

Seizing the Lodgment: Forcible Entry Lessons from Panama and the Falklands

A Monograph

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Abstract

Seizing the Lodgment: Forcible Entry Lessons from Panama and the Falklands, by MAJ James Beaulieu, 46 pages.

This monograph analyzes factors critical to the success of two forcible entry operations. In 1989, the US military conducted one of the most complex forcible entry operations in its history. The US invasion of Panama leveraged a semi-permissive presence in the country, multiple modes of power projection, effective intelligence, creative deception, and overwhelming combat power to seize 27 major objectives in the opening hours of the conflict. In 1982, the British deployed a combined naval, amphibious, and ground task force 8,000 miles to retake the Falkland Islands after an Argentinian invasion. The British Task Force's understanding of the operational environment, strategic and operational deception, application of synchronized combined arms, and logistics operations enabled British forces to effectively isolate the lodgment, gain, and maintain access.

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Acronyms

AAR	After Action Reports
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
A2/AD	Anti-Access and Area Denial
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
DOS	Days-of-Supply
EDRE	Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise
FM	Field Manual
FBMA	Forward Brigade Maintenance Area
ISB	Intermediate Staging Base
JCEO	Joint Concept for Entry Operations
JFE	Joint Forcible Entry
JP	Joint Publication
JOAC	Joint Operational Access Concept
JTF	Joint Task Force
MOD	Ministry of Defense
OPSEC	Operational Security
PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment
PDF	Panamanian Defense Force
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SAS	Special Air Service
SBS	Special Boat Service
SF	Special Forces
SPG	Special Projects Group
SOUTHCOM	Southern Command

TEWT	Tactical Exercise without Troops
TEZ	Total Exclusion Zone
TP	TRADOC Pamphlet
USARSO	United States Army South

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Introduction

This monograph explores a knowledge gap within the Department of Defense created due to its commitment to conflict in mature theatres over the last 15 years. While occupied with steady-state combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, little historical analysis occurred concerning Forcible and Initial Entry Operations. With the publication of Joint Publication (JP) 3-18 *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (2012) and the *Joint Concept for Entry Operations* (JCEO) (2014), the military only recently refocused on the capabilities, requirements, and challenges associated with forcible entry operations. Within the JCEO, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey emphasized the importance of the military's ability to enter into a foreign country and immediately employ its capabilities to perform assigned missions.¹ To accomplish this task, all services must prepare to support the JCEO framework while learning from history to refine doctrine and concepts for integration into the Joint Force.

In 2014, the US Army published its operating concept, *Win in a Complex World*, which described the Army's methodology for meeting future challenges within the evolving security environment. The concept emphasized expeditionary capabilities required to respond to global contingencies.² It highlighted the need to employ mobility, firepower, and protection to seize the initiative in support of the Joint Force.³ As a result, major commands across the Army identified the immediate imperative of sustained readiness to deploy on short-notice to meet future threats.⁴ To prepare appropriately, both the Army and Joint Force require analysis into how it might

¹ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), iii.

² TRADOC Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 2014), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, iv, 17, 40, 43.

⁴ Department of the Army, "Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2014," US Army, accessed November 12, 2015, http://www.g8.army.mil/pdf/Army_Strategic_Planning_Guidance2014.pdf.

conduct forcible entry in the future, and an evaluation of what lessons past experiences provide to current planners.

This monograph examines two recent forcible entry cases. It asks the following: during Operation Just Cause and Operation Corporate, how did the militaries fail to, or succeed in, conducting lodgment seizure and power projection upon initial entry? By considering that question, this monograph explores the critical challenge of lodgment seizure while offering recommendations for planning in support of a Joint Forcible Entry (JFE) operation. While applying an inductive analytical approach, concepts from both JP 3-18 and the JCEO provide a lens for evaluation by considering the doctrinal imperatives of “isolate the lodgment” and “gain and maintain access.”⁵

Arguably the most difficult and critical aspect of a forcible entry, lodgment seizure facilitates land operations within a hostile territory. The speed and manner within which the entry force secures access and occupies a lodgment creates implications for that force’s ability to project power to subsequent objectives. Throughout modern history, the success or failure of military operations has hinged on a military’s ability to establish and secure a lodgment in preparation for follow-on operations.⁶ The Normandy invasion in World War II leveraged capabilities across the multiple domains of land, sea, and air to build and project combat power on the European Continent. During the Korean War, the US Inchon landing seized initiative from the attacking North Koreans by projecting the combat power necessary to drive the North Koreans back across the 38th Parallel.⁷ These examples, as do many others, illustrate the importance of lodgment seizure in gaining initiative over a hostile force through forcible entry.

⁵ Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), I-4.

⁶ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, 1-4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

In preparing both cases, the conceptual framework outlined within the JCEO serves as a lens for evaluation and analysis. To address the problem of forcible entry, the JCEO introduced the following concepts to guide planning and execution:⁸

1. *Establish Appropriate Operational Conditions.* The entry force must emphasize this consideration during pre-crisis and crisis phases of a potential conflict. The Joint Force sets conditions to create exploitable gaps in an adversary's defense, which can increase the success of an entry operation. JFE planners should consider concepts such as deception, fires, intelligence, electronic countermeasures, area denial countermeasures, and command and control to achieve an advantage.
2. *Form Mission-Tailored Joint Forces for Entry Operations.* To successfully execute entry operations, the entry force must be tailored to meet the demands of the mission. Different types of forces possess an array of capabilities depending on the entry challenges, obstacles, and objectives.
3. *Conduct Entry by Integrating Force Capabilities across Multiple Domains.* The means of entry leveraged by initial entry forces must be integrated effectively to achieve a position of advantage relative to the defending force. Domains for insertion consist of land, sea, and air based methods.
4. *Transition to Achieve Operational Objectives.* The manner and success in which the entry force facilitates the transition of combat power to seize operational objectives beyond the initial lodgment. This includes the flow of follow-on forces through the initial lodgment to subsequent phases of an operation.

The US invasion of Panama occurred between December 1989 and January 1990 to combat drug trafficking, protect the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty, and respond to escalating aggression directed toward US citizens and military members from the military regime

⁸ Ibid., 10-23.

of Manuel Noriega.⁹ A number of factors shaped the dynamics of forcible entry within this case. First, a US garrison within Panama influenced the nature of the planning and execution of the operation. The US military conducted a complex series of entry operations across 27 locations throughout Panama. Over 27,000 soldiers, airmen, marines, and sailors participated in the operation, including elements from the XVIII Airborne Corps, 7th Infantry Division, 5th Infantry Division, and the 75th Ranger Regiment.¹⁰ While the official operation began on 20 December 1989, US planners evaluated the strategic and operational implications of military action beginning in 1987. A long planning horizon led to a complex, short-duration forcible entry operation directed towards achieving numerous objectives to defeat the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF). With the advantage of a small US military presence within Panama, these forces combined with those in the US to simultaneously seize objectives through multiple means of force projection. The unique dynamic of the American presence within the country offers potential implications for future forcible entry operations, while contrasting with the dynamics of Operation Corporate.

The second conflict examined here, the British and Argentinian conflict in the Falkland Islands, took place between April and June 1982. Provoked by Argentina after its invasion of the Islands on 2 April, the British dispatched a joint naval, air, and ground force to retake the British territory. The conflict lasted 74 days, but required a British amphibious assault to establish a lodgment and project power to defeat the defending Argentinian military. With no contingency plan in place to counter a hostile invasion of the islands, the British government quickly assembled a task force with the assets and capabilities available in the British Isles as a response

⁹ Lorenzo Crowell, "The Anatomy of Just Cause: The Forces Involved, The Adequacy of Intelligence, and its Success as a Joint Operation," in *Operation Just Cause: The U.S. Intervention in Panama*, ed. Bruce W. Watson and Peter G. Tsouras (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 69.

¹⁰ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, 3.

to Argentinian aggression. The case provides implications for future short-notice forcible entry operations with minimal pre-conflict planning, while providing an alternate international perspective.

The remainder of this monograph analyzes Joint and Army doctrine, presents the findings from each case study, and offers recommendations. Section II provides an in-depth review of strategic context, doctrine, and concepts related to forcible entry at the national, joint, and army levels. The section also reviews relevant definitions as related to enemy anti-access and area denial capability. Section III illustrates the findings within both Operation Just Cause and Operation Corporate deemed critical to each forcible entry success. Finally, Section IV synthesizes the cases utilizing the JCEO framework.

Strategic Context

Three documents define the role of forcible entry operations in US strategic policy. The *US National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, and 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review* outline the nation's defense priorities and identify the military's role in today's global security environment. In general terms, the *US National Security Strategy* clarifies the military's responsibility to deter and defeat threats to the United States while mitigating the impact of potential attacks and natural disasters.¹¹ The President directs that US forces must prepare to conduct global counter-terrorism operations, assure allies, and deter aggression through forward presence and engagement.¹² However, if deterrence fails, "US forces will be ready to project power globally to defeat and deny aggression to multiple theaters."¹³ The

¹¹ The White House, *United States National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2015), 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*

National Security Strategy emphasizes the military's role as a capable deterrent when viewed by potential adversaries, while stressing the need for an agile, responsive force that can project power and respond to global threats. This priority establishes the need for capable forces that can forcibly enter foreign lands and achieve US strategic objectives should armed conflict occur.

