

Running Head: UNPREPARED MILITARY DURING THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES

Unprepared Military during the Outbreak of Hostilities

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## Outline

Topic #5: A theme from *America's First Battles* is how—and why—the United States military has repeatedly been unprepared to execute its primary mission at the outbreak of hostilities.

1. Thesis Statement. The United States military has repeatedly been unprepared to execute its primary mission of executing combat operations and it has been evident from the past to the present. Correcting this mistake or mindset is vital to the future success of the military, whether tactically, operationally, or strategically.

2. Major Points.

- a. By evaluating the past, leaders can ensure that the necessary training, discipline, equipment, and proper mindset is present for all future combat operations.
- b. Complacency and a superior attitude can be detrimental initially in combat operations.
- c. NCOs must train their Soldiers constantly during peacetime and wartime, and get them into the right psychological mindset to close with and destroy the enemy.

3. Supporting Points of Evidence.

- a. Operation *Just Cause*. The United States military conducted a night assault in to the Republic of Panama to oust Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega.
- b. Operation *Restore Hope*. The United States military was unprepared for peacekeeping operations in Somalia. Peacekeeping turned into peacemaking with negative results. Government inaction contributed to the failed attempt in humanitarian aid.

### Abstract

As in the case of Operation *Just Cause* it is evident that the United States military was prepared to execute combat operations. Unlike Operation *Restore Hope*, the United States military was not prepared to change from peacekeeping to peacemaking operations. Correcting this mistake or mindset is vital to the future successes of the military, whether tactically, operationally, or strategically. Leadership from the highest levels down to the fire team leader will determine whether the military is ready for future combat operations. Throughout history, leaders have had different ideas about training and executing combat operations. Along with that, the position of the government and the people will also have a dramatic affect on the success of any operation.

## Unprepared Military during the Outbreak of Hostilities

The United States military has repeatedly been unprepared to execute its primary mission of executing combat operations and it has been evident from the past to the present. Correcting this mistake or mindset is vital to the future successes of the military, whether tactically, operationally, or strategically. The United States military has always had the mission to execute offensive or defensive operations against a foreign adversary. With that said, history has shown that the United States military has not always been prepared to execute this mission. This paper will take a brief look at two low intensity conflicts and illustrate that the military is sometimes prepared, sometimes caught off guard, and the outcome of both instances.

### *Operation Just Cause*

The successes during Operation *Just Cause* resulted from the meticulous planning many months prior to the date hostilities commenced. In fact, the operational plans were created, refined, and then shelved until the Department of Defense recommended to President George H. W. Bush, after a Marine was killed, to approve. This wasn't an operation that was thought up, planned hastily, and then executed. It was well thought out, rehearsed many times in many different locations, and executed surgically by all units who participated.

Training during the year of 1989 was tough, realistic, and with an end state in mind. Units did not know at the time what they were preparing for, but just kept rehearsing different scenarios repeatedly. Members of the Ranger Regiment conducted numerous airfield seizures during 1989. These seizures culminated with an assault on an objective with the location of the objective not being the same as previous iterations. These airfield seizures took place all over the United States including Fort Benning, Georgia, Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, Roswell, New Mexico, and Moses Lake Airfield, in Washington State.

Marksmanship during this timeframe was constant. Marching to the ranges to conduct training on all weapon systems was a weekly occurrence. Members of the Ranger Regiment fired more rounds than the Standards in Weapon Training approved. Physical training increased and took place twice a day. Foot marches were a weekly occurrence and transportation to training consisted of marching. In all facets of preparing for war, units across the country were preparing for hostilities and didn't even know it. Meaningful training was taking place and funding for the training wasn't an issue or a problem. Units trained for hostilities and were well prepared to execute Operation *Just Cause*.

On 20 December 1989, the United States Military launched an offensive into the Republic of Panama to find, secure, and remove Manuel Noriega from power. The offensive was a simultaneous assault (land, sea, and air) on multiple key infrastructures throughout the country. Within 14 days, Noriega was apprehended and a majority of the hostilities were over. According to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, the highly successful nature of such a complex operation pointed out just how well the U.S. Army had learned the lessons of a decade of training and preparation (p. 397).

