

Operation Blue Bat, 1958: Framing Activities in Crisis Response

A Monograph

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Abstract

Operation Blue Bat, 1958: Framing Activities in Crisis Response, by Major Brian A. Jaquith, US Marine Corps, 46 Pages.

In 1958, the US military forecasted decisive battles in Europe against a near peer competitor as the most likely instance of future conflict. To fit this vision, US forces fielded advanced weapons, created new organizational structures, and adjusted forward basing locations. Instead of conducting large scale combat, however, President Eisenhower ordered the US military to conduct forcible entry and partnered stability operations in Lebanon to quell political chaos. Known as Operation Blue Bat, the American intervention in Lebanon in 1958 represents an example of military leaders needing to rapidly discern US policy, frame the operational environment, and adjust the operational approach to nest military objectives with political aims at an acceptable level of risk. As the United States enters another era of great power competition, military planners must be cognizant that emergent crises without distinguishable national policy will continue to occur. Operation Blue Bat elucidates the operational challenges of military options to address those events.

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Acronyms

APOD	Aerial Port of Debarkation
ATF	Amphibious Task Force
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
CATF	Commander, Amphibious Task Force
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CIA	US Central Intelligence Agency
CINCNELM	Commander in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe, the East Atlantic, and the Mediterranean
CINCSPECOMME	Commander in Chief, US Specified Command Middle East
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CASF	Composite Air Strike Force
DoD	US Department of Defense
DoS	US Department of State
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
LF	Landing Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Command Authority
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SPECOMME	United States Specified Command Middle East
TAC	Tactical Air Command
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

USAFE	US Air Forces, Europe
USAREUR	US Army Forces, Europe
USIA	United States Information Agency
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Land the Landing Force

At 0400, the Marines of the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) were afloat 120 nautical miles off the coast when they were abruptly awoken by the ships' 1 Main Circuit loudspeakers, which ordered the crisis action teams to assemble. Almost simultaneously across ships of the transport squadron, key planners worked their way through the maze of passageways to planning spaces while subordinate leaders mustered their men, assigned tasks, and reviewed the morning's timeline. The assigned tasks and timelines were second nature by that point. The BLT had been afloat for months and recently its otherwise routine deployment was extended because of percolating regional instability. While the Marines distributed ammunition from the landing force operational reserve material, cleaned weapons, and loaded equipment aboard transports and tracked vehicles, leaders received an update brief on events unfolding near their destination. The tense political situation ashore finally reached the boiling point. The National Command Authority (NCA) issued the execute order. This was to be no drill, this time it was for real.

After months of threats to its sovereignty, a beleaguered partner nation requested US military assistance to prevent a violent overthrow of its government. These threats to its sovereignty originated with separatist groups internal to the country, but there was credible evidence that a regional hegemon provided external support in the form of fighters, funding, and weapons. This adversary's subversive actions short of war did not end with just material support to opposition groups. For months, it waged a seditious information campaign aimed at members of the partner nation's military to dissuade them from defending the government. Because of these information operations, host nation security forces' loyalty was questionable at best. As the BLT commander and his staff developed the scheme of maneuver and fire support plans for the landing, the Marines were uncertain whether they would be greeted on the beach by partners or projectiles.

At 1430, with the planning completed and equipment loaded, the Commander of the Amphibious Task Force (CATF) gave the order to "land the landing force." As the first wave

churned through the ocean, the afternoon's stifling heat baked the embarked Marines. It had already been a long and confusing day for the men, but it was far from over. There was still the thirty-minute transit to shore where they would be greeted by an ambiguous situation at water's edge and on subsequent objectives. The rapidity of the day's events left many unanswered questions in the Marines' minds as the vehicles maneuvered towards the surf zone, but at least the men in the first wave knew their task: conduct forcible entry operations in the vicinity of Red Beach to seize the adjacent aerial port of debarkation (APOD) and key infrastructure, enabling the introduction of follow on forces. The BLT's success or failure during the first few hours of intervention would have profound implications for the regional and global political aims of the US government.

Introduction

Keep in mind that what goes on today went on yesterday and will go on again tomorrow. From your own experience or from your reading of history, you have taken in the same shows, watched the very same scenes staged by the court of Hadrian, the court of Antoninus, and the courts of Philip, Alexander, Croesus. Same shows, same scenes, same parts. Only the names of the actors change.

— Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

The preceding anecdote illustrated a situation modern crisis response planners would recognize from training exercises. It described destabilizing events fomented by an adversary state using information operations, deniable “gray zone” actions short of armed conflict, and interference by transnational political organizations. Cumulatively, these actions challenged the political and territorial sovereignty of a partner nation and required intervention by an expeditionary force. This military force needed to develop an operational approach that restored stability while avoiding any escalation into a wider conflagration.

In fact, the vignette dramatizes the opening gambit of Operation Blue Bat, the American military intervention in Lebanon during the summer of 1958. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower responded decisively to the appeal of Lebanese President Camille Chamoun by dispatching the Second Provisional Marine Force

(consisting of several BLTs), the US Navy's Sixth Fleet, a Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) from the US Air Force, and Task Force 201 from the US Army's 24th Infantry Division. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) formed an ad hoc organization known as the United States Specified Command Middle East (SPECOMME) to assume control of the forces in the region and restore stability in Lebanon. The officer designated to lead SPECOMME was Admiral James L. Holloway, Jr.

As with any rapid intervention into an international crisis, the shifting circumstances of the political situation in Lebanon were unclear to the commanders and staffs planning and executing the mission. This ambiguity tested the ability of US forces to pursue an operational approach that nested military objectives with the political aims of the Eisenhower Administration. Indeed, at several crucial times during Operation Blue Bat, tactical decisions made by Admiral Holloway's forces worked at cross purposes with US political objectives. However, after 103 days of military operations, SPECOMME secured the sovereignty of Lebanon long enough for a peaceful transition of power to occur, the United States achieved its stated political aims, and military forces redeployed from the region without significant incident.

Viewed through the lens of current joint doctrine, Operation Blue Bat incorporated all five phases of the joint phasing model from Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning*, all five phases of an amphibious assault found in Joint Publication 3-02, *Amphibious Operations*, and all five phases of forcible entry operations found in Joint Publication 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*. For this reason alone, Operation Blue Bat deserves attention from military planners seeking lessons learned at the levels of the Joint Task Force (JTF) headquarters, service component command headquarters, or functional component command headquarters during crisis intervention. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, Operation Blue Bat represents an instance when a commander's initial environmental frame and operational approach proved invalid, requiring continual reframing of the problem and dynamic adjustment during execution. Recognizing these implications, this monograph will seek to analyze the following questions:

- What circumstances contributed to the unsatisfactory environmental frame during the initial intervention into the Lebanese political crisis in 1958?
- During the planning and execution of Operation Blue Bat, what reframing indicators convinced Admiral Holloway and the SPECOMME staff to modify the operational approach?

Answers to these questions may help contemporary planners involved in crisis response follow John Lewis Gaddis' dictum on the significance of studying history: "interpret the past for the purposes of the present with a view to managing the future, but not to do so without suspending the capacity to assess the particular circumstances in which one might have to act, or the relevance of past actions to them."¹ Indeed, as the United States reenters a period of great power competition, the lessons of Operation Blue Bat become more relevant to contemporary military planners. Although current US military strategy is fixated on large scale combat operations against near peer adversaries, history suggests that it is more likely to find itself conducting crisis response activities.

Understand the Operational Environment

Often we are puzzled by the causes of our problem; when we merely need to look at our own solutions to other problems in the past.

— Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*

Understanding strategic context and framing the operational environment can be accomplished using a modified version of an analytical framework known as the PESTLE assessment.² It creates context by synthesizing the environment through political, economic, social/demographic, technological, legal, and geographic lenses.

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 10-11.

² John A. Pearce II and Richard B. Robinson Jr., ed., *Strategic Management: Formulation, Implementation, and Control*. 8th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2003), 57-67.

Political Environment

Three concurrent and related events shaped the strategic environment before and during the intervention: the US policy of containment, decolonization, and Arab nationalism. The Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) began almost immediately following World War II and can best be interpreted using a realist view of international relations (IR) theory and an understanding of balance of power politics.³ The fundamental ideological differences between the USSR and the United States led to the formation of several multilateral international regimes for mutual defense. These Cold War international alliances included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Warsaw Pact, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO or Baghdad Pact).

In 1949, the western powers formed NATO, which by 1958 had expanded to 15 member nations.⁴ To balance against NATO's growth, in 1955 the USSR and six other nations entered into the Warsaw Pact.⁵ This struggle for dominance between western and eastern ideologies spilled into Southeast Asia in 1955 as well, with the formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty

³ D. Robert Worley, *Orchestrating the Instruments of Power: A Critical Examination of the U.S. National Security System* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 16-19. In the realist theory of international relations, the sovereign Westphalian state is the primary actor in the international arena and self-interest guides its actions. Matters internal to the state are left to itself, and the principles of sovereignty and noninterference in domestic activities are key. Interactions between states are "zero sum games: for one to gain, another must lose." This lack of international order dictates that states endeavor to amass enough power to deter attacks from adversaries and ensure their own survival. In the absence of sufficient defense mechanisms to "go it alone," states will form alliances to balance power against each other.

⁴ "Member Countries," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified March 26, 2018, accessed December 21, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm. The founding members of NATO were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, and the United States. Both Greece and Turkey received membership in 1952, and West Germany joined in 1955.

⁵ Gerard Holden, *The Warsaw Pact: Soviet Security and Bloc Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 6-9. The members of the Warsaw Pact included the USSR, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and Hungary.

Organization.⁶ Another buttress against the spread of communism was CENTO.⁷ Enacted in 1955, CENTO aimed to prevent Soviet absorption of the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, and North African regions during the period of decolonization.

The United States was not formally a member of CENTO, but the Eisenhower Administration openly supported self-determination in the region. He observed that decolonization in the Middle East and North Africa was a troubled process, with instability “heightened and, at times, manipulated by International Communism.”⁸ To keep the region from sliding into the Soviet sphere of influence, in March 1957 Congress passed the “Eisenhower Doctrine,” which pledged moral, economic, and military technical support to any nation in the Middle East that desired assistance.⁹ Furthermore, the Eisenhower Doctrine offered the employment of US armed forces to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of Middle Eastern nations against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by communism.¹⁰ Congressional amendments to the doctrine guaranteed the preservation of independence and political integrity of nations in the Middle East as a vital national security interest and restricted the deployment of US forces to besieged nations that formally requested assistance.¹¹

⁶ Monro MacCloskey, *Pacts for Peace: UN, NATO, SEATO, CENTO, OAS* (New York: Richards Rosen Press, 1967), 180-185. The founding members of SEATO in 1955 were Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan (including East Pakistan), the Republic of the Philippines, Thailand, the Republic of Vietnam, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States.

⁷ Ibid., 186-190. The Baghdad Pact member states were Iraq, Iran, Pakistan (including East Pakistan), Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Special Message to the Congress on the Situation in the Middle East, January 5, 1957,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1957* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 7.

⁹ “Joint Resolution To Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East,” Public Law 85-7, 85th Cong., 1st sess. (March 9, 1957), 5-6.

¹⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Special Message to the Congress on the Situation in the Middle East, January 5, 1957,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1957* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1958), 6-16.

¹¹ Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 111-112.

