Indonesian armed forces soldiers and Borzoi Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (1-27 Wolfhounds), participate in live fire exercise during Garuda Shield, in Cibenda, Indonesia, September 27, 2017 (U.S. Army National Guard/Matthew A. Foster)

A Model for Tactical Readiness Through Strategic Opportunity

By David A. Zelaya and Joshua Wiles

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T heater security cooperation programs (TSCPs) provide a unique opportunity to simultaneously generate U.S. force readiness and improve strategic interoperability with partner nations; however, the perception among tactical units is that readiness often takes a back seat to strategic objectives. What follows is a model for tactical unit integration into the strategic planning process that yields better outcomes for units at echelon. It is a simple model developed from our experience in Exercise Garuda Shield 17 (GS17). The model emphasizes placing tactical leaders at strategic points of friction to communicate tactical requirements up the chain of command and receive strategic messages down to the Soldier. First Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (1-27 Infantry), used tactical strategy to meet both national and strategic requirements while furthering unit readiness during GS17 with the Indonesian army (Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Darat [TNI-AD]).

While the battalion did achieve its overall training objectives, it was not without friction. We can now provide feedback into our missteps and successes.

What follows is a road map that outlines how we would have done things if we had another chance. We outline our situation, describe the model, and focus on some of the key friction points we encountered along the way.
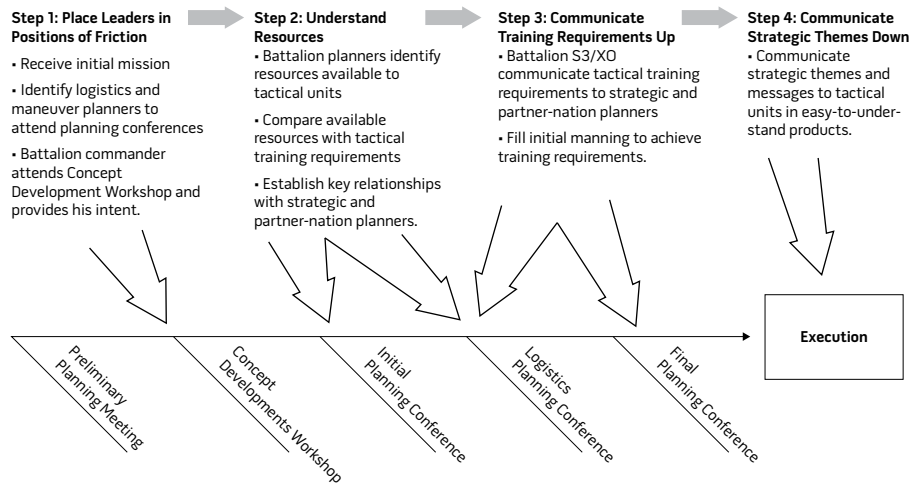
The Situation and Model

1-27 Infantry's experience was unique in that it was the highest degree of interoperability yet achieved with Indonesia. GS17 is an annual preplanned exercise that has historically focused on disaster relief and nonlethal civil support operations; however, in recent years the exercise has shifted toward a more kinetic theme. 1-27 Infantry had three primary goals going into the exercise:

- Maximize interoperability at the highest and lowest echelon possible between U.S. and Indonesian forces.
- Leverage strategic resources to conduct a Company Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX).
- Train at echelon and achieve the required complexity to conduct a Battalion Fires Coordination Exercise simultaneously with the Company CALFEX.

GS17 included B Company of 1-27 Infantry and A Company of 303 Infantry (TNI-AD) training side by side, mutually supported by indirect fires, snipers, and both U.S. and TNI-AD aviation. The battalion headquarters was a combined command post with staff representation from the United States and Indonesia. The partnered task force operated under the auspices of a United Nations mandate for training purposes.

To achieve its training objectives, 1-27 Infantry utilized a four-step tactical integration model outlined in the figure. As with most things, the most important step is the first one. Units must identify and empower the correct tactical exercise planner to communicate readiness requirements to strategic decisionmakers (specifically, the Service component command [SCC]) and subsequently place that planner at positions of friction in order to communicate the tactical unit's interests. When identifying the right leaders for the job, we found that echelon was

Figure. Model for Balancing Tactical and Strategic Requirements

Step 1: Place Leaders in Positions of Friction
- Receive initial mission
- Identify logistics and maneuver planners to attend planning conferences
- Battalion commander attends Concept Development Workshop and provides his intent.

Step 2: Understand Resources
- Battalion planners identify resources available to tactical units
- Compare available resources with tactical training requirements
- Establish key relationships with strategic and partner-nation planners.

Step 3: Communicate Training Requirements Up
- Battalion S3/XO communicate tactical training requirements to strategic and partner-nation planners
- Fill initial manning to achieve training requirements.

Step 4: Communicate Strategic Themes Down
- Communicate strategic themes and messages to tactical units in easy-to-understand products.

