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United States Marine Corps
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Marine Corps University
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**Maintaining the Edge: Airborne Forcible Entry Operations in the Contemporary
Operating Environment**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

MAJ Jake A. Hughes

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Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Richard L. DiNardo
Approved: [Signature]
Date: 14 April 2015

Oral Defense Committee Member: [Signature]
Approved: CHRISTOPHER S. SPOUR
Date: 14 APRIL 2015

Executive Summary

Title: Maintaining the Edge: Airborne Forcible Entry Operations in the Contemporary Operating Environment

Author: Major Jake A. Hughes, United States Army

Thesis: To ensure operational reach, and guarantee the United States' ability to back up the implements of national power, the U.S. military must fully fund, train and equip the Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Teams to fulfill the mission of executing JFEO. These units are a crucial asset that provides the President and Combatant Commanders (COCOMs) with options to rapidly project forces anywhere around the globe.

Discussion: As a dominant superpower, the United States has a responsibility to set the standard for leadership around the world. Arguably, no one holds this ideal in higher regard than President Barak Obama. In his 2010 National Security Strategy, Obama posits that to maintain this leadership role, the United States must pursue a comprehensive global strategy that, "rebuilds the foundation of American strength and influence..."¹ that will promote peace and security around the globe. The U.S. government has several tools at its disposal to help pursue this strategy to include diplomacy, information and economics. In order to be effective though, these implements of national power must be backed by our military might. In fact, President Obama goes on to outline that, the Armed Forces of the United States must be able to "win in today's wars; prevent and deter threats against the United States, its interests, and our allies and partners..."²

To achieve these ends, the U.S. military must be able to maintain the ability to project power into both the global commons as well as the sovereign territories of other nations.³ The concept of projecting military power anywhere, any time is known as Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO). Forcible entry is defined as, "seizing and holding a lodgment in hostile or potentially hostile territory that, when seized and held, will enable continuous landing of troops and material and provide maneuver space for subsequent operations."⁴ The United States Armed Forces focus on three distinct forcible entry capabilities: amphibious assault, air assault, and airborne assault. These capabilities can be used individually or in concert to accomplish the mission.⁵ To ensure operational reach, and guarantee the United States' ability to back up the implements of national power, the U.S. military must fully fund, train and equip the Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Teams to fulfill the mission of executing JFEO.

Conclusion: Over the past 50 years JFEO and FEO missions have proven themselves time and again to be an excellent option to both project U.S. power when needed as well as to shape and enforce diplomatic policy. In order to maintain JFEO and FEO forces as a feasible option for the President and COCOM's to use when they are needed the most, the airborne IBCT's must be at the forefront of the United States' strategy to prevent conflict, deter aggression, and assist other countries when needed. While facing economic constraints, the DoD must fully commit to supporting the forces that are capable of executing this increasingly important mission.

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Much of the research conducted for this project focused on the history of airborne forces since their inception in the interwar period. While conducting the research, I gained a new appreciation for all of the U.S. paratroopers that have served before me. Their commitment to the mission in the face of such extreme challenges should be studied by the current generation of service members to provide them insight on how good we have it these days.

I would also like to thank my wife, Kristy for having patience with me while I completed this project.

Introduction

As a dominant superpower, the United States has a responsibility to set the standard for leadership around the world. Arguably, no one holds this ideal in higher regard than President Barak Obama. In his 2010 National Security Strategy, Obama posits that to maintain this leadership role, the United States must pursue a comprehensive global strategy that, “rebuilds the foundation of American strength and influence...”⁶ that will promote peace and security around the globe. The U.S. government has several tools at its disposal to help pursue this strategy to include diplomacy, information and economics. In order to be effective though, these implements of national power must be backed by our military might. In fact, President Obama goes on to outline that, the Armed Forces of the United States must be able to “win in today’s wars; prevent and deter threats against the United States, its interests, and our allies and partners...”⁷

To achieve these ends, the U.S. military must be able to maintain the ability to project power into both the global commons as well as the sovereign territories of other nations.⁸ The concept of projecting military power anywhere, any time is known as Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO). Forcible entry is defined as, “seizing and holding a lodgment in hostile or potentially hostile territory that, when seized and held, will enable continuous landing of troops and material and provide maneuver space for subsequent operations.”⁹ The United States Armed Forces focus on three distinct forcible entry capabilities: amphibious assault, air assault, and airborne assault. These capabilities can be used individually or in concert to accomplish the mission.¹⁰ To ensure operational reach, and guarantee the United States’ ability to back up the implements of national power, the U.S. military must fully fund, train and equip the Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Teams to fulfill the mission of executing JFEO.

Military forces around the globe have used airborne infiltration forcible entry techniques to gain access to deep strategic objectives since the beginning of World War II (WWII). Since that time, numerous countries have continued to develop and implement this strategic capability within their own military formations, and have used it successfully to both deter and shape the battlefield. Today, over 50 countries have some form of parachute infiltration element that range in size from company to division-level.¹¹ As the world moves forward in a fiscally constrained global environment, many countries, including the United States have begun to rebalance resources and adjust traditional force structures.¹² In fact, within the past five years, several countries have reduced the size of their parachute capable formations in order to re-allocate personnel and funding to other competing priorities.