Middle Eastern countries, however, did not embrace the Eisenhower Doctrine. Only Lebanon and Iraq formally accepted the Doctrine and its associated economic and military benefits. The competing idea of Arab nationalism, espoused by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, sought to minimize further Western influence in the Middle East. Under this context, Egypt and Syria merged into the United Arab Republic (UAR) in February 1958.¹² The UAR's proclivity for anti-Western rhetoric after the Suez Crisis of 1956, as well as Nasser's burgeoning relationship with the USSR, concerned the Eisenhower Administration. Concurrent with the formation of the UAR, the monarchies of Iraq and Jordan created the Arab Federation, an alliance that pursued unification of foreign policies, integration of military forces, and coordination of economic policies. Each king, however, retained their own domain.¹³

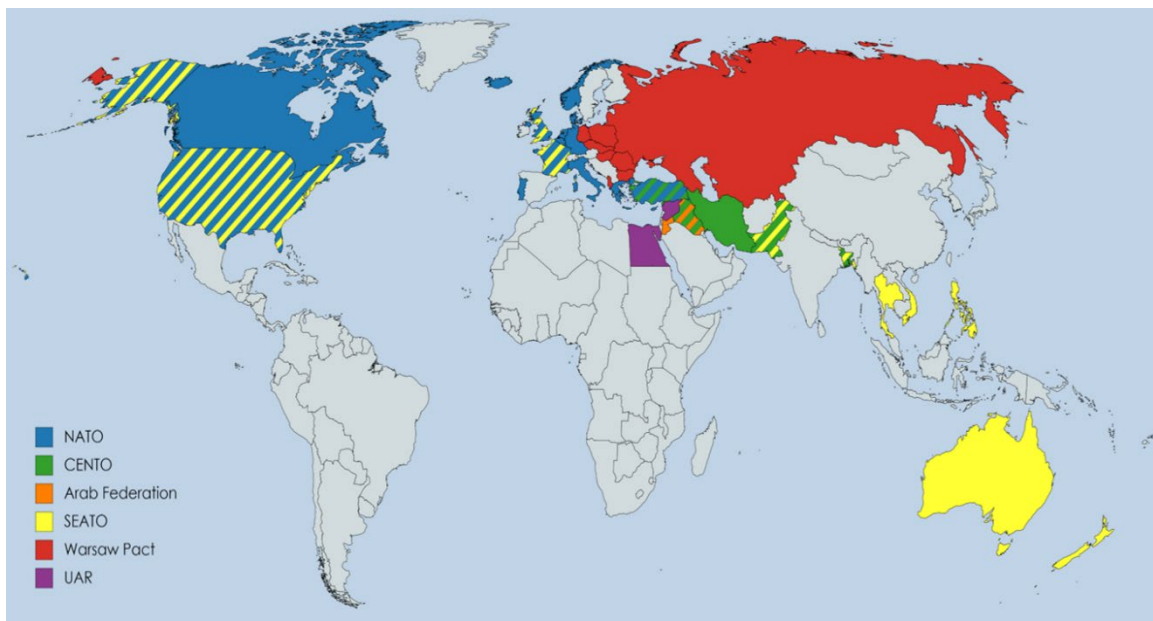


Figure 1. Treaty Alliance Organizations of the Cold War, 1958. Created by author using Historical Map Chart, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://historicalmapchart.net/world-cold-war.html>.

¹² Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, 2-8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 192-199.

Economic Environment

Global restructuring of international responsibilities after World War II created the economic environment of the 1950s. Following the war, the United States passed the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, known as the “Marshall Plan.”¹⁴ The Marshall Plan facilitated the rebuilding of Europe by infusing the region with financial capital while underwriting investment in modern industrial machinery. This rejuvenation of European markets created increased requirements to transport goods from the source of production to the global market. The commodity most needed to sustain the expanding global economy was oil, which was increasingly obtained from the Middle East. At the end of World War II, regional oil production averaged slightly more than 21,000 barrels per day. Five years later, it reached almost 550,000. American investment in the industry jumped as well. From 1946 to 1950, US foreign investment into the petroleum industry ballooned by more than 140 percent.

In the early 1950s, American business investment helped build the Trans-Arabian Pipeline (TAPLINE). It stretched from the oilfields in northern Saudi Arabia, through Jordan and Syria before terminating at the port of Sidon in southern Lebanon. It transported oil owned by the Arab-American Oil Company (ARAMCO), a conglomeration founded by American oil companies. In addition to TAPLINE, the California Texas Corporation, a subsidiary of the Texas Company and Standard Oil of California, built a refinery in Sidon.¹⁵ The rising Western influence and investment in Lebanon altered the internal economic conditions. Operation of the refinery

¹⁴ “Foreign Assistance Act of 1948,” Public Law 472, 80th Cong., 2d Sess. (April 3, 1948), 137-159.

¹⁵ Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984): 22-42.

and the port facilities created local jobs. Furthermore, it stimulated a corresponding investment in transportation, hospitality, and communications infrastructure.

Social/Demographic Environment

The population of Lebanon was one of the most diverse in the region because its location on the eastern Mediterranean made it a historical crossroads between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Christian beliefs, inherited from the expansion of the Roman Empire, coexisted alongside the Muslim religion. Political arrangements in Lebanon reflected this unique demographic makeup. The National Constitution of 1926 divided the allocation of government jobs and appointments proportionally between religions. Furthermore, a 1943 informal agreement between Christian and Muslim leaders established the traditional practice of having a Christian president, a Sunni Muslim premier, and a Shiite speaker of parliament. This agreement, known as the National Covenant, also allocated parliamentary seats based on the relative demographic composition of the electoral districts.¹⁶

The effectiveness of this agreement rested on demographic stability, which was in short supply in Lebanon in the late 1940s. The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and the subsequent adjustment of international boundaries created a large Palestinian diaspora, many of whom travelled north to the Lebanese cities of Sidon and Tripoli. The United Nations (UN) encouraged Lebanon to embrace the refugees and grant full citizenship, but the government refused as it imposed a financial burden and would upset the balance of power in government. Thus, the unemployed migrants lived near the most rapidly developing areas of Lebanon, were denied work, and lacked effective representation. When the Arab Nationalism movement of the mid-1950s arrived, the disaffected Muslim population embraced it.¹⁷

¹⁶ Jack Shulimson, *Marines In Lebanon, 1958* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1966), 2.

¹⁷ James L. Gelvin, *The Israeli-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 126-143.

Technological Environment

Technological innovation was a staple of the Cold War era as NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries attempted to gain military advantages over each other. Thus, research and development conducted during this time triggered significant political and military implications. Advances in rocket and missile technology stimulated the “space race” in the mid-1950s. The USSR and the United States both launched satellites into orbit between October 1957 and January 1958, and some of the same equipment helped develop new intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles.¹⁸ Negotiations on the placement of these missiles in the Middle East took place in 1958, profoundly impacting global geopolitics only four years later.¹⁹

Advances in aircraft technology also occurred during this time. The ongoing reduction of the size and weight of nuclear weapons meant bomber aircraft could carry greater loads and launch further from the destination. More efficient jet engines increased the speed at which they could close with the target. The increased payload, speed, and range of newer aircraft demanded a corresponding increase in aerial refueling capabilities. Throughout the early 1950s, the US Air Force developed material solutions to solve this conundrum. Investment in bombers, fighters, and aircraft dedicated to aerial refueling increased the operational range of the US military.²⁰

¹⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace 1956-1961* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 205-210, 255-257.

¹⁹ John Foster Dulles to Harold Caccia, April 16, 1958, Folder “JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, April 1958 (2),” Box 16, JFD Chronological Series, John Foster Dulles Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS (Hereafter Eisenhower Library). Caccia was the British Ambassador to the United States. This letter details the intent of the US to place intermediate range ballistic missiles in Turkey, a member of both CENTO and NATO. This agreement was reached the following year, and deployment of the missiles with nuclear warheads began shortly after President Eisenhower left office in 1961. These missiles in Turkey were one of the precursors to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

²⁰ US Air Force, Office of History, Air Mobility Command, *Air Refueling: Without Tankers, We Cannot...* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 1-20.

Legal Environment

In addition to the treaty organizations of the Cold War, the UN played a large role in influencing the international legal environment of the late 1950s. According to its Charter, the UN's purpose is to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of self-determination, achieve cooperation in solving international problems, and serve as a harmonizing agent for actions to attain the common ends. The most relevant organs that carry out these goals include the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Admission to UNGA is guaranteed as a member nation, but the UNSC is restricted to five permanent member nations and, in 1958, six nonpermanent members.²¹

In the bipolar environment of the Cold War, consensus within the UNSC on military action, and thus unified international opinion, proved a challenging proposition because both the United States and the USSR were permanent members and possessed veto powers. The Charter accounts for the possibility of such gridlock and includes articles that sanction individual or collective self-defense of member nations under armed attack. It further stipulates that actions taken in self-defense must be immediately reported to the UNSC for attention.²² This prevents unilateral military action taken outside the purview of the UN, encouraging international legitimacy. Failure to work through the UN risks international condemnation and formal repercussions.

Geographic Environment

Lebanon's location at the juncture of the Middle East, Africa, and Western Asia, combined with TAPLINE's economic importance and other associated oil refineries, made it

²¹ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice* (San Francisco: UN, 1945), 3.

²² United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, 6-11. In 1958, the members of the UNSC were the US, USSR, UK, France, Republic of China, Panama, Colombia, Canada, Japan, Iraq, and Sweden.

strategic key terrain. The pipeline and operation of the refinery at the port of Sidon allowed American oil companies to avoid the additional 7,200 mile sea route through the Suez Canal, which already proved to be a strategic chokepoint during the Suez Crisis of 1956. The oil transported annually through TAPLINE represented the equivalent of sixty tankers continuously operating from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean.²³

Lebanon was the smallest country in continental Asia and even today is only about one third the size of the state of Maryland. It shares approximately 50 miles of border with Israel to the south and 250 miles of border with Syria to the north and east. Most of Lebanon's population, then as now, resided in the narrow coastal plain in the west, which gradually rises into the Lebanon Mountains in the east. These mountains, which run north to south through the center of the country, form Lebanon's eastern boundary with Syria. The sparsely populated, mountainous border became a security challenge for the administration of President Chamoun.²⁴

Strategic Guidance, May – June 1958

In the spring of 1958, the political situation in Lebanon was smoldering. Throughout the previous year, President Chamoun methodically consolidated his grasp on power. In April 1957, he signed into law a bill that expanded the number of seats in Parliament and redrew the electoral districts for the upcoming parliamentary election, scheduled for June 1957. This law ensured his Christian majority party retained the requisite seats to support both his domestic and foreign policies. It also further marginalized the Muslims and Palestinians, who remained bitter about Chamoun's refusal to break relations with the United Kingdom and France during the Suez Crisis of 1956, as well as his recent acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine. In the summer and fall of 1957, protests occurred throughout Tripoli and Beirut, which government forces suppressed, at times using disproportionate force. These protests, driven by infuriated Arab nationalists, were

²³ Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 90-101.

²⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Lebanon," *The World Factbook*, last modified March 11, 2019, accessed March 18, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>.

further incensed by radio propaganda emanating from Syria.²⁵ To control the international narrative, Chamoun asserted that the protests in fact represented an attempted coup d'état sponsored by factions loyal to President Nasser.²⁶ The fractious Lebanese population retreated to local enclaves and awaited the election.

