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Combined Force Operations

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*Persuasive Thesis Statement on Combined Force Operations*

- I. Even though Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) have been successful in OEF/OIF, inadequate training; poor staffing; divergent operating environments; lack of a strategic overview and poor guidelines for civil-military relations led to confusion about civilian and joint military roles.
- II. History
  - A. The beginnings of U.S. Military Combined Forces Operations
  - B. Problems throughout history
  - C. Combined force operations during the Global War on Terrorism
  - D. Conclusion

*Abstract*

The history of United States Military Combined Force Operations is a long and troubled one. Specifically, this paper will outline the short comings involved with such operations. In every war, America attempts at Combined Force Operations have failed or at best conducted with great difficulty. A more effective method of conducting war time operations should be found. For example, the U.S. Army has begun to realize this goal with the establishment of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs). These self contained organizations go to war with almost everything they need to conduct combat operations independently. This paper will argue that this is the preferred method of conducting combat operations.

*Beginnings of Combined Force Operations*

The history of United States Military combined force operations is a long and troubled one. From the very beginning, the U.S. Military has struggled with such operations. Specifically, this paper will outline the short comings involved with these operations.

U.S. military has been involved in combined force operations since its foundation. During America's fight for independence from Great Britain, problems with civilian control of the militaries commissary operations and involvement in control of the state militias almost destroyed the Continental Army. In addition, General Washington's inability to control the militia lost him several major battles and almost cost America her independence. After America entered into an alliance with France in 1778, problems only intensified. The U.S. Congress and General Washington struggled with the French Government's desire to take operational control of the war. France believed that due to their commitment of the French Army, Navy, national treasure and belief that they understood warfare far better than the Americans they should take control of the war.

This attitude caused General Washington great difficulties in getting the French Army and Navy to commit to battle when he needed them. In addition, the U.S. Congresses' attempt to use both civilian and military officials, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) of the day to make peace with those Americans in the southern states that were loyal to Great Brittan met with failure and open hostility. Problems such as these and many more, can be seen time and again in every conflict the U.S. Military has participated in (Fleming, 2005).

*Problems Throughout History*

The U.S. Militaries involvement with combined force operations did not end with the successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War. The U.S. Congresses' distrust of a large standing Army and Navy, in addition to their unwillingness to pay for them, left Americas post revolutionary war professional military almost non-existent. An over dependence on a poorly trained, ill equipped, badly led militia with discipline problems left America unprepared for the War of 1812. Unable to contest the British control of the sea lanes due to the lack of a Navy, America decided to attack the British in Canada.

As in the Revolutionary War, the Congresses' insistence on using non-governmental agencies (civilian contractors) to supply the Army with food and supplies went terribly wrong. Contractor theft, incompetence, and outright fraud left the Army incapable of completing the capture of Canada. Moreover, several U.S. Armies were forced to surrender to British forces in Canada primarily due to several States Militia being unwilling to fight. This sorry military state of affairs invited the British Army to attack the U.S. homeland resulting in the capture and burning of Washington, DC in August of 1814. As in previous battles, the fall of the U.S. Capital was primarily due to the U.S. Army's inability to combine the regular Army and State Militia into a combined arms team. Luckily for America, the war ended in stalemate the next year with the end of the Napoleonic war (Stewart, 2005).

These same problems manifested themselves again during America's war with Mexico. Although the U.S. Army and Navy easily out matched the Mexican Army, problems with non-government supply agencies and poorly disciplined Militia made that fight much harder than it should have been and cost more casualties than should have

been required. America's next war saw the nation torn apart in the war between the states. The Confederate Army was out matched by U.S. forces in every way at the start of the war and should have been easily dealt with. However, incompetent generals that lacked a clear understanding of combined force operations, incompetent and fraudulent non-government logistical agencies and outright political power struggles between States Militia and the regular Army again resurfaced. This allowed the Confederate Army under General Robert E. Lee to defeat one Army after another for the first three years of the war. Not until President Lincoln appointed General Ulysses S. Grant commander, did the U.S. Army finally have a commander that understood combined force operations and was able to drive the southern states to their knees and bring the war to a close.

World War I began with Americas military ranked nineteenth in the world. As in every previous war, she had allowed her Army and Navy to become almost non-existent. She had no Air Force and the services that did exist, refused to work with each other. In fact, they were in open competition for what funds were available. Once America entered the war on the side of the allies she was, in many cases, forced to rely on her partners for equipment. America did, however, begin to understand her role as a world power and begin to understand the requirements of combined force operations. By the end of the War, she had become quite good at using her new Army Air Force, Tank Corps and Infantry as a combined arms team. With the end of the war, however, her Army and Navy were disbanded and those lessons were soon forgotten.

The start of World War II found the United States military in almost the same state as the beginning of World War I. Worse yet, the U.S. Army and Navy refusal to work as a combined arms team at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii resulting in a intelligence failure that cost

both branches of service dearly on December 7, 1941. Interservice rivalries, failure to cooperate properly with other government agencies and allied nations hampered the American military war effort until the end of the war. Time and again throughout history the U.S. Military has been unwilling to learn or has forgotten the lessons of combined force operations (Stewart, 2005).

#### *Combined Force Operations during the Global War on Terrorism*

The Global War on Terrorism has found America better prepared than ever before and with a clearer understanding of combined force operations. However, many of the same problems seen in previous wars have resurfaced. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in particular have been a problem. Host nation relations, interservice rivalry, issues with chain of command, supply responsibilities, enforcing internal administration and discipline, UCMJ authority, are just a few of the problems that, in many cases, cause many PRT's to, at best be ineffective, at worst a danger to themselves and those around them. Perhaps the best example of Combined Force Operations gone wrong in recent history is Operation Eagle Claw (more commonly know as Desert One). The aborted attempt in 1980 to free the American hostages being held captive in Iran. This operation, the first major U.S. military operation attempted after America's exit from Vietnam ended in disaster. Mainly due to every branch of the military wanting to be involved. The Air Force provided fixed wing aircraft and crew, the Navy provided rotary wing aircraft and crew, and the Army provided wheeled vehicles and special forces personnel. None of which had trained together or could even talk to one another by radio. However, because each service wanted to be part of the operation this mixed bag came together at the last minute, deployed and was expected to carry out a very complex Mission.

Operation Eagle Claw failed with out even getting close to its objective when Navy and Air Force aircraft collided at a refueling base in the Iranian desert during a Sandstorm, costing American service men their lives. Operation Eagle Claw is only one of a long list of Combined Force Operations dating back to our nations beginning that due to poor training, improper or lack of equipment, inter service rivalry or just plain bad leadership ended in mission failure. It is clear that if these operations are the future, much work must be done.

### *Conclusion*

It is clear that the United States Military has always struggled with Combined Force Operations. It is also clear that these operations are the way of the future. If these operations are to be successful, much work must be done to solve the shortcomings listed in this paper.

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