

“JOINTNESS” THE NEXT STEP FOR THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY  
FORCES TO ACHIEVE REAL UNIFIED ACTION

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
General Studies

by

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<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> Military Forces in Colombia need to evolve according to new threats. Currently, the Army's eight divisions are deployed territorially throughout the nation with a view toward developing the full range of military operations -- defensive, offensive, stability, and defense support to civil authorities. This paper examines an opportunity for operational unification with other forces including the Air Force, Navy and National Police, and with other national and departmental agencies and ministries. This study provides an academic look at how the Colombian Military Forces might better incorporate efforts to create real unified action in designated operational areas. The commander of a geographic combatant command (GCC) should be the senior commander and leader in each designated operational area or zone. When clearly authorized by national policy and orders, units of all services would be under his command. He would set whole-of-government priorities for the operational area, incorporating interagency or multinational forces, if necessary. In this study, the organization, structure, mission, and role of the Unified Combatant Commands (UCC) of the United States Department of Defense will be used as a comparative model, and Colombian task force experience with operations like "Vuelo del Angel and Joint Task Force OMEGA will be used as operational cases.					
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

“JOINTNESS” THE NEXT STEP FOR THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY FORCES TO ACHIEVE REAL UNIFIED ACTION, by Diego Alexander Bejarano Rodriguez, 64 pages.

Military Forces in Colombia need to evolve according to new threats. Currently, the Army’s eight divisions are deployed territorially throughout the nation with a view toward developing the full range of military operations -- defensive, offensive, stability, and defense support to civil authorities (DSCA). Under this construct, the Colombian Army is the supported organization while the Air Force and Navy are supporting organizations. Each Colombian security force has specific roles and responsibilities, but overall the Army controls the battle space.

As new threats continue to emerge in Colombia, the country’s national strategy must evolve to address these threats. This becomes exponentially difficult as the Army re-organizes after a long conflict against insurgents. The Colombian Military Forces (and other government ministries and agencies) must synchronize, coordinate, and integrate all activities to address new challenges to the nation. This study provides an academic approach to how the Colombian Military Forces can achieve unified, legal action in the operational environment. Using the United States Unified Command as an organizational model for comparison, and with a set of Colombian joint task forces as national operational cases, a command structure led by a single senior military commander per designated operational area emerges as a preferable organizational formula for achieving unified action.

Creation of the geographic unified command (GUC) in Colombia would facilitate synchronization, coordination, and interoperability among the Colombian Security Forces and with other governmental entities to achieve the commander’s operational objectives in designated areas. Colombia’s highly differentiated geography, its different cultures, areas, climates, and various customs affect military operations uniquely in each potential operational area. Accordingly, any designated operational area and its attendant GUC would have to be uniquely tailored. Nevertheless, the significant experience of Colombian Military forces conducting Joint Operations, such as a Joint Task Force OMEGA, will be described for their value in highlighting organizational advantages and disadvantages for unified action.

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## ACRONYMS

AA	Avenue of Approximation
AO	Area of Operations
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BR	Brigade
BN	Battalion
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CCDRs	Combatant Commanders
CCOES	Joint Special Operations Command
CENCOM	Central Command of United States
CONOPS	Concept of Operation
DAVAA	Aviation Division Air Assault
DIV	Division
DSCA	Defense Support of civil authorities
EJC	National Army of Colombia
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GUC	Geographic Unified Command
GCC	Geographical Combatant Command
IDP	Internal displaced persons
JTF	Joint Task Force
LOE	Lines of Effort
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBJ	Objective - Target
ROE	Rules of Engagement



UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UC	Unified Command
US	United States
SOCOM	Special Operations Command of United States

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## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND SETTING

American military forces demonstrate in their military operations that joint operations are key to success in achieving desired military goals during a military campaign. In 1958, Dwight Eisenhower, the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, said, “Separate ground, sea, and air warfare is gone forever. If ever again we should be involved in war, we will fight it in all elements, with all services, as one single concentrated effort.”<sup>1</sup>

Although Colombia did not participate in World War II, military joint doctrine continued to evolve. The standard for organization, equipment, and doctrine of military force, in the vast majority of the world is set by The United States Military Forces. They serve as a referent because of their personnel and their technology. The U.S military’s reputation is earned from actions in World War I, World War II, and Desert Storm. Since then, joint doctrine has shown that “the concept of ‘joint’ represents the historical truth that neither air power, nor terrestrial, nor maritime power wins wars on their own” (translated from Spanish).<sup>2</sup>

Currently, the Army of Colombia has eight divisions with specific areas of operations throughout Colombia. Each division should plan and develop offensive,

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Special Message to the Congress on Reorganization of the Defense Establishment,” April 3, 1958, accessed January 12, 2019, <https://www.dwightdeisenhower.com/195/War-Defense>.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Drew, “El mundo se ve distinto a 10.000 pies de altura,” *Air & Space Power Journal* (1990): 23.

defensive, stability, defense support of civil authorities, and operations plans and execute them if necessary. The map in Figure 1 shows the area of responsibility for each division in Colombia. The divisions are supported by brigades that have different types of battalions.



Figure 1. Colombian Map with Division AORs

Source: Created by author.

This tailored organization for each division area allows the armed forces to address different ecosystems, cultures, and problems specific to each region. Through 200 years of existence, Colombia's Army has had an active, positive presence in each of the corners of the country. As a result, the army is one of the institutions most highly regarded by Colombians. In some regions of the country, only the army is present; however, the regions and their population would benefit from a unified action approach.

The term "unified action" is a broad generic term referring to the broad scope of activities (including the synchronization and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental agencies) taking place within unified commands, subordinate unified commands, or joint task forces (JTFs) under the overall direction of the commanders of those commands. Within this general category of operations, subordinate commanders of forces conduct either single-service or joint operations to support the overall operation. Unified action synchronizes and/or integrates joint, single-service, special, multinational, and supporting operations with the operations of government agencies, NGOs, and IOs to achieve unity of effort in the operational area . . . Unified action within the military instrument of national power supports the national strategic unity of effort through close coordination with the other instruments of national power.<sup>3</sup>

Then "The capacity of the Armed Forces of the United States to operate as a cohesive joint team is a key advantage in any operational environment. Unity of effort facilitates decisive unified action focused on national objectives and leads to common solutions to national security challenges."<sup>4</sup> In some regions of Colombia, there is a presence of state entities such as the police, military services, governorships, courts, and mayors; these entities are necessary to articulate and achieve truly unified action.

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<sup>3</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 10, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, March 25, 2013, incorporating change 1, July 12, 2017), xiii

## Identification of the Problem

The need for coordination, synchronization and cooperation to exploit the capabilities of every branch and service is critical. However, this integration has to be achieved at all levels of military operations, ranging from the tactical battlefield, through the operational headquarters, to national strategic defense policies. The Colombian Armed Forces, as organized, now have not reached the required level of service jointness with regards to interoperability and coordination, of that the US military has or that pending missions and threats require. The military forces of Colombia are composed of the National Army, National Navy, and National Air Force. Each of these forces has missions and goals according to their capabilities. Even though it is the National Army that throughout almost two hundred years of Colombia's history has been charged with operational responsibility in operational areas; now, it is time to think joint. Accordingly, the US geographic combatant command model can serve as a model for the Colombian Armed Forces.

The Colombian Military Forces have five joint task forces throughout the country. They are identified as JTF "Vulcano," JTF "Furon," JTF "OMEGA," JTF "Pegaso," and JTF "Titan." Operational Commands, organized to conduct stabilization and consolidation operations are, as follow "Apolo," "Zeuz," "Jupiter," and "Nudo de Paramillo."

The major difference between the joint task forces and these operational commands is that JTFs are made up of troops from the different services such as army, air force, and navy, meanwhile the operational commands are only army forces.

