

**The Staff Responsibility to Help the  
Commander Develop His Vision**

**A Monograph  
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**Second Term AY 99-00**

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## ABSTRACT

The Staff Responsibility to Help the Commander Develop His Vision by MAJ Tim W. Quillin, USA, 46 Pages.

This monograph explores how the military battle staff helps the commander develop his vision. The researcher examined how the staff provides information to the commander using the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). The study then shows how the commander visualizes the battlefield using criteria of know the enemy, know the terrain, know yourself, and see the future. The Battle of the Black Sea, Mogadishu Somalia October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993, is used as a Case Study to determine what was the common shared understanding of the commander and staff.

The monograph concludes that the commander initializes a common understanding by giving the staff the problem before mission analysis. The staff then is challenged to provide solutions to the commander's problem using an integrated staff system.

The staff works as a system to filter information through a set of criteria to discover strengths and weaknesses of both the enemy and friendly units. Those strengths and weaknesses are then synthesized using a reverse battlefield operating system technique to provide the commander a picture of every feasible solution to the problem. Those feasible solutions then allow the commander to apply his experience to develop his vision for success.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The commander's vision is critical in synchronizing modern complex, fast paced, military operations. To facilitate successful military operations, it is imperative that the commander's battle staff is able to translate the intangible realm of the commander's vision into tangible, measurable action. To execute this the staff must develop a common understanding of the commander's vision, and thus identify the problems that must be overcome to attain it. This common understanding is key in focusing the staff's efforts. A common shared vision produces operations plans (OPLANS) and operations orders (OPORDS) that stream line resources towards a common, desired end-state. The commander does this through a process called battle command.

Battle command is the art of battle decision making and leading. It includes controlling operations and motivating soldiers and their organizations into action to accomplish the mission. Battle command includes visualizing the current state and future state, then formulating concepts of operations to get from one to the other at the least cost. It includes assigning missions, prioritizing and allocating resources, selecting the critical time and place to act, and knowing how and when to make adjustments during the fight.<sup>1</sup>

Battle command is a function that is exercised continuously.<sup>2</sup> It is the driving force that gives purpose to military operations. Battle command can serve as a force multiplier and compensate for weaknesses in other battlefield operating systems (BOS) or key individuals.<sup>3</sup>

Battle command demands action. It is about mission accomplishment in a tough unforgiving environment of combat.<sup>4</sup> Battle command has two components, decision-making and leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Decision making means anticipating events and understanding actions that will be put into motion once a decision is made.<sup>6</sup> Decisions in battle command demand more art than science. The commander's intuition is key to knowing exactly what information is required to make timely, sound, and accurate decisions. The creative activity of the commander combined with the science and information of the battlefield help the commander make sound decisions.

Leadership means being responsible for the actions of your unit. It is taking responsibility for the decision that must be made to achieve success.<sup>7</sup> Commanders that exercise strong leadership skills inspire their subordinates and establish teamwork to achieve the commander's stated vision. As military forces become more

sophisticated the role and vision of the commander increases in its importance. The commander's vision is the driving force that provides focus for the staff and anticipates future events.

Visualization of the battlefield, above all else supports battle command. Visualizing the battlefield is holistic in nature and must be examined from this viewpoint.<sup>8</sup> The commander's vision provides the greatest flexibility to respond to the enemy and plan for future operations. In combat operations battle command is seeing what the current situation is and visualizing the future state or what needs to be done.<sup>9</sup> The commander's vision includes mission accomplishment against an enemy, in a certain type of terrain. It organizes a unit to move from one state to the other with least cost to troops and equipment. A skilled battle staff works within the commander's vision to control the battle and provide input to the situation as the conditions change.<sup>10</sup>

The commander's battle staff has a key role assisting the commander in controlling units in combat. The staff performs all functions needed to provide direction to the organization and maintain combat operations at a high enough tempo to overcome the enemy. The staff and commander interaction of processing information, making

decisions and controlling combat actions involves a common shared understanding of the problem.<sup>11</sup> This common understanding by the commander and his staff saves time in the planning process and allows information to process rapidly for key decisions to be made.

Command is a process that makes use of information to achieve an end-state. The commander articulates his vision through an intent statement, which guides and directs subordinates to use maximum initiative to execute the mission.

This monograph answers the research question does the battle staff help the commander develop his vision of the battlefield? The research for this monograph explores how the battle staff at the tactical level (division and below) helps the commander develop his vision. The study examines how the staff provides information to the commander using the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). The monograph then considers how the commander visualizes the battlefield, at the tactical level of war, using a criteria of know the enemy, know the terrain, know yourself, and see the future. The researcher will then use the battle of Mogadishu as a case study to compare how a commander and staff are challenged in developing a common shared vision

using the criteria. Each Chapter in the monograph builds upon the other to answer the research question.

Chapter 2 describes the elements of visualization as outlined in doctrine. It shows how the criteria of know the enemy, know the terrain, know yourself, and see the future are key to seeing the holistic nature of battlefield visualization at the tactical level.

