REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE April 1994	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED FINAL

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE

OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT -- A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

AD-A280 675

6. AUTHOR(S)

DAVID E. CLARY LT COL, USAF

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

AIR WAR COLLEGE
325 CHENNAULT CIRCLE
MAXWELL AFB AL 36112-6427

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

Unnumbered AWC research paper

DTIC
ELECTE
JUN 24 1994
S B D

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

N/A

10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

N/A

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

PAPER IS WRITTEN TO FULFILL ACADEMIC RESEARCH REQUIREMNTS FOR AN IN-RESIDENCE SENIOR SERVICE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY SCHOOL.

12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

See page ii

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 2

94-19332

94 6 23 107

14. SUBJECT TERMS OPERATION, COMFORT, ANALYSIS	15. NUMBER OF PAGES 32
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLAS	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLAS	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLAS	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT--A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

by

David E. Clary

Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Dr. Alexander S. Cochran

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

April 1994

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Justification	
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Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: Operation Provide Comfort--A Strategic Analysis

AUTHOR: David E. Clary, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

The sight of 700,000 refugees fleeing the wrath of Saddam Hussein's army into the rugged mountains of northern Iraq brought world attention to the plight of the Kurds in the aftermath of the Gulf War in April 1991. In conjunction with world leaders, President Bush established a policy to assist those refugees and return them to their homes. President Bush's policy was fulfilled through a successful operational military strategy that evolved from that policy. An important key to the success of the strategy, was translation of policy into a clear and concise mission statement and mission objectives. These objectives then utilized coalition military, international relief organization, and private voluntary organization resources to successfully execute the mission tasks that flowed from the mission objectives.

The "new world order" seems to indicate that peacemaking and peacekeeping may become a prominent part of U.S. foreign policy in the future. If it does, the strategy employed during Operation Provide Comfort should be filed in the "success" drawer. However, one of the important lessons learned from this operation is that the glow from an operation's "success" will be dimmed if the operation's termination criteria is not carefully thought through, achievable, and recognizable when achieved.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel David E. Clary is a 1976 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. Following graduation, he attended Undergraduate Pilot Training at Williams A.F.B., Arizona. After earning his wings, he remained as a T-37 Instructor Pilot and Class Commander from 1978 to 1981. He was then assigned to R.A.F. Bentwaters, United Kingdom, as an A-10 Pilot and Flight Commander from 1981 to 1984. Colonel Clary then served as an A-7E Instructor Pilot and Exchange Officer with the U.S. Navy at N.A.S. Lemoore, California, from 1984 to 1986. He later joined a fleet squadron and deployed aboard the U.S.S. Carl Vinson for a six month cruise to the Northern Pacific, Western Pacific, and Indian Ocean, eventually making 160 carrier landings. Colonel Clary then attended Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell A.F.B., Alabama. After graduating in 1988, he stayed as a Joint Warfare instructor and curriculum developer for two years. Colonel Clary then returned to R.A.F. Bentwaters and flew the A-10 again from 1990 to 1993. During this tour, he made two deployments to Operation Provide Comfort, one as a squadron Operations Officer, and one as a Commander. During his combined seven months of deployment, he flew 54 sorties over northern Iraq. Colonel Clary is currently a student at the Air War College, again at Maxwell A.F.B. Colonel Clary has previously authored articles that have been published in The Journal for Electronic Defense, TAC Attack, and Approach Magazine.

OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT--A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

> No one can witness these piteous scenes of
> slaughtered Kurds--fighters and innocents--
> without being haunted and revolted by them, or
> without experiencing tremendous sense of
> guilt.[1]

> An estimated 80,000 Kurdish and other
> refugees, including women with infants in
> their arms and elderly people on mules, formed
> a five-mile-long procession through this
> remote region. Old women, their feet covered
> only with strips of cloth, struggled down a
> rocky path to a small footbridge across the
> icy Zap River.[2]

> Pope John Paul II urged world leaders today to
> find a just solution for the Kurdish people.
> "Not only are thousands of children, women and
> elderly people at risk of death from hunger or
> cold, but also the very survival of that whole
> community is in danger," the pope said.[3]

INTRODUCTION

During late March and early April of 1991, the world's
newspapers and magazines were filled with words and pictures
similar to the descriptions listed above. Saddam Hussein had
brutally crushed the Kurdish uprising which followed the Gulf War,
and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds fled into the snow-capped
mountains of nearby Turkey.[4] Most Kurds who had risen up against
Hussein believed President Bush would support them. But it didn't
take long for the rebellion to collapse when it became apparent
the President did not want to intervene in Iraq's "civil war".[5]
As world attention was focused daily on the desperate and

worsening plight of the Kurdish refugees, an upswelling of world opinion called for action by the United States. How did President Bush respond? What was the U.S. strategy in this crisis? Was the strategy successful? It is a matter of record that the president's response resulted in a contingency operation called Provide Comfort, and when judged by the operation's objectives, it was a successful operation.