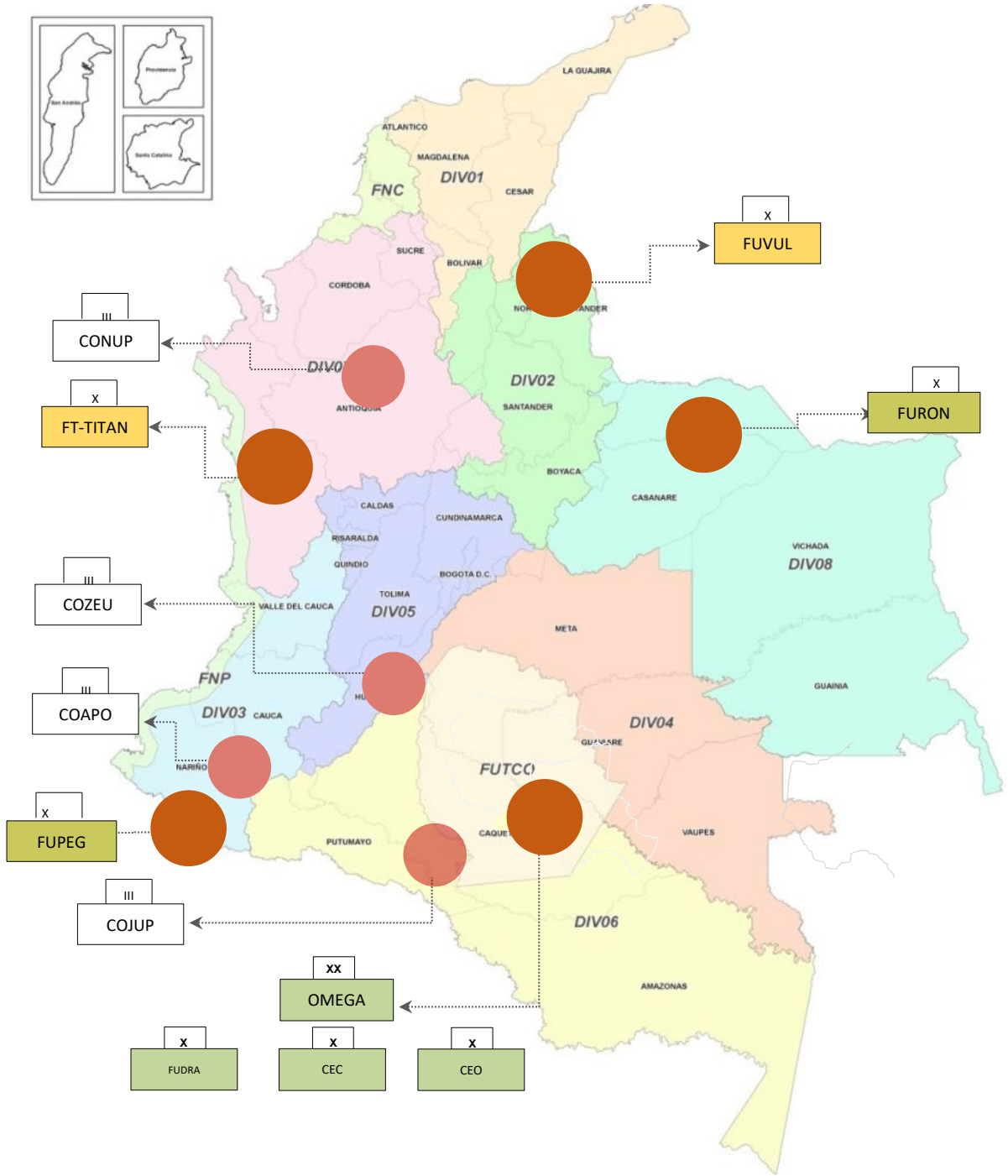


Figure 2. Colombian Map with JTF Locations

Source: Created by author.

As visualized in figure 2, Colombian military joint task forces are immersed in the operations areas of the divisions of the National Army. This presents some challenges in the development and control of military operations, between the JTF command and the division command. This challenge regarding responsibilities for operations could be even greater, or as I argue will be more efficient, with an additional organization that articulates military operations and synchronizes the work of all forces as well as other state entities. In this case, the unified command would fulfill the role of being responsible for the development of the military operations with specific units of the different services, the National Army, National Navy, Colombian Air Force, and Infantry Marines. Additionally, the units of the National Police could be organic or attached as part of the geographic unified command.

One of the main deficiencies of the organization of military forces in Colombia is the distribution of units nationwide. Not all the regions of the country have National Army, National Navy, Colombian Air Force and Infantry Marine components or even National Police units constantly assigned. The National Army, however, has a presence in all the regions of the country even though in some parts it is sporadic. As stated earlier, the National Army is responsible for planning, developing, and executing offensive, defensive, stability and DSCA operations. Often, when National Army operations fail, they fail because when the National Army develops a military counterinsurgency or counterterrorism operation, it requires many troops from all operational areas. It normally achieves the military objective, but afterwards, the National Army must re-deploy troops to their original designated areas of operation. The big gap is the need to consolidate the gains with the assistance of other institutions of the State. The lack of



unified action in almost all regions of the country increases the gap between society and the state despite military gains.

#### Primary Research Question

Given the current situation of ongoing tension in northern South America and inside Colombia, the next organizational step for the Colombian Military Forces is uncertain. Nevertheless, this research will analyze the evolution of Colombian military doctrine to answer the following question: Would it be strategically and administratively advantageous for Colombia to apply a military organizational structure similar to that of the geographic unified commands of the United States?

#### Secondary Research Question

According to the current organization of the Colombian Military Forces, and their experience with joint organizations. Are the Colombian Military Forces ready for the adoption of “Jointness”?

#### Assumptions

During the last two years the Colombian Army has updated its doctrine with the purpose of homogenizing procedures and standardizing operations with US doctrine and that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This process is known as “DAMASCO.”<sup>5</sup> This new National Army doctrine made a good approximation towards Jointness.

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<sup>5</sup> Doctrine DAMASCO represents a great evolution of the Colombian Army through the Joint Doctrine introducing new terms like Unified Land Operations, Mission

The Army has decided to call this process “DAMASCO, doctrine of all towards the future.” DAMASCO is a doctrine inspired by belief in God, because it takes its name from the Catholic Church. The National Army associated the doctrinal evolution of the army with the conversion of Saul in the gospel of Saint Paul, who during the trip to the ancient city of Damascus was surprised by the risen Jesus. It is an analogy that represents the new doctrinal vision, like Saint Paul, Colombia 'opens' its eyes to all the members of the institution. It has a dose of critical and creative thinking in the guidance of the generals, a rethinking of the vision of previous generations, and the inspiration and the motivation of the new ones in the construction of a modern multi-mission force.

According to the current problem, the unified command (UC) would have the mission of integrating the roles of the governmental and nongovernmental institutions. The first step for the UC is to guarantee that each region is a safe environment for other state entities to operate. Additionally, the unified commander must strengthen relationships with international authorities. All commanders have borders with neighboring countries and often require integration of military operations. The geographic unified command (GUC) must consider all factors of instability in a coordinated and synchronized way with the different entities of the state. Finally, the GUC must facilitate command and control, distributing operational control (OPCON) and tactical control (TACON) of units and personnel.

The Army, Navy and Air Force battalions and divisions would be in charge of recruiting, training, and equipping the troops to support the operations of the UC;

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Command, and Unified Action. The basis of the Colombian Doctrine are the US Army Doctrine during this process known as DAMASCO.

establishing the respective administrative control of each force and retaining operational control is the responsibility of the Geographic Combatant Command.

Due to technological advances, warfare has evolved in different ways. Armando Borrero, a Colombian specialist in joint doctrine says “Modern battle requires much more than mutual support among the Forces: it requires interdependence and making the most of all the components. Today, both the information systems of command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, as well as the value of the combination of firepower from all sources, require joint action.”<sup>6</sup>

Currently, the Minister of Defense is the chief national advisor to the head of state and the Minister of Defense and is, in turn, advised by the commanding general of the military forces. This system is similar to the US and provides depth and detail to analysis of each region. The unified commands in Colombia could have the role to advise the Minister of Defense and the President.

### Significance of the Study

This research seeks to analyze in an objective way the evolution of joint operations in Colombia. It can help as a guide to the renewal and innovation center (CRE-I); this is a think tank of the general command of the military forces in Colombia that was created with the purpose of updating Colombian joint doctrine.

This thesis aims to illustrate the needs of the joint commands at the higher military level in order to articulate the state effort in every region of the country.

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<sup>6</sup> Armando Borrero, “Los Comandos Conjuntos: Oportunidades y Dificultades,” *Revista En Fuerzas Armadas* 201 62 (March 30, 2007): 15, <https://issuu.com/esdeguacol/docs/201>.

This investigation will examine two specific successful Colombian cases of the application of the principle of jointness. These experiences are: First the experience of the Colombian Military Forces with Joint Task Force OMEGA and second Operation “Vuelo de Angel.” The purpose is to demonstrate that when joint doctrine is applied properly, successful results are obtained.

#### Delimitations

This thesis proposal is conceptual and will not address specifics regarding unit relocation, doctrine changes or implementation costs.

#### Limitations

The most significant research limitation is access to current Colombian military doctrine. This limitation is due to an ongoing update of Colombian joint doctrine and my limited access to this process.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the framework for current thought on jointness it is necessary to analyze the doctrine of the United States and provide a general concept of the role played by geographic commanders worldwide, in order to visualize the possible functions of the unified commands in Colombia. According to Joint Publication 1, the role of the Geographic Combatant Commanders (GUC) in the United States Military Forces is:

GCCs are the vital link between those who determine national security policy and strategy and the military forces or subordinate JFCs that conduct military operations within their AORs. GCCs are responsible for a large geographical area and for effective coordination of operations within that area. Directives flow from the President and SecDef through CJCS to the GCCs, who plan and conduct the operations that achieve national or multinational strategic objectives. GCCs provide guidance and direction through strategic estimates, command strategies, and plans and orders for the employment of military force. As military force may not achieve national objectives, it must be coordinated, synchronized, and if appropriate, integrated with other USG departments and agencies, IGOs, NGOs, multinational forces (MNFs), and elements of the private sector.

Using their strategic estimate(s) and strategic options, GCCs develop strategies that translate national and multinational direction into strategic concepts or courses of action (COAs) to meet strategic and joint operation planning requirements. GCCs' plans provide strategic direction; assign missions, tasks, forces, and resources; designate objectives; provide authoritative direction; promulgate ROE and rules for the use of force (RUF); establish constraints and restraints (military limitations); and define policies and CONOPS to be integrated into subordinate or supporting plans. GCCs also exercise directive authority for logistics over assigned forces and authority for force protection over all DOD personnel (including their dependents) assigned, attached, transiting through, or training in the GCC's AOR. The exception is for those for whom a chief of mission retains security responsibility.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> JCS, JP 1, II-6.

The combatant commands have specific missions in each of their areas of responsibility (AOR). In accordance with strategic guidance, such as the National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS), and National Military Strategy (NMS), geographic commanders must develop numerous plans, addressing threats within their areas of operation. The combatant commander focuses on the operational level aspects of their command and on achieving the military end state. The following addresses the missions and visions of two specific commands United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).



Figure 3. US Combatant Command AORs

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, “US Combatant Command AORs,” [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

## U.S. Central Command

USCENTCOM Mission. “Directs and enables military operations and activities with allies and partners to increase regional security and stability in support of enduring U.S. interests.”<sup>8</sup>

USCENTCOM Vision. “A more stable and prosperous region with increasingly effective governance, improved security, and trans-regional cooperation to counter state and non-state actors posing a threat to U.S. interests.”<sup>9</sup>

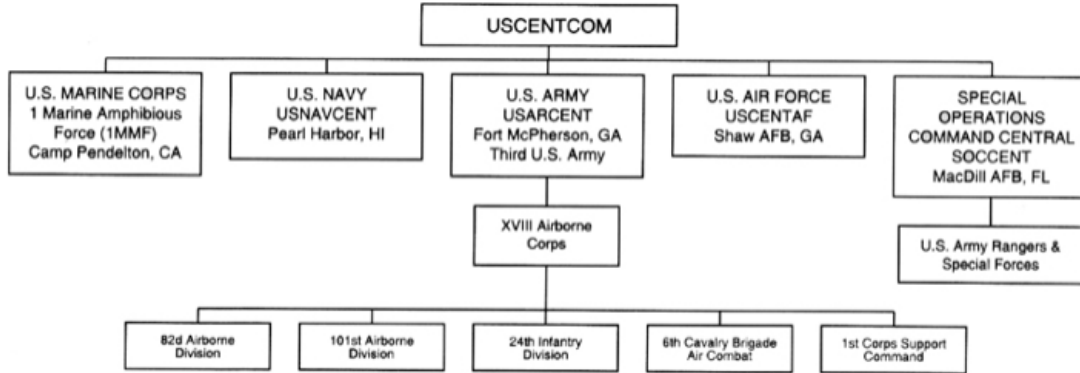


Figure 4. USCENTCOM Structure

Source: Center of Military History, *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1984* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army 1995), 68, <https://history.army.mil/books/DAHSUM/1984/ch03.htm>.