Chapter 3 examines how a battle staff provides information about the problem to the commander. The study explores doctrine with a focus on the MDMP to determine exactly what doctrine says about the staff's role in helping the commander develop his vision.

Chapter 4 explores the battle of Mogadishu against the criteria to determine if the commander and staff had a common shared understanding of the problem. The case study shows the importance of a common vision and what happens when the shared understanding of the problem is missing.

Chapter 5 analyzes the battle of Mogadishu through a comparison of the criteria to determine what the common shared understanding of the situation was during the battle.

The monograph concludes with Chapter six by answering the research question, does the battle staff help the commander develop his vision of the battlefield?

## CHAPTER TWO

### COMMANDER'S VISION

One who is confused in purpose cannot respond to the enemy<sup>12</sup>

Sun Tzu

Visualization by both the commander and staff is an important aspect of levying combat power at the right time and place. It is the building block of problem solving and serves as the cornerstone of transforming the commander's vision into action. It is important for the staff to understand and share the same vision as the commander. A shared vision allows the staff to ensure the optimum execution and development of the commander's plan. Additionally, a shared vision allows the staff to assist the commander during decision-making.<sup>13</sup> This shared vision is critical to ensure battlefield success. A shared vision between the commander and the staff streamline resources and helps to synchronize action in combat.

Chapter two examines how the commander visualizes the battlefield. This Chapter shows why it is important for the commander to clearly articulate his vision. It considers how the commander controls the system of battle command within his unit and explores how to achieve a

common understanding of the problem. Finally, this Chapter defines the criteria of know the enemy, know the terrain, know yourself, and see the future that frames how the commander develops his vision.

The battle command system supports the commander as he conducts military operations. It allows the commander to adjust plans for future operations while maintaining a focus on the current situation.<sup>14</sup> The system of battle command consists of organizational procedures and technical means to assist the commander and his staff in making decisions. Command is a process that goes on within the system and is the driving force that defines the purpose of military operations to the organization when solving complex problems.<sup>15</sup> The battle command system operates through the use of information.

The battle command process uses information to coordinate subordinate units to accomplish assigned missions.<sup>16</sup> This information is then processed through the staff to analyze the required information to make decisions and maintain situational awareness. The commander uses the staff to assist him from getting past generic information to battlefield awareness quicker than the enemy.<sup>17</sup> It is imperative the staff understand the problem designated by the commander and maintains the same common picture to

achieve success.<sup>18</sup> Without this common picture of the battlefield the staff creates a vulnerability that may jeopardize mission accomplishment.

The vulnerabilities of command lie in the size and abilities of today's modern staff. As the complexity of staff functions increase it becomes harder to maintain the same common understanding of the problem among several different staff sections. Therefore, the role of the commander to define the problem for his organization becomes critical to achieve a common shared picture of the battlefield and situational awareness.<sup>19</sup>

Before the staff can begin planning the commander must determine what his task and purpose are and pass to his subordinates a clear statement of what needs to be done.<sup>20</sup> When the staff understands the problem they can then begin to assist the commander with formulating his vision. The commander must focus the staff early to ensure a common picture is developed during mission analysis (the first step of the MDMP that begins the process of determining feasible solutions).<sup>21</sup> It is the commander's responsibility to define the problem.<sup>22</sup>

The commander must guide the staff to acquire the correct information to make decisions and formulate his vision.<sup>23</sup> The ability for the commander to correctly see

the battlefield is central to the unit's success. The commander develops a vision by considering the relationships of the enemy, terrain, friendly troops, and the future end-state. Field Manual (FM) 101-5-1 *Operational Terms and Graphics* defines battlefield visualization as;

The process whereby the commander develops a clear understanding of his current state with relation to the enemy and environment, envisions a desired end-state, and then subsequently visualizes the sequence of activity that will move his force from its current state to the end-state. The commander articulates a battlefield vision through an intent statement, which guides the development of a concept for the operation and subsequent execution of the mission.<sup>24</sup>

Visualization combines the science of enemy, friendly, and terrain information to form a picture so the commander can determine the best method of reaching his desired end-state.<sup>25</sup> Visualization uses the science of control to develop the art of command. The technical aspects of each element provide the raw material so the commander can begin the art of his vision and ultimate mission success.<sup>26</sup> The first element of vision the commander must consider is the enemy.

#### **KNOW THE ENEMY**

Knowing the enemy consists of understanding his strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, and limitations.<sup>27</sup> In

order to develop a vision the commander must have the ability to see weaknesses in enemy operations. The commander must get inside the enemy commander's head, and attempt to see what he is thinking.<sup>28</sup>

Things to consider when developing a vision of the enemy are the enemy objectives and end-state relative to friendly objectives and end-state. The commander examines the enemy's capabilities, synchronization requirements, and operations tempo (OPTEMPO) and determines how those requirements can best be exploited or deceived. Additionally, the commander must consider the enemy battle command system. A proficient battle command system will allow the enemy to set the conditions of the battlefield. The commander looks for ways to disrupt the enemy battle command system and gain the initiative. Lastly the commander considers the enemy's logistical capabilities and looks for weaknesses in logistical lines of communication.<sup>29</sup> These concepts will allow the commander to see and exploit enemy weaknesses and avoid enemy strengths.<sup>30</sup> After a thorough analysis of the enemy a comparison of the enemy to friendly situation forms the next step of the commander's vision.

