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SANCTIONS: INTENT OF THE "TOOL" FOR THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

by

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LTCOL, USMC

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Abstract of

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Preface

The use of sanctions by the operational commander is a subject about which very little has been written. The author would like to express his gratitude to Colonel Randy Heim (USA), for the ideas, advice and support that were instrumental in the completion of this paper.

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SANCTIONS: INTENT OF THE "TOOL" FOR THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the first phase of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides documented one of the earliest uses of sanctions as a technique of warfare. The Athenian target was Potidaea and the objective was starvation of the city. Instead of conducting a direct attack and force the citizens to submit to her will, Athens would eliminate Potidaea's ability to wage war and undermine public morale by conducting a siege. As is the case today, when sanctions are used, the Athenians wanted to end the siege quickly and decisively. Sieges were expensive, time consuming and their success or failure had a direct impact on national prestige. In the end, Potidea held out against the Athenians for three years and then surrendered only on terms.¹

In 1990, the United States was successful in obtaining United Nations authorized measures against Iraq following the invasion of Kuwait. Sanctions and the resulting naval blockade remained in effect both prior to and during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Despite the decisive victory of coalition forces and Iraq's resounding defeat, these sanctions remain in effect today. At least twenty United States Navy warships continue to patrol the Persian Gulf in an effort to control the flow of contraband into

¹ Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), II, 70.

Iraq.² As was the case with Athens, this blockade has been expensive and time consuming.

Potidaea and Iraq present divergent and instructive case studies in the use of sanctions at the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war. What is the value of sanctions to the operational commander? Can they produce a military condition that can accomplish strategic goals? Do sanctions have a culminating point where they become a waste of resources and distraction to the operational commander? This paper will attempt to answer these questions.

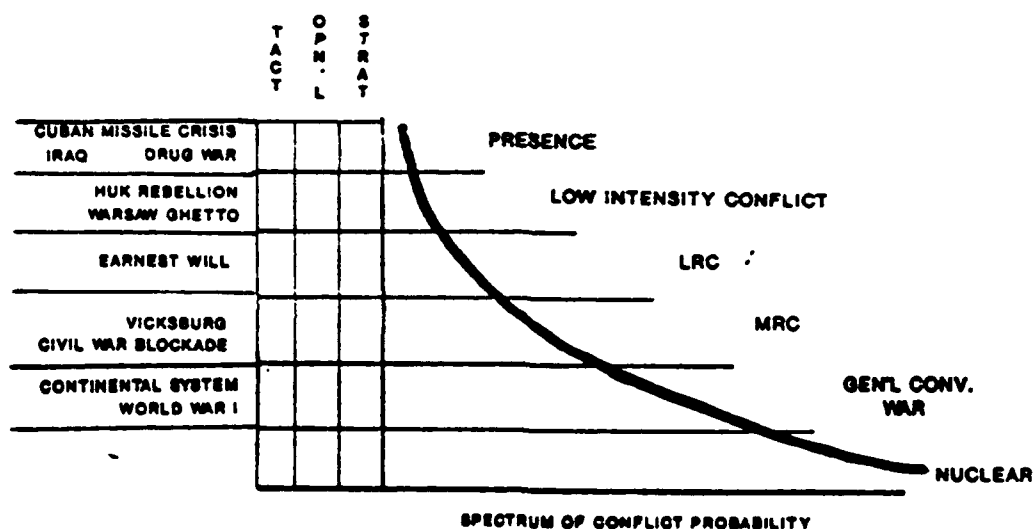
² Capt. Don Estes, "Weekly Intelligence Update," Briefing, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 13 April 1992.

Chapter 2

The Process

Little has been written on the subject of sanctions and the operational level of war. The scope of this paper does not attempt to address sanctions from an international law or economic perspective. Rather, sanctions and their value to the operational commander present the focus of the discussion. Historical examples of sanctions will be evaluated in the context of a spectrum of conflict for tactical, operational and strategic success or failure. The diagram at Figure 1 is used to illustrate my approach.

FIG. 1 SANCTIONS SUCCESSFUL? INTENT VS. RESULTS



For the purposes of this paper the terms boycott, embargo and blockade will be included as part of a general category of sanctions. These applications may be the result of a decision of an international body such as the United Nations, or as actions

taken unilaterally or collectively by nations for self defense or reprisal.³ The terms are often used interchangeably and a further clarification of their differences is required.