Central Command priorities are:

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<sup>8</sup> US CENTRAL COMMAND. *US CENTRAL COMMAND*. February 27, 2018. [www.centcom.mil](http://www.centcom.mil) (accessed 09 28, 2018)

<sup>9</sup> US CENTRAL COMMAND. *US CENTRAL COMMAND*. February 27, 2018. [www.centcom.mil](http://www.centcom.mil) (accessed 09 28, 2018)

Ensure an Effective Posture; Strengthen Allies & Partnerships; Disrupt & Counter VEOs and their Networks; Deter & Counter State Aggressors; Strategic Approach; Prepare the Environment; Readiness in Advance of Crisis; Pursue Opportunities; Seize the Initiative; Prevail in Conflict; and Win the Current Fight and Plan to Win the Next One.<sup>10</sup>

U.S. Special Operations Command

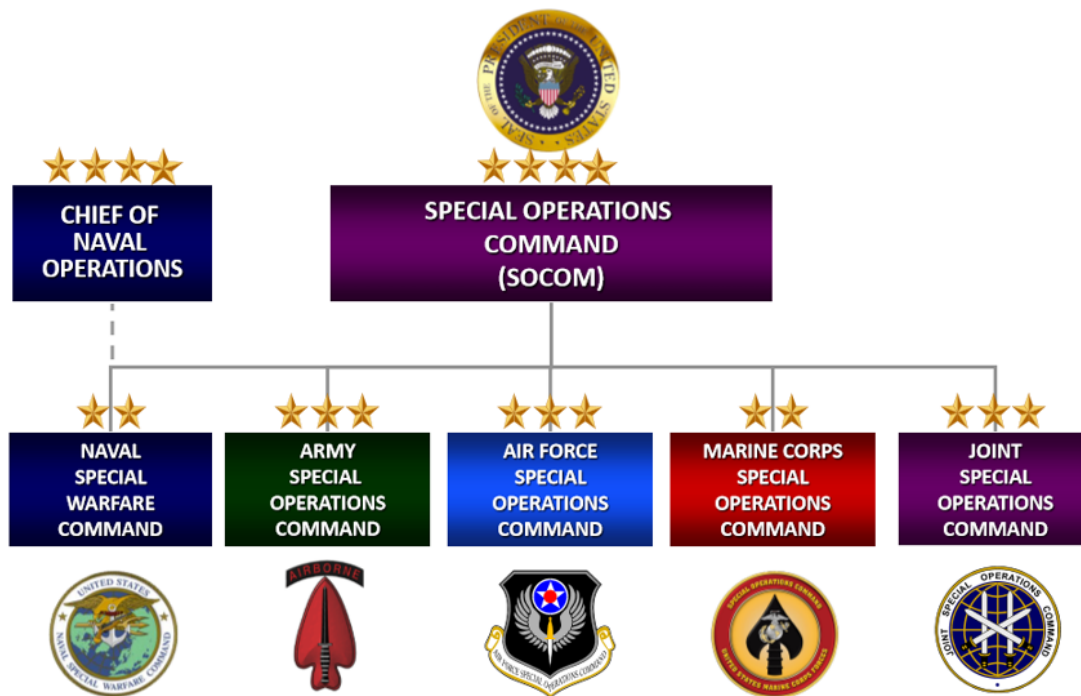


Figure 5. USSOCOM Structure

Source: Joint Special Operations University, “USSOCOM Structure,” <https://www.socom.mil/jsou/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> US Central Command (CENTCOM), “CENTCOM Mission and Command Priorities,” February 27, 2018, accessed September 28, 2018, <https://www.centcom.mil/ABOUT-US/COMMAND-NARRATIVE-US-CENTRAL-COMMAND>.



USSOCOM Mission. “Synchronizes the planning of Special Operations and provides Special Operations Forces to support persistent, networked and distributed Global Combatant Command operations in order to protect and advance our Nation’s interests.”<sup>11</sup>

Current USSOCOM core responsibilities include, but are not limited to: “Civil Affairs, Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction, Direct Action, Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Foreign Internal Defense, Hostage Rescue and Recovery, Military Information Support Operations, Security Force Assistance, Special Reconnaissance, and Unconventional Warfare.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> CENTCOM, “CENTCOM Mission and Command Priorities.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

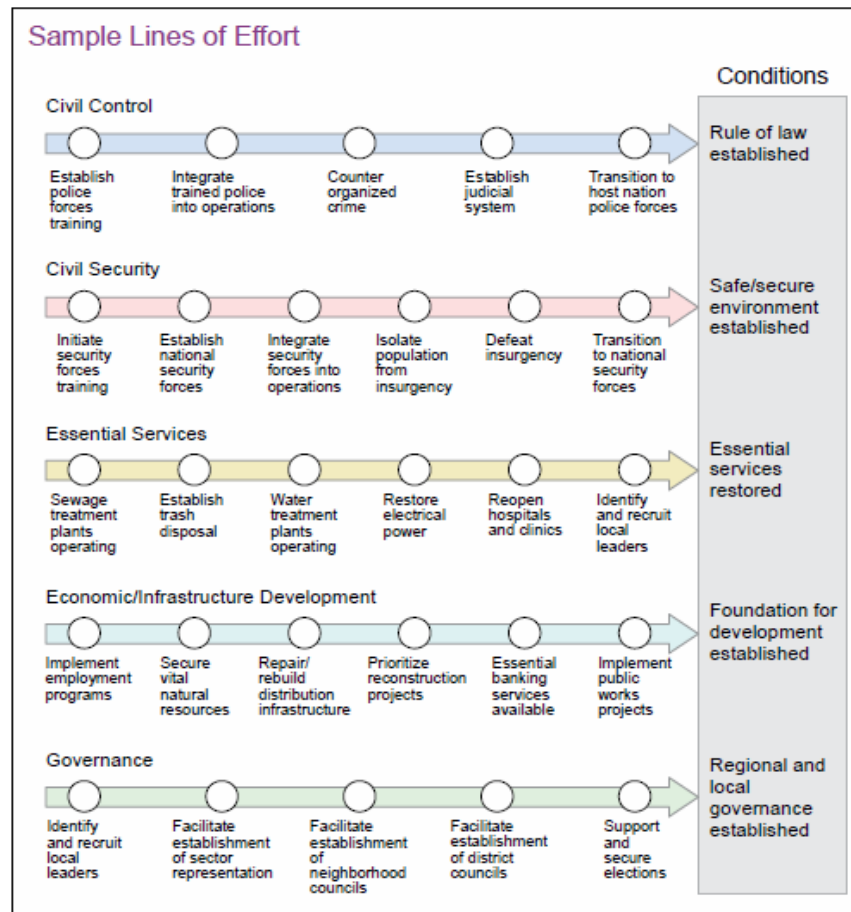


Figure 6. Lines of Effort – End State

Source: Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, June 16, 2017).

In figure six are some notional lines of operation that unified commanders must accomplish. They are linked to some examples of specific objectives required, in order to achieve the desired end state. These lines of operation, from US doctrine, can serve as a guide for future joint Colombian Military Forces. Establish civil security, establish civil control, restore essential services, support to governance, and support economic and infrastructure development, are essential goals for any country. Capabilities to achieve these goals are necessary for every country, in this case Colombia.

Posing perhaps the most important challenge for the military forces in Colombia is their geographical regions. Colombia has five natural geographic regions areas that divide the country and are described later. Each region has specific climate, hydrography, routes, population, and physical characteristics. Each area could present different kinds of problems, with different levels of threats. These problems must be addressed in different ways and by different institutions of the State. Some regions have a poor quality of education, others present only a partial presence of the state, and others include significant cocaine cultivation. These challenges directly impact military forces, and the best and most long-standing solution clearly requires joint actions by the government, society, and military forces.

For this reason, it is important that the unified command identify the principal issues in their region, in order to prioritize efforts to meet their mandate. Primarily UCs plan different courses of action to defeat regional threats, always coordinating and synchronizing with national policy. As you will see, the regions and their challenges differ significantly.

