



15 December 2016

Marines and Sailors,

MAGTF Integrated Exercise-16 (MIX-16), as part of the Marine Corps' experiment campaign plan titled SEA DRAGON 2025, was conducted in Southern California in July/August 2016. MIX-16 was a force-on-force free-play experiment that pitted an ELT (expeditionary landing team) from a sea-based MAGTF against a hybrid near-peer competitor employing adversary capabilities in a future environment as described in the MCWL/FD Marine Corps Security Environment Forecast.

An officer and senior SNCO (staff non-commissioned officer) were assigned from MCWL/FD to command and control the threat forces during this experiment, as well as to organize and employ a civilian population in the urban setting. Threat forces assigned consisted of 3d Platoon, L Co 3/5, augmented with EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) and HUMINT (human intelligence) Marines. OTS (off the shelf), commercially available equipment was procured to replicate emergent and future threat force capabilities and employed specifically to target perceived U.S. force vulnerabilities.

Rigorously challenging the ELT in a free-play environment allowed MCWL/FD to assess experimental objectives in a realistic environment that replicated the friction, uncertainty, fluidity, disorder, and complexity of any battlefield. The human dimension of war proved central, even when surrounded by emergent and future technological solutions to battlefield challenges. Chartering a capable, resourced, and adequately led threat force is crucial to recreating these battlefield aspects and was a key enabler to MIX-16 results. Our future adversaries will study our culture, emotional biases, and cognitive heuristics while they challenge our core assumptions about our very character. They can be expected to rapidly and economically combine commercially available technologies with willful human resources to ruthlessly attack our vulnerabilities in an effort to turn tactical effects into strategic advantages. They will be technically adaptive while proving informationally adept and avoid our well-known strengths with asymmetric means. They will rely on speed over security, choose dispersion over mass, ignore internationally accepted law of war principles, and apply information operations in a combined arms manner.

Semper Fidelis,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. D. Alford', is written over the typed name and title.

J. D. ALFORD
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commanding General
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Futures Directorate