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Coalition Joint Task Force Development and Allied Airpower:

Pooling Assets for Cooperative Missions

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As we have seen, air and space power have to play their roles in a changed security environment. This new security situation affects the armed forces in Europe and their method of military operation. Growing national pragmatism is observable with regard to participation or otherwise in an international operation. The result is that ad hoc coalitions are becoming a more frequent "modus vivendi." Often these involve combined and joint operations. Second, views with regard to the use of force are changing. The use of force is very restricted, especially during crisis management and humanitarian aid operations. The end certainly does not justify all the means. That extends both to inflicting unnecessary human suffering on the opponent as well as avoiding losses on one's own side. Given the attributes of airpower, such as speed and range, air forces are exposed to enemy action for only a brief period of time. The use of precision guided munitions enables air forces to avoid collateral damage to the extent possible. This means that airpower will frequently be deployed as the primary instrument in crisis management operations. Third, the endeavor to cash in on the so-called peace dividend has led to shrinking defense budgets. As a consequence, practically all armed forces in Europe are having to cope with lower manpower levels and less materiel.

The European armed forces have to adapt to the implications of the new security situation. More frequent deployment during actual operations and simultaneous down-scaling of existing military capability require a different method of working. The most probable method of operation is so-called coalition warfare, the cooperation between various armed forces units in ad hoc or more permanent combinations with both old and new partners. By now, numerous NATO countries have already gained extensive experience with this method of operation. The Gulf War and various subsequent operations in the former Yugoslavia are obvious examples. This practical experience has meanwhile again taught us that coalition warfare has its own specific features and places special demands on military units. Moreover, several military shortcomings have been identified. The NATO allies have launched a number of actions to ensure that the military capability of NATO is better geared to coalition warfare. First of all, an effort is being made to better accommodate operations in ad hoc coalitions by changes in the NATO command structure. NATO has developed the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) concept for this purpose. Besides this, we are also increasingly seeing the creation of bilateral and multinational partnerships between individual nations. My presentation will focus on the use of airpower during alliance or coalition warfare operations. First of all, I shall look at a number of lessons that we have meanwhile learned during operations in the former Yugoslavia with regard to operating in an international team. Next I shall examine the Combined Joint Task Force policy developed by NATO and the pooling of assets. I shall close by going over the conditions which have to be met by coalition warfare operations.

Lessons Learned in Bosnia

The Royal Netherlands Air Force was involved in the air operations in the former Yugoslavia from the outset. It became rapidly apparent that the specific attributes of airpower rendered it well suited for the

deployment of air forces during this politically sensitive crisis management operation. The flexibility of airpower resulted in a wide range of deployment options. Throughout the entire conflict, airpower was deployed as a means of transport, as it still is. At the same time, airpower was employed to enforce air embargoes and a no-fly zone during Operation Deny Flight. Airpower was used for coercive action, to retaliate for actions of the parties in the conflict. A good example of this is the raid on the Udbina airfield. This airfield was used by the Croatian Serbs to eliminate targets in the Muslim-controlled Bihac area. The raid, to my mind, was unique of its kind in NATO airpower history. For the first time since the founding of NATO, a multinational force was brought together comprising NATO fighter bombers, escort, Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD), electronic intelligence, reconnaissance, and search and rescue aircraft, supported by Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and Airborne Command and Control Center (ABCCC) aircraft. These aircraft, with the exception of the multinationally operated NATO AWACS, came from the US, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. Tactics and procedures were used that were developed during the NATO Tactical Leadership Program in Florennes, Belgium. The fact that human casualties had to be avoided forced the raid participants to operate almost "with their hands tied behind their backs." In spite of this restrained use of force, the raid was a great success. I am still proud that this raid had a strong Dutch component in terms of leadership. In addition to this, airpower was used to support ground units, for example, by a show of force or, as a last resort, close air support (CAS). Ultimately, recourse was made to Operation Deliberate Force, carrying out air strikes on a relatively large scale in order to force the warring parties to the negotiating table with the aim of bringing about a lasting truce. At the moment, airpower is employed to maintain the fragile peace in the former Yugoslavia.