## KNOW YOURSELF

Knowing yourself is much more than just knowing the strengths and weaknesses of your unit. This information is important and has input to the commanders decision but is insufficient by itself to accurately visualize the battlefield. The commander must consider his forces in terms of their capabilities and resources and what exactly can the unit reasonably accomplish? The commander takes into account the agility of his force and the length of time it takes his subordinate units to receive orders and begin movement relative to the enemy. Additionally, the commander must think about the synchronization requirements to achieve success, and does he have the communications required to maintain the appropriate OPTEMPO to win. Lastly, the commander must consider how long his unit can fight before it must take an operational pause to sustain the force.<sup>31</sup>

The ability to see yourself is no easy task, the commander must know his unit if he expects to win on the battlefield. The commander must employ his units according to their capabilities. Choosing the correct type of unit for each mission is vital for success. The commander's decision is influenced by the training status of his units and capabilities of their leaders.<sup>32</sup> When the commander has

a complete understanding of the enemy and friendly situations the commander then analyzes both forces against the terrain.

#### **KNOW THE TERRAIN**

Knowing the terrain includes much more than what the effects weather and night illumination have on mission accomplishment.<sup>33</sup> When considering terrain the commander must determine the effects the terrain will have on the enemy's ability to move and mass his forces. It includes knowing how the terrain will constrict movement, and provide the maximum cover and concealment for the force.<sup>34</sup> The commander must look at the terrain and determine where he can shape the battle to compel the enemy to go where friendly forces can generate the maximum combat power. Looking through the eyes of the enemy the commander can see where he can best use the terrain to disrupt his opponents plans, mass indirect fires, and create weaknesses.<sup>35</sup>

The ability to see the terrain and understand how it will affect future operations requires more than observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain, and avenues of approach (OCOKA). It requires the commander to have the ability to look at the terrain and see in his mind how the affects of terrain will play on future operations. Seeing the enemy and

friendly situations against the terrain is how the commander develops the future end-state. The aspects of future operations rely on the commander's ability to master the science and art of enemy, and friendly operations in relation to the terrain.

#### **SEE THE FUTURE**

Seeing the future combines knowing the science and art of the enemy, friendly, and terrain.<sup>36</sup> This ability to see the battle unfold through the previous three elements is the essence of battle command proficiency.<sup>37</sup> The utility of seeing the future focuses subordinates on what needs to be accomplished and what information is critical to achieve success. It is the commander's vision of the end-state that enables subordinates to develop the concept of operations and maintain a common picture of the battle as it unfolds.<sup>38</sup>

The ability to see how the enemy employs his forces under existing conditions, and employ friendly forces to meet his challenge is an art that few commanders have. The commander must understand what the enemy has to accomplish in order to be successful. He must be able to see how the enemy will employ his forces and understand what capabilities he has to counter enemy actions. The commander envisions how the enemy will see and shape the

battlefield. To achieve success the commander must envision what capabilities are vital to the enemy and what must be done to retain the initiative. Lastly, the commander must determine the critical actions and how long they will take to complete each action to achieve success.<sup>39</sup>

The ability to see the future and create a vision of success is key to the development of the commander's intent and subsequently the concept of operations. The commander's vision allows him to see the battle unfold in his mind. Vision then allows the commander to give planning guidance and initial commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) to his staff. Early definition of the problem and the commander's vision is the cornerstone to developing a common shared understanding of the battlefield.<sup>40</sup>

Achieving a common understanding of the problem remains a challenge for today's battle-staff. After action reports and perceptions of the combat training centers indicate that staffs are struggling with their role in assisting the commander in developing his vision.<sup>41</sup> Chapter three examines how the staff helps the commander develop his vision. The Chapter studies staff integration and, using the MDMP process found in *FM 101-5*, how the staff organizes to achieve a common picture of the battlefield.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **BATTLE STAFF AND THE COMMANDER'S VISION**

Chapter two outlined a set of criteria to visualize the battlefield at the tactical level of war. These criteria are lenses that information is filtered through to help the commander develop his vision. The battle-staff is organized to ensure the command decision-making process is sustained. The staff looks at information through the criteria to determine leverage points and facilitate decision-making. Additionally, the staff collects, assesses, and analyzes information through the criteria to determine the best solutions to the designated problem.

Chapter three examines the purpose and complexity of staff operations. The chapter examines how the staff is designed to help the commander. The chapter also examines the importance of staff integration and how a well-coordinated staff analyzes and synthesizes information. It is this ability to synthesize information that helps the commander develop his vision.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STAFF**

The purpose of the staff is to assist the commander. The staff provides the commander with information to help

the decision-making process. Skilled staffs work to produce solutions to the commander's problem. The staff plans the use of resources to support the desired end-state of the commander. It is the responsibility of the staff to produce plans and orders that help the commander reach his desired goal.<sup>42</sup> The staff accomplishes this by processing information.

