

JADEx PAPERS 6

Think Clearly. Plan Wisely. Act Boldly.

General Sir Rupert Smith's Command of 1st Armoured Division
during Operation GRANBY

Colonel Jason Adair, Canadian Army

August 2021



THE CANADIAN ARMY OCCASIONAL PAPERS SERIES

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“JADDEX”

GENERAL JACQUES ALFRED DEXTRAZE

“Leadership is the art of influencing others to do willingly what is required in order to achieve an aim or goal.”

—General Jacques Alfred Dextraze

These occasional papers are named in honour of the legendary Canadian Army General Jacques Alfred Dextraze, CC, CMM, CBE, DSO, CD, LL. D., affectionately known to his soldiers first as ‘Mad Jimmy’ and then later simply, ‘JADDEX’. Born 15 August 1919, he joined the Canadian Army in 1940 as a private soldier. He would end his military career 37 years later as a full general and the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

Jacques Dextraze received his early education at St. Joseph’s College in Berthierville before joining the Dominion Rubber Company as a salesman. During the Second World War, he left his civilian employment and enlisted as a private soldier with the Fusiliers Mont-Royal (FMR) in July 1940, shortly after the fall of France. Showing leadership potential during training, he was promoted to acting sergeant, but his first attempt to gain a commission in early 1941 was refused by the regiment. Nevertheless, he continued to display good-natured leadership and great skill, especially in instructing other soldiers. He was eventually commissioned in early 1942, and applied for active service overseas as soon as his officer training was complete.

Lieutenant Dextraze arrived in England just after the Dieppe Raid in August. With his unit decimated in that attack, it fell on him and other new junior officers to rebuild the unit and make it combat ready once more. The resourceful and dedicated young Dextraze applied himself completely to the task, showing great leadership at all times. By June 1944, Dextraze and the FMR were ready for combat.

The FMR landed in France in the first week of July as part of the 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division. It immediately went into action as the 1st Canadian Army was ordered to attack and destroy the remaining German resistance in Normandy and secure positions for the breakout battle that would follow.



Tactical headquarters of Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, 1945.

Source: Library and Archives Canada

On 1 August 1944, Major Dextraze commanded D Company in an attack to capture the church of St. Martin de Fontenay. The church, which was used as an observation post by the enemy, commanded the whole area and threatened the success of further operations of 6th Brigade, as it dominated a feature that had to be captured to secure the front. D Company took heavy losses in the assault from enemy machine gun and mortar fire which swept the open streets. Realizing that it was vital to keep up the momentum of the attack, Major Dextraze rushed forward and with no regard for his own safety personally led the assault into the church yard through enemy grenades, rifle and machine gun fire. In the sharp hand-to-hand fight that ensued, Major Dextraze, “setting the example”, overwhelmed the enemy and captured the position. Almost immediately the enemy counter-attacked, but Major Dextraze quickly organized the remainder of his men and defeated all efforts against his position. For his tremendous personal leadership and bravery in combat, the Army awarded Major Dextraze the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).¹ His men awarded him the title, “Mad Jimmy”.

In December 1944 Major Dextraze was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and command of his regiment. He led the FMR through the remainder of the war, earning a second DSO for his leadership in the liberation of the city of Groningen, the Netherlands, on 15 April 1945. The 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade was given the task of clearing the enemy from the centre of Groningen, and the FMR were ordered to clear the eastern half of the city. This involved house-to-house fighting, as the enemy was determined to hold the position at all costs.



Chief of the Defence Staff General J. A. Dextraze (right) speaks during ceremonies marking the establishment of Air Command in 1975.

Source : Library and Archives Canada

During the early stage of the battle the leading troops were held up by heavy machine gun fire coming from well-sited posts. Lieutenant-Colonel Dextraze quickly appreciated that if this condition was allowed to continue the whole plan might well collapse. He went forward immediately to the leading company, formulated a plan to clear the machine gun posts, and personally directed their final destruction. When the right flank company commander was killed, Dextraze raced through enemy fire to personally reorganize its attack and lead it forward to its objective. Despite intense enemy fire, he forced the Germans from their defences and forced the surrender of the garrison. Throughout the entire action, Lieutenant-Colonel Dextraze led his battalion forward, and when they were held up, assisted and encouraged them onto their objective. His resourcefulness, superb courage and devotion to duty was not only a great inspiration to his men, but the contributing factor to the final surrender of the enemy garrison of Groningen and the completion of the divisional plan.²

Lieutenant-Colonel Dextraze commanded his unit until the final surrender of Germany, after which he volunteered to lead a battalion in the Canadian Infantry Division then formed for active service in the Pacific. Japan surrendered in August

before Canadians units were deployed, and Dextraze 'retired' to the general reserve officer's list and re-entered civilian life. His tenure out of uniform was short, however, and in 1950 he returned to active duty as the officer commanding 2nd Battalion, Royal 22^e Régiment on overseas service during the Korean War. Dextraze again displayed his tenacious character and leadership at the defence of Hill 355, when his unit was surrounded by the enemy, but held off all attacks and refused to surrender the position. In 1952, Lieutenant-Colonel Dextraze was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his service in Korea.

After returning from Korea, Dextraze was briefly appointed to the Army Staff College and then to the Land Forces Eastern Area Headquarters. In 1954 he was promoted full colonel and appointed Chief of Staff of Quebec Command in Montreal. He subsequently served at the Infantry Schools in both Borden and Valcartier, until he returned to command the Quebec Region as a brigadier in 1962. His tenure there was short, however, as the following year he deployed as the commander of the Canadian contingent as well as the Chief of Staff for the United Nations Operation in the Congo. In early 1964 he organized, coordinated and led a series of missions under the operational codename 'JADEX' to rescue non-combatants from zones of conflict in theatre, actions which earned him a promotion within the Order of the British Empire to the rank of Commander as well as the award of an oak leaf for gallant conduct.³

Upon returning to Canada Dextraze was appointed Commander 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, where his traditional signature of 'Jadex' on all official correspondence stuck with him as a nickname. In 1966, he was again promoted to major-general and the position of Deputy Commander of Mobile Command. In 1970, Dextraze was promoted to lieutenant-general and made Chief of Personnel at National Defence Headquarters. In 1972, Lieutenant-General Jacques Alfred Dextraze was appointed Chief of the Defence Staff with the rank of full general and awarded the rank of Commander of the Order of Military Merit. He served as Canada's top soldier until his retirement in 1977, nearly four decades after he joined as a private in the infantry. For his tremendous service to the armed forces and the country he was admitted to the Order of Canada in 1978. When Jacques Alfred Dextraze passed away peacefully on 9 May 1993, the nation said a sad goodbye to one of the most legendary and outstanding soldiers in its history.

ENDNOTES

1. Recommended for immediate DSO, 5 September 1944, endorsed by Lieutenant-General H.D.G. Crerar, Acting General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, First Canadian Army on 4 November 1944.
2. Recommended for immediate Bar to DSO on 17 April 1945; supported by Headquarters, 6 Canadian Infantry Brigade on 2 May 1945 and passed forward on 30 May 1945.
3. Awarded Commander, Order of the British Empire (CBE) with gallantry oak leaf as per Canada Gazette of 3 October 1964 "For Services with the UN Forces in the Congo" as Commander of the Canadian contingent with the United Nations in the Congo (UNUC).

