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Research Essay

Operational Leadership in The Gulf War: Lessons from the Schwarzkopf-Franks Controversy

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INTRODUCTION

The US-led coalition won a decisive victory in the Gulf War when it conducted Operation Desert Storm. Without question the coalition was successful in achieving its overall objective of ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait and restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty. However, not all operational objectives were fully achieved. For example, the coalition did not achieve the complete destruction of the Republican Guard Forces (RGFC). The RGFC was certainly defeated, but not completely destroyed, as it managed to retreat half of its tanks back north into central Iraq by the war's end. 1 These forces were and remain today Saddam Hussein's source of power and one of Iraq's key centers of gravity. Their very survival enabled Saddam Hussein to stay in power even after the crushing defeat suffered by his military forces in Kuwait. The fact this coalition operational objective was not completely achieved reflects adversely on the military leadership at the operational level. Since General (GEN) Norman Schwarzkopf was the Commander-in-Chief of US Central Command (CENTCOM) for the Gulf campaign, one must look to his leadership or lack thereof for reasons why this objective was not fully achieved. In his autobiography, GEN Schwarzkopf frequently criticizes the slow, methodical pace of the US VII Corps attack of the RGFC under the command of Lieutenant General (LTG) Fred Franks. Jr. ² Hence, GEN Schwarzkopf would certainly point to the slow pace of this attack as

a major contributing factor as to why so much of the RGFC was allowed to escape.

During the Gulf War there was significant controversy about the conduct of the VII Corps attack on the RGFC between the tactical level commander, LTG Franks, and the operational commander, GEN Schwarzkopf. Although the war ended successfully for the coalition, we need to examine why this controversy occurred, what exactly happened, and what we can learn from it. Heeding the lessons from this controversy will enable future operational commanders to be more successful in fully achieving their operational objectives, particularly their most critical ones.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

What happened in the controversy between US VII Corps and CENTCOM during the VII Corps attack of the RGFC? Why did this controversy occur? What lessons can be learned to improve operational level leadership in future conflicts?

The principal leadership lesson from the Schwarzkopf-Franks controversy is that operational level leadership must create the environment to achieve an accurate information flow to the operational commander, so that a common operating picture is achieved and understood between tactical, operational, and strategic levels of leadership. To prove this thesis, this paper will argue that in

Operation Desert Storm poor communications flow, engendered by a lack of trust and respect between GEN Schwarzkopf and LTG Franks, prevented a common operating picture and understanding of the time the VII Corps attack would take to execute. This prevented GEN Schwarzkopf from knowing when VII Corps would complete its destruction of the RGFC. He was then not able to articulate this to GEN Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), so the strategic level could synchronize the end of the conflict to occur after the RGFC was destroyed. The poor communications flow, engendered by this lack of trust and respect, was important because GEN Schwarzkopf did not appreciate the length of time required for the VII Corps to conduct the complex maneuver necessary to concentrate its forces on the RGFC to achieve its complete destruction. Lacking this competency and not listening and learning from those who had that competency, LTG Franks and the 3d US Army Commander LTG John Yeosock, prevented GEN Schwarzkopf from being able to provide the strategic level leadership the proper operating picture. Lacking this picture prevented the strategic level from shaping political events to cause the end of the conflict to occur after the RGFC had been completely destroyed.

The operational level commander provides the leadership that links the achievement of operational level objectives to the accomplishment of tactical missions within the constraints and restraints of the strategic political and military environments. The operational level commander must have an accurate picture

and understanding of the overall tactical plan to be in a better position to synchronize and influence tactical, operational, and strategic activities to achieve operational objectives within political realities. In Operation Desert Storm it is apparent the operational level commander did not have a timely, accurate assessment and understanding of the VII Corps tactical plan to achieve destruction of the RGFC. This inaccurate assessment and understanding prevented complete destruction of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard forces and attainment of one of the most important operational objectives of the US-led coalition.

To demonstrate this, operational level leadership and operational art in the context of the Gulf War will be defined. In addition, leadership in the art of battle command will be examined with particular focus on the importance of credibility, communications, and trust. In subsequent discussions it will become apparent these were weaknesses of GEN Schwarzkopf. Then an examination of CENTCOM's misunderstandings and misperceptions surrounding the US VII Corps attack on the RGFC will occur. This will highlight the operational commander's lack of appreciation for the time required to maneuver a large armored corps through multiple obstacle belts, in restricted terrain, against a fighting enemy. The discussion will also highlight the operational commander's poor leadership style for upward communications flow with respect to VII Corps

during the conflict. This will enable us to determine what Operation Desert Storm operational leadership lessons can be learned and applied to future conflicts.

OPERATIONAL LEVEL LEADERSHIP

The nature of operational level leadership is to inspire and direct joint and combined operational forces within a theater of operations to perform subordinate campaigns and major operations to accomplish the strategic objectives of the unified commander or higher military authority. The operational level leader provides the guidance and direction to tactical leaders to achieve the vital link between strategic objectives and tactical employment of forces. ³ He does this through the application of the operational art. Operational art is defined to be:

The employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles. Operational art translates the joint force commander's strategy into operational design, and, ultimately, tactical action, by integrating the key activities at all levels of war.⁴

For the Gulf War, President Bush had laid out the strategic objectives within a week of Iraq's invasion:

First, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government. Third, security and stability for the Gulf. Fourth, the protection of American citizens abroad. ⁵

As translated into GEN Schwarzkopf's operational objectives, President Bush's policy goal of regional stability and security included eliminating Iraq's capability

to assemble weapons of mass destruction - - chemical, biological, and nuclear - - and the destruction of the Republican Guard Forces in the Kuwaiti Theater. This did not mean the total destruction of every Iraqi RGFC tank, but destroying enough of the RFGC divisions to render them impotent as offensive fighting force. This would contribute to regional peace. ⁶

