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COALITION TARGETING FOR OPERATIONAL FIRES: A HIT OR A MISS?

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by

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

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### Abstract of

#### COALITION TARGETING FOR OPERATIONAL FIRES: A HIT OR A MISS?

Future conflicts are most likely to be fought by a multinational force operating as a coalition. One of the critical factors the lead nation or coalition commander must deal with is maintaining coalition cohesion.

The employment of operational fires is a key element to the success of nearly every campaign plan. The perception by coalition members that they are not being supported by the operational fires plan could lead to a fracture in the coalition. How can coalition members make inputs to the Joint Targeting List and how does the commander ensure that they receive the operational fires support they require?

An analysis of the targeting process for operational fires in operation OVERLORD, the Korean War and operation DESERT STORM will provide a basis to look at current joint doctrine and determine if a method exists to include multinational input into the targeting process.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

"Almost every time military forces have deployed from the United States it has been as a member of --most often to lead-- coalition operations"<sup>1</sup>

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 ensured that future military actions by the armed forces of the United States would be jointly undertaken. If history is an indicator, it is highly probable that joint U.S. forces will be part of a multi-national force in any future conflict. Since World War I, every war and most peacetime contingencies the U.S. has been involved in have been multinational operations.

"Each multinational operation is unique, and key considerations involved in planning and conducting multinational operations vary with the international situation and perspectives, motives, and values of the organization's members".<sup>2</sup> This statement from Joint publication 3-0: Doctrine for Joint Operations, is indicative of the inherent difficulties involved in conducting multinational operations. Joint publication 3-16: Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations states, "No single command structure best fits the needs of all alliances and coalitions".<sup>3</sup> Although this statement seems fairly obvious the larger implications are that the coalition commander will need to develop a command structure that takes into account the desires of each member country to maintain a cohesive force. The transient nature and the uncertainty of membership in any given coalition make this a

formidable task.

Coalition command structures generally fall into one of the three following types:

a. Parallel Command Structure. No single force commander is designated. Member nations retain control of their own national forces. Coalition leadership must develop a means for coordination among the participants to attain unity of effort.

b. Lead Nation Command Structure. All member nations subordinate their forces to a single partner. Unity of command facilitates unity of effort. However, nations are generally reluctant to grant control over their forces to another nation. Coalition counterparts are also sensitive to actions that might be construed as preferential to the lead nation's interests.

c. Combination of Parallel and Lead Nation. When two or more nations serve as controlling elements for a mix of international forces, such as the command arrangement employed by the Gulf War coalition.<sup>4</sup>

**Thesis:** A key planning and execution factor in any military conflict, coalition or otherwise, is the employment of operational fires. As discussed in paragraph (b) above, the perception that preferential treatment is influencing the application of operational fires could lead to a fracture in the coalition. How can the commander guard against this?

This paper will first look at the targeting process for

operational fires and areas for potential problems. It will then review three previous multinational campaigns as well as current joint doctrine to provide insight on how the coalition commander can accommodate requirements from force members for operational fires support. Through this analysis it will also attempt to identify the best vehicle(s) for coalition members to nominate targets.

## II. THE TARGETING PROCESS

The first step in employing operational fires is the identification of suitable targets. The ultimate aim is to develop a target data base or target list that includes all potential enemy targets. The targeting process is an iterative cycle conducted on a daily basis. Joint pub 2-0, describes the targeting cycle as follows:

1. COMMANDERS GUIDANCE AND OBJECTIVES
2. TARGET DEVELOPMENT
3. WEAPONERING ASSESSMENT
4. FORCE APPLICATION
5. EXECUTION PLANNING/FORCE EXECUTION
6. COMBAT ASSESSMENT<sup>5</sup>

Step six of this process feeds back to step one with evaluation of fires already conducted to determine if the desired level of damage has been attained or if additional fires need to be employed against a specific target. The essence of the targeting process at the operational level is to match the objectives and guidance of the Joint Force Commander (JFC) to the appropriate lethal or nonlethal weapon system best suited to achieve the objective.<sup>6</sup>

Although this is a critical process in the conduct of a

combat operation, and it is discussed in several Joint Publications, nowhere is there a specified method to accomplish it.

