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SEA DENIAL: DISASTER IS WAITING! (U)

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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pre-war nations transiting vital sea areas. Adequate pre-hostility actions must establish the military conditions that will enable the safest possible transport of wartime material through U.N. approved maritime exclusion zones. This effort by all strategic and operational planners will maintain control over vital sea areas, will impact the desired start-date of the next major regional contingency, will control war escalation and will strongly influence war termination.

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The ability of a Third World belligerent to deny access to vital sea areas and thus restrict the arrival of sustaining forces will be the focus of the operational level decision makers during the next major regional contingency. This paper will present recommendations that, when implemented by strategic and operational planners, will convert a potential military disaster due to sea denial by a belligerent, into a strategic and operational success. Once a prompt response has been initiated during the next crisis, our ability to sustain the war will be jeopardized unless we revise traditional international constraints and position military forces to counter the potential sea denial threat. These forces must be organized, trained and equipped to be proactive; and allowed by the rules of engagement to preemptively neutralize the potential disastrous conventional threats to pre-war nations transiting vital sea areas. Adequate pre-hostility actions must establish the military conditions that will enable the safest possible transport of wartime material through U.N. approved maritime exclusion zones. This effort by all strategic and operational planners will maintain control over vital sea areas, will impact the desired start-date of the next major regional contingency, will control war escalation and will strongly influence war termination.

PREFACE

This paper presents an unclassified view of possible deficiencies in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPEs). The conclusion will provide recommendations for operational level planners to review to correct the noted deficiencies.

JOPEs consists of five major functions that complete a deliberate planning and execution cycle for a potential crisis. This paper will only discuss actions required during the first three steps.

- A. Threat Identification and Assessment
- B. Strategy Determination
- C. Course of Action Development

The fourth and fifth steps, Detailed Planning and Implementation, are follow-on steps to the early critical planning phases mentioned above. However, the scope of this paper does not permit a discussion of the subsequent changes in these steps that would result from actions on the first three.

The primary objective of this paper is to show that a Third World belligerent with conventional weapons has the capability and intent to deny vital sea areas to a U.S. led coalition. Such sea denial would impact the start of the next major regional crisis and could deny access to required seaborne sustainment forces to the battlefield. A preemptive and proactive response is necessary to counter this threat.

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SEA DENIAL: DISASTER IS WAITING!

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Strategic Sea Control;

"consists of...destruction of hostile sea denial forces at some distance from the area or units to be protected."¹

The Problem. Recent past experiences have shown that sea denial of vital sea areas by Third World belligerents has restricted the arrival of sustaining forces to commence and/or wage war. Operational Level planners have not adequately prepared U.S. forces to preemptively neutralize the threat from potential Third World belligerents preparing to deny access to vital sea areas.

The Issues. Strategic and operational level planners must review deficiencies in the planning stage of the joint operation planning and execution system (JOPES). These planners must then initiate a comprehensive revised plan that will effectively deal with the possible consequences of sustaining forces being denied access to vital seaports in a major regional crisis. This paper provides steps to consider to support a revision to JOPES.

The Subjects. A discussion of recent successful and unsuccessful attempts of sea denial during various crises over the last ten years will be presented. Each example will be used to formulate recommended steps for operational level planners to consider to counter future attempts at sea denial.

Deficiencies in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System will be discussed as they pertain to the early decision-making process of resolving sea denial scenarios. Specific recommendations will cover areas that require more emphasis by operational level planners.

The Solutions. Recommendations for operational level planners to better prepare for future sea denial scenarios will be summarized. These recommendations will discuss appropriate operational level actions required during peacetime, during crisis initiation, and during the extensive precursor operations when earlier preemptive and proactive actions have failed.

The Commander's Handbook on the Law of Naval Operations best summarizes the approach to solving the sea denial problem when it states:

"Included within the inherent right of self-defense is the right of a nation (and its armed forces) to protect itself from imminent attack. International law recognizes that it would be contrary to the purposes of the United Nations Charter if a threatened nation were required to absorb an aggressor's initial and potentially crippling first strike before taking those military measures necessary to thwart an imminent attack. Anticipatory self-defense involves the use of armed force where there is a clear necessity that is instant, overwhelming, and leaving no reasonable choice of peaceful means."

International (vice national) anticipatory self-defense will be presented as a new concept to counter the potential sea denial threat of a Third World belligerent challenging the combined vital interests of a region.

CHAPTER II

SEA DENIAL: FOCUS OF THE NEXT MAJOR REGIONAL CRISIS

Joint Pub 1 states:

"Shock, Disrupt and Defeat."