CANADIAN ARMY LAND WARFARE CENTRE

The Canadian Army Land Warfare Centre (CALWC) evolved out of the original Directorate of Land Strategic Concepts (1997–2006) and the Directorate of Land Concepts and Designs (2007–2012) as part of the ongoing army transformation and maturation of capability development in the Land Force. As the primary think tank for the Canadian Army, its mission is to advise the Commander Canadian Army on the future security environment, the capabilities that will be required to operate in that environment, and alternative concepts and technologies to achieve those required capabilities. CALWC provides a focal point within the Army to identify, examine, and assess factors and developments that will have an impact on the Army of Tomorrow and the Future Army. In meeting its mandate, the centre examines a wide range of issues covering the global and domestic environments, emerging technologies and human factors, as well as allied and foreign force developments.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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THINK CLEARLY. PLAN WISELY. ACT BOLDLY.

General Sir Rupert Smith's Command of 1st Armoured Division during Operation GRANBY

Colonel Jason Adair, Canadian Army

The acid test of an officer who aspires to high command is his ability to be able to grasp quickly the essentials of a military problem, to decide rapidly what he will do, to make it quite clear to all concerned what he intends to achieve and how he will do it, and then to see that his subordinate commanders get on with the job... When all is said and done the greatest quality required in a commander is "decision"; he must then be able to issue clear orders and have the "drive" to get things done....and [cannot] have any success if he fails to understand the human approach to war. Battles are won primarily in the hearts of men...

Field Marshal Montgomery¹

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Why is a Canadian brigade commander writing about a British general? The answer is simple: faced with the current emphasis on fighting a relatively capable foe in a large scale operation, I looked to history to inform my thinking and, in so doing, studied 1st Armoured Division's actions during Operation GRANBY. From this study, the approach of the division's commander, General Sir Rupert Smith, emerged as particularly instructive. What follows is a summary of the battle and the salient "lessons in command" derived from this study.

ABSTRACT

The recently published Canadian Army Modernization Strategy highlights both continuity and change in the way that the Army will fight in the future. The critical continuity that emerges is the requirement for effective command. Accompanying this principal necessity is the inference that the future may demand expertise in conducting large-scale operations against a viable foe. The Canadian Army has not fought a peer competitor in over 75 years. Therefore, in this present period amidst a world awash in change, it is essential to consider the enduring character of command in large-scale operations. While studying history does not provide all of the answers for the future, it amplifies command's enduring tenets and enables military professionals

to ask pertinent questions about the future. This study of Major-General (later General Sir) Rupert Smith's command of the 1st British Armoured Division during the First Gulf War, which the British dubbed Operation GRANBY, highlights some of command's timeless techniques in the context of conducting a large-scale operation.

Between November 1990 and February 1991, Major-General Smith forged an ad hoc division into a lethal fighting formation that quickly defeated its Iraqi foe. During the four-day ground war between 24 and 28 February 1991, the division advanced almost 300 kilometres and destroyed three Iraqi divisions, achieving its mission to secure VII (US) Corp's southern flank. While it is clear that the Iraqi divisions were second rate, the 1st Armoured Division, by any measure, was extremely effective in fulfilling its mission. Given this success and that it was a composite formation brought together from across the British Army, what lessons can be derived from Major-General Smith's approach to command?

Command's fundamental activities are conceiving a plan, communicating intentions and imposing one's will to ensure that intentions are realized. Smith had a deliberate, thoughtful and pragmatic approach in fulfilling those functions. He saw clearly his role as the division's commander and understood how to employ his staff to enable himself and his subordinates. He provided a clear conception of "battle" and infused clarity of thought and purpose within his command. Specifically, he communicated the clear steps critical to the division's success, providing just enough unifying guidance to his commanders before unleashing and enabling them to fight and win. While some have dubbed his command as a classic case of mission command, it is fundamentally a case of a commander effectively tailoring his approach to command to the realities of the moment—an eternal requirement for any commander.

INTRODUCTION

On 28 October 1990, Major-General (later General Sir) Rupert Smith assumed command of the 1st Armoured Division at Shiel Barracks in Verden, Germany. At that moment, neither he nor anyone else could have predicted the future. By the end of January 1991, he had assembled an ad hoc division in Saudi Arabia, integrated it with VII (US) Corps and was ready to fight the Iraqi Army. And fight they did. Between 24 and 28 February 1991, the division "advanced 290 km in 66 hours, destroyed the best part of at least three Iraqi divisions, took 7,024 prisoners, two Iraqi divisional commanders, and captured over 400 'equipments' and 2,000 small arms."² While Smith would later contend, in his seminal work, *The Utility of Force*, that such battles were aberrations in the post-industrial age, his approach during Operation GRANBY illuminates the enduring nature of command and some of its timeless best practices. This paper aims to refresh thinking about commanding large formations by contextualizing and highlighting Smith's actions as a division commander in the Gulf in 1990/1991. The analysis reinforces that command's fundamental activities are conceiving a plan, communicating intentions and imposing one's will to ensure that intentions are realized. The way in which a particular commander performs those functions depends on the circumstances



Major-General Rupert Smith confers with his staff at his main headquarters.

Source: Imperial War Museum, GLF 53

and the individual, together representing the *character of command*. As this paper will illustrate, Smith was clear-eyed and approached command pragmatically but did not subcontract his own thinking to his staff or lose touch with those under his command who were closest to the enemy. He established a clear conception of training and battle, organized his force around the concept, and employed his staff to challenge assumptions and help him and his commanders adapt the plan to reality. He “visualized” his commanders through the battle, blending training and rehearsals, unifying thought and purpose, and ultimately fostering disciplined freedom of action. Such an approach highlights interminable command techniques.

FORMING THE DIVISION AND PLANNING FOR BATTLE

United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 set a 15 January 1991 deadline for Iraqi forces to withdraw from Kuwait. Just prior to the tabling of that resolution, the US decided to deploy VII (US) Corps to the Gulf. The British government followed. The British decision, in mid-November 1990, led to it more than doubling its commitment of ground forces. This triggered the rapid deployment of Headquarters 1st Armoured Division; 4th Armoured Brigade; a medium reconnaissance regiment; and an army aviation regiment, along with supporting artillery, engineers and logistics units. With 7th Armoured Brigade already in the Gulf, this composite formation would grow to over 22,000 personnel from across the Army, representing a significant portion of the Army’s fighting power, and assured an important role in the ground operation.³

Directed to deploy this force on 13 November, Smith immediately began his own estimate, which was captured in his "Notes to Self." Those notes contained 41 points that included critical assumptions; the draft divisional mission and intent; a description of the anticipated nature of operations; critical training requirements; and a list of questions, organized under key operational headings.⁴ The estimate provided initial guidance to his staff and informed his own reconnaissance to the Gulf, which occurred between 21 and 25 November. After briefing the Operation GRANBY Joint Force Commander on 26 November, he published Directive 1/90 on 30 November. This prescient expression of Smith's intent aimed to "draw the strings together" to enable his subordinate commanders to "make decisions and take measures" to be capable of conducting operations by 31 January 1991.⁵ Indeed, in less than nine pages, he provided subordinate commanders with a clear "critical path" for organizing, training and administering while also outlining, in general terms, how he envisioned that the division would fight. This operational concept shifted the division's mindset from the defence to the offence and is a clear example of tailoring foundational doctrine for purpose and knitting together complementary actions to create a single battle. Importantly, at this early stage, it allowed subordinate commanders to visualize their possible role in battle, and it reinforced the requirement to remain flexible while imbuing all ranks with clear purpose:

In essence, the Divisional battle will involve the committal of appropriately grouped brigades, usually sequentially to the "Contact Battle" in concert with the "Depth Fire Battle" being fought by the Artillery Group under CRA [Commander Royal Artillery]. The brigades are responsible for fighting the "Contact Battle" concentrating the full power of their battlegroups under the covering fire of the close support artillery allocated to them.⁶

The directive also emphasized the pervasive human factors essential to preparing the division to fight and win. Smith wrote: "...we must establish throughout the Division an attitude of mind that is robust and capable of enduring the uncertainties, fear and confusion associated with war...discipline is the glue that holds men together when threatened" and "that the execution of [drills and procedures] is a matter of discipline" but that men should not become "unthinking automatons."⁷ He also encouraged his commanders to exercise their initiative, compelling them to always ask: "What would my Commander wish me to do if he could see what is in front of me?" He concluded with specific direction to commanders: "[It] has been shown time after time that the leaders who have the capacity to discipline themselves and their commands while still thinking and taking appropriate action are those that triumph in war."⁸ The common theme was initiative and disciplined action. At a time when the division was simultaneously forming, training and moving to the Gulf, the directive provided commanders both the clarity and latitude to focus their efforts. In retrospect, it unified and drove the actions of the division for two months.