Preliminary Planning Meeting — Concept Developments Workshop — Initial Planning Conference — Logistics Planning Conference — Final Planning Conference — **Execution**

the key factor. The closer that planner is to the executing unit, the better he will be able to communicate and negotiate that unit's readiness requirements. Regardless of who is in the position, however, he must be empowered with a clear understanding of his commander's intent and training requirements to be successful. The commander's intent must include the minimum requirements that define success for the training unit. These minimum requirements are often communicated as key training gates on a tactical unit's training progression.

Once a leader is identified and empowered, he must be placed in the best position to advocate for his unit. The regularly held planning conferences are the best venue to establish face-to-face relationships with all parties. The interactions among tactical planners, strategic combatant command planners, and the partner nation are critical for setting the conditions for success, both strategically and tactically. SCC exercise planners generally viewed their mission through a lens based on senior leader directives and guidance. These planners were often not fully aware of our distinct readiness requirements; therefore, it was key to select a tactical unit–level representative armed with the unit commander's readiness intent to advocate for integration of those objectives into the TSCP exercise. In our particular case, we sent the battalion's assistant operations officer to all planning

events. Additionally, face-to-face coordination with the partner nation became crucial, as it controls the key resources of land and time. 1-27 Infantry successfully established this vital relationship with the TNI-AD early and leveraged it throughout the planning process to ensure that training objectives remained relatively stable regardless of changes to the strategic and political environment.

Strategic Planners

Home station training often includes a complex environment of competing units and limited resources. Tactical units tasked with a TSCP have a unique opportunity to leverage strategic resources for gains in readiness. Steps two and three in our model are the tactical unit's opportunity to shape the planning process to achieve its ends. Units should maximize focus on two lines of effort that define success with clearly outlined standards. We specifically used Objective T (OBJ-T) standards as our baseline when determining our minimum requirements in accordance with guidance provided to us by brigade leadership. The OBJ-T standard outlined minimum personnel requirements and training objectives that defined success.

TSCP personnel requirements were the first key components for consideration. We found ourselves balancing two areas: force-cap and leader presence.

Indonesian soldiers and Borzoi Company, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division (1-27 Wolfhounds), conduct live fire exercise during Garuda Shield, in Cibenda, Indonesia, September 27, 2017 (U.S. Army National Guard/Matthew A. Foster)

The *OBJ-T Leaders Guide* outlines minimum personnel requirements for any given training event. Eighty percent of the unit's authorized Soldiers must be present for training, and 85 percent of key leaders must be present. Tactical-level planners must consider minimum requirements to achieve desired readiness; this includes number of Soldiers being trained, external evaluators, and enablers. We recommend, at a minimum, a battalion-level headquarters element to mission command the broader exercise in order to give the training audience the flexibility to focus on what is most important: training. Planners must keep in mind, however, every seat assigned to staff or an enabler is a seat taken from the primary training audience.

1-27 Infantry brought one light infantry company, a scout/sniper team, a battalion fire support element, battalion medical team with provider, and the battalion main command post to GS17. The required support personnel quickly exceeded the initial force-cap of 150 personnel and had to be adjusted upward with SCC planners. Due to successful negotiations, 1-27 Infantry was able to secure the required personnel slots that led to a successful mission. The battalion dual-hatted enablers as observer-controllers and safeties, achieving significant efficiencies.

Filling key leader slots to achieve OBJ-T requirements became a particular point of friction due to the constant change of personnel before, during, and after the exercise. To maintain the readiness gains secured from a TSCP, it is critical to lock key leaders into positions. We achieved success by maintaining focus on the minimum required personnel and using that standard as the basis for all negotiations. We also influenced the process throughout a 6-month planning period by injecting battalion-level planners early and maintaining that presence throughout execution.

The second focus area relating to readiness is unit training objectives. 1-27 Infantry was able to increase readiness through disciplined commitment during the planning process. As mentioned, battalion representation at the logistics planning conference directly influenced training success. The battalion armed key leaders with the minimum readiness tasks required to achieve success. These tasks were based on training gates required to achieve future readiness milestones. In this case, the battalion executed a company CALFEX and battalion fire coordination exercise in preparation for a battalion live-fire set to occur later in the year.

Partner Nation

Despite language and technological barriers, communicating requirements to our partners was relatively straightforward once we established a sense of trust at the lowest level. That said, we focused most of our effort

Indonesian armed forces and Hawaii Army National Guard participate in command post exercise during Garuda Shield, in Cibenda, Indonesia, September 25, 2017 (U.S. Army National Guard/Thomas A. Foster)

on communicating our live-fire training requirements and accepted risk on our interoperability training objective. The outcome was a considerable gap in emphasis by both parties during execution.

Testing interoperability via a tactical voice bridge (TVB) was an objective identified as critical to operations in the Pacific. TVBs allow for shared communication between two partner forces without the need to reduce communication security or equipment. TVBs are not new or uncommon in modern operations; however, GS17 was the first time the technology was employed between American and Indonesian forces. Traditionally, TVBs are used between partnered nations with similar command and control architecture and a shared language. We established our TVB with a partnered force with significantly different communications architecture and which also spoke a significantly different language. While the TVB was established

successfully, achieving interoperability via the TVB was a more precarious proposition.

