

CASE STUDY 1 - Military Operational Excellence (U.S. Army, Afghanistan)

Theme: Strategy, systems redesign, operational efficiency, cross-agency coordination

Tags: High-stakes decision-making, pattern recognition, process architecture

Situation

During a deployment to Afghanistan, a U.S. Army combat support operations cell faced a critical breakdown in mission coordination. Ground units required daily air support for intelligence, surveillance, and overwatch; yet, only **45–65% of mission requests were being approved**, leaving units exposed and creating operational risk.

The problem: *constant last-minute requests overwhelmed the Air Force approval system*, causing systemic failure across both branches.

Action

James conducted a rapid diagnostic:

- Mapped the entire request-to-approval workflow across Army and Air Force systems.
- Identified hidden bottlenecks (timing, request accuracy, and information gaps).
- Contacted Air Force counterparts directly to understand their thresholds and constraints.
- Discovered that **24 hours** was the minimum cycle needed for near-guaranteed approval.
- Introduced a redesigned protocol requiring **72-hour submissions**, increasing clarity and reducing friction for both Army and Air Force teams.
- Standardized mission packet content based on Air Force requirements to eliminate errors and rework.

Result

Within weeks:

- Mission approval rates jumped from **45–65% → 99%**.
- Air Force scheduling workload stabilized.
- Ground units received uninterrupted air coverage.
- Cross-agency trust increased dramatically.
- A previously reactive mission-support system became predictable and dependable.

Consulting Capability Demonstrated

- ✓ Systems thinking under pressure
- ✓ Rapid diagnostic + workflow redesign
- ✓ Multi-stakeholder negotiation
- ✓ Pattern recognition and operational efficiency
- ✓ Building alignment across competing structures