Having established his philosophy of command and directed and energized critical training, movement and administration, Smith transferred his efforts to planning the battle to come. He arrived in Saudi Arabia on 11 December and established

his headquarters at the port of Al Jubail, in northeastern Saudi Arabia. After the 1st Armoured Division confirmed that it was capable of sustaining itself during an offensive operation 350 kilometres west of Al Jubail, the decision was made, on 14 December, to place it under the tactical control of VII (US) Corps. That command relationship would take effect on 26 January. The decision brought with it the authority to plan with the corps. Smith met with the corps commander, Lieutenant-General Fred Franks, on 24 December. They discussed training, planning and the importance of integrating staffs.⁹ With a clear chain of command and the broad outline of the corps' and division's probable roles, Smith concentrated the division's staff on tactical planning while his subordinate commanders focused on training and administrative preparations. All activity was guided by Smith's original directive.

The emphasis of planning was on offensive operations aimed at destroying the Republican Guard Forces Command (RGFC) divisions, Iraq's all-volunteer strategic reserve and their centre of gravity. They were located in southern Iraq, 150 kilometres north of the border with Saudi Arabia. The destruction of those divisions would compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. But the divisions were not the first problem. Immediately facing VII (US) Corps were six Iraqi Army divisions organized as part of the Iraqi Army's VII Corps. The corps placed five divisions (26th, 48th, 31st, 25th, and 27th Infantry) on a 120-kilometre front along the Saudi-Iraqi border, west from the Wadi Al-Batin (the riverbed that is the border between Kuwait and Iraq). Their mission was to defend in place. To do so, they were arrayed in a forward, linear and static defence, which grew weaker as it stretched west. While fortified to varying degrees, the divisional positions were centred on meaningless terrain, each approximately 10 kilometres north of the border, with each division's defensive zone being 15 to 20 kilometres wide and of a similar depth. As General Franks noted, "they were like a fleet at anchor in the sea."¹⁰ The corps' Reserve and its only mobile force, the 52nd Armoured Division, was located approximately 50 to 75 kilometres north of the static divisions. Central to the Iraqi mission and plan was their fixation on terrain. This, coupled with the reality that they "were blind, hungry, and unable to move, attrited by desertions and casualties and fooled by the coalition deception plan," created vulnerabilities that VII (US) Corps would come to exploit.¹¹

In stark comparison to the Iraqi VII Corps terrain-focused mission, the VII (US) Corps' mission was to destroy the RGFC. To achieve that, the plan envisioned the 1st (US) Cavalry Division feinting and demonstrating at the Rugi Pocket along the Wadi Al-Batin to fix enemy divisions along the border and deceive them as to the point of main effort. Amidst this ongoing effort, 1st (US) Infantry Division (1st (US) ID) would breach the minefield and border defences west of Wadi Al-Batin and penetrate 40 kilometres beyond the border, to destroy direct fire weapons and artillery observation posts. 1st (UK) Armoured Division would move through this breach, conduct a forward passage of lines with 1st (US) ID and then move east across the Al-Dibdibah plain, attacking the western flank of VII (Iraq) Corps and destroying the tactical reserves of those divisions positioned along the border. The division would then be in a position to block the RGFC, leaving the latter two options: be destroyed by the

VII (US) Corps' enveloping force or withdraw. The corps' enveloping force would conduct a "left hook" in a gap in Iraqi defences around the western flank of VII (Iraq) Corps, west of the breach. That force would be led by the 2nd (US) Armoured Cavalry Regiment, which would be the covering force and screen the advance of the 1st (US) Armoured and 3rd (US) Armoured Divisions, who would destroy elements of the RGFC. The bottom line is that the success of the 1st Armoured Division was essential in ensuring that the Corps could move quickly and securely against the RGFC.

Five days after receiving his mission and having conducted a mission analysis, Smith provided an initial brief (mission and outline plan) to the Commander VII (US) Corps on 1 January 1991 during a corps study period. As the lone allied division commander in the corps, he opened by commenting that, despite the fact they "[t]rained in Europe, [were] dressed for the jungle [and were] fighting in the desert, they were pleased to be part of the Corps."¹² He went on to stress the inhibitive impact that intelligence gaps were having on detailed planning, emphasizing that the Division's success was predicated on finding the tactical reserves of the Iraqi divisions that he was tasked to destroy. The corps study period was useful in that it provided Smith with greater insight into the corps plan. It also enabled him to further refine the division's mission, which he translated from US to British doctrinal terms and subsequently outlined during a corps map exercise (MAPEX) held from 6 to 8 January. With a clear mission and the majority of its forces in the Gulf, the division maintained a defensive posture and adopted an offensive mindset. All elements began to train with focused urgency against a backdrop of the threat of pre-emptive attacks, operational security demands, deception efforts and ongoing interoperability, administrative and equipping challenges.

For the remainder of January 1991, Smith focused on six areas. First, he took an active role in welding the ad hoc division together, ensuring that all ranks shared a common purpose and understood the context within which they were operating. Daily, he would visit training, having lunch with units, seeking to understand their realities while reinforcing in them the purpose of the operations, "dispelling the prophets of gloom" and updating them on the overall situation. Second, he actively kept his various superior commanders updated. He understood that he was the face of the British ground force in the war and recognized the importance of ensuring that the Commander VII (US) Corps, Commander British Forces Middle East, the UK Joint Commander and the Chief of General Staff maintained a clear picture of the division's activities and realities. Third, he set the conditions for and oversaw training. That required him to accept the risk associated with moving logistics and medical units ahead of the division to support training. In monitoring training, he focused on ensuring that his formations were capable of achieving their anticipated tasks while maintaining the posture required to respond to chemical attacks and supporting the ongoing deception plan. Fourth, he led the planning effort. Each day he would spend time guiding his staff, thinking through problems, identifying intelligence requirements and refining the plan. Fifth, he closely monitored specific administrative and logistics issues—those that could undercut his combat power—and, when

necessary, fought associated bureaucratic battles with Whitehall. And finally, sixth, while he could not divulge the details of the actual operational plan, he assisted his commanders to visualize the broad contours of the operational plan. He personally led five MAPEXs, each three hours in duration, that enabled commanding officers, formation commanders and key staff to visualize and exchange ideas about their role in specific phases of the anticipated battle.¹³ Not only did these exercises provide the opportunity to unify thinking across the divisions, they informed supporting MAPEXs (logistics and medical) and ultimately the development of desert standard operating procedures (DSOP), which captured the science required to support the art of Smith's operational concept. Specifically, the DSOPs represented the realities of operating in the desert and the unique organization of the division. They focused on logistics "yardsticks," movement, and supplemented existing doctrine, taking into account force ratios (based on operational analysis) and focusing on anticipated tasks (advance, obstacle breaching, break-in, meeting engagement and hasty defence). Ironically, the only contingency that was not considered in detail was that of unbridled success—the rapid collapse of the Iraqi Army.