There are five different types of sanctions (moral, diplomatic, financial, economic and military) and at least five types of embargoes (on exports of arms, munitions, and implements of war, on imports, on raw materials, on technology and an international boycott).⁴ For our discussion, the following definition of sanctions is relevant:

"an economic or military coercive measure adopted, usually by several nations in concert, for forcing a nation violating international law to desist or yield to adjudication."⁵

Our emphasis centers on military coercive measures and their strategic and operational application. As we progress through our process, our focus will be on the intent and the results of sanctions in the relationship between the operational and strategic level of war.

At this juncture, almost every historical case of sanctions can be applied through the spectrum of conflict and a corresponding assessment of their effectiveness can be weighed.

³ Margaret Doxey, Economic Sanctions and International Enforcement (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 7.

⁴ M.S. Daoudi and M.S. Dajani, Economic Sanctions (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p.2.

⁵ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass: Merriam, 1977), p. 1,023.

Chapter 3

Presence/Drug War/Iraq/Cuba

The professed purpose of the day-to-day presence of deployed U.S. troops has been that they are the key to stabilizing a crisis and preventing war. Presence, at the low end of the conflict spectrum is the level of historic U.S. involvement. A visible presence can provide deterrence and promote U. S. influence and access.

Recent changes in the current Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) have particular significance for the Unified Commander in these areas of influence and access. Political, economic and military factors must now be included in all deliberate and crisis planning. Sanctions can be a consideration in developing flexible deterrent options and adaptive planning cases. Three cases of the application of sanctions at the presence level can help us evaluate their effectiveness for the operational commander.

Drug War

The U.S. has been involved in drug interdiction operations since the 1970's and, in 1992, all branches of the armed forces are participating in supply side interdiction operations. Posse Comitatus and various agency roles and missions reduce U.S. military involvement to a peacetime presence, consisting mainly of detection and monitoring responsibilities. The Unified Commander's challenge is to stimulate cooperation among source nations to oppose the illegal production, transport and sale of drugs. When a source nation refuses to cooperate or backs away from democracy,

sanctions are imposed. U.S. security assistance and deployments for training generally are terminated.

The scope of this paper precludes a detailed analysis of the U.S. counternarcotic strategy. Suffice it to say that, to date, the U.S. presence and imposition of sanctions in the drug war has not been effective and there are some who would characterize this strategy as a failure.

The author asserts that sanctions, as applied in the U.S. peacetime presence to prosecute the drug war have failed because the tactical measures being employed will not achieve the desired strategic intent of reducing supply. The "tool" the operational commander requires is entry, access and leverage over source countries. The Unified Commander needs to integrate all forward presence assets, in his area of responsibility, as a direct link to counter-drug operations. Simply put, the strategic intent of the U.S. counter-drug strategy is not achievable because the sanctions currently being used lack the necessary capabilities and credibility. To be effective, the Unified Commander needs to consider counter-drug operations a real war and, at the present time, that is politically impossible. Sanctions, as employed in the drug war, cannot achieve strategic results.

Iraq

As mentioned in the introduction, sanctions against Iraq were first instituted in August 1990. The United Nations Security Council recently decided to continue sanctions because Baghdad has yet to satisfy all conditions of the Gulf War cease-fire.

Iraq is a unique case in that it may be the first time the world community imposed sanctions against an offending nation, then as a coalition, defeated this country in a decisive military engagement. Yet, these sanctions are still maintained today although the war's cease-fire occurred over a year ago. Significant tactical assets continue to be committed in this long term effort.

The original sanctions failed in their intent to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. The war was not avoided. During the August - March 1991 timeframe, the National Security Agency actually monitored at least 2900 sanction violations.⁶

The author asserts that today's post-war sanctions seeking to force Iraq to destroy all weapons of mass destruction and return prisoners of war will suffer a similar fate. Sanctions against Iraq should have reached their culminating point in January 1991 with the first metal on target. Today, from the operational commander's perspective, Iraqi sanctions have become an unprofitable expense in terms of time, manpower and resources. In August of 1990, sanctions may have served as a warmup to the war that followed. In May of 1992, the same may be true.