Joint Pub 3-0: Doctrine for Joint Operations is the keystone document of the joint operations series and is the first place that the relationship between the commander and the Joint Targeting Coordination Board is discussed. Joint Pub 3, states

**"JFCs may establish and task an organization within their staffs to accomplish these broad targeting oversight functions or may delegate the responsibility to a subordinate commander. Typically, JFCs organize Joint Targeting Coordination Boards (JTCBs). If the JFC so designates, a JTCB may be an integrating center for this effort or a JFC-Level review mechanism. In either case, it needs to be a joint activity comprised of representatives from the staff, all components, and if required their subordinate units."**<sup>7</sup>

Joint Pub 3, goes on to say "The JFC defines the role of the JTCB. Typically, the JTCB reviews target information, develops targeting guidance and priorities, and may prepare and refine joint target lists."<sup>8</sup> On the surface this guidance appears to endorse the establishment of a JTCB; however, the key statement "may establish" makes this a purely conditional decision. Additionally, the statement "The JFC defines the role of the JTCB," while giving the JFC flexibility in establishing his organization, leaves in doubt what the actual function of the JTCB will be.

To further complicate the targeting organization and process, joint doctrine states, "JFCs will normally designate a Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC)..."<sup>9</sup>. The JFACCs



responsibilities will be assigned by the JFC but will normally include, "Functioning as the supported commander for: The JFC's overall air interdiction effort"<sup>10</sup>. In modern warfare the air interdiction effort is often the predominant component of operational fires. The JFACC will generally have a separate organizational branch that deals with the targeting process.

These organizational dilemmas are not new. History is full of multinational operations that have had to solve similar problems. A look at three historical cases dating from World War II will help provide insight into this process.

### **III. HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES**

#### **WORLD WAR II: OVERLORD**

"Effectiveness in World War II established for all time the feasibility of developing and employing joint control machinery that can meet the sternest tests of war. The key to the matter is readiness, on highest levels, to adjust all nationalistic differences that affect the strategic employment of combined resources, and, in the war theater, to designate a single commander who is supported to the limit. With these two things done, success rests in the vision, the leadership, the skill, and the judgement of the professionals making up the command and staff groups; if these two things are not done, only failure can result."<sup>11</sup>

Operation OVERLORD, the Allied invasion of Normandy, is considered the greatest amphibious operation in history, and the decisive western battle of the Second World War.<sup>12</sup> The campaign design for the Normandy invasion incorporated operational fires to shape the battlefield through the destruction of German defenses, enabling Allied forces operational maneuver, and by

isolating the German operational reserve forces, denying their timely commitment. The process used to develop the operational fires plan in many ways parallels the modern targeting process.

Operational fires during OVERLORD consisted primarily of aviation assets of the U.S. Army Air Corps and the Royal Air Force. General Eisenhower, as the Supreme Allied Commander and operational commander for OVERLORD, had four air components in the operational fires process. There were two strategic air components, the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSTAF), and RAF Bomber Command. These strategic forces would be used as operational forces in preparation for the invasion. The two tactical air components available were consolidated under the Allied Expeditionary Air Force (AEAF). In order to consolidate the command structure of the air components and to alleviate personality conflicts between the component commanders, General Eisenhower appointed Air Marshall Sir Arthur Tedder as the coordinator for air operations. This command structure closely resembles the current JFACC structure.

The targeting process for OVERLORD was more complicated. It began when General Eisenhower, with the concurrence of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, selected an operational air campaign that concentrated fires on railroads, railyards, lines and bridges in France and Belgium. This was deemed the most effective way of limiting the maneuver capability of the German operational reserve without compromising the plan for OVERLORD. Once this decision was made the actual target approval process

involved the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the British Air Ministry, SHAPE and the Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

The resultant process consisted of, General Eisenhower providing guidance to the air staff, the air staff producing a target list, which was approved by Eisenhower and forwarded to the War Cabinet for review and final approval. From the war cabinet it was returned to the air staff for distribution to the bomber commands for actual execution planning (Figure 1).