GEN Schwarzkopf, through his planners, applied operational art to devise a campaign plan, which consisted of battlefield goals to achieve these operational and strategic objectives. On November 14 1990, within a week of President Bush announcing the further buildup of US forces in the gulf, GEN Schwarzkopf articulated these goals to his senior commanders as: attacking the Iraqi leadership by going after his command and control; gaining and maintaining air superiority; totally cutting off his supply lines; destroying chemical, biological and nuclear capability; and destroying the Republican Guard. ⁷

GEN Schwarzkopf was especially emphatic on the latter operational objective when he stated:

"... And finally, all you tankers listen to this. We need to destroy – not attack, not damage, not surround – I want you to destroy the Republican Guard. When you're done with them, I don't want them to be an effective fighting force anymore. I don't want them to exist as a military organization." For the benefit of our Vietnam vets – practically the whole room – I emphasized that "we're not going into this with one arm tied behind our backs. We're not gonna say we want to be as nice as we possibly can, and if they draw back across the border that's fine with us. That's bullshit! We are going to destroy the Republican Guard."

With such emphatic direction towards a specific operational objective, one must inquire why so much of the RGFC was allowed to draw back across the border? Was there something about the nature of GEN Schwarzkopf's leadership and direction of the Gulf War that allowed this to happen? To completely examine this requires definition of some specific leadership skills.

According to the US Army Battle Command Laboratory, leadership is the means to "make it happen" as visualized. ⁹ Traditional leadership skills have been organized into information managing skills and people managing skills. Information managing skills include credibility, problem solving, decision making, goal setting, planning and organizing, and implementation. The first of these, credibility, has significant leadership aspects particularly in regard to the nature of operational leadership. A leader achieves credibility in the eyes of his or her peers, superiors, subordinates and clients when they perceive the leader as knowledgeable and skilled. ¹⁰

People managing skills include communications, networking, negotiation, conflict management, delegation, participative management, motivation, coaching, and mentoring. Without people managing skills, the information managing skills are incomplete. The nine people managing skills are important components of leadership. The first skill involves interpersonal communications. This has been well recognized by the military and is included as a leadership competency at all three levels (tactical, operational, and strategic) of military

leadership. This skill involves the content and quality of interaction among people defined by their observable behavior and interaction, the information transfer, and the feelings that are associated with them. ¹¹

Trust repeatedly arises as one of the most important variables in information flow research. A behavioral research study on trust by Zand in 1972 concluded:

Trust is . . . considered a key ingredient for the effective functioning of an organization. Trust facilitates interpersonal acceptance and openness of expression, whereas mistrust evokes interpersonal rejection and arouses defensive behavior . . . An increase in trust will increase the exchange of accurate, comprehensive, and timely information. 12

As cited by Lussier and Saxon of the US Army Research Institute, Zand's study specifically examined how mistrust in an organization affected communication and direction of information flow. Specifically, a strong positive correlation was found between accuracy of information and trust, and also between completeness of information and trust. A strong negative correlation was found between information loss and trust. This supports the conclusion that there is a strong relationship between trust and information flow. According to Zand, trust affects accuracy, direction, completeness, and timeliness of information flow

Also cited by Lussier and Saxon is a more recent behavioral research study of educational organizations by Hurst and Levine in 1989. Hurst and Levine found the greater the organizational trust, the greater the accuracy and completeness of

the flow of information in the organization. When trust was low, the accuracy of information was also low. In the study, information flow directionality was measured upward, downward, and laterally. When there was more trust, there was more upward than downward information flow. ¹⁴

Applying these behavioral research results to military organizations then, leads one to conclude that commanders who enjoy high levels of trust can be expected to receive more information from their subordinates than those commanders who are not trusted. In addition, the information received by trusted commanders will be more timely, accurate, and complete than information provided to commanders who are not trusted.

In order to have accurate tactical battlefield assessments then, the leadership and communications challenges for operational level leadership is to encourage upward information flow to give a good common operating picture as to what is happening on the ground. With correct information and accurate assessments of the tactical situation, operational leaders can better command and control operations to achieve operational level objectives. We will now explore the controversy between VII Corps and CENTCOM to see what we can learn about these principles of operational level leadership as they were applied in the Gulf War.

BRIEFING TO SENIOR COMMANDERS (14 NOVEMBER 1990)

In the 14 November 1990 briefing to his senior commanders, GEN Schwarzkopf outlined his plan to defeat Iraqi forces. GEN Schwarzkopf called it the 'Hail Mary' play, and it involved going around the Iraqi defenses rather than through them. Along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border near the gulf, the US Marines and a Saudi task force were to thrust straight into Kuwait to tie up Kuwaiti forces and encircle Kuwait City. A parallel attack would occur with Pan-Arab forces in western Kuwait to seize the road junction north of Kuwait City to block Iraqi supply lines. XVIIIth Airborne Corps would go deep to the Euphrates River to block the RGFC's last route of retreat. Then GEN Schwarzkopf gave LTG Franks his mission.

Finally I turned to Fred Franks. "I think it's pretty obvious what your mission is going to be," I said, moving my hand along the desert corridor just to the west of Kuwait, "attack through here and destroy the Republican Guard." I wanted to pin them with their backs against the sea, then go in and wipe them out. ¹⁵

After the briefing no commanders had any concerns about the plan except LTG Franks. Given that he was being asked to destroy six RGFC divisions and had been allocated three US divisions and one UK division, he felt he needed more forces. GEN Schwarzkopf echoes this when he states:

The only dissonant note was from Freddie Franks: "The plan looks good, but I don't have enough force to accomplish my mission." He argued that I should give him the 1st Cavalry Division, which I was holding in reserve. I said I'd consider it when the time came. ¹⁶

In his book with Tom Clancy, Franks has a different version of the briefing with Schwarzkopf. Franks states he did not even bring up the fact that he needed more force at the 14 November briefing. He did bring it up later during a December briefing to Schwarzkopf. The Franks/Clancy version reads:

When the briefing was over, the CINC doubtless expected an outpouring of enthusiasm from his commanders, and he got it from some of them. But not from Fred Franks, which, for Franks, was certainly a mistake. For General Schwarzkopf, Franks's absence of display was interpreted as a lukewarm attitude toward the plan.