The purpose of this study is to examine the strategy which was planned and executed during this contingency operation. It is my thesis that national policy was fulfilled during Operation Provide Comfort through a successful operational military strategy, however, the operation has not been concluded. U.S. and coalition aircraft continue to fly aircraft over northern Iraq providing security to the Kurds. This study will begin with a look at the national policy as espoused by national command authority, then a look at how that policy was translated into an operational mission statement and objectives. The study will also examine the resources used, and the plan which utilized those available resources to achieve the objectives. Finally, this study will examine termination criteria for this operation, and its implications for the future.

NATIONAL POLICY

On April 5, 1991, President Bush announced to the world he had "directed a major new effort be undertaken to assist Iraqi refugees".* This effort was coordinated with Gulf War coalition

partners and was "designed to alleviate the plight of the many innocent Iraqis whose lives have been endangered by the brutal and inhumane actions of the Iraqi Government".[7] This presidential announcement signaled the beginning of a policy to assist the refugees. The contingency operation that grew out of this policy was named Operation Provide Comfort. This study will begin with an examination of the events which preceded and prompted this policy, and the statements made and policy formulated by national command authority in response to those events.

Earlier, during the course of the Gulf War, President Bush had made appeals to the people of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein.[8] On February 15, he called for Saddam's overthrow from within saying:

> There's another way for the bloodshed to stop,
> and that is for the Iraqi military and the
> Iraqi people to take matters into their own
> hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator,
> to step down.[9]

The original Gulf War objectives established by President Bush during his August 25, 1990 address to the nation were to (1) secure the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, (2) restore the legitimate government of Kuwait, (3) assure the security and stability of the Persian Gulf region, and (4) protect American lives.[10] The President's February 15, 1991 statement appears consistent with objective #4 from his August 25 address. A coup would possibly have negated the need for a ground war thus saving American lives.

Emboldened by the President's words, coupled with the quick

3

defeat of the Iraqi military forces during the Gulf War of
January and February of 1991, the Shiite fundamentalists in
southern Iraq[11] and the Kurds in northern Iraq[12] began an
Anti-Saddam uprising in early March. A mixture of Kurdish "Pesh
Merga" guerrillas, local residents, and defecting Iraqi army
personnel won numerous victories during the first three weeks of
March.[13] Under the leadership of Massoud Barzani, the Kurdistan
Democratic Party leader, and Jalal Talabani, leader of the
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan[14], this mixture of rebels took
control of numerous cities including Irbil, Sulaymaniyah, Dahok,
and the key oil center of Kirkuk.[15] The rebels claimed they had
ousted Iraqi troops along the 206-mile border with Turkey and
controlled 75 percent of northern Iraq.

During mid-March, however, the tide began to turn. The
first reports of the use of helicopter gunships against the Kurds
were reported in the town of Kirkuk.[16] U.S. intelligence
confirmed the use of Hip and Hind attack helicopters[17] against
both the Shiites in the south, and Kurds in the north.[18] Stories
also began to emerge of Iraqi government atrocities in their
efforts to regain control.[19] In the town Karahanjir, 12 miles
east of Kirkuk, Kurdish sources claimed the Iraqi forces killed
every person in town, "including babies".[20]

Although he condemned the use of the helicopter gunships,
President Bush and his staff were reluctant to come to the aid of
the rebels. According to administration officials, President
Bush was reluctant to get involved at this point fearing a messy

and protracted military operation. On March 13, he stated, "I think it would be better if everybody stayed out and let the Iraqi people decide what they want to do."[21] Marlin Fitzwater, White House spokesman, followed on March 26 by saying, "We're not going to take a position (in Iraq's civil war)."[22]

With the U.S. shying away from military support to the rebel movement, Iraqi government forces launched a major offensive on March 28 to recapture the towns lost to the Kurds over the month of March. When Iraqi troops shelled the outskirts of Dahok, Jalal Talabani appealed to President Bush and the United Nations to "stop this annihilation of the Kurdish people." Talabani and Barzani asked Bush and Gulf War coalition forces to stop the Iraqi military from using helicopters, artillery, tanks, and armored vehicles. Intervention would be needed to stop what the Kurdish leaders described as the slaughter of civilians caught up in the fighting.[23]

On April 2, the Washington Post reported that the Kurdish uprising against Saddam Hussein had collapsed.[24] Two days later, Izzat Ibrahim, deputy commander of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, had declared, "The homeland, from the far north to the far south, has been purged of (the rebels)."[25] That same day, Robert Hall, Pentagon deputy spokesman reported, "There is minimal offensive activity by the insurgents anywhere in the country." He also reported the systematic destruction of population centers where insurgent activity had been high. And he concluded that the government retribution against the

insurgents had been violent, and had caused a wide-spread

displacement of people.[24]

Turkish authorities estimated over 220,000 Iraqi Kurdish

refugees, fearing brutal reprisals, had crossed the border into

Turkey.[27] The refugees included not only the Pesh Merga

guerrillas and their families, but also professionals,

businessmen, and other members of the middle and upper class who

had openly supported the uprising. Western journalists, who had

been with the Kurds while covering the story for the past weeks,

reported the Kurds were convinced they were betrayed by the

United States. Almost overnight, the Kurds had stopped praising

President Bush, and began accusing him of collusion with Saddam

Hussein in "genocide".[28]

Pressure on the administration to "do something" now began

to come from all directions. Deomocratic Senate Majority Leader

George J. Mitchell felt the U.S. should at least stop Iraq from

using helicopter gunships to kill Iraqi rebels.[29] Turkish

President Turgut Ozal called for an urgent meeting of the U.N.