The *National Military Strategy* describes the employment of military forces to advance US national interests. According to the strategy, the military protects the nation and wins wars through operations that defend the homeland, ensure global security, and project power to win decisively.¹⁴ The strategy highlights challenges posed by state actors, and technologies developed by belligerent states designed to counter US military advantage while impeding access to the global commons.¹⁵ The strategy emphasizes the role of a capable, proven military utilized as an effective conflict deterrent. However, should deterrence fail, the military must be prepared to “project power across all domains to stop aggression and win our Nation’s wars by decisively defeating adversaries.”¹⁶ JFE capability, achieved through effective force projection, is a relevant component to deterrence. If a potential adversary understands the US military’s ability to conduct swift, decisive force projection into hostile territory, alternative forms of national power might facilitate conflict resolution prior to hostilities. Finally, the *National Military Strategy* specifically identifies the need for the future force to operate in contested environments given Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD) challenges.¹⁷ As a counter to US military superiority, potential belligerents may leverage A2/AD technology to achieve an asymmetric advantage over US force

¹⁴ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: n.p., 2015), 5.

¹⁵ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

projection capability. Methods to counter these advanced capabilities directly influence the Joint Force's ability to conduct forcible entry.

The 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) outlines the 21st Century Defense Priorities built upon the three pillars of Protect the Homeland, Build Security Globally, and Project Power and Win Decisively.¹⁸ The document again emphasizes the need for US forces to deter acts of aggression in one or more theaters by remaining capable of decisively defeating adversaries.¹⁹ The document highlights the need to strengthen power projection capabilities as both a form of deterrence and as a critical combat enabler. The QDR directs the development of new capabilities, tactics, techniques, and procedures to improve power projection capability into foreign soil and quickly accomplish the mission.²⁰ More specifically, the document states that the military “will refine our doctrine, modernize our capabilities, and regain our proficiency to conduct forcible entry and large-scale combined arms maneuver operations against larger and more capable adversaries.”²¹ Forcible entry operations constitute a cornerstone for achieving our US national and military strategy as directed within strategic documents.

Joint Concepts and Doctrine

Numerous concepts guide the Joint Force's understanding and planning for forcible entry operations. The *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020* translates strategic priorities into operational theories. This document introduces the concept of Globally Integrated

¹⁸ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: n.p., 2014), v.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁰ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 25.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

Operations as a guiding Joint Force precept.²² The *Joint Operational Access Concept* (JOAC) describes how the Joint Force will operate in response to emerging A2/AD security challenges. Finally, JP 3-18: *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* and the *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, frame the concept, capabilities, and challenges associated with forcible entry.

The overall concept of *Joint Force 2020* is the need for the Joint Force, amid drawdowns and personnel reductions, combined with increasing technological threats of opponents, to achieve an operational advantage through Globally Integrated Operations. The concept identifies ten primary missions through which the Joint Force achieves US strategic objectives.²³ As defined by Globally Integrated Operations, the Joint Force “must quickly combine capabilities with itself and mission partners across domains, echelons, geographic boundaries, and organizational affiliations.”²⁴ The concept proposes the idea of global agility as a key to joint force success. Swift and adaptable military response, the ability to quickly project power, and the capability to extend operational reach provide the foundation for global agility.²⁵ The concept specifically states the need to project power despite A2/AD challenges, thus emphasizing technological development to counter this potential obstacle. The JOAC compliments *Joint Force 2020* by providing a conceptual baseline for overcoming enemy A2/AD capabilities.

The JOAC outlines the Joint Force’s strategy in response to emerging A2/AD security challenges by employing the following terminology:

- a. Operational Access: The ability to project military force into an operational area with sufficient freedom of action to accomplish the mission.²⁶

²² Joint Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020* (Washington, DC: n.p., 2012), 1-4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴ Joint Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*, 4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁶ Joint Staff, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)* (Washington DC, 2012), i.

- b. Assured Access: The unhindered national use of the global commons and select sovereign territory, waters, airspace and cyberspace, achieved by projecting all elements of national power.²⁷
- c. Anti-Access: Those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area.²⁸
- d. Area Denial: Those actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area.²⁹

Operational access supports the US strategic objective of assured access.³⁰ To meet the challenge of operational access, the Joint Force must leverage cross-domain synergy to gain domain superiority, facilitating freedom of action within a theater.³¹ Cross domain synergy entails the “the complementary vice merely additive employment of capabilities in different domains such that each enhances the effectiveness and compensates for vulnerabilities of the others.”³² In order to achieve operational access, two tasks must occur in a specific theater: overcoming the enemy’s A2/AD capability through the application of combat power, and projecting the requisite combat power over required distances for introduction into the operational area.³³ In reference to

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Joint Staff, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)*, i.

³¹ Ibid., ii.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 5.

JFE, operational access sets the conditions for entry operations into a hostile territory by overcoming potential enemy A2/AD obstacles.

JP 3-18 *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* sets forth the forcible entry doctrine that governs the activities and performance of the Joint Force and its service components. The Joint Force defines forcible entry as “seizing and holding a lodgment in the face of armed opposition.”³⁴ It defines a lodgment as “a designated area in a hostile or potentially hostile operational area that, when seized and held, makes the continuous landing of troops and materiel possible and provides maneuver space for subsequent operations.”³⁵ The doctrinal manual provides guidance on command and control, employment options, command relationships, planning considerations, operational structure, force synchronization, and logistical requirements related to JFE operations. According to JP 3-18, a forcible entry operation typically occurs during the “seize the initiative” or “dominate” phase of a joint operation, with the following internal phases: 1) Preparation and Deployment; 2) Assault; 3) Stabilization of the Lodgment; 4) Introduction of follow-on forces; and 5) Termination or Transition.³⁶ Forcible entry forces typically consist of the following capabilities in isolation or combination: amphibious assault, airborne assault, air assault, or special operations.³⁷ Critical to the success of a forcible entry is the ability to seize a lodgment to facilitate the flow of follow-on forces. Finally, JP 3-18 emphasizes the requirement for the service components to maintain well-trained and well-prepared forces capable of executing forcible entry operations, on short notice, in support of a Joint Force commander.³⁸

³⁴ JP 3-18, vii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ JP 3-18, III-3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, viii.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, x.

The final Joint publication, the JCEO, provides the Joint Chiefs vision for how joint forces enter foreign territory and immediately employ capabilities to accomplish assigned missions.³⁹ The concept frames the military problem in terms of the challenges associated with the Joint Force's ability to enter into foreign territory and accomplish missions while overcoming obstacles consisting of armed opposition, A2/AD capability, geographic constraints, and degraded or austere infrastructure.⁴⁰ The concept outlines the reasons for conducting entry operations as: defend against threats to the global commons; find, control, defeat, and disable weapons of mass destruction; conduct limited duration missions; assist populations and groups; and to establish a lodgment for follow-on forces in support of US strategic objectives.⁴¹ The concept emphasizes the need to employ unpredictable maneuver across multiple domains at multiple entry points to gain entry and achieve desired objectives.⁴² The JCEO identifies 21 capabilities the Joint Force requires to effectively conduct entry in a contested environment, utilizing these capabilities as guidance for the development of doctrine, technologies, and concepts across the service components.

Army Concepts and Doctrine

The *Army Strategic Planning Guidance* of 2014 frames the Army's strategy for meeting unpredictable challenges in the future security environment. The document provides a reference for Army leadership and branch components that explains its role in support of the nation, future direction, and priorities for concept development. The document identifies the Army's two basic roles: deter and defeat threats on land; and control land areas and secure their populations. It

³⁹ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, iii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, v.

⁴² Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, vi.

further identifies the Army's four enabling roles: 1) Support to security cooperation; 2) Support domestic civil authorities; 3) Entry operations; and 4) Army support to other services, the Joint Force, and the Department of Defense.⁴³ In identifying entry operations as an enabling role for the Army, the document states that "an essential element of the Army's capabilities to conduct prompt and sustained land combat rests in its capability for entry operation" from multiple domains.⁴⁴ In order to "project power and win decisively" the Army must overcome belligerent A2/AD capability, enter into foreign territory, and achieve military objectives within either contested or permissive environments.⁴⁵ The Army reinforces the strength of the Joint Force as its land component, which requires the Army to maintain an expeditionary quality to respond at any time against any adversary at any location across the globe.⁴⁶

The Army's operating concept, *Win in a Complex World*, builds on the *Army Strategic Planning Guidance* by clarifying how the Army supports the Joint Force. The operating concept frames the military problem in terms of how the Army conducts prompt response in support of Joint operations, in sufficient scale, and for ample duration to prevent conflict, shape the security environment, and win the nation's wars.⁴⁷ The Operating Concept nests within JFE doctrine by stating: "Army forces conduct expeditionary operations consistent with the Joint Operational Access Concept and Joint Concept for Entry Operations."⁴⁸ The central theme of *Win in a Complex World* is that the Army maintains globally responsive combined arms teams capable of maneuver from multiple locations and domains to present multiple dilemmas to the enemy while

⁴³ Department of the Army, "Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2014," 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁷ TP 525-3-1, 16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

limiting his options, avoiding his strengths, and attacking his weaknesses.⁴⁹ Army forcible and early entry forces provide a foundational capability that enables the Army to respond globally, achieve surprise, and bypass or overcome enemy A2/AD capability through inter- or intra-theater maneuver to multiple locations, setting the conditions for follow-on land operations.⁵⁰ The operating concept identifies the warfighting challenges of projecting forces, conducting forcible and early entry, and rapid transition to offensive operations to ensure access as a focus for further capability development.⁵¹

Within Army doctrine, forcible entry falls primarily within the domain of airborne and air assault capabilities. The US Army considers airborne and air assault units as its assured access capability within the context of Unified Land Operations in support of the JFE concept.⁵² Field Manual (FM) 3-99 *Airborne and Air Assault Operations* outlines Army doctrine as it relates to forcible entry. Much of the concepts within FM 3-99 nest within the doctrinal foundation established in JP 3-18. For instance, the Army reiterates the forcible entry purposes, principles, and phases from JP 3-18 within FM 3-99. Within a JFE operation, airborne and air assault forces provide the Army's mobile, expeditionary capability required to project immediate combat power into operational environments and conduct operations upon arrival.⁵³ The Army organizes and equips airborne and air assault forces to rapidly deploy and conduct sustained operations as a ground maneuver element.⁵⁴ The major contribution the Army emphasizes within FM 3-99 is the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 32.