The staff assists the commander by continuously analyzing information so the commander can make informed decisions.<sup>43</sup> To help the commander make decisions and understand the situation the staff processes and uses two types of information, situational awareness and execution information.

Situational awareness information is the basis for decision-making. To understand the situation the staff uses a set of criteria such as the characteristics of the enemy, oneself, and the terrain to maintain an understanding of the environment. Situational awareness information allows the staff to give the commander critical information so he can make timely decision.

Execution information communicates a clearly understood vision and understanding of the operation to achieve the desired outcome after the commander as made a decision.<sup>44</sup> Regardless of what type of information the

staff uses a common appreciation of the battlefield must be present. The criteria used to filter information become critical as the staff gathers and analyzes data. It is this filtered information that the staff uses to produce OPLANS and OPORDS.

The primary product of the staff is to create an understanding of the situation for the commander and his subordinates.<sup>45</sup> Situational awareness is achieved by examining data through a set of filters that focuses information directly on the problem. These filters or criteria provide a useful tool so the commander and staff can make periodic checks to make sense of information.<sup>46</sup> A function of the staff is to analyze large amounts of hard data that the commander does not have time to consider. The staff analyzes the data and ensures that information is fed into the planning process.<sup>47</sup>

The fundamental objective of planning is to learn. The staff analyzes information to create a relationship of understanding between the commander and the future. The task for the staff is to analyze information through a set of criteria to learn what future possible solutions are available. The staff presents analyzed information to help the commander see how he wants to achieve his future end-state.<sup>48</sup> When the staff has developed into a learning

organization it is best prepared to adapt and solve complex problems. A well-organized staff system can enhance the information process and be the catalyst for effective planning.<sup>49</sup>

#### **THE STAFF SYSTEM**

An organizational system is made of many interrelated subparts with each relying on the other to achieve maximum performance. If any one of the subparts of a system performs poorly it will affect the performance of the whole. Effective systems require awareness with the environment and successful interaction with the other subparts. Failure to maintain awareness with the environment and interact with the other subparts will result in the organizations decline. A military staff is a complex functioning system.<sup>50</sup>

Complexity is created when the functioning of many systems interact with each other in inconsistent ways. There are three components of a complex system. A complex system adapts to its environment, is self-organizing, and operates at the "edge of chaos" or its breaking point<sup>51</sup>. A complex environment can be overcome by creating goals that focus the organizational effort. A learning organization sees the staff system in a holistic manner. This holistic approach allows the organization to identify patterns and

structure to solve problems.<sup>52</sup> An Army staff organization is a complex system designed to solve military problems.

The staff system is made of several different sections that interact with each other to develop solutions to difficult military problems. The staff is modeled after the Battlefield Operating System (BOS) found in FM 100-5 *Operations*. The BOS of intelligence, maneuver, fire support, air defense, mobility and survivability, logistics, and battle command help the commander coordinate and synchronize combat power in terms of time, space and purpose. The BOS model allows the staff to analyze, integrate, and successfully execute combined arms operations.<sup>53</sup>

The staff is organized to ensure the command process is sustained. It is the process that allows the system of staff operations to collect, assess, analyze, and discard information not relevant to solving the commander's problem.<sup>54</sup> The members of the staff must understand the system of staff planning and have a common understanding of the problem to be affective. The difficulty in the planning process is the ability to identify systems that facilitate learning and those systems that do not. Each member of the staff must facilitate the learning process to accomplish detailed planning.<sup>55</sup>

The planning process is sustained with an integrated effort by every element of the staff. One measure used to judge a high performing integrated staff system is to determine at what level in the chain-of-command decisions occur. Normally the lower decisions are made the better the staff system. Lower level decision-making enables friendly forces to set the conditions of the battle and respond more rapidly to the enemy. Staff integration is key to developing a high performing staff and maintaining a common shared understanding of the problem.

#### **INTEGRATION OF THE STAFF**

Staff integration is the combining of staff functions and structure to collectively solve military problems. Staff integration is the secret to developing maximum organizational effectiveness. An integrated staff organization is able to process information, maintain situational awareness and remain efficient during stressful situations. Integration is achieved through organizational structure, developing teamwork, and mutual experiences.<sup>56</sup>

The structure of the staff organization is critical to efficient operations. Each staff section provides a small part to solving the commander's problem. It is necessary to coordinate the activities across the staff to have an integrated solution. Interaction between staff sections

allows knowledge of the problem to disseminate throughout the organization. Disseminated information permits each member of the staff to contribute to the solution. The specific organizational structure is essential to functional integration.

