

SERGEANTS MAJOR ACADEMY
J600: Coalition/Joint Force Land Component Command Operations

Lesson J601
Transitioning from a Division/Corps (G) Staff to a Joint (J) Staff

Reading A
On Point II
(Excerpt)

On Point II

Transition to the New Campaign:
The United States Army in Operation
IRAQI FREEDOM May 2003–January
2005



Military Transitions in Spring 2003

During the 6 weeks following the toppling of the Saddam regime, as the CPA arrived and ORHA departed, Coalition military forces quickly established their presence in the capital city and throughout Iraq, preparing for what came next. Still, the role of the United States' and the United Kingdom's military forces in the next stage of the campaign remained unclear. During the initial planning that led to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM commander, tasked Third Army/CFLCC to lead the postinvasion phase of the campaign known as Phase IV, Transition, in joint doctrine terminology, which CENTCOM believed would be relatively short. Once CENTCOM concluded its postconflict operations, CFLCC would pass responsibility for the longer, more complex reconstruction and stabilization effort to a combined joint task force (CJTF). The DOD gave this joint task force a variety of names, designating it first as Combined Joint Task Force–Iraq and later as Combined Joint Task Force–7 (CJTF-7). However, planners at the DOD and CENTCOM had focused on Phase III, Decisive Operations, of the campaign and, consequently, had invested only a limited amount of time and resources in the organization and manning of this joint task force.

In April the Third Army had been serving as the CFLCC, the headquarters responsible for Coalition land forces in Iraq under CENTCOM. General Franks told his subordinate leaders during a 16 April visit to Baghdad to be prepared to conduct an abbreviated period of stability operations and then to redeploy the majority of their forces out of Iraq by September 2003. In line with the prewar planning and general euphoria at the rapid crumbling of the Saddam regime, Franks continued to plan for a very limited role for US ground forces in Iraq.⁴

Following Franks' intent, CFLCC planners started preparations to redeploy, and soon the 3d Infantry Division (3d ID) and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (1st MEF) received orders to begin their own preparations for leaving Iraq. In fact, the desire to reduce US forces in Iraq was so strong that after listening to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld voice concerns about deploying the 1st Cavalry Division (1st CAV), already loading its equipment in the United States for movement to Iraq, Franks recommended to the Secretary in late April that the division stay stateside.⁵ This decision stemmed from the belief, at the national level, that 1st CAV's Soldiers would not be needed to stabilize Iraq.⁶



Photo Courtesy of www.MedalofFreedom.com

Figure 8. General Tommy Franks.

Franks also wanted the Third Army/CFLCC out of Iraq as soon as possible and returned to its normal role in support of land operations throughout the CENTCOM area of operations (AO), which included Afghanistan. By the second week of May, V Corps commander Lieutenant General William Wallace received confirmation that his headquarters would serve as the core of CJTF-7, the Phase IV military headquarters tasked to replace Third Army/CFLCC in Iraq.⁷ In late April Wallace learned that he would be replaced as commander of V Corps by Major General Ricardo Sanchez, then commanding the 1st Armored Division (1st AD), heading to Iraq from Germany. No new CJTF headquarters would be coming to Iraq after all. V Corps, which would not be officially designated as CJTF-7 until 15 June, was to operate under the political guidance of ORHA and Jay Garner. ORHA also expected to have a short lifespan, turning over political power to a new Iraqi Government by the end of the summer.

In late April CFLCC remained in charge of Coalition ground forces, but was beginning to transfer responsibility to V Corps and preparing to redeploy to the United States. It provided only limited guidance to the tactical units that fanned out across Iraq. Even without a detailed mission and guidelines on how to conduct the next phase, by the beginning of May US Army divisions took positions across the country and began executing a variety of operations. The 101st Airborne Division (101st ABN) established itself in the northwest of the country around the city of Mosul. To its southeast, the 173d Airborne assumed responsibility for the city and environs of Kirkuk. In the area between Kirkuk and Baghdad, a region known as the Sunni Triangle, the 4th Infantry Division (4th ID) set up a sprawling presence. In Al Anbar province, to the west of the Sunni heartland, the 3d ID and the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment (3d ACR) began operating in cities such as Fallujah and Ramadi. The 1st AD, soon to be augmented by the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment (2d ACR) and the 2d Brigade Combat Team (2d BCT) of the 82d Airborne Division (82d ABN), moved into Baghdad to begin its operations in the Iraqi capital. (See Appendix C, Map of Unit Areas of Responsibility, 2003–2004.) Across these areas of responsibility (AOR), the special operations Soldiers of the newly established Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Arabian Peninsula (CJSOTF-AP), created when CJSOTF-North and CJSOTF-West were combined, began conducting reconnaissance, psychological operations, and the hunt for high-value targets.