Security Council to deal with the growing refugee crisis on the

Turkish-Iraqi border. Also through the U.N., France had

sponsored a Security Council resolution condemning all forms of

oppression in Iraq, and demanded that Iraqi authorities halt

their military campaigns against the rebels in southern and

northern Iraq.[30] British Prime Minister John Major sent an

urgent message to President Bush and called for a "massive

international effort" to help feed and house the refugees who had

fled from the Iraqi army.[31]   The following day, President Bush responded.

In a Presidential statement released by the White House on April 5, President Bush stated:

> The human tragedy unfolding in and around Iraq
> demands immediate action on a massive scale.
> At stake are not only the lives of hundreds of
> thousands of innocent men, women, and
> children, but the peace and security of the
> Gulf...I have directed that a major new effort
> be undertaken to assist Iraqi refugees.
> Beginning this Sunday (April 7), U.S. Air
> Force transport planes will fly over northern
> Iraq and drop supplies of food, blankets,
> clothing, tents, and other relief-related
> items for refugees and other Iraqi civilians
> suffering as a result of the situation there.[32]

With these words, President Bush established a policy to assist, with help from several coalition nations, the Iraqi refugees who had fled into the mountains fearing reprisals by the Iraqi military. Specifically, he ordered the air-drop of supplies to the Kurds in the mountains along the Turkish-Iraqi border, as well as contributions of money and goods to international organizations for distribution to Iraqi civilians. To execute this policy, President Bush set into motion the contingency operation known as Provide Comfort.

Having established policy, it was now time for the U.S. military to translate this policy into a military strategy. Military strategy, for the purposes of this study, is a "broad concept, embracing an objective defined by appropriate political or military authorities, military resources, and a plan or concept for using those resources to achieve the objective".[33]

The obvious first step in the development of strategy should be to establish the objective(s).

OPERATIONAL MILITARY OBJECTIVES

This fundamental first step of military strategy development, defining the objective, is often an iterative, and evolving process. If given the time and an opportunity to plan a specific military strategy, commanders and staffs should normally ask several questions to better understand the objective: Who established it? Is it clearly defined? Can it be restated? How is it related to other ongoing activities? When will it be achieved?[34] In the case of Provide Comfort, there were less than two days between notification of some of the military units involved, and the execution of the first airdrop missions.[35] For this reason, and because of an evolving policy to address the crisis, Provide Comfort's mission, objectives, and tasks evolved over time. This study will now examine the evolution of the operational military objectives during this operation. It will show Provide Comfort evolved initially from an airlift effort, to a more comprehensive effort that enticed the Kurds out of the mountains and back to their homes. One of the significant keys to the success of these efforts was the translation of stated policy into an operational mission statement, mission objectives, and mission tasks which would accomplish the policy.

The initial objective, which was deduced by the European Command and the Combined Task Force Provide Comfort staffs from

the president's policy of assistance to the refugees, was to stop the dying and suffering.[36] International relief agencies' officials estimated up to 1000 people were dying daily.[37] Due to the extremely rugged terrain and poor road conditions, the first logical option of delivering humanitarian aid was by air. On April 7, U.S. Air Force C-130s delivered 27 tons of badly needed food and supplies. During the first five days, the C-130s had flown 41 missions, delivered 136 tons of meals ready-to-eat (MREs), 67,500 liters of bottled water, 35 tons of blankets, and 400 parachutes intended for use as tents.[38] Even though it was the quickest logical means to help in this situation, airdrop had its disadvantages. The quantity of airdropped supplies simply could not alleviate the dying and suffering of the now estimated 700,000 refugees huddled along the Turkish-Iraqi border.[39] To make matters worse, the press reported that several refugees had been killed during the airdrop operations.[40] Accordingly, the international community began to discuss alternatives, which would eventually lead President Bush to alter his policy.

Prime Minister Turgut Ozal was the first to suggest that enclaves along the border should be created for the refugees where they would be protected against attack from Saddam's forces.[41] British Prime Minister John Major proposed this idea to the European Community, and won its support for a U.N. supervised enclave.[42] Defense Secretary Richard Cheney also raised the issue of safe zones, but conceded that U.S. officials had not addressed how such a zone could be created.[43]

Additionally, the U.N. Security Council began informal consultations on ways to create a buffer zone in the north.

While the U.N. debated the creation of what came to be called "safe havens", the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, and the U.S. agreed to augment the airdrop effort with a massive helicopter airlift effort.[44] Concurrently, the U.S. warned the Iraqi government not to carry out any military activity in northern Iraq where international efforts were underway to help the Kurds. Specifically, the Iraqis were instructed not to fly any aircraft north of the 36th Parallel which encompassed most of the territory of the traditional Kurdish homelands.[45] Administration officials admitted this warning was an attempt to, in fact, create a "de facto" safe haven. The issue was finally resolved on April 11 when President Bush, after meeting with European community officials, announced the U.S. and European allies were now "in agreement on the creation of areas within Iraq where refugees would be protected."[46] This announcement effectively altered his original guidance and policy.