Each staff function must operate as a cohesive unit. Each staff member's role is critical and has far reaching implications for process performance. The staff process used must contribute to solving the commander's problem. The staff is organized to ensure the planning process is sustained. The difficulty in staff organization is to know when the process facilitates problem solving and when the process contributes to the problem. The staff process operates smoothly when an integrated staff operates as a team and is familiar with the functions of the other staff sections.<sup>57</sup>

Staff integration is closely related to teamwork. The competence of the staff in conducting staff actions as a unified, integrated team is a major determination of combat effectiveness. The necessary training requirements to develop teamwork are individual training, staff training, and operational training.<sup>58</sup>

Individual training allows each member of the staff to contribute to the team. Individual training is independent

of other staff actions and contributes to overall team performance and cohesion. Individual training allows each individual of the staff to contribute to the planning process enabling the staff to solve complex problems.

Staff training refers to skills needed to coordinate activities among the several different staff sections in the organization. Effective staff training integrates team performance of the staff. Staff's training skills are important to the proficiency of planning and collective execution. Staff training is the tool that enables operational training to produce an integrated and efficient staff.

Operational training allows the staff to develop into an integrated, cohesive team. Operational training is conducting staff training under stressful realistic conditions. It allows the staff to assimilate individual training with the entire staff to solve complex problems. The final step to staff integration is developing mutual experiences.<sup>59</sup>

Mutual experiences develop a competence in the staff that will result in a more smoothly functioning staff organization. Shared hardships and situations give the staff a common appreciation for each other. Past experience allows the staff to build knowledge that will be

called upon in future operations. Experience gives the staff an ability to sense subtle changes in the situation that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Integration and understanding the staff system are crucial components to developing the commander's vision. The staff gathers information to better understand the characteristics of the problem. The staff now shifts from preparing reports and gathering data to synthesizing information against the criteria to help the commander visualize the future.<sup>60</sup>

#### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

The staff assists in the development of the commander's vision through synthesizing already analyzed data. Synthesizing allows the staff to discover all the possible solutions to the problem. Collecting, and transmitting data is not enough. Data must be compared to the criteria and analyzed across each staff section to discover every possible solution.<sup>61</sup> What emerges from this collective team effort is an understanding of the situation and all the available solutions to answer the problem.

The collective effort of the staff allows the expertise of each staff member to have input to every possible solution. As each staff section examines their BOS against the other criteria a series of strengths and

weaknesses begin to emerge. These strengths and weaknesses are then compared against the problem and coordinated with every staff section.

Synthesis begins with the initial staff estimates. Before a formal mission analysis begins the staff conducts an analysis of all information known about the problem.<sup>62</sup> The initial estimate is an examination of friendly and enemy BOS areas to determine force strength and capabilities. The lead planner guides the staff through the process and answers the questions of what is known and what is not known about the problem and situation. After an initial estimate is completed each staff section begins a reverse BOS analysis of the enemy.

A reverse BOS analysis allows each staff section to examine the opposing enemy BOS function and compare it to the terrain and friendly capabilities. This analysis allows the staff to determine enemy strengths and weaknesses in relation to the friendly situation. A thorough reverse BOS analysis examines capabilities to determine how best to defeat the enemy. To take advantage of enemy weaknesses and negate enemy strengths each BOS function coordinates across the staff for solutions.<sup>63</sup>

After the reverse BOS analysis is complete the staff begins the synthesis process. Each staff section

coordinates with the other staff sections to provide solutions to exploit enemy weaknesses and negate enemy strengths. This cross BOS synthesis enables the separate elements of the staff to form a unified understanding of the problem. The synthesis effort conducted by the staff helps the commander envision every possible solution against the problem. As the commander begins to understand every feasible solution his vision begins to develop. The synthesis process allows the commander provide the staff with initial planning guidance and an intent statement on how he envisions the future end-state.<sup>64</sup>

Chapter three provides a case study analysis of the Battle of the Black Sea in Mogadishu Somalia, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993. The case study examines the battle to understand what the commander understood as the problem. The purpose of the case study is to understand what the U.S. force commander knew about the enemy and how he used all available resources to defeat enemy strengths and overcome enemy weakness.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BATTLE OF THE BLACK SEA

After the fall of Somalia President Siad Barre, the country of Somalia fell into a bloody civil war that left the weakest of their society dieing from starvation.<sup>65</sup> Somalia's decent into anarchy split along clan lines and created constant turf wars and struggles to control the flow of food supplies from international relief agencies and local producers. Control of the food supply became a source of power for the warring clan factions. The clan factions controlled food distribution by extortion, threats, and racketeering. By 1992 millions of Somali women and children were dieing of starvation.<sup>66</sup>

The terrible conditions in Somalia attracted the United Nations (U.N.) and the U.S. through a constant cry from the media and international relief agencies. As the situation in Somalia grew worse, pressure from the international community and U.S. Congress urged the Bush Administration to act with humanitarian aid in order to restore the flow of food to those who were suffering from the aftermath of civil war and subsequent anarchy.<sup>67</sup>

On December 4, 1992, President George Bush ordered the U.S. military to begin deployment into Somalia. The task

given to the military was to alleviate widespread famine and starvation. The Defense Department explained that the deployment was necessary because "the level of violence was increasing faster than the humanitarian effort to try and deal with the situation" and that a large military force was needed to overpower the warring factions and secure relief supplies into the country.<sup>68</sup>

