Fires in the Close Fight: OIF Lessons Learned

Purpose

- **Inform Senior Infantry Leaders on Lessons Learned During OIF From a BCT Perspective**

- **Generate Discussion on Implications for the Future**

Panel Members

- **3BCT FSCOORD/1-10 FA CDR**
- **Commander TF 1-15 IN**
- **Commander TF 2-69 AR**
- **3BCT ALO**

A 3BCT TTP

"Prep with Steel, Lead with Lead, Count the dead"

3/3ID BCT CDR

Bottom Line

"Tell them Joes to get the lead out!!"

Audie Murphy, To Hell and Back
Universal Pictures Inc 1955

Well…during OIF We Got the Lead Out…
Effectively Employing, Artillery, Mortars, & CAS
During 6 Battles Over 21 Days.

Context

- 3BCT Was Extremely Well Trained Due to a 6 Month ODS Rotation and Other Pre-combat Training
- ODS Allowed for Rigorous Combined Arms Training That Included PLT Through BCT Live Fires
- Task Force and Co Commanders Had Seen the Effects Of Fires in These Live Fires and Had Gained Confidence in Their Fire Supporters
- After ODS (Oct 02) Crews and Leaders Stabilized

Winners

- Maneuver/ Fire Support Personnel Cohesion
- M7 BFIST
- Paladin
- Maneuver Shooters-- LRAS3
- Voice Call for Fire/Digital Fire Direction
- CAS (Especially A-10s!)
- SADARM/HE
- DIVARTY & Counterfire
- Use of Mortars
- Boundaries & FSCMs

Losers

- **Dud Producing Rounds**
- **A2C2 of EAB Assets in BDE Zone/sector**
- **NTC Type Employment of Colts**
- **FBCB2 for Fire Supporters or ABCS integration**

Winner: Maneuver/Fire Support Personnel Cohesion

- **Fire Support Officer Assignment Methodology**
  - **CO FSO--former Platoon Leader**
  - **TF FSO--former Battery Commander**
  - **BDE FSO—senior Major/2nd BQ Job**
- **Longevity--experts on the BFIST**
- **All Had Executed Numerous Combined Arms Live Fire Exercises**
- **BFIST Allowed the FSO to Fight His Way Into His OP**
- **Un-parrelled Maneuver Commander Emphasis on Fires**

Winner: M7 BFIST

- **Truly Revolutionary…allows the FIST to Keep Up; Provide Own Force Protection and Acquire Targets (10digit @10kms)**
- **The Days of the FSO Following the Company CO Are Over!**
- **3BCT Generally Used BFIST As a BDE/TF Observer… Positioned by CO CDR to Meet BDE/TF Observer Plan… Linked to EFSTs**
- **1st Round Fire for Effect Was the Norm**

Co-responsibility for Training the CO FSE

TF CDR

- **M2 Gunnery**
- **Bradley Maneuver**
- **TF Drills/plays**
- **EA Development Etc..**

DS BN CDR

- **Pre-gunnery**
- **Use of MEP (Turn It Into a M7)**
- **Occupation of OP**
- **Development of Tactical & Technical Triggers**
- **CFF**

Winner:PALADIN

- **Fire Mission Times Under 2 Minutes…always Ready to Fire**
- **Great OR Rate; Never an Issue Keeping up. (Stop, Shoot, Move)**
- **Can Shoot From Anywhere in Any Weather**
- **Very Accurate…1st Round FFE**
- **Provided Crew Adequate Force Protection…used MK19/M2**

Winner: Maneuver Shooters—LRAS3

- 3 BCT invested time into the maneuver shooter program
- Scouts/BRT particularly proficient..Executed numerous live fires During ODS
- LRAS3 extremely accurate…tested to under 10m accuracy
- Sight 45X Mag…can acquire targets beyond 10k
- Better sight than COLTs
- During Battle of Karbala BRT biggest killer with indirect
- 3BCT did not have ODS Bradleys