⁵² Field Manual (FM) 3-99, *Airborne and Air Assault Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), x.

⁵³ FM 3-99, 1-4.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1-8.

unique capability airborne and air assault forces provide to achieve a vertical envelopment, where both capabilities provide flexibility and depth for the joint force commander.⁵⁵

According to FM 3-99, forcible entry can be executed through vertical envelopment to achieve decisive results or establish a lodgment.⁵⁶ JP 3-18 defines vertical envelopment as “a tactical maneuver in which troops that are air-dropped, air-landed, or inserted via air assault, attack the rear and flanks of a force, in effect cutting off or encircling the force.”⁵⁷ Used in combination with other domains, airborne and air assault forces provide flexibility in countering operational access obstacles. The Army may launch airborne forces in support of a JFE without the delays associated with establishing an intermediate staging base (ISB) from which to launch entry operations.⁵⁸ Air assault forces can deploy from land-based facilities and ships, but due to operational reach, may require an ISB from which to launch into hostile territory.⁵⁹ Both capabilities provide a means to achieve surprise, seize a lodgment, or conduct follow-on operations within the construct of a JFE. Each can rapidly project combat power throughout the depth of an operational area.⁶⁰

Within sub-elements of Army doctrine, few functional branches reference the manner in which they support or enable forcible entry. Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 4-0 *Sustainment* references the importance of logistics in sustaining operational reach and force projection in the conduct of Army operations.⁶¹ ADRP 4-0 defines operational reach as “the

⁵⁵ Ibid., x.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1-18.

⁵⁷ JP 3-18, GL-6.

⁵⁸ FM 3-99, 1-20.

⁵⁹ FM 3-99, 1-21.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 4-0, *Sustainment* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), 3-5, 3-7.

distance and duration across which a unit can successfully employ military capabilities.”⁶²

Sustainment enables the operational reach of a forcible entry force from the establishment of the lodgment to the projection of combat power to subsequent military objectives within a theater.

Logistics operations support force projection through the processes of mobilization, deployment, sustainment, and redeployment.⁶³ Sustainment branches provide the logistical support for entry operations as it relates to theater opening and basing necessary to sustain the force.

The Engineer Branch also references support to forcible entry operations in FM 3-34 *Engineer Operations*. Within FM 3-34, the Engineer Branch added “enable force projection and logistics” to its lines of engineer support as a way for the engineer disciplines of combat, general, and geospatial engineering to support the ground force commander within a forcible entry.⁶⁴ The enable force projection and logistics line of engineer support intends to guide the branch in providing the foundational infrastructure necessary for supporting early entry and follow-on forces within a theater of operations.⁶⁵ Similarly, this line of engineer support, combined with the traditional assured mobility competency of the Engineer Corps, provides a means for overcoming an adversary’s attempts to limit US power projection with A2/AD methods.

Case Study: Operation Just Cause

The US invasion of Panama, termed Operation Just Cause, took place from mid-December 1989 to late January 1990. This case study provides a short background to the operation, highlighting the US political, strategic, and operational objectives. It then describes

⁶² ADRP 4-0, 3-5.

⁶³ ADRP 4-0, 3-7.

⁶⁴ Field Manual (FM) 3-34, *Engineer Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), v.

⁶⁵ FM 3-34, v.

and analyzes the factors that contributed to success in the US military's ability to seize a lodgment and project combat power during the early morning invasion on 20 December 1989. The following factors proved critical to the success of the forcible entry: the existing US presence within Panama; the combined airborne, air assault, and ground modes of power projection; outstanding intelligence of the enemy and the operational environment; deception operations; and the overwhelming application of combat power.

Background

Planning for Operation Just Cause began in the fall of 1987 and culminated with the decision by President George H.W. Bush on 17 December 1989 to launch the invasion. Tension between the Panamanian and US governments escalated consistently during this period, as Panama's de facto military dictator, Manuel Noriega, fueled the deteriorating relationship. While clamping down on any domestic political opposition, Noriega endorsed a campaign of harassment directed towards US service personnel and their dependents living in Panama.⁶⁶ Stationed in Panama to protect the American-owned Panama Canal and ensure access to the economically vital region, US military forces long maintained a presence in the region. With over 50,000 US citizens living in the country, including several thousand United States military personnel, the US held significant interest in Panama's security and stability.

Months of harassment directed towards US military personnel and their dependents culminated on the evening of 16 December 1989. PDF soldiers manning a roadblock fired on a group of Marines approaching the traffic stop, killing one.⁶⁷ After witnessing the incident, the

⁶⁶ Lawrence A. Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management June 1987 – December 1989* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2008), 24-28.

⁶⁷ Malcom McConnell, *Just Cause: The Real Story of America's High-Tech Invasion of Panama* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 16-18.

PDF detained a US Navy lieutenant and his wife, subjecting them to torture and harassment.⁶⁸ President Bush approved Operation Just Cause the following day with the policy aim of protecting US interests by restoring stability to Panama. The Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, outlined the following strategic objectives: protect American lives; protect American interests and rights under the Panama Canal treaty; restore Panamanian Democracy; apprehend Noriega; and remove the Noriega regime and replace with a government more acceptable to the Bush administration.⁶⁹ The US Military's Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), US Army South (USARSO), and eventually the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps assumed responsibility for operational planning.

Upon presidential approval the XVIII Airborne Corps, designated as Joint Task Force (JTF) Panama, initiated its plan. Having assumed planning responsibility from USARSO in October 1989, XVIII Airborne Corps finalized the plan and led its execution. The operational plan identified the following objectives: destroying the combat capability of the PDF; seizing key lines of communication to prevent PDF reinforcement at key defensive positions; seizing facilities essential to the Panama Canal's operation; apprehending Noriega; and rescuing US prisoners.⁷⁰ With an estimated strength of approximately 14,000 PDF soldiers defending sites in and around Panama City, XVIII Corps viewed the operation's center of gravity as the PDF, and prioritized destroying its fighting capability during the initial hours. This priority enabled the achievement of all US strategic objectives by neutralizing the PDF's ability to conduct a coordinated defense.⁷¹ Overall, the forcible entry into Panama executed by XVIII Airborne Corps

⁶⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁹ Crowell, 69.

⁷⁰ Crowell, 69.

⁷¹ Ibid.

proved overwhelmingly successful, as US forces simultaneously seized 27 major targets in the initial hours of the operation, employing surprise while minimizing collateral damage.⁷²

Findings

The JCEO identifies Operation Just Cause as one of the most complex forcible entry operations conducted in the US military's history.⁷³ A combination of airborne, air assault, conventional, and special operations forces simultaneously struck 27 major objectives in an around Panama City, rendering the PDF unable to conduct a coordinated defense. Five predominant factors explain the overwhelming success of XVIII Airborne Corp's ability to seize a lodgment and quickly project power. First, the existing presence of US forces within Panama provided an overwhelming advantage within the operational environment that the US military leveraged. Second, the multiple modes of power projection, consisting of airborne, air assault, and ground means, leveraged surprise and simultaneity to gain the initiative over the defending enemy forces. Third, US forces implemented creative means for building intelligence about both the enemy and the environment. Fourth, the US Army utilized an effective deception plan that led to PDF complacency while guarding against a breach of operational security (OPSEC). Finally, the overwhelming combat power concentrated against an inferior force made both tactical and operational success likely.

The US Army possessed a significant advantage during the planning and execution of the forcible entry in that it already possessed a semi-suitable lodgment in Panama City. In 1989, the US Army, Navy, and Air Force already occupied bases along the Panama Canal from which they performed traditional home station operations. The 193rd Infantry Brigade served as the

⁷² Edward M. Flanagan Jr., *Battle for Panama: Inside Operation Just Cause* (New York: Brassey's, 1993), 34.

