

Running head: COMBINED FORCES OPERATIONS; PAST, CURRENT, AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

Combined Forces Operations; Past, Current, and Future Expectations

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### Abstract

As far back as the inception of our nation, our U.S military has participated in Combined Force Operations. This type of operation has been performed or conducted for various reasons and under different circumstances surrounding each conflict. In the following, we will view four major aspects of combined force operations; the history of combine force operations, the challenges that are posed from combine force operations, and the advantages and disadvantages of conducting combined force operations. In speaking to the past, present and our current state of affairs throughout the world, it is quite possible that combined force operations at one level or another will become a constant way of “doing business” for our military forces in years to come.

## Introduction

As we continue to face strategic military commitments in such nations as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia to name a few, the operational tempo of our U.S military has hit record highs. Combined force operations are one facet or answer to maintain deployments and essential forces on the battlefield. Just like the United States, many countries as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have provided troops, equipment and additional assets in the forward deployed area of operations. Had these past operations not involved combined force operations, this may not be the case. Many nations could not sustain troop and equipment levels that most conflicts require in this day and age. By conducting combined force operations, this allows not only the United States to participate, but other nations as well. Combined force operations create the ability to fight multi-front conflicts abroad as well as the increase in national affairs with our allies.

In the following, we will discuss the inception of combined force operations and the reasoning for such operations. We will provide recent examples of such operations throughout the world and discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of conducting combined force operations. Inevitably, there are solutions to fix some of the problems we face when working with other nations towards one essential goal. As the United States continues fighting current conflicts, we will be hard pressed to conduct most large-scale operations alone.

### History and Background of Combined Force Operations

The United States has participated in combined force operations throughout its history. Combined force operations have ensured the survival of a fledging country, established a global empire, and then set the stage for the spread of America's national interests. This paper will explore the background of the United States' combined force operations including the need for

such operations in the past, major countries and organizations that have partnered with the United States, successful combined force operations and their impact, and lastly, the necessity of these operations in the future. As the United States prosecutes the Global War on Terror (GWOT) combined force operations will increase in importance and become integral to United States and world security.

The United States has identified the need for and participated in combined force operations since its inception. It could be argued that the United States would not have survived as a country without the military support of France. A French declaration of war on Britain, the weight of the French Navy and the infusion of French volunteers into the Continental Army allowed GEN Washington to transition from fighting to preserve his own army to a campaign plan that actively engaged the British forces. A naval victory by the French combined with adept maneuvering by GEN Washington trapped the British forces at Yorktown, Virginia and forced the British military to seek a negotiated settlement of the American Revolution. So, within two years of its formation, the fledging United States had learned the need for combined force operations and would maintain this tactic as it faced adversaries at home and abroad.

Combined force operations would continue to be part of the American military tradition, but would be refined after the Spanish-American War as the United States found itself embroiled in police actions throughout the world, but most notably in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Philippines. The American armed forces participated in 38 military interventions between 1890 and the start of World War One (Grossman, 2001). During these operations, they would establish a pattern of immediately focusing on the rebuilding of the local army and police forces using American Noncommissioned Officers and Officers in key positions, and then using those forces as part of a combined force operation and campaign to pacify insurgent groups and

prepare that country to defend itself against insurgents as well as outside forces.

America continues to utilize combined force operations around the world since the fall of the Soviet Union. As we reached out to former Warsaw Pact countries, we have conducted numerous operations and training events with these countries establishing a precedent for multi-nation operations that has paid off tremendously in places like Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan.

The United States has had many partners in the conduct of combined force operations during its short history. Historically, Great Britain, Canada, and France have frequently participated in combined forces operations in pursuit of joint interests worldwide. Additionally, the nations that are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have and continue to participate in multi-national exercises around the globe in order to improve the military readiness and ability of the nations involved. Exercises such as Return of forces–Germany (REFORGER) paved the way for post Cold War combined force operations with countries such as Poland, Romania, and Hungary that have directly impacted our operations in the GWOT. With the advent of the GWOT, our partnerships in combined force operations around the world have dramatically changed. While some of our more traditional partners have redefined their roles or dropped out completely, other countries have stepped in to take their place. Countries such as Japan, Georgia, and Poland have dramatically expanded both their participation in current operations as well as their willingness to participate in future operations in order to help secure their national interests.