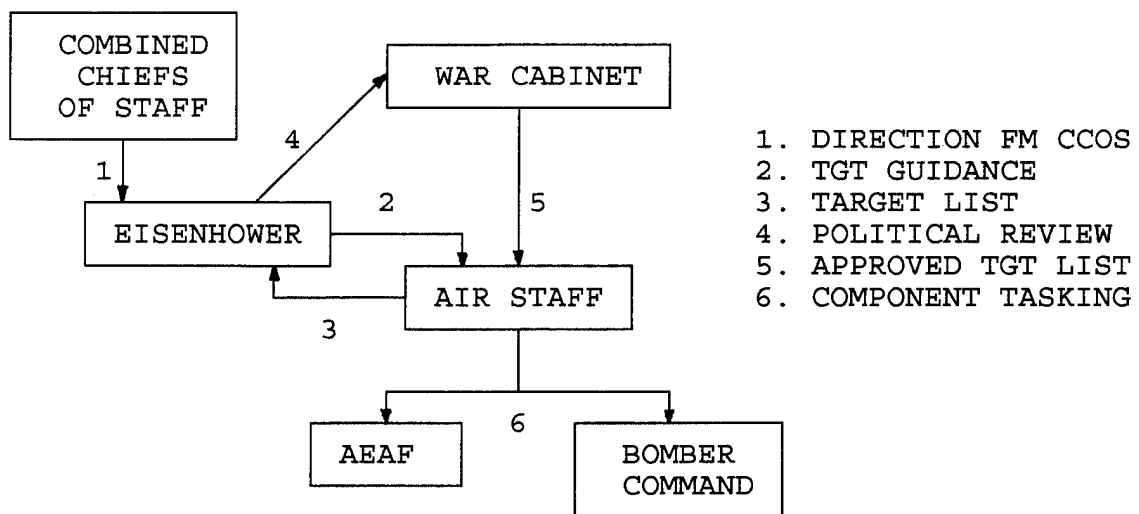


Figure 1. TARGETING PROCESS FOR OPERATION OVERLORD

Throughout the operation the Combined Chiefs of Staff provided overall Guidance to General Eisenhower. The targeting guidance General Eisenhower provided was translated to actual targets for the air components by the British Air Ministry. There was also extensive political involvement in the process. Prime Minister Churchill never fully supported bombing the railroads because of the potential for civilian casualties. He

initially required each specific target be cleared by the British War Cabinet.<sup>13</sup> Of the first 27 targets nominated by General Eisenhower only 14 were approved.<sup>14</sup> General Eisenhower found the situation untenable and with the assistance of President Roosevelt convinced Churchill to give Eisenhower a free hand in targeting as long as civilian casualties remained under 10,000 total.

During operation OVERLORD there was no equivalent of the JTCB, although a major lesson learned was the need for a more effective and representative targeting element. In fact this led to the creation of the Combined Strategic Targets Committee in the fall of 1944. This was the first JTCB-type organization, although at the strategic level of war.<sup>15</sup>

While the targeting process for operation OVERLORD was complicated, it ultimately proved successful. However, General Eisenhower's operational fires were primarily limited to his bomber forces. As warfare modernized, and both land and seabased weapon systems increased in range and lethality, future JFCs would be required to consider numerous weapon systems as components of their operational fires.

#### **KOREA**

The use of operational targeting during the Korean War was limited. There was very little integration of air strikes with the ground maneuver plan. However, while there may not have been an integration of efforts, the targeting process itself is worthy of review, since it was the first example of the Air

Force operating as a separate service.

The command structure played a large role in the targeting process in Korea, where General Douglas MacArthur functioned as both the Unified and Allied Commander as well as Army Component Commander (figure 2).

