



By LeVares Jackson

Part of the job of a Squadron Command Sergeant Major (CSM) is determining where you should be on the battlefield. There are several doctrinal references that describe the duties and responsibilities. I found the one that best describes where we should be is *ADRP 6-0, Mission Command*.

In operations, commanders employ their command sergeant major throughout the area of operations to extend command influence, assess morale of the force, and assist during critical events.

While I was the Command Sergeant Major of a Cavalry Squadron, I struggled at first to find my place on the battlefield during training exercises.

Over time, I realized that I best served my organization and my commander by being at the

point of friction. As CSMs, our individual freedom of maneuver, wealth of experience, and unique insight into the commander's intent make us ideally suited to alleviate the inevitable friction that arises over the course of an operation.

At The Point of Friction

Since the CSM does not have a prescribed doctrinal location in a combat formation, we're the perfect leader to provide the grease when the machine starts to slow down. During NTC 18-03 I tried to identify those areas where I could bring my experience and knowledge of the commander's intent to those staff officers, leaders, and Soldiers working through stressful situations. I felt like this is how I could contribute to the success of the mission.

Throughout our NTC rotation, I did not stick beside the commander who was focused on the main effort, I remained mobile. During our first resupply operation, I moved to the resupply point to make sure it didn't slow down the pace of combat operations. At another point in the fight, I helped the XO in the TOC deconflict air MEDEVAC. During mission planning, I helped coach members of the staff to ensure sustainment was synchronized with operations.

Because I wasn't tied down to a mission command node or a particular mission set in the tactical fight, I didn't carry the same level of stress that a company commander, staff officer, or first sergeant carried. There were several times I saw the problem more clearly than they did. And, because I was involved with the planning process, it helped me identify those areas where I could best support the unit and my commander during operations.

Knowing Commander's Intent

To be able to extend the command influence and be at the critical events mentioned in *ADRP 6-0*, the CSM must understand the commander's intent. This understanding comes from the close relationship the CSM has with the commander, giving us a unique insight into rationale behind decisions and the intended end state of the mission.

While there is benefit in the commander and CSM moving together as a team, I found a greater benefit in being in the places he was not. As I moved across the formation, I was able to reinforce the commander's intent throughout the operation. Afterwards, I found myself in a position to provide him with feedback on how his intent was received by the Soldiers on the ground. I couldn't have done this being a wingman.

Putting Our Experience to Use

There are 1000 different places where a CSM could be on a battlefield. The trick is identifying those one or two places where things could start falling apart. When we figure out where those are at, we've determined our place on the battlefield.

I learned that we can put our experience as senior NCOs to good use by looking for friction, and then moving to it. I found that my experiences, my knowledge of the commander's intent, and my freedom of movement helped other leaders and the organization be successful.

Finally, I encourage new battalion and squadron CSMs to grab a copy of *ADRP 5-0*, *ADRP 6-0*, or *TC 7-22.7* and have a conversation with your commander. While we always talk about roles and responsibilities in garrison, these publications provide a doctrinal base to discuss roles and responsibilities in combat.

Command Sergeant Major LeVares J. Jackson is an Armor Cavalry Senior Leader. He has held every leadership position from a tank driver to Command Sergeant Major of the 2nd Squadron 1st United States Cavalry Regiment. He is currently the Brigade CSM for 1st ABCT, 1ID.

Finding CSM Roles and Responsibilities in Doctrine:

Noncommissioned Officer Guide TC 7-22.7: pp 4-20

ADRP 5-0: para 4-14

ADRP 6-0: para 3-38

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