With the completion of the MAPEXs and the finalization of the DSOP's, on 28 January, Smith issued *Directive 2 – Planning*. Its purpose was to provide his commanders with "a basis for planning [their] own battles."¹⁴ In addition to providing the updated mission, this directive summarized the accrued learning of the previous two months and was a clear, descriptive narrative of how, in broad terms, he envisioned the coming battle to unfold. It was an amplification and adaptation of Directive 1/90. While there was no fundamental change to the concept of the divisional battle, that directive clarified its purpose: "to defeat the enemy's mobile forces—to achieve this we must destroy his armoured, mechanized and artillery units—and his headquarters. We are not fighting for ground unless we need it."¹⁵ It further wove together the depth and contact battles. The depth battle was defined as: "to attack the enemy in such a way as to prevent him firing and moving to reinforce the *contact* battle" and distilled the contact battle to its essence: "to destroy the enemy quickly, [generally] at ranges in excess of 1,000 metres."¹⁶ Brigades would be committed sequentially, but their manoeuvre coupled with the depth battle sought to systemically disrupt, destroy and dislocate the enemy rather than cumulatively attrite them. Interestingly, the directive is notable for what it did not contain. While it outlined three possibilities for the conduct of the forward passage of lines and the immediate breakout, it did not detail a plan for the subsequent advance and destruction of the tactical reserves of a series of Iraqi Army divisions. Why? Quite simply, because a critical planning assumption was that the tactical reserves would be moving, following the coalition attack. Smith did not know where they would be located.

During a divisional orders group (O Gp) on 29 January, the operational plan was briefed to the division's commanders for the first time. The mission of 1st Armoured Division was: "To attack through 1 [US] ID to defeat the enemy tactical reserves in order to protect the right flank VII (US) Corps."¹⁷ Reflecting the general officer commanding's (GOC) *Directive 2 – Planning*, this O Gp detailed the forward passage of lines but "did



“The artillery commander needs to have information on which to fight his battle and, to this end, I grouped the medium reconnaissance regiment with the Artillery Group.”

Major-General Smith confers with Brigadier Cordingley at 7th Armoured Brigade’s main headquarters. Major-General Smith met to confer with Brigadier Cordingley on 27 February as the operation transitioned to the “pursuit.”

Source: Major-General Rupert Smith

not attempt to cover the subsequent development, as the method used to defeat the enemy’s tactical reserves would depend on last minute intelligence.”¹⁸ The completion of the O Gp demarked the start of an intensive operational preparation of the battlefield¹⁹ and specific rehearsals and training, during which the decentralized efforts of the preceding two months were fused together. Between 31 January and 3 February, the division completed a command post exercise to validate command and control arrangements, and it conducted a tactical exercise without troops followed by day and night “walk-throughs” of the 1st (US) ID’s practice breach area.²⁰ Between 4 and 6 February, the division came together for the first time during Exercise Dibdibah Drive, allowing brigades to manoeuvre and the integration of first and second line logistics during a full rehearsal of the breach with 1st (US) ID. That was followed by Exercise Dibdibah Charge between 16 and 18 February, which provided another opportunity to rehearse divisional manoeuvre over the 140 kilometre distance to the division’s pre-H-hour location, Assembly Area Ray. While the entirety of the division did not have the opportunity to exercise together, this final exercise confirmed the ability of the division’s headquarters to integrate all elements of combat power and demonstrated the proficiency of the formations in executing those drills and manoeuvre originally directed in Directive 1/90.

As Exercise Dibdibah Charge concluded, Operation Order 4/91 was issued on 18 February. The order focused on the forward passage of lines (FPOL) with 1st (US) ID and confirmed the groupings—the organization of the division for battle. The way that Smith organized the division reflected clearly his carefully considered operational concept:

I wanted to fight the division in depth and I wanted to achieve, for my brigades, objectives which I called bite-sized objectives. I wanted them to be able to consume these very quickly and be ready to move on. In this way, I would achieve tempo while I fought, using my CRA and his Artillery Group, in a depth battle to isolate that contact battle by destroying, disrupting, and delaying the enemy using the artillery and any air we had allocated. The artillery commander needs to have information on which to fight his battle and, to this end, I grouped the medium reconnaissance regiment with the Artillery Group. I also grouped the aviation regiment with them for information gathering on one hand and the ability to use their weapons on the other.²¹

Overall, the division's organization stemmed directly from Smith's conception of battle and his tolerance of various risks. It, as will be outlined, represents the following realities: the division's capabilities and anticipated tasks, the fact that reinforcements would be limited; and the reality that there was no British Corps headquarters to assist in supporting its unique logistics requirements.

In the round, the division was unbalanced, in that it only had two traditional manoeuvre formations and significant artillery but was overall lacking in infantry. The manoeuvre force of the division, responsible for fighting the contact battle, was the 4th Armoured Brigade (two infantry and one armoured battle group; a close support regiment in direct support; an engineer regiment; an electronic warfare troop; forward logistics detachment; and armoured field ambulance) and 7th Armoured Brigade (two armoured and one infantry battle group with the same attachments as 4th Brigade). The Artillery Group, commanded by CRA, was responsible for providing air defence security, supporting the contact battle and fighting the depth battle, integrating artillery, medium reconnaissance, aviation and air. It consisted of three general support regiments, a medium artillery regiment, a multiple launch rocket system regiment, an air defence regiment, and a US field artillery brigade, which provided general support reinforcing fire to support the main effort (as required). Often, those assets were grouped with the medium reconnaissance regiment and the majority of the aviation regiment, reflecting Smith's mantra, "if you can see it, you must be able to shoot it."²² The Engineer Group was commanded by the Commander Royal Engineers with the primary task of providing mobility support to the advance. In terms of employment, 4th Regiment Army Aviation Corps consisted of those helicopters not grouped in the Artillery Group, and were to conduct various command and control and reconnaissance tasks.

Beyond the typical divisional organizations described above, there were a number of ad hoc organizations. The Route Development Battle Group was formed from 32 Armoured Engineer Regiment (augmented with military police) and was to "select, build and maintain the division's main supply route."²³ Another ad hoc organization was the Division Reconstitution Group. Given Smith's concept to maintain tempo in the sequential commitment of brigades, thereby "employing logistics like firepower," this organization was established to quickly resupply and reconstitute the brigade

that was “out of contact.”²⁴ Central to this group was Armoured Delivery Group, another ad hoc grouping, built around the 1st Battalion Queen’s Own Highlanders, which would “receive, hold, train and deploy reinforcements of men and vehicles to fighting formations” and/or form a reserve.²⁵ The Support Helicopter (SH) Force consisted of no less than 37 helicopters of various types. Puma helicopters were to focus primarily on the evacuation of casualties from regimental aid posts and ambulance exchange points to dressing stations, while Sea Kings and Chinooks would transport casualties further rearwards. As a secondary task, the SH Force could move critical combat supplies and prisoners of war. After having already pushed logistics forward to formation and units, to further reduce lines of communication, the forward force maintenance area was established. It represented the divisional element of 3rd line logistics support, which was tightly intertwined with the division’s 2nd line logistics organizations, collectively controlled by the Deputy Chief of Staff. The Prisoner of War Guard Force, commanded by the Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, consisted of three infantry battalions and was responsible for guarding the British prisoner of war camp and collecting and escorting prisoners to that camp. Finally, the 1st Armoured Division Signals Regiment provided communications support throughout the divisional area of operations. Of note, Smith saw his reserve as being fire support rather than a manoeuvre element. Adopting this organization was unifying in that it grouped functions, more so than was standard practice. This offset the impact of the division’s composite character, reduced the requirement to re-group and ultimately simplified the way in which Smith exercised command.