This essay will articulate the importance of maintaining a viable airborne forcible entry capability within the United States Army. These units are a crucial asset that provides the President and Combatant Commanders (COCOMs) with options to rapidly project forces anywhere around the globe. The essay will first depict the global contemporary operating environment to demonstrate that airborne JFEO forces are more critical now than ever before. Next the essay will highlight three airborne FEO's that exhibit the effects that these operations can have as an implement of national power. The essay will also address the current threats that may affect the United States' ability to execute JFEO, and our means to overcome those threats. Finally, the essay will address the future of airborne forcible entry operations within the United States Army and partner nations within the emerging global environment.

What does the contemporary operating environment look like?

The world that we live in continues to face new trends and emerging threats. The adversary that poses these threats look at western powers not as a global leader, but as an enemy

that must be conquered. Many scholars like Samuel P. Huntington believe that in the future, “A West at the peak of its power confronts non-Wests that increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to shape the world in non-Western ways.”¹³ Huntington goes on to claim that a face-off between these ideologies will be framed as “the West versus the rest.”¹⁴ It seems that the idea Huntington posits is validated every time you turn on the news or read an article in the paper. The Arab Spring has been a central driver in the shifting attitudes that non-westerners feel towards western powers. This dynamic has caused violence to increase at near exponential rates throughout the Middle East and Africa. In the Middle East, the Sunni/Shia divide is becoming more polarized and minorities like the Yazidis as well as Christians are fighting for survival. In key regions of Africa, militant entities like Boko Haram and Al Shibab are decimating innocent populations.

Outside of religious and ideological differences, other countries that look at the West with distain like Russia and China are making major strategy, policy, and economic shifts to increase their power and standing on the world stage. After a short hiatus from the 2008 conflict in Georgia, Russia has resumed their incursion to the west into Ukraine to regain territory lost after the fall of the Soviet Union. Russia also continues to build economic and military ties with known threats like North Korea, China, and Iran. In conjunction with creating territorial issues with many of the sovereign island nations in both the East and South China Seas, China is expanding their economic influence by joining trade alliances in the Pacific, and mining valuable natural resources in both Africa and Afghanistan. China has also decided to invest in rebuilding the Silk Road extend their lines of communication to the West.

Of the 178 countries listed on the Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index, 126 are listed at warning level or higher.¹⁵ This index is compiled using numerous of data points, but key trends

like population growth in developing countries; major shifts in global economic power, the scarcity of natural resources have the most impact on the already stressed global security environment.¹⁶ These changing trends will undoubtedly lead to increased conflict around the globe, and the U.S. will become involved. In the 2010 National Security Strategy overview, President Obama states that the U.S. has to underwrite global security in the face of these emerging threats by upholding commitments to allies, partners, and institutions. This expression of Wilsonian idealism solidifies the U.S. government's commitment to global leadership and sets the precedent that the U.S. cannot turn its back on the world in the face of adversity. Instead, the U.S. is obligated to focus on strengthening international institutions and cooperating with other countries to combat extremism and find solutions to climate change, armed conflict and disease. President Obama wants to execute this strategy without the use of force, but identifies that military force might be necessary at times to defend our country and our allies.¹⁷

The global environment described above may challenge U.S. leadership in a real and powerful way for the foreseeable future. Many academics like Huntington speculate that gaps in economic power, ideology and the struggle to expand territory and influence will remain, or probably widen over the next ten years. Again, this dynamic has the potential to lead to increased conflict around the globe. The burden of leadership that the U.S. has assumed on the global stage, as President Obama articulated in the National Security Strategy, is even more important. U.S. policy makers are aware that if and when these conflicts infringe upon our sphere of influence, or adversely affect our allies, partners, and specifically our protected states, this country will be compelled to use all of our instruments of national power to mitigate the conflict.¹⁸

The instruments of diplomacy, economics, and information are vital to the United States' ability as a nation to influence both major and minor players on the global stage. In order remain truly effective in assuring our allies and partners, using these tools to persuade regimes, non-state actors or governments, the military instrument of national power must be strong and credible. U.S. Military forces must be regionally involved, globally responsive and they need to maintain the inherent ability to rapidly deploy, fight, and win whenever and wherever our national interests are threatened.¹⁹ Military power that is organized in this manner serves as an excellent means to deter aggressors from attacking our allies and our interests both here in the United States and abroad. In the United States Army, the force that is best trained, manned, and equipped to project military power as described above is the Airborne Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT).

Recent applications of airborne JFEO.

