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Shifting the Gun Tube in the War on Terrorism:
Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirement of the Department of Joint Maritime Operations.

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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03 February, 2003

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Abstract

Shifting the Gun Tube in the War on Terrorism: Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa

Though United States military doctrine evolved for and from conventional wars, the elements of operational art are invaluable in the planning and execution of *all* military operations. Missions fought in counter-terrorism, special operations or military operations other than war environments also require detailed preparation pursuant to conducting and sustaining strategically successful campaigns. Even in this paradigm-shifting conflict against Al Qaeda, the same fundamental principles, processes and conditions that define operational art remain relevant to Joint Force Commanders and their staffs and therefore remain an essential aspect to the application of military force.

Considering lessons learned from *Operation Enduring Freedom*, critical operational factors were planned in detail despite the fact that the Horn of Africa mission was initially being conducted by elite Special Forces. Pertinent to the design and deployment of all forces to a Joint Force Commander and staff are the elements of command and control, operational intelligence and protection. In this global campaign, political-military and interagency coordination are also important to the success of all operations. In order to defeat Al Qaeda and conclude the War on Terrorism, it is imperative that planning staffs design aggressive strategies, utilize the nexus with other government agencies and take and achieve the initiative. Lessons implemented during Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa should be incorporated to enhance the planning of the next Joint Task Force in the War on Terrorism or other military operations.

INTRODUCTION:

“Without operational art, war would be a set of disconnected battles or engagements, with relative attrition the only measure of success or failure.”¹ In generic terms, “operational art can be defined as a component of military art concerned with the theory and practice of planning, preparing, conducting, and sustaining major operations and campaigns aimed at accomplishing operational or strategic objectives in a given theater.”² Operational art provides a “framework to assist commanders in ordering their thoughts when designing campaigns and major operations.”³ The elements of operational art are essential in the planning and execution of *all* military operations, including those fought in counter-terrorism, special operations or military operations other than war environments.

The current War on Terrorism provides an adequate demonstration of the importance of this strategic tool in the implementation of joint military efforts. Fundamentally different from conventional wars for and from which United States military doctrine was developed, the global fight against Al Qaeda will be a defining conflict of the 21st century. Demonstrating a capacity for functioning throughout the world, unlike terrorists of the 1970s and 1980s, Al Qaeda “is not guided by territorial jurisdictions – its theater of support and operations, is global.”⁴

During the initial stage of the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan, leaders in United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) took into account this organizational characteristic and began to anticipate the appropriate course of action. In order to remove the pervasive threat posed by Al Qaeda, they began to consider the necessity for and the logistics of expansion to other regions of the theater even as the United States Air Force began a bombing campaign which decimated the Tora Bora cave complex. Extensive military

operations throughout Southeastern Afghanistan forced Al Qaeda leaders, operatives and supporters to flee their previously safe havens. Intelligence reports indicated that some were escaping to other Middle Eastern countries, others to locations from Latin America to Japan. Many were relocating to the closest lawless region: the nearby Horn of Africa, specifically the country of Yemen. Therefore, the Commander of USCENTCOM ordered his special operations component, Combined Joint Forces Special Operations Command Central (CJFSOCC), located in Doha, Qatar, to plan for and prepare to execute a counter-terrorism campaign in Yemen and possibly Somalia.

In order to formulate a sound, executable strategy, with the integration of military and non-military elements, CJFSOCC's joint planning group conducted the mission analysis required to produce an operations plan. The joint planning group, which incorporated representatives from all of the military services and supporting governmental organizations represented in USCENTCOM, collected and synthesized all available relevant information in the formulation of strategy. Understanding both friendly and enemy critical factors and functions was an important and indispensable element to both operational and strategic success. Through their deliberate planning to open a new theater of war in the Horn of Africa, the joint planning group illustrated the critical importance of the application of operational art in the War on Terrorism.

As Clausewitz suggested, "not aiming everything at the enemy's center of gravity admits only one exception – that is when secondary operations look exceptionally rewarding."⁵ In this instance, expanding the War on Terrorism to the Horn of Africa and incorporating lessons learned from the initial stages of *Operation Enduring Freedom* was necessary in order to continue to fight Al Qaeda without an operational pause. In an ever

changing, fluid and dynamic environment of U.S. military operations, victory and defeat are decided by the capacity to incorporate situational information and previous experience.