A number of valuable lessons can be drawn from the conflict in Bosnia. First of all, the need was demonstrated for a clear political goal in the execution of a military operation. Simultaneous peacekeeping and peace-enforcing operations proved risky. The lack of consensus among the coalition partners as to the nature of the conflict meant that the deployment of airpower was drastically limited and could only be used effectively at a very late stage. The impossibility of arriving at a rapid consensus arose primarily because some countries had ground troops on the spot while other countries did not. These ground troops were used on various occasions as hostages by the warring parties. During situations of this kind, national sentiments understandably had the upper hand over international amity.

The second lesson that was learned was the need for an adequate command and control structure. The dual-key system which entailed that both the UN and NATO had to give permission for the deployment of airpower proved barely workable in practice. Consequently, the inherent speed of reaction of airpower came to nothing. By the time the air force would finally appear on the spot, the situation on the ground turned out to have changed drastically.

Third, there was a far-reaching politicization of the conflict among the coalition partners. NATO politicians have a strong tendency towards hands-on management and direct information down to the tactical level. Also, actions at the tactical level proved to have strategic effects. The loss of a single F-16, for example, took on unexpected proportions. The distinction became blurred between political strategy, military strategy, and the operational and tactical levels. On more than one occasion, senior NATO air force commanders approached the air crews via radio directly or through airborne relay by the AWACS aircraft. Detested by airmen ever since the days of the Vietnam War, this tendency towards finely-tuned command and control became a day-to-day reality. Moreover, highly restrictive rules of engagement applied, including the need for visual identification. This trend made quite evident the need for near-real-time information and adequate command and control systems. Fourth, it was found that the joint European NATO partners lacked certain military capabilities and were heavily dependent for these on the US. Examples of this are mobile C2 systems, strategic air transport, air-to-air refueling and strategic reconnaissance systems such as satellites. Lastly, the conflict proved to be of such a nature that employment of traditional free-fall weapons such as nonguided missiles or bombs was very limited. Frequently, the use of precision attack weapons was made mandatory to avoid collateral damage. During the entire conflict, precision guided munitions were used more often than straight forward bombs.

The CJTF Concept

The NATO partners have realized that the current method of operation demands a high degree of

flexibility. This demand for flexibility emerges in the requirement of being able to operate on the periphery or even far beyond the traditional NATO area of operation. Moreover, such flexibility entails the option of being able to operate with armed forces and nations in ad hoc coalitions. The command and control organization has to be geared to this. The Coalition Joint Task Force concept was decided on for this purpose at the Brussels summit in 1994. CJTFs can be deployed across the entire spectrum of force, ranging from most demanding requirements up to and including smaller contingencies. This is why a modular approach was chosen. The condition made was that a residual Article Five capability, the NATO defense, would be maintained. There is a possibility of nations belonging to the Western European Union or even non-NATO nations participating in CJTF operations. Consequently, it was required that a smooth interface could be guaranteed between NATO countries on the one hand and Western European Union countries and non-NATO nations on the other. This allows the CJTF to execute both alliance and coalition warfare operations.

Based on these requirements, the following organization was decided upon. In the first place, there is a so-called parent headquarters. This is an established multinational and joint headquarters with structural size and flexibility to form a framework CJTF staff. The framework staff is called the nucleus and is embedded in the parent headquarters. It consists of a group of dual-hatted, pre-designated personnel that represent all principal staff functions. Existing NATO headquarters do not have the structural size to provide all staff functions on a continuous basis. Therefore, augmentation and support modules from the parent headquarters or other NATO or national headquarters are required. These augmentation-and-support modules provide the nucleus staff with complete functionality and adequate sustainability. For operational planning, a combined and joint planning staff has been established. This staff is collocated with the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Casteau, Belgium. The staff consists of representatives of all NATO nations including those not part of the integrated military structure. Non-NATO and Western European Union nations can participate on a case by case basis. Located at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels is a capabilities coordination cell, a principal body that charts the contributions the individual nations can make.