The parliamentary elections took place as expected, with one important addition. President Chamoun's acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine made Lebanon an important regional ally for the United States in balancing against growing Soviet influence in the Middle East. The administration supported Chamoun monetarily, with money disbursed through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and into the campaign coffers of Chamoun's party.²⁷ This achieved the immediate goal of keeping the Lebanese parliament pro-Western, but US interference in the elections ultimately delegitimized Chamoun in the eyes of his opposition. Even US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles expressed concerns to Eisenhower that Lebanese elections had been too favorable to US policy, and that the removal of moderates from Arab nationalist parties threatened to undermine Chamoun's administration.²⁸

Chamoun next turned his attention to the presidential election of 1958. His six year term ended in 1958, but the Lebanese constitution prohibited consecutive terms in office. In December 1957, however, Chamoun further inflamed his opponents by indicating his desire to pursue an unconstitutional second term. Securing the parliamentary majority in the June 1957 elections permitted Chamoun an opportunity to change the law to fulfill his desire to stay in power. This created a conundrum for the Eisenhower Administration. Chamoun's foreign policy record, combined with the lack of an emergent alternative contender, made him the only attractive

²⁵ Robert McClintock, "The American Landing in Lebanon," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 88, no. 10 (October 1962): 66.

²⁶ Fahim I. Qubain, *Crisis in Lebanon* (Washington, DC: The Middle East Institute, 1961), 53-58.

²⁷ Wilbur C. Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 256-268.

²⁸ Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace 1956-1961*, 265.

candidate to sustain US influence in the country. However, if US policy openly supported the reelection Chamoun, then it openly interfered with the self determination of a sovereign state. But if US policy did not support Chamoun's reelection bid, Lebanon could fall out of the American sphere of influence.²⁹ The issue of presidential succession in Lebanon lacked clarity at the highest levels of the US government through the spring of 1958.³⁰ Regardless of US policy towards the Lebanese elections, amongst his detractors Chamoun's consolidation of power created a tenable situation for the future of Lebanon.

On May 8, 1958, the volatile situation erupted when unidentified assailants assassinated Nasib Matni, the owner and editor of an anti-Chamoun newspaper in Beirut. Opposition groups believed Chamoun's administration was either knowledgeable about or outright responsible for the killing.³¹ Rioting consequently broke out in Tripoli and Beirut from May 9 to May 11, during which rebels burned the United States Information Agency (USIA) building. In addition to the violent protests, Chamoun's opposition declared a country-wide general strike.³² On May 12, the riots in Beirut intensified. Agitators attacked the presidential palace and burned down the American University library.³³ Sensing an opportunity to influence the upcoming Lebanese elections, the UAR increased its illicit support to the anti-Chamoun factions. Not content with radio messages, President Nasser increasingly provided support in the form of funds, fighters, and clandestine arms that crossed from Syria into Lebanon along the lengthy, porous border.³⁴

²⁹ Erika G. Alin, "The 1958 United States Intervention in Lebanon" (PhD diss., The American University, 1990), 215-223.

³⁰ Dulles to William Rountree, phone call, April 30, 1958, Folder "Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – April 1, 1958 to May 29, 1958 (2)," Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. William Rountree was the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs. In this conversation, even the Secretary of State was confused about whether or not the United States was going to support Chamoun in the election that was only months away.

³¹ McClintock, "The American Landing in Lebanon," 66.

³² Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 4.

³³ Alin, "The 1958 United States Intervention in Lebanon," 228.

³⁴ McClintock, "The American Landing in Lebanon," 66.

President Chamoun declared a countrywide state of alert and summoned the ambassadors of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to discuss foreign military intervention to stabilize the nation.³⁵

On May 13, President Chamoun's inquiry about the feasibility of US military support reached both the Eisenhower Administration and the government of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. Through consultation with Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, Secretary Dulles determined the British military would respond favorably, provided the United States did as well.³⁶ Later that evening, President Eisenhower held a meeting at the White House with key advisers, including Secretary Dulles, Undersecretary of State Christian Herter, Director of the CIA Allen Dulles, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Nathan Twining to formulate US policy on the rapidly developing situation. During the meeting, the group articulated concerns about the strategic environment before crafting a response to Chamoun. Lebanon was a regional partner that publicly accepted the Eisenhower Doctrine. Failure to respond positively to Chamoun's request might contribute to further internal destabilization, the collapse of his government, and the potential installation of a regime aligned with the Arab nationalist movement and the USSR. A negative response would also undermine the US strategic narrative about partnership in the international struggle against communism.³⁷

There were potential drawbacks to consider as well. Military intervention premised on the Eisenhower Doctrine would signal to the world that Lebanon was under a direct attack from the UAR, and that the UAR was controlled by international communism. Such a declaration

³⁵ McClintock, "The American Landing in Lebanon," 66.

³⁶ Dulles to Selwyn Lloyd, phone call, May 13, 1958, Folder "Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – April 1, 1958 to May 29, 1958 (2)," Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. Lloyd was the British Foreign Minister.

³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Lebanese Crisis, May 13, 1958, The White House, 5:50pm, Folder "White House – Meetings with the President 1/1 – 6/30/1958 (2)," Box 6, White House Memoranda Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. Additional attendees included William Rountree, White House Staff Secretary Brigadier General Andrew Goodpaster, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs John Irwin.

would impact the tenuous relationship between the United States and the USSR and potentially trigger wider armed conflict. In addition to global considerations, there were potential negative regional impacts as well. If the Arab world viewed US intervention as another western imperialist expansion, TAPLINE could be shut down, access to the Suez Canal blocked, and a wave of anti-US sentiment could roil the region. It was also possible that US intervention could be interpreted as support for another Chamoun presidential term and as aiding his attempts to violate the Lebanese constitution.³⁸

The participants at Eisenhower's meeting also considered that military force may prove incapable of resolving the crisis. Secretary Dulles reviewed contemporary communist methods of warfare throughout the world, such as inciting riots, and commented on the impracticability of combating them with military options. Indeed, even as Eisenhower considered US policy towards the insurrections in Lebanon, Vice President Richard Nixon dealt with riots while on a goodwill trip to South America. On May 13, the same day as Chamoun's inquiry, anti-American rioters in Venezuela attacked Nixon's motorcade, which narrowly escaped to the US Embassy in Caracas. As a result, the NCA alerted expeditionary elements from the US Marine Corps and US Army for immediate movement to the Caribbean for potential extraction of Nixon and other diplomats.³⁹

Dulles further opined that should forces be committed to Lebanon, it would be difficult to establish a basis on which they could subsequently retire and leave behind an acceptable situation. The Secretary of State was not alone in his concerns. John Irwin, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, amplified Dulles' thoughts. He argued that the administration should articulate a clear mission, formulate appropriate rules of

³⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Lebanese Crisis, May 13, 1958, The White House, 5:50pm, Folder "White House – Meetings with the President 1/1 – 6/30/1958 (2)," Box 6, White House Memoranda Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

³⁹ Ann C. Whitman Diary, May 13, 1958, Folder "May, 1958 ACW Diary (1)," Box 10, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President 1953-1961, Eisenhower Library.

engagement, and identify courses of action should the military request reinforcements for force protection.⁴⁰

After deliberating on these strategic considerations, Eisenhower directed that a message be sent to Chamoun informing him the United States would help the Lebanese if it was absolutely necessary. Dulles sent a cable to Ambassador McClintock in Beirut that explained the US government's policy on the application of military force in Lebanon. The Eisenhower Administration recognized that the "introduction of Western forces into Lebanon is a grave step which could have the most serious and far-reaching consequences and one which should not be lightly requested or other than under the most compelling necessity to meet a situation where the integrity of Lebanon is genuinely threatened and where its own forces do not suffice for protection." The cable specified that US forces would have the "dual mission of (a) protecting American life and property and (b) assisting the Government of Lebanon in its military program for the preservation of the independence and integrity of Lebanon which is vital to the national interests of the United States and world peace." In Dulles' vision, the US presence in Beirut and Tripoli would permit Lebanese forces to address the opposition groups inciting violence. The cable further specified requirements for Chamoun to formally request aid, including meeting four conditions: (1) he must not formally invoke the Eisenhower Doctrine when requesting military support; (2) he must file a complaint with the UNSC alleging outside interference from the UAR in its internal affairs and the consequent threat to its integrity and independence; (3) he must gain the public support of some Arab states for both the appeal to the UNSC and any US intervention; and (4) the request could not be used to further Chamoun's candidacy in the upcoming elections.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Lebanese Crisis, May 13, 1958, The White House, 5:50pm, Folder "White House – Meetings with the President 1/1 – 6/30/1958 (2)," Box 6, White House Memoranda Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁴¹ Dulles to McClintock, telegram, May 13, 1958, Folder "JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, May 1958 (2)," Box 16, JFD Chronological Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

Eisenhower also directed that General Twining alert appropriate forces for potential action in Lebanon.⁴² While the US military remained focused on deterring threats from the USSR, a modicum of contingency planning occurred after the Eisenhower Doctrine became law. The existing operational plan for the region, OPLAN 215-56, only described operational approaches incident to an Arab-Israeli conflict, and those courses of action limited US military actions to the protection of US citizens and their interests. As the commander identified for contingencies in the Middle East, Admiral Holloway chaired several meetings in late 1957 and early 1958 to rectify the inadequacies of the operational approach and establish branch plans. These meetings resulted in the revision of the existing plan to more closely nest its operational approach with emerging US policy. Ultimately, the revised plan, OPLAN 215-58, included broad guidance for the use of force in the region and included detailed component plans for military action in specific countries, including Lebanon.⁴³ The operational approach for Lebanon placed significant emphasis on securing sea and aerial ports of debarkation to allow the introduction of follow on forces.⁴⁴

⁴² Memorandum of Conversation, Subject: Lebanese Crisis, May 13, 1958, The White House, 5:50pm, Folder "White House – Meetings with the President 1/1 – 6/30/1958 (2)," Box 6, White House Memoranda Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁴³ US Specified Command Middle East, *Command Report on Operation "Blue Bat," 15 July – 25 October 1958*, December 1958, Enclosure 3: 4, Marine Corps Archives, Quantico, Virginia (Hereafter referred to as USSPECOMME Report and Marine Corps Archives). The Archives provided this report to the author via CD.

⁴⁴ David W. Gray, *The US Intervention in Lebanon, 1958: A Commander's Reminiscence* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 1984), 4-8.