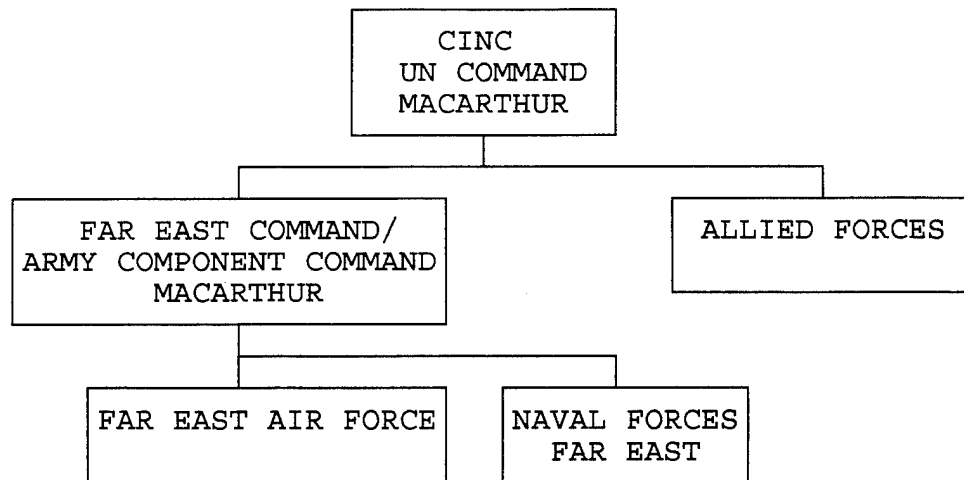


Figure 2. U.S. COMMAND STRUCTURE KOREA

His staff was not manned to fulfill the functions of both commands, causing problems especially in the area of targeting for operational fires.

Three distinct targeting organizations evolved during the Korean War (figure 3). The first was the Far East Command (FECOM) Targeting Group at the Far East Command located in Tokyo. The FECOM group was tasked with operational targeting for employment of air forces within the Korean Theater. It soon became apparent that this group was made up of "officers who lacked the experience and depth of knowledge for targeting an air force".<sup>16</sup> Most of the FECOM staff were Army officers with

little Air Force or Navy representation.

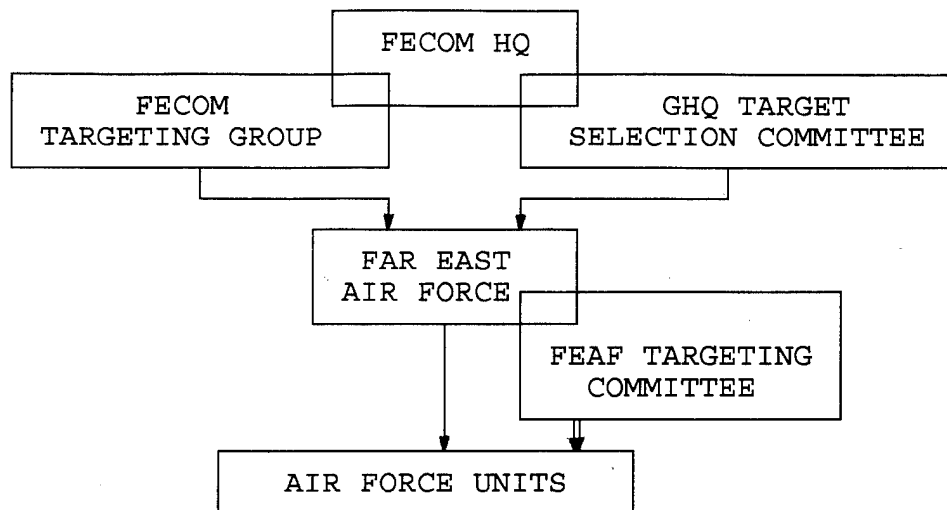


Figure 3. KOREAN WAR TARGETING FLOW

When over 20% of the first 220 targets chosen by the FECOM target group were found to be nonexistent a second targeting organization was formed, the GHQ Target Selection Committee. This committee included the Vice Commander of the Far East Air Force (FEAF) and a senior representative from Naval Forces Far East. The increased experience level provided on this committee resulted in a significantly improved targeting process. As it evolved, it came to fulfill the role of today's JTCB: conducting targeting oversight and coordination, and development of the Joint Targets List.