Winner: Voice Call for Fire/Digital Fire Direction

- **We Trained to Execute CFF Digital, but Really Couldn't During OIF Because of Distances**
- **Combat Experience Showed That the CFF Must Be Voice Because:**
  - **Otherwise It Is Just Another E-mail**
  - **Voice CFF Enhances the Bond Between Guns and Observer**
  - **FDCs & Guns Must Hear and Feel the Urgency of the CFF**
  - **Voice Allows Digitally Challenged Leaders to Monitor**
- **Digital Is Superb With AFATDS for FA Battalion Fire Direction (2 to 3 Min Rounds Down Range After CFF)**

Winner: CAS

- DIV ALO Positioned “CAS Stack” to Support Main Effort Reducing Response Time
- 3 BCT Received in Excess of 100 Sorties Throughout OIF
- Everything From B52 to A10
- JDAMS Very Effective but Required Longer Lead Time
- Easily De-conflicted Airspace Which Allowed Simultaneous Engagement
- A-10 Pilots Particularly Heroic
- USAF Re-dedicated to CAS
- Superb ALO, BALOs & ETACs

Winner: SADARM/HE

- SADARM added to UBL just prior to LD
  - No training on it..only had a white paper
  - Requires 1500 meter standoff
  - Very effective against Tanks/BMPs
  - 3 rounds will kill at least one tank…never missed
- HE very effective against the Enemy we encountered
  - 1/6 of DS BN UBL
  - Ammo of choice because of low dud rate and VT/TD function
  - Much more effective against armor than effects tables say… Shock Effect

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Winner: DIVARTY & CTRFIRE

- **Unlike the CTC experience… DIVARTY is a player**
- **DIVARTY provided superb close fire support with MLRS (MSD 1500m) & relieved the BCTs of the burden of Conterfire**
- **We all learned to get the radars set before an attack..thank god his artillery was inaccurate**

Winner: Use of Mortars

- **Mortars Very Effective During OIF…They Were in the Fight**
- **Mortar Platoons Very Proficient at Hip Shoot**
- **Use of MET and Survey Significantly Increases Accuracy**
- **Allowed FA to Be Focused**
- **Used FA to Shape/Prep and Mortars to Destroy RPG Teams in Urban Areas**

Winner: Boundaries & FSCMs,

Boundaries are our Friend!

- **Boundaries Became Supremely Important in The Non-contiguous Environment**
  - **No Fratricide Because Fire Supporters Knew Who Owned the Land**
- **FSCMs Facilitated Responsiveness..As Long As Maneuver Commanders Knew Where the CFL Was, We Kept It Tight**
- **The dreaded Intervention Point problem can largely be reduced with boundaries and well placed FSCMs**

Loser:Dud Producing Rounds

- **DPICM-- Over Half of the DS BN UBL**
- **Maneuver Commanders Hesitant to Use It..But Had to**
- **Dud Rate Not Bad on Hard Surfaces, but Worse Than Expected off Roads.**
- **Not for Use in Urban Areas**
- **SADARM Preferred Killing Munition, HE for Suppression**
- **Is DPICM Munition a Cold War Relic?**