To reduce uncertainty and friction amidst a constantly changing situation, Smith issued final orders at the last practical moment. At 1000 hours on 24 February, he gathered his commanders to provide a framework for conducting operations, after the division had passed through 1st (US) ID. As the flat and unpopulated desert terrain held no tactical significance, he refused to become wedded to a single plan. Rather, he focused on destroying known likely concentrations of the enemy denoted by “goose-eggs on the map,” with some as large as 20 kilometres by 20 kilometres in area. Those objectives were grouped by a series of phase lines, which represented decision points tied to the likelihood of re-grouping, movement of fire support or the anticipated requirement of resupply. Smith stated, “Gentlemen, this rugby game is the hardest one we have ever played. When we leave the breach, the ball comes out of the ruck and the try-line is the Euphrates,”²⁶ before delineating the framework for the battle:

What I have done is to divide our area up into a series of objectives with the names of various metals. These have been calculated on our assessment of the current enemy situation as to where the enemy might be and grouped into objectives that I think brigades could manage on their own and...where I want to go/be in order to develop the situation within our area.

In effect, there are three lines of divisional objectives. The first line, marked by Phase Line Rose...Objective Bronze. The objective when we attack up to this preliminary objective line is to gain room to get the rest of the division out—away from [1st (US) ID's] breach head.

The second line of objectives takes us to Phase Line Lavender which gives us three sets of objectives—Copper, the beginning of Brass, Zinc and Steel. These get us poised so I can start to manoeuvre the division as with clear air on one side of the area or the other. I don't know which way I'm going at this stage...²⁷

At the conclusion of the O Gp, Smith stated:

We have talked about this and we have thought about it for some months and now we are going to do it. About fifteen percent of what we think we are going to do and the way we plan to do it will be proven wrong. It is our business to stop things going wrong and to put them right. We must be adaptive to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Don't let the enemy dictate to you. The moment that happens we are failing to carry out our task and are cooperating with him.

But above all remember that with very few exceptions the whole of this division has never done anything like this before. People are now getting very excited and twitchy. So take the first jump nice and steady, keep the boys under control. Don't let them go running on, or we will make a series of elementary errors which will only serve to slow us down in the long term.

Over-confidence, over-high spirits, is in my opinion often the mark of an amateur. With it, when setbacks occur, comes depression and gloom. We, gentlemen, are professionals and our object overall is the reduction and final dispatch of our enemy with economy of effort in so doing.²⁸

Smith adopted Napoleon's approach: *On s'engage, et puis on voit* [we engage and then we see]. While some commanders may have wished for more certainty or additional details, providing such information would have been speculative. The content of the orders represents a plan to deal with what was known at the time, and was based on the primary assumption that the Iraqi tactical reserves would move when the ground attack started. Specifying tasks or establishing control measures beyond what Smith did would have provided his subordinates a false sense of certainty. In conveying "knowns" and providing a framework to deal with the probable, he minimized uncertainty to the degree he could. The division would fight an advance to contact along two broad axes, disrupting, delaying and destroying the enemy in depth while brigades were unleashed, one at a time, to close with and destroy the enemy in small and sharp battles. And that, for the most part, is what occurred.



“It is our business to stop things going wrong and to put them right. We must be adaptive to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.”

— General Sir Rupert Smith



Source: Wikipedia

British soldier during Operation GRANBY



Source: American Press

Tank crews with the British 7th Armoured Brigade stand atop their Challenger tanks.

“STRESSED BY OUR OWN SUCCESS:” FIGHTING THE ENEMY...AND THE PLAN

Over the ensuing days, despite the inevitable fog and friction of battle, the division fought its plan, although on an accelerated timeline. Given the overall success of the ground attack, General Schwarzkopf ordered VII (US) Corps to breach and attack as quickly as possible. The result was that 1st Armoured Division's H-hour was advanced by almost 24 hours. This demanded that the division drive, rather than transport its Challengers during the move to its staging areas, 15 kilometres south of the border berm, throughout the night of 24–25 February. The changes did not stop there. The corps commander decided to assign 1st (US) ID as the third fist of the corps' manoeuvre force against the RGFC, which necessitated that they complete its breach task as quickly as possible. The result was a change in the order of march through the 16 lanes of the breach. Instead of the entirety of 1st Armoured Division moving through the breach *en masse*, the “logistics train” of 1st (US) ID would use 50 percent of the lanes, while 1st Armoured Division's echelon would use the remainder. In effect, the division would fight without its echelon for the first 24 hours. Smith's desire to create self-sufficient brigades paid off before first contact with the enemy. Just after noon on Monday, 25 February, Smith issued radio orders and, in just over 400 words, unleashed the division, directing that 7th Brigade would lead the advance.

Amidst wind and rain, the division's reconnaissance regiment, the 16th/5th Lancers, moved through the breach lanes at midday on 25 February. They were followed by 7th Brigade, which crossed its line of departure at 1515 hours and began moving along the northern axis of advance. 4th Brigade followed, completing its transit of the breach at 1930 hours and assuming responsibility for the southern axis. By 0200 hours on 26 February, the last of the division's F Echelon had crossed into Iraq. The Iraqis were surprised, although the initial response by some “heavy” elements was determined. The coherence and will of the Iraqi opposition unravelled as the division advanced quickly and violently. In broad terms, the plan was executed as envisioned. With the Artillery Group gaining information and disrupting depth objectives, the brigades attacked quickly in turn. Using speed as both a sword and shield, Smith shifted the main effort as success on a particular objective seemed assured. By first light on 26 February, 7th Brigade had secured Objectives Copper and Zinc, while 4th Brigade had secured Objective Bronze. Later that morning, 4th Brigade secured Objective Brass and by 1500 hours Objective Steel was in their hands.²⁹ In between those attacks, 7th Brigade assaulted and secured Objective Platinum and, by 1700 hours, achieved the same result at Objective Lead. Throughout the night of 26–27 February, 4th Brigade attacked Objective Tungsten, which was secured by first light. On the morning of 27 February, the division had reached its limit of exploitation at Phase Line Smash, 15 hours sooner than predicted. In its wake, the division had destroyed the 46th Mechanized Brigade, the 52nd Armoured Brigade and the manoeuvre forces of at least three divisions.³⁰

With the division consolidated at its limit of exploitation, it had culminated as a result of the speed at which it had advanced. In the words of Smith, “we were stressed by our success.”³¹ Given the distance that the division had moved, communications between VII (US) Corps and the division were “fragmented.”³² Smith did not have a clear view of

the situation to his front, nor was he aware of the progress of other VII (US) divisions to his north, or the Egyptians to the east. Furthermore, he was unaware of the state of the bypassed enemy to the south. And the division's manoeuvre elements had caught up to its reconnaissance elements. It had "[outrun] its own headlights"; the depth battle was subsumed into the contact battle.³³ The brigades had caught up to the slow-moving Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked)-equipped 16th/5th Lancers. The operation turned into a pursuit.

At this point, there was some uncertainty about the division's next task. One option was for it to move north toward Basra or, alternatively, it might attack east into Kuwait. Amidst this ambiguity, Smith organized for flexibility, and reinforced 7th Brigade with a reconnaissance squadron and additional artillery. When the call came to attack east, they were ready. On 27 February, 7th Brigade advanced 50 kilometres, destroyed the enemy within the division's boundaries and secured Objective Varsity, which turned out to be void of any enemy. In an effort to shorten the corps' lines of communication, the division was, during this period, also told to be prepared to attack southwest along the Wadi Al-Batin. Smith grouped additional engineers to 4th Brigade and prepared them for the task. This task was subsequently annulled and the division was tasked to move further east to the Kuwait City–Basra road, to cut-off the Iraqi army withdrawing to Basra. The 7th Brigade arrived at the road at 0750 hours, ten minutes before the cease-fire took effect, while 4th Brigade ended the war at Objective Varsity.