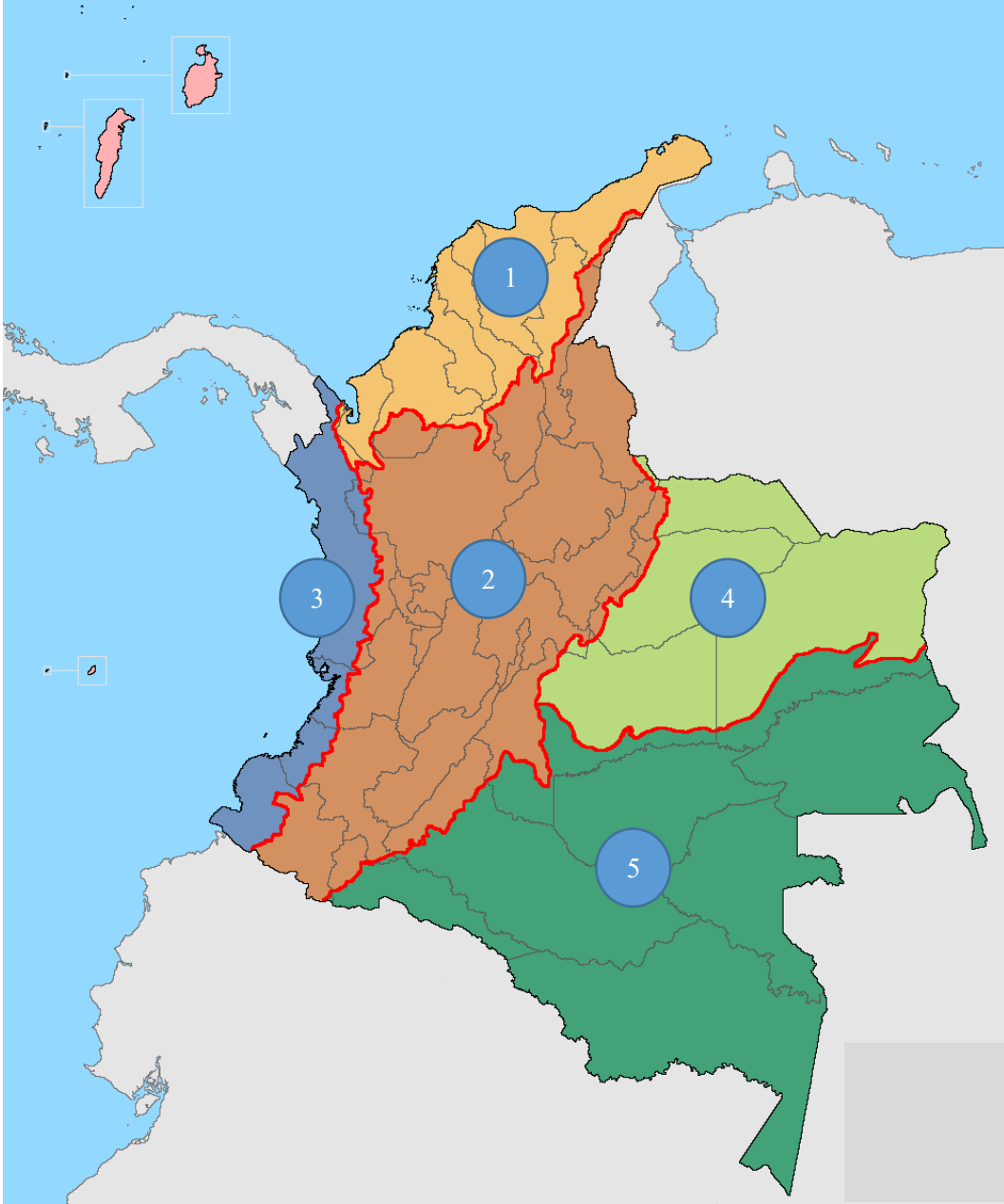


Figure 7. Colombia by Regions

*Source:* Created by author.

NOTE: 1. Caribbean region; 2. Andes region; 3. Pacific region; 4. Orinoquia region; 5. Amazonia region.

## Andes Region

The Andes Region is the principal region in Colombia because it is where the vast majority of Colombians live. The Andes Cordillera (mountain range) enters Colombia in the south-western part of the country. It is divided into two chains: The Cordillera Occidental (Western mountain range) and the Cordillera Central (Central mountain range). The Cordillera Central divides into two branches the Macizo Colombiano (the Colombian Massif) and the Nudo de Almaguer, and gives rise to the Cordillera Oriental (Eastern mountain range). The so-called Cinturón de Fuego del Pacífico (Pacific Belt of Fire), formed by numerous volcanoes, is located in this region. The Galeras volcano, near the city of Pasto, and the Nevado del Ruiz (also a volcano) are important for their recent activity.<sup>13</sup>

This area has many of Colombia's principal cities. The cities are Medellin, Pasto Bucaramanga, Cali, Manizales, Ibaguè and the heart of Colombia, the capital city of Bogota which is the location of the principal governmental institutions. Also located in Bogota is the House of Nariño, where the president lives, as well as the Supreme Court of Justice, and the General Command of Military Forces with the chief staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as the National Police Command.

This is a very complex operational region because it is the heart of the country where the vast majority of the population lives, and yet has areas of difficult access due to the three mountain ranges (cordilleras). The mountain ranges divide the country into different mobility corridors for narco-terrorist organizations, organizations that seek to create drug traffic routes to the coasts or clandestine airports for illegal export. The main problem in this region is the northern border with Venezuela. This area is known as "Catatumbo," and presents a complex environment because it combines challenging conditions such as the influence of guerrilla groups, unemployment, low academic

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<sup>13</sup> Colombia-SA, "Colombian Geography I," accessed September 23, 2018, <https://www.colombia-sa.com/geografia/geografia-in.html>.

quality, poor infrastructure, as well as other challenges. The majority of the Colombian and Venezuelan population has always lived in the middle of war, usually with little military or police presence. Additionally, the border with Venezuela serves as a transit corridor vital for illegals to flee from military operations and to remove cocaine produced in the region from the country. Currently, the migration of Venezuelans to Colombia is due to the lack of employment, the presence of dictator Nicolas Maduro, and the absence of essential things to live in the neighboring country. It has led some Venezuelans to join illegals groups to survive. According to *Americas Quarterly* “A study by Venezuela’s Simón Bolívar University estimated there were about 900,000 Venezuelans in Colombia.”<sup>14</sup>

### Caribbean Region

The Caribbean Region, is situated to the north of the Andean region, with an area of 132,288 square kilometers, this region comprises the coastal plain of the Caribbean seaboard and some separate mountainous zones. Prominent in this area is the snow-covered mountain range of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the highest in Colombia. Its highest peaks are Simon Bolivar and Cristobal Colon, which reach up to 5,775 meters (18,947 feet) above sea level. The departments of Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Córdoba, La Guajira, Magdalena and Sucre lie in this region.<sup>15</sup>

The Caribbean presents multiple problems. The high poverty index leads young people to easily join drug micro-trafficking or to seek to join illegal groups. Low quality of education leads to low wages. This disaffection with the current situation is a common

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<sup>14</sup> Manuel Rueda, “Venezuelan Refugees Strain Colombian Border Towns,” *Americas Quarterly* (May 17, 2017), accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/venezuelans-seek-refuge-neighboring-countries>.

<sup>15</sup> Colombia-SA, “Colombian Geography I.”

cause of non-compliance against the state. The lack of basic utilities, informal work, significant internal displaced persons (IDP's), drug-trafficking on the streets, and the collateral damage caused by the drastic weather, etc. make this region vulnerable to the guerrilla groups efforts to attack government institutions. For years, the lack of leadership, organization and planning on the part of political leaders has made this region one of the poorest in the country.

### Pacific Region

The Pacific Region is comprised of the coastal plains of the Pacific seaboard to the west of the Cordillera Occidental. It stretches from the Colombian border with Panama to the border with Ecuador and has an area of 80,000 square kilometers. The Baudo mountain range, the Pacific mountain range, the Darien, and the Katios National Park lie in the region. The Choco department and part of Valle del Cauca, Cauca and Nariño departments are situated in this area.<sup>16</sup>

The Pacific Region in general, due to its location, is characterized by a great variety of hydrographic, ecological, mining and forestry resources. However, these same advantages place it at the center of the social phenomena of negative impact such as drug trafficking and armed conflict. For example, deforestation, and scarce vital services, such as water, electricity, telephone, internet, and other essential services are a problem due to the inability of the state to guarantee these basic services. Additional problems include the illegal trafficking of animals, illegal drug trafficking, and sex exploitation to Asia because the capability to control the ports by local authorities are insufficient.

### Amazonas Region

The Amazonas Region, also referred to as The Colombian Amazon Region, lies to the south of the territory between the Guaviare and Amazon

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<sup>16</sup> Colombia-SA, "Colombian Geography I."

Rivers, the Cordillera Oriental and Brazil. It has an area of 403,348 square kilometers. It is an area of rainforest and comprises the departments of Amazonas, Caquetá, Guainía, Putumayo, and Vaupés. The Amacayacu Park, Cahuinari Park and the Nukak Nature Preserve are known for their beauty and biodiversity.<sup>17</sup>

Known as the lungs of the world by some environmental companies, because of the large area of rainforest, this area is at high risk of over cultivation,. The excessive rate of deforestation due to the increase of illicit crops, especially coca has caused cultivation figures never seen before. This area has numerous, important rivers, which present a favorable environment for the illegal cocaine, lumber, and exotic animal businesses operating here. Communications are significantly degraded in this very complex area for military operations. The little or in some cases null presence of the government, represents a lack of national commitment to some inhabitants of the region.

#### Orinoquia Region

The Orinoquia Region, is a fairly flat territory with low vegetation. It stretches from the skirts of the Cordillera Oriental to the border with Venezuela and from the Arauca River to the Guaviare River. It is an area of 310,000 square kilometers. The Macarena mountain range, approximately 2,000 m high, is situated in this region. The Arauca, Casanare, Meta, Vaupes and part of Guainia departments lie on the Eastern Plains.<sup>18</sup>

This is the main cattle region of the country which is of vital importance for the national economy. Due to the absence of the government in most of this region, easy access by illegal groups to establish base camps, training bases, and rallying sites. By sharing the border with Venezuela and with little control by government authorities in

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<sup>17</sup> Colombia-SA, “Colombian Geography I.”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



this area, it becomes a supply corridor, not only of foodstuffs, but also of ammunition and money for the support of guerrilla warfare.

There are also Insular regions. Colombia has two oceans: the Pacific on the west, and the Atlantic on the north. In this case, these insular areas are immersed in the Pacific Region and Caribbean Region respectively.

The problems evidenced in each of the regions cannot be addressed exclusively with military power. Unified action of the government is required with a national security strategy defined by the President of the Republic and articulated by the Minister of Defense to ensure that combined military units are permanently present in a GUC in each region to ensure that the government institutions reach all of the national territory.

The change in the role of the military forces would fulfill these tasks. Colombia has several favorable aspects that would facilitate the adoption of a GUC system. One of them is that there is a General Command of the Military Forces that was founded more than half a century ago.