> (F)ollowing consultations with Prime Minister Major, President Mitterrand, President Ozal of Turkey, Chancellor Kohl this morning, U.N. Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, I'm announcing an expanded - a greatly expanded - and more ambitious relief effort. The approach is quite simple: if we cannot get adequate food, medicine, clothing, and shelter to the Kurds living in the mountains along the Turkish-Iraq border, we must encourage the Kurds to move to areas in northern Iraq where the geography facilitates rather than frustrates such a large-scale relief effort.
>
> Consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 and working closely with the

> U.N. and other international relief
> organizations and our European partners, I
> have directed the U.S. military to begin
> immediately to establish several encampments
> in northern Iraq where relief supplies for
> these refugees will be made available in large
> quantities and distributed in an orderly way.
>
> Our long-term objective remains the same - for
> Iraqi Kurds and, indeed, for all Iraqi
> refugees, wherever they are, to return home
> and to live in peace, free from repression,
> free to live their lives.
>
> We intend to turn over the administration of
> and security for these sites as soon as
> possible to the U.N.[47]

President Bush's original policy had now evolved into a more comprehensive policy. The President had coordinated with wo.·d leaders and set the wheels in motion for a longer-term solution. While still working to stop the dying and suffering, the second prong of a two pronged U.N.-backed relief effort was initiated in earnest. The second prong would be an international effort under Combined Task Force Provide Comfort leadership, to eventually have the Kurds voluntarily return to their homes, to repatriate them. The aim would be to provide "international humanitarian presence and relief wherever needed in the country, so that people can stay as close to, and eventually return, home."[48] Having expanded his policy to include the termination criteria of turning the operation over to the U.N., the stage was now set for the operational military commander to develop his objectives, and to implement his plan using his available resources.

Then Lt. Gen. John Shalikashvili, who assumed command of this military effort known as Operation Provide Comfort on April

17, listed his mission, objectives, and tasks as follows:

Provide Comfort Mission

Combined task force Provide Comfort conducts
multinational humanitarian operations to
provide immediate relief to displaced Iraqi
civilians until international relief agencies
and private voluntary organizations can
assume overall supervision.[49]

Provide Comfort Objectives

- Immediate: Stop the dying and suffering; stabilize the
  population.
- Mid-term: Resettle population at temporary sites; establish
  sustainable, secure environment.
- Long-term: Return population to their homes.[50]

Provide Comfort Tasks

1) Provide immediate relief/stabilize population.
2) Build distribution system/infrastructure.
3) Construct transit centers.
4) Transfer displaced civilians to transit centers.
5) Transition operation to International Relief Organizations and
   Private Voluntary Organizations.
6) Provide continuous security for operations.
7) Facilitate ultimate objective to return displaced civilians to
   their homes.[51]

One of the real keys to the success of Operation Provide

Comfort was realized in the translation of national policy into

the mission statement, objectives, and tasks listed above. These

mission, objectives, and tasks statements were translated by the

Combined Task Force Provide Comfort staff, and were based on the

April 16, 1991 U.S. European Command (EUCOM) operation order

which listed the Combined Task Force mission and concept of

operations.[52] Comparing President Bush's statements to the
listed objectives, it is clear that the policy speech was
translated into an appropriate mission statement and objectives
by both the EUCOM staff and the Combined Task Force staff. The
objectives were clearly stated. Termination criteria was listed
as the turn over to the U.N. of both administration and
security. The objectives also clearly provided for a time-phased
approach, that allowed for prioritization, and yet kept long-term
goals in focus. The tasks that were established from the
objectives, in essence, became the plan that would achieve the
objectives.

THE PLAN AND RESOURCES

It is now appropriate to examine the plan that was executed
to accomplish the tasks, which in turn accomplished the
objectives. This section will portray the task force
organization, and how the organization was built to accomplish
listed tasks. It will then examine who accomplished each task,
and how it was done.

To provide a framework with which to examine the execution
of the plan and the resources used, it is very helpful to start
with a look at how the combined task force was organized. In a
nutshell, the operation was organized to perform the assigned
tasks. (See figure 1) Task Force A, commanded by Brig. Gen.
Richard W. Potter, Jr., was tasked to help provide immediate
relief and stabilize the population in the mountains (task #1).