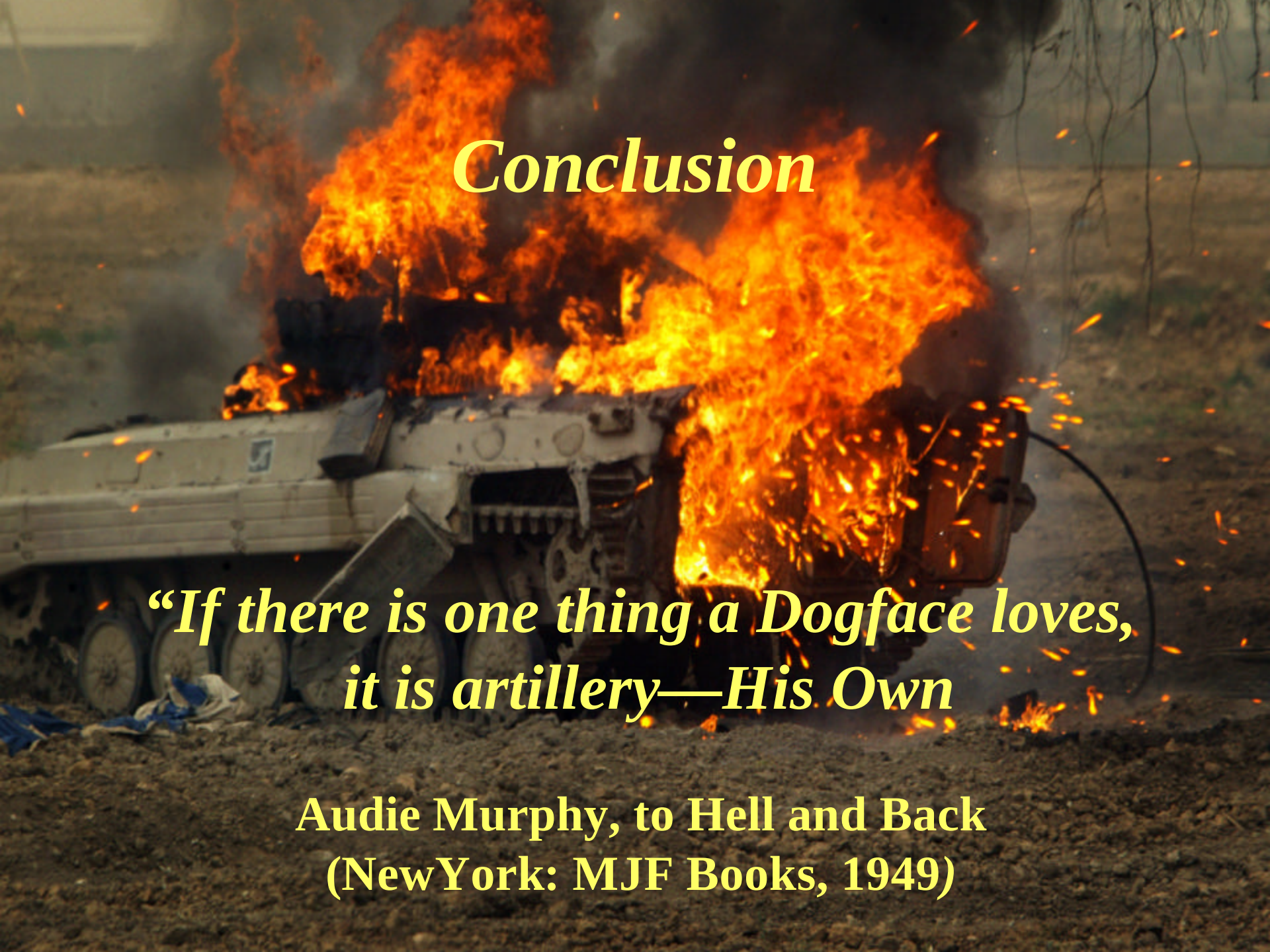
Loser:A2C2 of EAB assets in BDE Zone/sector

- **A2C2 of BDE Assets (CAS/Mortar/Arty) Was a Success Story.**
- **MLRS and ATACMS De-confliction Was Much Harder**
  - **ACA Established Inside BDE Zone Is Not Easily Recognized at Higher Echelons (Even With AFATDS)**
  - **BDE ACA Can Shut Down the DIV Cdr's Fires**
  - **Corps ATACMS Was Not De-conflicted**
- **A2C2 Requires Constant Coordination and Cross Talk**
- **This Is Maneuver Commander's Business**

Big Sky…Little bullet is not the answer!

Loser:NTC Type Employment of COLTs

- At NTC Colts Routinely Operate Independently
- During OIF Colts Attached to BRT or Scout PLT
  - Fielding of LRAS3 Made Their Sights Obsolete
  - Battle Buddy Concept…co-located With a Scout Section
  - Scout Actually Acquired the Target…colt Got the CFF Into the FA System/provided Expertise
- Colts Not Survivable Without Battle Buddy Concept



Conclusion

"If there is one thing a Dogface loves, it is artillery—His Own

Audie Murphy, to Hell and Back
(NewYork: MJF Books, 1949)