“Only by minimizing failures and maximizing success can we prevail against a determined enemy willing to kill and die.”⁶ Even in this paradigm-shifting conflict against Al Qaeda, the same fundamental principles, processes and conditions that define operational art remain relevant to Joint Force Commanders and their staffs and therefore remain an essential aspect to the application of military force.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENEMY:

Operational art requires that Joint Force Commanders and their planning staffs possess a comprehensive understanding of the enemy and the threat. “Al Qaeda is the first multi-national terrorists group of the twenty-first century and confronts the world with a new kind of threat;” therefore, extensive data collection and analysis of their organization was required before planning a major military operation in the Horn of Africa.⁷ Although Afghanistan was the principle military training base, U.S. intelligence knew as early as 1991 that Al Qaeda trained recruits in “Sudan, Yemen, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Somalia and the Philippines.”⁸ During the initial phases of *Operation Enduring Freedom*, intelligence reports indicated that Al Qaeda operatives were fleeing by foot through the porous borders of Pakistan, particularly in the vicinity of Khost and Gardez Afghanistan through Waristan Pakistan, in order to reach the Arabian Sea. Upon reaching the coast, they moved via small watercraft to the Arabian Islands of Socotra or Abd al Kuri in an effort to reach Yemen and Somalia.

YEMEN: Yemen is valuable to the terrorist organization for its transit and logistical aspects, which make the country a strategic location. Since the 1990’s, “Al Qaeda’s network in

Yemen has fostered a growing cooperation with the Aden- Abyan Islamic Army, an outlawed terrorist sect,” and its location has grown in importance to the organization.⁹ Prior to the events of September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda’s Yemeni membership was estimated to be the third largest, preceded only by the Egyptians and the Algerians. “Only 35% of Yemen is under the permanent influence and control of the government,” and the state of lawlessness provided an ideal alternate base after U.S. intervention in Afghanistan.¹⁰

The Al Qaeda network in Yemen has an extensive history of terrorist attacks against western nations, particularly against any U.S. presence within Yemen. By the way of brief, but certainly not inclusive example: in early 1992, Al Qaeda mounted attacks on U.S. troops billeted in hotels in Aden while they were in route to *Operation Restore Hope*; in 2000, in addition to the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole (DDG -67) which killed 17 sailors, Al Qaeda attempted to sink the U.S.S. The Sullivans (DDG -68); in 2001, they planned to destroy the U.S. Embassy; and most recently, an explosive-laden boat rammed a French oil tanker and three U.S. aid workers were shot dead working in a hospital.¹¹ Due to the weak central government of Yemen and the inability of President Ali Abdallah SALIH to intervene in Al Qaeda operations, the armed tribal outlying areas make Yemen a fertile ground for terrorist activity. In response to this situation and at the invitation of the Yemeni government, a small contingent of U.S. forces was authorized to assist in counter-terrorism operations.

SOMALIA: As early as 1992, intelligence reports indicated that the Al- Itihaad al Islamiya or Islamic Union based in Somalia was linked to international terrorism and had fostered close ties with the Al Qaeda network. The population of Somalia is one-third Muslim; without an official government, the “failed state” serves as an inviting safe haven for extremists Islamic groups. Somalia itself is divided into two separate regions, Somaliland and Puntland,

controlled by several different clans and factions. Current intelligence is insufficient to prove that Al Qaeda members are hiding in Somalia; however, two suspected Al Qaeda training camps are located at EL WAK in the southwest and LAS ANOD in the north.¹² The Central Intelligence Agency “confirmed that Al Qaeda trained the Somalis who attacked and killed the U.S., Belgian and Pakistani peacekeepers October 3rd and 4th, 1993.”¹³

Although there are currently no U.S. troops based in Somalia, the joint planning group was compelled to plan for the execution of “hot pursuit” operations to track fleeing Al Qaeda members into the country. Furthermore, the joint planning group considered Maritime Interdiction Operations and Leadership Interdiction Operations to be performed by U.S. and coalition naval vessels in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia.

CRITICAL FACTORS:

“One of the essential steps in planning a campaign is to identify the enemy’s critical factors, and in particular his strategic center of gravity.”¹⁴ In determining the enemy’s center of gravity, a complete understanding of enemy strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities directs the staff in the allocation and identification of both military and non-military forces necessary to execute the given mission. “Determining the enemy’s center of gravity is a vital element for establishing clarity of purpose, focusing effort, and ultimately, generating synergistic effects in the employment of one’s forces.”¹⁵

AL QAEDA CRITICAL STRENGTHS: Commanders and their planning staffs must take into account an exhaustive inventory of the enemy’s attributes prior to undertaking the preparation of a successful strategy. U.S. military planners utilized the first 120 days of fighting in Afghanistan to paint a clear picture of what could be expected in other encounters with Al Qaeda forces. In this way, they planned to counter or undermine Al Qaeda strengths,

which are primarily represented by their blind dedication, stealth, and scope of action. The most important strength of all Al Qaeda operatives is their psychological conditioning and willingness to die for Allah. “Common to all Al Qaeda and its associated groups are fourteen mandatory qualifications: knowledge of Islam, ideological commitment, maturity, self-sacrifice, discipline, secrecy and concealment of information, effective operations security, good health, patience, unflappability, intelligence and insight, caution and prudence, truthfulness and wisdom, the ability to observe and analyze, and the ability to act.”¹⁶ Al Qaeda’s successes are also due in part to their surreptitious movement; Al Qaeda forces are well trained in small unit actions/tactics or surprise attacks and have shown considerable skill in choosing the time and place of engagement with U.S. forces in hostile action. Additionally, through their wealth, Al Qaeda has demonstrated the capability to conduct attacks against the West well beyond the Middle East.

