

Reflections of a DIVARTY Commander

By COL Jim Collins

In December 1997, I reported to the 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) at Fort Stewart, Georgia. More specifically, to 3ID Division Artillery (DIVARTY), Marne Thunder. I was a young Lieutenant immersed in what I thought was the best unit in the Army. I keenly remember both DIVARTY Commanders during my tenure and, over the years, I have come to appreciate the importance of their technical and tactical expertise and how they were standard-bearers for the King of Battle. Contrasting those early formative years to 2021, I reflect on “what I wish I would have known back then.” Now, as a current DIVARTY Commander, allow me to provide several observations that I could have benefited from 24 years ago. Agree or disagree – all I ask is that you think about my reflections. If you disagree, discuss them with your colleagues or a mentor. If you agree, find a reason to challenge them. But, at end-state, trust one thing – this DIVARTY Commander (and I am confident it applies to all Field Artillery Commanders) wants you to succeed – the future of the King of Battle may depend on it!

First and foremost, before we proceed, let’s acknowledge one consideration – you (we) are different. That is not meant to be a compliment or an insult – just a mere fact. The Field Artillery requires a heightened degree of precision – this applies to the calculation of a gunnery solution to the file structure on your computer. We need to approach every aspect of the Field Artillery with the precision it deserves. If embraced, the difference is not a liability but a source of pride. In my opinion, this has practical application for everything we do.

Advice for an incoming Battery Commander

What is the difference between a good Battery Commander and a great Battery Commander? Simple, for the first six months of your command, do not focus on your idealization of what a Commander “should do.” For example, a firing Battery Commander will often dedicate a disproportionate amount of time for an upcoming Howitzer Table VI qualification. In my opinion, while Howitzer Table VI is important, it will occur to a reasonable standard with or without the Battery Commander’s day-to-day involvement. However, three other aspects of command will inevitably be neglected without the Commander’s routine involvement:

1. Command supply discipline. First, know the Army standard for property accountability. If the property is not present (yes, that includes all classes of supply, not just class VII) someone must be held accountable. Second, before starting change of command inventories, learn how to use Global Combat Support System-Army (G-Army). If 100% of Class VII, with all associated Class IX,

is not built into GArmy, you will likely spend an exorbitant amount of time throughout the rest of your command to fix it. It is worth the investment in time and mental energy to get it right prior to your first day of command.

2. Arms room. Simply put, adhere to AR 190-11, *Physical Security of Arms, Ammunitions, and Explosives*. I consider the arms room an easy way to measure discipline. An undisciplined arms room means an undisciplined unit. In this case, I don't think exceptions apply.
3. Barracks. Will you be a Commander that stays out of the barracks to "give the Soldiers freedom and time to unwind" or will you be the Commander that surges leaders and emphasizes standards into the barracks? Before you make that decision, first, understand the issue. This is not just about the barracks, it is about good order and discipline throughout your unit. Find the right balance. Mastery of these three variables is the difference between a good command and a great command.

Day with DIVARTY

Once a month, Command Sergeant Major Jean-Pierre Alcedo and I host several senior NCOs and junior officers from each of the Field Artillery Battalions. The day consists of four events. First, a team-building PT event. Second, three Leader Professional Development discussions. Third, a digital sustainment training scenario. Lastly, prior to COVID 19, the day concluded with a social at my residence. All events are important for different reasons and, I acknowledge this may sound vain but, in my opinion, the social was especially important. From my time at Fort Stewart, I have several memories of visits to my senior leaders' homes ranging from my Battalion Commander's Holiday Reception to the DIVARTY Commander's Hail and Farewell. Twenty years later, the Army has given me the privilege of living in a historic home on Fort Bliss. I consider it an honor to welcome visitors into the DIVARTY Commander's home and try to create similar memories for the next generation of leaders. I hope in 20 years an officer recalls a visit: "do you remember the countless pictures of cannons and the entire bookshelf of REDLEG reading?" Of course, mentorship is branch

immaterial but we need more artillery officers to aspire to be like other artillery officers.

Command and Support Relationships of the Field Artillery Battalions within a Division and the Fire Supporters in a Brigade Combat Team

First, this topic is an entire article of its own but allow me to make three broad assertions:

1. For many, this has been a topic of discussion for the past 7-10 years. No, it has been a topic of discussion for the past several decades. But let's be clear - it is about lethality.
2. Remove emotion from the discussion. This is not about which training meeting the Commander attends or their rating scheme or maintaining modularity. Remember, it is about lethality.
3. Is it "easier" to have one boss versus multiple bosses? Yes, but in this case, easier is not better. A Fire supporter who cannot maintain a professional balance between their Maneuver unit and the Field Artillery Battalion will not succeed. A Field Artillery Battalion that cannot maintain a professional balance between their Maneuver brigade and the DIVARTY will not succeed. And, yes, Field Artillery Battalions are assigned to the Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) but, don't try to oversimplify it, you still have two bosses. Remember, once again, it is about lethality. Everyone has a role within this discussion, from junior leaders to General Officers, the conversation was ongoing in 1997 and is still ongoing. Continue to mature this discussion.