⁷³ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operation*, 3.

permanent party Army unit within Panama, reporting directly to USARSO. Howard Air Force Base provided an established logistical hub and ensured air lines of communication with the United States. Several thousand US military personnel served in Panama during the 1980s. This number rose to approximately 13,000 Soldiers, Airmen, and Naval personnel immediately prior to the conflict.⁷⁴ A total of approximately 27,000 US military personnel participated in the invasion. Under the guise of training, readiness, and security exercises, the US Army stationed just under half of the required combat power in Panama in anticipation of a future operation.⁷⁵

The US Army utilized the existing lodgment to build combat power long before the initiation of hostilities. The Army began deployment of additional troops in early 1989 as part of Operation Nimrod Dancer, an effort to bolster existing US forces in Panama in response to instability. As part of Nimrod Dancer, the Army deployed an additional brigade headquarters and light infantry battalion from the 7th Infantry Division, a mechanized infantry battalion from the 5th Infantry Division, and a Marine Corps Light Armored Infantry Company.⁷⁶ Anticipating the inevitability of future conflict, Lieutenant General Maxwell Thurman, the SOUTHCOM commander, and Lieutenant General Carl Stiner, the XVIII Airborne Corps Commander, directed the deployment of additional fire support and reconnaissance capabilities to Panama in October 1989. They prepositioned M551 Sheridan light tanks, Apache helicopters, and OH-58 scout helicopters which provided greater flexibility and fire support during the conflict's opening hours.⁷⁷ The Army secretly flew these additional assets into Howard Air Force Base, attempting

⁷⁴ Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 75.

⁷⁵ Lawrence A. Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause December 1989 – January 1990* (Washington DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2014), 51.

⁷⁶ Donnelly, Roth, and Baker, 75.

⁷⁷ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause December 1989 – January 1990*, 26-33.

to avoid alerting the PDF of the increased combat power.⁷⁸ Overall, the existing US military presence provided a significant advantage for building combat power in the country prior to the 20 December H-hour. However, the existing footprint had a second, and possibly even greater, benefit. The US presence enabled both planners and ground forces to build intelligence about the enemy and the terrain in the months leading to the conflict.

The XVIII Airborne Corps and USARSO leadership used numerous methods to gain in-country intelligence while familiarizing soldiers and units with the physical environment. These methods benefited senior leaders, operational planners, as well as the troops on the ground. Detailed intelligence gained through carefully cloaked rehearsals enabled a synchronized plan that maintained operational tempo while ensuring the simultaneous application of combat power across numerous objectives during the first few hours of the conflict.

In the months prior to the invasion, units in Panama conducted multiple rehearsals that familiarized them with their H-hour objectives. US forces conducted two forms of official rehearsals directed by the command: single-unit exercises called “Sand Fleas” and joint exercises called “Purple Storms.”⁷⁹ The Sand Fleas served as individual unit readiness exercises, where platoon to battalion size elements rehearsed their movement to objectives designated by the operations order.⁸⁰ The Purple Storms served to integrate battalion and above elements across the joint force within Panama, improving interoperability and synchronization across the different services.⁸¹ In executing the readiness exercises, the modes of insertion mirrored those which units

⁷⁸ Donnelly, Roth, and Baker, 91.

⁷⁹ Robert Ropelewski, “Planning, Precision, and Surprise Led to Panama Successes,” *Armed Forces Journal International* 127 (February 1990): 28; and Carl Stiner, “The Architect of ‘Just Cause’ Lt. Gen. Carl Stiner Explains his Panama Plan,” *The Army Times*, March 12, 1990, 15.

⁸⁰ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management June 1987 – December 1989*, 231.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 111, 181.

utilized the morning of 20 December – either ground movement or air assault. The rehearsals benefited the tactical level units by orienting them with the terrain, as they verified the location of objectives and the defense posture of PDF on each site.⁸² According to Colonel Douglas Terrell, commander of the 7th Infantry Division’s Aviation Brigade: “The rehearsals were going on right under the noses of the PDF for three of the air assaults. The PDF thought we were doing it to strengthen security or to protect our forces.”⁸³ Both tactical and operational leaders utilized the close proximity to the Just Cause objectives to bolster their understanding of the environment.

The semi-permissive environment in Panama prior to hostilities enabled official and unofficial reconnaissance by US leaders. Both Lieutenant General Stiner and the commander of the 193rd Infantry Brigade, Colonel Mike Snell, completed personal helicopter reconnaissance of potential objectives in the months leading to the conflict, which then informed operational planning.⁸⁴ Tactical level leaders conducted plain-clothes reconnaissance during daylight hours, while others performed unit-level van mounted tactical exercises without troops (TEWT) to rehearse H-hour actions.⁸⁵ Company-level leaders even met to recon and talk through objectives on the weekend.⁸⁶ Units within Panama additionally leveraged close proximity to the PDF to gain intelligence on its activities and plans. The 29th Military Intelligence Battalion established listening points in the vicinity of PDF bases to acquire information on the capability and intent of

⁸² Clarence E. Briggs III, *Operation Just Cause: Panama December 1989 – A Soldier’s Eyewitness Account* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1990), 35.

⁸³ Ropelewski, 28.

⁸⁴ Flanagan, 34.

⁸⁵ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause December 1989 – January 1990*, 112-113, 175-176.

⁸⁶ Robert K. Brown, “U.S. Warriors Topple Panamanian Thugs: “We Came, We Saw, We Kicked Ass” – 82nd Airborne Graffiti, Balboa, Panama,” *Soldier of Fortune* (April 1990): 59.

its troops.⁸⁷ Overall, the semi-permissive environment enabled the solidification of plans through effective H-hour rehearsals, while facilitating a thorough and meticulous understanding of the environment. Subsequently, the rehearsals performed by US forces created the added benefit of an effective deception plan.

Accounts and after action reports (AAR) from Operation Just Cause indicate that the Sand Flea and Purple Storm readiness exercises created a routine training environment in Panama that ensured the element of surprise. According to the USARSO Operation Just Cause AAR, the Sand Flea and Purple Storm exercises “became so commonplace that during the initial stages of JUST CAUSE some Panamanians felt that the activity was another in this series of irritating events. When they discovered otherwise, the time for effective resistance had passed.”⁸⁸ The frequency of the exercises even influenced the highest levels of Panamanian leadership. On the night of 19 December, as the US military posture increased in Panama, Noriega dismissed the activity as another training exercise.⁸⁹ He and his PDF leadership failed to take effective action to coordinate a synchronized defense that might have impeded the US Army’s ability to quickly seize objectives. The effect also thwarted any attempt by Noriega to flee Panama, as US Special Forces disabled any means of aerial transportation out of the country. Navy SEALs destroyed Noriega’s personal jet, which served as one of the 27 major objectives US forces assaulted through airborne, air assault, and ground means at H-hour.

The mix of forward deployed and US based contingency forces attacked in a synchronized manner through airborne, air assault, and ground insertion methods to achieve surprise and concentration. JTF-Panama task organized into five major task force elements that

⁸⁷ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause December 1989 – January 1990*, 155.

⁸⁸ Operation Just Cause After Action Report (AAR): Enclosure 3 (Operations) to Army After Action Report (AAR): Operation Just Cause, “Deception Planning and Execution,” May 28, 1990, Panama Crisis Collection, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁸⁹ Flanagan, 25.

facilitated the simultaneous seizure of objectives at H-hour. The major task force elements, with composition, mode of entry, and general objectives are described below and highlighted in Figure 1.⁹⁰

- 1) Task Force Atlantic. 7th Infantry Division elements stationed in Panama as part of Operation Nimrod Dancer. Attacked H-hour targets north of Panama City on the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal via ground modes of insertion from US bases.
- 2) Task Force Bayonet. 193rd Infantry Brigade and supporting units stationed as permanent party in Panama under USARSO. Attacked H-hour targets in Panama City including the PDF Headquarters, the Presidential Palace, Fort Amador, and the Patilla Airport via air assault and ground modes of insertion from US bases.
- 3) Task Force Pacific. 82nd Airborne Division units, consisting of the 1st Brigade, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), and supporting division enablers. Originating at Fort Bragg, the unit conducted an airborne insertion into the 75th Ranger Regiment secured Torrijos-Tocumen Airport. Following the airborne entry, it seized three major objectives via air assault on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal including PDF garrisons at Panama Viejo, Fort Cimarron, and Tinajitas.
- 4) Task Force Semper Fi. The Marine Corps permanent party contingent stationed in Panama and those deployed as part of Operation Nimrod Dancer. It secured key US facilities and lines of communication on the west side of the Panama Canal at H-hour via ground insertion.
- 5) Special Operations Task Forces Red, White, Black, Blue, and Green. An amalgam of Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, and the US Army 75th Ranger Regiment units. At H-hour, the rangers seized the Torrijos-Tocumen and Rio Hato Airports via

⁹⁰ Further description of the specific missions of each task force can be found at: Donnelly, Roth, Baker, 77; Flanagan, 46; and Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management June 1987 – December 1989*, 268.

airborne insertion from the United States. Army Special Forces (SF) and Navy SEALs already in Panama attacked high value targets via ground and air assault insertion.