Of course the US Army was not alone in this early stage of postinvasion operations. To the south of Baghdad, the 1st MEF took up positions in the region around Karbala and An Najaf. In the southeastern corner of Iraq, centered in the city of Basrah, the British 1st Armoured Division established its AOR. At the end of May 2003, approximately 160,000 Coalition troops had spread out across Iraq to begin postconflict efforts.⁸ Eventually, as more Coalition troops entered Iraq in the summer of 2003, CJTF-7, the Coalition military headquarters established in June 2003, redesignated all areas of operation as multinational division AORs. By the fall of 2003, CJTF-7 had divided Iraq into six AORs: Multi-National Division–North (MND-N),



Figure 9. CFLCC initial battlespace for PH IV operations.

Multi-National Division–North Central (MND-NC), Multi-National Division–Baghdad (MND-B), Multi-National Division–West (MND-W), Multi-National Division–Central South (MND-CS), and Multi-National Division–Southeast (MND-SE). (See Appendix D, Map of Theater Structure, 2003–2005.)

An Uncertain Summer: June–September 2003

In June 2003 the United States made a dramatic change in the Coalition’s command structure. This transition began informally in late May when General Franks told both Lieutenant General Wallace, the outgoing V Corps commander, and the newly promoted Lieutenant General Sanchez, the inbound commander of V Corps, that CFLCC was pulling out of Iraq to refocus on its theater-wide responsibilities. Franks ordered V Corps to become the nucleus of the senior military command in Iraq designated as CJTF-7. This move was sudden and caught most of the senior commanders in Iraq unaware. Sanchez and V Corps (an Army headquarters focused on ground operations at the tactical level) would now have to become a joint and combined headquarters, responsible for the theater-strategic, operational, *and* tactical levels of war.

Sanchez assumed command of V Corps on 14 June 2003. On 15 June this informal transition became formal with the activation of CJTF-7. The process was complicated because the V Corps staff was not configured for the types of responsibilities it received. In retrospect, Lieutenant General Wallace stated:

You can't take a tactical headquarters [V Corps] and change it into an operational [level] headquarters [CJTF-7] at the snap of your fingers. It just doesn't happen. Your focus changes completely, and you are either going to take your eye off the tactical fight in order to deal with the operational issues, or you are going to ignore the operational issues and stay involved in the tactical fight.⁹



DOD Photo by LCpl Andrew Williams, USMC

Figure 10. Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez, Commander, CJTF-7.

To lead at all these levels, Sanchez designed a new staff that incorporated officers from the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, as well as from the various Coalition forces. He also needed to add more Army officers to his staff if he hoped to guide postinvasion operations at all levels. Many of the military units in Iraq prepared to redeploy to their home stations, which complicated the task of bringing new officers into CJTF-7. CENTCOM and CFLCC quickly took their staffs back to Kuwait, Qatar, and MacDill Air Force Base in Florida. Within the V Corps staff, many officers received orders transferring them to new units and scheduled Army training courses. Sanchez found this transition to be particularly problematic for the staffing and support of his new organization. He stated, "CENTCOM had pretty much shut down its operations [in Iraq]. Most of the key people were back in CENTCOM [headquarters] in Tampa, Florida. For CFLCC, the barn door had been opened and everybody was in a mad dash to get back home. So we . . . knew, even by that point, that we had an issue."¹⁰ Although CJTF-7 gradually added

officers from the four American military services as well as from Coalition nations, the process moved slowly and posed significant challenges to command and control in the summer of 2003.

While Sanchez struggled to create a viable combined and joint staff immediately after taking command of CJTF-7, he issued broad guidance to his tactical commanders who were dealing with practical challenges across Iraq. Each commander was then free to develop and implement specific plans, particular to their AOR, within this general framework. By July 2003 Sanchez articulated that guidance in the form of the following mission statement:

Conduct offensive operations to defeat remaining noncompliant forces and neutralize destabilizing influences in the AO in order to create a secure environment in direct support of the Coalition Provisional Authority. Concurrently conduct stability operations to support the establishment of government and economic development in order to set the conditions for a transfer of operations to designated follow-on military or civilian authorities.¹¹