As Smith had created self-sufficient formations, he focused on ensuring the success of 3 of his 12 subordinate commanders; Commanders 4th and 7th Brigade and CRA. His energy was further focused because he had also given considerable latitude to his chief of staff and deputy chief of staff to coordinate and control other critical actions (predominantly logistics), relying on them to advise him of issues requiring his decision. In practical terms, that led to him anticipating and integrating the depth and contact battles. His role in the contact battle was to ensure that brigades attacked objectives with the right support at the right time and could win quickly. In the depth battle, he monitored its progress through CRA, focusing on Iraqi dispositions, strengths and assessed intentions, which informed his manoeuvre and the tempo at which it occurred. Smith focused on the decisive formations in the division, knowing that the supporting actions of others were being closely coordinated.

There are two particular aspects of Smith's command technique worth highlighting: the method in which he arrived at decisions and the locations from which he chose to command. Smith's approach to decision-making was disciplined. While he encouraged and stimulated critical thinking, his approach ensured his subordinates' freedom of action to execute their plan. He focused on making the decisions only he could make and solving problems that formations could not solve on their own. Furthermore, he inculcated amongst his commanders a spirit of "in the absence of information, execute the order they should have received." This well-ordered approach to decision-making was reinforced not just in execution, but in planning, during which he sought to identify the decisions that he, the corps commander and his subordinate commanders

could be called upon to make. He viewed his decisions as those pertaining to exploiting opportunities or reacting to the unforeseen; designation of the main effort and/or reserve; regrouping; re-allocating fire support; and fundamentally changing the plan. Adopting this “anticipatory decision-making” lens focused him and his staff on the division’s role in the battle, causing him to delegate authorities and reduce the number of decisions that only he could make. As a result, all but two of the significant decisions were anticipated. The first situation that was not anticipated was moving through the breach much earlier than anticipated. Establishing the feasibility of that required determining whether the division could move quickly enough; determining the impact of increased track mileage on combat power; and determining how long the division could sustain itself without 2nd line support. Second, the collapse of the depth battle on 27 February was not foreseen. That led to redefining the operation as a pursuit and the accompanying decision to provide 7th Brigade with additional artillery to complete its subsequent task to secure Objective Varsity.

Determining the best location from which to command remains constant in the mind of a commander. In Smith’s case, he was constrained on account of the limited communications capability that he had in every location but his main headquarters (HQ). The main HQ was the only location where he could have uninterrupted access to the information required to integrate the contact and depth battles. Furthermore, with the interoperability challenges associated with the lone allied formation in the corps, the interoperable communications systems in the main HQ were of even more importance. The main HQ, one of the two identical command posts, designated Alternate A and B, leapfrogged to maintain continuity. It always included key staff: COS, G2, SO2 G3 Ops, and SO2 G3 Plans. Throughout the operation, the main HQ was never far from the brigades, moving five times.³⁴ Smith spent the majority of his time around the “bird table” in close proximity to key staff. To supplement that input, in order to gain a “feel” for the operation, he often listened to the radio communications down to the unit level, garnering a sense of the situation from not only what was being said but also the tone of voices. For 60 hours, until early on 27 February, Smith was content in his headquarters as the situation unfolded according to plan. When the division reached Phase Line Smash, the next bound was far less certain, fatigue was beginning to be a significant factor and the division had just suffered many casualties in a fratricide incident. At that point, after issuing orders for 7th Brigade to move to Objective Varsity, Smith flew forward and met Commander 7th Brigade, Brigadier Cordingley, to discuss probable tasks for the battle-after-next while providing an update on the progress of the overall campaign. Thereafter, he visited 4th Brigade and the US artillery brigade to discuss future contingencies.

SO WHAT? ENDURING LESSONS IN COMMAND

As with any historical study, objectivity is essential in identifying relevant lessons. Germane to this study is the reality that Smith trained his division for the worst, but it fought and defeated a second-rate foe in a short but large-scale operation. A more capable enemy would have undoubtedly further tested the division.



Major-General Smith sits at the “bird table” in his main headquarters. In the background are Majors Simon Mayall and Mungo Melvin.

Source: Major-General Rupert Smith

But context is important—when many of the actions were taken, especially in planning and during the first 24 hours of the operations, uncertainty reigned and the outcome was not assured. Importantly, it was an atavistic experience for those in contact with the enemy: kill or be killed. To forget those realities could undercut the lessons of command that follow.

A commander is the primary source of the morale of his command. Smith defines morale as “[t]he spirit that seeks to triumph in adversity and arms a man against the shock of battle.”³⁵ He further qualifies this definition by stating: “The [m]orale of an individual or a group is not of necessity a measure of happiness or contentment; it is a measure of the cohesion and power of that individual’s or group’s resolve to pursue its object come what may.”³⁶ Smith was sensitive to the primacy of the spiritual (i.e. belief in higher purpose) and emotional elements of leadership, and believed that commanders played a critical role in generating and sustaining high morale—the resolve to win. His actions reflected that view. He imbued within the division a sense of pride derived from its purpose and the seriousness of their task. Smith took seriously his role in conveying that purpose, visiting units frequently to personally reinforce his intent and to better understand the realities of the soldiers he commanded. In each unit, he strove to impart a sense of importance of the task they would undertake and how it contributed to the overall mission. He demonstrated that presence mattered and that only a commander who was known to his soldiers could tap into the intangibles and inspire them.

Commanders must complete their own estimate and provide clear and empowering direction early. Smith did not subcontract his thinking to his staff. Rather, he thought through the problem himself, then discussed it with his staff. Based on his own analysis and the staff's input, he personally wrote and issued timely directives to express intent and provide the basis for his subordinate's decision-making. Those directives were founded upon doctrine but also demonstrate original thinking and tailoring the force to the situation. Doctrine was not a substitute for thinking, but Smith was disciplined in defining and, when required, redefining tasks in unambiguous doctrinal terms. Throughout the division, all ranks recognized such directives were written in Smith's own hand. Having clear direction "in hand" unleashed initiative while rapidly unifying thought, purpose and action.

Think "two-up" and "two-down". Smith was both the architect and the artist of division's role in battle and grasped the implications of tactical decisions and results on operational and strategic outcomes. As an artist, he conceived and planned the battle and, as the novelist, he established the narrative to direct "down" and inform "up." He was deliberate and consistent in informing his myriad of superiors of the situation through his eyes. He was equally committed to ensure that his immediate subordinates and commanding officers understood their role in the larger battle. In terms of the latter, he deliberately, through MAPEXs, rehearsals, and training, "imagined" his commanders through the battle to come, who then did the same thing with their subordinates. That deliberate visualization paid intangible dividends, best characterized by many who suggested that, when the battle came, they had already experienced "it."

Be comfortable with uncertainty and a "messy" battlefield. Smith innately understood that battle is chaotic and unpredictable. His antidote was to simplify plans and focus on the enemy, without being over-simplistic. To Smith, "perfect" was the nemesis of "good enough." His approach to planning and the way he made decisions illustrate his aversion to mechanistic approaches to fighting, which are brittle and ultimately fall apart. He therefore adopted a thoughtful, simple and opportunistic approach to fighting, fueled by clear commander's intent and undergirded by commonly understood and practised drills. This combination created agility, allowing opportunities to be identified and exploited. Smith was concerned about winning rather than tidiness or order.