Joint Force Commanders (must have) the ability to apply overwhelming force from different dimensions and directions to shock, disrupt, and defeat opponents.¹

We shock the enemy by being preemptive, we disrupt the enemy by being proactive, and we defeat the enemy with overwhelming force that has been organized, trained and equipped to strike first, strike fast and strike often.

We must not wait and be reactive to an aircraft carrier being torpedoed, a major logistics ship striking a mine or an amphibious ship being struck by antiship missiles.

We must not allow a Third World belligerent to conduct a successful sea denial of U.S. led Coalition Forces. We must not take the first shot in the next major regional contingency (MRC).

Sea Denial During Desert Storm/Desert Shield. General Schwarzkopf stated:

"I'd canceled the Navy's amphibious assault on Faylakah Island. Plans called for it to precede the ground war by two days, but the helicopter carrier U.S.S. Tripoli and the Aegis guided missile cruiser U.S.S. Princeton had struck mines, U.S. and British minesweepers had been unable to clear the area, and as a result the Navy hadn't made it into position to launch the attack in time."²

This is a real example of a successful sea denial by Iraqi mines! What if these mines had been laid in the Strait of

Hormuz and been struck by two major combatants, similar to the U.S.S. Tripoli (LPH 10) and U.S.S. Princeton (CG 59), and an MPS or Sealift ship? This would have effectively, though temporarily, blocked ninety-five percent of the logistics flow required to sustain Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

This would have given Saddam Hussein at least temporary control of the sequencing of events on the battlefield. He could now choose when and where to do battle!

Future use of Sea Denial by Iran.

"The most important acquisition (by the Iranian Government) was the decision to buy three KILO type diesel submarines from Russia. The first boat was delivered in 1992. This purchase signals the determination of the Government in Tehran to create "NO-GO" areas in the Gulf and outside the Strait of Hormuz to prevent foreign powers from meddling in Gulf affairs at will."³

The purchase of three KILO class submarines by Iran gives Iran the capability to interdict shipping in the Persian Gulf. The intelligence community must now decide if Iran has the intent to use the KILO and then to determine the risk to U.S. and Coalition forces in a future conflict.

"The expansion and modernization of Bandar Abbas and Chah Bahar Naval Bases since 1989 must be seen in the context of Iran's preparations for operating the country's first submarines, the three KILO class boats ordered from Russia."⁴

This implies a serious and long term project for Iran. Concern for maintaining the stability of the region has been expressed by strategic and operational leaders in the United States.

The Commander in Chief of the Central Command, General Joseph Hoar stated: "Iran's military buildup is making it the primary long term threat to stability in the region."

He added that "defending strategic waterways in the Persian Gulf region becomes more challenging now that Iran has bought new submarines," and "Iran has spent more than two billion dollars per year on high-technology weapons since its military buildup began in 1988."

Major General Ali Shahba, Iranian Chief of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces, stated:

"Iran is situated in the most sensitive and most strategic part of the world. The countries of the region began to arm themselves much beyond their capability, their capacity and their populations. We will not waste our resources. We have relied on self sufficiency. We have relied on our domestic national and military resources. We have paid special attention to maintenance, repair and training. We have made very satisfactory progress in our self sufficiency."

Vice Admiral William A. Owens, Deputy CNO (N-8), recently stated: "in the mission area of strategic sealift and its protection... we must be able to control the parts of the world's oceans that affect our ability to get strategic sealift to a crisis area."

Additionally, he added: "The KIL0 is indeed a very different cat, and so I watch with great interest as the Iranians take delivery on their first one from the Russians."

The Naval Institute Proceedings of March 1993 stated "One KIL0 with a wake homer can put a carrier at risk."

The capability and the intent of the Iranians to use their submarines will provide an unacceptable risk to future Coalition Forces transiting the Persian Gulf.

The sustainment of the next battle in the Persian Gulf will be jeopardized. Operational planners must plan to take proactive and preemptive actions to negate the ability of a Third World belligerent nation to control the battlefield.

A recently purchased and exercised Iranian Kilo submarine may be able to accomplish just this goal and strike specific targets (versus random targets using mines) during the next conflict, thus accomplishing their goals and gaining control of the situation while we observe, prepared only to take action reactively.

Operational Level Actions to Counter Sea Denial. The ability of a Third World belligerent to deny access to vital sea areas and restrict the arrival of sustaining forces should be the focus of the operational level decision makers during the next major regional contingency (MRC).

The Iranian threat is real! The culminating point of victory may be determined by who fires the first shot and successfully gains control of vital sea areas.