In an effort to reestablish power in the region the Somali National Alliance (SNA) led by Farah Aideed on 5 June 1993, attacked U.N. forces on a routine patrol killing 24 Pakistani soldiers in an ambush. In response to the attacks the U.S. sent special operation forces (SOF) to support United Nations Operations Somalia (UNOSOM). The SOF force consisted of a company of Rangers from the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, units from the 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR), and Special Forces personnel from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The SOF force was called Task Force (TF) Ranger and was commanded by Major General William F. Garrison.<sup>69</sup>

The mission of TF Ranger was to capture Aideed and breakup the SNA infrastructure in order to restore order in Mogadishu and provide security for UN operations in Somalia.<sup>70</sup> TF Ranger deployed to Somalia on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1993 and conducted six missions leading up to the

raid on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The October 3<sup>rd</sup> mission known as the "Battle of the Black Sea" killed eighteen rangers and would be marked as the turning point of U.S policy in Somalia.<sup>71</sup>

#### **THE PLAN**

The plan was a very simple generic plan developed back at Fort Bragg and modified as the situation required. The force consisted of an assault element, a security element, a vehicle ground force, organic aviation assets, and a headquarters element.<sup>72</sup>

The assault element consisted of special operations personnel who were inserted by helicopter on top of the target building. Once on the ground the assault element was responsible for clearing the building and capturing the target personnel. After the building was secure the assault element secured the target personnel and transported them back to the airfield.<sup>73</sup> Assisting the assault element was the security element surrounding the targeted area.

The security element consisted of a reduced strength ranger platoon task organized into four separate teams. The responsibility of the security element was primarily to prevent any outside interference with the assault element. The secondary responsibility was to seal off the area to prevent anyone from escaping the target location. The

security element was inserted by helicopter to four locations around the target creating blocking positions in four key intersections. After the mission was complete the extraction would be the responsibility of the ground assault force.

The ground assault element consisted of a platoon size force of armored HMMWVs that carried .50 caliber machine guns and MK19 automatic grenade launchers. The ground assault force would depart the airfield immediately after the assault elements and security elements left the airfield. They would move to the target location to reinforce the security element and conduct extraction for the other two forces as required. As the mission was executed the aviation element provided a robust air support package.<sup>74</sup>

The aviation element consisted of several aircraft that performed critical the roles of reconnaissance, attack, and general lift. The reconnaissance aircraft were used to pinpoint the target location and guide the lift elements into the target area. The lift helicopters would fly the force into the target area and generally take up an orbit a safe distance away and wait for a call to extract the force if needed. Two of the lift birds would carry snipers and orbit over the target location and provide

sniper support to the TF. Four attack helicopters provided fire support and was in constant contact with the forces on the ground. Two helicopters carrying the command and control headquarters and a search and rescue team orbited over the target area. The search and rescue team was planned as a contingency in case of a downed aircraft. The aviation element gave the TF the ability to rapidly insert onto a target site and maintain flexibility during execution.

Each piece of the plan was critical for mission success. The routine nature of the plan and the need for rapid response created vulnerabilities if anything should not go as designed.

#### **THE FIRE FIGHT**

Sunday October 3<sup>rd</sup> began like any other day for TF Ranger. Most Sundays were used as a day of rest, giving soldiers a break from their normal six-day training cycle, and this Sunday began like any other. TF Ranger was on continuous standby everyday of the week and at approximately 1200 hrs the TF was alerted and told to begin preparation for a new mission.<sup>75</sup>

As TF Ranger prepared for the mission, information on the objective site was rapidly changing. The exact target location was not certain and the numbers of target

personnel were not known at all. It was believed that Aideed was having a meeting with several of his key lieutenants in a house near the Olympic Hotel. Just after lift off the word to go with mission was approved and confirmation was given that the Hotel would be the target building.<sup>76</sup>

At 1530 hrs the main assault and security forces lifted off with seventeen aircraft, followed by the ground convoy. As TF Ranger arrived at the target location they immediately began to take fire from several locations. While the security perimeter was being formed the assault element entered and cleared the building. After about an hour, at approximately 1630 hrs, the assault force emerged with 20 prisoners, but didn't capture Aideed. It was about this time that the first blackhawk was shot down five blocks from blocking positions.<sup>77</sup>

The first Blackhawk was hit in the tail by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). The SNA have been increasing their use of RPGs against U.S. aircraft and had recently shot down a blackhawk.<sup>78</sup> Rangers securing the perimeter immediately left their blocking positions and moved to secure the crash site to rescue the down crewman. The search and rescue element, orbiting over the target location, fast roped onto the crash site and provided

assistance. After the crash site was secure two of the injured crewman were evacuated.<sup>79</sup>

Meanwhile, the ground convoy, ordered to link up with the crash site, came under intense ground fire. After several unsuccessful attempts by the ground convoy to link up it was ordered to return to the airfield leaving ninety rangers stranded.<sup>80</sup>