The United States has participated in many successful combined force operations. Typically, American leaders have worked in order to ensure the success of their coalition partners. The defense of South Korea is a great example of a continuous combined force operation. Twenty-two countries participated in the Korean War as allies of the United Nations

(Evanhoe, 2007). The ability of Americans to coordinate the efforts of so many partners as well as the sacrifice of those countries is why South Korea is the economic and regional power it is today.

Operation Desert Shield/Storm is another example of a well executed combined force operation. The United States, building on lessons learned during the Cold War from exercises such as REFORGER, BRIGHT STAR, and FOAL EAGLE, was able to build a multi-national coalition that included such non-traditional partners like Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. This union was able to defeat 43 Iraqi divisions in the defense ("Iraqi Army"), a seemingly impossible task had it not been for the previous experience of the American armed forces in working with other nation's militaries. The liberation of Kuwait has resulted in the establishment of close ties with several Arab nations and continued joint military ventures.

America conducted a combined force operation with its NATO partners in order to restore peace to the countries of Bosnia and Kosovo. These countries, racked by civil war and genocide, had multiple factions with a variety of equipment and abilities, fighting to gain control of key areas and to settle historic grievances involving ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. NATO was able to build two coalitions that saved these countries with a minimum of violence. Both countries were reclaimed from the ravages of ethnic cleansing by a community of concerned nations and have reassumed their place as members of the European community.

Combined force operations will continue to be necessary as part of the Global War on Terror. Training and working side by side with other nation-states militaries will be an integral part of defeating insurgents throughout the world. The United States military as part of the GWOT conducts combined force operations focused on both training and educating host nation militaries. These operations in places like the Philippines and the Horn of Africa are essential in

denying safe havens to terrorists. We as a nation have vowed to pursue terrorist organizations that threaten America anywhere in the world. To accomplish this goal we must be able to conduct operations with the host nation military.

Our commitment to the destruction of terrorist cells worldwide ensures that we must work with a variety of nations and organizations. Combined forces operations have been an important part of America's past and have included a number of countries. The United States Armed Forces have participated in many successful combined force operations that have helped to shape the modern world. There are however, many challenges that the United States military faces as it strives to incorporate other nations in joint ventures abroad.

### Challenges

Some initiatives that the United States and coalition forces have accomplished working together in the past, present, and strive to improve in the future, are joint effects. There does not appear to be a current solution, but there are five possible courses of action to narrow or eliminate this gap. The United States could go it alone, provide coalition alliance members with the essential communications systems, provide members with screened information, standardize all future coalition and allied acquisitions, or use coalition and allied forces in centralized but only low-tech situations. Unfortunately, all current efforts have their drawbacks for the benefits attained. Although there currently is not a magic solution, now is the time to commit ourselves to the effort. Given the right framework, outlook, and commitment of resources, these challenges can be overcome.

The training environment for United States forces must include the operational setting, threat perceptions, current and emerging technologies and capabilities, and conventional operations as well as emerging strategic, operational, and tactical asymmetries. During the war

in Afghanistan, this philosophy helped shape the military campaign. Instead of sending a massive invasion force, the coalition footprint remained modest and adopted a strategy of teaming with local Afghan forces that opposed the Taliban. The use of precision-guided weapons and the immediate delivery of humanitarian relief sent the message that we were coming as a force of liberation. After the major fighting ended, the United States did not flood Afghanistan with Americans but rather worked with Afghans to establish an interim government and an Afghan national army.