A U.S. led coalition will not be able to initiate a time-critical sustained response against a Third World coalition who has fired the first shot, gained control of a vital chokepoint and denied access to necessary military and logistic forces.

Steps are provided below to guide the political, strategic and operational planners to avoid the loss of control of the next major regional contingency on 'Day One'.

As stated in Joint Doctrine:

"Actions during a pre-hostilities phase seeks to set the terms for battle and enhance friendly and limit enemy freedom of action. Friendly forces should not seek battle until it has set the terms in its favor and should avoid being rushed into battle before such conditions are established."¹⁰

Peacetime: Steps to be Taken Immediately to Counter Sea

Denial.

The first three steps listed below are oriented toward the deliberate planning cycle and discuss weaknesses that require action during peacetime. These actions are necessary to avoid the consequences of disaster during the first days of the next Major Regional Contingency.

Step One: Educate the political and strategic decision makers.

We must first educate the political and strategic planners about the high probability of a successful sea denial scenario by a Third World belligerent.

The national and defense intelligence communities must both warn and convince the national command authority (NCA) of both the capability and intention of a Third World coalition to strike against seaborne forces in vulnerable chokepoints.

Joint task force commanders must provide realistic commander's estimates with updated enemy's capabilities (ECs) to their Unified Commanders (CINCs). The CINCs must then provide realistic strategic estimates to the National Command

Authority (NCA) that support the inputs of the intelligence communities.

The NCA must be convinced that such an attack on U.S. forces based on a successful sea denial scenario will have unacceptable political and military consequences as well as disrupt the will of the American people and Congress. This unacceptable event will result in a heavy loss of life and in the mission loss of major and costly capital ships. The loss of lives and a mission-kill of an invincible and costly capital ship to a Third World belligerent's torpedo will strongly influence the dynamic will of a democratic society.

An effective sea denial will require approaching forces to re-evaluate the risk of entering a vital chokepoint. This reassessment will result in the need to make a decision between three options. The options are:

1. accept the risk and go through, acknowledging the possibility of attrition to accomplish the strategic objective;
2. not accept the risk and delay hostilities until the area is cleared to an acceptable level thus giving the advantage of controlling when and where to do battle to the enemy;
3. not accept the risk, and withdraw.

It is anticipated that the political situation will eliminate the option of withdrawal.

To restate the first and most critical of all steps:

Educate and convince the political, strategic and operational level planners about the real capability and intent of a Third World belligerent, such as Iran, to deny vital sea areas to military forces. Organize, equip and train forces to be prepared to preemptively respond to avoid unacceptable losses due to sea denial in the first days of conflict.

Step Two: Apply adequate intelligence and special operation forces. Following the success of convincing the political and strategic planners, in advance, during the deliberate planning phase, the NCA must now increase the use of all aspects of the intelligence community to continuously monitor and analyze the location of the conventional weapons of potentially hostile Third World nations controlling vital sea lines of communications (SLOCs).

As stated in Joint Doctrine, under Considerations Before Combat, "most inclusive is preparing the theater; which involves intelligence and counter-intelligence to understand the enemy's capabilities and intentions."²²

The intelligence community must have the assets in country to support the goal of eventually preempting and neutralizing potential conventional weapons that would be used in a sea denial environment. This chapter on Joint Doctrine goes on to state:

"Special operations prior to conflict provide powerful operational leverage. Among their potential contributions, special operation forces (SOF) can be employed to gather critical information, undermine a

potential opponent's will or capacity to wage war or enhance the capabilities of multinational forces. Special operations forces can gain access and influence in foreign nations where the presence of conventional U.S. forces is unacceptable or inappropriate. They can also ameliorate the underlying conditions that are provoking a conflict in an effort to preclude open hostilities from occurring."¹²

Special operation forces (SOF) will be a major player in accomplishing the proactive and preemptive actions necessary to neutralize the Third World weapons capabilities used in conducting sea denial.

Operational level theater/campaign planners must increase the emphasis on maintaining an accurate intelligence base of all weapon systems that can influence the sea lines of communications (SLOCs) and especially the vulnerable chokepoints leading to potential future crisis areas. Additionally, operational planners must ensure adequate special operation forces (SOF) are trained and positioned to quickly neutralize the threat on short notice.

Successful sea denial by the enemy will be a direct result of shortchanging our intelligence and SOF assets in the pre-hostilities phase.

Step two is thus stated:

Operational planners must increase all aspects of intelligence monitoring, collecting and analyzing to a level that will provide highly reliable, accurate and timely "indications and warnings" in a Third World pre-hostilities sea denial environment. Additionally, adequate special operation forces (SOF) must be

available and trained to respond preemptively on short notice to specific threats in a sea denial theater.