In fact, Franks was profoundly enthusiastic about the CINC's concept, and he was absolutely certain that when it came to a fight, his troops would win. Unfortunately, an excited outburst was the farthest thing from his mind just then. Instead, he was rapidly forming maneuver schemes in his head (hoping to give his commanders an early heads-up); he was thinking about Iraqi forces in front of the corps and about what the Republican guards might do (since the VII Corps mission was force oriented), and he was thinking about force placement on the ground.

After General Schwarzkopf finished speaking, he invited the others up front to look more closely at the maps and intelligence photos of the minefields and barrier systems, and the like. While Franks was up there, examining them, the CINC approached him and asked, "Hey, Fred, what do you think?"

And Franks answered in a calm, confident, forceful, but professional voice, "We can do this. We'll make it happen."

For the CINC that wasn't enough. It turned out to be a burr underneath his skin. ¹⁷

BRIEFING TO SENIOR COMMANDERS – LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

GEN Schwarzkopf was an emotional leader, subject to mood swings and frequent outbursts. According to GEN Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) during the Gulf War, GEN Schwarzkopf's outbursts acted

as a safety valve for his frustrations. Hence it was typical for his subordinates to take the heat for these frequent outbursts. ¹⁸

Frequent outbursts, however, can inhibit upward communications flow. If an operational leader has a tendency to unload his frustrations on a subordinate when he hears news he does not like, other subordinates will pick up on that. Bad news will only be delivered when it absolutely has to. And often information is delivered too late to act on. Based on the way Schwarzkopf termed Frank's concern about needing more forces as dissonant, says a lot about Schwarzkopf's style of leadership. He wanted 'yes' men to work for him and did not desire upward communication unless it was good news. He did not want subordinates to bring him problems, only solutions.

BRIEFING TO SECDEF AND CJCS (8 FEBRUARY 1991)

On 8 February 1991, Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Cheney and GEN Powell arrived in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of President Bush to appraise whether the coalition was ready to launch a ground war. The VII Corps under Fred Franks had recently completed its long move from Germany to tactical assembly areas near the northern border of Saudi Arabia. In a few days the VII Corps would be prepared to move into attack positions. LTG John Yeosock, the Third Army Commander and LTG Franks's higher headquarters commander, briefed

Schwarzkopf prior to the arrival of Cheney and Powell on all the Third Army tactical plans including those of VII Corps. GEN Schwarzkopf states:

My only major concern after sitting through his brief was VII Corps. There was no doubt in my mind that the corps would make it to the starting line, and its plan of maneuver carried out the mission I'd assigned, but the plan seemed plodding and overly cautious: VII Corps was to advance, stop, regroup, advance again, and so on. Its commander, General Franks, was also still insisting that he needed the reserve division to succeed. The more I thought about this, the more concerned I got. When the time came for crucial decisions to be made on the battlefield, I wasn't going to be I was absolutely dependent on the individual skills, temperaments, and judgments of my generals. establish a clear framework and convey my intentions and the spirit in which I wanted the campaign carried out. I reminded Yeosock that VII Corps wasn't fighting the well-trained, wellequipped Soviet army it expected to take on in Europe. "I do not want a slow, ponderous pachyderm mentality. This is not a deliberate attack. I want VII Corps to slam into the Republican Guard. The enemy is not worth a shit. Go after them with audacity, shock action, and surprise."

When Yeosock explained that Franks was worried that VII Corps did not have enough men or combat power to succeed in the attack, I reminded him that our air campaign was pounding the enemy ground forces and eroding the Iraqis' will to fight. I reiterated: "Let me make it clear, John. I do not want a mechanical grind-it-out operation. We must be flexible enough to capitalize on things as they occur. The idea is *not* to get to intermediate objectives and then stop to rearm and refuel. If you have divisions sitting around, you will present a huge target for chemicals, and you will lose. You cannot have VII Corps stopping for *anything*." Yeosock said he understood and agreed.

After Cheney and Powell arrived, a full eight hours of briefings were conducted which included all of the tactical commanders. GEN Schwarzkopf states his impressions of the briefings.

As the day when on, Pagonis gave a presentation showing that we'd accomplished our giant shift of forces to the west in the allotted three weeks. Cheney was full of praise. Then Franks, Griffith of the 1st Armored Division, and McCaffrey of the 24th Mechanized Infantry Division gave detailed briefings on how they would accomplish their missions -- all very impressive, I thought, except for Franks, whose plan was still too deliberate and who insisted on telling the secretary and the chairman that he was going to need the reserve. ²⁰

However, if Schwarzkopf had any reservations about Franks's plan as briefed to the SECDEF and the CJCS, he never shared it with Franks. The Franks/Clancy version of the briefing follows.

During the briefing, Franks went through the final iteration of the plan in detail, including a summary of combat actions up to that point, the RGFC's likely options, and a review of training time for each major unit.

Some questions came up, and then Cheney asked the biggest question of the war: "How will it all end?" It was a great question. Franks hesitated a moment, thinking Chenev should really hear the answer from General Schwarzkopf, from a theater perspective, instead of the perspective of one of five attacking Corps commanders. But there was only silence. So Franks said, "Mr. Secretary, I cannot answer for anyone else, but I can give you my opinion from a VII Corps perspective. I believe the Iraqis will defend from positions about where they are now. We will get to a position about here" -- he pointed to objective area Collins -- "and then turn right ninety degrees, slamming into the RGFC with a three-division fist. We will continue to attack and finish around the area of the Kuwait-Iraq border here" where it intersects Highway 8. "XVIII Corps will attack to our north. We will be the anvil along the border area and they will be the hammer coming in from the north."

There was no discussion.

General Schwarzkopf also spoke to the assembled commanders. He said he was "very well pleased" with what he had heard.