Though the U.S. Army force structure has changed significantly since WWII, airborne units, and the FEO capabilities that they bring to the fight have continued to serve as the President's "trump card" for the military implement of national power. In fact, the President has used JFEO and FEO resources in nearly every U.S. combat operation since WWII. These operations include Operation URGENT FURY in 1980, Operation JUST CAUSE in 1989, as well as Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2001 and 2003 respectively.²⁰ In each case, the President projected a significant amount of combat power into a non-permissive environment to achieve immediate results. JFEO mission success in each of these operations opened a lodgment for follow-on forces and supplies to flow through to support the decisive operation.

Of the aforementioned missions, Operation JUST CAUSE, the incursion into Panama to remove Dictator Manuel Noriega, is arguably the most publicized. Leading up to the JFEO, diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Panamanian government had soured. The U.S. Senate had passed a resolution that called for Noriega to relinquish his authority, and the U.S. State Department cut off military and economic aid to the country. Events escalated quickly as the Noriega regime declared war on the United States in December 1989.²¹

Essentially, none of the diplomatic tools had worked, so President George H.W. Bush decided to use the U.S. Military's JFEO capability to restore the balance. On 19 December, 1989, the 75th Ranger Regiment went wheels-up from their home stations enroute to a number of objectives in Panama. They were followed closely by a composite brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division.²² Early in the morning on 20 December, the Ranger Regiment and the 82nd Airborne Division composite brigade executed a overwhelmingly successful JFEO that shaped the battlefield for the other U.S. Military elements executing Operation Just Cause.

Operation Just Cause proved that having JFEO capable units postured for rapid response is arguably the most vital tool within the military instrument of diplomatic power. President Bush turned to this capability when, "every other avenue was closed..."²³ The JFEO objectives during Operation Just Cause gave the Joint force the capability to quickly build up combat power, establish lines of communications, and flow in logistical materials that were essential to the Joint force executing the operation. This operation is a great example of using the JFEO capability when you are out of options, and you have to apply military force to the diplomatic process, but there are other scenarios in U.S. diplomatic history where simply notifying a JFEO force has deterred military action.

A JFEO force does not have to put paratroopers out of a plane and onto the ground to be effective. In fact, the threat of using a JFEO was used as a formidable tool to influence the diplomatic process in the early 1990's. On September 18th 1994, President William J. Clinton signed an order that deployed U.S. Military forces to the island nation of Haiti.²⁴ The Joint Task Force (JTF) mission was to provide assistance to the populace of Haiti and compel General Raoul Cedras to step down as dictator and replace him with the rightfully elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

As part of the force deployment, the 82nd Airborne Division received the order to conduct a JFEO into multiple objectives throughout Haiti. The unit marshaled and deployed in an array of C-130 and C-141 aircraft from Pope AFB on September 19th. While enroute, the Joint Staff halted the invasion on hold for 24 hours and sent the aircraft and paratroopers back to Pope AFB. This tactic worked exceedingly well. When General Cedras, the oppressive dictator heard that the 82nd Airborne Division was on the way, he stepped aside and allowed the diplomatic process to proceed.²⁵

The United States Army is not the only military force that has executed JFEO missions in the recent past. In January 2013, the French Army readdressed the importance of airborne operations when they conducted a company-plus sized, limited-visibility combat parachute assault to seize Tessalit Airport in Mali as part of Operation Serval. The purpose of this JFEO was to seize the airport as well as block routes for Islamist fighters escaping north into the desert.²⁶ The mission succeeded because it provided France with the ability to rapidly project power at the time and place of their choosing to dramatically influence the fight in Mali.

The overviews of Operation JUST CAUSE, Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, and the combat parachute assault to support Operation SERVAL validate that JFEO can be used as a practical approach to strategically project power and achieve decisive victory. JFEO can serve as a very convincing deterrent as well. Simply having the means to call upon a group of highly trained and ready units that have the ability to insert massive amounts of power into any environment can provide a significant boost to the President's ability to use diplomacy in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Current JFEO doctrine

As highlighted in the introduction, Airborne JFEO is not the only forcible entry option that is available for the President to employ when he needs a fast and credible force to respond to potential contingency operations around the globe. Now we will examine the doctrine that provides guidance to the Joint force for JFEO. JFEO can be used to bring forces into a non-permissive or semi-permissive environment as the initial phase of an operation or campaign to the extreme of conducting a JFEO as a single operation to achieve operational or strategic objectives. Amphibious and air assault operations are the two alternative options for insertion of the joint force.²⁷

Amphibious JFEO forces are a formidable tool that the Joint Force has used quite effectively in the past to conduct both small and large scale FEO. JP 3-02 defines amphibious operations as military operations "...launched from the sea by an amphibious force (AF) to conduct landing force (LF) operations within the littorals."²⁸ There are five major types of amphibious operations that can be used as part of the Joint fight. Though the amphibious assault

is most likely to be used for JFEO, other operations include: amphibious raid, amphibious demonstration, amphibious withdrawal and other operations.