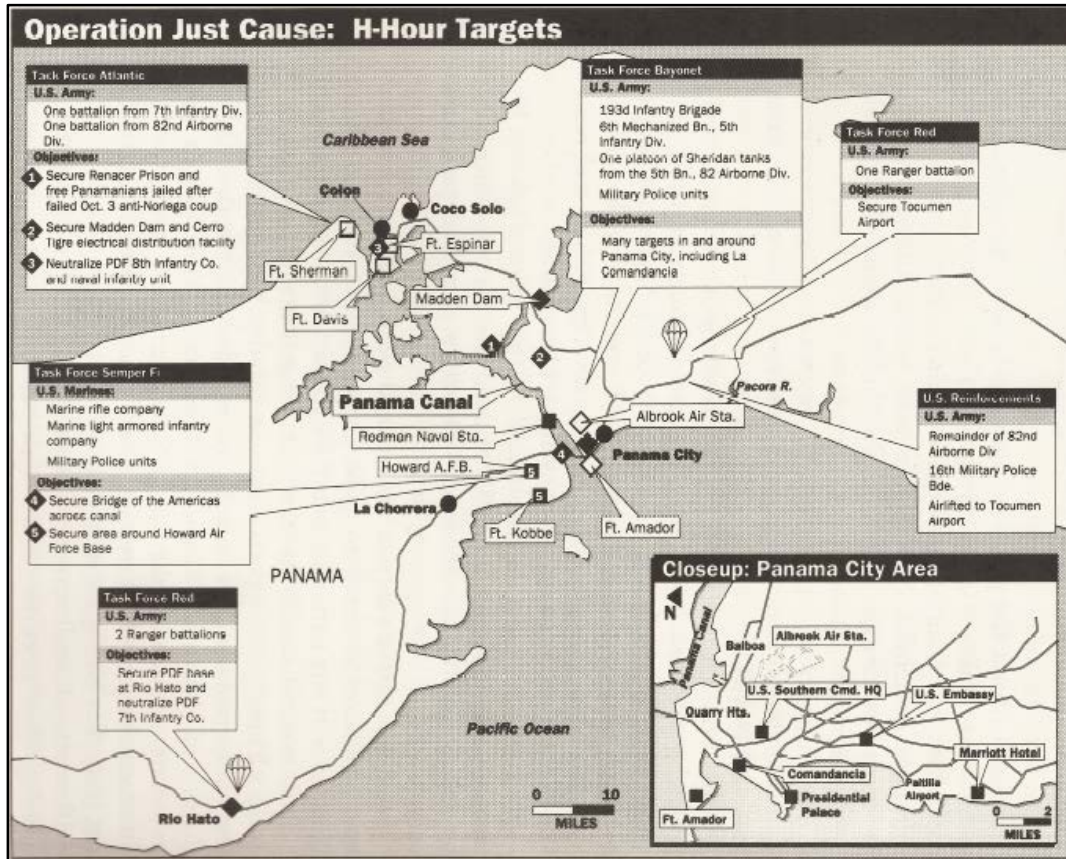


Figure 1. Operation Just Cause H-Hour Targets

Source: Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth, and Caleb Baker, *Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama* (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), 100.

USARSO's original Just Cause plan differed in the mode of insertion and composition for parts of the forcible entry force. The original plan called for the gradual build-up of US forces within Panama beginning at H-hour. The plan directed the entry of an air-landed brigade of 7th Infantry Division over a period of days to support ground combat operations.⁹¹ Upon assuming

⁹¹ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management June 1987 – December 1989*, 133.

command of SOUTHCOM in October 1989, General Thurman directed the replacement of 7th Infantry Division with the 82nd Airborne Division as the essential assault force within Task Force Pacific, preferring a rapid airborne strike, synchronized alongside ground and air assault operations from forces already in Panama.⁹² This approach ensured the application of overwhelming combat power across the initial entry mission set to quickly seize the initiative over the PDF. The US military faced the key operational challenge of synchronizing the timing of hundreds of moving pieces into and throughout Panama at H-hour. In the process, they succeeded in maintaining OPSEC of the pending invasion until the night of 19 December.

In order to achieve surprise, OPSEC became a major concern at all echelons of the US military. While the Sand Fleas and Purple Storms remained veiled as readiness and training exercises, media reports in the United States threatened to provide early warning to the Noriega regime. In order to ensure OPSEC, the XVIII Airborne Corps and units from the 82nd Airborne Division cloaked rehearsals for support to Operation Just Cause as part of the Division's Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise (EDRE) Program.⁹³ Understanding the media's ability to detect heightened activity at military bases, division elements conducted EDREs with regularity, thus creating the perception of a standard readiness exercise at Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base in the days leading to 19 December.⁹⁴ The US military maintained effective OPSEC until the night of 19 December, when PDF elements received warning just hours prior to the operation.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 268.

⁹³ Operation Just Cause After Action Report (AAR): Enclosure 4 (Training) to Army After Action Report (AAR): Operation Just Cause, "EDRE Programs," May 28, 1990, Panama Crisis Collection, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

⁹⁴ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause December 1989 – January 1990*, 40.

The early warning received by the PDF did little to prevent the successful US Army seizure of H-hour objectives. On the evening of 19 December, US media outlets printed speculative reports about a possible attack, while Cuban sources confirmed the existence of troop transport aircraft traveling towards Panama.⁹⁵ While US forces lost the immediate tactical surprise, they benefited from OPSEC over the months and days preceding the operation. The reports occurred with little time for the PDF to establish a coordinated defense, while its leader, Manuel Noriega, concerned himself with personal survival.⁹⁶ One major issue concerned US military leadership after the loss of tactical surprise. The presence of shoulder fired surface-to-air (SAM) missiles threatened low flying troop transports and air assault helicopters.

While the US Air Force operated with complete air superiority over Panama, the greatest area denial threat possessed by the PDF was its Soviet provided anti-aircraft artillery and shoulder fired SAMs. However, the PDF failed to employ these capabilities with any significant effect on US military aircraft. US ground forces already in Panama rendered the Soviet bloc ZPU 14.5-mm and 23-mm anti-aircraft guns inoperable at H-hour. During planning, US intelligence indicated the PDF possessed Soviet-developed SAM-7 and SAM-16 anti-aircraft missiles.⁹⁷ Intelligence assessments indicated that, while the PDF possessed this capability, they lacked the “desire or resolve” to employ it.⁹⁸ As a contingency, US forces mitigated the potential threat by maintaining operational surprise, planning H-hour insertions during the cover of darkness, and utilizing AC-130 Spectre gunships to neutralize potential firing points from the air.⁹⁹ The combination of

⁹⁵ Ibid., 65-72.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 228.

⁹⁷ McConnell, 80.

⁹⁸ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management June 1987 – December 1989*, 172.

⁹⁹ Crowell, 75-77.

effects achieved the overall intent, as PDF SAMs capability accomplished little during the operation's initial entry phase.

Finally, the asymmetry in force composition and capability between the PDF and the US military all but made operational success during the forcible entry a foregone conclusion. Inferior in size and technology, the PDF operated predominantly as an internal security force. Well trained and disciplined at the tactical level to counter domestic threats, they lacked effective leadership, training, and equipment to counter a professional US military.¹⁰⁰ As a result, upon learning of the US attack, many PDF Soldiers fled the immediate Panama City vicinity for the relative safety of the countryside.¹⁰¹ The US military force, consisting of 27,000 Soldiers, airmen, and marines across conventional and special operations forces, combined with precision airstrikes and aerial bombardment, quickly overwhelmed any defense the PDF mounted. While the remaining PDF fought hard, in the end US forces failed to encounter the number of PDF troops originally expected.¹⁰²

Case Study: Operation Corporate

From April to June 1982, the British military executed Operation Corporate to recapture the Falkland Islands from Argentina. The British government dispatched a combined naval, marine, and army task force consisting of a Carrier Battle Group, Amphibious Task Force, and Landing Force to sail 8,000 miles, conduct an amphibious entry, and retake the British territory. This case provides a short background to the operation, highlighting the British political, strategic, and operational objectives. It then analyzes the key factors that contributed to British success in lodgment seizure and combat power projection. The following factors proved critical

¹⁰⁰ Yates, *The U.S. Military Intervention in Panama: Origins, Planning, and Crisis Management June 1987 – December 1989*, 38.

¹⁰¹ Donnelly, Roth, Baker, 183.

¹⁰² Ibid.

to the British military's success in the forcible entry: an understanding of the operational environment shaped through reconnaissance and intelligence activities; deception operations at the strategic and operational level; the combination of joint force effects to overcome Argentine A2/AD capability; and logistics as an enabler for operational reach and force projection.

Background

On 2 April 1982, the Argentine military invaded the Falklands Islands. Located approximately 200 miles off the coast of Argentina, the island remained disputed between the Argentine and British governments since the 1800s. During the invasion, Argentine marines quickly overwhelmed the small British garrison. The Argentine military established and reinforced an 8,000 troop garrison with its headquarters located at the capital of Stanley. On 5 April, the British government immediately alerted a combined naval and marine task force to sail from Britain for the Falklands, with its route highlighted in Figure 2.¹⁰³ The British Government identified two principals at stake which warranted a coordinated diplomatic and military effort. First, the Argentine Government threatened the Falkland Islanders right of self-determination. With a large British majority, the Falkland's population previously voted to remain a territory of the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁴ Second, the British viewed Argentine aggression as a violation of international sovereignty that warranted an immediate response from the international community. The British Government adopted the policy objective of achieving a complete Argentine withdrawal and full restoration of British administration.¹⁰⁵ From the operation's

¹⁰³ Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign - Volume II: War and Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

¹⁰⁴ Freedman, 19.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

beginnings, the British viewed the means of accomplishing this objective as both diplomatic and military.