We need to plan at the operational level to be proactive to deny any potential enemy the capability to block access to vital seaports. Schwarzkopf acknowledges that many of our counters to the cheap conventional weapons used by Iraq and Iran were reactive vice proactive. Schwarkopf states:

"We launched retaliatory strikes...after an Iranian cruise missile struck a tanker flying the American flag in Kuwait city harbor. We reacted by attacking two Iranian oil platforms in the Gulf.

...after an Iranian mine nearly sunk the U.S. Navy Frigate Samuel B. Roberts. We reacted by destroying three of their warships.

...after the Bridgeton struck a mine. We reacted by dispatching special night-vision-equipped Army helicopters, which ultimately detected and helped capture the Iran AJR, an Iranian ship sowing mines.¹³

One positive statement by Schwarzkopf supporting proactive and preemptive actions in a wartime scenario was expressed when he stated:

"A dozen high-tech Army and Air Force special-operations helicopters would start the attack against Iraq... They were to take out two key early-warning radar installations on the Saudi-Iraqi border."¹⁴

This shows that special operations forces can effectively conduct preemptive attacks on specific targets. Mines,

missiles, torpedoes in storage areas, and docked submarines present the best sea denial targets during the pre-hostilities phase.

Additional SOF units were successful during Desert Storm.

"The frigate Nicholas carrying Army special forces AHIP helicopters and a Kuwaiti patrol boat cleared Iraqis from eleven oil platforms from which small surface to air missiles had been launched."

"Helicopter borne Naval special forces teams secured other islands... the net effect was to clear the Iraqis from their observation posts in the Northern Gulf."

"On 8 February 1990, the U.S.S. Wisconsin (BB 64) supported a Marine Corps probe into southern Kuwait defenses."¹²

An example of the use of intelligence satellites during Desert Storm to counter the mine threat was displayed when;

"the Iraqi Spasilac-Class salvage tug AKA laid several mine fields. This minelayer was detected, largely by satellite sensors reporting to analysts in Washington. However, Coalition forces were unable to attack targets detected 48 hours earlier by satellite due to the detection planning and attack time-delay. The salvage tug was repeatedly targeted, but it was not caught."¹³

Political, diplomatic and military posturing during a pre-hostilities phase may result in the United Nations determining that verbal threats by a Third World belligerent satisfy the definition of imminent warfare. This imminent threat of warfare requires a preemptive response. The United Nations should declare a pre-war condition allowing the potential victims of imminent warfare to neutralize the threat.

If the U.N. is not involved in the crisis then the U.S. will have to take-the-lead in declaring a pre-war condition supporting preemptive action.

The declaration of a pre-war condition would justify the use of international anticipatory self-defense expanding on the definition of national anticipatory self-defense presented in chapter one. This declaration would allow a preemptive strike against any enemy capabilities that may overwhelm a vital SLOC attempting to gain military control of vital resources affecting a region.¹⁷

It is during this pre-war condition that the innovative ideas of planners must take advantage of the intelligence assets and SOF assets to preempt potential enemies.

The Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) is the principal system within the Department of Defense for translating policy decisions into operation plans and operation orders (OPORDS) in support of national security objectives.¹⁸

JOPES - Where Does It Fit In?

JOPES requires, as the first three functions of deliberate planning;

- * threat identification and assessment,
- * strategy determination
- * and course of action development.

These three steps will be directly related to the successful use of pre-war intelligence assets to identify the threat and pre-war special operations forces to neutralize the

threat prior to the initiation of actual hostilities or the arrival of any seaborne forces.

Lessons learned from Desert Shield state:

"The Iraqis had a large number of Exocet antiship missiles which could be carried by their airplanes and their heavier helicopters. Ashore they had Chinese-built silkworm antiship missiles on mobile launchers. Finally, they had invested heavily in mines.

Surely the Iraqi boats should have been able to dart out, fire their missiles, and throw the Allies surface navy out of the Northern Gulf.

Small mobile silkworm launchers could never be fully accounted for!

Saddam's most effective threat was the sea mine; 800-1600 sea mines were laid between the 10 - 40 foot depths.

The Iraqi mine threat affected almost all Coalition naval operations during the Persian Gulf conflict."¹⁰

The maritime campaign plan for the Gulf included: "attack shore facilities that threaten naval operations."¹¹

Shore facilities that threaten naval operations include mine storage sites, missile storage sites, and any delivery vehicles for mines and missiles. This is a job for intelligence assets to locate and special forces to neutralize before hostilities begin.