Though these operations can be executed by LFs from the Army or the United States Marine Corps, the Marine Corps is the proponent for the development of amphibious doctrine, tactics, techniques and equipment for the DoD.²⁹ The Marine Corps is also inherently more expeditionary in nature than the Army, as they are a smaller force that is prepositioned forward and therefore, more strategically mobile. Since more than 80 percent of the world population resides within 100 miles of the coastline, amphibious operations are crucial to the Joint Force's ability to rapidly project power from the littorals inland to support numerous options across the range of military operations (ROMO).³⁰

The U.S. Marine Corps amphibious JFEO capabilities have increased since the introduction of the V-22 Osprey. This rotary wing lift airframe has twice the lift capacity of the CH-46, the previous rotary wing aviation asset, and can fly at speeds up to 250 knots.³¹ Even with this new advantage, there are still some aspects of the amphibious JFEO option that are not ideal. Specifically, amphibious assault has limitations in terms of massing and building up combat power on the beachhead. Amphibious assault requires echeloning forces to secure the beachhead and establish and expand the lodgment. This sequential build up of combat power can be slow, and is easily affected by tidal and meteorological fluctuations. The deep penetration capability of the V-22 cannot circumvent the limitations of the sequential build up of combat power, and is also constrained by the limits of weather and HLZ availability.

Though using an amphibious assault similar to Operation CHROMITE during the Korean conflict as a stand-alone JFEO option may be feasible in today's contemporary operating environment it is highly unlikely. The amphibious option has an important role to play within

the Joint Force, but because of the increased number of mission variables and complexity of the operation, it is difficult to see this option applied in an unaccompanied manner. Similar to the amphibious option, air assault JFEO faces its own share of issues as well.

In 2008, a new FEO tool was added to official Joint doctrine- air assault by rotary or fixed wing assets. These operations can be based from sea or from an intermediate staging base (ISB) on land and provide even more flexibility for the Joint force to conduct both defensive and offensive operations. Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, “Joint Doctrine for Forcible Entry Operations,” explains that the basic offensive air assault operation is called the air assault attack. This is the integration of combat, combat support, and combat service support while moving to or from an objective area. This type of operation also lends itself to executing other tasks to include: exploitation, pursuit, secure, reconnaissance in force, raids, and defend.³² Unlike the other forms of JFEO, air assault operations are not inherently joint. Air assault FEO can be executed by an Army Division using organic rotary wing lift and attack assets in conjunction with their indirect fires capabilities.

Rotary wing capabilities were used by the Joint force in the Korean conflict, and have been successfully used as a tool to rapidly insert forces inland in most major conflicts ever since. Though this is a feasible option to project power, there are limitations to include helicopter landing zone (HLZ) size and aircraft that require sequential insertion which conflicts with the Joint principal of mass outlined in JP 3-0 “Joint Operations.”³³ Additionally, JP 3-18 does not fully synthesize ways in which to apply and plan for the use of air assault assets in a non-permissive environment. By not fully developing this option in doctrine, we discount the definition of forcible entry, “seizing and holding a lodgment in hostile or potentially hostile territory.”³⁴ To further support that this JFEO option is not fully developed, when the air assault

operations doctrine was added to JP 3-18, it seems to have been added to the end of airborne operations in Appendix B, as if it is meant to be a complimentary option. Until the Joint Force builds upon the current air assault option doctrine, it cannot be a stand-alone technique for JFEO.

Though each of the doctrinal mission options can be used individually, it is best to use them, if applicable in concert to maximize the effects of surprise on the enemy. Using one or more of these techniques simultaneously within the same operational area to mutually support multiple objectives is called integrated forcible entry operations. This method is very similar to the plan that allied forces executed during Operation OVERLORD. Another way to use these techniques simultaneously in distinctly separate operations was demonstrated on Point Salinas during Operation URGENT FURY. This technique is identified as concurrent forcible entry operations.³⁵

As discussed above, both amphibious and air assault JFEO techniques often lead to projecting combat power in a sequential manner. This relatively slow build-up of combat power can pose undue risk to the assault forces. Additionally, amphibious and air assault JFEO options require useable beaches, open ports, and useable airfields and/or HLZs. These techniques are viable, but may not work as well in the contemporary operating environment in which U.S. forces will be inserted into non-permissive environments. In these instances, it is essential to project overwhelming combat power in the most rapid manner possible.³⁶

Sustainment and logistical efforts is another key piece of doctrine that planners must adhere to stringently. Logistics enables the movement and maintenance of forces, and must be planned in detail in order to ensure JFEO mission success. Plans must incorporate the six logistic functional areas of transportation, health services, maintenance, supply, civil engineering

and other services into each phase of the campaign and avoid focusing on the deployment and assault phases.³⁷ According to JP 3-18, airborne and air-assault forces are required to deploy with three Days of Supply (DOS) as well as initial resupply options.³⁸ Once three DOS are expended, there must be a detailed plan to bring in follow-on formations as well as supplies to relieve these lightly armed and provisioned JFEO forces. There must also be a detailed analysis to compare JFEO force requirements and the logistical capabilities to support those requirements.³⁹ A shortfall in logistical capability when executing a JFEO is a risk that will adversely affect mission accomplishment, and could possibly lead to overall failure.