Figure 2. British Task Force Sea Route to the Falkland Islands

Source: Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1983), 95.

The British strategy to achieve an Argentine withdrawal leveraged complementary diplomatic and military pressure.¹⁰⁶ While the British Government participated in diplomatic negotiations mediated by both US and UN representatives, it displayed resolve to undertake

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

military action in the event of diplomatic failure. British diplomats increased pressure to achieve a negotiated resolution in its favor, as the Carrier Battle Group established a blockade and Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ) around the Falklands to prevent the naval and aerial resupply of the Argentine forces.¹⁰⁷ As the diplomatic effort failed, British officials approved the operation to retake the Falkland Islands. On 21 May, the combined British Carrier Group, Amphibious Task Force, and Landing Force initiated military action with the operational objectives of securing a bridgehead, building and projecting combat power on land, and defeating the Argentine military.¹⁰⁸ The amphibious landing occurred on East Falkland at Port San Carlos. Over a period of six days, the Landing Force seized a lodgment and built combat power for a subsequent advance towards Argentinian positions. By 14 June, the combined British Task Force seized the capital of Stanley and reasserted British possession of the Falklands as the Argentine military surrendered.¹⁰⁹

Findings

In Operation Corporate, the British Task Force, consisting of a Naval Carrier Group, Naval Amphibious Group, and Marine Commando Landing Force, conducted a complex entry into a non-permissive environment that many observers initially considered impossible.¹¹⁰ Upon initiation of the attack, British forces quickly seized a lodgment at Port San Carlos after encountering minimal initial Argentine resistance. Once on land, the British Task Force faced strong Argentinian air attacks that impeded its ability to build combat power and conduct a

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 211.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Clapp and Ewen Southby-Tailyour, *Amphibious Assault Falklands: The Battle of San Carlos Water* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 85-86.

¹⁰⁹ Duncan Anderson, *The Falklands War 1982* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 10.

¹¹⁰ Freedman, 70.

breakout. After landing additional combat power, a combined Marine and Army land force advanced on Stanley, reasserting British control of the Falklands. Ultimately, four predominant factors emerged in the success of the Task Force in seizing a lodgment, building combat power, and projecting power to seize Stanley and defeat Argentine resistance. First, the Task Force conducted integral reconnaissance and intelligence activities which shaped the commanders' understanding of the operational environment, including the effects of terrain and enemy on the potential landing. Second, the British Government and the Task Force conducted strategic and operational deception which effectively influenced the Argentine military's assessment of a potential landing and shaped the concept in which they defended the Islands. Third, the combined effects of naval fires, air interdiction, air defense, and Special Forces effectively neutralized the Argentine A2/AD air threat. Finally, logistics capacity ashore assured sustained access and proved critical for the Landing Force's breakout and advance to subsequent objectives.

An understanding of the operational environment, gained through intelligence activities and reconnaissance, set the conditions for an unopposed landing and lodgment seizure. An early obstacle identified by planners lay in understanding the terrain in and around the Falklands.¹¹¹ During planning and execution, three men proved central to the operation's success: Rear Admiral Sandy Woodward, Commander of the Carrier Battle Group; Commodore Michael Clapp, Commander of the Amphibious Task Force; and Brigadier Julian Thompson, Commander of the Landing Force. In order to make effective decisions regarding potential amphibious entry sites, the commanders' required a thorough analysis of the terrain, including potential landing beaches and approach marches to Argentinian positions.¹¹² Though the British occupied the Falklands for decade's prior, little terrain data existed in British databases.¹¹³ In order to shape understanding of

¹¹¹ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 35.

¹¹² Freedman, 422.

¹¹³ Ibid., 72.

the physical environment, Brigadier Thompson recruited assistance from a former Falklands Island Garrison Commander, Major Ewen Southby-Tailyour. Possessing first-hand experience on the island, combined with detailed survey data on the Falkland beaches gained through his interest as a professional sailor, Southby-Tailyour recommended a number of potential landing sites, with San Carlos meeting optimum amphibious landing criteria.¹¹⁴ San Carlos possessed sheltered anchorage for the amphibious ships to unload men and supplies, a number of good landing beaches, defensible ground surrounding the lodgment, room for logistics, accessible exits for tracked vehicles, and natural obstacles which made an Argentinian counterattack unlikely.¹¹⁵

While the commanders identified an unopposed landing as a critical criterion for ensuring success during lodgment seizure, a landing at or near the defended Argentinian garrison at Stanley became an early option. Ultimately, the commanders opted for the possibility of an unopposed landing over the advantage of proximity to Stanley. According to Commodore Clapp's assessment, "better to plan to beat the enemy from a firm position ashore with full available logistics than straight from the sea" near Stanley, where the enemy could easily maneuver and concentrate its defense at the landing site.¹¹⁶ In order to determine the viability of the proposed landing sites, including that at San Carlos, Task Force planners required greater intelligence regarding the size of the Argentine force on the Falklands, their level of armament, and how effectively they prepared to defend a potential landing.¹¹⁷ Figure 3 illustrates the considered beach landing sites compared to Argentinian Army locations.

¹¹⁴ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 77-78.

¹¹⁵ Julian Thompson, "Force Projection and the Falklands Conflict," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years On: Lessons for the Future*, ed. Stephen Badsey, Rob Havers, and Mark Grove (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 89.

¹¹⁶ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 63-66.

¹¹⁷ Woodward, 78.

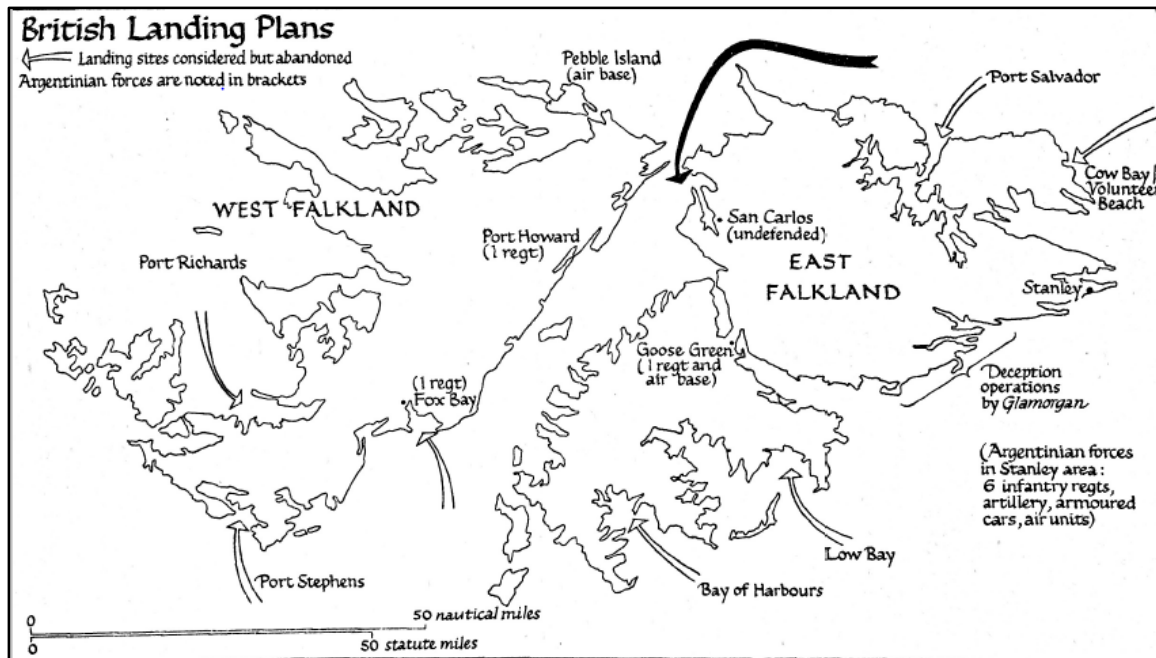


Figure 3. Operation Corporate Beach Landing Options and Argentinian Army Locations

Source: Martin Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate: The Falklands War, 1982* (London: Viking, 1985), 197.

British Special Forces, consisting of Special Boat Service (SBS) and Special Air Service (SAS) detachments, shaped the commanders' understanding and confidence as they considered landing sites. Reconnaissance by SBS and SAS confirmed enemy disposition and composition at the various Falkland beaches, in addition to morale of the enemy, command structure, types of weapon systems, and the ability of the Argentinians to move troops via helicopter as part of a counterattack.¹¹⁸ In addition, the detachments confirmed initial estimates provided by Southby-Tailyour on the effects of terrain at each proposed landing site. As H-hour loomed, to facilitate an unopposed landing with minimal risk to British forces, the detachments monitored San Carlos and the approach waters to confirm enemy activity or mining operations.¹¹⁹ According to Clapp in his

¹¹⁸ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 101.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

assessment of the importance of Special Forces, they “collected the information without which the landings could not have proceeded.”¹²⁰

In addition to effective intelligence, strategic and operational deception shaped conditions for the British Task Force and influenced enemy defense plans. Deception operations confused the Argentinian leadership about the intent of the British forces, and contributed to the garrison’s inability to mount a coordinated, timely ground attack during the initial lodgment seizure at San Carlos. At the strategic level, the British Ministry of Defense (MOD) implemented a deception plan generated at its Special Projects Group (SPG) to mislead Argentina regarding the true intent of the Task Force. The SPG initiated an effort that threatened facilities on the Argentine mainland. By threatening these facilities, British officials hoped to mislead Argentine officials as to the timing of attacks on the Falklands, persuading them to move air units to northerly bases, and dedicate military resources for defense of the mainland.¹²¹ Combined with an operational deception plan, strategic deception planted the seeds of confusion.