Threat assessment, the first function of JOPES, had to identify the capability and intent of the Iraqis to use mines. The function of JOPES required the Strategic decision makers

to identify the impact of effective Iraqi sea denial and how that would fit into the use of mass, economy of force, and culminating points in achieving the objectives.

Principles of war provide an excellent guideline and checklist to review prior to entering battle. The questions that need to be asked are; is the risk too great to take the chance? Are there alternatives? Or...is it time to charge ahead in an unprepared battlefield?

With threat assessment completed and the amphibious forces prepared to conduct a landing, it was time to determine a course of action, the third function of JOPES. The chosen course of action resulted in the canceling of the amphibious landing and the use of overwhelming military force in another theater of war thus avoiding the unacceptable risk to the amphibious forces. Alternatives were available to overcome a successful limited sea denial effort by Iraq.

JOPES succeeded; however, a successful sea denial in the future will be on a larger scale and more focused toward the center of gravity of critical sustaining forces approaching the battlefield. A lack of preemptive actions during the next crisis will show the weaknesses of the JOPES pre-hostilities planning phases during the next Gulf crisis.

Step Three: Organize, train and equip forces to respond to the potential threat.

Another critical area that requires emphasis in the joint planning process is the availability of resources to counter the sea denial threat.

"Requirements planning focuses on the combatant commander's analysis of the enemy threat. The planned response determines the level of forces and the support to overcome that threat."²¹

One of the missions of the CINCs is to ensure that their assigned forces are properly organized, trained and equipped to respond to the potential threats in his theater of operations.

The CINC and the assigned Commander of his Joint Task Force (CJTF) must have the ability to counter sea denial and avoid the consequences of -- taking the first shot -- in the next conflict. This will require a revision to certain doctrines emphasizing the need to be proactive and preemptive vice reactive and defensive.

Step three is stated:

Organize, equip and train all elements of the Joint Task Forces to be proactive and preemptive (not reactive and take the first shot) in countering a potential sea denial threat.

Crisis: Steps to be Taken When Sea Denial is Imminent:

Steps four through seven will address actions to be taken once a crisis is imminent.

Step Four: U.N. (or U.S. if acting alone) must approve or declare a pre-war condition allowing preemptive action.

"Planners should assume the worst-case scenario. The planner should not assume that the enemy will not use every capability at his disposal and operate in the most efficient manner possible. To dismiss these enemy possibilities could

dangerously limit the depth of planning. Again, planners should not assume away an enemy capability."==

Operational planners must review commander's estimates to ensure realistic enemy capabilities (ECs) are presented to CJCS and NCA during the threat identification and assessment and strategic determination phases of the deliberate planning cycle.

"A regular review of the Joint Center for Lessons Learned (JCLL) and Joint Universal Lessons Learned Systems (JULLS) during the planning process can alert planners to known pitfalls and successful, innovative ideas."==

These two statements from the Joint Staff Officers Guide (May 1992) emphasize the need for operational planners to plan for the worst case, review the lessons learned and be innovative in their ideas to counter today's threat!

Innovation may require procedures to use preemptive military forces in a neutral country, or in their territorial seas, to negate the capability of a posturing Third World nation during a U.N. specified and approved pre-hostilities phase.

The deliberate planning process stems from the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP) and eventually results in an OPLAN to counter a specified potential hostile situation such as that mentioned above. It is during phase III of the OPLAN development that shortfalls are identified and resolved.

The worst-case sea denial scenario has shortfalls and unless reviewed and revised; DISASTER IS WAITING.

The Joint Operation Planning and Execution System provides a list of military options to be considered in the military-oriented planning phase. These are known as flexible deterrent options (FDOs) . Included in the military flexible deterrent options to support future contingencies are:

- * Increase collection efforts,
- * Deploy a carrier battle group (CVBG) to the region,
- * Move maritime pre-positioning ships (MPS) to the region,
- * Increase the use of SOF facilities,
- * Pre-stage sealift and
- * Open and secure sea lines of communication.

CVBG, MPS, and Sealift will be denied access to the battlefield unless intelligence assets and SOF assets are allowed to be proactive and preemptive to eliminate the threat during the pre-hostilities phase.

Step four is stated:

Strategic and operational planners must convince the NCA to encourage the U.N. to institute a new concept: a U.N. approved "pre-war" condition that allows appropriate preemptive actions against a proven potential (hostilities imminent) belligerent.

Step Five: Declare military exclusion zones in vital sea areas.

During the next major regional contingency (MRC), a U.S. led coalition will attempt to conduct prompt and sustained operations to achieve strategic objectives.