Cuba

Cuba has had plethora of experience with sanctions imposed by the U.S. In 1898, sanctions were not effective during the Cuban rebellion, and in 1958, during Castro's Communist insurgency to

⁶ BG Runyan, "Intelligence and the Commander," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 22 April 1992.

oust Batista, U.S applied sanctions again did not achieve their strategic goal. Although the intent was to keep Castro out of power, the U.S. arms embargo actually damaged the legitimate government and not the insurgent.⁷ After seizing power, Castro may have been pushed further towards the Eastern bloc by sustained U.S. sanctions on the Cuban economy.⁸

One could argue that the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 provides a solid example of sanctions achieving the desired strategic result. The operational commander's "tool" was the forceful quarantine of Cuba with the intent of forcing the Soviets to not bring more ballistic missiles into the country and to remove those already there. Although some evidence has indicated that the Soviet Union probably would not have mounted a military response to a U.S. strike on the missiles or an invasion of Cuba, there is no clear cut evidence to support such a Soviet decision.⁹ Therefore, the role of the blockade in contributing to achieving the desired U.S. strategic result should not be underestimated. Although it seemed likely that a negotiated settlement would have been reached, and that the Soviet Union would not go to war over Cuba, events could easily escaped the control of both sides.¹⁰

⁷Irving Horowitz, ed., Cuban Communism (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), p. 10.

⁸Miroslav Nincic and Peter Wallenstein, Dilemmas of Economic Coercion (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1983), p. 9.

⁹Horowitz, p.120.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 4

Low Intensity Conflict/Warsaw Ghetto/ Huk Rebellion

On April 19, 1943 the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising occurred. In the twenty one months from October 1940 until July 1942, almost one hundred thousand Warsaw Ghetto Jews died from hunger, disease, slave labor or execution. The German siege reduced the Jewish population to a tenth of it's original size. From July 22, 1942 to September 1942, three hundred thousand Jews were either deported to concentration camps or shot on the spot.¹¹

In February 1943, the Germans had 2,842 military personnel ready to liquidate the ghetto. These personnel included three artillery/sapper divisions and two police battalions. Machine guns, unlimited ammunition, tanks and planes were also available. Additionally, at least seven thousand SS troops and police were mobilized in the city to serve as a reserve.¹²

Against this German force, the Polish underground army and resistance movement appeared to be completely eliminated. However, when the Russian armies approached Warsaw during the summer and fall of 1944, the Polish underground army again rose up against the Germans and surrendered only after 63 days of bitter fighting.

The German sanctions that resulted in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising disgraced Hitler's army. Force, brutality and overwhelming resources eventually prevailed, but at great effort

¹¹Ber Mark, Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), p.3.

¹²Ibid., p.13.

and cost to the German operational commander. A small band of fighters, held off for weeks and months the most powerful military machine ever known. The German siege and resulting ghetto revolt also had long range repercussions. The siege fueled subsequent incidents of Jewish resistance across Poland and well beyond it's borders. ¹³

Huk Rebellion

American military and economic sanctions were vital in the Philippine government's success against the well organized, Communist insurgency known as the Hukbalahap. In 1950, the U.S. was focused on Europe and at war in Korea. The nation did not appear to understand the frustration and problems of the Philippine people. However, once the U.S. realized just how close the Filipino government was to collapse, policy makers took positive actions.

In this case, American military advice, equipment and economic aid were successfully combined with the Magsaysay government efforts to stop the HUK revolt. The Joint United States Military Assistance Group-Philippines (JUSMAG) and key U.S. advisors had great latitude and were able to develop assistance programs that melded and integrated the Philippine Armed Forces with social reforms. ¹⁴

Because of the Korean War, few U.S. troops were available for

¹³Ibid., p.197.

¹⁴Major Lawrence M. Greenberg, The Hukbalahap Insurrection (Washington: U.S. Government Print. Off., 1987), p. 148.

deployment to the Philippines. To prevent a deepening of U.S. involvement, the operational commander prohibited U.S. advisors from taking the field with the Philippine military... thus fostering Filipino self-reliance. When the Filipino army realized that they were not fighting as an occupation force but to protect their countrymen, they began to gain the support of the people. The trinity of the Filipino military, people and government worked towards the same strategic goal and the end of the HUK movement followed.

The German siege of Warsaw was a tactical and operational success, but did not succeed strategically. The operational commander's intent of liquidating the ghetto, was not accomplished and resulted in immediate and long-range adverse implications. The example of a small group of people fighting valiantly against overwhelming German opposition lifted the morale of Jewish communities across Poland. The images of Jewish rebels also inspired Jews in France and subsequent revolts in the Shaestochowa, Badzin and Bialystok Ghettos.¹⁵ The combined military, police, political and economic resources of the Nazi occupation forces were intended to crush the uprising. However, a Polish underground publication tells of an attack on a German police battalion passing through the Warsaw ghetto as late as mid-June 1944. Three Germans were killed and twenty five captured Jews were executed.¹⁶ This incident occurred after the Germans had used all the resources at

¹⁵Mark, p. 197.