There has been, and still are challenges in Iraq, but they are considerably different. On the other hand, the Saddam regime was much too powerful for Iraqi freedom fighters to remove from power without an overwhelming number of coalition forces. The only Iraqi fighting force that was capable of fighting alongside special operations forces in the north were the Kurdish fighters. They effectively tied down Saddam's northern units and liberated the city of Mosul. We were able to liberate the Iraq people with as little as 100,000 plus warriors on the ground and with the use of precision weapons. Once combat operations ended, we worked hand in hand with the Iraqis, training them to take responsibility for their government and security over their own country (Vines 2006 43, 44).

In only two months, the United States accomplish what took three years in postwar Germany. Within a new Iraqi police force, we were conducting joint patrols with coalition forces. Within three months, we began training a new Iraqi army with the assistance of our coalition brothers.

Despite the Department of Defense's increasing emphasis on the importance of training for joint urban operations before deployment, few opportunities currently exist for joint urban operations training that place troops from different services on the ground working under a

joint headquarters. Various factors account for the lack of joint urban operations training, such as the services' focus on training service-specific skills, and the lack of an overall strategy requiring joint urban operations training, specific joint urban operations training requirements, and a formal mechanism for scheduling joint urban operations training at service-owned facilities. Without a training strategy, defined requirements, and a joint scheduling mechanism, the Department of Defense can not guaranty that joint urban operations training will occur or that the Department of Defense will maximize the joint usage of urban operations training facilities. Although there is often some level of synchronization incorporated into the Marine Corps and Army urban operations training events, these efforts fall short of the Department of Defenses' definition of a joint training event because they do not include a joint headquarters and focus on service, rather than joint, training objectives (Leaf, 2003).

Although currently, the issue for operating as a joint team relies on all forces under one umbrella or joint, headquarter. This will be something that we need to work through if we are going to expect coalition forces to collectively train and fight together in an urban environment.

Despite all its advanced technology and extraordinary firepower, the United States military is ill-prepared to wage an urban war. As it happens, though, the likelihood of urban warfare will only grow in the coming years. Accordingly, the United States military, and to a lesser extent its counterparts in Israel, Australia, and several NATO countries, have been taking a hard look at how to win the next urban war. That entails developing new technologies to aid the urban warrior, revamping training programs, and rethinking the guiding doctrine within military operations.

Command and control relationships in multinational operations involving United States military forces have ranged from loose overall unity of command structures, marked by

parallel command structures, to strong central command and control of coalition operations. These are just some of the examples, there is no standard command and control arrangement for multinational operations; the command structure is influenced by too many dynamic factors that must be considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, every participating state in a coalition has its own domestic law(s), policy, and cultural predisposition that influence how much, or how little, it allows foreign command of its participating armed forces.

The Navy is currently working on coordination efforts with new technology for coalition capabilities and assessment of priorities. The goal of this project is to analyze the application of techniques for performing quantitative analysis, and the benefits of a network-centric coalition force. The Navy suggests that this concept can occur with its operational construct and architectural framework called FORCEnet. FORCEnet Warfare in the Information Age, integrating warriors, sensors, command and control, platforms, and weapons into a shared and distributed combat force. Coalition forces can share this strategic definition (Poirier, J.).

During Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), The United States Department of Defense demonstrated great strides by investing in a system that enables the forces to communicate effectively across the electromagnetic spectrum. United States and coalition forces have made great strides to communicate effectively and come online with system procedures to enable them to work together and allow their forces to work together as one team. As stated earlier, research has shown that insufficient systems, training and possibly no established command and control headquarters element were great challenges in conducting combined force operations. During OIF the technology was present for both United States and coalition forces to effectively communicate together, but coalition assets reportedly operated as separate entities, and were often locked out of United States planning and execution

because of the sensitivity of the mission. Missions that involved United States aircraft were not accessible to coalition forces. Therefore, systems were not the main struggle as other barriers prevented this collaboration from taking place.

