same playing field.

There were two Expandable secure work trailers (mobile TOC) that we brought with us to run all the ISR feeds into our location and then run the feed inside the JCC/KBCC JOC location. The feeds were sanitized to make them relevant to only view only, which means that the Pakistani and the Afghani could only view the video and could not capture the feeds. There were promises made at the top levels of our government to the Pakistani government that they would be able to see the feeds as well at the General Head quarters building in Pakistan but it was not ever completed by the time we left country. There was a big effort on our side to make this happen but it is not easy to make happen with the communication equipment that the Pakistani government had. The US government was working on a solution but it did not exist at this time. Equipment that is being used in the CENTCOM Theater varies from command to command and surely did not exist for the host nation at this time, even if it did they do have the skills that it would take to understand or work the complex communication equipment.

When we arrived at the KBCC the Pakistani officers that were assigned to the KBCC were two captains and two Majors. This quickly changed with the importance of the mission to the Pakistani government. They sent two Colonials and four LTC's to run communications during the ISR missions back to PAKMIL HQ; this seemed to work better because these officers had enough pull to make things happen during mission profiles. Whereas before the personnel that was at the KBCC could not make a decision without higher HQs approval which took at least two to three hours. By the time this came back the intelligence was useless.

Airspace deconfliction was one of the big problems because cross border operations procedures did not exist. Upon initial JCC stand-up, AFCENT was unprepared to conduct Predator operations in Pakistan airspace. No written guidance was in place at the CAOC or elsewhere. When the first mission was executed, the Predator operator had to contact Pakistan ATC upon crossing the border. The lack of formal guidance and procedures can potentially create a hazard to the flight safety for civilian as well as Pakistani military air craft operating in the FATA/NWFP.

Torkham Gate force protection issues were one of the big concerns for the JCC/KBCC. After conducting our threat vulnerability assessment we believed the Torkham Gate area was not manned, resourced or received the required amount of emphasis deserving of the primary GLOC's border crossing point into Afghanistan. There were no counter intelligence efforts within the KBCC confine and the physical security was lacking at best. We quickly set up a new base defense plan and started working my AFOSI counterintelligence team assigned to the JCC along with USSF intelligence and ASO personnel to coordinate and identify threats and detect gaps in the force protection plan. Within 30 days we had identified seven personnel that were

working on the base (host nation) that were having weekly if not daily contact with various members of the local Taliban leaders. We arrested some of them and used others to keep an eye on the local threat.

The success of the mission created its own problems with the media. Every time one of the US congressmen or senators that were visiting the AOR wanted to see how the JCC/KBCC was working they had to have reporters with them. This was one of the big success stories that the PAO wanted to get out to the three countries were working together. We tried to show them how the three countries were working together to fight the terrorists and resolve border disputes but somehow there was reporting back in the United States that we were the ones dropping bombs on the terrorist. This was not the truth because the missions that we flew were ISR only; we did not have armed air craft or authority to fire missiles.

Some of the shortfalls of the mission were that having a highly trained and very versatile unit is that it is almost impossible to replace the unit with JMD fills. Having all SOF personnel is great but trying to replace those skills in a time of war is hard if not impossible. We were initially deployed for 90 days as a favor to CENTCOM to give them time to build its own JCC type unit but it took almost 180 days to back fill JTF SWORD and the top leadership positions ended up being filled by SOF personnel anyway. NCO's played a key role in all aspects of the mission one of my Master Sergeant acted as the JOC SGM and another Master Sergeant was in charge of all intelligence collection products and dissemination to higher commands. The communications NCOs that were assigned to me were truly amazing they had all communication equipment up and running within 48 hours of being on the ground and did not have any problems with any types of communication throughout the mission.

One thing that I want to bring up at this time is the lack of combat skills that some of the other service's NCO's; soldiers, airmen and sailors have, if we are going to fight as a joint fighting force we should all have the same basic skills when it comes to combat. It is sad when some of these American fighting men do not have the skills that it takes to defend themselves. The time that I had to spend on the range with these men was unsatisfactory. The training that they should receive before they are deployed must be changed. It is a must that they should all be experts with their own weapon. When you are at least one hour away from the nearest fire base by air you have to be able to defend yourself. The non SOF personnel that were with me from the beginning were somewhat proficient and became an asset to the team in a short time. The problem that I am talking about is for the personnel that were coming to replace us. Some of them had never fired thier weapon before they came into a combat zone. I am not talking about infantry Soldiers I am talking about the guys who have been working on these big staffs and not spent the time to go to the range. All the commanders at the four star level want their personnel to get out of the rear and get down range, but before they do that it is the

responsibility of the senior NCO's in these commands to ensure that their people are ready to deploy. I know that as a staff NCO or officer it is hard to keep up with combat skills as a staff guy but your life and or someone else's life my depend on how well you can react when the bad guys are at your wall in some remote fire base at the end of the world.

One of the biggest problems with the hand off of the mission was the equipment problems between a unit and JMD fills. My JTF has its own organic equipment assigned to it. But when I try to turn over a mission to someone who comes to the fight with only personnel equipment it is impossible to hand over a mission. When you try to transition organic equipment from one unit to personnel that do not have a UIC or a property book is next to impossible. For us to leave behind this high dollar equipment the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) had to send its property book manager to our location and change all left behind equipment to the TSOC's book. We had to get approval from USASOC to leave the equipment behind with the lateral transfer document in hand. This is the biggest problem that a unit like mine will always have and I don't know it can be fixed. If we are going to start some kind enduring mission anywhere in the world the Combatant Commander's staff has to be prepared to acquire equipment that is necessary for the follow on personnel. If the mission cannot be resourced then during the MDMP process it must be identified and brought to the commander's attention as a mission stopper.

The last point that I would like to touch on is the use of the Reserve Component personnel as augmentees. As individuals they can be uses for critical gaps in the JMD if they have the skill set that is missing or needed. All of the Joint Personnel that I had assigned to my JTF had the right skill sets that I needed for this mission. This is one of the critical areas that you have to cover in your mission planning process up front, you cannot wait to get into country and see what your gaps are. When you decide to use or ask for Reserve Personnel there are risks evolved with the process, one is the time frame that you are going to be deployed for. When you ask for augmentation the time line should be laid out and the duration should be understood, but when you are doing missions with no clear time frame you must accept the risk that some of your personnel may not be able to complete the mission with you, and can your unit absorb the loss or degradation to your mission. If you are going to use Reserve Personnel you have to get them to your location as soon as possible to ensure they are ready for deployment and understand what the standards' are, and what is expected of them during the mission. I have nothing but good things to say about the Reserve Personnel that I had assigned to my JTF they were communication specialist NCOs from the Joint Communication Support Element, stationed at Macdill Air Force Base, Tampa Florida. I would take them with my JTF any time on any mission with no reservations.

APPENDIXES:

A. Photos' Fire Base, Torkham