Combined Support Command, commanded by Brig. Gen. Harold E.
Burch, was tasked to build the distribution system and
infrastructure which would allow efficient distribution of
humanitarian assistance (task #2). Task Force B, commanded by
Maj. Gen. Jay M. Garner, was tasked to construct the transit
centers, transfer the refugees to those centers and then to their
homes, and to provide security all the while (task #3, 4, and
7). Civil Affairs Command, commanded by Brig. Gen. Donald
Campbell, was tasked to coordinate with the multitude of
international relief organizations and private voluntary
organizations in providing humanitarian assistance. It was also
his job to transition the entire assistance program to these
organizations once the Kurds returned to their homes (task #5).
The air forces, commanded by Brig. Gen. James L. Hobson, Jr.,
were tasked with the initial air drops, and airlift and
continuous security for the duration of the operation (task #1
and 6). With this organization, Lt. Gen. Shalikashvili had
effectively organized to accomplish the tasks required, which in
turn would accomplish the stated operational objectives. Each
subordinate commander within this task force was responsible for
a significant portion of the mission, and responsible for the
overall success of the operation.[53]

The initial tasking of the task force was to provide
humanitarian relief of food and other necessities by airdrop.
Tactical airlift units were able to deliver relief within 36
hours of the initial notification of the units involved. U.S.

C-130s, followed quickly by tactical airlift from numerous countries, were escorted by A-10 and F-16 fighters. Not only was the rapid response of aerospace power important, but the infrastructure of Incirlik Air Base in Turkey was a key to the U.S.'s ability to respond quickly. Incirlik had been the host for EUCOM's air contributions during the Gulf War. As such, it was experienced in supporting combat operations, both from the base services perspective, and from the command and control perspective as well.[54]

Also part of the first group to arrive was Brig. Gen. Potter. The general, too, had been stationed in Turkey during the war, and had commanded the Special Operations Command contingent from EUCOM.[55] Forces under his command were instrumental in the first deliveries of supplies by helicopter. His Special Forces troops were the first task force personnel to find and enter the camps, assess the situation, and provide on-the-scene distribution.[56] They also assisted camp leadership and private organizations with basic medical care and sanitation.[57] The arrival of his personnel in the refugee camps in the mountains signaled the beginning of some order to the chaos that existed in the camps at the time. It was through the combined efforts of the air forces and special forces that the first task of providing relief was started so quickly, and began to stabilize the situation in the camps. But as has been mentioned, this was not a permanent solution. A more efficient distribution system had to be established.

15

Brig. Gen. Burch, in the words of Lt. Gen. Shalikashvili, had "the thankless task of building the logistics infrastructure that turned out to be our greatest challenge and also to be our savior."[38] After the airdrops began, the next resource brought in to deliver aid to the refugee camps were the helicopters, which provided greater safety during their deliveries. With special forces troops now in the camps, direct coordination with the refugees determined what type of supplies were more urgently needed in each particular camp, increasing efficiency. But, to deal with the sheer volume of supplies needed to sustain 700,000 people, local truck transportation was hired and quickly put to work. An important part of the distribution system was the utilization of the facilities at Incirlik, Diyarbakir, and Batman Air Bases, and the port of Iskenderun, all in Turkey, for incoming supplies and offload to other airplanes, helicopters, or trucks. Additionally, humanitarian service support bases, which among other things served as key logistic hubs and warehouses, were established at Silopi, Turkey, and Zakho and Sirsenk in Iraq.[39] Another key to the logistics effort was the transition from the initial emergency delivery (push system) to the tailored delivery to the camps (pull system). Again, this transition meant the right amount of supplies were getting to the right place at the right time. In summary, Brig. Gen. Burch succeeded in transitioning from airdrops to truck delivery, and a push system to a pull system.[40] This ultimately resulted in a transition from MREs to bulk fresh food, and a halt to the

starving. But as mentioned earlier, feeding the Kurds in the mountains was not the long term solution. The next step was to convince the Kurds to return to their homes.

To entice the Kurds back to their homes, a series of transit centers were built that provided food, temporary shelter, and medical aid on their way to their homes. Security was also provided along the route, and most importantly, was also provided when they got to their homes. Additionally, transportation was provided to those who could not walk back to their homes. It was Maj. Gen. Garner's task to find transit center sites, build and operate them, assist with transportation, and provide security during the refugee movement. His troops in Task Force B selected camp sites where they could provide the best security. They then designed and built the transit centers. A great deal of effort went into the design of these transit centers. First, they had to be temporary. If they were too high quality, the refugees may have decided to stay in them permanently. Second, in order to be used at all, they had to fit the needs of the Kurds. Kurdish elders had been surveyed to determine what was required to ensure the centers were culturally compatible for the Kurdish families. Commercial trucking was secured to assist those who could not walk down from the mountains. Finally, Task Force B provided security which was probably the fundamental requirement in convincing the Kurds to return to their homes.[41]

Providing security to the Kurds was a major part of Operation Provide Comfort. This operation was unique as a

humanitarian effort, because it enticed refugees to their homes under the same regime that had caused them to flee in the first place. The first airdrops flew through Iraqi airspace, dropped supplies to people who had just been fighting the Iraqi army, and occurred before the Gulf War peace treaty had been signed. Coalition forces entered northern Iraq, which had not seen any coalition ground activity during the war, and established a security zone that measured roughly 3000 square miles. Both of these intrusions on Iraqi sovereignty involved risking Iraqi reaction. Task Force B, in conjunction with the stern demands made by Lt. Gen. Shalikashvili of Iraqi military representatives, were successful in clearing this security zone of all Iraqi military forces.[42] There were numerous minor confrontations between these forces during this operation, but none of them became major incidents.

