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The Role of Support in a Contingency Situation DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77

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"We have the people, the expertise, the capabilities, the motivation for successful task-force operations. The missing link in the chain has been training," Colonel Lawrence K. White, deputy director support, told the class in the Task Force Operations Familiarization Training Program during a half-hour talk on 2 May 1960.

The subject of the task force has been kicked around a lot, Colonel White said. The trouble has been, though, that the stuff so far has not been put on the front burner until the operation started. Then a wild look for persons and support got under way. To remedy such confusion, Colonel White said that he was glad to see task-force training starting and to see his support people included in the instruction. With the support load increasing and personnel being cut, making his people available for the course was difficult; but he wanted to make any contributions necessary.

People in support are a good group, he said. There is, however, no substitute for training in learning to apply expertise. One thing he remembered from his Fort Benning training as a second lieutenant was always to establish a base fire and maneuver. This principle he found himself unconsciously applying later in combat; the application had become second nature. Too often people in the Agency have taken the attitude that they know all about a matter because it is set down in a book and they have read the book. The need is for training, not from a book, but from application of principles through practice until the appropriate courses of action become automatic.

Colonel White expressed delight that OTR is about to do something in supplying such training in the task-force field. Suggestions for planning and training task forces have run from one extreme to another - from a mere list of names to the establishment of a cadre. No work from a list of names is possible. A self-training cadre would become static. Something between the two would be the answer. This course is not the answer, but it is a start.

Closer teamwork between operations and support people is essential, Colonel White said. Operations people should know support capability and support limits. Support has a reservoir of competent persons in communications, logistics, training, finance, security, medical, and personnel areas. These persons, though, are not ready to start operations without knowledge of them and of their objectives.

Too often there is a misconception on the part of the operations people that information on operations cannot be given to anybody on the support side of the house because of danger of the information's fanning out. It is

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desirable to keep the operation to those who need to know. Tell the support people what we want, but not what we are doing has sometimes resulted in danger to security in an unwitting person's stumbling on information without any indication of its significance and need for protection. It is necessary for the support-office head to designate one representative for operations people to deal with. If he is to see to it that full available support is ready, he must know what the operational objective is. Bringing in the right support persons early helps to insure sound security.

The necessity of taking support people into the operations team was stressed by Colonel White. No one officer knows about all matters in a contingency task-force operation. A commander has his hands full with directing the operation proper; it is impossible for him to keep his finger on all matters of support. But his support helpers must know the operations objective to deliver promptly what is needed.

Colonel White left the class with the oldest and most needed of educational warnings: the student gets out of any training only what he puts into it.

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