There is no better example of how essential logistical planning efforts are to JFEO mission success than Operation MARKET GARDEN. During this operation, the British 1 Airborne Division, as part of the 1st Allied Airborne Army parachuted into Arnhem over 60 miles behind enemy lines only to be cut off from their lines of communication and reinforcements. 1 Airborne battled the German 2nd SS Panzer Corps for over nine days in an attempt to secure key bridgeheads over the Lower Rhine River and the bridge at Arnhem. 1 Airborne ran out of ammunition, to include their anti-tank weapons, food, as well as defensible positions. They also sustained significant casualties while waiting on support and reinforcements from the British 2nd Army.⁴⁰ Though many failures contributed to this disastrous mission, poorly planned and executed logistical efforts directly led to the loss of 7,605 men killed, wounded or missing.⁴¹ Truly, logistics are a crucial part of JFEO that must be thoroughly planned in order to ensure mission accomplishment. Outside of planning shortfalls, JFEO faces many other threats as well.

Potential threats to U.S. JFEO capabilities

Though U.S. JFEO forces have not been challenged successfully in the last 50 years, the complex and rapidly changing contemporary operating environment described earlier in this essay may negatively impact our ability to obtain operational access. Operational access is defined as, “the ability to project military force into an operational area with sufficient freedom of action to accomplish the mission.”⁴² Emerging threats to operational access from both state and non-state actors are increasing dramatically as globalization and new technologies provide our enemies with the means to conduct Antiaccess (A2) and Area-denial (AD) operations. Though often confused, A2 and AD have distinctly different roles within an adversary’s operational access denial plan. A2 capabilities are “long-range actions and capabilities that prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area.”⁴³ AD actions and capabilities are typically short range in nature and focus on limiting freedom of action within the operational area once the forces arrive.⁴⁴

The Joint Chiefs of Staff identified that enemy A2/AD capabilities were becoming an increasing threat to U.S. force projection in 2011. To describe how the joint force would overcome the future enemy A2/AD problem, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey published the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) in January 2012. This concept is focuses on the importance of maintaining operational access throughout the global commons and in sovereign territories. The JOAC outlines three emerging trends that the U.S. Military will face in future operations: “improvement and proliferation of weapons that deny access or freedom of action in an operational area, a changing U.S. overseas defense posture, and the emergence of space and cyberspace in important and contested domains.”⁴⁵ The U.S., its allies and partnered nations are currently facing each of these emerging trends. Though

each trend poses a number of challenges to JFEO and FEO, the most significant is the improvement and proliferation of weapons.

Russia has been actively participating in a massive effort to proliferate arms to numerous countries over the past decade. In a seven year span, Russia sold \$74 billion worth of conventional weapons that include tanks and sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles to China, India, Algeria and Venezuela.⁴⁶ Moreover, Russia has conducted weapons transfers with Iran and Sudan, and sold arms to the Assad regime in Syria.⁴⁷ Russian arms sales increased drastically in 2012 and 2013 to support a military machine that wants to update their arsenal. They have invested heavily in domestic defense industries that produce technologically advanced weapon systems in order to level the playing field with western powers like the United States.⁴⁸ Though they claim to be internally focused, Russia has not shied away from selling these sophisticated weapons systems to neighboring countries. Russia's continued involvement with operations in Ukraine as well as the ongoing financial expenditures in Crimea is two reasons why Russia is willing to sell these weapons to any buyer.

Russia currently sells a number of conventional weapons around the world. Of these weapons, the most significant threats to operational access are arguably the S-300PM and most recently updated S-400 Triumf (NATO designated SA-21 Growler). These Surface to Air Missile systems (SAMs) are effective at a range of over 250 kilometers. The S-400 is comparable to the U.S. Patriot missile, and can target up to 36 targets to include: stealth, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), cruise missiles as well as sub-ballistic missiles.⁴⁹ In late 2014, Russia entered a \$3.5 billion dollar arms deal with Egypt that includes S-400 missiles. Additionally, in January 2015 Russia entered a cooperation pact with Iran to become their only supplier of technologically advanced weapons solidifying a deal that also included S-400

missiles.⁵⁰ On top of this, in January 2015, China bought six S-400 missile battalions to bolster their A2/AD capabilities and expand their influence in the South China Sea.⁵¹

Clearly, Russia is defying the United States openly by entering into these arms contracts. Russia's defense industry is making a handsome profit while having the added bonus of limiting U.S. operational access throughout Asia and the Middle East. By selling these technologically advanced A2 weapon systems to select allies within Asia and the Middle East, Russia is significantly changing the balance of power away from the U.S. and its allies. Though Russia is a major player in limiting U.S. operational access, China may pose the most significant challenge to the U.S. and our allies.