A significant part of this security effort was the no-fly zone that had been established north of the 36th parallel, and the coalition fighters that patrolled that zone. During the coalition's advance into the security zone, A-10s and F-16s were called by the ground forces to help "convince" the Iraqi military to continue to pull out during some of the minor confrontations.[43] With the security zone now free of the Iraqi military, and coalition aircraft highly visible overhead, the Kurds were comfortable that they could now return to their homes in safety. The next issue to be solved was the turnover of the humanitarian effort to international relief organizations and

private voluntary organizations.

Brig. Gen. Campbell was tasked coordinate and integrate the efforts of the over 50 private and governmental organizations that arrived to provide humanitarian assistance. These organizations brought their expertise in humanitarian operations to Provide Comfort, and were critical to the success of all the taskings. The reserve civil affairs soldiers under Brig. Gen. Campbell's command brought all of the different agencies together, and organized it so the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) could take over the management of the refugee assistance program.[44] CARE's team leader in Iraq, Roland Roome, praised the military's role in organizing the operation saying:

> What was incredible to me was how the military set up all the detailed and complicated systems at such speed with so little prior experience in the food game. It was great working with them — real professionals with a great attitude.[45]

On June 7, operation of all temporary camps, medical support, and food distribution were turned over to the UNHCR. By July 15, the last coalition troops departed northern Iraq, ultimately completing the objectives stated by President Bush in early and mid April. But Operation Provide Comfort did not end. Coalition air forces continue to fly over the skies of Iraq, north of the 36th parallel. When will the operation be terminated? And what will happen to the Kurds when it is terminated?

TERMINATION CRITERIA

Establishing some sort of termination criteria to determine when a military objective has been achieved, or when to end an operation, has probably been a topic of discussion since man has been involved in group conflict. In this final section, the concept of termination criteria will be examined. Specifically, this study will explore the growing importance to Americans of termination criteria, what the termination criteria was for Provide Comfort, and whether the termination criteria was adequate to successfully end U.S. involvement in the operation.

The termination criteria aspect of strategy formulation appears to be an increasingly critical factor with the increasing number of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. After the Vietnam and Gulf War experience, it can be argued that in the future, Americans will demand short and decisive military operations, with achievable objectives, and a desired end-state that will be easily be recognized when reached. In the Gulf War, for instance, the objectives of securing the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, restoring the legitimate government of Kuwait, and protecting American lives were all achievable and easily recognized when reached. The fourth objective however, to assure the security and stability of the region, was not as clear. This objective was far more difficult to translate into achievable military objectives, and far more difficult to recognize when it had been achieved.

The termination criteria for Provide Comfort that was

established in mid-April and listed in the mission statement
involved the turnover of tne relief effort to international relief
agencies and private voluntary organizations. The overall mission
provided immediate relief to displaced Iraqi civilians, which in
retrospect is exactly what happened. After the Kurds had been fed
and resettled in their own homes, coalition troops departed the
security zone in northern Iraq, essentially completing the
mission. However, as has been mentioned, the security provided to
the Kurds played a critical role in enticing the Kurds out the
mountains. The Kurds felt the coalition forces were necessary to
protect them against Iraqi army reprisals. After coalition ground
forces left, coalition air power maintained the exclusion zone
prohibiting Iraqi fixed-wing aircraft north of the 36th parallel.
Coalition air power also continued to provide a "visual presence"
in the skies over northern Iraq, which continued to prevent
reprisals against the Kurds.[66] But coalition aircraft continue to
fly over Iraq today, almost three years after the withdrawal of
ground troops. Can we really say that the operation has been
completed? In my opinion, no, it is not over.

If one considers the continued coalition sorties flown over
northern Iraq today, one could argue the original termination
criteria of Operation Provide Comfort has proven to be
inadequate. The original listed termination criteria for Provide
Comfort did not include security against Iraqi army reprisals
after the departure of coalition ground troops. Yet security was
such a vital part of the operation, that it should have been

included in any discussion of terminating the operation. Sooner
or later, the sovereignty of the airspace over Iraq needs to be
returned to the Iraqi government. And when it does, will the
Iraqis once again deal harshly with the Kurds? One can only
speculate on the answer. But unless Americans are willing to
continue to expend shrinking military dollars to provide Kurds
security, the U.S. should work diplomatically toward ending the
overflights in northern Iraq. At the moment unfortunately, this
issue is inextricably tied to other issues between the U.S. and
Iraq, most notably, nuclear proliferation. The final termination
of Operation Provide Comfort will probably be a part of an overall
diplomatic settling of relations between these two countries.
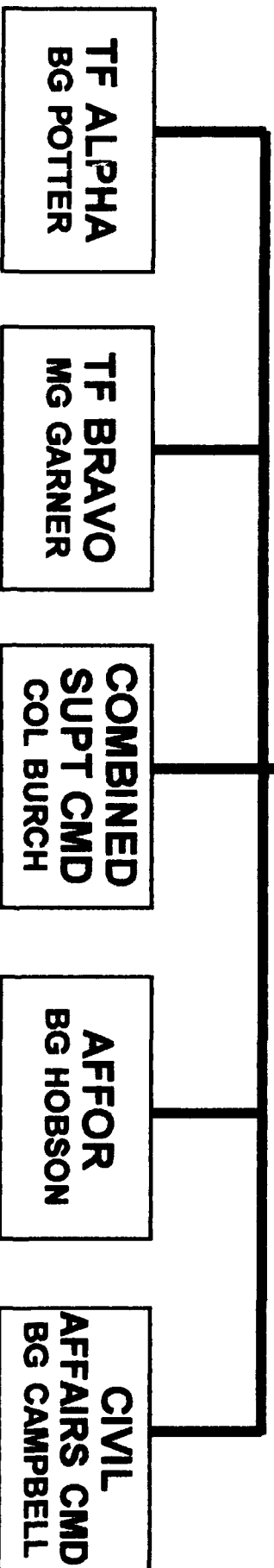