The United States and each coalition partner had separate contract agreements for sharing classified information. Because of these policies, operations planning information to coalition forces allowing only minimal classified information became a huge challenge (Schrage 4).

In closing, we have shown how past and even current technology used on today's battlefields has proven insufficient in systems and how new equipment coming into theater has enabled effective communication between United States and coalition forces, however, this technical solution may not affect the differences in the individual policies that restrict information sharing among coalition partners. The United States will continue to take the lead on being more effective with our coalition partners. The point to remember is that American and coalition forces are fighting as a close team with Iraq's security forces. There are over 190 embedded transition teams operating as a vital part in supporting the Iraqi forces. The United States and coalition forces have, and will continue to have challenges as we make great strides to enable Iraqi battalions to receive new training, logistical and combined arms support from United States and coalition forces.

#### Advantages

Combined force operation enables the combatant commander to fight in a conflict with many advantages. The advantages of waging war with other partners greatly outweigh the challenges and disadvantages. By forging coalitions of countries that have the same objectives, the force multiplier of collaborating countries sharing information, political and military goals, and responsibilities present the combatant commander with seemingly endless opportunities. The key is, knowing how to manage coalition partners who can join to provide the strength of

numbers or technological superiority for the pursuit of a common goal or goals. The commander of a multinational force can use cohesion and mutual support to gain operational success in the campaign.

Allied forces train together to increase efficiency and cohesion. During these times of training, which are done often in allied host countries, the visiting countries already have forces forward, to project to areas of importance. Training may be done in the name of supplementing a police force or assisting in managing a drug trafficking issue, but the fact remains that a force is closer to a possible target. This allows a country to springboard or launch into another location with greater speed or use other countries to assist in the transit of military cargo. Therefore, response times to conflicts will be greatly reduced. This allows armies to be more alert and agile in the world theater of operations.

Just as in life, cooperation with others increases the ability to accomplish things better. In combined force operations, each country brings a unique skill set to the operation. In Ian O. Lesser's (2002) *Coalition Dynamics in the War Against Terrorism*, he states:

Some actors may also bring specific "niche" capabilities, allowing them to make a contribution to international efforts of a relatively important kind, despite otherwise modest resources. Thus, Norway as a leading source of maritime intelligence, has been able to assist in monitoring the movement of shipping with possible Al Qaeda connections. States of the former Soviet Union, and some in Central and Eastern Europe, have considerable expertise regarding chemical, biological and nuclear matters. Malta, Cyprus, Switzerland and Bermuda, along with a host of small states, have extensive practical involvement in international financial transactions, and their cooperation may be instrumental in the attempt to

monitor and interdict terrorist funding. In sum, new patterns of terrorism will see new and non-traditional dynamics in counter-terrorism cooperation (p. 6).

Training and cooperating with other countries gives a coalition force a greater understanding of worldwide cultures, and in the end, a greater capacity to wage war. As stated by GEN Peter Pace, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in his posture statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee (2006) “As we move ahead in combating terror, we do so increasingly in combination with other nations who understand the danger terrorism poses to their citizens” (p. 7).

Training together also ensure that communication skills between the forces is enhanced. Working side by side through difficult exercises allow each coalition country army to better understand the nuances and jargon that each uses in its operations. This understanding is of the utmost importance during periods of intense activity. Countries that were once enemies, but are now coalition partners can use this training time to overcome suspicions of techniques and tactics. Training together to defeat an enemy should not be done for the first time on the battlefield. Time spent training together also allows doctrine to be wrote and revised before lives depend on execution. This training time gives the individual Soldier a better sense of who is to his right or left. Knowing that coalition partners have the same goals and commitments gives the individual Soldier a better sense of comfort, and could even enhance performance of the Soldier and his or her unit.

Not only are there strength in numbers, but unity of friendly forces presents a formidable foe to the enemy, militarily and geopolitically. Countries that have alliances between each other train together, have cooperative agreement to send representatives to the other nations, military schools, and share equipment knowledge. This enables the combined forces team to fight

seamlessly and overcome obstacles easily. This shows opponents that the force has unity in conflict and in peace.