Over the last twenty years, China has developed a "counterintervention" A2/AD strategy that centers on "battlefield information dominance." This strategy is clearly focused on AD capabilities to prevent U.S. forces from interfering in potential conflicts in the South China Sea. In addition to their ballistic missile capabilities, China has used its ever-increasing defense budget to build a program that will allow them to target C2 capabilities; weapons control centers, as well as air and sea platforms. This emerging AD doctrine emphasizes striking first and as far out as possible.⁵²

Major players as well as non-state actors participating in the global power struggle have more tools than the aforementioned AD capabilities to limit U.S. operational reach. Once the Joint force gets to the fight, the adversary that we might face will present AD challenges that can significantly impact JFEO forces as well. These AD operations may include actions on land, in the sea or in the air that will inhibit U.S. operations within areas that the adversary is defending. Aerial AD operations are a combination of enemy air force and integrated air defenses like the S-

400 missiles that help them maintain air equality or superiority, and provide an umbrella over the land and forces that they have set out to protect. These types of operations and capabilities are typically limited to the most sophisticated of these countries, like Russia and China. These countries also have long range reconnaissance aircraft, anti-satellite weapons, and cyber attack capabilities can provide them with the information and the means necessary to limit our forces abilities once they arrive in the theater of operations.⁵³

Land AD operations include artillery, rocket or missile defenses that target ground units when they are most vulnerable on the drop zone. The enemy may also employ land mines to prevent maneuver, as well as utilize chemical, biological, or radiological agents to contaminate areas that JFEO forces may likely seize.⁵⁴ These land AD operations are likely to be used by non-state actors and less significant state actors against a U.S. JFEO once it gets on the ground. As you can see, if given the opportunity, an organized and determined enemy can use all or only some of these capabilities as part of an integrated defense strategy to defeat U.S. JFEO forces before they can reach the objective area, or when they arrive in the theater of operations.⁵⁵

Overcoming A2/AD challenges

The U.S., our allies, and partnered nations must be able to identify and overcome these sophisticated and more lethal A2/AD systems. To meet this challenge, the JOAC offers that the Joint Force must lean heavily on cross-domain synergy which is the complimentary employment of capabilities across different domains to enhance effectiveness of some and compensate for the vulnerabilities of others. Working together across all domains will ensure that the joint force has the freedom of action required to gain operational access anywhere around the globe.⁵⁶ Operational design will determine the specific combination of domain superiorities that will

allow the joint force to find the seam and dominate enemy A2/AD capabilities. This concept promotes joint synergy, and through a combination of air-sea-land battle will allow the force to bring more assets to bear to help exploit the identified seam or pocket in the enemy A2/AD umbrella, and punch through it using a JFEO or FEO. Coordinated efforts across the joint force, using Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD), radar jamming, and robust fighter escorts limit our adversary's ability to prevent operational access.

To further facilitate joint coordination, the Air-Sea Battle Office (ASBO) was created in 2012 to implement an operational concept to help meet the A2/AD challenge. In May 2013, this office published a paper that explains that the U.S. must develop “networked, integrated forces capable of attack-in-depth to disrupt, destroy and defeat adversary forces (NIA/D3).”⁵⁷ To successfully conduct an “attack in depth” the Joint force must be able to project forces through the enemy's AD umbrella. Before this can occur, the Joint force must be able to destroy enemy A2/AD weapon systems. The U.S. has spent billions of dollars to develop and purchase longer range missiles like the Joint Air-Surface Standoff Missile-Extended Range (JASSM-ER) as well as Long Range Anti Ship Missiles (LRASM) to mitigate China's A2/AD threat.⁵⁸

Another factor that impacts operational access is the United States' changing overseas defense posture. Since the Cold War is over and contingency operations in the Middle East are drawing to a close, the U.S. has significantly decreased its presence overseas. These thoughts are not new; in fact they have been in the mind of U.S. Department of Defense officials since 2002. Then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said in a congressional budget committee meeting that:

“...We must, therefore, reduce our dependence on predictable and vulnerable base structure, by exploiting a number of technologies that include longer-range aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles [UAVs], and stealthy platforms, as well as reducing the amount of logistical support needed by our ground forces.”⁵⁹

Naturally, this decreased presence limits basing and forward staging options, therefore U.S. operational access in areas that used to be open to our military presence. The shifting balance of power in the contemporary operating environment in regions like the Middle East and Asia narrow our access options as well. In the Asia Pacific region, both India and China are making power plays that place lesser powers in the region between a proverbial “rock and a hard place.”

Though the U.S. has strong allies and partnerships in the Asia Pacific, it is becoming harder to influence them with the rise of potential regional hegemony like China and India. As their economies and defense capabilities continue to grow, so do their spheres of influence. As a result, the U.S. seems to grow farther away as an ally or partner. As this gap widens, countries that were once willing to partner economically and militarily with the U.S. now have to consider the second and third order effects that those decisions will have within the region. This shifting dynamic can significantly impact U.S. ability to project power when we need to react quickly to contingency operations.