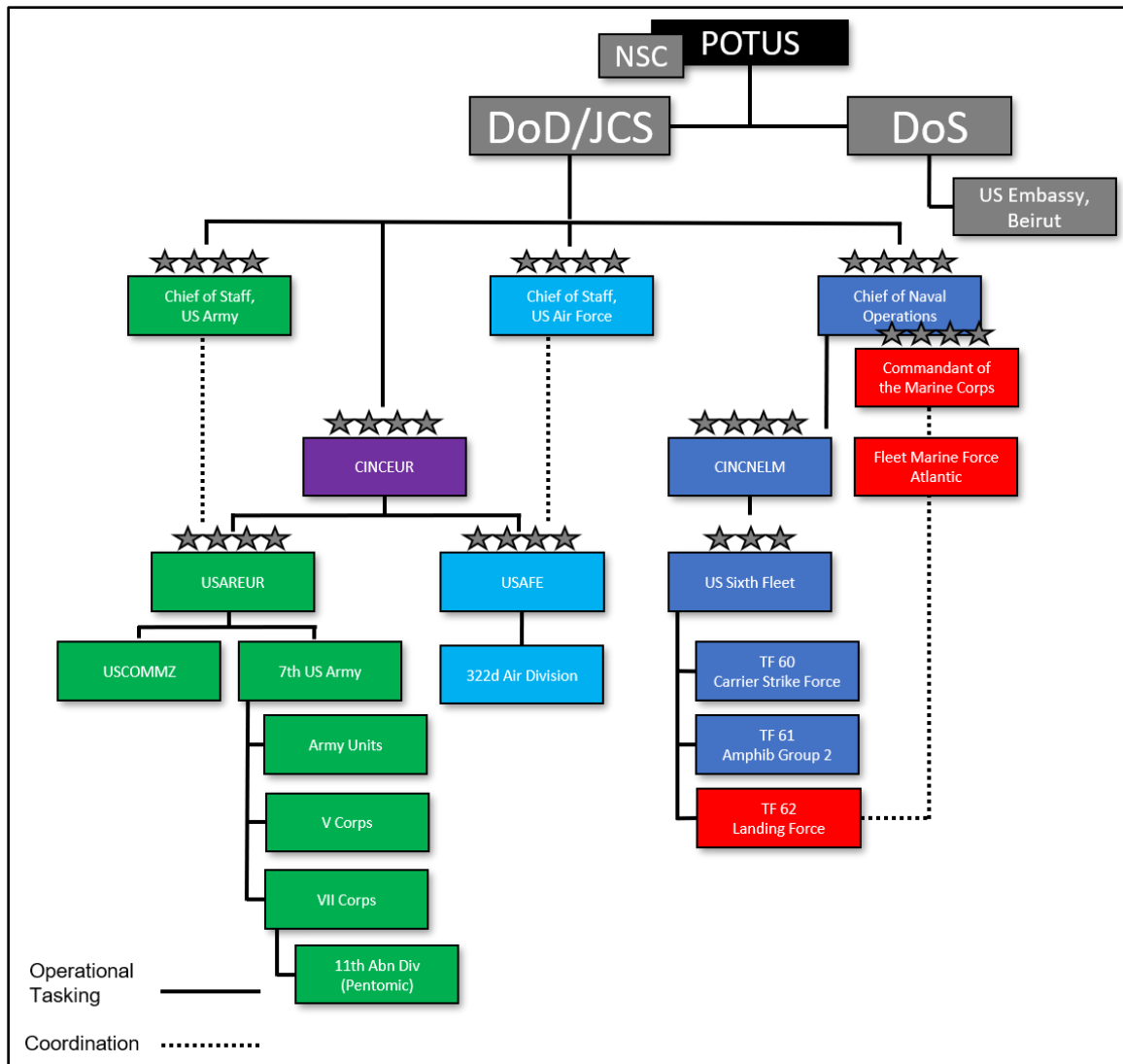


Figure 2. US Forces Command Relationships, May - June 1958. Data adapted from Gary H. Wade, "Rapid Deployment Logistics: Lebanon, 1958" (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984).

The May 13 alert issued by General Twining reached naval and land forces operating in the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. The United States Sixth Fleet steamed towards Lebanon, along with its potent Amphibious Force.⁴⁵ The Amphibious Force of the US Sixth Fleet consisted of Task Force 61, the Amphibious Task Force (ATF), and Task Force 62, the Landing Force (LF). These Task Forces ordinarily consisted of one amphibious transport squadron

⁴⁵ Ann C. Whitman Diary, May 13, 1958, Folder "May, 1958 ACW Diary (1)," Box 10, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President 1953-1961, Eisenhower Library.

(TransPhibRon) and one BLT, respectively, but an ongoing relief-in-place on May 13 doubled the forces available. The US Navy headquarters cancelled the relief and both BLTs proceeded towards the amphibious objective area.⁴⁶ Simultaneously with the movement of the Amphibious Force, the headquarters of the 2d Provisional Marine Force and Amphibious Group Two deployed from the United States to the Mediterranean to provide a common headquarters and begin detailed planning for the amphibious operations.⁴⁷

In addition to the naval forces, on May 17 elements of two Airborne Battle Groups in the 11th Airborne Division (Pentomic) marshalled forces and loaded equipment aboard cargo aircraft in West Germany. The Army's portion of OPLAN 215-58, known internally as the 201 Plan, subdivided responding forces into five elements: Task Forces A, B, C, D, and E. Task Forces Alpha and Bravo consisted of airborne infantry forces, while Task Force Charlie included logistical support. These three elements would move by air to the objective. Task Forces Delta and Echo included more logistical support as well as tanks and other heavy vehicles; they would move by sea from the port at Bremerhaven.⁴⁸ The alert status for Task Force Alpha lasted until May 24.⁴⁹

While US forces postured, the Eisenhower Administration worked to refine its policy towards Lebanon, coordinate with allies, and gain international support. From the onset, the United States and Great Britain developed a combined response. Even as US forces received their alert orders, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan offered the use of British airborne forces stationed

⁴⁶ Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 7-8. First Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment (BLT 1/8), led by Lieutenant Colonel John Brickley, had been embarked aboard TransPhibRon 4 in the Mediterranean since January 1958. Their scheduled replacement, 2d Battalion, 2d Marine Regiment (BLT 2/2), led by Lieutenant Colonel Harry Hadd and embarked upon the ships of TransPhibRon 4, which arrived in the vicinity of Gibraltar just as the situation in Lebanon grew tense.

⁴⁷ Sidney S. Wade, "Operation Blue Bat," *Marine Corps Gazette* 43, no. 7 (July 1959): 11.

⁴⁸ Gary H. Wade, "Rapid Deployment Logistics: Lebanon, 1958," Master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1984: 14-15.

⁴⁹ Gray, *The US Intervention in Lebanon, 1958*, 4-8.

in Cyprus.⁵⁰ To plan for a possible coalition response, Admiral Holloway dispatched Brigadier General David Gray, the assistant division commander of the 11th Airborne Division (Pentomic) and commander of Task Force 201, and the commanders of Task Forces 61 and 62 to Cyprus to develop a combined plan. The result was another branch of OPLAN 215-58, which included possible British actions in Lebanon or Jordan, should the latter request assistance for any reason. It also clarified the operational objectives and troop requirements. The port facilities and the international airport in Beirut constituted the initial objectives. If the amphibious force was in the eastern Mediterranean, it would seize the port and Task Force 201 would seize the airfield. The British would remain on alert for contingencies in Jordan. If the amphibious force was in the western Mediterranean, the British would seize the port, and the Marines would remain in reserve off the coast of Jordan. Thus, the minimum force requirement approximated two regiments.⁵¹ This combined plan became CINCAMBRITFOR OPLAN 1-58 and received the code name “Blue Bat.”⁵²

The Eisenhower Administration then went to work on selling its plan to the international community. It first notified the Arab Federation to stress the importance of Arab support for any military action on behalf of Chamoun.⁵³ The rest of the world became aware of the US policy towards Lebanon through American and Lebanese actions at the UN. As early as May 16, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and Dulles considered actions in support of Lebanon at the UNSC and compiled evidence of UAR interference in Lebanese affairs.⁵⁴ It was increasingly

⁵⁰ Caccia to Dulles, phone call, 10:48am, May 14, 1958, Folder “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – April 1, 1958 to May 29, 1958 (2),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁵¹ Gray, *The US Intervention in Lebanon*, 1958, 8-9.

⁵² USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 3: 2, Marine Corps Archives.

⁵³ Caccia to Dulles, phone call, 6:48pm, May 14, 1958, Folder “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – April 1, 1958 to May 29, 1958 (2),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁵⁴ Dulles to Lodge, phone call, 10:52am, May 16, 1958, Folder “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – April 1, 1958 to May 29, 1958 (1),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

clear that while internal opposition against Chamoun existed, Nasser's support and "gray zone" activities worsened the tenuous situation.⁵⁵ Ambassador McClintock estimated there to be upwards of 7,000 Lebanese rebels and UAR fighters in the country.⁵⁶

The Lebanese government submitted its formal complaint on the UAR's actions on May 22, and the UNSC met to consider the charges on June 6. Lodge presented the American rationale in a speech that drew heavily on the history of the UN. In it, he emphasized the need for the institution to protect small states from interference by those whose resources and power were larger. Appealing to the rest of the UN, Lodge noted that most member nations resembled small powers like Lebanon and posited that Lebanon's fate could also hang in the balance if no action was taken.⁵⁷ On June 11, the UNSC reached a consensus and passed Resolution 128, which avoided specific charges against the UAR but established the United Nations Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) to prohibit future cross border interference. The group received the mandate to "ensure no illegal infiltration of personnel or supply of arms or materiel across Lebanese borders."⁵⁸ However, the efforts of UNOGIL to stabilize the situation faltered upon arrival. Rebel groups controlled many of the regions along the border with the UAR where infiltration allegedly occurred, and they prohibited UNOGIL's access. Other areas of suspected incursions were in the eastern mountainous regions, and UNOGIL lacked the ability to operate in such restricted

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Luncheon Conversation between Dulles, Lodge, and Dag Hammarskjöld, 1:30pm, July 7, 1958, Folder "JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, June 1958 (1)," Box 16, JFD Chronological Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. Hammarskjöld was the Secretary-General of the United Nations during the crisis.

⁵⁶ McClintock, "The American Landing in Lebanon," 67.

⁵⁷ US Department of State, "Second Statement by Mr. Lodge, June 10," *Department of State Bulletin*, 39, no. 994 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, June 9, 1958): 88-90.

⁵⁸ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution 128-58 of 11 June 1958* (New York: UN, 1958).

terrain.⁵⁹ Sensing deteriorating conditions, Eisenhower ordered General Twining to change the alert level for forces in the region from a 48 hour notice to a 24 hour notice.⁶⁰

While UNOGIL attempted to enforce its mandate and US forces postured for potential response, the Secretary-General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld, confronted President Nasser with undeniable evidence of the UAR's interference in Lebanese affairs. Instead of denying these actions, Nasser admitted their occurrence and agreed to stop the movements. Although he acquiesced to cease future cross border infiltration, the fighters and weapons previously provided remained a destabilizing threat to the Chamoun regime. In Dulles' assessment, while promising to refrain from any further aggression, Nasser actually desired that the fighting in Lebanon continue. The presence of these foreign combatants proved even more challenging because UNOGIL lacked both the authority and the means with which to address Nasser's fait accompli.⁶¹

Reframing: June – July 1958

The respite provided by diplomatic actions during the latter weeks of May and the beginning of June allowed Admiral Holloway and the component commands of SPECOMME to refine existing plans and develop supporting concepts for Operation Blue Bat. Brigadier General Sidney Wade, the Commander of Task Force 62 and the 2d Provisional Marine Force, planned a landing exercise known as COMBINE II with Rear Admiral Robert Cavenagh, the Commander of Task Force 61 and the ATF. Exercise COMBINE II constituted a regional exercise designed for two purposes: a demonstration of both capability and resolve as well as a rehearsal for any future actions in Lebanon. The US Marine Corps and US Navy also deployed additional combat power to the area. In mid-June, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines (BLT 3/6) embarked aboard

⁵⁹ Alin, "The 1958 United States Intervention in Lebanon," 263-265.