As stipulated in the Political Constitution of Colombia in Article 2,

They are essential purposes of the State: to serve the community, promote general prosperity, and guarantee the effectiveness of the principles, rights, and duties enshrined in the Constitution; facilitate the participation of all in the decisions that affect them and in the economic, political, administrative and cultural life of the Nation; defend national independence, maintain territorial integrity and ensure peaceful coexistence and the enforcement of a just order, “and 217” The Nation will have permanent Military Forces constituted by the Army, the Navy and the Air Force for its defense. The Military Forces shall have as its primary purpose the defense of sovereignty, independence, integrity of the national territory and constitutional order, “is determined as a mission for the Military Forces” Defend the sovereignty, independence, integrity of the national

territory and the validity of the constitutional order, to contribute to the security of the population, its resources and the Social State of Law.<sup>19</sup>

Evolution of joint doctrine in Colombia is very similar at times to that of the US, for example:

Law 102 of 1944 established in the Chief of Staff the functions of command body of the Government, making him virtually a general commander, since centralized in this position are the purposes of the command of the military morces. Subsequently, Decree 835 of April 16, 1951, created the post of Commanding General, assigning the functions that had been assigned to the Chief of Staff.

Prior to the issuance of this decree, an extensive study was made of the system of joint control, as practiced in the United States. It was concluded that this organization should be committed to an efficient organization that obeys orthodox principles and the clear will of command.

Thus was born the General Command of the Military Forces, under whose command are the Army of Colombia, the National Navy, and the Colombian National Air Force. The Constitution of 1991 recognizes the existence of the military morces and gives them their mission through article 217.

The constitutional mission of the General Command of the Military Forces of Colombia is: “Defend the sovereignty, independence, the integrity of the national

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<sup>19</sup> Political Constitution of the Republic of Columbia, “Title 7: Chapter 7: From the Public Force,” accessed April 4, 2019, <http://www.constitucioncolombia.com/titulo-7/capitulo-7>.

territory and the validity of the constitutional order, to contribute to the security of the population, its resources and the Social State of Law.”<sup>20</sup>

To accomplish this, the military forces must adopt a single chain of command in the employment of any of its duties, which will serve to operate jointly, and coordinate with others government agencies throughout the national territory. In this way, and to comply with the imposed constitutional mission, it is also required that each one of the force commanders comply with their respective Institutional missions as indicated below:

Mission of the Army: “The National Army conducts military operations aimed at defending sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, protecting the civilian population, private and state resources, to help generate an environment of peace, security, and development, which guarantees the constitutional order of the nation.”<sup>21</sup>

The vision of the Army, “in 2030, the National Army will continue to be the decisive force of action of the Nation, with the capacity to conduct autonomous, joint, coordinated and combined operations, simultaneously in two theaters of operations, one external and one internal.”<sup>22</sup>

The mission of the Navy: “Contribute to the defense of the Nation through the effective use of flexible naval power in the maritime, fluvial and terrestrial spaces under its responsibility, with the purpose of fulfilling the constitutional function and

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<sup>20</sup> Military Forces of Colombia, “Military Forces Command,” accessed September 10, 2018, <http://www.cgfm.mil.co/quienes-somos/#1485877158348-92804f2f-2585>.

<sup>21</sup> Colombian Army, “Colombian Army,” accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.ejercito.mil.co>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

participating in the development of maritime power and the protection of the interests of Colombians.”<sup>23</sup>

The Vision of the Navy: “By 2030 the Navy will be a medium Navy with regional projection, with oceanic defensive force, a guarantor of the maritime interests of the nation with ability to meet maritime security operations in the Exclusive Economic Zone and Naval War in theaters Operations established, serving as support for the foreign policy of the national government as well as to contribute to technological development, scientific, social and economic of the nation.”<sup>24</sup>

Mission of the Air Force:

The Colombian Air Force exercises and maintains control of the airspace, conducts air operations, for the defense of sovereignty, independence, integrity of the national territory, constitutional order and achievement of the purposes of the State. This mission was established taking into account that within the roles of the Military Forces, the Air Force is responsible for the domain of the airspace, in compliance with the constitutional mandate emanated from Article 217 of our Constitution. Within the theoretical content of the mission, it is clearly distinguished that the Air Force is the only organization with the capacity to dominate the airspace, field of action involved within the responsibility of the Military Forces, taking into account that its operational concept and its principles of employment are characteristic and characteristic of this Force. The airspace is the essence of the Air Force; it is its reason to be, not only as an active and passive defense force in the service of the nation but as a decisive force for the future of peace and cordiality that the Colombian people build. Socially, the Air Force guarantees, during 24 hours a day, the unique and permanent protection of the national airspace; and even though its action and use of aircraft could place it as a polluter, it extends its guarantee through environmental protection projects

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<sup>23</sup> National Navy, “Directorate of Mission and Vision Health,” accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.armada.mil.co/es/content/misión-y-visión>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

that seek greater oxygen production, not only for the nation it is part of its defense, but for global benefit.<sup>25</sup>

#### Vision of the Air Force:

A Colombian Air Force developed technologically, with the best human talent and entrenched in its values, to lead the aerospace power and be decisive in defense of the nation. The technological development in all environments of the Air Force, is the orientation towards the desired future, not only by the air community but by the Colombian people. That objective, more than a dream, is a reality and quality of an Air Force with a future. Obviously, state-of-the-art technology requires a highly trained human talent to operate it, with a high-level commitment and highly qualified skills, consistent with speed, national scope, precision, and flexibility, which make the Force an Institution of aerospace power leader nationally and internationally. An Air Force with a culture of lifelong learning requires strong support for its values, which allows an administration directed by them and, in turn, they are the ones who guide their decisions. Strengthening values, not only indicates their permanent practice, but a continuous construction of them, which leads to individual ethical behaviors, which help to develop an organizational culture that allows strengthening the legitimacy of the Force in the fulfillment of its mission. The correct application of values in day-to-day actions during the performance of air operations, the maintenance of a highly selected personnel from the moment of their incorporation, as well as through their military career, and the application of technology aspects, will allow the defense of the nation, from the air action, be decisive to win the war and ensure spaces of peaceful coexistence.<sup>26</sup>

In 1944, through Law 102, a centralization of command began to be discussed and the term general commander was formally used. But it was not until 1951, by means of decree 835, that the position of the general commander was created, who from then on would perform the functions the Chief of the General Staff. This was the beginning of the General Command of the Colombian Military Forces, which was in charge and in command of the three Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) as recognized by the Political

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<sup>25</sup> Colombian Air Force, "Incorporation: Mission," accessed September 15, 2018, <https://www.incorporacion.mil.co/mision-29>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Constitution in its article 217.<sup>27</sup> Once again, the influence of US military doctrine has made an impact on a reorganization of the Colombian forces.

According to Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations describe the relationship between combatant command such as unique authority on the region. As shown in figure 8 the commander has four general functions and could delegate operational control when he estimates it is necessary.

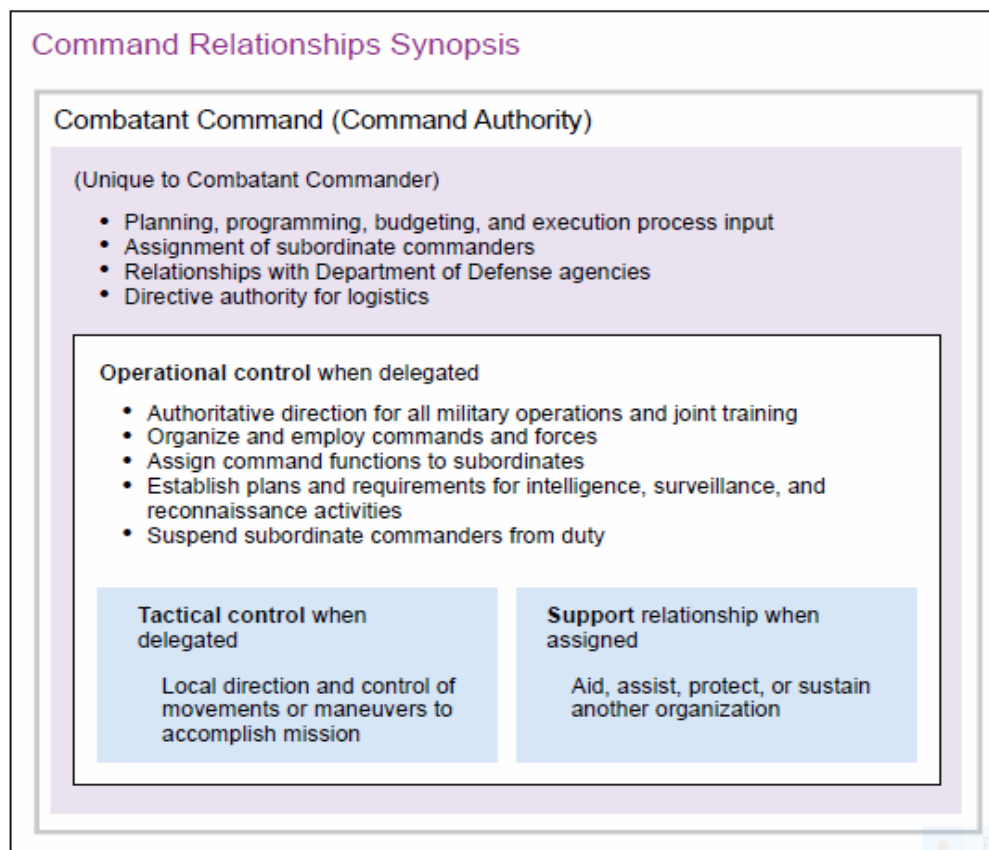


Figure 8. Command Relationship Synopsis

Source: Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Military Forces of Colombia, "Military Forces Command."

Even though he could delegate authoritative direction for all military operations, the CCMD is responsible of the operations on each specific area. This arrangement could be used as an example case if Colombia develops unified commands.