Pooling of Assets

Shrinking defense budgets are resulting in a growing pressure on the military capability of individual nations. Paradoxically enough, down-scaling air forces are being deployed during actual operations more often than ever. This requires the limited capability to be handled not just effectively but also with utmost efficiency. Nevertheless, we are seeing that certain smaller countries, in particular, are having more and more difficulty maintaining a sufficient level of a certain capability. Increasingly more often, the limits of a minimum critical mass are in jeopardy of being overshoot. International combinations in which these limited capabilities are brought together constitute a possible solution to the problem. The pooling of assets results in a number of obvious operational advantages. First of all, by bringing together what are in essence limited assets, sufficient operational mass can be generated after all. Second, the pooling of assets results in a more effective use of limited capability. Third, a greater number of assets ensures enhanced operational flexibility. After all, there is more room for maneuver within which the capability can be deployed. Last, by pooling their assets, countries can compensate for each other's shortcomings.

Alongside these immediate, practical advantages there are also a number of indirect gains. First of all, the pooling of limited national assets entails that capabilities that can no longer be supported by a single country are nevertheless maintained. Thus, expertise in this specific field is kept. An example of this is the fact that through cooperating in an international army corps, countries that no longer have a complete independent army corps nevertheless generated staff officers who were familiar with working at the operational level. A second advantage is the fact that such joint operations strengthen the mutual ties between the individual nations. That is not an aspect to be neglected in the European security context in which the old, common enemy has disappeared. Third, these joint operations ensure the right mind set among military personnel. People become used to working together with international partners and with other cultures. They learn to accept a different look on how to execute certain operations, etc. This, too, constitutes a significant advantage for military units which, in the future, will almost always participate in coalition warfare operations. Fourth, pooling--unlike the actual integration of units--enables individual countries to withdraw their own capability as they wish from these incidental or permanent

partnerships. As a result, countries retain sufficient sovereignty and say as regards their own units. This is important in a situation in which the interest of, for example, North America and Europe or the mutual interests of individual European member states diverge. Fifth, the anchoring of national units in international teams diminishes the chance of such units being affected by cuts. Lastly, the pooling of assets enables the smaller NATO countries with modest military capabilities or even non-NATO nations at a lower technological level to make a meaningful contribution to a specific military operation. The contribution of the diverse nations may extend to specific aircraft and weapon systems, a certain expertise, command and control systems or other special capabilities such as CSAR and SEAD. This form of support for an operation will probably largely be the preserve of the larger air forces. Even so, smaller, but technologically highly developed air forces can also play their part. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that affairs such as surveillance and security, medical care, communications, or logistical support are just as important. This opens up opportunities for less developed partners in a coalition. It may also happen that a nation that is currently only making a modest contribution can play a key role in a subsequent operation.

It is no wonder that a great many initiatives in the field of pooling of assets are being developed in Europe, given the major advantages to be gained. These joint operations extend to all kinds of areas. A logical domain is air transport, a field in which European nations are traditionally less strong than the US Air Force. There are now several partnership agreements which entail, for example, the Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, and Germany cooperating closely in the field of air transport by means of memoranda of understanding (MOU). These countries can use each other's transport aircraft while they consult closely to decide which country's turn it is to carry out a particular flight. Coordination up to now has proved excellent. Frequently it happens that the transport of a coalition partner can be used to execute a certain rush job. In fact, a Dutch serviceman may not yet know in the morning whether he will be embarking later on in the day on board a Dutch, Belgian, German, or even British transport aircraft. The second field in which the pooling of assets and international cooperation takes place is the area of theater missile defense (TMD). The current NATO air defense concept is being extended to so-called extended air defense where the intention is to put in place an adequate defense against tactical ballistic missiles. In practice this is not proving a simple task. Ambitions, doctrines, possible methods of deployment, and available assets differ drastically among the various European countries. In order to acquire more insight into the possibilities and limitations of TMD and to gain experience with this specific task, Germany and the Netherlands have been working together closely with the United States for some years now. Up to now, the partnership has mainly focused on building knowledge and expertise. For this purpose, the Netherlands organizes an annual multinational TMD training exercise at which the defense task is integrated with counterforce operations by fighter aircraft and bombers. The training exercise is commanding sharply growing international interest.