Empower commanders; avoid meddling and over-controlling. Given the ad hoc composition of the division, Smith in many ways organized it to empower those closest to the "problems." That reflected his fundamental belief that all ranks should "execute the order they should have received." To make that a reality, he first confirmed and clarified his intent so that subordinate commanders could understand their role amidst the broader context. Second, he made it a priority to get to know personally his commanders so that he could play to their strengths and guard their weaknesses and, in turn, he relied on them to do the same. Next, he sought "to lower decision levels, thus reducing the need for information to flow upwards and speeding action."³⁷ In doing so, he reduced his decisions to only those that he was best positioned to make

as the GOC, concentrating on his specific responsibilities. That said, he remained aware of details that were critical—those that could have a direct impact on his plan. Importantly, he acknowledged the capacity of his subordinate commanders' HQs, specifically, the often forgotten reality that, while a division can plan and execute simultaneously, brigades and units struggle to do the same. He therefore did not request from them, or inundate them with, vast quantities of information. Smith's aversion to meddling also spared his staff from seeking and reporting trivia—information that was not essential to his own decision-making. Finally, he only imposed control measures that enabled command, recognizing that minimizing control measures unleashes initiative. While leadership is far more than a series of decisions, Smith clearly differentiated those decisions that were his to make from those in the province of his subordinate commanders. That built a climate in which commanders used their initiative and took responsibility.

Organize and employ the staff as a fighting arm of the formation. Having commanded the division for less than two weeks before being ordered to the Gulf, Smith built his team from the inside out. First, he molded the division's staff into an extension of his thinking, priorities and style, encouraging them to work fast and be a "place" that was trusted and where people go to for answers.³⁸ He had a direct relationship with its critical members, and looked to them for information and suggestions. In doing so, he guided their focus, encouraged thinking, problem solving and the competition of ideas. That emphasis on thinking prevented the staff from being bound by process, creating mindless products or holding unnecessary meetings. Smith also understood the value of small staffs that were "light in rank." He believed that small staffs light in rank were more thoughtful, human and focused on the essential. Of note, the division's main HQ, two identical, self-contained and mobile headquarters, consisted of 76 officers and approximately 100 other ranks.³⁹

Planning is less a process than an ongoing learning and thinking activity. Smith took a pragmatic yet thoughtful approach to planning, and he demanded thinking and rigorous analysis, illustrating his belief that winning and losing in battle is as much about being out-thought as it is about being out-fought. In that vein, he viewed planning as an iterative learning process that he guided. Rather than offering thoughts and taking briefs, he was disciplined in issuing clear guidance to his staff and then entered into a dialectic with them, meeting with them daily to discuss a particular aspect of the plan. Smith recognized that plans are ultimately compromises. He also avoided making a litany of assumptions and did not try to plan too far into the future. Instead, he focused on "knowns" and learning to develop the plan, emphasizing to his subordinates what they could do next to exploit success.⁴⁰ This stood in contrast to VII (US) Corps, which planned for seven contingencies and issued corresponding fragmentary orders for each. The division thought about these problems but did not issue branch and sequel plans. It did not waste time by over-planning. Finally, he connected the art to the science, most notably by employing an operational analysis section to determine optimal force ratios. That validated his approach in "fighting one fist at a time" and narrowing the frontages of the manoeuvre brigades.

Organize the force around the problem. Smith recognized that he had to establish his organization as quickly as he could to compensate for its inherent lack of cohesion and the persistent reality of von Moltke's dictum that "an error in initial disposition might not be able to be corrected for the entire campaign." Smith's operational concept was driven by three simple requirements: information collection; tempo (fighting small battles quickly); and self-sufficiency (flexibility). He organized the division's formations around those necessities, shunning doctrinal norms. Grouping information gathering and strike assets to fight the deep battle was particularly imaginative, as was the formation of the Armoured Delivery Group and the Route Development Battle Group. Those functional groupings reduced the requirement for regrouping and simplified the command and control structure.

Do not fight a battle you cannot supply, and remain aware of key logistics and administrative factors. Smith believed that logistics should serve the master of the tactical plan but was prudent in ensuring that his plan was logistically feasible. In striking this balance, he challenged his logisticians to plan for probabilities rather than the worst case and eschew their predisposition to over-insure and "play it safe."⁴¹ Conceptually, he employed logistics like firepower, grouping key stocks and equipment forward to ensure rapid resupply, which in turn created the desired tempo. In practical terms, he personally took an active role in monitoring critical administrative and logistics issues, which took up a significant portion of his time. As an example, he convened an equipment management group that brought together commanders and key staff in order to ensure that he understood key issues and to balance training with future operational demands. His personal attention to those types of factors early in the deployment ensured commanders set the essential logistics foundation for operations and that all ranks were confident in the overall logistics system.

Drills and discipline provide a sturdy foundation. Stemming from his initial estimate and underpinned by Smith's belief that "movement is the essence of formation tactics," he prescribed the drills that would be critical to the division's success. Those simple drills aggregated to discipline the division, focus its training and create confidence in doing routine things well. The drills served as a point from which to deviate and contributed to commanders being able to think and make critical "manoeuvre" decisions while fighting. Smith viewed drills as the equivalent of rugby "plays," which are not overly rigid and can be eclipsed at any time by someone picking up the ball and leading.⁴²

Keep orders short, using the most applicable means of delivery to provide clarity, reduce confusion and maintain tempo. The main document of Operation Order 4/91 was 14 pages, supplemented by 16 annexes that totaled 103 pages. An analysis of that order reveals that it was as short as it could have been, given the mass of coordinating instructions required to conduct a FPOL with a US division. Following H-hour, orders were few and short, issued over Ptarmigan or the combat net radio.

As required, the orders were supplemented by fragmentary orders (sent by email) containing the required coordinating details and overlays as necessary. Between 24 and 28 February, Smith issued verbal orders at least seven times, communicating much in few words: initiating movement and designating main effort while providing an overview of the situation. Of note, as the operation progressed and “people only heard their own callsign” as a result of fatigue, written orders became the norm.⁴³ Orders were kept short because there was a clear view of the operational concept and plan; commanders had a sense of *déjà vu* during execution because of the intensive training, rehearsals and the use of schematics; and Smith directed “what,” not “how,” and did not desire or attempt to fight his subordinate commanders’ battles.

Plan to command. While he was opportunistic and flexible, Smith planned to command. He was not an apostle of a meeting-laden “battle rhythm” but rather of essential activities—those things only he could do as the GOC. Prior to 24 February, Smith’s daily rhythm was: breakfast alone (to think); check-in with the staff (to receive updates); meet with subordinate commanders (to encourage, confirm and clarify intent and understand problems); eat lunch at a different location each day (to understand realities of problems); and return to the HQ to reconcile his observations with updates and insights from the staff. Intrinsic in planning to command was deciding when to decide. Smith recognized that the timing of his decisions mattered and always asked: “do I have to make a decision right now?”⁴⁴