A perfect example of how these dynamics can have negative impacts on operational access at the strategic level happened prior to the invasion of Iraq. The Operational Plan (OPLAN) for the invasion called for both air and land forces to be based to the north and south of Iraq. Because the U.S. shared a good relationship with Turkey, planners expected full support from their government for the staging of forces for the operation. Unfortunately, Turkey did not allow our forces to use their country as a jump off point because they understood that allowing a

western power to invade another predominantly Muslim nation could have detrimental second and third order effects throughout the Middle East. Diplomatic means failed to achieve the objective, so to get around this dilemma; the U.S. Military had to execute an Airborne JFEO to project troops into northern Iraq.

As described above, the U.S., our partners and allies face a significant and dynamic challenge in the areas of operational access and power projection. Diplomatic and economic efforts can be utilized to strengthen partnerships and solidify U.S. commitments abroad for pre-position of forces and forward basing. If those implements of national power fail, cross-domain and joint synergy, used in concert with our technological might will mitigate our adversary's capabilities so that our force can find a seam within the A2/AD umbrella. Once a seam is found the U.S. must be able to execute a JFEO operation that can exploit the advantage to gain access to the area.

It is clear that the United States must focus its efforts on a Military that can execute the JFEO and FEO mission in the face of A2/AD threats. Unfortunately, stressors from the global financial situation required the United States government to pass the 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA). This act instituted spending limits and caused a \$50 billion dollar a year sequestration that affected all areas of the government. Further, in 2012 the Department of Defense began adjusting to a ten year \$487 billion dollar budget reduction. On top of this, the 2015 Presidential budget reduced the defense budget by \$113 billion dollars over the next five years.⁶⁰ This means that the U.S. military will have to be fully prepared to execute the JFEO mission while undergoing significant reductions in strength and readiness levels.⁶¹ The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) clearly states that the U.S. Military will protect and expand critical

capabilities, modernize forces, invest in readiness and prioritize combat power all while maintaining the capability to project power over great distances.⁶²

The U.S. Military has gained resilience over the last 14 years of constant conflict. In the coming years, the U.S. Military will be able support the three pillars of the National Defense Strategy of protecting the homeland, building security globally, and projecting power and winning decisively.⁶³ As the budgets decrease, the U.S. military should have enough funding to protect interests at home and abroad, but something has to give. These fiscal constraints will cause significant training and readiness gaps for many formations throughout the military, and will lead to accepting an increased level of risk all while expectations of a lower margin of error.⁶⁴ Overall, the global security environment and the fiscal constraints that the United States government faces have led the DoD to adjust their focus on many priorities.

Airborne JFEO is the best answer for operational access

One of the most significant of these is the newly revived focus on more expeditionary forces that are readily available, and have the capability to rapidly deploy for missions that span the range of military operations around the globe. The basic roles of the U.S. Army are to deter/defeat threats on land as well as control land areas and secure their populations. These roles are fundamentally grounded in the ability to conduct JFEO and FEO. Though the U.S. Army will continue to man, train, and equip combat forces that are capable of conducting airborne, air assault, and amphibious JFEO to seize key objectives and lodgments, a decreasing budget and reduced manning will adversely affect this capability.⁶⁵

The U.S. Army identifies formations that are manned, trained, and equipped to conduct a specified mission such as FEO as Mission Tailored Forces. These forces maintain proficiency

on all aspects of unified land operations, but have special capabilities to compliment the COCOM's requirements. One of these roles includes the Global Response Force (GRF), which is comprised of one Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) from the 82d Airborne Division. This mission tailored force was created in 2008 to increase the U.S. Military's capability to rapidly deploy and respond to contingency operations around the globe. This is a rotating responsibility that is carried between the three IBCTs in the 82nd Airborne Division. While one IBCT is conducting the GRF mission, they will be maintained at a full readiness level to support the COCOM's and President's priorities.

According to the most recent Army plan, the other two IBCTs within the division, and the two IBCT's in the U.S. Army outside of the 82nd Airborne Division, (173rd IBCT in Vicenza, Italy assigned to EUCOM and 4/25 IBCT in Alaska, assigned to PACOM) may potentially become part of a planned tiered readiness cycle. This means that 20% of the operating force will be funded for collective training, and the rest of the U.S. Army will assume risk in collective training at the small unit level. The tiered readiness will continue until the U.S. Army has achieved its force structure goals.⁶⁶ The plan for which specific formations will undergo readiness constraints is not published yet, and this raises some significant questions.