¹⁶Mark, P.93.

their disposal to eliminate the Jews.

The defeat of the HUK rebellion in 1951 is a classic example of how sanctions and military /economic aid, in the right amount, can help a government defeat an internal insurgency. U.S. sanctions on firearms, ammunition and equipment, combined with JUSMAG's fostering of Filipino self-reliance produced highly effective countermeasures. The Filipinos, not U.S. troops, fought the battles and defeated the guerrillas. The use of sanctions contributed to the achievement of operational and strategic goals, but would not have been successful without the efforts of the Philippine people.

Chapter 5

Lesser Regional Conflict/Earnest Will

In July 1988, Iran accepted United States Security Council Resolution 598 which called for an end to hostilities and a negotiated solution to the Iran-Iraq War. During the eight years of this war, various sanctions were employed by both belligerents. Sanctions were also enforced by other states, both unilaterally, collectively and also by the United Nations. Our discussion will focus on the "tanker war" and the U.S. reflagging of eleven Kuwaiti oil tankers in 1987.

The U.S. military mission involved performing escort duties for eleven reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers and protecting them from increasingly hostile Iranian forces. This was not intended as an open-ended mission to protect all nonbelligerent shipping in the Gulf but rather to show American determination to stand up to intimidation. Although the reflagging operation was hotly debated in Congress and with the public, reflagging clarified U.S. objectives in the Gulf. As stated in the Carter Doctrine ten years earlier, we were there to protect American interests. "Earnest Will" as the operation would be named, was also designed to aid in containing and eventually ending the Iran-Iraq War.

Between September 1987 and early July 1988 over 100 convoys were conducted. As many as 33 U.S. Navy Warships served as escorts in or near the Gulf. U.S. policy makers warned Tehran that continued mining and missile attacks on tankers would result in U.S. forces taking Iranian forces under fire. In April of 1988,

U.S. forces sunk five Iranian fast patrol boats and one frigate, with another frigate heavily damaged.

Many believe that the U.S. naval presence in the Gulf and the decision to reflag and escort Kuwaiti Oil tankers brought about the end of the Iran-Iraq war.¹⁷ "Earnest Will", although a risky operation, was a tactical and operational success. The sanctions worked because of excellent command and control and rules of engagement that made it clear to Iran that the U.S would respond decisively. Contributing to this success was the fact that Iran did not possess the naval and aircraft assets to really challenge the formidable U.S. power that was present. A militarily stronger Iran may not have been so reluctant.

Strategically, "Earnest Will" resulted in large delays in tanker transit times, was time consuming and extremely expensive. The operational commander had dozens of warships, minesweepers, attack helicopters, Marines, Special Operations Forces, AWACS and mobile sea base assets dedicated to the protection of eleven tankers.

Despite U.S. public declarations of neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, our overt support of Iraq made it clear that we did not want Iran to win. This could account for some of the Iraqi delaying tactics that surfaced during the peace talks. "Earnest Will" was a U.S. attempt to balance the power in the Persian Gulf in the late 1980's. Strategically, the sanctions imposed more of

¹⁷Christopher C. Joyner, ed., The Persian Gulf War (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), p. 153.

a burden on world participants rather than creating an air of regional stability. It can be argued that they, in fact, became one of the undermining currents that eventually led to the Gulf War of 1990.

Chapter 6

Major Regional Conflict/Vicksburg/Naval Blockade

The capture of Vicksburg has been called the most important Northern strategic victory of the Civil War.¹⁸ Grant's elaborate and risky plan was successful. In seventeen days, his army had fought and won five engagements and inflicted 7200 southern casualties. The enemy, inside the best defensive structure of the war, was surrounded. For the next six weeks, Confederate soldiers and three thousand civilians would be trapped in Vicksburg, waiting for rescue.

The Union's siege controlled both the land and water. Land based artillery and gunboat fire pounded Vicksburg around the clock. Union troops had even tunneled under rebel defenses.