Of particular concern in the Horn of Africa was support from the population of “failed states,” decentralized leadership and the rugged open rural terrain which would shift advantage to Al Qaeda. The network has also perfected the art of agent handling which generates a high quality of human intelligence. Blending well within the population, Al Qaeda operatives are frequently alerted or begin to anticipate the arrival of U.S. forces; therefore, they decide whether or not to engage.

AL QAEDA CRITICAL WEAKNESSES: In order to shift or create a strategic advantage, it is essential to identify the frailty, which one may exploit to weaken the center of gravity.

Among the Al Qaeda critical weaknesses are the limited numbers of forces that support and directly participate in waging war against the West. Although the organization has decentralized command and control, those able to plan and execute significant operations are

limited. *Operation Enduring Freedom* revealed other critical weaknesses: their lack of heavy weapons and the inability to conduct sustained or combined operations against U.S. and coalition forces. Coalition forces in the region were successful in their intelligence gathering efforts, while Al Qaeda agents were less successful in their efforts to conceal activity. For example, in suspected Al Qaeda regions, Marib and Al Jawf, suspicious activities and occurrences raised red flags for U.S. intelligence resources. Three tents located in the middle of the desert with several four-wheel drive sport utility vehicles in the immediate vicinity are uncommon for the remote region.

AL QAEDA CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES: An examination of the Al Qaeda organization reveals the areas of exposure, primarily communication and cash flow, which U.S. military and political leaders must control in order to achieve operational objectives. Although their doctrine and practices are extremely strict, Al Qaeda is essentially a modern organization. Employing “up to date technology, Al Qaeda relies upon satellite phones, laptop computers and standard messaging formats” to communicate; in most respects, transmission of these signals tends to be vulnerable to Western intelligence capabilities.¹⁷ Communication, which is vital for Al Qaeda’s sustained operations, is detectable and represents a critical vulnerability. Also susceptible in the conduct of all operations is their source of wealth and funding. While most Al Qaeda operations are relatively inexpensive, training for and execution of attacks would be hampered if the money flow were disrupted.

AL QAEDA CENTER OF GRAVITY: Joint Publication 2 defines centers of gravity as “those characteristics, capabilities, or localities from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.”¹⁸ The strategic Al Qaeda center of gravity in any theater is their “solid base and society founded on their strictest Islamist

principles.”¹⁹ At the operational level, the combination of their highly dispersed terrorist cells with available funding is key to disrupting and forcing the extinction of this organization. Some claim that leadership is their center of gravity; however, while killing Osama bin Laden might bring satisfaction to many Americans, it would not end terrorism. Another leader would immediately replace him to continue the “holy war” against the West as declared in the “Declaration of War Against The Americans Occupying The Land Of The Two Holy Places,” dated August 23, 1996.²⁰

HORN OF AFRICA GUIDANCE:

The joint planning group received strategic intent and operational focus from the Commander, USCENTCOM through a series of detailed warning orders. The ultimate objectives for the U.S. in the Horn of Africa were to eliminate and neutralize the Al Qaeda organization and to assist the country of Yemen in its counter-terrorism fight through both specialized training and weapons provided to the Yemeni military. The theater-specific objectives for USCENTCOM was the destruction and elimination of all Al Qaeda operatives and terrorist cells in Yemen, to include any training camps, support facilities, or financial resources. A key component involved foreign internal defense training of the Yemeni Special Forces Battalion in order to increase the government’s ability to police its own country; U.S. Special Forces provided their Special Forces Advanced Urban Warfare training in an effort to prepare Yemeni forces to conduct unilateral operations. This training was critical as evidenced by their first attempt to contain terrorism: Yemeni Special Forces lost 12 soldiers in an attack on an Al Qaeda hideout on December 18, 2001.²¹ Yemeni Special Forces soldiers desperately needed the specialized training. In support of the assigned task, Commander, CJFSOCC first established a base of operation for the Crisis Reaction Element

(CRE) in Yemen and for the quick reaction force (QRF) to be staged in Djibouti. These bases of operation established communications and intelligence capabilities in the target country and provided sufficient logistical channels to support these operations.