Franks himself was really pleased with the outcome. He thought they were all of one on the attack, and on what the corps and Third Army would do if the RGFC stayed where they were. ²¹

BRIEFING TO SECDEF AND CJCS – LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

If GEN Schwarzkopf had such reservations about Franks's plan, why didn't he express it during or after the briefing to Franks? No one during the briefing suggested any modifications to the VII Corps plan to speed up the pace of attack ²² Admittedly, Schwarzkopf did give guidance to Franks's superior, Yeosock, to make sure VII Corps did not stop for anything, but movements-wise it would have been difficult to satisfy that requirement and still achieve a sizable fist with which to slam into the RGFC. The leadership issue of credibility of the operational commander begins to emerge here. Schwarzkopf, being an infantryman by background, may have just decided to leave maneuvering the armored forces to Yeosock and Franks since they had an armored cavalry background. This is fine for an operational commander as long as he is willing to accept the plan of the armored cavalrymen as it is briefed. The guidance "don't stop for anything" fails to recognize the need to rearm, refit, and refuel prior to moving out of attack positions to 'slam' into the RGFC. It also failed to appreciate the massive movements required to maneuver the Corps from the line of departure, 200 kilometers to the main defenses of the RGFC. If Schwarzkopf had a better way, why didn't he share it with Yeosock and Franks?

Schwarzkopf also stated he did not envision this was a deliberate attack. If an armored corps is going to mass 3-4 armored/mechanized divisions on six enemy RGFC divisions (3 of which are armored divisions) that have been in place a number of days, how can this be anything but a deliberate attack?

What emerges here is that General Schwarzkopf did not have a firm grasp of the tactics and operational maneuver that would be required to completely destroy the RGFC. This was evidenced when he bypassed the opportunity to answer the SECDEF's question on what the end state should be in theater, leaving Franks to try to answer that for him. Schwarzkopf's emerging low levels of operational and tactical credibility and emotional style of leadership began to paint a picture of a commander who lacked credibility with subordinates and would not comprehend the VII Corps tactical plan after the ground war began.

GROUND WAR – G-DAY AND G+1 (24 AND 25 FEBRUARY 1991)

At 0400, on Sunday, 24 February 1991, two attacks were launched at either end of the long coalition front. In the east the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force's (1st MEF's) two divisions and the Joint Forces Command-East attacked toward Kuwait City. In the west the XVIII Airborne Corps attacked across the Saudi-Iraq border deep into Iraq to cut off the Iraqi Army's highway 8-escape route from Kuwait to Baghdad along the Euphrates River. ²³

The VII Corps attack had not been scheduled to kick off until early morning on 25 February. However, because the Marine attack was doing so well in the east, General Schwarzkopf asked LTG Yeosock about 0900 to ascertain whether VII Corps could attack that afternoon. The early attack would protect the Marines left flank. After consultation with LTG Franks, it was decided the VII Corps attack would be moved up fifteen hours to 1500 on 24 February. ²⁴

The attack went well. The 1st Infantry Division (1st ID) breached the complex obstacle belt in the eastern part of the VII Corps sector penetrating approximately 20 kilometers into Iraq. The 1st ID created lanes in the belt the 1st (UK) Armored Division (1st (UK) AD) would pass through the next day. The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (2nd ACR) led the attack in the center of the Corps sector to the west of the breach penetrating approximately 60 kilometers into Iraq. The 3rd Armored Division (3rd AD) followed it. The 1st Armored Division (1st AD) attacked to the west of 3rd AD. Its lead cavalry units also penetrated to approximately 60 kilometers pass the line of departure. ²⁵

By late in the evening of G-Day the main body forces of VII Corps had moved approximately 25 to 30 kilometers inside Iraq. General Schwarzkopf was satisfied with the progress of VII Corps and expected both VII Corps and the XVIII Airborne Corps to make good progress throughout the night. ²⁶ Towards the end of the evening he called CJCS to give him an update.

I had spoken to Powell regularly throughout the day. His reaction to its events, like mine, was guarded. We both knew better than to make assumptions based on a jumble of disjointed early-battle reports. At ten P.M., I called to give him a final update. I was tired; at the end of the conversation I heard myself say how much I'd like to blow up the giant Saddam statute and the victory arch in downtown Baghdad. Pentagon lawyers vetoed the idea a couple of days later, but that night about 20 hours into the ground war, I went to bed content. ²⁷

However, while Schwarzkopf went to bed believing the VII Corps attack would continue throughout the night, LTG Franks had decided that the VII Corps ground attack would halt for the night. This was based on the advice of his subordinate commanders and his own sense of the battlefield. The 1st ID commander recommended the forward night passage of lines that would have to be conducted by the 1st (UK) AD through the lanes in the obstacle belts through his forward units be postponed until morning. MG Rupert, 1st (UK) AD Commander concurred. The Commander of the 2nd ACR recommended a night pause so the 1st AD and 3rd AD could close up tighter in preparation for hitting the Phase Line Smash (the next major phase line) the next day. To avoid fratricide and not risk casualties as a result of night operations, Franks concurred with these recommendations and informed Yeosock.

From the first moment of my involvement in Desert Shield, and all during Desert Storm, I had been in frequent communication with John Yeosock. John and I had agreed that I would call him as often as possible during the ground war to keep him informed. It was especially important for me to try to talk to him around 1800 so that he would have the latest when he went to General Schwarzkopf's regular 1900 evening briefings.

I called John Yeosock that evening to report what I was doing and why -- a sin ple conversation between two cavalrymen who understood what it took to maneuver VII Corps. I told John that in my judgment the immediate situation and complexity of what we had to do at night was not worth the risk of continuing the attack. Just as he had done a few hours before, he told me he agreed with what I was doing and trusted my judgment. ²⁸

However, when GEN Schwarzkopf woke up in the morning to get a situation update he exploded like a volcano. GEN Schwarzkopf states:

I came into the war room early the next morning and hurried to the battle map to see how far we'd advance during the night. "What the Hell's going on with VII Corps?" I burst out. Its lines had shifted *backward*.