The Joint History Office (1995) reported the following:

The operational success of *Just Cause* rewarded efforts by Congress and the Bush administration to avoid repeating the mistakes of Lebanon and Grenada. The determination of President Bush and the enhanced authority of the Chairman and CINC combined to provide specific, readily attainable objectives and responsive and effective command and control while giving the tactical commander considerable operational freedom (p. 3).

### Operation *Restore Hope*

In December 1992, the United States government authorized the deployment of approximately 25,000 combat troops into the country of Somalia to aid in humanitarian relief that began in August 1992. The troops were sent in due to the high jacking and looting of the food supplies by rival gangs and clans, which prevented the food from getting to the 1.5 million suffering from starvation.

One issue that happened in Somalia was the crisis changed early on. It turned from humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping, into peacemaking. The distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement cannot be easily maintained (Hirsh, J. & Oakley, R. 1995).

Additionally, according to the Weinberg-Powell doctrine of the 1980's, the military should go into an engagement with everything they have, overwhelming force and leave quickly. The will and ability to use overwhelming force to back a peacekeeping operation offers the greatest possibility of successfully completing a peacekeeping mission. The United States military did not take this approach initially and it cost the lives of many coalition and United States military service members as a result.

An example of lives lost took place on 3 October 1993 during Operation *Gothic Serpent* with Soldiers from the Ranger Regiment, 160<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and a Special Forces Operational Detachment. This Task Force conducted a daylight helicopter insertion into the heart of Mogadishu to capture key personnel of Mohammed Aidid. The Task Force found, detained, and exfiltrated the captured personnel and then proceeded to wait for their own extraction. Then tragedy struck, one helicopter was shot down...and then another. The Task Force had to regroup and rush to the aid of the downed crew. This change in plan cost the lives of many Soldiers in the Task Force to include the pilots of the downed aircraft. Peacekeeping or

peacemaking was replaced with direct combat and survival. The Task Force responded, fought valiantly and many Somalia's were killed. The next morning the Task Force exfiltrated or walked out of the city and back to their secure area. The mission changed and the brave members of the Task Force responded immediately, but at a great cost to the Task Force and to the initial peacekeeping mission.

Within weeks of this operation, political pressure pulled the Task Force out of country. Other coalition members who were participating in peacekeeping or humanitarian aid were removed by their governments as well. The United States military was not prepared to continue with combat operations after peacekeeping failed. Instead of sending more Soldiers to work as peacekeepers, the answer was to remove all forces from the country. Additionally, the Soldiers sent to Somalia to find Aidid did not train in peacekeeping. United States Army Rangers train to take something (i.e. airfield, land, or enemy personnel). Rangers don't rationalize or convince someone to do something...they force them to.

### Findings

The outcome of the successes of the United States military is dependent on many factors. During the late 1980's, the United States military was fully manned, trained, and ready to execute any operation. It had been many years since a low intensity or full scale combat operation had taken place. During the early and mid 1990's United States military manpower reduced significantly. The military was not staffed fully and not trained to the level to meet future hostilities as demonstrated during Operation *Restore Hope*. This doesn't mean the military didn't rise to the occasion. Service members in Somalia showed flexibility and adapted to change quickly. During the early 1990's, military training strategy was not peacekeeping or

peacemaking and because of this, the military was not fully prepared to execute this type of mission.

### Conclusion

As in the case of Operation *Just Cause* it is evident that the United States military can and was prepared to execute the mission of executing combat operations. With Operation *Restore Hope*, the United States military was not prepared to change from peacekeeping to peacemaking. Correcting this mistake or mindset is vital to the future success of the military, whether tactically, operationally, or strategically. Leadership from the highest levels down to the fire team leader will determine whether the military is ready for future combat operations. Throughout history, leaders have had different ideas about training and executing combat operations. Current leaders determine whether the United States military will be prepared to execute combat operations during a time of need. Along with that, the position of the government and the people will also have a dramatic affect on the success of the operation. Today, the military needs to maintain combat proven and effective leaders to sustain the ranks of the Army to ensure the military is always prepared for future hostilities or combat operations.

References

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