Alongside the combination of similar or equivalent systems, we are also seeing a second trend in international cooperation involving countries endeavoring to bring together a complete range of airpower capability. Combination of various systems into a composite force package produces a synergetic effect whereby the sum is greater than the constituent parts. Such a complete collection of airpower capability then includes command and control, intelligence, and reconnaissance systems. It also includes combat capability such as fighters, fighter bombers, and ground-based air defense systems. Last, the package also includes equipment such as air transport, air-to-air refuelling tankers, electronic warfare aircraft, and other systems. Last year Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg set up the so-called Deployable Air Task Force (DATF). These individual countries put their assets into a common pool so as to be able to act jointly in an international force. These three nations operate in principle as a single entity. Denmark has meanwhile indicated a tentative interest in joining this Deployable Air Task Force. The Royal Air Force and the French Air Force recently resorted to coordinating their operations in a so-called Franco-British Air Group. Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands have expressed their interest in possible participation in this group. It has to be said that this form of cooperation actually encompasses more than just the pooling of assets. Combining a great diversity of systems into a composite force consequently requires more to be done, for example, in the field of exchange of knowledge, the development of joint tactics and procedures, etc. The end of this development is by no means in sight.

The most far-reaching form of pooling of assets is the creation of actual integrated multinational units.

NATO has several units of this kind. The most obvious example is NATO's Airborne Early Warning Force (NAEFW). The NAEWF is due to be radically modernized in the years ahead. This will allow the system to continue to operate for years ahead as a modern flying command and control platform. NATO's Integrated Air Defense System is being modernized. The upper levels of the associated command and control structure consist almost entirely of multinationally-manned and -exploited command centers and headquarters. The project is taking into account the need to procure mobile C2 components. These mobile components will also be manned by multinational crews. The possible procurement of an Alliance Ground Surveillance System is also being considered by the NATO allies, similar to the NAEWF.

However, we should not ignore the fact that international cooperation also has certain disadvantages. Differences in culture or doctrine can lead to friction between participating nationalities. More seriously, the need to mediate between various national operational standards could lead to a compromise on a lower, mutually agreed upon international standard. The major problem, however, is the question of national control over national assets. Inevitably, situations will arise where nations will choose not to participate in a specific coalition operation. The higher the degree of international cooperation, the more complex this issue becomes. In the case of mere pooling of similar assets, the withdrawal of a single nation's contribution will reduce the overall number of assets available but leaves the rest of the force intact. Removing a national contingent from a composite force could lead to a severe reduction or even complete loss of a specific but essential element of the total force package. This could seriously reduce the effectiveness of the composite force. Fully integrated multinational units no longer consist of national building blocks but form a single entity. It then becomes even more difficult to withdraw national participation from such a unit. This applies, above all, in situations where a large contributor in a multinational unit decides on unilateral action of this kind. In the worst case, such a decision could render the multinational unit or force nonoperational. Moreover, there is a significant political signal which can reduce the international cohesion of such a multinational unit.

Initiatives such as Air Transport MOUs, the DATF, the Franco-British Air Group and the possible creation of new multinational units, could possibly serve as a basis for a truly integrated European Air Force in the distant future. It is clear that the issues surrounding national sovereignty and say over individual countries' national units constitute the biggest impediments to the pooling of assets in whatever form. Honesty compels me to say that we still have a long way to go on this front.