Develop a robust and trusted liaison network. 1st Armoured Division employed 70 officers, warrant officers and senior NCOs (with drivers and operators) in one of two liaison roles. First, they were adaptors who were embedded in US headquarters and who could plug in to the American system to work in key capacities. Second, there were a smaller number of transformers who could have direct communications with Smith and who could explain his thinking.⁴⁵ Liaison teams had a key role in ensuring “closeness of fit” between Smith’s understanding of his own plan and his superiors’ (both British and American), flanking and subordinate commanders’ understanding of it.⁴⁶ That was particularly important given that the division was the only non-American formation in VII (US) Corps.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to cast renewed light on General Sir Rupert Smith’s approach to command during Operation GRANBY with the view to extract relevant lessons for current commanders. While the actions of the division are undoubtedly more coherent in retrospect and extend far beyond the action of a single person, the evidence is clear. During a short time, Smith provided coherence and infused within his command clarity of thought and purpose. He assumed command, oversaw the assembly of 22,000 soldiers and critical equipment, bonded it together both physically and cognitively, and fought and won. While there is no formula for command, Smith’s approach reveals its soul. He quickly grasped the essence of the “problem” and communicated the clear steps critical to the division’s success. Progressively, he and his commanders came together

and built upon those steps, together transforming composite groups of soldiers into an effective fighting formation. Smith did so by focusing on essential factors—human, training and technical—that would prove indispensable to the success of the division. To Smith, there was no allure in any undertaking and endeavor that did not contribute directly to the destruction of the tactical reserves of the Iraqi VII Corps. He himself focused on tasks that only he (as the GOC) could perform while empowering and encouraging his commanders and remaining connected to those under his command. He led planning and remained highly attuned to strategic and operational factors, but he never let himself get out of touch with his soldiers; their reality was a key element in his reality. He developed a simple and flexible concept of battle and demanded the execution of disciplined drills at every echelon. That combination of clear intent and ruthlessly executed drills focused training and rehearsals and infused the division with ever increasing confidence. When the battle was fought, many had a sense of “we have done this before.” His approach reinforces the old adage that “battles are often won before they are fought.” In battle, he maintained a clear focus on his mission and drove the division hard, manoeuvred swiftly and created a series of cascading problems for the Iraqis. That resulted in their rapid destruction, which was his and the division’s mission. In late 1990 and early 1991, 1st Armoured Division, led by General Smith, thought clearly, planned wisely and acted boldly.

ENDNOTES

1. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, *Memoirs*, Cleveland: World Publishing, 1958, xxi.
2. Major-General Rupert Smith, *Op GRANBY First Impression Report*, March 1991, 1.
3. Inspector General Doctrine and Training, *Operation Desert Sabre: The Planning Process and Tactics Employed by 1st Armoured Division* (Army Code 71520), 1993, 1–3.
4. Major-General Rupert Smith, *Op GRANBY*. Undated.
5. Major-General Rupert Smith, *Op GRANBY Directive 1/90*, 30 November 1990, A-1.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid, 3–4.
9. Tom Clancy and General Fred Franks, *Into the Storm: A Study in Command*, New York: Putnam, 1997, 211.
10. Lieutenant-General Fred Franks as quoted in: *British Army Documentary: The Gulf Conflict Part 3 – The Liberation of Kuwait*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYcNZEyAOc>
11. Colonel John Davidson, *The 100 Hour Ground War: How the Iraqi Plan Failed*, Army Corps (7th) APO New York 09107, New York, United States, 1991, 88.
12. Lieutenant-General Thomas Rhame, quoted in: Gregory Fontenot, *The 1st Infantry Division the US Army Transformed*, University of Missouri, 2017, 164.
13. Unknown to all but Smith, the COS and SO2 G3 Plans, the final MAPEX, on 27 January, “fought” the plan using a fictitious scenario.
14. Major-General Rupert Smith, *Directive 2 – Planning*, 28 January 1991, 1.

15. Ibid., 2.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Major-General Rupert Smith, *Op GRANBY First Impression Report*, March 1991, 12.
19. This term was conceived by SO2 G3 Plans, Major (later Major-General) Mungo Melvin. This activity included the following: mission analysis; intelligence preparation of the battlefield; force ratio calculations; the development of target area matrices (axes, order of march, fire support and control lines); sequence of contact and depth battles; and decision points defined in space). See Major-General Rupert Smith, *Op GRANBY First Impression Report*, March 1991, 13.
20. Major-General Rupert Smith, *Op GRANBY First Impression Report*, March 1991, 8.
21. Major-General Rupert Smith as quoted in: *British Army Documentary: The Gulf Conflict Part 3 – The Liberation of Kuwait*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYcNZEyAOc>
22. General Sir Rupert Smith, Interview with the author, 30 October 2018. General Smith further noted that the division had 30 times the weight of high explosive than a WWII armoured division.
23. Brigadier (Major-General) Graham Ewer as cited in: Brigadier (Major-General) Martin White (editor), *Gulf Logistics: Blackadder's War*, Potomac Books Inc., 1995, 218.
24. Brigadier (Major-General) Graham Ewer as cited in: Brigadier (Major-General) Martin White (editor), *Gulf Logistics: Blackadder's War*, 1995, 214.
25. Colonel S. H. R. H. Monro, "The Armoured Delivery Group 1st Armoured Division – Op GRANBY," *British Army Review* No. 102, 61.
26. Major-General Rupert Smith as quoted in: Inspector General Doctrine and Training, *Operation Desert Sabre: The Planning Process and Tactics Employed by 1st Armoured Division* (Army Code 71520), 1993, 6-2.
27. Major-General Rupert Smith as quoted in: Inspector General Doctrine and Training, *Operation Desert Sabre: The Planning Process and Tactics Employed by 1st Armoured Division* (Army Code 71520), 1993, 2-23.
28. Major-General Rupert Smith as quoted in: Major-General Patrick Cordingley, *In the Eye of the Storm: Commanding the Desert Rats in the Gulf War*, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1996, 198.
29. It was during the attack on Objective Steel by 3rd Battalion Royal Regiment of Fusiliers that two A-10's mistakenly destroyed two Warriors, resulting in nine soldiers being killed and eleven wounded.
30. Major-General Martin White as cited in: Brigadier (Major-General) Martin White (editor), *Gulf Logistics: Blackadder's War*, 1995, 10.
31. Major-General Rupert Smith as quoted in: Inspector General Doctrine and Training, *Operation Desert Sabre: The Planning Process and Tactics Employed by 1st Armoured Division* (Army Code 71520), 1993, 4-8.
32. Major-General Rupert Smith as quoted in: *British Army Documentary: The Gulf Conflict Part 3 – The Liberation of Kuwait*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYcNZEyAOc>
33. General Sir Rupert Smith, Interview with the author, 30 October 2018.
34. The first move was from Assembly Area Ray to the breach site early on 25 February to co-locate with the main command post of 1st (US) ID. That was followed by a move on area west of Objective Copper late on 25 February. Alternate A moved to Objective Zinc and became the main HQ on 26 February at 1600 hrs and then Alternate B assumed the role of main HQ in the early morning hours of 27 February, east of the Wadi Al-Batin. On 28 February, the main HQ moved location west of Objectives Cobalt and Sodium, astride the Kuwait City–Basra highway.

35. Major-General Rupert Smith, "Fighting Instructions Edition 5," *British Army Review* No. 149, 37.
36. Ibid.
37. Major-General Rupert Smith, "The Gulf War: The Land Battle," *The RUSI Journal*, 137, 1992, Issue 1, 4.
38. General Sir Rupert Smith, Interview with the author, 30 October 2018.
39. Inspector General Doctrine and Training, *Operation Desert Sabre: The Planning Process and Tactics Employed by 1st Armoured Division (Army Code 71520)*, 1993, 2–14.
40. General Sir Rupert Smith, Correspondence with the author, 19 November 2019.
41. Major-General Rupert Smith as cited in: Brigadier (Major-General) Martin White (editor), *Gulf Logistics: Blackadder's War*, 1995, 18.
42. General Sir Rupert Smith as quoted in: Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command: The Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S., British and Israeli Armies*, 2011, 135.
43. General Sir Rupert Smith, Interview with the author, 30 October 2018.
44. Unnamed source as quoted in: Anthony King, *Command: The Twenty-First Century General*, 2019, 149.
45. General Sir Rupert Smith, Correspondence with the author, 6 January 2019.
46. General Sir Rupert Smith as quoted in: *Command and Combat in the Information Age*, 2003, 13.

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