

1. The world is full of bad people. Mind you, not everyone is bad, but there are enough of them out there that we have to arm ourselves. Over the years, we've done a pretty good job of that. When the bad people scare us or hurt us, we have to whack them. This is hard, because you want to try and whack the bad people where they live and not where we live. Naturally, the bad people don't want to get whacked, and they feel pretty smug because we aren't mean enough to whack all of them at once. So we have to go over to where they live and whack them carefully. That's why we have an Army and not just a Navy and an Air Force with trillions of dollars worth of super weapons. We don't get such expensive weapons, because we break them a lot more rapidly. Even worse, the bad people can get close enough that they can whack Soldiers even though they get whacked a lot more.

2. Whacking bad people is dangerous. It's also hard. It's easier and safer to whack the bad people if you do it from the air or the ocean. That's because the bad people can't afford the super weapons that do stuff from there. That's why we have to be nice to the Navy and Air Force; so they will whack bad people with great enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, sometimes the Navy and Air Force get too enthusiastic at whacking people and they hurt Army Soldiers and other not so bad people that ended up in the wrong place. That's why we have to spend a lot of effort telling them where we are and what we need them to do. We also try to stay out of their way when they are too busy whacking cities and countries and stuff. We also have to do a lot of explaining to civilian bureaucrats about what they need to do to clean up after the bad people get whacked.

This is called "unified action" but it's really like going over to the neighbours to apologise for breaking their window.

3. What makes this really hard is sorting out the not so bad people from the bad people. We try to whack the bad guys and miss the good guys. Of course, the not so bad people are all upset that we are over there whacking people. They want us to go back to where we live and leave them alone, unless the bad people are whacking them as well. They tend to go postal unless we help them keep their families alive and well. The best way to do that is to let their politicians and police do it while they stay out of our way.

Unfortunately, their politicians and police screw this up a lot so we have to take time out from whacking the bad guys (or tricking the Air Force and Navy into doing that) and help out the not so bad people around us. Even though they won't like us, sometimes they help us to find the bad people. This also helps us calm down the Air Force guys who would whack everybody at once.

This is called "full spectrum operations".

4. Even though we don't get the super weapons that the Air Force and Navy get, we still have a

lot of stuff, and Soldiers. This is called "combat power". None of this stuff is worth a nickel if somebody isn't in charge. Hopefully they know what they are doing. When they do, it's called leadership and it's really important because most Soldiers just want somebody intelligent to take charge and get them back home in one piece. Inside the Army, we squabble about which part of the Army gets the most stuff. After a while, some really important general comes down and tell us to knock it off and "cooperate".

If we don't, the bad people will whack us and even the Air Force won't be able to bail us out. This is called "combined arms".

5. The Army has a lot of processes that it is still trying to figure out. Don't worry about these things. Just be happy if somebody actually gets you an order that you can understand in time for you to do something about it. If not, at least you can blame the higher headquarters. Most of the time, Soldiers are happy if they get fed, occasionally get some sleep and a shower and things aren't too SNAFU. Soldiers also tend to be lazy unless they are motivated.

This is "battle command".

6. Really important generals are Soldiers too. They just get less sleep than the ordinary Soldiers. They have to try and figure out how to straighten out the big mess that all the politicians made. At the same time they have to decide how to whack the bad people and keep the not so bad people from going postal. If they do a good job, they get sent to the Pentagon. You don't want to be one of them.

This is called "operational art".

7. Dealing with information is hard. The bad people don't play by the rules and they lie ... a lot. One screw-up on our part and all the not so bad people get all upset because the bad people make a big deal about it. We need to spend a lot of time telling the not so bad people why we are different than the really bad people. Usually they don't get it.

Meanwhile the media people are busy trying to uncover the giant government conspiracy that we are supposed to be running. Also every hacker out there is trying to screw up our computers and radios. This makes it really hard. Meanwhile the Air Force and Navy are wondering what's wrong, since it's not so hard for them. Once in a while, somebody on our side figures out what we should be doing.

This is called "knowledge management".

Glossary

Bad People: People that need whacking

Battle Command: Motivating Soldiers with a cigar in your mouth

Combined Arms: Using all of your combat power at once and surviving it

Full Spectrum Operations: Careful whacking combined with lots of explaining

Operational Art: Getting the Air Force or Navy to deal with the bad people before Soldiers have to

Not so bad people: Anybody in the area of operations that is not a bad person or a Soldier

SNAFU: A Twentieth Century term for land operations

Soldier: Individual speaking in expletives and wearing cool-looking digital camouflage that doesn't blend in with anything

Unified Action: The opposite of SNAFU

Whacking: The redistribution of impairment of biological functions intended to eliminate intercellular cooperation within a sentient organism