⁶⁰ Dulles to Twining, phone call, 8:59am, June 11, 1958, Folder "Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – Gen. June 2, 1958 to July 31, 1958 (5)," Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁶¹ Memorandum of Luncheon Conversation between Dulles, Lodge, and Dag Hammarskjöld, 1:30pm, July 7, 1958, Folder "JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, June 1958 (1)," Box 16, JFD Chronological Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

TransPhibRon 2 and departed for the Mediterranean. This move increased the total number of BLTs in the US Sixth Fleet area to three.⁶²

While the Amphibious Forces planned rehearsals and deployed additional combat power, in West Germany Task Force 201 refined plans and shifted forces as well. During the initial alert, Gray identified deficiencies in the procedures for marshaling airborne units and rigging combat equipment for parachuting. These deficiencies resulted from a planned rotation of new forces into West Germany to meet the US Army's new strategy for fighting in Europe. The US Army scheduled the 11th Airborne Division (Pentomic) to be reflagged as 24th Infantry Division on July 1. As a result, throughout early 1958, non-airborne qualified personnel gradually replaced the airborne qualified personnel familiar with the peculiarities of airborne operations. To rectify this problem, Gray established an ad-hoc organization to train incoming personnel and conducted inspections and exercises throughout June.⁶³

As the structure of the US Army airborne formations changed, so too did the concept of support developed by US Air Forces, Europe (USAFE) and the 12th Air Force. Deploying and sustaining multiple assault echelons by air increased the number of transport aircraft required to base in Europe. To ensure support and compensate for aircraft maintenance challenges, additional C-124 Globemasters from the Military Air Transport Service deployed to West Germany.⁶⁴ This solved the lift capacity problems, but it unintentionally created new complications. The 322d Air Division, the transport unit on call to support the operation, already consisted of several types of aircraft. Initially outfitted with C-119 Boxcars, it partially transitioned to the newer C-130 Hercules just before the May alert. Augmentation with C-124s meant there were no less than three different cargo aircraft supporting airborne operations. Practically speaking, this equated to differing operational ranges, fuel requirements, maintenance considerations, and payloads. The

⁶² Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 9.

⁶³ Gray, *The US Intervention in Lebanon, 1958*, 10-11.

air planners adjusted the concept of support to account for the different airframes by standing up a forward staging area at Incirlik Air Base in Adana, Turkey. The new concept of support called for the paratroopers to be picked up at airbases in West Germany and shuttled to Incirlik, some 2000 miles away. From Incirlik, the transport aircraft would link up with combat aircraft and conduct the assault into Lebanon, only 200 miles further south.⁶⁵

The use of strike aircraft in Lebanon presented additional challenges. Should the crisis require the immediate deployment of tactical aircraft, the closest assets resided in West Germany and had been earmarked for the defense of Europe. Their departure for the Middle East would create a capability gap in the skies over West Germany. To rectify this situation, the US Air Force's Tactical Air Command (TAC) allocated the use of a CASF for Operation Blue Bat. The CASF was a task organized unit of fighter, bomber, reconnaissance, and support aircraft with enough organic personnel and equipment to support deployments up to thirty days. If time constraints required the use of tactical aircraft based in Europe, the CASF could quickly deploy to West Germany and backfill them. With enough advanced notice, however, the CASF could deploy directly to the Middle East with a response time for the initial wave of strike aircraft of approximately seventeen hours, with all combat aircraft in theater within forty eight hours.⁶⁶

As the joint force remedied deficiencies in the operational plan, US policy and military strategy towards Lebanon continued to evolve. On June 14, President Chamoun inquired a second time about the intended US military intervention, which prompted further synchronization between the US Department of State (DoS) and the US Department of Defense (DoD). Shortly after Chamoun's query, Dulles discussed military objectives and the operational approach with Deputy Secretary of Defense Donald Quarles. The latter indicated that a portion of the available forces stood ready to intervene, and more would follow from alternate locations. If called upon,

⁶⁵ Albert P. Sights, Jr., "Lessons of Lebanon: A Study in Air Strategy," *Air University Review* 16, no. 5 (July/August 1965): 29-35.

⁶⁶ Sights, Jr., "Lessons of Lebanon: A Study in Air Strategy," 30-31.

the initial objectives would be Beirut and Tripoli, where the US forces would “move ashore, establish themselves, and meet forces if attacked.” Dulles immediately recognized the inadequacy of this plan and told Quarles that the military did not have the political guidance it needed. The two agreed to establish a working group with members of both DoD and DoS to better nest military actions with political aims.⁶⁷

Dulles conferred with Lodge about Chamoun’s second entreaty in preparation for a scheduled meeting at the White House. Lodge counseled that with UNOGIL present but its mission incomplete, military action by the United States carried the strategic risk of losing international support. Dulles inquired about the possibility of UNOGIL requesting US military protection as a way of retaining flexibility and legitimacy, but Lodge advised against it.⁶⁸

On June 15, Eisenhower held a second policy discussion at White House with Dulles, Herter, Rountree, Quarles, and Twining. Since his initial declaration of support, Eisenhower’s support for Chamoun wavered based on the Lebanese military’s apparent unwillingness to address its country’s own problems. Eisenhower believed both President Chamoun and General Fouad Chehab, the Commander in Chief of the Lebanese Army, lacked leadership.⁶⁹ Dulles and Quarles also shared this judgment.⁷⁰ However, Eisenhower and his advisers failed to understand Chehab’s struggle to keep the Lebanese Army from disintegrating. As the Lebanese Army was

⁶⁷ Dulles to Quarles, phone call, 4:50pm, June 14, 1958, Folder “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – Gen. June 2, 1958 to July 31, 1958 (5),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁶⁸ Dulles to Lodge, phone calls, 9:35am and 12:00pm, June 15, 1958, “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – Gen. June 2, 1958 to July 31, 1958 (5),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

⁶⁹ Ann C. Whitman Diary, June 15, 1958, Folder “June, 1958 ACW Diary (2),” Box 10, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President 1953-1961, Eisenhower Library. Additional attendees at this meeting included Allen Dulles; Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs William Macomber, Jr.; Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs John Hanes III; Director of the USIA George Allen.

⁷⁰ Dulles to Quarles, phone call, 4:50pm, June 14, 1958, Folder “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – Gen. June 2, 1958 to July 31, 1958 (5),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library.

the representative of the Lebanese people, any attack ordered on Muslim strongholds may have been met with refusal or defections by Muslim soldiers. Chamoun may have appeared unwilling to act, but realistically he possessed limited options.⁷¹ Despite misgivings, Eisenhower reaffirmed the policy of using military force to support Chamoun, as it was preferable to any conceivable alternative. Dulles believed there was a “real possibility” of an appeal on short notice.⁷² He did not have to wait much longer.

On July 14, the smoldering situation finally exploded. A violent military coup d'état occurred in Iraq as King Faisal and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said prepared to depart for a meeting with CENTO leaders in Turkey. The militants killed King Faisal and al-Said, installing a junta led by Brigadier Abdul Karim el-Kassem. Soon after taking control of Baghdad, el-Kassem publicly recognized the UAR, a policy which King Faisal had denied. President Nasser responded in kind by praising the revolution against King Faisal and his pro-Western regime.⁷³

Concerns about the stability of the Jordanian government, the other state in the Arab Federation, emerged simultaneously. Days before, King Hussein dodged an assassination attempt from within his own army.⁷⁴ Credible evidence mounted that another attempt to overthrow Hussein might occur on July 17. With Faisal gone and Hussein threatened, the stability of both CENTO and the Arab Federation were in question. These events also empowered rebels in Lebanon, and Chamoun again summoned the foreign ambassadors to discuss military options.⁷⁵ These actions in Iraq and Jordan fundamentally changed the strategic calculus. No longer was the Eisenhower Administration solely concerned about the situation inside Lebanon. If the chaos in

⁷¹ Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 400-401.

⁷² William Knowland to Dulles, phone call, 4:50pm, June 17, 1958, “Memoranda of Telephone Conversations – Gen. June 2, 1958 to July 31, 1958 (5),” Box 8, Telephone Conversation Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. Senator Knowland (R, CA) was the Senate Minority Leader.

⁷³ Osgood Caruthers, “Faisal Vanishes,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1958.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ McClintock, “The American Landing in Lebanon,” 69.

Iraq and Jordan spread to Lebanon, western powers could potentially be shut out of the region all together. Even worse, Nasser's close relationship with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev could solidify Soviet regional influence.⁷⁶

Eisenhower learned of the unfolding events from CIA reports at approximately 8:00am. Following a scheduled meeting of the National Security Council, Eisenhower received the formal Lebanese request for military action within forty eight hours.⁷⁷ In a subsequent meeting with the President and Congressional leaders, Dulles outlined the situations in Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. He grimly noted that failure to act would mean a loss of international prestige, a loss of the Middle East to Soviet influence, and a loss of access to three-fourths of the free world's oil reserve. General Twining confirmed to the group that the Joint Chiefs were unanimous in the opinion that military intervention was the only reasonable course of action. After questions had been asked, and varying opinions fielded, the meeting with Congressional leaders adjourned. President Eisenhower remarked to General Twining, "All right. We'll send them in. Nate, put it into operation."⁷⁸

The Operational Approach

I want to speak personally to the officers and men of our forces – Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen – who are now in Lebanon, on the Mediterranean Sea, or in the skies over that area. You are in Lebanon because the United States has responded to an urgent request from Lebanon, a friendly country, for help in preserving its cherished independence which has been gravely threatened [...] A large part of that threat comes from outside forces which have sent men and munitions into Lebanon to help in destroying its democratic government, based upon free popular elections.

— President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Message to US Forces in Lebanon, July 19

⁷⁶ Dulles, Memorandum for the Record, Subject: Meeting re Iraq, July 14, 1958, Folder "JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, July 1958 (3)," Box 16, JFD Chronological Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. Meeting attendees included members of the State Department, the DoD, and the CIA.

⁷⁷ Ann C. Whitman Diary, Timetable of events of week of July 14-19 in connection with Mid East, Folder "July, 1958 ACW Diary (1)," Box 10, Ann Whitman Diary Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President 1953-1961, Eisenhower Library.

⁷⁸ "An Act in Time," *Time Magazine*, July 28, 1958, 12-15.

On July 14, General Twining directed the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Arleigh Burke, to execute the US portion of Operation Blue Bat. Uncertainty about the evolving situation in Jordan precluded British military action in Lebanon, but Twining ordered that the basic concept of Operation Blue Bat be followed as best as practicable.⁷⁹ Burke alerted Admiral Holloway to activate SPECOMME and established H-Hour for the Marines' amphibious landing at 3:00pm on July 15. He further directed Holloway to join his flagship in the Mediterranean. Simultaneously, General Henry Hodes, the Commander of US Army, Europe (USAREUR) placed the Task Force 201 of the 24th Infantry Division on alert in West Germany. Soon thereafter, the JCS directed the Commander in Chief of European Command, USAFE, and TAC to execute Operation Blue Bat.⁸⁰

At 4:00am aboard the USS Pocono, Wade and the new commander of Task Force 61, Rear Admiral Howard Yeager, received the order to land the Marines that afternoon. Although intimately familiar with the operational approach described in OPLAN 1-58, the commanders lacked specific intelligence about the geographic conditions and tactical situation that awaited them. The underwater demolition unit normally conducted reconnaissance of the beach approaches, nearshore, and backshore areas, but it resided on the USS Plymouth Rock, which was unavailable for the landing.⁸¹ The only information about the landing area came from observations made by the Operations Officer of BLT 1/8 who travelled incognito to Beirut at the onset of the crisis.⁸² The assumption that the landing craft could make it ashore unimpeded constituted additional risks for the commanders to weigh.

⁷⁹ Robert J. Watson, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense: Into the Missile Age 1956-1960*, ed. Alfred Goldberg (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1997), 209-212.