"Our information yesterday wasn't entirely accurate, sir," said Moore. He explained that while *elements* of VII Corps -- namely, cavalry scouts -- had indeed ranged fifteen miles inside Iraq, the tank force had slowed after crossing the border the day before. That still didn't explain what I was seeing. I had been told that General Franks and his corps would be moving all night and, since there was no enemy to their front, had expected to find them closing in on Objective Collins. This was a ten-mile-wide oval of flat, gravelly desert west of the main Republican Guard positions that was to serve as jumping-off point for VII Corps's attack. There General Franks was supposed to turn his formations east to hit the Republican Guard. I looked at the map again; what made VII Corps's lack of progress especially hard to understand was the

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GROUND WAR - G-DAY AND G+1- LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

GEN Schwarzkopf's tirade to LTG Yeosock in comparing VII Corps' progress to that made by McCaffrey's 24th Infantry Division (24th ID) was certainly dramatic, but demonstrated Schwarzkopf's lack of battlefield awareness. The 24th ID had encountered no enemy resistance at all. In addition, the 24th ID was about to be slowed down significantly by almost impassable terrain in its sector. Schwarzkopf also did not appreciate the large burden placed on VII Corps when the attack was moved up by fifteen hours. Nor did he seem to comprehend the difficulty of breaching minefields and conducting forward passage of lines of divisional units at night. In addition, Franks was seeking to minimize casualties by massing and concentrating his combat power. This had been a dictum of American military thought since the mid-1800's. ("There is no higher or simpler law in strategy," Clausewitz had stated, "than that of keeping one's forces concentrated.") ³⁰

In addition, Schwarzkopf's comment that VII Corps had not had a shot fired at them was also incorrect. All attacking divisions had taken enemy fire going through the defensive obstacles and trenches. Of course, the overwhelming force of VII Corps overcame the defenders. The 1st ID had attacked the Iraqi 26th Division, which was defending with two brigades forward. Iraqi soldiers defending in trenches were offered the opportunity to surrender. If they refused,

they were buried by armored combat earthmovers or suffered the effects of mine clearing line charges exploding in their trenches. The division had captured over 1000 prisoners. ³¹

Franks's statement that he and Yeosock understood what it took to maneuver VII Corps implied that Schwarzkopf did not. In fact, Schwarzkopf's contradictory statements in his autobiography reinforce this view. In his meeting with Yeosock prior to the Cheney-Powell briefings on 8 February, he told Yeosock this was not a deliberate attack. Then on 25 February in another conversation with Yeosock he states that the deliberate attack had turned into something else. Schwarzkopf states:

By the time Yeosock and I spoke again at noon, I was determined to turn up the heat. The campaign had shifted from deliberate attack to what tacticians call an exploitation, in which an army pursues a faltering enemy, forcing it to fight in hopes of precipitating a total collapse. ³²

In the face of Schwarzkopf's tirade, Yeosock stood his ground, to his credit.

This caused Schwarzkopf to flip-flop from his earlier outburst. Schwarzkopf states:

Yeosock and I didn't waste time discussing the inaction of seventh Corps the night before. He simply confirmed that Franks had cautiously chosen to stick to his original plan, even though it was based on the assumption that the Iraqis would fight a lot harder. Franks had insisted on getting all his divisions past the barrier and then stopping to regroup on the other side. That process was now almost complete, Yeosock said, and soon VII Corps would move north. If all went well, it would be in position to attack the Republican Guard the next day. While this pace was nowhere near as fast as I'd have liked, it was acceptable. ³³

With so much emotional energy going into these tirades, only to determine in the end the pace of the VII Corps attack was indeed acceptable, one has to wonder how much energy Schwarzkopf was devoting to forward thinking. For example, how would CENTCOM's plan change if the Iraqi Army started pulling out of Kuwait early because of the success of the Marine Corps attack? Or, how would CENTCOM synchronize air and land operations to complete its destruction if the RGFC started to retreat back into central Iraq? Or, how would the CENTCOM plan transition from a deliberate attack to an exploitation? These were all operational level questions that no one seemed to be considering, but needed operational level attention and leadership.

An operational leader who directs his emotional energy so intensely into the current operation, especially an operation that is going so well at the expense of future planning, diverts his commanders and staffs attention away from really important issues. These important issues include forward planning that looks out 48 to 72 hours and beyond to consider the questions raised above.

GROUND WAR – G+2 DAY (26 FEBRUARY 1991)

Early the next morning an event occurred that caught the operational and strategic levels of leadership by surprise. Iraqi forces began to pull out of Kuwait. GEN Schwarzkopf states:

At 2:15 that morning Brigadier General Butch Neal, the night operations chief, nudged me awake. "Sir, we picked up a public broadcast on Baghdad radio. They're ordering their troops out of Kuwait." . . . We'd intercepted radio messages from III Corps, the Iraqi force occupying Kuwait City, ordering its units to pull out, and JSTARS, our high-tech observation plane that monitored activity on the battlefield, had picked up a convoy of 150 vehicles moving rapidly north out of the city.

Powell called almost immediately. I told him we were monitoring the roads and would bomb any military target that presented itself. He confirmed we were to continue with the attack -- Iraq had given no indication that it was willing to accept the UN resolutions. But he speculated, "This could very quickly lead to a cease-fire."

"If it happens in less than a day or two, we could have a big problem with the Republican Guard," I said. Since their positions were in Iraq, not Kuwait, an immediate cease-fire would mean they'd probably escape. On that worrisome note, I went back to my room for a few more hours' sleep.³⁴

This obviously made speeding up the VII Corps attack more urgent so the Republican Guard would not escape. The next morning GEN Schwarzkopf would receive another update that would send him into another tirade. GEN Schwarzkopf states:

When I returned to the war room just after sunrise, I immediately asked, "Where's the Republican Guard?" . . . "We're not sure, but we think they haven't moved." That news, if true, was encouraging. But then Burt Moore, my operation chief, informed me VII Corps *hadn't moved either* -- only a few lead elements had reached Objective Collins. "Get me Yeosock," I ordered.