The Somali forces began to mass around the crash site using tire fires and sheets inside windows as signals to guide emerging forces. The SNA began to assault the crash site with heavy automatic fire. Road blocks were used by the SNA to slow the convoy and rescue teams from reaching the area. Farah Aideed later stated that he was looking for an opportunity to create American casualties. By late afternoon the rangers were pinned down with help still hours away.<sup>81</sup>

During the fire-fight a second blackhawk was shot down with another RPG. Two Army snipers from Fort Bragg, North Carolina fast roped on the second crash site to protect the downed pilot. The two men were killed and the pilot was taken prisoner. The situation began to get worse so the rangers established a casualty collection point and attempted to consolidate the remaining force to increase their defenses.<sup>82</sup>

Stranded in the most hostile area of Mogadishu ninety rangers forcibly occupied a building to provide protection and begin to consolidate and treat casualties. Throughout the night attack helicopters provided air support with 7.62mm miniguns and a helicopter was taking heavy fire bringing need ammunition, water, and medical supplies. The support from the attack helicopters and the needed supplies prevented the SNA from overrunning the stranded rangers.<sup>83</sup> The Quick Reaction Force (QRF) from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 10th Mountain Division was alerted and a rescue operation is planned.<sup>84</sup>

At 1830 hrs the QRF attempted a rescue and was repelled because of intense ground fire. The TF commander, Major General Garrison, requested armor support from the U.N. Pakistani and Malaysian forces. The Clinton Administration refused the deployment of armor earlier because of the political message that the U.S. was planning a long-term deployment. The assembly of the QRF was not preplanned and took five hours to organize the separate forces. Once the force was assembled they departed the airfield at approximately 2330 hrs.<sup>85</sup>

After fighting through several roadblocks the QRF finally reached the casualty collection point and rescued the stranded rangers. Because of the narrow streets and

ally ways the armor of the newly assembled QRF was unable to reach the rangers. A pick up point was established several blocks away. Four hours later, at approximately 0520 in the morning, the wounded and dead of TF ranger were collected and evacuated. Because of limited space on the extraction vehicles several rangers had to run along side of the convoy, taking heavy fire as they ran to the pick up site. Once everyone arrived at the pick up site the larger armored convoy moved several miles North to a soccer stadium for evacuation back to the airbase.<sup>86</sup>

The Battle of the Black Sea is considered to be the worst fire-fight since the Vietnam War. Eighteen rangers were killed, seventy-five wounded with six rangers permanently disabled. The battle on 3 October ended U.S. involvement in Somalia.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS

This Chapter analyzes what the commander's vision was during the Battle of the Black Sea, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993. The analysis compares what happened in the battle to the criteria of know the enemy, know yourself, know the terrain and see the future, examined in Chapter 3.

#### Know the Enemy

Aideed began to increase aggressive action towards UN forces in the months prior to October 3<sup>rd</sup>. As the U.N. attempted to establish a Somali controlled government, Aideed initiated his campaign to gain power and control of Mogadishu and rival clan factions.<sup>87</sup> U.S. forces either didn't see or discounted the increase in SNA aggressiveness. This false impression that the enemy was incapable or incompetent to mount an attack led to several miscalculations by TF Ranger.

TF Ranger minimized the capabilities of the enemy and believed they were unable to react with substantial force during an assault. The SNA showed their ability to mass force on June 5<sup>th</sup> when they ambushed the Pakistan patrol.<sup>88</sup> Intelligence information identified several signals used by the SNA to move forces within the city. Signals, such as, tire fires, sheets inside windows, and women and children

pointing position locations indicated the desire and ability to mass. Aideed believed that creating casualties was a critical factor to achieve success.<sup>89</sup>

The SNA identified the use of air as a vulnerability to U.S. operations. Aideed said after the battle that he had planned to use his RPGs to deny the freedom of helicopter operations during a U.S. attack.<sup>90</sup> The downing of two helicopters and damage of another three gave the SNA the momentum to overwhelm TF Ranger. A plan to protect aviation assets from RPG fire was inadequate. TF Ranger believed that the chance of an aircraft being shot down was minimal.<sup>91</sup> The magnitude of a downed aircraft had a crippling affect on the operation once it occurred.

The area of the Olympic Hotel was a known strong hold of Aideed's forces.<sup>92</sup> Aideed and his lieutenants conducted a meeting in the most secure area they knew. TF ranger had no contingencies established to prevent SNA forces from massing while the operation was in progress. The situation rapidly turned in favor of Aideed's forces as the U.S. turned its attention to search and rescue.<sup>93</sup>

#### **Know Yourself**

Knowing your force is critical to mission success. The TF Ranger commander made critical mistakes in knowing the capabilities of his force. Coordination with U.S.

conventional forces to assist the TF was insufficient and untimely. Liaison officers were exchanged but 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry was never considered in the plan to assist or respond with the QRF.<sup>94</sup> After the air insertion capability was denied the ground capability of the TF became critical.