As countries continue to form alliances and make commitments, the number of safe-havens for the opposing force shrinks exponentially. Countries have alliances with other countries that in turn have alliances with other countries, and the system continues. As more partnerships form, the places for “the enemy” to feel comfortable will continue to get smaller and smaller. This process is done through the political process, not militarily.

As politicians become involved, they are able to exert additional pressure through their governments in the form of financial and economic actions. Even during World War I at the Paris Conference held in March of 1916, the allied governments “adopted resolutions affirming unity of military, economic, and diplomatic action looking to the accomplishment of their unshaken purpose to achieve victory for the common cause” (New York Times, ¶ 1). Even now in the global war against terrorism in Afghanistan, this point is emphasized by Donald Rumsfeld, then Secretary of Defense, in a 2002 press conference with Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akaev. The United States and Kyrgyzstan share the same goals for Afghanistan, Rumsfeld said: “that it no longer be a haven for terrorists or terrorist training camps; that its neighbors permit it to grow, prosper and recover from drought, war and the difficulties it has faced” (Kozaryn, L.D., 2002).

Conducting large-scale military operations can be extremely burdensome on the finances and people of a nation. Forming a coalition to conduct combined forces operations can help defray costs for all parties involved.

During the Gulf War, strong political leadership also underlay important international financial support to the war effort, including large financial contributions from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Japan,

Germany, South Korea and others to help defray U.S. incremental costs. This spread the financial burden of the war and helped to cushion the U.S. economy from its effects (“Final Report to Congress,” 1992).

Accomplishing the mission of large-scale warfare relies heavily on a steadfast coalition. Such support can alleviate some difficulties of reconstruction and of military distribution for all countries involved.

Combined force operations present the ability to present a unified front in the international aspect as well. If international law is violated, as in the Kosovo conflict, the strength of the force becomes greater than the force itself. GEN Wesley Clark (Ret.) stated, “When you stack international law with strength of diplomacy and military power, it allows decisive strategic results to be achieved without decisive military force.” This shows the opposing force that not only do we have the ability, we have the support of the international community behind us (2003).

As countries continue to form alliances, the advantages continue to increase. Economic stability is created, assurances for assistance when needed are created, strengthened security for partner nations, and a long lasting relationship built on mutual respect and understanding is fostered. The United States Navy is currently trying to forge this relationship in Southeast Asia by training militarily and exercising cooperation that extends into the political area. This is apparent in the efforts during disasters.

In today’s intertwined world of politics and economics it is extremely difficult for a country to maintain an atmosphere of individualism and must learn to use the advantages of combined forces operations to exert extra pressure on its opposition. Soldiers training and fighting in combined force operations can also become more satisfied working with other

citizens of the world and productivity can even increase. The cultural, economic, political, and military advantages are endless and can be ominous to opposing forces. Combined force operations characterize forces of enduring relevance in meeting the global military challenges.

### Disadvantages

Everything has advantages and disadvantages to include combined force operations. Within the next few paragraphs we will discuss some of the major disadvantages to conducting combined force operations.

Every participating nation is required to supply and sustain themselves in combined force operations. This can be a tremendous challenge when considering the forward deployed theater of operations. This means nations spend money on transportation, supply and sustainment operations indefinitely during sustained operations. According to the experts, this type of sustained operation would be better funded if the participants combined their supply requirements together. Nowadays, it looks like that problem is getting solved through joint ventures while forward deployed. The use of common items such as batteries, fuel, and ammunition alone are just a few examples.

The other part of this issue is the number of the operations any one nation sustains at any given time. The participation in numerous operations is currently not a shared budget of more than any one given nation. If military force expenditures were indeed a shared cost, nations may indeed have the ability to sustain any given operation over a longer period of time. Currently, the United States is leading the funding for both OIF and OEF.