CONCLUSION

The sight of 700,000 refugees fleeing before the wrath of
Saddam Hussein's army into the rugged mountains, followed by the
sight of 1,000 of them dying each day brought world attention to
the plight of the Kurds in the aftermath of the Gulf War in April
1991. In conjunction with world leaders, President Bush
established a policy to assist those refugees and return them to
their homes. President Bush's policy was fulfilled through a
successful operational military strategy that evolved from that
policy. An important key to the success of the strategy, was
that the policy was translated into a clear and concise mission
statement and mission objectives. These objectives then utilized
coalition military, international relief organization, and

private voluntary organization resources to successfully execute the mission tasks that flowed from the mission objectives.

The "new world order" seems to indicate that peacemaking and peacekeeping may become a prominent part of U.S. foreign policy in the future. If it does, the strategy employed during Operation Provide Comfort should be filed in the "success" drawer, and be readily available for future reference. However, one of the important lessons to be learned from this operation is that the glow from an operation's "success" will be dimmed if the operation's termination criteria is not carefully thought through, achievable, and recognizable when achieved.

CTF PROVIDE COMFORT
LTG SHALIKASHVILI

- TF ALPHA
  BG POTTER
- TF BRAVO
  MG GARNER
- COMBINED SUPT CMD
  COL BURCH
- AFFOR
  BG HOBSON
- CIVIL AFFAIRS CMD
  BG CAMPBELL

24

ENDNOTES

1. Haynes Johnson, "In Iraq, Hungary Redux." <u>The Washington Post</u>, April 5, 1991, p. A-2.

2. John Murray Brown, "Iraqi Refugees Pour Into Turkish Camp." <u>The Washington Post</u>, April 7, 1991, p. A-27.

3. John Murray Brown, "International Relief Reaches Iraqi Refugees." <u>The Washington Post</u>, April 8, 1991, p. A-12.

4. John M. Goshko, "U.N. Tells Iraq to Halt Repression." <u>The Washington Post</u>, April 6, 1991, p. A-1.

5. Ann Devroy and Al Kamen, "Bush, Aides Keep Quiet On Rebels." <u>The Washington Post</u>, April 3, 1991, p. A-1.

6. President George Bush, "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance To Iraqi Refugees." Statement released by the White House, April 5, 1991, <u>Dispatch</u>, p. 233, April 8, 1991.

7. Ibid.

8. John M. Goshko, "Rebel Urges West to Aid Iraqi Kurds." <u>The Washington Post</u>, April 2, 1991, p. A-15.

9. Ann Devroy, "'Wait and See' on Iraq." <u>The Washington Post</u>, March 29, 1991, p. A-14.

10. Thomas A. Kearney and Eliot A. Cohen, <u>Gulf War Air Power Survey Summary Report</u>, (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 1993), p. 27.

11. William Clairborne, "Anti-Saddam Uprising Spreads in South Iraq." <u>The Washington Post</u>, March 5, 1991, p. A-1.

12. Jonathan C. Randal and Valerie Strauss, "Rebels Said to Control Much of Northern Iraq." <u>The Washington Post</u>, March 15, 1991, p. A-37.

13. Dan Balz and John M. Goshko, "Situation In Iraq 'Murky'." <u>The Washington Post</u>, March 20, 1991, A-22.

14. Jonathan C. Randal, "Kurdish Commander Invites Saddam Foes To Meeting in Iraq." <u>The Washington Post</u>, March 27, 1991, p. A-25.

15. Steve Coll, "Clashes Reported In Iraqi Capital." <u>The Washington Post</u>, March 14, 1991, p. A-1.

16. Randal and Strauss, "Rebels Said to Control Much of Northern Iraq," A-37.

17. Rick Atkinson, "Iraq Shifts Troops To Combat Kurds." The Washington Post, March 30, 1991, p. A-1.

18. Jonathan C. Randal, "Kurds' Spring of Hope Collapses Amid Feelings of Betrayal." The Washington Post, April 3, 1991, p. A-1. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf later confessed that he had been "suckered" by the Iraqis during the peace negotiations into tolerating the Iraqi use of helicopters after the war.