Operational deception proved effective in convincing the Argentine commander on the Falklands, Brigadier General Mario Benjamin Menendez, of a pending British landing near Stanley. Leading up to the 21 May assault, the British pursued a three pronged deception plan codenamed Operation Tornado. First, aviation and naval gunfire bombarded Argentine infrastructure and positions near Stanley to harass and soften the defenses. Second, the Task Force leaked its strategy referencing a large combined operation against both the mainland and Argentine defenses at Stanley through radio signals intended for enemy intercept. Finally, the Task Force inserted SBS patrols to engage locals. The patrols spread word of a pending

¹²⁰ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 102.

¹²¹ Freedman, 414-416.

amphibious attack at Stanley, while simultaneously conducting dummy reconnaissance patrols in the Stanley waters.¹²²

Combined with an SAS diversionary attack at H-hour, the deception efforts proved effective on the day of the San Carlos landing. While the Amphibious Task Force facilitated the landing of the British 3 Commando Brigade, SAS detachments raided Argentine positions near the Goose Green settlement. At Menendez's headquarters in Stanley, early reports indicated two British battalions ashore at San Carlos, but he considered this a diversionary attack for a larger British landing closer to Stanley.¹²³ After Menendez realized the extent of the British operation, and amidst pressure from the Argentinian President Leopoldo Galtieri to prevent a British landing, he ordered a counterattack from Argentinian forces defending Goose Green. Believing they were pinned down by a battalion of infantry rather than a detachment of SAS, the Argentine forces at Goose Green refused to move.¹²⁴ Overall, despite pressure from the Argentine Government, the military garrison effectively allowed the British to land unopposed. According to Menendez, "I had told them that my main policy was to oppose a British landing at Puerto Argentino [Stanley] and they couldn't tell me that I had failed in this. And now they wanted me to do something else completely different and impossible."¹²⁵ Menendez instead turned to the Argentine Air Force to counter the British threat.

As an A2/AD capability, Argentinian airpower presented the most effective forced entry challenge. The Argentine Air Force served as the predominant threat to the Amphibious Task Force's ability to get both combat and logistics forces ashore. After British naval aviation

¹²² Freedman, 467-486.

¹²³ Martin Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate: The Falklands War*, 1982 (London: Viking, 1985), 228.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹²⁵ Middlebrook, 229.

rendered the airstrips on the Falkland Islands unserviceable, the predominant air threat originated from the mainland. All three British Commanders, Woodward, Clapp, and Thompson, agreed early in the planning process on the decisiveness of air superiority for putting forces ashore.¹²⁶ Possessing approximately 120 operationally ready aircraft, the Argentine's held them in reserve beginning on 1 May with the intent to avoid direct contact with the British Carrier Group or naval fighters.¹²⁷ Though Woodward hoped to attrite the Argentinian Air Force in the weeks leading to D-day, the Argentinians refused to do battle, and instead held airpower in reserve for defense of a British attack at Stanley.¹²⁸ Despite the clear lack of air superiority, the British MOD approved execution of the San Carlos landing, identifying the risks as manageable by the Task Force.¹²⁹ On the day of landing, the Argentine Air Force proved effective. They struck a total of five British ships, sinking one and significantly damaging the remainder.¹³⁰ Yet the amphibious landing continued, as the Landing Force sustained zero casualties. The MOD assessment ultimately proved correct. The effect of joint fires and the advantages inherent in the terrain overcame Argentina's ability to influence the landing.

Understanding the threat posed by Argentinian airpower, the commanders relied on a series of capabilities to attrite enemy aircraft throughout the landing operation. The combination of naval fires, air interdiction, landing force air defense systems, and Special Forces helped tip the balance of power. On D-day, Argentina launched a total of thirty-five sorties on the Task Force's position inside San Carlos Bay. The combination of Sea Harrier Combat Air Patrols (CAP), in

¹²⁶ Sandy Woodward, *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1992), 98-99.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 184, 270.

¹²⁸ Freedman, 421.

¹²⁹ Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1983), 169.

¹³⁰ Woodward, 269.

conjunction with 4.5” naval guns, downed fifteen enemy aircraft while defending the amphibious landing ships.¹³¹ The Argentine Air Force continued attacks in similar magnitude over subsequent days with comparable results. While the British navy possessed the preponderance of effective aviation countermeasures, the Landing Force employed air defense artillery once ashore. They utilized Rapier systems to create an air defense bubble over the lodgment.¹³² Special Forces also contributed to the attrition of the Argentine air capability. Concurrent with H-hour, the Task Force inserted a British SAS team to raid and disable an Argentine air force position on Pebble Island, northwest of the landing site, effectively destroying twenty-seven Argentinian fighters.¹³³ While the Argentine Air Force inflicted damage on British ships, it sustained a more significant rate of loss due to the combined effects of British air defense, air interdiction, and Special Forces operations.

The effects of terrain in and around the San Carlos Bay also limited the Argentine Air Force’s effectiveness. The mountainous terrain surrounding the Bay constrained the ability of incoming aircraft to identify targets, which proved favorable for the British Task Force. According to Woodward, the Argentinians “made the crucial mistake of going for our frigates and destroyers rather than the amphibious ships and troops carriers, which were there for the taking.”¹³⁴ Originating from the mainland, Argentine bombers made a two-hour flight to the Islands without fighter support. Upon arriving over San Carlos Bay, they possessed very little accurate intelligence regarding the types and location of targets to engage, while simultaneously coming within British CAP and air defense range. According to Argentinian Brigadier Horacio Mir Gonzalez, an air force captain during the conflict, “A question that Argentinian pilots have

¹³¹ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 155.

¹³² Middlebrook, 230-231.

¹³³ Woodward, 270.

¹³⁴ Woodward, 262.

always been asked after the war is why we attacked the British warships and not their logistics ships. The answer is quite simple: we attacked whatever we could attack, if and when we saw it!"¹³⁵ The combination of restrictive terrain, ineffective Argentine targeting, and the dual capabilities of air defense and air interdiction created conditions that facilitated sustained access to the entry point at San Carlos, which is illustrated in Figure 4. The 3 Commando Brigade secured the initial lodgment during the first four hours of the operation, while the Landing Force's logistics required an additional six days to build the requisite capacity to support a breakout.

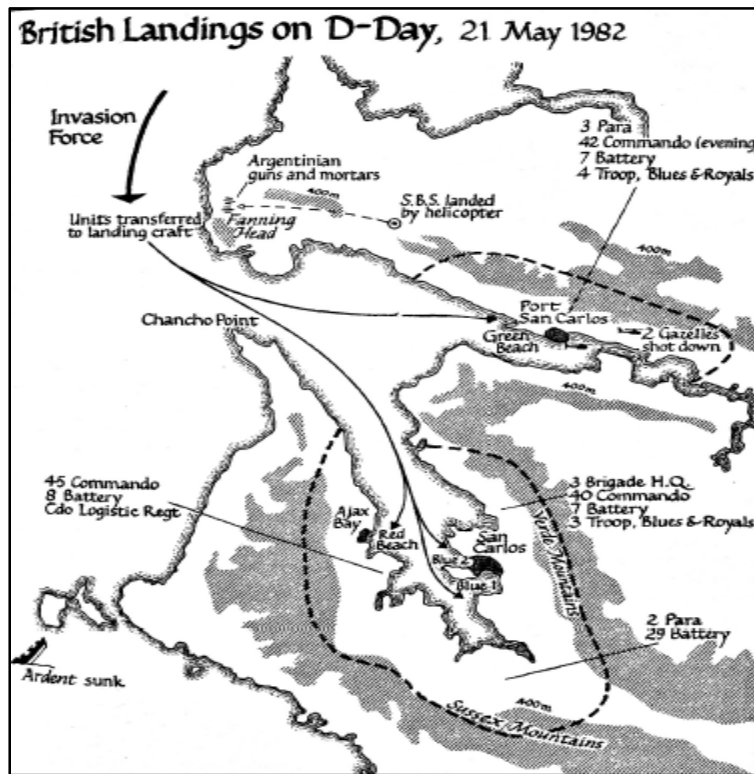


Figure 4. British Landing in San Carlos Bay

Source: Martin Middlebrook, *Operation Corporate: The Falklands War, 1982* (London: Viking, 1985), 209.

¹³⁵ Horacio Mir Gonzalez, "An Argentinian Airman in the South Atlantic," in *The Falklands Conflict Twenty Years on: Lessons for the Future*, ed. Stephen Badsey, Rob Havers, and Mark Grove (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 78.