A prompt response to neutralize the enemy's actions will

be successful due to the ability of our overwhelming forces to gain aerospace control during the first few days of conflict.

Sustained action will be immediately threatened by the ability of the enemy to effectively and efficiently block all of the sea approaches to the crisis area.

A U.S. action to declare and announce an international maritime exclusion zone (MEZ) is necessary to: first, warn all nations of the potential of indiscriminate mining and torpedoing of any seaborne vessels by a potential belligerent and second, allow offensive actions by U.S. led Coalition forces to preemptively neutralize the threat. Support and approval by the U.N. is strongly desired however a U.S. led Coalition may be involved in a crisis without U.N. backing.

As operational planners, our commander's estimates convinced us that the enemy had the capability to temporarily block/deny access to a vital sea port. It will be only after he has shown his intent by actually laying mines and sending newly acquired diesel submarines to the sea denial area (which will be a surprise to many pre-war planners), that he will provide the strategic and operational decision makers with their most important question; is it worth the risk to challenge the minefield and submarine patrolled area.

An announced maritime exclusion zone will set the stage for inserting advance forces to clear belligerents from vital land and sea areas influencing the chokepoints.

Step five is thus stated:

Strategic and operational planners must be ready to

support (U.N. approved) maritime exclusion zones (MEZ) in vital sea areas and preempt belligerent forces which may attempt to influence the transport of vital trade in the region.

Sea Denial in the Falklands War. British Operational planners faced an Argentine Maritime Exclusion Zone (MEZ) with the real threat of diesel submarines and air to surface missiles.

Sea denial by the Argentine Navy's submarine and Air Force's delivery of air to surface missiles forced the British to proceed into battle with a high degree of risk to achieve the objective of landing the Marines in the Falklands.

The British Center of Gravity was the transiting battle fleet with embarked aircraft and marines. A successful strike by the diesel submarine on the carrier or troop ships would have delayed and possibly denied seaborne access to the Falklands until the submarine threat was eliminated. British operational planners used overwhelming force, attrition and "luck" to force the marines ashore.

Attrition and "luck" are not viable choices for the United States. Operational level pre-planning must dictate preemptive action to eliminate the threat prior to the arrival of U.S. forces.

In a dramatic reversal, the British used their submarine to deny the sea to the Argentine Navy. One catastrophic sinking of an Argentine Cruiser was enough to convince the

Argentine operational level planners to "give up" their attempt of temporary sea control.

In the next Mid East crisis, an Iranian KILO class diesel may accomplish the same goal by sinking a major combatant in the Persian Gulf.

Step Six: Revise rules of engagement (ROE).

The strategic and operational level planners are required to deliberately plan in advance the steps necessary to counter the unacceptable consequence of a successful sea denial.

This planning must now consider unorthodox methods in today's military environment to ensure that the military sealift required to sustain a conflict will be allowed acceptable freedom of movement.

Operational planners must be allowed by the rules of engagement to take the necessary preemptive actions in order to "not take the first hit."

Step six recommends:

Strategic and operational planners must request appropriate rules of engagement (ROE) that support proactive and preemptive actions against potentially hostile nations. International (vice National) anticipatory self-defense (the ability to preempt) must be declared by a U.S. led Coalition allowing military actions against a belligerent nation threatening the collective vital interests of a region. Again, actions by strategic planners to gain U.N. participation and approval is strongly desired.

Step Seven: Station forces where necessary to neutralize the sea denial threat.

We must station the necessary trained forces at sea and ashore and must be preemptive and -- shoot the archer before he launches the arrow, -- even if it means we fire the first shot and draw the first blood.

Covert military actions by our primary covert forces must destroy the archers (missiles and mines ashore and submarines at the piers) before they arrive on scene.

Taking the initiative away from a posturing Third World force with a surprise covert military action will negate his goals, restrict his actions and allow the necessary freedom of the seas to deploy the sustainment forces to the conflict.

Victory, especially in a technologically advanced environment, is only achieved by striking first, striking fast and striking often.

The onus is on the Joint Task Force Commander to effectively staff and plan for these critical steps now. We must train and plan to be proactive and preemptive and not reactive to the next major regional crisis.

Step seven states:

Strategic and operational planners must station the necessary overt and covert forces ashore (including neutral territories) and at sea (including territorial seas) to preemptively neutralize any potential belligerent forces that may be attempting to influence a vital sea area.

Sea Denial in the Iran - Iraq War. Iran's indiscriminate missile firings at random blips on radar scopes scored numerous hits on both seaborne military targets and neutral merchants. This type of warfare had a major impact on the flow of vital military oil to Iran through the Strait of Hormuz.