⁸⁰ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 2: 1-2, Marine Corps Archives.

⁸¹ US Sixth Fleet, Commander Amphibious Group FOUR (CTF 61) Report of Amphibious Operations Lebanon 14 July – 25 July 1958, September 1958, Enclosure 1: 5, Marine Corps Archives (Hereafter referred to as US Sixth Fleet Report).

⁸² Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 8.

Information about potential enemy forces proved scant as well. It was known that rebel forces dominated the cities of Tripoli and Sidon and controlled a substantial portion of Beirut. While McClintock estimated up to 7,000 fighters at the time of intervention, the commander of BLT 2/2 estimated approximately 2,000 fighters in Beirut alone.⁸³ Moreover, at the beginning of the crisis, the entirety of the UAR First Army deployed along the Syrian border, only 60 miles and several hours travel from Beirut.⁸⁴ The commanders lacked data on the loyalty and intentions of Lebanese Army as well. This well-equipped force already felt internal divisions over the crisis. Elements sympathetic to the rebel cause posed a significant threat to any forcible entry. Holloway later judged the available intelligence as both “out of date and unreliable.”⁸⁵

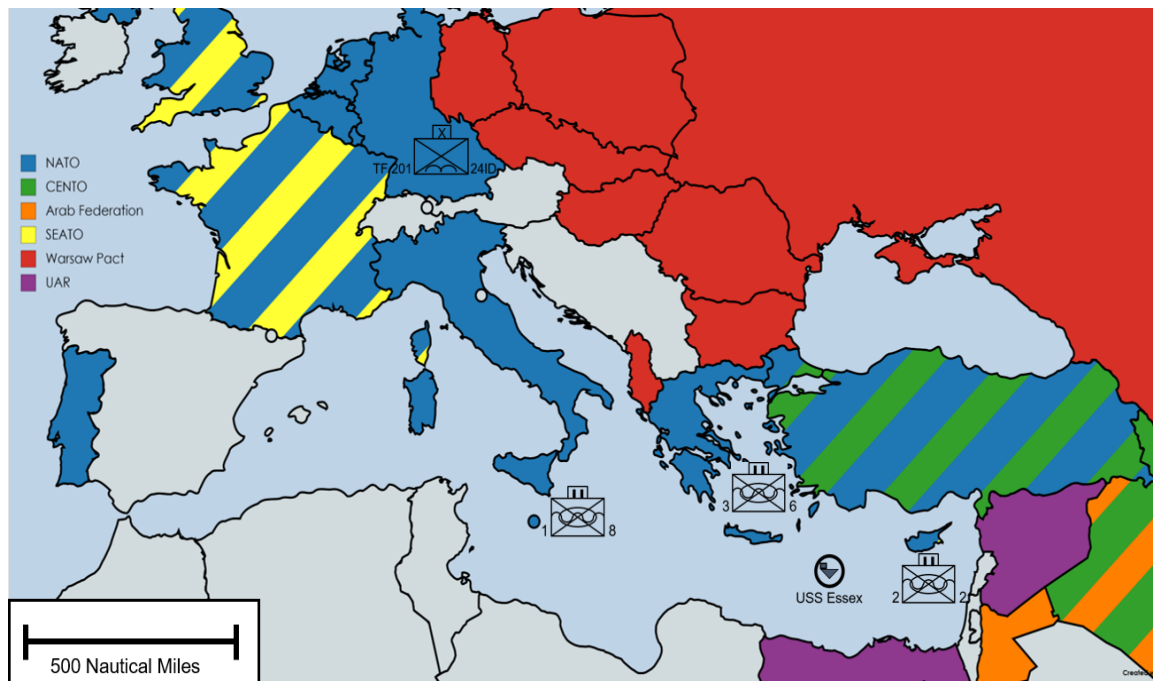


Figure 3. US Force Disposition at 4:00am July 15, 1958. Data adapted from US Sixth Fleet Report, Enclosure 1: 2, Marine Corps Archives and USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 6: 8, Marine Corps Archives.

⁸³ Harry Hadd, “Orders Firm But Flexible,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 88, no. 10. (October 1962): 82.

⁸⁴ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 1: 1, Marine Corps Archives.

⁸⁵ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 5: 2, Marine Corps Archives.

Assessment of US capabilities for the landing proved equally worrisome. Although additional assets strengthened the amphibious forces during the preceding months, their disposition and locations varied greatly. Amphibious Transport Squadron 6 and BLT 2/2 were approximately 120 miles away from Lebanon and represented the only unit capable of meeting the timeline in the initiating directive. They operated at reduced strength, however. The USS Plymouth Rock, carrying the BLT's tanks, shore party, and the underwater demolition team, suffered a mechanical breakdown earlier in the week and headed towards the port in Malta for repairs.⁸⁶ Additionally, JCS constraints hampered Task Force 201's preparations. To maintain operational security and prevent advanced warning of combat troops leaving West Germany, no movement or marshalling of forces could be conducted until after the initial landings in Lebanon, thus extending the response time should the BLT require reinforcements.⁸⁷ The time constraint imposed by the NCA and the additional limitations of the JCS meant the initial forces available for Operation Blue Bat would be less than half of the force requirement identified in OPLAN 1-58.

Furthermore, OPLAN 1-58 assigned aircraft sorties in defense of the ATF to British aircraft based on Crete and detailed close air support for the LF to Task Force 60, the carrier strike force of US Sixth Fleet. The evolving situation in Jordan precluded participation from the British, and all air support tasks thus fell to the Task Force 60 and the USS Essex. However, when Eisenhower ordered the intervention, these ships operated 360 miles west of Lebanon and could provide neither combat air patrol above the amphibious force nor close air support for the LF.⁸⁸ Despite the mounting risks, TransPhibRon 6 approached the amphibious objective area and BLT 2/2 debarked on schedule for the 3:00pm landing.

⁸⁶ US Sixth Fleet Report, Enclosure 1: 2, Marine Corps Archives.

⁸⁷ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 6: 6, 14, Marine Corps Archives.

⁸⁸ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 6: 8, Marine Corps Archives.

BLT 2/2's first objective was Beirut International Airport, several miles south of the city. When the tracked landing vehicles of the first wave lumbered ashore across Red Beach, the Marines encountered no opposition and secured the objective within an hour. Simultaneously, Eisenhower broadcast a statement to the American public announcing the American landing and describing the military objectives: protect the lives of American citizens and assist the Government of Lebanon to preserve its territorial integrity and political independence.⁸⁹ In a subsequent address to Congress on the same day, Eisenhower publicly declared the operation's termination criteria. American forces would withdraw "as soon as the United Nations has taken further effective steps designed to safeguard Lebanese independence."⁹⁰

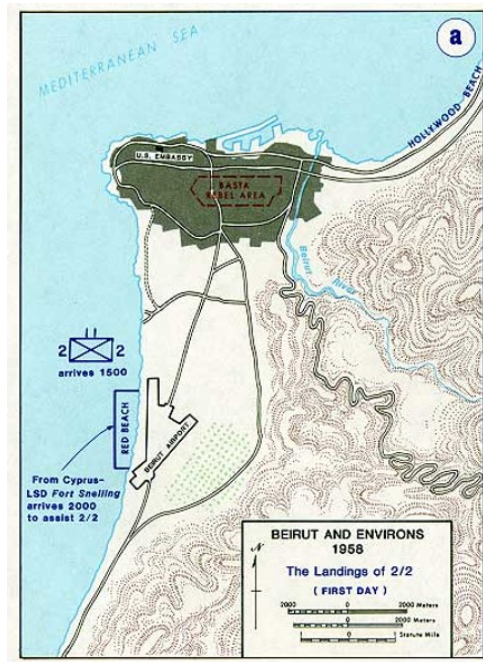


Figure 4. The Landings of 2/2 (First Day). Map from US Military Academy History Department, "Conflicts Since 1958, US Marine Corps, Beirut, 1958," accessed March 12, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Since%201958/Beirut.jpg.

⁸⁹ Hadd, "Orders Firm But Flexible," 83-84.

⁹⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Special Message to the Congress on the Sending of United States Forces to Lebanon, July 15, 1958," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1959), 550-552.

While the political aims, military endstate, and termination criteria were clear to the Eisenhower Administration, tactical events on the beach appeared disjointed. The Naval Attaché from the US Embassy approached the command post of BLT 2/2 and relayed a request from Ambassador McClintock that the BLT reembark aboard TransPhibRon 6 because General Chehab could not guarantee that the Lebanese Army would not attack the Marines. The BLT Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Hadd, denied the entreaty from the Ambassador on the basis that his orders came from Eisenhower through the chain of command. He did, however, arrange for a boat to take the attaché to the USS Taconic to confer with Captain Victor McCrea, the Commodore of TransPhibRon 6.⁹¹ Captain McCrea's message to the ambassador stated, "I am operating under orders from Commander Sixth Fleet and Commander in Chief Specific Command Mediterranean who in turn are operating under orders US President. All troops have landed and will remain ashore in vicinity airport until further orders."⁹²

While the attaché lingered on the ship, another embassy worker arrived at BLT 2/2's command post with a different message altogether. McClintock requested immediate deployment of a rifle company to guard the Presidential Palace because officials uncovered an assassination attempt from within the Lebanese Army. Hadd's perimeter spread more than 9,500 yards from the high water mark, around the airport, and back to the beach. Marines not involved in securing the line manually unloaded supplies through the surf zone. The Palace was four miles away, close to the rebel held portion of Beirut. Hadd refused again, but later that evening travelled to the embassy to deliberate with McClintock, agreeing to place a company on alert to respond to the palace.⁹³ McClintock sensed the disconnect between military actions and the political reality. He

⁹¹ Hadd, "Orders Firm But Flexible," 84.

⁹² Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 13.

⁹³ Hadd, "Orders Firm But Flexible," 84.

cabled Dulles to report that military commanders were not following his instructions. His inability to explain US military actions to the Lebanese Army further risked its disintegration.⁹⁴

While BLT 2/2 consolidated gains, other US forces enacted their portions of Operation Blue Bat. In West Germany, Task Force Alpha arrived at the Fürstenfeldbruck airfield, marshalled for embarkation, and awaited orders to fly to Incirlik Air Base. In the United States, the Atlantic Fleet and the remainder of the 2d Marine Division prepared for embarkation aboard ships and aircraft.⁹⁵ Fighter, bomber, reconnaissance, refueling, and transportation aircraft of the US Air Force's CASF also rapidly deployed from the eastern seaboard of the United States to the Middle East.⁹⁶

Reframing During Execution

On the morning of July 16, Holloway, Wade, and Yeager all arrived in the amphibious objective area while BLT 3/6 debarked and landed at Red Beach. Once ashore, BLT 3/6 conducted a relief in place with BLT 2/2, freeing it up to secure the second group of objectives: the American Embassy and the port of Beirut. The arrival of BLT 3/6 prompted Holloway's first change to SPECOMME's command relationships. As the preponderance of the Marines were conducting operations ashore, Holloway designated Brigadier General Wade as Commander, American Land Forces.⁹⁷ The flag officers met aboard the USS Taconic to discuss the operation, and Holloway instructed Wade to proceed ashore and meet with McClintock as soon as possible. After receiving assurances from Hadd that BLT 2/2 would be ready to move into the city by 9:30am, Wade travelled the short route into Beirut.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ US Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff Historical Division, *Chronology of Significant Events Relating to the Employment of US Forces in Lebanon, First Installment*, Combined Arms Research Library, KS, November 1958: 65.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 61-65.