The logistics build-up ashore first constrained, then ultimately enabled, the projection of forces beyond the initial entry beachhead. After the initial lodgment seizure, the logistics fears of Thompson and his subordinate commanders materialized. According to Nick Vaux, Commander of 42 Commando Brigade, “All of us acknowledged the impossibility of a breakout before we could sustain ourselves, but at the same time we feared stagnation within the beach-head.”¹³⁶ Stagnation occurred, as the logistics race ashore turned into a competition between the Argentine Air Force’s ability to target ships in San Carlos Bay and the speed in which the Amphibious Task Force landed the required logistics. Ultimately, the air threat forced the Task Force to revise its logistics concept. Assuming air superiority, the Task Force originally planned to conduct logistical support directly off ships in San Carlos Bay, while maintaining a small support area ashore.¹³⁷ Once the air threat emerged, the Task Force fundamentally revised its logistics plan. It stockpiled 30 days-of-supply (DOS), in addition to medical and maintenance capabilities ashore, to facilitate sustained access and lodgment breakout. The Task Force simultaneously moved all naval ships to sea, outside of the Argentine Air Force range.¹³⁸

In addition to the increased quantity of supply required for transportation from ship to shore, the manner in which unloading occurred delayed the build-up. Because the Task Force departed Britain hastily, it failed to implement logistical storage priorities for efficient offloading.¹³⁹ During the offload process, the random manner in which the Task Force stored support items forced logisticians to reconfigure cargo at sea based on the priorities established on

¹³⁶ Nick Vaux, *Take That Hill!: Royal Marines in the Falklands War* (New York: Pergamon-Brassey’s, 1986), 97.

¹³⁷ Kenneth L. Privratsky, *Logistics in the Falklands War* (South Yorkshire, England: Pen and Sword, 2014), 95-96.

¹³⁸ Vaux, 93.

¹³⁹ Clapp and Southby-Tailyour, 32.

the ground.¹⁴⁰ With cargo ships and amphibious transportation now moving from sea, into the San Carlos Bay, to the shore, the cycle time for logistical items to reach ground units took at least two days.¹⁴¹ Logistics considerations constrained the land force's ability to consolidate its gains and advance, which triggered frustration from officials back in London.

Officials in London felt international pressure as the campaign stagnated due to the logistics and movement problems. The British MOD signaled concerns to the Task Force on 24 May regarding the implications of a delayed breakout from the beach.¹⁴² On 26 May, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, Commander of all British Operations in the South Atlantic, emphasized to Woodward and Thompson, "it is imperative that we keep going at very best possible speed."¹⁴³ A sense emerged that diplomatic support in favor of a pro-British resolution would wane as soon as the Task Force initiated military action. While Thompson expressed the need for patience as 3 Commando Brigade built-up vital logistics ashore, political pressure increased to get ahead of international pressure that called for a ceasefire.¹⁴⁴ According to then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, "every day that Stanley is not taken is another country lost to world opinion."¹⁴⁵ On 27 May, elements of 3 Commando Brigade finally advanced to objectives at Darwin and Goose Green. The Land Force maintained pressure on the Argentinians while additional combat power came ashore in preparation for a final assault on Stanley.

After 3 Commando Brigade successfully defeated enemy opposition at Goose Green, the Brigade transitioned towards Stanley. On 30 May, Major General Jeremy Moore arrived in the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 32-25.

¹⁴¹ Privatsky, 116.

¹⁴² Ibid., 129.

¹⁴³ Freedman, 563.

¹⁴⁴ Jenkins and Hastings, 220.

¹⁴⁵ Jenkins and Hastings, 275.

Falklands with additional combat power in the form of 5th Infantry Brigade. Moore assumed command of all British land forces, and prepared for a two-brigade assault on the Argentinian positions defending the capital. After landing 5th Infantry Brigade and establishing Forward Brigade Maintenance Areas (FBMA) to sustain the two-brigade advance, the Land Force commenced its attack on 11 June. By 15 June, British forces secured Stanley and declared a ceasefire after the Argentinian garrison surrendered.

Synthesis

The JCEO outlines a framework for forcible entry operations. The framework addresses the military problem of entry onto foreign territory followed by the immediate employment of capabilities to accomplish missions against armed opposition. The approach emphasizes the consideration of enemy area denial systems, geography, and degraded or austere infrastructure as key challenges.¹⁴⁶ In order to overcome these challenges, the JCEO proposes that “future mission-tailored joint forces will conduct entry by integrating force capabilities across multiple domains, exploiting gaps in an adversary’s defense at select entry points to achieve operational objectives.”¹⁴⁷ This section illustrates the factors that led to success in both case studies by considering the following JCEO framework concepts: Establish appropriate operational conditions; Form mission-tailored joint forces for entry operations; Conduct entry by integrating force capabilities across multiple domains; and Transition to achieve operational objectives..

In both cases, military forces created conditions that contributed to successful entry against armed opposition. The US and British ability to shape enemy decision-making during the initial lodgment seizure appears most significant. Operational deception, the use of terrain, and the nature of the physical environment influenced the opponent’s ability to prevent American or

¹⁴⁶ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, 10.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

British entry. Deception operations confused the enemy regarding the intent of the invasion forces. In Operation Just Cause, the regularity in which US forces conducted rehearsals created a condition where the PDF failed to recognize the dynamics of conflict until after the invasion force secured key objectives. In Operation Corporate, deception served as an effective tool that confused the enemy regarding the time, location, and intent of the lodgment seizure. In both cases, operational deception successfully created a physical, as well as psychological, gap in the enemy defense that facilitated effective entry. Simultaneously, the US and British military leveraged advantages within the terrain and physical environment to create conditions that constrained the enemy's ability to effectively counter the forcible entry in both scenarios. American forces seized key terrain in Panama before the PDF could react, while the terrain surrounding the beach at San Carlos limited the Argentine Air Force's effectiveness. The advantageous use of terrain and the environment should be considered in determining the specific entry points as they may offer unique advantages. Additionally, creative deception efforts can increase the enemy's uncertainty while offering multiple dilemmas based on time, location, and intent of the entry force.

The effectiveness of mission-tailored joint forces appears contradictory in the results of the case studies. The JCEO states that "in order to successfully execute the entry mission, the Joint Force must be tailorable to the demands of the situation and the mission at hand."¹⁴⁸ In Operation Just Cause, the commanders of SOUTHCOM, USARSO, and XVIII Airborne Corps directed the force composition and capabilities required given lengthy analysis and assessment of the mission. During the planning process, after assuming the command of SOUTHCOM, General Thurman reframed the direction of the planning effort by emphasizing the complementary need for speed, surprise, and concentration. In doing so, he substituted the use of a brigade from the 7th Infantry Division with one from the 82nd Airborne Division as the US-based entry force. The

¹⁴⁸ Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*, 14.

82nd Airborne Division's capabilities better met Thurman's outlined conditions. However, in Operation Corporate, the Task Force deployed as an ad hoc assembly of naval, air, and marine capabilities across the three commands of the Carrier Battle Group, Amphibious Group, and Landing Force. In order to achieve a successful entry, the Task Force creatively applied diverse capabilities across all task organized elements, including Special Forces. The case suggests that, while a tailorable force specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct forcible entry may be the ideal, a general force possessing diverse capabilities may exhibit the adaptability necessary to succeed in overcoming the challenges of area denial, geography, or austere infrastructure. In both cases, the use of Special Forces served as a crucial combat multiplier. They possessed unique capabilities that the conventional forces leveraged and without which the results may have been different.

The case studies prove the importance of multiple domains in achieving a position of advantage relative to the enemy, while overcoming area denial and geographic challenges. In both cases, the combined effects of land, sea, and air based capabilities created an asymmetric advantage. In Operation Just Cause, US forces leveraged ground, airborne, air assault, and Special Forces to conduct a vertical envelopment while quickly overwhelming PDF defenses at multiple entry points. In Operation Corporate, the British integrated land, sea, air, and Special Forces capabilities to overcome Argentine area denial platforms, secure a beachhead, and maintain access. The deployment and use of capabilities across multiple domains created numerous dilemmas for the defender, overloaded his decision making ability, and allowed the attacking militaries to seize and maintain the initiative. The creative and combined effects ensured operational access to the targeted entry locations and set conditions for achieving operational and strategic objectives.

Finally, when discussing the transition to achieve operational objectives, the JCEO makes little mention of logistics and operational reach. In fact, the framework emphasizes the role of follow-on forces once the initial lodgment is secured with minimal consideration of subsequent

operations by the landing force to sustain the lodgment, project power, conduct a lodgment break-out, or transition to a ground offensive. Two different phenomenon emerged through the case studies reference transition. First, the existing infrastructure within Panama ensured operational reach during Operation Just Cause. Existing US facilities enabled the build-up of forces and equipment necessary to achieve operational objectives in the days, weeks, and months leading to the conflict. In this case, US forces leveraged advantages in the environment to conduct forcible entry in conjunction with the targeting of operational objectives. In Operation Corporate, the geographic isolation, austere environment, and limited access to the Falklands created tension between the strategic need to maintain initiative versus logistics constraints that limited operational reach. Only once sufficient logistics came ashore could the Landing Force consolidate its position, conduct a break-out, and advance to subsequent objectives. Overall, inadequate planning and execution of logistics can constrain the transition to operational objectives following lodgment seizure. Depending on the environment, this constraint might have strategic implications.

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