Additionally, Iran's specific targeting and firing at both seaborne military targets and neutral merchants almost totally cut-off seaborne oil flow to Iraq forcing Iraq to depend on oil pipelines.

The mutual elimination of the enemy's mines and missiles by Iran or Iraq prior to their use was not specifically attempted and vital logistics to sustain their war was disrupted on both sides.

Again, operational planners failed to eliminate the threat to seaborne forces. Special forces must be able to locate and destroy the enemy's sea denial weapons before they reach the battlefield.

Sea Denial has Succeeded: Steps to be Taken Today to Counter a Potentially Successful Sea Denial Effort.

Steps eight through ten provide recommendations for operational planners to initiate in advance, to ensure that operational forces are prepared when sea denial by the enemy has succeeded and forces are now required to face the threat of mines, torpedoes and missiles in chokepoints.

Sea denial by the enemy gives him favorable military conditions to sequence his military events thus controlling his resources that will achieve his strategic objectives. If this

sounds familiar, this is exactly what our strategic and operational planners want to achieve. We have lost the initiative!

Additionally, time is critical, especially in the early stages of a crisis, and sea denial by the enemy has immediately negated our control of this important factor. The enemy has taken control of when and where to do battle.

The disadvantage of sea denial is that it may be considered an act of war and may provide the impetus of a U.S. led coalition to quickly and effectively enter the conflict with maximum firepower (a typical approach) to neutralize the poorly constructed threat. U.S. and Coalition forces would clear the approaches and quickly minimize the risk to an acceptable level. This is what most operational planners would hope. This miscalculation of the enemy's capability and intent is where DISASTER IS WAITING. The operational level planners would have failed.

Sea denial will provide the enemy the ability to exploit early tactical successes (again, a primary goal of Allied Forces) thus forcing our operational planners back into their crisis action modules.

To adequately prepare for the consequence of a successful sea denial effort by the enemy, operational level planners must again turn to the deliberate planning cycle. This leads us to the last three recommendations to counter the threat:

Step eight: Operational planners must initiate actions

"today" to equip and train their forces with the most technically advanced active and passive countermeasures against both the source of the potential weapons (submarines, minelayers, aircraft, helicopters and patrol boats) and the actual weapons themselves.

Step nine: Operational planners must "mass" and train the appropriate "resources" needed to conduct actual precursor operations in a mined and submarine-patrolled chokepoint prior to the arrival of high value seaborne military and commercial vessels.

Step ten: Strategic and operational planners must review and revise the precursor "risk-factor" (standard 80% or upgrade to 95%) and the "time-to-clear" requirement (standard 72 hours to achieve 80% or upgrade to two weeks to achieve 95%).

Limited resources demand the lowest risk factor possible. At present, for example, an 80% clearance may be achieved in 72 hours. This implies the possibility of one of every five ships being "denied" access to vital ports to sustain the crisis even after a minefield has been swept.

The consequences of not upgrading the standard must be understood by all strategic and operational level decision-makers.

This may be unacceptable as it may not meet the strategic objective of supplying adequate logistics to continue the war

on favorable terms. In today's downsizing environment, the risk factor and time-to-clear should be adjusted to 95% (thus requiring up to two weeks for the mine squadrons to complete their task).

Sea Denial by Libyan Foxtrot Submarines - 1986. During El-Dorado Canyon, the Task Force Commander of the \$60 billion three-carrier battle group Rear Admiral Jeremiah, stated "My biggest worry was the ability of the Foxtrot Submarine to conduct a successful attack on one of the carriers."²¹

One torpedo would have caused the repositioning of the high value units to a safer haven, thus denying their access to the desired battle zone. The plan by operational planners to eliminate any enemy submarine that attempted to get underway was necessary and effective.

The U.S. was "proactive" and was prepared to be "preemptive" against the threat and it worked!

This approach must become the standard by all Joint Forces in our dealings with Third World belligerents

The alternative may be best expressed by the following two quotes by Admiral Sandy Woodward, Commander of the British Task Force, enroute to the Falklands:

"Lose Invincible and the operation is severely jeopardized. Lose Hermes and the operation is over. One unlucky torpedo, bomb or missile hit could do it."²⁴

"It was, however, clear to me that if the Argentineans knew what they were doing and hit one of my

carriers, we would not need a *casus belli*, a reason to start a war. The war would already be over."**

Sea Denial: Disaster is Waiting!