Use of armor among the contributing nations of the U.N. was also very poorly planned. Integrating armor into the QRF contributed to a five-hour delay of the QRF departure. Although TF Ranger requested and was denied the use of armor they never determined alternative solutions with the forces that were available.<sup>95</sup>

The rush to assemble the QRF with a task organized armor capability is evidence that the staff failed to provide the commander with options. Additionally, the staff did not understand the initial assault elements capability to defend against an organized counterattack. The evidence is clear that an understanding of the problem and a common picture of the initial situation were not present among the staff or the commander. Had the staff synthesized all the available information across every BOS section a better understanding of the enemy would have occurred. Also cross BOS analysis would provide the commander with more options when something goes wrong.

### **Know the Terrain**

The terrain was in the favor of SNA forces. The narrow streets and alleys of Mogadishu provided cover for movement and protection against direct fire.<sup>96</sup> The SNA had an advantage of the terrain because their familiarity with the streets of Mogadishu allowed them to move more rapidly. The SNA used roadblocks to slow the movement of ground convoys. The narrow alleys provided excellent cover for RPG fire towards helicopters and vehicles. The city, ravaged after years of civil war, was very difficult to navigate, creating confusion as the convoy moved to reach the stranded rangers. The restrictive conditions of the terrain and difficulty of navigation significantly contributed to TF Rangers problems.<sup>97</sup>

### **See The Future**

Seeing the future is very difficult. To correctly understand enemy capabilities the commander must understand the relationship between terrain and friendly forces. Aideed learned from the previous six missions conducted by the TF and gained confidence after the 25 September downing of a helicopter with RPG fire.<sup>98</sup> The SNA understood that casualties were the weakness in U.S. presence in Somalia. With an understanding of creating casualties Aideed began a

policy of aggressiveness towards U.N. operations and most specifically the U.S.<sup>99</sup>

TF Ranger failed to consider SNA actions leading up to October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1993. The commander focused on the operations of friendly forces and did not consider how the SNA would counter the TF Ranger attack. The staff failed to provide a clear picture of how the enemy would employ and what capabilities he could bring to the fight. By not understanding friendly vulnerabilities, enemy strength, and the terrain the commander never fully had a clear picture of the battlefield. Without a clear picture of the battlefield available options quickly ran out when things did not go as planned.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The research for this monograph clearly shows that the staff does help the commander articulate his vision. The commander and staff have contributing responsibilities in the development of the commander's vision and a common shared understanding of the battlefield. The commander identifies, for the staff, the problem that he wants resources applied against. The staff analyzes information through a set of criteria that determines solutions to the commander's problem. The fundamental actions of the staff are the ability to synthesis information in order to see every feasible solution.

If the commander and staff are to synchronize and integrate decisions of complex military problems they must have a common understanding of the battlefield. This common understanding is developed during the mission analysis phase of the MDMP. FM 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, states that mission analysis is "defining the tactical problem and determining feasible solutions".<sup>100</sup> This statement is correct if the commander participates early in the planning process. FM 101-5 fails to adequately describe the role of the commander. The initial guidance, the commander is required to provide, does not

include a statement of the problem. If commander does not state the problem early it is nearly impossible to develop a common understanding among the separate staff sections. In order for the commander to see every feasible solution he must articulate the problem as the starting point for mission analysis.

Effective battle command systems are organized to facilitate the planning process. The separate staff sections work together to discover every feasible solution to the problem. When the staff has a common picture of the problem they can more effectively employ resources. The planning process is a double-edged sword. The process is important to maintain in order to achieve integration of the staff but the process must not become the problem. A staff that understands the process can quickly analyze information. Information is then synthesized across every staff section to find every feasible solution.

Synthesized information allows the staff to think forward in time and anticipate future events. Synthesizing information across the staff creates options as the situation begins to change. An effective staff never allows the commander to run out of options or possible solutions to a given problem.

The staff presents solutions to the commander so he can begin to develop his intent to achieve success. The commander adds to the staff process his experience to articulate an intent statement. A strong commander's intent is a clear concise statement of what the commander wants done in respect to a set of criteria and the future end-state.<sup>101</sup> The intent statement is based on a common understanding of the problem and promotes initiative to achieve the end-state.

The Battle of the Black Sea describes the consequences when a commander and his staff do not share a common picture of the battlefield. The future end-state must consider enemy capabilities and terrain to achieve success. The commander's problem must consider each element of the criteria and not just the friendly end-state.

TF Ranger did not fully understand the problem on 3 October 1993. Evidence shows that TF Ranger based the problem on friendly criteria and did not consider enemy strength and terrain. To correctly frame the problem the commander must consider each element of the criteria. Clearly stating the problem begins the process of visualizing the battlefield.

Had TF Ranger used the process of visualization the commander could have had a more developed picture of the

situation. It is the staff's responsibility to synthesize information and provide the commander with the tools to develop his vision. Had TF Ranger seen the situation correctly the use of other resources could have been planned for early.

The generic plan developed back at Fort Bragg contributed to the staff not analyzing or synthesizing information. The TF Ranger staff applied the original plan to every situation and did not modify the plan to the changing environment. Had the staff synthesized information they could have foreseen the need to adjust the plan and provide additional options for the commander.

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