

Are we ready to command with less control?

by J. R.

Ur ett säkerhetsperspektiv publiceras artikeln endast under initialer.

Redaktören

Resumé

Soldater och officerar har på en bredare nivå, genom internationella insatser erhållit erfarenheter av strid och stridliknande situationer. Den taktiska miljön som dessa erhållits i är dock till del skild från den miljö som vi återigen förbereder oss för att försvara. Genom teknisk materiell och personell överlägsenhet har chefer lett och kontrollerat sina trupper på marken, i realtid har beslut tagits och ordrar givits. Genom ett historiskt exempel drar författaren lärdomar avseende hur kontrollerande beteenden kan undvikas och uppdragen slutföras på ett annat sätt. Den fascinerande historien om fiskebåten som seglade i krig används som exempel, MV *Krait*. Tre guidande principer lyfts fram, att användas som en kognitiv utmaning vid planering och genomförande av operationer bakom fiendens linjer.

THIS ARTICLE ARGUES that commanders within the special forces of today, transitioning from counter-insurgency (CI)¹ operations towards national defense operations, could learn from our less technically dependent ancestors. From a fishing boat, I have drawn three possible guiding principles on how to conduct operations deep behind enemy lines, target for effect, be unconventional by innovation and utilize trust over continuous control. It has been done, and it will have to be done again in the future, but are we as commanders up to the task? Or are we so heavily influenced by the recent CI and counter-terrorism (CT) operations² that we exercise more control than command. The

aim is to challenge readers' perceptions and encourage reflections on how we fight today and possibly over the way we have to fight tomorrow.

Operation JAYWICK

What can we learn from the fishing boat that went to war, MV *Krait*? In September 1943, *Krait* set off from Australia with a small number of members from the Z Special unit. Their mission; to strike Japanese vessels in the harbor of Singapore. The *Krait* returned seven weeks later with its crew of 14, after a daring clandestine successful mission deep behind enemy lines. The overall mission was short and broad:

The mission of Allied Intelligence Bureau will be to obtain and report information of the enemy in the Southwest Pacific Area... and in addition, where practicable, to weaken the enemy by sabotage and destruction of morale and to lend aid and assistance to local efforts to the same end in enemy-occupied territories.³

The plan was devised by Major Ivan Lyon of the Gordon Highlanders and Major Jock Campbell of the King's Own Scottish Borderers.⁴ After escaping the Japanese invasion of Singapore they came up with a plan of attacking the Japanese Navy at its heart. The plan involved using an old fishing boat or a trader. The *Kofuku Maru* had been seized by the British from the Japanese and was renamed the *Krait*. The boat was an old Japanese sampan boat, which needed some restoration. The actual mission was postponed several months due to the preparations and maintenance of the boat. The plan was composed of several phases, the infiltration by boat to the area of operation, the reconnaissance and sabotage preparations made by the raiding party, from canoes, the pick up of the raiding party, and the exfiltration from the area of operations by boat. On 18 September 1943 disembarking of the raiding party was initiated. After that the *Krait* would avoid enemy contact for eleven days and pick up the raiders on the night of 1-2 October.⁵ The raiders were then on their own, jumping from island to island with the canoes. The *Krait* was left alone listening to radio (public) of any news of the successful mission. The following quote is from the Australian Navy.

Between 05:15 and 05:50, seven explosions were heard indicating that all the attacks had been successful. Seven Japanese ships had been sunk or severely damaged, amounting to between 37,000 and 39,000 tons. *Krait*, meanwhile, made her way back

to the rendezvous point on Pompong, arriving just after midnight on the morning of 2 October. Shortly afterward, the crew recovered Davidson and Falls in Canoe 2. The other two canoes were in the area but could not locate the sampan in the dark. *Krait* retired to the south of the Temiang Strait and returned to pick up the other canoes at around 21:00 on 3 October.⁶

The mission was a success. Only once did the *Krait* break radio silence on her way home after passing the Lombok Strait.⁷

The modern dilemma

The author has, during several combat deployments, seen the effect of a fighting machine with far superior assets in action and recognize the need for centralization of coordination and control due to all the (air) assets working together in this type of environment. CT and CI operations are typically far superior in firepower and air power than the opponent. However, the risk is that we will translate the types of operations we conduct overseas to the operational environment with which we will conduct defense of our national borders. I'll try to describe from my experience, a typical capture operation in Afghanistan.