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ability of a Third World belligerent to deny access to vital sea areas and restrict the arrival of sustaining forces will be the focus of the operational level decision makers during the next major regional crisis.

Joint doctrine states that actions during a pre-hostilities phase seek to set the terms for battle and enhance friendly and limit enemy freedom of action. The friendly force should not seek battle until it has set the terms or established the conditions for battle in its favor and should avoid being rushed into battle before such conditions are established.

Joint doctrine is correct! Failure in the pre-hostilities phase by operational planners to preemptively take control of vital sea areas will result in the loss of major combatants and major (sustaining) logistics ships to Third World conventional weapons. This loss will affect the planned sequencing of battlefield events, shift the initiative to the enemy and possibly result in the political decision to delay battle or withdraw forces altogether.

A reactive/take the first shot vice proactive/preemptive response will result in disaster!

Sea Denial; Disaster is Waiting!

The following steps are required to better prepare the political and military planners to counter a potential sea denial adversary during the next major regional crisis. If the U.N. is not a participant in the next crisis, the U.S. will initiate the

necessary steps mentioned below to achieve its political and strategic objectives.

During peacetime;

- * Educate the political, strategic and operational level planners about the real capability and intent of a Third World belligerent, such as Iran, to deny vital sea areas to military forces. Organize, equip and train forces to be prepared to preemptively respond to avoid unacceptable losses due to sea denial in the first days of conflict.

- * Operational level planners must increase all aspects of intelligence monitoring, collecting and analyzing to a level that will provide highly reliable, accurate and timely "indications and warnings" in a Third World pre-hostilities sea denial environment. Additionally, adequate special operation forces (SOF) must be available and trained to respond preemptively on short notice to specific threats in the sea denial theater.

- * Organize, equip and train all elements of the Joint Task Forces to be proactive and preemptive (not reactive and take the first shot) when countering a potential sea denial threat.

During a situation when a crisis is imminent and sea denial is a potential showstopper:

- * Strategic and operational planners must convince the NCA to encourage the U.N. to institute a U.N. accepted "pre-war" condition that allows appropriate preemptive actions against a proven potential (hostilities imminent) belligerent.

- * Strategic and operational level planners must be ready to support U.N. declared maritime exclusion zones (MEZ) in vital sea areas and be prepared to preempt belligerent forces which may attempt to influence the transport of vital trade in the region.

* Strategic and operational level planners must request appropriate rules of engagement (ROE) that support proactive and preemptive actions against potentially hostile nations. International (vice national) anticipatory self-defense (the ability to preempt) must be approved by the U.N. allowing military actions against a belligerent nation threatening the collective vital interests of a region.

* Strategic and operational level planners must station the necessary overt and covert forces ashore (including neutral territories) and at sea (including territorial seas) to preemptively neutralize any potential belligerent forces that may be attempting to deny access to a vital sea area.

The final recommendations are actions to be taken in advance, to ensure that operational forces are prepared when sea denial has succeeded by the enemy and U.S and Coalition forces are now required to face the threat of mines, torpedoes and missiles in transiting vital sea areas.

* Operational planners must initiate actions "today" to equip and train their forces with the most technically advanced active and passive countermeasures against both the source of the potential weapons (submarines, minelayers, aircraft, helicopters and patrol boats) and the actual weapons themselves.

* Operational planners must "mass" and train appropriate "resources" needed to conduct actual precursor operations in a mined and submarine-patrolled chokepoint prior to the arrival of high value seaborne military and commercial vessels.

* Strategic and operational planners must review and revise the precursor "risk-factor" (standard 80% or upgrade to 95%) and the "time-to-clear" requirement (standard 72 hours to achieve 80% or upgrade to two weeks to achieve 95%).

Being aware of the consequences of not upgrading the standard, the possible unacceptable losses of major combatants, must be understood by strategic and operational level decision-makers.

These steps will provide an acceptable level of risk in support of the political and strategic objectives of conducting littoral warfare during the next major regional crisis.

Our ability to sustain the next war will be jeopardized unless we revise traditional international constraints to pre-position military forces ashore. This must include stationing forces on land on neutral territories, and afloat, in territorial waters, to preemptively overcome the potentially disastrous conventional threat of a Third World belligerent posturing against nations transiting vital sea areas.

These steps will also ensure adequate pre-war preparation by providing the necessary military conditions for the safest possible transport of wartime material (men and equipment) through U.N. and U.S. politically and militarily hardened maritime exclusion zones. This necessary effort by all strategic and operational planners will maintain control over the desired start-date of the next major regional crisis, will control war escalation and strongly influence war termination.

Don't bring me a plan where we have to take the first shot!

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