Are you familiar with a Field Artillery Battalion Modified Table of Organizational Equipment (MTOE)? I will make a potentially contentious statement: I, the DIVARTY Commander, do not delegate the decision for Soldiers not to maintain/train 100% of their MTOE equipment. Have you ever heard this comment: "we don't use that piece of equipment?" The fact remains, the Army has given us that equipment for a reason. A practical example: the Stand-Alone Computer Unit (SCU) in the Bradley Fire Support Vehicle is

an underutilized capability that, if Fully Mission-Capable, and linked to the Fire Support Sensor System, can significantly expedite Fire mission processing times, reduce target location error and minimize human error. I do not delegate the decision whether you employ the SCU on the observation post. If it does not work properly, fix it; if it is obsolete, submit feedback to the BCT Command Capability Managers Fires; if you don't need it, submit a change to the MTOE. Until then, it is required for Fire support qualification.

There is one variable that is indisputably different between a junior officer and the DIVARTY Commander – perspective. Regardless of the degree of intelligence, an officer with three-

But, continuing with the example above from the Field Artillery Battalion, how many tasks should a formation of 504 Soldiers be able to accomplish in a duty day? From a Soldier's perspective, to simplify the day, let's say three. From the DIVARTY Commander's perspective, to increase readiness, let's say ten. The two perspectives are contrary – one seeks simplicity while the other may be in the best interest of the Army. Neither is right nor wrong, it is about perspective.

Most of you are familiar with Army Systems of Record. For example, G-Army is the system of record for supply, equipment services, etc. I can't

REDLEGS, we are different...

five years of service will naturally view issues differently than an officer with 20+ years of service. One perspective may be based on experience; another perspective based on what is in the best interest of the unit; another perspective based on what is in the best interest of the Soldier, etc. It is not about right or wrong; it is about perspective. Two examples:

1. Command Maintenance may provide a good example of differing perspectives. In this case, the Brigade Commander's perspective is likely aligned with what is in the best interest of the unit. A Field Artillery Battalion has approximately 504 Soldiers. Not including physical training and lunch, command maintenance should consist of seven hours in the motor pool. $504 \text{ Soldiers} \times 7 \text{ hours} = 3528 \text{ hours}$. Is it feasible to do proper preventive maintenance checks and services on ~134 pieces of equipment within 3528 hours? Most Brigade Commanders think so. Therefore, by close of business on Monday, why isn't 100% of equipment 5988Es completed to standard? Of course, there are countless reasons why. But, how can we close this gap in perspective?
2. Have you ever asked the question: "which glass ball can I drop – there are too many priorities?" I will be the first to acknowledge everyone is very busy and there are a lot of competing priorities.

state with the same conviction I used for the MTOE assertion but, to the greatest extent feasible, I require all Field Grade officers to scrutinize any decision not to fully utilize an Army system of record. All of us have routinely said, "We use too much PowerPoint." I agree, so instead, use the system of record. Weapons qualification: use the Individual Weapons Report from Defense Training Management System (DTMS); maintenance meeting: use the Equipment Status Reporting from G-Army; immunization readiness: use the Immunizations Report or Unit Medical Readiness Report from Army Medical Department Medical Protection System. Sounds easy but to execute you must first learn how to use each system; second, instead of updating slides, input comprehensive data into each system; third, condition the team to use these products. An example: when I was a Battalion S3, prior to every quarterly range conference, I queried DTMS for individual weapons qualification by Battery. Typically, units averaged 65%. At the conference, I resourced the required number of ranges to get each unit to 100%. Inevitably, the Battery commander would subsequently state "I don't need five M4 ranges, I am at 90% individual weapon qualification – why didn't anyone ask me prior to the conference." Why would I ask? The system of record shows you are at 65% – execute the range.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the purpose of this article (I assure you it is not about nostalgia). The purpose is singular: the Field Artillery leaders

at echelon, want you to succeed. As previously stated, the future of the King of Battle may depend on it! I leave you with four summative assertions:

1. REDLEGS, we are different – but that is a strength.
2. We need more artillery officers to aspire to be like other artillery officers. In a Division, we may be assigned to four separate Brigades but collectively we have a lot to learn from each other.
3. Be a technical and tactical expert. Your senior rater may not demand that of you – but your “other boss” does.
4. Never disparage another branch. However, it is encouraged to routinely affirm to anyone that will listen – I am a proud member of the King of Battle! The most lethal branch in the Army!

Below: COL Jim Collins, left, the commander of Division Artillery, 1st Armored Division and CSM Tito Ferrera, the acting senior enlisted advisor for 1AD, prepare the colors during a casing ceremony prior to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion's deployment to Afghanistan, at Fort Bliss, Texas, August 1. The casing of the colors is a tradition which formally encases the colors in a protective sheath, reflecting a unit's deployment or movement and signifying the continued service away from home station.

(U.S. Army photo by SPC Matthew J. Marcellus)

KING OF BATTLE

Best of luck, A DIVARTY COMMANDER

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