Organizing for joint operations involves many considerations. Most can be associated in three primary groups related to organizing the joint force, organizing the joint force HQ, and organizing OAs to help control operations. Understanding the OE helps the JFC understand factors that may affect decisions in each of these areas.<sup>28</sup>

The understanding of the operational environment in a specific region helps any commander to develop adequately military operations. Normally the CCD could create JTF for specific objectives with an unambiguous area of operations, and delegate the operational control in the commander of the JTF.

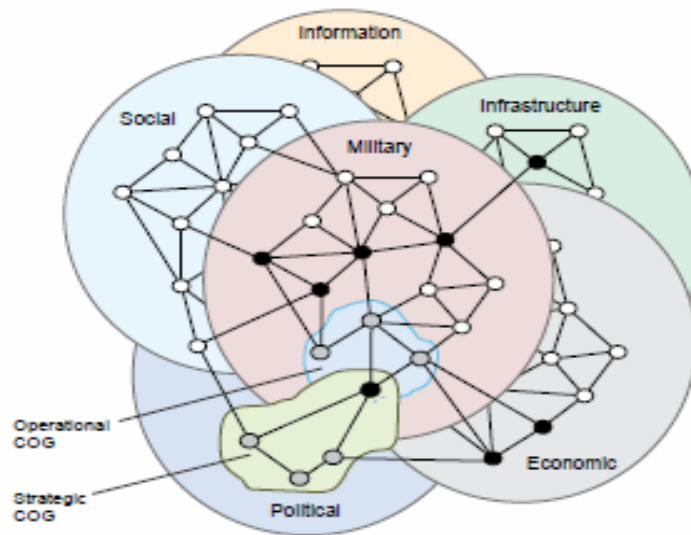


Figure 9. Systems Perspective of the Operational Environment

*Source:* Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017).

As shown in figure 9, each joint command must develop a general understanding of their area of responsibility and share this understanding with their subordinates. This is known as a systems perspective. The purpose of the systems perspective is that it “facilitates operational design and joint operation planning by providing the joint force commander (JFC) and staff with a common frame of reference for collaboration with interorganizational and multinational partners to determine and coordinate actions that are beyond the JFC’s command authority”<sup>29</sup>

US Joint Publication 3-0 visualizes that the commander could have challenges outside of their command authority, however the JFC uses various tools to develop possible solutions, including all governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Additionally, it is interesting how Title 10 of the US code in Section 164 assigns commanders of combatant commands the responsibilities and duties for CCDR’s. Duties are as follow below:

**(a) Assignment as Combatant Commander.**

**(1)** The President may assign an officer to serve as the commander of a unified or specified combatant command only if the officer—

**(A)** has the joint specialty under section 661 of this title; and

**(B)** has completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment (as defined in section 664(d) of this title) as a general or flag officer.

**(2)** The President may waive paragraph (1) in the case of an officer if the President determines that such action is necessary in the national interest.

**(b) Responsibilities of Combatant Commanders.**

**(1)** The commander of a combatant command is responsible to the President and to the Secretary of Defense for the performance of missions

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<sup>29</sup> JCS, JP 3-0, IV-3.



assigned to that command by the President or by the Secretary with the approval of the President.

**(2)** Subject to the direction of the President, the commander of a combatant command—

**(A)** performs his duties under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense; and

**(B)** is directly responsible to the Secretary for the preparedness of the command to carry out missions assigned to the command.

**(3)** Among the full range of command responsibilities specified in subsection (c) and as provided for in section 161 of this title, the primary duties of the commander of a combatant command shall be as follows:

**(A)** To produce plans for the employment of the armed forces to execute national defense strategies and respond to significant military contingencies.

**(B)** To take actions, as necessary, to deter conflict.

**(C)** To command United States armed forces as directed by the Secretary and approved by the President.

**(c)** Command Authority of Combatant Commanders.

**(1)** Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, the authority, direction, and control of the commander of a combatant command with respect to the commands and forces assigned to that command include the command functions of—

**(A)** giving authoritative direction to subordinate commands and forces necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command, including authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics;

**(B)** prescribing the chain of command to the commands and forces within the command;

**(C)** organizing commands and forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command;

**(D)** employing forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command;

**(E)** assigning command functions to subordinate commanders;

**(F)** coordinating and approving those aspects of administration and support (including control of resources and equipment, internal organization, and training) and discipline necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command; and

**(G)** exercising the authority with respect to selecting subordinate commanders, selecting combatant command staff, suspending subordinates, and convening courts-martial, as provided in subsections (e), (f), and (g) of this section and section 822(a) of this title, respectively.

**(2) (A)** The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that a commander of a combatant command has sufficient authority, direction, and control over the commands and forces assigned to the command to exercise effective command over those commands and forces. In carrying out this subparagraph, the Secretary shall consult with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

**(B)** The Secretary shall periodically review and, after consultation with the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the commander of the combatant command, assign authority to the commander of the combatant command for those aspects of administration and support that the Secretary considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command.

**(3)** If a commander of a combatant command at any time considers his authority, direction, or control with respect to any of the commands or forces assigned to the command to be insufficient to command effectively, the commander shall promptly inform the Secretary of Defense.

**(d) Authority Over Subordinate Commanders.** Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense

**(1)** commanders of commands and forces assigned to a combatant command are under the authority, direction, and control of, and are responsible to, the commander of the combatant command on all matters for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c);

**(2)** the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) shall communicate with other elements of the Department of Defense on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has been assigned authority under subsection (c) in accordance with procedures, if any, established by the commander of the combatant command;

**(3)** other elements of the Department of Defense shall communicate with the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has been

assigned authority under subsection (c) in accordance with procedures, if any, established by the commander of the combatant command; and

(4) if directed by the commander of the combatant command, the commander of a command or force referred to in clause (1) shall advise the commander of the combatant command of all communications to and from other elements of the Department of Defense on any matter for which the commander of the combatant command has not been assigned authority under subsection (c).

(e) Selection of Subordinate Commanders.

(1) An officer may be assigned to a position as the commander of a command directly subordinate to the commander of a combatant command or, in the case of such a position that is designated under section 601 of this title as a position of importance and responsibility, may be recommended to the President for assignment to that position, only

(A) with the concurrence of the commander of the combatant command; and

(B) in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense.

(2) The Secretary of Defense may waive the requirement under paragraph (1) for the concurrence of the commander of a combatant command with regard to the assignment (or recommendation for assignment) of a particular officer if the Secretary of Defense determines that such action is in the national interest.

(3) The commander of a combatant command shall

(A) evaluate the duty performance of each commander of a command directly subordinate to the commander of such combatant command; and

(B) submit the evaluation to the Secretary of the military department concerned and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

(4) At least one deputy commander of the combatant command the geographic area of responsibility of which includes the United States shall be a qualified officer of a reserve component of the armed forces who is eligible for promotion to the grade of O-9, unless a reserve component officer is serving as commander of that combatant command.

(f) Combatant Command Staff.

(1) Each unified and specified combatant command shall have a staff to assist the commander of the command in carrying out his responsibilities. Positions of responsibility on the combatant command staff shall be filled by officers from each of the armed forces having significant forces assigned to the command.

(2) An officer may be assigned to a position on the staff of a combatant command or, in the case of such a position that is designated under section 601 of this title as a position of importance and responsibility, may be recommended to the President for assignment to that position, only.

(A) with the concurrence of the commander of such command; and

(B) in accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense.

(3) The Secretary of Defense may waive the requirement under paragraph (2) for the concurrence of the commander of a combatant command with regard to the assignment (or recommendation for assignment) of a particular officer to serve on the staff of the combatant command if the Secretary of Defense determines that such action is in the national interest.

(g) Authority to Suspend Subordinates.

In accordance with procedures established by the Secretary of Defense, the commander of a combatant command may suspend from duty and recommend the reassignment of any officer assigned to such combatant command.

(h) Support to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The commander of a combatant command shall provide such information to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as may be necessary for the Chairman to perform the duties of the Chairman under section 153 of this title.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, the Political Constitution of the Republic of Colombia in title 7, chapter 7 mentions the functions of the public force. Specific functions, relevant to the military, follow bellow:

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<sup>30</sup> US Code, Title 10. Armed Forces, Subtitle A. General Military Law, Part I. Organization and General Military Powers, Chapter 6. Combatant Commanders, U.S. Code § 164 - Commanders of combatant commands: assignment; powers and duties, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/164>.

Article 216. The public force will be integrated exclusively by the Military Forces and the National Police. All Colombians are obliged to take up arms when public needs demand it to defend national independence and public institutions. The Law will determine the conditions that at all times exempt from military service and the prerogatives for the provision thereof.

Article 217. The Nation will have for its defense a permanent Military Forces constituted by the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The main purpose of the Military Forces is to defend the sovereignty, independence, integrity of the national territory and the constitutional order. The Law will determine the system of replacements in the Military Forces, as well as the promotions, rights and obligations of its members and the special career, benefit and disciplinary regime that is theirs.

Article 218. The law will organize the police force. The National Police is a permanent armed body of civil nature, in charge of the Nation, whose primary purpose is the maintenance of the necessary conditions for the exercise of public rights and liberties, and to ensure that the inhabitants of Colombia live together in peace. The law will determine your career, performance and disciplinary regime.

Article 219. The Public Force is not deliberative; it cannot meet except by order of legitimate authority, nor direct petitions, except on matters that relate to the service and morality of the respective body and in accordance with the law. The members of the Public Force may not exercise the function of suffrage while they remain in active service, or intervene in activities or debates of political parties or movements.

Article 220. The members of the Public Force cannot be deprived of their degrees, honors and pensions, but in the cases and in the manner determined by the Law.

Article 221. Of the punishable conducts committed by the members of the Public Force in active service, and in relation to the same service, they will know the courts martial or military courts, in accordance with the prescriptions of the Military Penal Code. Such Courts or Courts will be integrated by members of the Public Force in active or retired service. In the investigation and prosecution of the punishable conducts of the members of the Public Force, in relation to an armed conflict or a confrontation that meets the objective conditions of International Humanitarian Law, the norms and principles of this will be applied. Judges and prosecutors of ordinary justice and of Military or Police Criminal Justice who are aware of the conduct of members of the Public Force must have adequate training and knowledge of International Humanitarian Law. Military or Police Criminal Justice will be independent of the command of the Public Force.