The TNI-AD preferred face-to-face integration to maintain a shared network. Furthermore, the language barrier between forces incurred unforeseen costs. The use of a TVB in this context required translation on both sides of every transmission. The TVB also forced the TNI-AD to apply new combat power to manning partnered radios.

Despite some initial complications, the TVB still proved to be a powerful tool to reduce friction between units. During situations where shared communications were necessary for safety, the TVB and our architecture worked as designed. Specifically, during two real-world medical evacuations and indirect fires coordination, the TNI-AD seized the opportunity provided by shared communications. They manned the TVB, maintained the network on their radios, and sent critical reports.

Below are a few planning considerations that we should have emphasized in steps 2 and 3 of our tactical integration model that would have allowed us to maximize interoperability during the training exercises:

- During the initial planning conference, SCC planners should have provided tactical units with an interoperability assessment in accordance with Army Regulation 34-1, *Multinational Force Interoperability*. Based off the assessment of the partner-nation's capabilities, planners at echelon (including the tactical level) should bring interoperability training objectives to the table. Those training objectives should be outlined and agreed to by the partner countries. Both partners need to understand and strive toward the same goals throughout the exercise.

- Tactical planners for partnered forces should align communication capa-

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Assessing Chinese Military Reforms

Edited by Phillip C. Saunders, Arthur S. Ding, Andrew Scobell, Andrew N.D. Yang, and Joel Wuthnow

China's current military reforms are unprecedented in their ambition and in the scale and scope of the organizational changes. Virtually every part of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) now reports to different leaders, has had its mission and responsibilities changed, has lost or gained subordinate units, or has undergone a major internal reorganization.

The contributors review the drivers and strategic context underpinning the reform effort, explore the various dimensions of PLA efforts to build a force capable of conducting joint operations, consider the implications for the PLA services, and examine Xi Jinping's role in driving the reforms through and using them to strengthen control over the military. The chapters chronicle successes and outstanding problems in the reform effort, and consider what the net effect will be as the PLA strives to become a "world-class" military by mid-century, if not much sooner.

bility, staff manning, and structure as closely as possible. If not, the mission command architecture across all warfighting functions should be outlined, agreed to, and rehearsed during the initial phase of the exercise with a specific emphasis on medical lines of communication.

- When overcoming a language barrier, the following should be considered by all parties: maintain a robust interpreter capability and balance the depth of integration against the risk of overcomplicating lines of communication. Specifically, planners must understand that the higher the echelon of integration between nations, the lower the complexity of interoperability.

Communicating Strategic Themes Down

During our time training with the TNI-AD, we found them to be motivated, professional, and competent. They were our peers and desired to be treated as such. Over time and within recent conflicts, U.S. forces have operated with a mentor/mentee mindset in relation to other armies. Our tactical exercise scenario was originally built at home station using a host-nation framework common in current U.S. Army decisive-action training scenarios. The idea of a host nation subtly implies that the nation doing the hosting needs our help managing their internal affairs. The TNI-AD were quite aware of the context of the exercise and wanted to make sure that the training scenario reflected our countries working together under a United Nations resolution.

Subtle strategic distinctions like the one above are just as critical at the tactical level as at the strategic. The final step in our tactical integration model focuses on the idea that strategic themes, messages, and pitfalls need to be understood by tactical leaders who are conducting face-to-face engagements with foreign partners. The following is a possible solution to the strategic communications issues we experienced during our exercise:

- The Embassy attaché generates a summary of the exercise's recent history that is then given to the strategic effects cell at the SCC.
- The SCC then outlines its commander's intent for the exercise, including desired interoperability training objectives by echelon.
- Division-level planners reconcile the commander's intent with their own training objectives, themes, and messages.
- All three inputs are finally given to the training unit in either a one-page document or a leader smart card.

At endstate, Soldiers conducting face-to-face interaction and training with partner nations understand the context of their operation and can communicate with partners in a productive manner—all of which further enables a quality exercise and successful accomplishment of readiness objectives.

TSCPs should be viewed as readiness opportunities, not burdens. They provide opportunity for increased resources, unique experiences, as well as deployment and training readiness. Influencing the process early and continuously directly correlate to a unit's ability reach readiness levels outlined in their commander's intent for the exercise. Planners successfully enable increased capability and readiness generation by understanding manning requirements and the commander's desired training objectives to be successful. Exercise planners and their partner-nation equivalents are the key audience to influence and ensure success. 1-27 Infantry gained capability and readiness through diligent planning and the hard work of its Soldiers. We utilized a tactical integration model to increase interoperability in the Pacific and do our part within the greater team. It is our humble desire that future units participating in TSCP missions will apply our lessons learned. **JFQ**