On the phone, Yeosock confirmed the report. "John," I said bluntly, "no more excuses. Get your forces moving. We have got the entire goddamn Iraqi army on the run. Light a fire under VII Corps. I want you to find out what they intend to do and get back to me." ³⁵

After checking with LTG Franks, Yeosock finally got the answer that he needed to get back to Schwarzkopf. Franks was concentrating his forces for the main attack on the RGFC. Schwarzkopf describes this when he states:

I began to worry that the weather would bog down VIIth Corps still more. It was raining hard in that part of the theater and the wadis, or riverbeds, were filling up. Meanwhile, it became clear that the Republican Guard was no longer sitting still. Their commanders -- using the cover of the storm -- were organizing a classic battlefield retreat. Intercepted radio messages indicated that the Tawakalna Division was to stay in place and fight a delaying action while the Medina and Hammurabi pulled back in stages toward Basra. Finally, Yeosock called. Frank's advance force was on Objective Collins, he r

At noon we heard that Moscow, still operating as Baghdad's intermediary, had called for a meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss a possible cease-fire. That prompted a phone call from Powell, who, after listening to my description of our progress across the front, asked, "Can't you get VII Corps moving faster?" I explained the timetable Yeosock and I had agreed on for attacking the Republican Guard, and suggested that, if a cease-fire seemed imminent, "You might have to buy us some time."

Things got very quiet on the other end of the phone. Then Powell said evenly, "Call General Yeosock. Tell him the chairman is on the ceiling about this entire matter of VII Corps. I want to know why they're not moving and why they can't attack an enemy that has been bombed continuously for thirty days. They've been maneuvering for more than two days and still don't even have contact with enemy. It's very hard to justify VII Corp's actions to anyone in Washington. I know I shouldn't be second-guessing anyone in the field, but we should be fighting the enemy now."

I relayed the message willingly -- I hoped it would further encourage VII Corps to move -- but the pressure from headquarters had already galvanized Franks. Within half an hour Yeosock reported that the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment had attacked the westernmost elements of the Tawakalna. He also indicated that the 1st Infantry Division, with its heavy tanks, would take over the attack at the end of the day. "Does that mean if we can attack tonight we will?" I asked.

"You bet," said Yeosock. 37

After giving Schwarzkopf the update, Yeosock, sensing the urgency of the matter, believed it appropriate for LTG Franks to talk to Schwarzkopf personally. Schwarzkopf describes his version of the conversation when he states:

A little while later -- by now it was late afternoon -- Franks himself called. "General Yeosock told me that a report to you would be in order," he began stiffly. The first thing he brought up was his concern that some Iraqi units he'd bypassed might come up to hit him on the flank. He wanted them destroyed before his forces turned to the Republican Guard, and therefore was about to order an attack toward the *south*.

"Fred," I interrupted, "for chrissakes, don't turn south! Turn east. Go after 'em!" Waller, sitting nearby, overheard my end of the conversation; he had his fists clenched and was staring at his desk. I reminded Franks that he had the powerful British 1st Armored Division on his right and he could use that to protect his southern flank. He immediately agreed. I didn't need to brow beat the man -- I recognized he was going through the usual last-minute jitters that precede a crucial battle.

Then he told me what I'd been waiting to hear: that he intended to attack the Republican Guard throughout the night. "Great!" I said. "You should have good shooting tonight. Keep up the pressure. Don't let them break contact. Keep 'em on the run. If we can get in under the weather we'll have the Air Force pound them as they pull back in front you." ³⁸

LTG Franks, however, had a starkly different version of his only conversation with GEN Schwarzkopf during the four-day war. Franks states:

I began by reporting that we had turned the corps ninety degrees east and were attacking the RGFC, that 1st INF would pass through 2nd ACR that night and form the three-division fist of the Corps to destroy the RGFC, that I had Apaches going deep that we were pressing the fight hard. He seemed to take it all in.

Because I assumed he already had a good picture of our activities, I did not give him the details of the fighting, or of the battle damages to the Iraqis. As I discovered after the war, though, his HQ was twelve to twenty-four hours behind in tracking the fight. If I had known that then, I would have filled him in more completely. As it turned out, what the CINC apparently thought we were doing and what we were actually doing were worlds apart.

After I had taken him through our basic situation, I told him about our orders from Third Army to attack south with the British, and told him instead we should continue east and maybe north with the British, and he agreed. He thought going south was a bad idea as well.

Once again, I thought we understood each other. Again, I discovered after the war that I was wrong. In his autobiography, General Schwarzkopf reports that he heard me say that I was worried about some bypassed Iraqi units that might hit us in the flank and that, in his words, I "wanted them destroyed" before his

forces turned to the Republican Guards, and therefore was about to order an attack toward the *south*.

... I didn't even want to attack south with the *British*, much less the whole corps. How he got that impression is almost unimaginable to me. I was stunned. Here we were in a fist; we had been attacking relentlessly into the Tawalkana most of the day; we were also less than two hours from an Apache battalion attack about 100 kilometers east of those battles; and all of it heading due east! How could he think I was about to turn south?

Lastly, I told him about our commitment of the 1st CAV in the north and our double-envelopment scheme of maneuver.

After he had listened to it all, he answered, "OK, Fred, good work, keep it up," or words to that effect. He went on to add some compliments to the corps, yet he also left me with the clear intent that we should continue to press the attack hard. . . as we were in fact doing. Then he added some intelligence that was new to me: the Hammurabi Division was being loaded onto HETs and were trying to escape the theater.

Finally, he thanked me for the update and added a "good luck," and that was it. I got no change in orders from General Schwarzkopf.