The idea of tiered readiness briefs well when faced with budgetary constraints, but should the U.S. Army subject its most responsive capability to project forces rapidly to respond to contingency operations or deter aggression to this program? The simple answer is no. Clearly the United States faces a complex, dangerous, and volatile future. If the U.S. DoD and our President are serious about protecting the homeland, building security globally, and projecting power, they must influence the United States Army to fully fund and support the most capable and credible forces to achieve this mission- the airborne IBCT. The airborne IBCT's are

tailorable, scalable, and provide a responsiveness that no other conventional unit in the United States Army can provide. These forces can conduct missions across the range of military operations to include; JFEO, raid and direct action, non-combatant evacuation (NEO), fixed site security and defense, joint targeting and strike capabilities as well as humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR).⁶⁷

The airborne IBCT's are considered the U.S. military's most flexible and capable conventional units for a variety of reasons. Because they are so versatile, and can be used to support the decisive operation in a multitude of roles, they must have primacy for training and equipping over other conventional forces. First, a JFEO executed by an airborne IBCT can capitalize on the principles of mass and surprise in a manner that no other conventional force can match. According to JP 3-0, "the purpose of mass is to concentrate the effects of combat power at the most advantageous place and time to produce decisive results."⁶⁸ Massing the effects of combat power allows a smaller force, like the airborne IBCT to achieve decisive results against a well prepared enemy. This really is the essence of JFEO. The airborne IBCT provides the President of the United States, or a COCOM the ability to demonstrate our military might and project a viable force in the most rapid manner possible. In fact, the airborne IBCT is the only JFEO capable force that can deliver a brigade's worth of combat power at a time and place of our choosing in under 20 minutes.⁶⁹

Though the joint force may have to suppress enemy air defenses to set the conditions for a JFEO, an airborne IBCT can still achieve surprise on the enemy. Unlike the other JFEO capabilities, airborne JFEO formations can be inserted anywhere within the adversary's operational area. Though the enemy can anticipate the use of airborne JFEO, they can only predict, to a certain degree, where the paratroopers will be inserted. This leads our adversary to

spread his forces along a broader front, and allows the airborne IBCT to magnify the effects of mass and achieve surprise when the paratroopers land on the DZ.

Another reason to prioritize the airborne IBCT is tied directly to their capability to seize a lodgment. This mission set has proven itself time and again in operations like Operation JUST CAUSE and Operation SERVAL as a way to maintain the initiative against an enemy. While serving as a supporting effort in a larger joint operation, the airborne IBCT can seize an initial lodgment, like an airfield, and provide flexibility for the joint force. Seizing an airfield provides the joint force with the ability to organize and expand the lodgment, and turn it into a staging base. This base can be used to bring in the forces and equipment that will increase logistical capacity for the decisive operation. Additionally, once the lodgment is stabilized, the joint force can introduce follow-on forces that can execute subsequent missions throughout the Area of Operations (AO).⁷⁰

The airborne IBCT, when used in a JFEO role provides the President and the COCOM's more flexibility to plan and execute strategic level operations than any other JFEO capable organizations. Its ability to leverage mass and surprise to gain access into any environment and maintain the initiative, as well as their capability to rapidly build logistical capacity and bring in follow-on forces makes them the ideal tool for power projection. If the U.S. Army fully funds and maintains the readiness of only one of the airborne IBCTs at any given time, how can our force remain a credible deterrent? The Army must prioritize the airborne IBCTs in the tiered readiness schedule to ensure that the United States has the tools necessary to react whenever and wherever they are needed. If this does not occur, and a conventional airborne JFEO is the only remaining option left to secure the interests of the United States, or the interests of our allies and partnered nations, the U.S. Army will be forced to deploy troops that are not properly manned,

trained, or equipped to handle the situation. Given the volatile current operating environment with its increased numbers of potential aggressors and their significant A2/AD capabilities, it would be wise to keep the airborne IBCTs fully prepared to meet these dynamic challenges.

Conclusion

Considering the emerging threats in the global environment that are based on ideological differences, the struggle for power as well as economic instability, no one can predict when or where the next conflict will occur. Maybe Russia will continue to conduct operations to secure more former Soviet territory. China might forcibly reclaim Taiwan or other disputed territories in the South China Sea. Iran could further develop its capabilities and achieve its goal of becoming a nuclear power. If the U.S. continues to focus on a policy of exercising global leadership to support their interests, and the interests of their partners and allied nations, the DoD must focus its energy on providing a force that is ready and capable of acting decisively when facing these situations. Obviously, the most convenient and reliable option to project power is to methodically build up forces in an adjacent friendly nation. Unfortunately, in future conflicts, the U.S. military may not be afforded the opportunity to pursue this strategy. In that case, the DoD must have the option to insert a force that can secure an area that will facilitate the build-up of maneuver and logistical forces to carry out follow-on operations in support of our policy objectives.

Over the past 50 years JFEO and FEO missions have proven themselves time and again to be an excellent option to both project U.S. power when needed as well as to shape and enforce diplomatic policy. In order to maintain JFEO and FEO forces as a feasible option for the President and COCOM's to use when they are needed the most, the airborne IBCT's must be at the forefront of the United States' strategy to prevent conflict, deter aggression, and assist other

countries when needed. While facing economic constraints, the DoD must fully commit to supporting the forces that are capable of executing this increasingly important mission.

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