Article 222. The law shall determine the professional, cultural and social promotion systems of members of the Public Force. In the stages of their formation, they will be taught the basics of democracy and human rights.

Article 223. Only the Government may introduce and manufacture weapons, munitions of war and explosives. No one may own or carry them without the permission of the competent authority. This permission may not be extended to cases of attendance at political meetings, elections, or meetings of public corporations or assemblies, either to act on them or to witness them. Members of national security agencies and other armed official bodies, of a permanent nature, created or authorized by law, may carry weapons under the control of the Government, in accordance with the principles and procedures indicated therein.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Political Constitution of the Republic of Columbia, “Title 7: Chapter 7: From the Public Force.”

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The author conducted a qualitative and comparative analysis of two casestudies. The first was operation “Vuelo del Angel.” The second was Joint Task Force OMEGA, the first joint structure in the Colombian Military Forces, OMEGAto examine the evolution of joint operations and joint structures in the Colombian Military Forces. Throughout military history in Colombia, joint structures and organizations in the Colombian Military Forces have been influenced by the United States Military Forces. Thus, I will analyze the organization and mission of two unified commands US Central Command (USCENTCOM) and US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

This research analyzes the operation conducted by military forces “Vuelo de Angel”. In 1998 the military forces in Colombia, with the support of Brazil, planned and executed a large joint operation with all military forces. The purpose was to recover the city of Mitu that was occupied by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), one of the worst terrorist actions in Colombian history. The success of this operation demonstrated the need for joint organizations and joint operations, thus beginningan evolution in joint doctrine.

The research stresses the importance of evolution in the structure of the military organizations in Colombia. JTF OMEGA served as the case study regarding current organization, mission and operational environment. This joint jask force is one of the best units in the Colombian Military Forces, enjoying a very favorable and prestigious reputation. This reputation is recognized within Colombia as well as by neighboring

countries. Many countries conduct official visits to Colombia and the Colombian Military with the purpose of learning more about this unit and why they are so successful.

After WWII, Colombia began an evolution in joint doctrine. In 1951 Colombia created a General Command of Military Forces theoretically consolidating all services of the military under one command. However, it was in the 21<sup>th</sup> century that the implementation of joint operations and joint task force structures took root in the military culture. JTF OMEGA and some of the biggest operations against the narco-terrorist group FARC, serve as examples of this change in thinking.

This research mentions briefly how Title 10 of the United States Code, describes the functions of combatant commanders in detail, and how the Colombian constitution has a broad concept about the military forces.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the information is organized chronologically to help the reader comprehend the evolution of joint military operations within the military forces and the creation of the first joint unit of the Colombian Military Forces.

Guerrilla operation “Marquetalia,” the armed plan to capture the municipality of Mitú, was announced on October 28, 1998 by the alias “Jorge Briceño” or “Mono Jojoy”, commander of the organic guerilla block who directed the armed assault. The plan explicitly detailed the use of weapons, fuel units, and supplies, as well as general movements, robberies to finance entities, movements of seized goods and the preparation of ambushes for military units that might reach the area. It also included the massive use of explosive and incendiary ramps.

On November 1, 1998, a thousands of FARC guerrillas was [were] captured for the first time in its history [in the] a capital city Mitu. That day, in the early hours of the morning, a massacre of a degraded conflict left dozens dead and kidnapped. That dawn, a handful of police contained one of the most violent guerrilla attacks in the history of Colombia.<sup>32</sup>

The guerrilla operation Marquetalia, in November 1,1998 against the National Police Command in Mitu, Colombia was one of the most significant strikes against the State. At that time the unit was composed of 120 uniformed officers. The unit included five officers, two non-commissioned officers (NCOs)77 patrol officers, six agents, and 30

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<sup>32</sup> CNN Espanol, “Una masacre, decenas de policías secuestrados y la única toma a una ciudad capital por parte de las FARC: 20 años después de la toma de Mitú,” *CNN*, November 02, 2018, accessed February 25, 2019, <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2018/11/02/una-masacre-decenas-de-policias-secuestrados-y-la-unica-toma-a-una-ciudad-capital-por-parte-de-las-farc-20-anos-despues-de-la-toma-de-mitu/>.



As seen in figure 10, Mitu was one of the furthest points in Colombia, even with a significant concentration of members of the public force; the military forces had to launch a military operation.

This operation was one of the hardest blows by guerrillas on the Colombian state in the history of the country. This forced the country to rethink its operations and restructure its military forces to fight the type of warfare experienced at that time.

#### Guerrillas Operation “Marquetalia” the Occupation of Mitu

On November 1, 1998, at four o'clock in the morning, the guerrillas managed to gather approximately 1,500 guerrillas from fronts 1, 7, 17, 44, the Juan José Rendón mobile column and the Eastern Bloc led by Víctor Julio Suarez Rojas, known as "El Mono Jojoy." The guerrillas were ordered to enter the capital of the department of Vaupés, to take Mitú and hold the city for a long time. The military action against the departmental capital of Vaupés was a tactical action - offensive but was a geostrategic strike for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. This operation demonstrated the guerrilla capability to gather intelligence for the guerrilla effort and to critically who analyze the points in favor and the points against carrying out the operation. The FARC knew the military security, that the Colombian Army relied on. According to military security, Barri Buzan exposed deficiencies "as the armed and defensive capabilities of the State."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Universidad del Rosario, “Nature and conditions of political security,” in *Safety in construction in Latin America, Take 1*, ed. Bogota Editorial Center, 125-133, [https://www.urosario.edu.co/cpg-ri/InvestigacionCEPI/documentos/libros/libro\\_Seguridad\\_enConstruccion/](https://www.urosario.edu.co/cpg-ri/InvestigacionCEPI/documentos/libros/libro_Seguridad_enConstruccion/).

The guerrillas did an exhaustive intelligence job with the purpose of occupying the city as soon as possible and with the least casualties possible. The FARC knew the exact number of policemen in the city, as well as close support personnel.

The FARC entered the city during the morning hours with approximately 1,500 armed men; and the police tried to defend the city. But it was impossible to contain the attack. The fighting lasted until around 2 pm. Once the FARC obtained the victory, the next step was to prepare to defend the city when the government tried to recover it with the military forces.

One of the best tactics of the FARC was to put explosives on the runways in the airport because the only way to arrive at Mitu is by plane. They also disabled the antennas to isolate the population and so that the military could not use them to communicate between them. That Sunday, the occupation of Mitu by the FARC was a complete success, owing largely to the lack of military forces in the area. The military had not prepared for this circumstance.

#### Military Operation “Flight of Angel” retaken of Mitu

President Andrés Pastrana asked the high command of the armed forces to design a strategy that would allow the State to recover the urban center of the capital of Vaupés that had been taken by thousands of men from the Eastern Bloc of the FARC.

Specifically, the higher commanders of the military forces realized that they did not have the infrastructure, weapons, or capabilities to execute the mission as quickly as required. First, the Mitú airport had been dynamited and cordoned off by guerrillas of the Eastern Bloc, which prevented the National Air Force aircraft from landing. Second, the helicopters that the air force had did not have sufficient flight cruising range to reach

Mitú and return to San José del Guaviare without refueling. However, they drafted a plan to recover the city where Brazilian assistance would play a decisive factor.

Through diplomatic channels to the Government of Brazil, Colombia got the authorization to use a military base located in Querari that was fundamental to deploy troops and refuel aircraft. For that reason, it was vital to the success of the operation.

Based on lessons from operation “Vuelo del Angel,” the GUC in Colombia had the mission to link with neighboring countries in order to achieve real unified action. Unified action is “the synchronization, coordination, and integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort”<sup>34</sup> with the purpose of focusing on the process, eliminating over planning and using resources efficiently.

Until that moment, the military forces realized they lacked the assets, as well as the infrastructure to be operationally effective on the battlefield. These lessons would mark a modernization route in the military forces.

The harsh operation, commanded from San José del Guaviare by the Army's own commander, General Jorge Mora Rangel, began with the displacement of 200 counter-guerrilla soldiers and 20 police from the jungle commandos. These men left the anti-narcotics base in DC-3 planes and Black Hawk helicopters to the base of Querari, in Brazil. There they tanked the aircraft and were later disembarked 10 kilometers from the urban center of Mitu.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 12 April 2001, as amended through 19 August 2009), 573.

<sup>35</sup> Redaccion el Tiempo, “Batalla Nocturna Para Recuperar Mitú,” *El Tiempo*, 04 November 1998, accessed April 7, 2019, <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-846204>.

“We had to go back because the guerrillas were on us, said a soldier who was evacuated from the theater of war.”<sup>36</sup> The military forces did not have enough troops in the area to push guerrillas to retreat.

“Night came, the high commanders regrouped the troop and waited for the night to arrive to launch the final battle.”<sup>37</sup> After three days of guerrilla control, the military forces were trying new tactics and techniques to defeat the FARC during the night.

“Confusing the guerrilla with police. We confused some guerrillas with police. They went in the retreat and wore a uniform and the patch used by the police.”<sup>38</sup> Although the experience on the military was enough to fight against guerrillas, they did not have the control measures to develop efficient joint operations.

“Protected at night, a counterattack by about 220 men of special forces and backed by ten black hawk[s], two combat aircraft OV-10[s], 3 MI-17[s] and a ghost plane with ammunition 0.50 caliber, surprised by the rear of the guerrillas.”<sup>39</sup> This marked the first time that the military forces developed a joint operation at night. This shows that the concept of “jointness” that at the time did not exist.

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<sup>36</sup> Redaccion el Tiempo, “Batalla Nocturna Para Recuperar Mitú.”

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> WebInfoMil.com, “Asi fue la Operacion ‘Vuelo de Angel’ que permitio recuperar Mitu de las garras de los terroristas de las FARC,” November 2018, accessed April 7, 2019, <http://www.webinfomil.com/2018/11/asi-fue-la-operacion-vuelo-de-angel-que.html>.