Conditions for Coalition Warfare

International cooperation is the key to military success in the period ahead of us. In practice, however, it has been demonstrated that such international cooperation can only be successful if certain conditions are met. These lessons are not really new, but it would appear that we keep forgetting them. Cooperation, first of all, has to be based on mutual respect. Bigger, more developed countries need to show understanding for the specific situation of smaller, possibly less developed countries. The smaller partners in the coalition, after all, have inherently limited capabilities. There also has to be a certain tolerance towards other cultures, other methods of working, other values and norms etc. Mutual trust can only arise if there is a sufficient amount of mutual respect. Mutual trust is a must if we are to operate effectively together during combat operations. People will only be willing to deploy their own troops for such a joint operation if they can blindly count on the will, the commitment, and the military capability of a coalition partner.

Second, there has to be unity of effort. Only if all the cooperating partners are seeking to achieve a single goal is there a possibility of having the combined assets working together effectively. All the participating states in the conflict have to agree on the nature of the conflict. This, in turn, means consensus on the political strategy, military strategy, and operational objectives of an operational campaign. There also has to be agreement on the military assets to be used.

A third condition is unity of command. The combining of different national systems involves a certain risk if the individual nations do not resort to delegating the necessary command and control competencies to a single commander or do so insufficiently. Too often we have seen in the past that when unity of command was not guaranteed, the deployment of air forces had an inadequate result. In

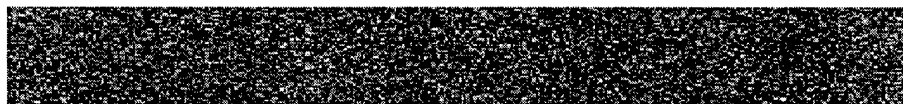
the worst case such a situation may lead to significant and probably avoidable losses on our own side. Unity of command, therefore, is an absolute must if we are to guarantee the effective deployment of airpower.

Fourth, there has to be the endeavor to achieve far-reaching interoperability. We must not forget that it has taken NATO 45 years to achieve the current level of interoperability. Even now there are frequent problems in this field. It still happens that US, UK, German, Italian, and French systems are unable to communicate with each other and consequently are unable to cooperate with each other or only on a limited scale. Current joint operations may also extend to non-NATO partners equipped with different systems, different data communication resources and protocols. It actually means taking a step backwards for the NATO partners in relation to the situation during the Cold War. Traditionally neutral countries and former Warsaw Pact countries are equipped with nationally developed assets or assets based on Russian technology. This is the reality which we will have to learn to live with. We have to accept that it will take a long time and cost a lot of money to solve these interoperability problems.

Fifth, there has to be simplicity. Cooperation with other countries entails the risk of misunderstandings as a result of differences in language, differences in insight, and different tactics, techniques and procedures. A joint, straightforward doctrine and mutual coordination of procedures are a necessity for successful coalition warfare.

Last, countries that intend to participate in coalition warfare operations have to prepare for this. This entails that training exercises have to be carried out jointly right now. It is after all, too late to try to improve operational cooperation and eliminate certain shortcomings at the start or even during an ongoing operation. It is only by training with each other now in peacetime that the necessary level of professionalism and effectiveness can be achieved that is needed to carry out an actual operation successfully.

As we have seen, the change in the international security situation has resulted in a growing interest in coalition warfare operations. Airpower is frequently playing a prominent role as a result of its inherent strong attributes. Operational experience gained during various operations in the former Yugoslavia has demonstrated that military operations of this kind obey their own laws. If these historical lessons are ignored, airpower will fail to live up to its inherent potential. This could result in political and military failure. Moreover, there is the chance of unnecessary losses of personnel and materiel. It is crucial that we take these lessons to heart and prepare ourselves now for the execution of coalition warfare operations.



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