Lieutenant General George E. Stratemeyer, the FEAF commander felt all along that targeting for air missions should be performed by the Air Force. While he could not initially convince MacArthur of this, he formed a FEAF targeting committee. This committee continued to refine the targeting

lists provided by the GHQ target selection committee and by 1952 was making target nominations to GHQ for inclusion on the targets list.<sup>17</sup> The final process closely resembled the relationship between today's JTCB and JFACC. Unfortunately, as the targeting organization evolved, the ground components became virtual bystanders. The result was failure to integrate operational fires with the ground campaign at the operational level.

#### **OPERATION DESERT STORM**

"...We will initially attack into the Iraqi homeland using airpower to decapitate his leadership, command and control, and eliminate his ability to reinforce Iraqi forces in Kuwait and southern Iraq. We will then gain air superiority so that we can subsequently attack Iraqi ground forces with air power to reduce his combat power and destroy reinforcing units..."<sup>18</sup>

The above quote from General Schwarzkopf, Commander in Chief Central Command, CINCCENT, clearly indicates his intentions regarding employment of operational fires in DESERT STORM. General Schwarzkopf had a diverse assortment of means to employ as operational fires. These included air assets of the Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Army attack aviation; long range fire systems of the Army and Navy; Special Operations Forces; and non-lethal fires such as active electronic warfare and psychological operations. The dilemma was how to effectively target these capabilities to ensure unity of effort while maximizing the capabilities of each individual system in support of campaign objectives. As in the previous cases the command structure played a key part in how unity of effort was achieved.

The coalition command structure used during DESERT STORM was a combination of lead nation and parallel command relationships, while U.S. command structure reflected current joint doctrine. General Schwarzkopf functioned as the lead nation tactical commander for U.S., British and French forces as well as the JFC. The joint force components consisted of the Navy Component Central Command, NAVCENT; Air Force Component Central Command, CENTAF; Army Component Central Command, ARCENT; Marine Component Central Command, MARCENT, and the Special Operations Component Central Command, SOCCENT. In an attempt to simplify the command structure General Schwarzkopf appointed himself as the Land Component Commander (LCC) and designated CENTAF as the JFACC.

General Schwarzkopf did not initially establish a JTCCB to oversee the targeting process. He worked directly with CENTAF on target set selection during the early stages of an air campaign based on a plan developed and briefed to him in August 1990 by the Air Force planning cell "Checkmate". The Checkmate strategy focused on strategic attacks by air power to defeat Iraq, with only a small portion of the air assets dedicated to targets in support of a ground operation.<sup>19</sup>

The initial target list for DESERT STORM was taken from the Checkmate briefing and consisted of 84 targets developed solely by Air Force planners.<sup>20</sup> As the planning process for the campaign continued the list of targets eventually grew to over 600.



The JFACC became the center for targeting during DESERT STORM. In accordance with Joint Pub 3.56-1, the combat plans segment of the JFACC was manned with intelligence representatives from each component who worked in the Guidance Apportionment and Targeting (GAT) cell. The primary method of target nomination for components was via the Target Information Report (TGTINFOREP). This formatted message allowed components to identify targets that would impact their operational plan but were outside of their tactical fires area and request that operational fires be directed against them.

Unfortunately, there was a perception within the joint U.S. forces that the JFACC was not always equitably distributing assets for operational fires. As Brigadier General Arnold, ARCENT Operations Officer reported during the war:

"Air support-related issues continue to plague final preparations for offensive operations and raise questions concerning our ability to effectively shape the battlefield prior to initiation of the ground campaign. . . Army nominated targets are not being serviced. Efforts must be taken now to align the objectives of the air and ground campaigns, and ensure the success of our future operations."<sup>21</sup>

This perception within U.S. forces, who had direct access to the GAT and were at least familiar with the target nomination process, certainly begs the question: how did coalition members perceive the operational fires support being provided by the JFACC? Although no specific examples of coalition discontent could be found, it is not unreasonable to believe they experienced levels of frustration similar to ARCENT.