Participating in combined force operations means different priorities for different nations. Every nation wants to achieve its own goals at the end of the operation. The different goals and alignments can have an affect on these operations. Those countries, who participate in the

mission, are conscience of their counterparts and fully aware of the overall outcome of any one particular operation. Sometimes they use other countries to achieve their set goals.

These differences make the operations more difficult and at times become a longer, more drawn out operation. Because of the different goals and priorities of these nations, they do not concentrate or focus their priorities in the same manner. Each nation or contributing military force may have different priorities than their counterparts. Each participating military force may have the ability to perform certain operations more effectively than the other. This force may be more skilled at the execution stage of any particular operation in which they can execute a mission faster and more accurately. These concentration differences can tend to make the entire operation longer and more difficult.

Currently, there are many nation states that require outside assistance. They cannot solve their problems on their own and require assistance in the form of humanitarian aid or military force. This is the most important reason for combined force operations. This quest to provide assistance to nations in need is natural. Participating in more and more operations has at times, caused stress to our military forces abroad. Although this issue of being overstretch has come to light, particular attention must be paid to the long recovery required to stand our military back on its' feet. Recovery of both equipment and supplies may take years to rebuild.

Each nation, while spreading its strength and providing assistance worldwide is also becoming weaker and weaker. The requirement to concentrate on different missions on different continents can, and may become our greatest challenge. These different missions are may divide the nation. The majority of the nation supports the operation, while others do not. It could be dangerous as well while the support for our military on the home-front weakens. Soldiers who

participate in these missions hear and understand the news and opinions about these various conflicts worldwide. This knowledge can have a huge effect on their performance.

When conducting combined force operations, each nation involved must adhere to and respect the other nation's traditions, laws, habits, and culture. We must pay particular attention to these issues as well during the operation planning process. In the execution of operations, these factors pay vast dividends to the length and outcome of any operation. Sometimes we have to change our tried and tested procedures, and are required to train and adapt to new ones. This type of training and awareness tend to make the pre-deployment process longer.

These factors of combined force operations can effect negatively on the moral of the Soldiers as well. One aspect of this is the differences between the armed forces involved. Differences in supply, equipment and other factors of the operation can destroy the moral. Each nation is funded differently than the other, which leads to technological differences in the ability to perform various types of operations. Meaning one military force may be better prepared to execute an operation than another.

National military strategy, current global security demands, and reality requires that the armed forces are prepared to conduct the full range of military operations in concert with the militaries of other nations. Joint Vision 2010 puts it this way: "It is not enough just to be joint when conducting future operations. We must find the most effective methods for integrating and improving interoperability with allied and coalition partners. Although our armed forces will maintain decisive unilateral strength; we expect to work in concert with allied and coalition forces in nearly all of our future operations, and increasingly, our procedures, programs, and planning must recognize this reality" (Clark, 2003).

The best evidence for the differences and challenges within combined force operations is the NATO Respond Forces (NRF), in Europe. According to James Jones, "The NRF is a high-end outfit," Jones said, "And the units that are certified for the NRF will have to be fully interoperable. "If we can't make it fit in the NRF, then it will not be certified for utilization". This is a prime example of tools or techniques implemented to ensure combined force operations become a smooth flowing machine with interoperability throughout.

### Conclusion

In closing, we have discussed a brief background on the inception of combined force operations, the challenges faced when working with our allies abroad in both equipment, and doctrine and have elaborated on the tremendous advantage we have as a nation in conducting combined force operations. With the United States current commitments abroad and the continued desire to maintain solid relationships with our current and future allies we can expect most large scale conflicts to continue to be combined with one or more nations. Whether these combined operations are part of a humanitarian effort or along the lines of the fight against the global war on terrorism, many nations have a vested interest in the preservation of peace, and human rights. Combined force operations are just one example in the unity of effort towards one goal. We have discussed historically how combined force operations came about, our current requirement for these types of operations as well as what we can expect in future commitments around the world.

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