⁹⁶ US Air Force Historical Division Liaison Office, *Airpower Deployments in Support of National Policy: 1958-1963*, Combined Arms Research Library, KS, July 1963: 3-6.

⁹⁷ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 2: 2, Marine Corps Archives.

⁹⁸ Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 18.

During this meeting with the Ambassador, Wade first realized his understanding of the operational environment was dangerously incomplete. While American forces followed the prescribed actions of Operation Blue Bat, the rapidly developing political circumstances rendered the operational approach obsolete. General Chehab expressed fear for the American troops soon to enter Beirut, as the proposed axis of advance to the second objective went through the portion of the city controlled by the rebels. When Chehab requested the cancellation of the mission, Wade balked but agreed to delay the column long enough to discuss matters with President Chamoun.

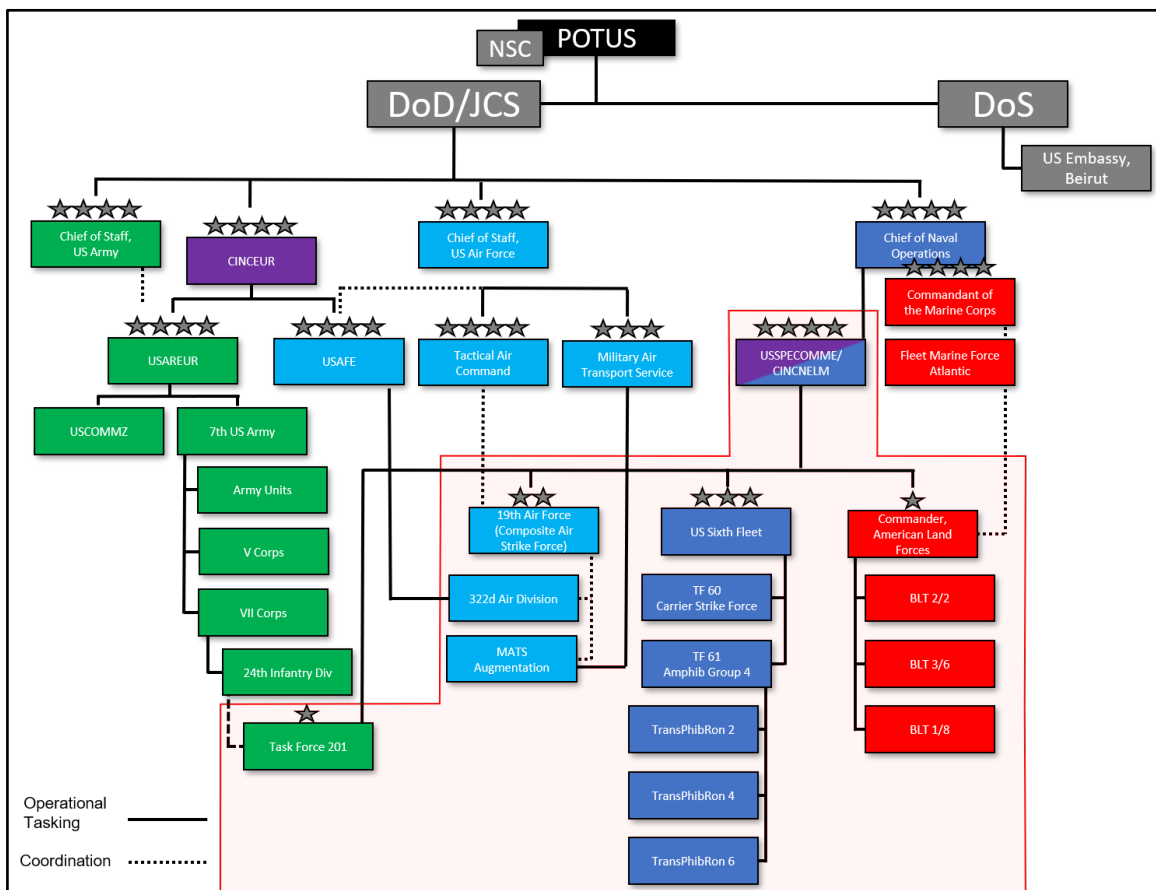


Figure 5. US Forces Command Relationships July 16, 1958. Data adapted from Gary H. Wade, "Rapid Deployment Logistics: Lebanon, 1958" (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984): 12; USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 2: 2, Marine Corps Archives; and US Sixth Fleet Report, Enclosure 1: 2, Marine Corps Archives.

Chamoun eventually approved the American scheme of maneuver, but by the time Wade returned to the embassy, Lebanese combined arms units established blocking positions along BLT 2/2's route to the objective.⁹⁹ He informed McClintock of the development and returned to the airport accompanied by an interpreter. Passing a Lebanese blocking position, Wade talked to the crews manning Lebanese tanks. In the ensuing discussion, he learned the Lebanese Army had orders to stop any movement into the city.¹⁰⁰

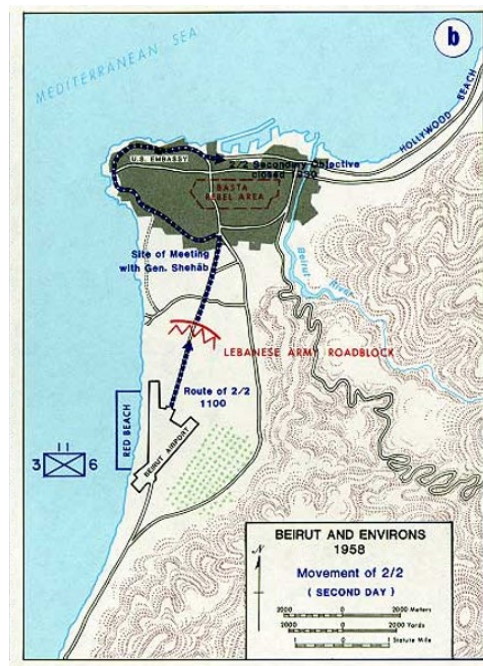


Figure 6. Movement of 2/2 (Second Day). Map from US Military Academy History Department, "Conflicts Since 1958, US Marine Corps, Beirut, 1958," accessed March 12, 2019, https://westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/Since%201958/Beirut.jpg.

Expediting his return to the airport, Wade found BLT 2/2's column headed for the Lebanese roadblock. He instructed them to halt in place and continued to the airport to radio Holloway about the unfolding events. Instead, upon arrival at the airport, Wade learned that Holloway and Yeager were already aboard a helicopter bound for the airport. When they arrived,

⁹⁹ Wade, "Operation Blue Bat," 13-15.

¹⁰⁰ Shulimson, *Marines in Lebanon*, 18-19.

Wade advised them of the tenuous circumstances unfolding just outside the city. The trio immediately headed north in Wade's vehicle to find McClintock.

While passing BLT 2/2 on the road to Beirut, Wade saw Ambassador McClintock and General Chehab approaching from the city. Both vehicles stopped at the head of the column to discuss the matters at hand. This meeting between McClintock, Holloway, Yeager, Wade, and Chehab was the first time in the crisis where all military leaders shared the same appreciation for the operational environment. Once the commanders developed this shared understanding, they developed a modified scheme of maneuver that bypassed the rebel stronghold in the center of Beirut and prevented fratricide between the Lebanese and American forces. The column reached the ports and secured the second objective in the middle of the afternoon without firing a shot.¹⁰¹

As the day's events unfolded in Lebanon, Task Force Alpha finished rigging all of its equipment and prepared to depart West Germany and move to Turkey for staging.¹⁰² The order took longer than expected, however, due to political considerations about overflight permission. Austria, neither a member of NATO nor the Warsaw Pact, sought to remain neutral and prohibited use of its airspace for American transit. Although a member of NATO, Greece also restricted the use of its airspace. The 322d Air Division changed the routes to comply with these restrictions, which made the route more circuitous and time consuming.¹⁰³ The first echelon departed West Germany while BLT 2/2 prepared to move into Beirut and arrived at Incirlik as BLT 2/2 secured the port. In total, Task Force Alpha consisted of 1,749 paratroopers and it took thirty two C-130s, eight C-124s, and nineteen C-119s, a total of seventy two sorties to transport them to Incirlik. The last group did not arrive until the following day.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Wade, "Operation Blue Bat," 13-15.

¹⁰² Gray, *The US Intervention in Lebanon, 1958*, 12-17.

¹⁰³ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 6: 1-2, Marine Corps Archives.

¹⁰⁴ US Air Force Historical Division Liaison Office, *Airpower Deployments in Support of National Policy: 1958-1963*, 3-6.

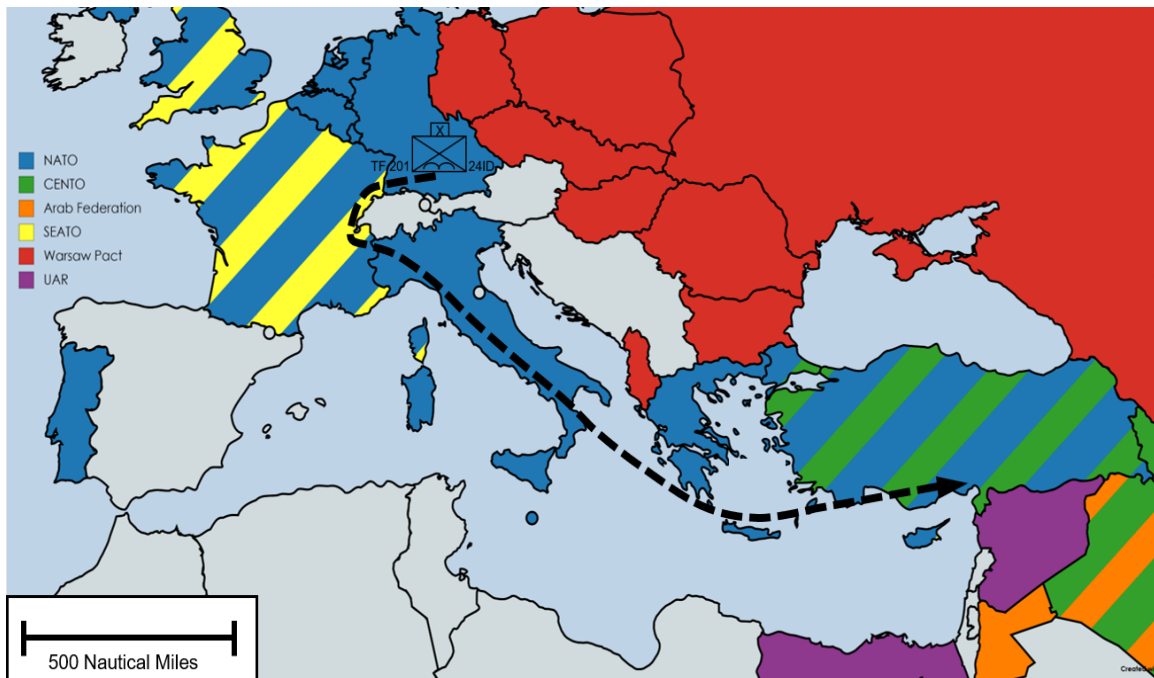


Figure 7. Task Force 201's Extended Route to Incirlik Airbase, Turkey. Data adapted from Gary H. Wade, "Rapid Deployment Logistics: Lebanon, 1958" (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984): 32.