After three days of intense combat in the area of operations, the Colombian National Air Force was key to the success of the military. “Fighter aircraft of the air force detected 17 boats of the FARC docked in Rio Vaupes and [they] bombed.”<sup>40</sup>

This demanding and effective operation allowed that on the third day the FARC were forced to retreat, leaving the town by trails, roads, and rivers, fleeing before the air power, an aspect that they never imagined would mark the military advantage over their claims.<sup>41</sup>

One of the great successes at Mitú was the use of joint military forces, even the National Police, in coordinated operations, as well as the need to create cooperation agreements with a neighboring country (Brazil), in the fight against drug trafficking and subversion.

According to the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH), “1998 was the year in which more guerrilla attack on towns were attempted in the country: 58 in total. Of these, 44 were the responsibility of the FARC”.<sup>42</sup> It was during this administration with Mr. Andres Pastrana Arango as President of Colombia when political and military leaders agreed on the necessity to find a solution to face current and future armed conflict. With the support of the United States, the Colombian Plan was created. This plan provided sufficient technical assistance and means such as aircraft and weapons to the

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<sup>40</sup> WebInfoMil.com, “Asi fue la Operacion ‘Vuelo de Angel’ que permitio recuperar Mitu de las garras de los terroristas de las FARC.”

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> National Center of Historic Memory, “Bienvenidas y bienvenidos a nuestra xi semana por la memoria,” October 31, 2018, accessed February 26, 2019, <http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/noticias/noticias-cmh/bienvenidas-y-bienvenidos-a-nuestra-xi-semana-por-la-memoria>.

military to directly fight the guerrillas within the country and reduce the levels of illegal crops that were the source of financing for the guerrillas.

In 2002 Plan Colombia began, and some aircraft and training arrived in the country. In 2002, Colombians chose a new President Mr. Alvaro Uribe Velez, and he continued the alignment of political and military objectives in a coordinated manner in order to end the armed conflict in Colombia. Therefore, now with policies and resources, the military had the necessary tools to develop military operations against illegal groups. Martha Lucia Ramirez, Minister of Defense when leading the planning process and finalizing the planning phase said “The public force will take the first step in this effort to articulate a comprehensive response to security challenges. The second should be given by the State as a whole and the third by the whole society”<sup>43</sup>.

In 2002 with General Mora Rangel as the Chief of Military Forces, the same who led operation “Vuelo del Angel” in 1998, began the initiative and the planning to create joint units in order to fight against guerrillas, and to consolidate the “Democratic Security Policy” government policy of that time.

In December 2003 General Ospina Ovalle founded Joint Task Force OMEGA<sup>44</sup> and began the enormous challenge of getting military personnel to begin to think joint. The primary mission for which the JTF OMEGA was created was to attack the heart of the FARC. This operation sought to take away territorial control of the FARC at several critical points in the south of the country, in the departments of Meta, Guaviare, and

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<sup>43</sup> Letter of Presentation from the Minister of Defense, Martha Lucía Ramírez, to the Democratic Security Policy, 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Decree 060 of December 4 of 2003, General Command of the Military Forces.



Caquetá, where the Eastern and Southern Blocks of the FARC operated. Success began slowly but over time achieved overwhelming success.

Additionally, JTF OMEGA had some conceptual considerations in order to follow the right route. They were:

**Disarticulation:** Understood in the military institution as the application of effective military power to neutralize the armed, logistical and terrorist capacity of the structures of the enemy system, using all active, preventive and dissuasive measures, achieving a cumulative effect of irreversible cracking as a priority or of maximum impact in the Strategic Areas.

**Operational Strategic Containment:** Integrate the efforts of the State to monitor, prevent and control the use of strategic mobility corridors, ports, airports, rivers, and roads by the threat in the transversal axes.

**Dominant Intelligence:** It is the product of intelligence obtained from the State intelligence agencies, fulfilling the intelligence cycle and providing the correct knowledge and detail of the terrain, enemy and the troops themselves. Essential elements applicable to the campaign and whose result is materialized in a strategic, operational or tactical success.

**Use of Critical Mass:** Use of the most significant number of men and combat power (air, river power, and ground) on a given objective and area, it is necessary to accurately determine the critical areas and concentrate on them and on the objective with maximum potential.<sup>45</sup>

These elements were the conceptual basis and the “strategic” line on which the planning and execution of military operations had to be based in their area of operations. However, two concepts were vital to the success of the JTF OMEGA. Intelligence and critical mass were key because using all forces under one commander with sufficient intelligence makes success of military operations much more likely.

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<sup>45</sup> “Operations Estimates” of the Joint Task Force Omega, 2-3.

In this case, the success of JTF OMEGA motivated the General Command of the Colombian Military Forces to create more joint units such as the Joint Special Operations Command (CCOES.) They have achieved similar success.

The composition of the Joint Task Force OMEGA was:



Figure 11. Air Component JTF OMEGA

Source: JTF OMEGA.



Figure 12. Fluvial Component JTF OMEGA

Source: JTF OMEGA

As has already been analyzed, a specific feature of modernization is that it tends to produce an increasingly functional organization with experts working in each area respectively. In the case study, Joint Task Force OMEGA is a clear example of functional specialization, since it was necessary to have a group of trained soldiers who could act in a fast, coordinated and effective way, combining the three forces (Army, Air Force, and Navy).

As visualized before, the components of JTF OMEGA are organized very similarly to the geographic command in the US, with components of land, air, and sea. In

the Colombian case, sea is better described as fluvial because it better describes operations in rivers. However, the purpose of the organization is the same, create a unit with multiple capabilities to develop multi-mission operations.

The functions and responsibilities for the combatant commanders are written in Title 10 US Code, outlining particular functions and overall detailed authority over other services or agencies according to the mission. In comparison with the Colombian Political Constitution, the responsibilities of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of the Staff are extensive. Also, the Political Constitution of Colombia does not mention the relationships between the services and other government agencies.

All institutions want to achieve success during their duties, and military forces are not an exception. Therefore, it would be advisable to expand the whole concept and emulate the success of our joint task forces. Currently in Colombia, the concept of “jointness” can be seen at a higher level, such as the regional, but the concept needs to be expanded.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

At the end of this research, a general conclusion would be that it is strategically and administratively advantageous for Colombia to apply a military organizational structure similar to that of the unified geographic commands of the United States. However, institutional conflicts of interest among government agencies can be one of the most difficult challenges to face. Several intermediate actions would have to be taken before making a decision to implement unified geographic commands. The areas of responsibility of the divisional units of the National Army would have to be eliminated and would be replaced by the new geographic unified (GUCs) commands and commanders, who would make operational decisions in that region.

Colombia's geographically distinguishable regions are appropriate as areas of operation in great part because commanders would have to make decisions in accordance with the particularities of the physical and human geography. Each region has specific characteristics that differentiate it from the others, such as climate, vegetation, land elevations, animals, diseases, roads, population, social problems, customs, beliefs, and indigenous peoples; all of these factors are concerns for the combatant commanders with the purpose of making the right decision, at the right time, in the right moment.

According to one of the best military forces on the world, those of the US, the appropriate direction to take in order to face new global threats is with joint command -- commands with multiple capabilities, components of all services and teamwork between military and civilians; as is the current organization structure of USSOCOM and USCENTCOM.

The counter-guerrilla operation 'Marquetalia' exposed visible flaws and irregularities in the security and defense of the Colombian State and the military. By 1998, the most prominent and oldest guerrillas in Colombia, the FARC, had enough rebels and sufficient combat power to potentially take the capital city of Bogotá and put the military forces in an untenable position. Different complications in developing operation "Vuelo del Angel" in 1998 -- such as mobility and logistics limitations, unclear cooperation agreements with neighboring countries, the lack of night tactics, reduced riverine capability, and limited air assets -- all compelled senior military commanders and political leaders to redirect the nation's military strategy.

Plan Colombia was vital for the modernization of weapons, tactics, training and general military support to achieve operational success, and to restore the Colombian Military Forces reputation worldwide. An increase in the budget of the security sector of the country and the beginning of economic and logistic aid by the government of the United States, had the objective of improving and developing new and better military capabilities. Mobility was one of the flaws that was recognized in the development of Operation 'Vuelo de Angel'; therefore, the acquisition of airplanes and helicopters adapted to the needs of the conflict was the solution to mitigate the gap.

By 2002, the electorate chose Mr. Alvaro Uribe Velez as President, which served as a milestone in finding a path toward a military solution against the FARC. The new military commanders took the first step to plan the first joint unit in the military history in Colombia, JTF OMEGA, and with this, the military forces changed the mentality from defensive operations to offensive operations. One of the flags of the Security Democracy Policy of Mr. Alvaro Uribe Velez was to be present in all municipalities around the

country in order to avoid what happened at Mitu in 1998 and simultaneously increase the combat power of the military.

JTF OMEGA was the first joint unit in Colombia with components of all services. It became an elite unit with immense combat power. The mission setting was precise and concise --to attack the base camps of the FARC guerrillas. Therefore, with enough combat power, and a clear mission, the results could not be better; with combat every day the combat power of the FARC began to diminish. The joy and optimism of the national government and the military forces were immediate, so much so that they started the process to create more joint units across the national territory.

The Colombian Military Forces are ready for “jointness.” However, top leaders of the government to individual soldiers must be convinced that “jointness” is the solution to finish a long period of war in Colombia. Also, the geographic unified commands can also play a vital role during the transition forward toward peace because the capabilities to reconstruct roads, railways and key infrastructure could help every town regardless of size or remoteness. Unified commanders play an active part linking civil authorities with military leadership in interagency relationships in order to promote and advance regional development plans, always with the guidance of the civilian head of state. Missions, responsibilities and authorities of a geographic unified commander must nevertheless be codified in the National Constitution of the Republic of Colombia, as the highest legal norm in the country (allowing and also limiting military commanders to integrate and interact with other agencies and civil authorities), similarly to what is written in Title X of the US Code.

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