It was our only talk during those four days, and afterward, I could not help but conclude that he was satisfied with what we were doing. He also left me with the feeling that we had another 48 hours to finish this war. ³⁹

Schwarzkopf's conclusion after the conversation with Franks reflects that he was satisfied at that point with VII Corps ready to attack. Schwarzkopf states:

We'd finally set the stage for the largest tank battle in history. The massive force assembled under Franks -- the 1st Armored Division, the 3rd Armored Division, the 1st Infantry Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, and the British 1st Armored Division -- would confront the elite Iraqi armored units that had spearheaded the invasion of Kuwait. Seven months after they'd invaded Kuwait, the hour of reckoning was upon the Republican Guard. 40

GROUND WAR - G+2 - LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

On the 26th of February we see another tirade from Schwarzkopf, which clearly reflects his lack of understanding in what it is taking to maneuver VII Corps into place to attack as many as six RGFC divisions. The tirade reveals poor interpersonal communications ability on the part of GEN Schwarzkopf. This poor communications ability is not creating an environment of trust for upward communications flow from LTG Yeosock. Observe how Schwarzkopf always has to call Yeosock in these situations. It does not appear Yeosock is ever calling him. Additionally, the conversations are usually one-sided. Upward communication flow appears almost non-existent. Yeosock only communicates with Schwarzkopf when he has to. This implies Yeosock does not trust GEN Schwarzkopf because of his lack of credibility regarding the maneuver of an armored corps and his poor interpersonal communications ability to listen, learn, and understand what it takes to maneuver the corps into position to attack the RGFC.

The way Schwarzkopf acts and writes about VII Corps indicates a lack of communication and understanding about their operations. The clear differences in Franks's and Schwarzkopf's different interpretations of their only phone conversation during the war clearly indicate this. It appears they were talking past each other, even though the main message, that VII Corps was attacking the RGFC now seems to have been communicated. In addition, the true lack of trust

and respect Schwarzkopf has for Franks comes across in his actions and writings. This explains perhaps why he did not appear to hear everything Franks was telling him, particularly about the proposed attack south with the British. Hence Schwarzkopf did not only have poor interpersonal communications with LTG Yeosock, but with LTG Franks as well.

This poor communications flow, engendered by a lack of trust and respect between GEN Schwarzkopf and LTG Franks, prevented a common operating picture and understanding of the time required to conduct the VII Corps attack. However in this one conversation between the two, Franks told Schwarzkopf about his RGFC 'destroy mechanism,' which is the plan for the double envelopment of the RGFC. It doesn't appear to have even registered with Schwarzkopf, as mention of it does not appear in his account of the conversation. This prevented GEN Schwarzkopf from knowing when VII Corps would complete its destruction of the RGFC. He was then not able to articulate this to GEN Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), so that the strategic level could synchronize the end of the conflict to occur after the RGFC was destroyed. Lacking this picture prevented the strategic level from shaping political events to cause the end of the conflict to occur after the RGFC had been completely destroyed.

GROUND WAR - G+3 DAY AND BEYOND

Schwarzkopf concludes about the VII Corps attack:

VIIth Corps did attack the Republican Guard all night. Not surprisingly, the Republican Guard fought hard to hold their ground. But we overwhelmed them and by dawn our reports showed that the Tawakalna Division had been almost completely destroyed while we hadn't lost a single tank. The Medina and Hammurabi divisions, confused by the discovery of a massive coalition force closing in on them from the west, tried to hurry their retreat toward Basra. Meanwhile on Highway 8 the XVIIIth Airborne Corps had destroyed a large convoy of Iraqi heavy-equipment transports trying to haul tanks out of the war zone.

By the middle of the day the major elements of the Medina Division were being destroyed, but the Hammurabi Division was escaping. Schwarzkopf states:

I spent the rest of the day monitoring reports of the fighting along Kuwait's northern border, where Yeosock and his generals were tightening their grip on the remainder of Saddam's army. Even though the weather remained foul -- pelting rain, which I called infantryman's because foot soldiers take living in the mud for granted -- VIIth Corps made steady progress. Yeosock called in the middle of the afternoon to let me know that our 1st Armored Division had broken through the positions of the Medina Division and at least two entire battalions of Iraqi tanks had been destroyed. He said the Hammurabi Division was now on the run, hiding in and behind an oil field, with our 1st Armored Division in pursuit.

"How much longer do you need to finish off the Republican Guard?" I asked.

"One more day," he answered promptly. "They'll be done for by tomorrow night." 42

However, the war would not get another full day. A cease-fire would be set in Washington from a public relations standpoint. Because it would play well in the media, the cease-fire was initially set to end the conflict an even four-days after it

began. However, when it was discovered that extending the cease-fire time an additional four hours would make it an even 100-hour war, the White House decided on this option. It seems a 100-hour war was catchier from a political publicist's viewpoint than a four-day war. Hence, the war was concluded by setting an arbitrary time for ending hostilities. GEN Powell, uninformed about the VII Corps 'destroy mechanism' to complete the destruction of the RGFC, was not in a position to push the case at the strategic level to extend the cease-fire to achieve this operational level objective. As it turns out the decision to end the war was based on political instead of military considerations.⁴³

In evaluating Franks's command of VII, Corps Schwarzkopf included in his book a conversation with GEN Powell:

After making sure Powell knew the details, I'd told him I'd decided to let the matter drop. I had also decided I been too harsh in my criticism of VIIth Corps slow progress during the ground battle. It is easy to second-guess in the isolation of a war room deep underground where you are not faced with the enormous task of moving huge forces over strange terrain in foul weather against an unknown enemy. I knew that there wasn't only one right way to fight a battle. Franks was a fine commander who had carried out his assigned mission as he had seen it and, just like me, he'd been faced with the challenge of accomplishing that mission while sparing the lives of as many of his troops as possible. We would probably never know whether attacking the Republican Guard one or two days sooner would have made much difference in the outcome. What I did know was that we had inflicted a crushing defeat on Saddam's forces and accomplished every one of our military objectives. That was good enough for me. 44