19. Atkinson, "Iraq Shifts Troops To Combat Kurds," p. A-12.

20. Ibid.

21. Devroy, "'Wait and See' on Iraq," p. A-14.

22. Ibid.

23. Caryle Murphy, "Iraqi Army Reported Advancing on Rebel-Held Northern Areas." The Washington Post, March 31, 1991, p. A-18. Presumably, Talabani and Barzani were referring to the use of U.S. and coalition military forces to stop the Iraqi military.

24. Randal, "Kurds' Spring of Hope Collapses Amid Feelings of Betrayal," p. A-1.

25. John M. Goshko, "U.N. Nears Accord On Iraqi Killings." The Washington Post, April 5, 1991, p. A-14.

26. Ibid.

27. John M. Goshko, "U.N. Action Urged On Crisis in Iraq." The Washington Post, April 3, 1991, p. A-1.

28. Randal, "Kurds' Spring of Hope Collapses Amid Feelings of Betrayal," p. A-14.

29. Devroy and Kamen, "Bush, Aides Keep Quiet On Rebels," p. A-1.

30. Goshko, "U.N. Action Urged On Crisis in Iraq," p. A-1.

31. Goshko, "U.N. Nears Accord On Iraqi Killings," p. A-1. In addition to responding to all the cries to "do something", one could argue the President's remarks seem to imply one of his original Gulf War objectives still had not been met. Even after "winning the war", the security and stability of the region had not been ensured. See again the Gulf War objectives listed on page 3.

32. Bush, "U.S. Humanitarian Assistance To Iraqi Refugees," p. 233.

33. William P. Snyder, "Strategy: Defining It, Understanding It, and Making It." Air War College, Department of Military Studies, Readings: Book 1, Military Studies Course - MS 610, June 1993, pp. 61-71.

34. Ibid.

35. The 92nd Tactical Fighter Squadron for instance, flew airlift escort missions into Iraq only 36 hours after their initial no-notice execution order from their homebase at Royal Air Force Bentwaters in the United Kingdom. The 92nd was the author's unit of assignment at the time.

36. Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort." Statement given before the House Armed Services Committee, September 4, 1991, Aspects of Anti-Chaos Aid to the Soviet Union. Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992, pp. 4-22.

37. John E. Yang, "Military Mobilized For Refugee Relief." The Washington Post, April 13, 1991, p. A-16.

38. John E. Yang, "Bush: U.S., Allies Concur On Refugee Zones in Iraq." The Washington Post, April 12, 1991, p. A-32.

39. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort", p. 6.

40. Yang, "Military Mobilized For Refugee Relief", p. A-16.

41. Michael M. Gunter, The Kurds of Iraq. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1992, p. 56.

42. William Drozdiak and David B. Ottaway, U.S., "Allies Want Refugee Havens Established in Iraq." The Washington Post, April 9, 1991, p. A-1.

43. Bill McAllister, "U.N. Buffer Zones In Iraq Suggested." The Washington Post, April 8, 1991, p. A-1.

44. John Murray Brown, "Misery on a Mountainside." The Washington Post, April 12, 1991, p. A-1.

45. John E. Yang and Ann Devroy, "U.S. Seeks to Protect Kurd Refugee Areas." The Washington Post, April 11, 1991, p. A-1.

46. Yang, "Bush: U.S., Allies Concur On Refugee Zones in Iraq", p. A-32.

47. President George Bush, "U.S. Expands Kurdish Relief Efforts." Opening statement at White House news conference, April 16, 1991, Dispatch, April 22, 1991, p. 273. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 On Repression of Iraqi Civilians condemned Hussein's oppression of his civilian population. It insisted that Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to "all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq." It requested the Secretary General to pursue humanitarian efforts in Iraq. The resolution appealed to all U.N. members and humanitarian organizations to contribute to the relief efforts. And finally, it demanded Iraq cooperate with the Secretary General with these relief efforts.

48. Princeton N. Lyman, "Crisis of Refugees and Displaced Persons of Iraq." Statement before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs of the Senate Judiciary Committee, April 15, 1991. Dispatch, April 22, 1991, pp. 274-278.

49. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort", p.9.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid, p. 10.

52. Donald G. Goff, Col, USA, Building Coalitions for Humanitarian Operations--Operation Provide Comfort, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, p. 14.

53. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort", pp. 10-12.

54. John T. Fishel, Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue: War Termination and Desert Storm. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, pp. 51-58.

55. Ibid, p. 52.

56. Ibid, p. 53.

57. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort", p. 17.

58. Ibid, p. 12.

59. Captain David S. Elmo, USAR, "Distributing Food to the Kurds." Army Logistician, January-February 1992, pp. 2-5.

60. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort", p. 15.

61. Ibid, p. 17.

62. Ibid, p. 20.

63. The author flew several missions where coalition aircraft flew low altitude high speed passes over Iraqi positions, which led to their continued withdrawal out of the security zone.

64. Shalikashvili, "Statement of Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, U.S. Army, Commander, Operation Provide Comfort", pp. 12-15.

65. Elmo, "Distributing Food to the Kurds," p. 5.

66. The author was also involved in flying these missions over northern Iraq.

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