

FA On Target in the Storm

Operation Desert Storm feedback and observations continue to filter into the Field Artillery (FA) School here at Fort Sill. But one fact already is abundantly clear: fire support played a *dominant role* in Desert Storm.

During a six month period, Total Army FA forces deployed to Southwest Asia to support American and coalition maneuver forces—the largest contingent of US artillery since World War II. Our artillery force consisted of 43 cannon, rocket and missile battalions organized into seven division artilleries and seven FA brigades. Two corps artillery headquarters provided overall command and control. The units came from both heavy and light forces, from the continental US and Germany and from the Active and Reserve Components. Our National Guard FA brigades were the only large Reserve Component combat units to see action in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations. The result was timely and devastating massed fires both before and after the ground war started.

Doctrine. Desert Storm confirmed our war-fighting thrust is on target: our fire support principles are sound and, most importantly, our doctrine, tested under fire, is effective.

Maneuver commanders and fire support coordinators (FSCOODs) executed fire support doctrine and the decide-detect-deliver methodology brilliantly during Desert Storm. The commanders expressed their intent for fires clearly, making the *decide* phase effective and efficient. Then, understanding the commanders' intent, FSCOODs identified high-payoff targets, prioritized targets for engagement in the overall fire support effort and assured connectivity between sensors and shooters. These actions by senior leaders allowed fire support systems to engage enemy forces responsively and accurately.

In the *detect* phase, Redlegs integrated a multitude of organic and supporting platforms, complemented by national- and theater-level target acquisition assets. These assets included satellite imagery at

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the national level; US Air Force aircraft, such as the joint surveillance and target attack radar system (JSTARS), at the theater level; and Firefinder radars, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and other organic systems at the division and corps levels. All were networked into fire support operations with our targeteers insightfully analyzing the information produced.

In the final phase, we *delivered* massed fires. Massed artillery fires provided the maneuver commander combat power at the time and place he needed it. This gave him overwhelming fire superiority and allowed him to maneuver to exploit the effects of fire.

Executing our counterfire doctrine in combat was another “first” for the FA. The Firefinders rapidly identified targets for counterfire and sent the data digitally or by voice to the shooters. Our cannon and multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) assets silenced the Iraqi artillery by delivering very “convincing” fires. In fact, Iraqi prisoners called MLRS dual-purpose improved conventional munition (DPICM) bomblets “Steel Rain”—the most terrifying threat they faced.

Training. Desert Storm proved our soldiers are the best trained in the world. Our young soldiers displayed confidence in themselves, their leaders and their equipment.

Soldier confidence can be attributed to our rigorous, realistic training at the Combat Training Centers (CTCs). Each CTC provides soldiers and leaders the forum to hone their skills and integrate them into a truly combined-arms effort.

Modernization. The MLRS and Army tactical missile system (Army TACMS) both had their “baptism by fire” in Desert Storm. The launching of the first Army TACMS on January 18th ushered in the Arm’s new age of rocket

and missile artillery. The devastating concentration of firepower of MLRS and Army TACMS made them invaluable combat multipliers for the maneuver forces. While MLRS struck the enemy’s artillery and command and control and logistical sites with massive volumes of DPICM sub-munitions, the Army TACMS destroyed deep targets well beyond the rang of ground weapon systems. Commanders are *unanimous* in their praise for our rocket and missile firepower.

The surgical, point-kill capability of the Copperhead projectile also was combat tested for the first time. Despite the degrading effects of the desert on our laser designators, this point killer achieved its aim in the vast preponderance of more than 90 engagements.

Leader Development. In Desert Storm, the Army’s leader development process proved to be very effective from both the institutional and field perspectives. Our leaders displayed initiative, decisiveness, innovativeness and technical and tactical competence in employing their weapon systems and organizations.

Leaders at all levels showed remarkable flexibility. Senior leaders provided sound guidance to help maneuver commanders synchronize the battlefield. Junior officers and NCOs displayed fundamental leader skills and war-fighting knowledge far beyond their years of experience.

Conclusion. Fire support was a decisive partner with maneuver in Southwest Asia. Not since World War II has fire support in general and the FA in particular proved such a major force for the combined-arms team.

Field Artillery—*On Time, On Target!*