The Southern surrender came on the Fourth of July 1863. The troops were starving and too sick to attempt a breakout. Ironically, one of the first things that the Yankees did, after marching into the city, was to break into the stores of Vicksburg citizens who had been hoarding food in anticipation of higher selling prices.¹⁹

The Civil War continued for two more years following this strategic victory. The war probably would have lasted much longer if the Union had not employed its naval superiority so effectively in the form of the blockade of the southern coastline, river

¹⁸James M. McPherson, The Battle Cry of Freedom (New York: Ballantine Books, 12988), 1988), p. 637.

¹⁹McPherson, p. 636.

warfare and amphibious assault. Our discussion will focus on the blockade.

Blockade

The blockade has been termed the best example of the use of this tactic in the history of naval warfare.²⁰ The fact that the Union possessed 500-600 vessels, compared to the Confederacy's less than 150, accounts for the Union's overwhelming naval superiority.

Counting bales of cotton or the numbers of blockade runners who were successful is beyond the scope of this paper. The blockade was not airtight but did result in the South's isolation and deprivation of supplies. By denying an agricultural economy access to the imports it needed, the strength of the South's trinity was weakened. The blockade was successful operationally because it was the driving force for almost all naval action of the war and it allowed the Union a freedom of action that the South never enjoyed.

Did the blockade produce a military condition during Civil war operations that achieved a strategic goal?

The blockade was an important factor but not the deciding factor in the North's victory. The blockade prevented foreign intervention and directly supported military ground operations. These are the key attributes to the Northern sanctions, both at Vicksburg and throughout the entire Civil War. Sanctions, in the form of a blockade, could not have won the Civil War alone.

²⁰Daniel J. Carrison, The Navy From Wood to Steel 1860 - 1890. (New York: Franklin Watts), p. 160.

However, in this case the impact and results of the operational commander's intent did ultimately contribute to the achievement of desired strategic goals.

Chapter 7

General Conventional War / Continental System / World War I

The Napoleonic wars served as the first example of sanctions, both offensive and defensive, on a large scale. The emperor resorted to economic warfare because he would not challenge England on the sea and he had decided against another invasion attempt. Negotiations would not work because England would never accept French hegemony.²¹

The objective for both sides during the imposition of the Continental System was to bring about financial ruin and cause a shortage of food. The Continental System would serve as the first attempt at applying sanctions to an entire country.²²

Napoleon hoped to drain treasure from England and make it impossible for her to finance further warfare. He also hoped that public support for the war effort would dissolve and that the people would force the English government to sue for peace, even on French terms.

The Continental System failed because intentions did not achieve the desired result. The sanctions, which sought to bring about English economic strangulation, suffered from haphazard enforcement and the lack of France's allies cooperation. The system failed in its attempt to completely disrupt the British

²¹Steven T. Ross, European Diplomatic History 1789-1815. (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing, 1969), p. 269.

²²Richard J. Ellings, Embargoes and World Power (London: Westview Press, 1985), p. 15.

economy.²³ Neither the French sanctions nor the British counter sanctions were in any way decisive. The British were able to find a multitude of ways around the system and even open new markets. In the end the system hurt France's allies, who suffered serious economic problems because of their loss of trade with Britain. Russia eventually abandoned the system and Napoleon found himself fighting a two front war.

World War I Blockades

Although Napoleon's Continental System may serve as the most familiar example of the use of sanctions, the period 1914-1918 saw the employment of sanctions that added a new dimension to warfare.

During World War I, both Germany and Britain exerted sustained efforts, involving both allies and neutral countries, to sever each other's sources of trade and finance through the use of blockades.

Britain's blockade of Germany was announced in March 1915 as a reprisal for submarine warfare. The sanctions covered all German trade. Complicated mechanisms were put in place to enforce these restrictions, including Hitler's trade with neutral governments.²⁴ Neutral shipping and trade were often caught between the two blockades and suffered. This new type of blockade was significantly different from the old, direct blockade of the enemy's coastline.

Ultimately, the pressure of the blockades drove both Germany

²³Ross, p. 382.

²⁴Bernadotte E. Schmitt and Howard C. Vedeler, The World in a Crucible 1914-1919. (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 317.

and Britain to national self-sufficiency.²⁵ The British were more successful at food supply and raw materials management than the Germans. Germany experienced difficulties with munitions output, manpower, and methodically exploited the occupied countries.