The scene is Afghanistan 2012, and I am with a mixed-team preparing to strike a compound in the Balkh province, Northern part Afghanistan. In preparations for the strike, I have had the opportunity to properly survey the target from aerial photography and persistent surveillance from UAVs. The target; an insurgent commander residing in a compound with possibly two bodyguards. He has been tracked for days and is fixed within the compound. With my team, Afghan special police, friendly support, and command & control elements, our numbers are close to fifty. Our force is superior in numbers

and weapons. Thanks to blue force trackers, Identification, Friend or Foe, my commander follows every move. In advance of the raid we have requested and got approved Medical Evacuation on a 15 minutes Notice to Move. Two friendly fighter jets are loitering from a distance, ready to engage if needed or requested from the JTAC (Joint Terminal Attack Controller). We are ready; my commander back in the Tactical Operations Cell is satisfied with the security, checks, and controls he can execute. The command is centralized, with all the available assets terminating in my commander's operations room. I am with the ground force commander from our Afghan allies, but the higher-ups execute both command and control. I feel like we have all available assets at hand, and we're just waiting for the commander to give us the go. He's waiting for one last confirmation from the UAV and is assessing the risk to his personnel one more time. The risk to men and mission is low. On all the different radio-systems there is continuous reporting, and the chatter increases in intensity when it's getting closer to strike. Go, go, go, the mission is a success.

Are we ready to take the risk?

The author has tried to make a point of describing two types of operations, one in an international counter-insurgency context, and the other in a national defense context, but far away and a long time ago. One is operation, JAYWICK. The other one is based on several operations conducted by the author overseas. All the CI operations, I would argue, give us valuable combat experience on several levels. However, all operational experience cannot transition into the national defense TTPs. Operationally it's a dilemma for commanders. Perhaps younger commanders will find themselves

doubting the mission or less willing to accept the risk. They weren't present in the earlier years when taking a risk meant losing the operational picture and not knowing where your troops are, and not getting real-time updates. How can we use all the valuable experience from the international operations and be more dangerous to our enemy while keeping operational security and setting the stage to withhold the element of surprise? This article doesn't give the answer, but it's obvious what worked during WWII, and the clandestine raid during Operation JAYWICK, and we are ignorant if we could not use those lessons learned. From this amazing and daring mission, there are some guiding principles identified, not necessarily as a must-follow principle, but more as a planning and execution guidance.

Target, for effect. One of the reasons for the successful mission was proper preparations and rehearsals. The higher command could give this time to the executing force because there was no time constraint. The target was not time-sensitive, and the force was given a broad mission statement; raid the harbor rather than raid a specific vessel. Therefore, carefully select your target and reflect on the effect you would like to achieve or impose on the enemy.

Be unconventional by innovation. Give your operatives freedom in planning and execution, and encourage innovation. Put all your effort into the planning phase and be prepared to support in the execution phase. During Operation JAYWICK, a clandestine approach was part of the success. The innovative idea to meet these criteria was the use of the *Krait* for infiltration, and the foldable canoes.

Trust over continuous control. When executing, give the force proper support. But only when called upon or needed, there is no need in a clandestine mission like this for

daily situational reports. When operating deep behind enemy lines, what effect could you as a commander assist with? Make sure that your operatives understand the risk and give them your trust and guidance rather than your checks and controls.

The author recognize that it will be hard to fulfill this, but I think having the guts to dare will be an improvement from the way we plan and rehearse national defense operations today. Perhaps Admiral McRaven's theory of relative superiority is now, once more, very relevant.⁸

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Noter

1. Counterinsurgency: Comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes. Also called COIN. *Joint Publication 3-24 Counterinsurgency*, Department Of Defense, 2018, s GL-5.
2. Counterterrorism: Activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals. Also called CT. *Joint Publication 3-26 Counterterrorism*, Department of Defense, 2014, s GL-3.
3. McPhedran, Ian: *The Mighty Krait*, HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney 2018, s 17.
4. Djokovic, Petar: "Krait and Operation JAYWICK", Royal Australian Navy, <https://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/krait-and-operation-jaywick>, (2019-11-14).
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ramsay Silver, Lynette, from the research of Hall, Tom (Major): *Krait, the Fishing Boat that went to War*, Cultured Lotus, Singapore 2001, s 96.
8. McRaven, William H.: *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Random House Publishing Group, New York 1996, s 4.