Force closure continued from July 17-20, while Marines from BLTs 2/2 and 3/6 conducted partnered stability operations in Beirut. Task Force Alpha arrived in Beirut and took up positions around the airport. Battalion Landing Team 1/8 landed across Yellow Beach, north of Beirut. Second Battalion, Eighth Marines (2/8), lifted by Marine aircraft from North Carolina, landed in Lebanon after a brief stopover in Morocco, and all aircraft and personnel from the CASF arrived at Incirlik by July 20.¹⁰⁵

The arrival of Task Force Alpha and the command group of Task Force 201 precipitated Holloway's final significant change of command relationships within SPECOMME. As the Commander, American Land Forces, Wade possessed nominal authority over Gray and Task Force 201. To prevent task saturation and span of control issues, Holloway requested a senior

¹⁰⁵ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 2: 3-4, Marine Corps Archives.

general officer to assume control of Marine and Army forces in Lebanon. The US Army provided Major General Paul Adams to serve in this capacity.¹⁰⁶

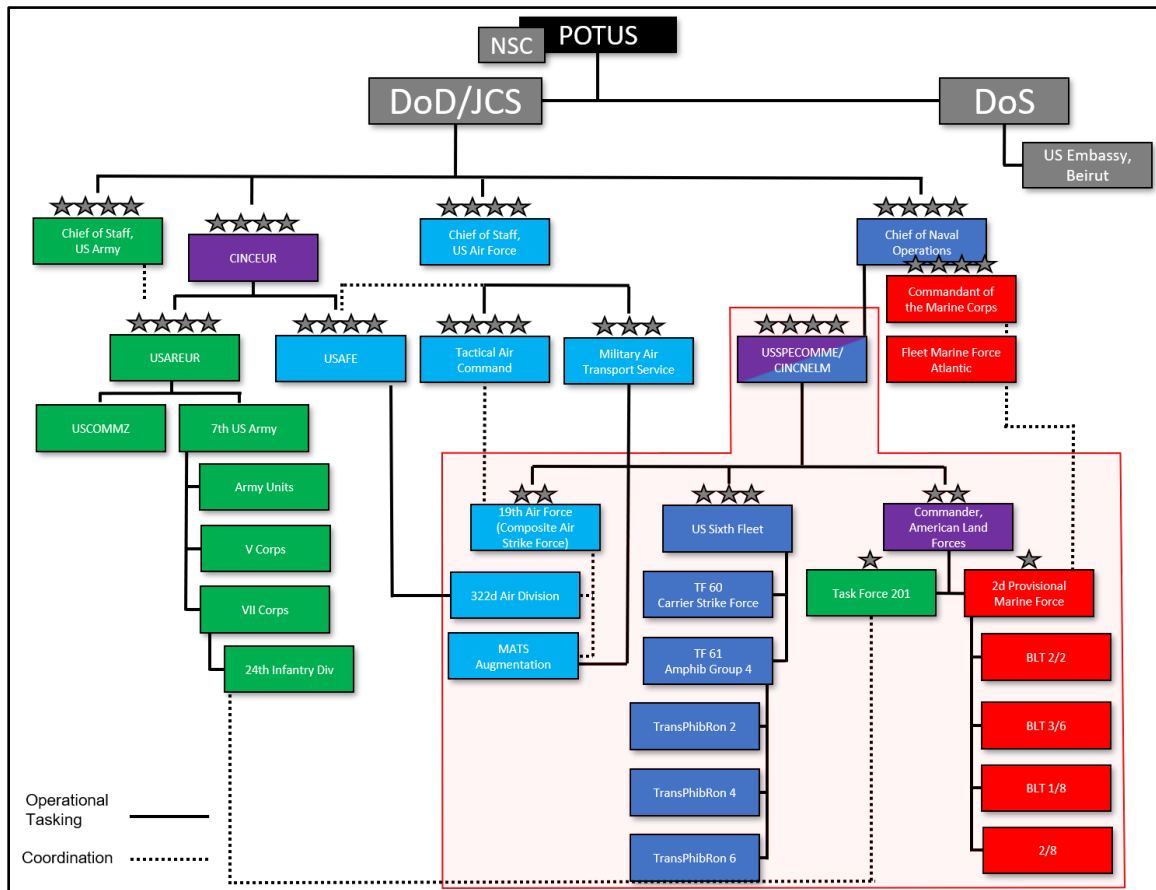


Figure 8. US Forces Command Relationships July 26, 1958. Data adapted from Gary H. Wade, “Rapid Deployment Logistics: Lebanon, 1958” (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute, 1984): 12; USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 2: 2, Marine Corps Archives; and US Sixth Fleet Report, Enclosure 1: 2, Marine Corps Archives.

The rapid deployment of large US combat formations in Lebanon contributed substantially to quelling the unrest. In late July, the Charlie, Delta, and Echo echelons of Task Force 201 arrived in Lebanon. Holloway cancelled the deployment of the Bravo echelon, which would have provided more infantry forces, because the situation on the ground markedly differed from the one anticipated in OPLAN 1-58. Instead of widespread resistance to the landing, American forces were generally tolerated by the populace. In addition to cancelling the

¹⁰⁶ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 3: 2-4, Marine Corps Archives.

deployment of Task Force Bravo, Holloway halted the deployment of US Army forces armed with “Honest Johns,” a tactical nuclear artillery piece. For the rest of the summer, the soldiers and Marines did not perform combat operations envisioned by OPLAN 1-58. Instead, they conducted partnered stability operations with the Lebanese Army, as well as large scale joint and combined landing exercises north of Beirut. By the beginning of September, most Marine units backloaded amphibious shipping and prepared for redeployment.¹⁰⁷

With security guaranteed by US and Lebanese forces, free and fair presidential elections took place at the end of July. President Chamoun completed his term and, in September, passed the mantle to General Chehab, who received the majority of votes.¹⁰⁸ Inaction in the UN prevented the original termination criteria from being achieved, and the Eisenhower Administration adjusted the benchmark to redeploy forces from Lebanon. Instead of relying on stabilizing actions from the international community as a precursor to departure, US forces would cease operations upon the request of the duly constituted government in Beirut.¹⁰⁹ A gradual withdrawal took place throughout early fall, and all forces departed Lebanon by October 25, 1958.¹¹⁰

Implications

Operation Blue Bat met the overall political objectives of the Eisenhower Administration, but inadequate environmental framing at multiple echelons significantly elevated the military and political risk during the onset of operations. The inadequate framing activities occurred due to a lack of clear US policy prior to the crisis, the ad hoc nature of SPECOMME and the subordinate

¹⁰⁷ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 3: 3-9, Marine Corps Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Chehab to Eisenhower, September 24, 1958, Folder “OF 198, Lebanon, Government and Legation of,” Box 728, White House Central Files, Dwight D. Eisenhower Records as President, Eisenhower Library.

¹⁰⁹ Dulles to Leslie Munro, August 18, 1958, Folder “JFD Chronological Series, Box 16, July 1958 (1),” JFD Chronological Series, Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Library. Munro was the President of the UN General Assembly.

¹¹⁰ USSPECOMME Report, Enclosure 1: 12-14, Marine Corps Archives.

commands, and the general lack of coordination between SPECOMME and the diplomatic team at the US embassy in Beirut. The mission's success owed itself to deliberate reframing activities during planning, opportunistic reframing during execution, and a healthy dose of luck.

The Eisenhower Administration's grand strategy in the Middle East, expressed through the 1957 Eisenhower Doctrine, did not achieve unity of effort in all elements of national power. The doctrine, while largely economic in nature, did incorporate foreign military sales with Iraq and Lebanon. However, the offer of US military force to ensure territorial sovereignty and self-determination failed to articulate how the military instrument would achieve those ends. Furthermore, by predicating the use of military force on external threats from communist forces, the Administration obfuscated the likelihood of intervention when the first indications of the crisis appeared. The meetings at the White House in mid-May established a relatively clear policy, and by emphasizing diplomatic actions, the staffs at SPECOMME and subordinate commands gained time to deliberately reframe the environment. This period of reframing, while insufficient by today's standards, proved instrumental in preventing a complete disconnect between OPLAN 1-58 and the reality on the ground in Beirut.

The ad hoc nature of SPECOMME and its commands also contributed to the inadequacy of initial attempts at framing. Holloway's daily job was Commander in Chief, United States Naval Forces in Europe, the East Atlantic, and the Mediterranean (CINCNELM), not Commander in Chief, US Specified Command Middle East (CINCSPECOMME). He and his staff were responsible for the day-to-day operations of a substantial portion of the US Navy and its contribution in the event of a conflict with the USSR. Furthermore, both Task Force 61 and 62 resembled composite organizations that never functioned together prior to Operation Blue Bat. Task Force 201 was no better. The reflagging of the 11th Airborne Division into the 24th Infantry Division created gaps in understanding that were not easily remedied. The disparate and extemporaneous nature of the command precluded shared understanding. When permitted an

opportunity to reframe, these organizations engaged in single-loop learning, and focused on familiar tasks instead of coming together to conduct effective problem framing.¹¹¹

This preoccupation with solving recognizable problems prevented SPECOMME from double-loop learning and effective problem framing. Conducted correctly, this would have led to increased dialogue with DoS representatives, specifically Ambassador McClintock and his team operating in Beirut, to develop a systemic understanding of the crisis in Lebanon. The LF's complete lack of information and intelligence about adversary capabilities, host nation security force intentions, the political situation, and environmental factors demonstrated a breakdown in the environmental frame.

Despite these gaps, some credit is due Admiral Holloway, Brigadier General Wade, and Ambassador McClintock. Although the initial entry into Lebanon carried significant risk because of inadequate problem framing, all three leaders recognized the potential for future events to spiral out of control. The roadside meeting to prevent a tactical engagement between Lebanese and American forces is the manifestation of reframing during execution. All parties were fortunate it happened when it did.

Conclusion

Operation Blue Bat is an instructive case study for today's military planners. Political and military leaders of the era focused almost solely on great power competition with the USSR, at the expense of forecasting emerging smaller scale contingencies and developing national policy to address and prevent the underlying issues. American military strategy for basing, organization, doctrine, and technological development centered on fighting and winning in large scale combat operations, operations that never occurred. Instead, political strife in the smallest country in Asia led the United States to deploy more than 40,000 sailors, soldiers, airmen, and Marines to the

¹¹¹ US Marine Corps, *MAGTF Staff Training Program (MSTP) Pamphlet 5-0.1, Marine Corps Design Methodology* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 47-51.

Mediterranean Sea to fight a war of limited aims. The DoD cobbled together this force from what was available and subordinated it to an organization that did not exist until the crisis erupted.

Military planners in today's global political environment may be met with the same challenges Holloway faced in 1958. As the United States returns to an era of great power competition with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, most diplomatic and military attention is devoted to deterring and, if necessary, defeating these potential adversaries. The US military is developing new doctrine, such as the US Army's Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, which foretell a return to large scale, conventional warfare against state actors. Simultaneously, advances are being made in the incorporation of cyber and space activities at the operational level of war. In short, the American military is preparing for the worst case scenario. Deterrence, however, is a paradox. The more prepared the US military is for these events, and the more it signals willingness to engage in them, the less likely they are to occur.¹¹² Absence of large scale combat is the true measure of effective deterrence. Senior leaders and their staffs will be called to action in unfamiliar places, with little understanding of US policy and political aims, with forces that are not ideal to conduct the mission required. Studying the experiences of Holloway and those like them, and understanding their impact on joint and service doctrine of today, will be what determines if the crisis response planners of tomorrow are successful or not.

¹¹² Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 40-52.

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