In an attempt to resolve the perceived lack of support,

General Schwarzkopf activated the JTCB prior to initiation of the ground offensive. At ARCENT's urging the JTCB became proactively involved in the targeting process, resulting in increased and effective support to the ground campaign. The overall success of the ground offensive is a testimonial to how the effective use of operational fires can contribute to the campaign plan.

#### IV. ANALYSIS

These case studies have demonstrated that with improvements in weapons technology, operational fires play an increasingly important role in combat operations. In Operations OVERLORD and DESERT STORM, the use of operational fires was key to the success of the ground campaign. In Korea, significant air power existed but was not effectively coordinated with the ground campaign resulting in a protracted conflict.

The ability to conduct force application planning, the matching of a target with the appropriate weapon and delivery system to service the target is the heart of targeting. It is essential that the JFC establish an effective organization and dynamic process that facilitates this. In each of the cases noted, the initial command structure was modified to better support operational goals. In operation OVERLORD the review of individual targets by the political war cabinet was deemed to restrictive and was deleted after successful lobbying by General Eisenhower. The final evolution of the operation OVERLORD targeting effort was development of the Combined Strategic

Targets Committee. In Korea the initial failure of the FECOM targeting group led to the establishment of the more diverse GHQ target selection committee. During DESERT STORM, complaints from ARCENT about lack of support led to activation of the JTCCB.

In each of these instances a committee or board with oversight and coordination responsibility was the solution to effectively coordinating the targeting process. The key to which was ensuring proper representation. As noted, the JFC recognized the initial problems in the targeting process and modified the organization to include the proper mix of personnel.

#### **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Today, the rapidly changing global political and economic environment has resulted in an expanded role for military forces including missions ranging from peace keeping/enforcement, Military Operations Other Than War to major regional conflicts. To effectively deal with these situations, joint doctrine gives the commander significant latitude in establishing his organizational structure.

With the emergence of the United Nations as a leadership body in the world following DESERT STORM it is highly likely that future military operations will be multinational ventures. In coalition operations U.S. forces are increasingly likely to be the lead nation or overall force commander. In this environment, the JFC must include member nations in the planning and execution process to maintain their support and the

legitimacy of the operation. A key element in this effort is in the target nomination/selection process for the employment of operational fires.

To achieve unity of effort and to maintain coalition support, the JFC must establish an organization that can accommodate input from the entire breadth of the multinational membership. To achieve this, first he must determine if the level of effort is sufficient to establish a JFACC. If so, he should also establish a JTCB. The JTCB membership should include a senior coalition officer from each component equivalent. In DESERT STORM it would have been appropriate to include in the JTCB a senior officer from the British forces, the French forces and a representative from the joint Arab/Islamic forces. Since a function of the JTCB is to approve target nominations for inclusion on the Joint Integrated Prioritized Targets List (JIPTL), membership on the JTCB affords a direct method of nominating targets for these coalition members. If he elects not to establish a JFACC he must ensure the members of his staff responsible for the targeting and operational fires effort are fully aware of the requirement to include coalition members in the process.

Second the JFC should direct his intelligence and operations staff personnel to provide briefings and training if required or desired, to coalition members on the targeting process. Particular attention should be paid to the TGTINFOREP and the Target Bulletin (TARBUL) since these are the key vehicles

for nominating targets and requesting support. These messages are unique to JFACC operations and foreign forces are likely to be unfamiliar with them.

A final consideration centers on the intelligence aspect of targeting. Today's targeting process is highly dependent on national, often restricted, intelligence sources. Any limitations likely to be imposed by higher authority on sharing intelligence sources and methods must be identified as early as possible.<sup>22</sup> If restrictions are required then every effort should be made to sanitize products so members can be fully included in the targeting process. Denial of this data to coalition members is likely to create friction.

The strength of any operation lies in the unity of effort in the participants. If the JFC can establish an organization that fully integrates the members of a multinational coalition the probability of maintaining cohesion and ultimately victory will be significantly increased. Including coalition members in the targeting process will advance the objective of achieving this cohesion and unity of effort.

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