GROUND WAR - G+3 AND BEYOND - LEADERSHIP ANALYSIS

The fact that Schwarzkopf was somewhat contrite about how he had judged Franks during the war is further evidence that he did not understand what Franks was trying to do in maneuvering his corps. Schwarzkopf's emotional personality just wanted results. When Franks's attack was successful in destroying the preponderance of the RGFC in his sector, he was happy, as evidenced by his concluding statement. After the war, Fort Leavenworth planners reconstructed timelines of Franks's VII Corps movements. They determined the fastest he could have accomplished the maneuver would have been 10 hours faster based on tactical movement rates alone. When one adds the additional effects of weather and time for logistics enroute, it appears Franks moved the formation as fast as he could. ⁴⁵

The strategic level ended the war too early to achieve the full destruction of the RGFC. Not knowing LTG Franks's RGFC 'destroy mechanism' (a double envelopment of the RGFC), GEN Powell was not in an informed position to use that information in influencing the decision at the strategic level to possibly continue the war for another day. As Pulitzer prize-winning author, Rick Atkinson states in his book, <u>Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War:</u>

Moreover, when given the opportunity to urge that the fighting continue – to Powell, to Cheney, and to Bush – Schwarzkopf demurred. No thought appears to have been given to halting deep attacks while letting the Army – with close support from the Air

Force – either complete Franks's double envelopment or encircle all of Basrah. 46

This falls on GEN Schwarzkopf's shoulders. He never communicated the common operating picture to the strategic level, which might have prolonged the war, enabling the complete destruction of the RGFC.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that poor communications flow, engendered by a lack of trust and respect between GEN Schwarzkopf and LTG Franks, prevented a common operating picture and understanding of the time required to conduct the VII Corps attack on the RGFC. This prevented GEN Schwarzkopf from knowing when VII Corps would complete its destruction of the RGFC. He was then not able to articulate this to GEN Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). The strategic level was then not able to synchronize political events to cause the conflict to end after the RGFC was destroyed. The poor communications flow was important because GEN Schwarzkopf did not appreciate the length of time required for the VII Corps to conduct the complex maneuver to concentrate its forces on the RGFC to achieve its complete destruction. Lacking this competency and not listening and learning from those who had that competency, LTG Franks and the 3rd US Army Commander LTG John Yeosock, prevented GEN Schwarzkopf from being able to provide the

strategic level leadership the proper operating picture. Therefore, through this examination of GEN Schwarzkopf as the operational level leader during Operation Desert Storm, one concludes that operational level leadership must create the environment to achieve an accurate information flow between tactical and operational commanders. Only in this way can a common operating picture be achieved and understood between tactical, operational, and strategic levels of leadership. This is the principal leadership lesson from the Schwarzkopf-Franks controversy.

The operational level commander provides the leadership that links the achievement of operational level objectives to the accomplishment of tactical missions within the constraints and restraints of the strategic political and military environments. The operational level commander must have an accurate picture and understanding of the overall tactical plan to be in a better position to synchronize and influence tactical, operational, and strategic activities to achieve operational objectives within political realities. In Operation Desert Storm it is apparent that the operational level commander did not have a timely, accurate assessment and understanding VII Corps tactical plan to achieve destruction of the RGFC. This inaccurate assessment and understanding prevented complete destruction of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard forces and attainment of one of the most important operational objectives of the US-led coalition.

ENDNOTES

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- ² General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, <u>The Autobiography: It Doesn't Take a Hero</u> (New York: Linda Grey Bantam Books, 1992) 455-456, 461-464.
- ³ US Army Field Manual 100-5, Fighting Future Wars (Washington: Brassey's, 1994) 6-2.
- ⁴ US Department of Defense, Joint Pub 1-02, Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994 as amended 10 June 1998) 314.
- ⁵ Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. (Ret.). On Strategy II: A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992) 175.
- ⁶ Rick Atkinson, <u>Crusade</u>, <u>The Untold Story of the Gulf War</u> (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993) 299.
- ⁷ Schwarzkopf, 381.
- ⁸ Ibid, 381-382.
- ⁹ James W. Lussier and Terrill F. Saxon, <u>Critical Factors in the Art of Battle Command</u>, (Fort Leavenworth: Army Research Institute, 1994) 17.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 18.
- ¹¹ Ibid, 18- 19.
- ¹² D. Zand, "Trust and Managerial Problem Solving." <u>Administrative Science Quarterly</u> 17.2 (1972): 232.
- ¹³ Lussier and Saxon, 24.
- ¹⁴ Lussier and Saxon, 24.
- 15 Schwarzkopf, 383.
- ¹⁶ Schwarzkopf, 383.
- ¹⁷ Tom Clancy and General Fred Franks, Jr. Into the Storm: A Study in Command (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1997) 194, 195.
- ¹⁸ Colin L. Powell, My American Journey (New York: Random House, 1995) 492.
- ¹⁹ Schwarzkopf, 433, 434.
- ²⁰ Schwarzkopf, 434.
- ²¹ Clancy and Franks, 235, 236.
- ²² Gordon and Trainor, 307.
- ²³ Bruce W. Watson, ed., Military Lessons of the Gulf War (London: Greenhill Books, 1991) 96.
- ²⁴ Clancy and Franks, 265, 266.
- ²⁵ Clancy and Franks, 278-285.
- ²⁶ Schwarzkopf, 454.
- ²⁷ Schwarzkopf, 455.
- ²⁸ Clancy and Franks, 284.

²⁹ Schwarzkopf, 455, 456.

³⁰ Atkinson, 406.

³¹ Clancy and Franks, 276-279.

³² Schwarzkopf, 456.

³³ Schwarzkopf, 456.

³⁴ Schwarzkopf, 461.

³⁵ Schwarzkopf, 461.

³⁶ Schwarzkopf, 462, 463.

³⁷ Schwarzkopf, 463.

³⁸ Schwarzkopf, 463-464.

³⁹ Clancy and Franks, 367-368.

⁴⁰ Schwarzkopf, 464.

⁴¹ Schwarzkopf, 466.

⁴² Schwarzkopf, 467.

⁴³ Gordon and Trainor, 439.

⁴⁴ Schwarzkopf, 482.

⁴⁵ Gordon and Trainor, 409.

⁴⁶ Atkinson, 476.

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