The results of the sanctions were generally inconclusive but should be factored into Germany's eventual defeat. The German shortage of raw materials impacted a government that was not prepared for a protracted conflict. From the operational commander's perspective, World War I demonstrated that sanctions could become a major, it not conclusive or decisive, part of military operations.

²⁵Ibid., p.318.

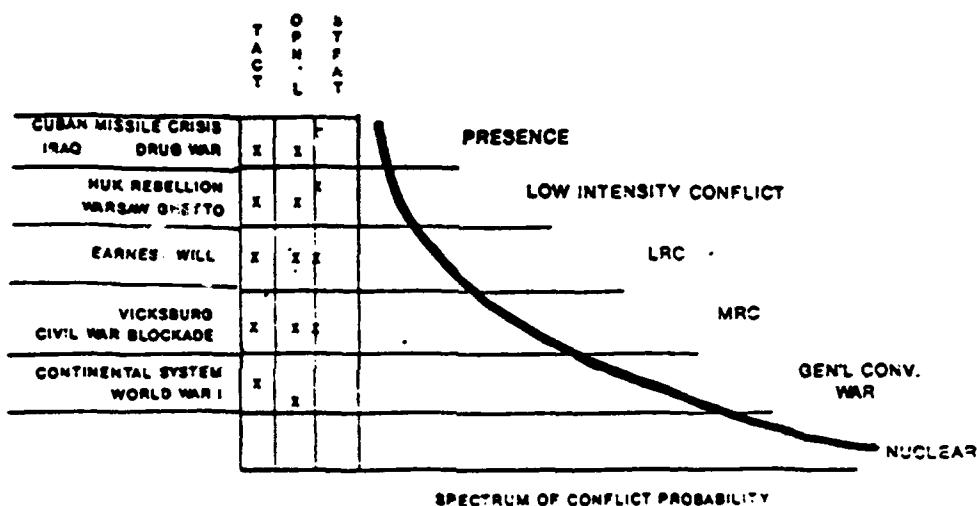


Chapter 8

Conclusions

Prior to drawing conclusions from the previous cases, refer to Figure 2...the spectrum of conflict diagram. I have indicated with an "X" where, according to my analysis, sanctions were successful at each level of warfare and the original intent was fulfilled.

FIG.2 SANCTIONS SUCCESSFUL? INTENT VERSUS RESULTS



What becomes apparent in almost all of my selected cases is that sanctions were successful at the tactical and operational level. However, the relationship between the operational and strategic level now becomes the center of our focus... because, in none of our cases, did sanctions achieve all strategic goals. Where sanctions were successful they contributed to, but did not decide, the outcome.

The Cuban missile crisis, Huk rebellion, "Earnest Will", Vicksburg and the Civil War blockade are cases where sanctions came closest to accomplishing strategic goals. The drug war, Iraq (pre

and post Desert Shield/Storm) and the Continental System represent strategic failures. Is there a common thread that can be found in success and failure? Can the operational commander identify and create conditions that will foster success?

Sanctions are most effective for the operational commander when they are tied to a clear U.S. policy or objective. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, sanctions were seen as credible and demonstrating U.S. resolve. The same was true for "Earnest Will". Conversely, sanctions that result in sporadic tactical success, as in the drug war, will fail to have strategic impact or successful results. The strategic intent of the policy must be clear and aimed at achievable objectives. The operational commander and his planners must clarify these intentions, if required.

Sanctions should also be tied to diplomatic activity, as was the case in the Cuban Missile Crisis when both sides wanted to negotiate. This is not to mean, however, that diplomats should politically constrain the military strategy and tactical operations of the operational commander when sanctions are intended as a military signal.

The majority of our case studies indicated that sanctions work well when avoiding escalation. The Cuba, Huk and "Earnest Will" cases were all successful in this regard. The Continental System and World War I cases employed sanctions that contributed to escalation and ultimately failed or were not decisive.

Finally, a firm time limit, for the operational commander to utilize sanctions as a tool, is difficult to establish. In our

case studies, the long term naval blockade, conducted during the entire Civil War, was effective. However, the Iraq and drug war cases indicate that a culminating point for sanctions may be reached. Without a significant change in national objectives, sanctions in these cases are wasting resources and distracting to the operational commander.

Based on my review of sanctions, I would submit that the operational commander has a powerful tool available to him. But a word of caution is needed...when sanctions are taken out of the tactical and operational arenas and elevated into strategic direction...expense, exposure, frustration and failure are all too often close at hand.

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