OPERATIONAL FACTORS:

“At any level of war, freedom of action is achieved primarily by properly balancing the factors of space, time, and forces.”²² From Bismarck and Napoleon to MacArthur and Schwarzkopf, all great military leaders evaluate these factors to enhance their ability to maneuver freely while conducting their assigned operations. These same considerations apply not only in conventional warfare, but also in the Horn of Africa theater of operations.

FACTOR SPACE: “Physical space encompasses land, sea and airspace, including outer space, with all their features, which influences employment and effectiveness of land, sea, and air forces.”²³ Slightly larger than twice the size of Wyoming, Yemen has a total land mass of 527,970 kilometers (kms), with 1,746 kms of land boundaries and 1,906 kms of coastline.²⁴ However, most of the country is rugged desert and is considered primitive. Being previously established in the theater of operations, the isolation of Yemen was not a considerable limitation. By definition a nation’s sovereignty severely restricts the factor of space. U.S. forces did not have free rein inside Yemeni borders.

The CRE and a command and control element were established 25 kms outside Sana’a at the Yemeni Special Forces camp. All logistical, operational equipment and re-supply was flown in from the CJFSOCC Headquarters 1,542 kms away: a seven hour C-130 flight or a three hour C-17 flight. Any logistical requirement traveled from point of origin to Qatar and then to Sana’a. Any requirement for the QRF was fulfilled from Qatar, 1059 kms away, or from Yemen, 257 kms away. With refueling and country over-flight clearances

negotiated for *Operation Enduring Freedom*, extending the channels to support operations in Yemen was relatively simple. Generally, the CRE and QRF could receive critical requests within 24 hours if the items were already in the theater.

FACTOR TIME: As lost time may not be recovered, “time is one of the most precious commodities in the conduct of warfare.”²⁵ In the Horn of Africa, with permission to host U.S. forces granted by the Yemen government and under the authority of United Nations Article 51 to conduct Maritime Interdiction Operations and Leadership Interdiction Operations in international waters, Al Qaeda could not deny access to U.S. forces. However, lengthy political-military negotiations between the two governments delayed or “shifted to the right” deployment timelines, which further created disruption in the sequencing of forces within USCENTCOM and in the U.S. Transportation Command. These additional delays allowed Al Qaeda to continue operations in Yemen and to stabilize their organization and support mechanisms. Maritime Interdiction Operations and Leadership Interdiction Operations were not hindered and therefore commenced upon approval of the execution order.

FACTOR FORCES: Forces play a critical role in all military operations, particularly when constraints and limitations are imposed. “In the strict definition of the term, “force” refers to military power and consists not only of the “troops,” “naval forces,” or “air forces” but also forces of all services with their required logistical support.”²⁶ For the purpose of analysis here, only the ground forces will be considered. The availability and mission accomplishment of the “air and naval forces” were not restricted; those already supporting *Operation Enduring Freedom* were simply given additional missions to support the Horn of Africa operations.

USCENTCOM allocated Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (B/1/5) as the initial CRE or primary ground force, “trigger pullers”, for this mission. CJFSOCC also had available a command and control and intelligence cell for the mission; however, the force cap on the ground in Yemen limited personnel to a total of 120. Considering the force restrictions, B/1/5 committed: four Special Forces Operational Detachment Alfas (48 pax) and a HQ element (8 pax, total 56 pax) to conduct foreign internal defense with the Yemeni Special Forces and two Special Forces Operational Detachment Alfas (24 pax) as its QRF. The remaining 44 personnel allowed in Yemen consisted of the CJFSOCC command and control and intelligence fusion cell located at the U.S. Embassy in Sana’a.

The restriction on force allocation, levied by the government of Yemen, severely limited the flexibility and capability available to Commander, CJFSOCC in performing his counter-terrorism mission in Yemen. The force capacity was supplemented by Yemeni Special Forces and other government agency teams from the U.S.

OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS CRITICAL TO THE JTF-HOA COMMANDER:

A successful deployment of forces requires detailed planning and coordination by the commander and his staff. “The operational commander applies operational art to the planning and execution of a campaign or major operation, not only by sequencing and synchronizing joint forces in combat, but also by sequencing and synchronizing many operational-level activities” or functions.²⁷ Though the Horn of Africa mission was being conducted by Special Forces, critical operational functions were planned in detail taking into consideration lessons learned from *Operation Enduring Freedom*. The operational functions

most pertinent in the design and deployment of forces to Yemen were command and control, intelligence and protection.

OPERATIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL: Initial warning orders from USCENTCOM designated Commander, CJFSOCC as the supported commander responsible for planning, deployment and execution of the U.S. counter-terrorism mission in Yemen. By delegating this responsibility, Commander, USCENTCOM ensured that he could continuously monitor the situation in the entire theater and supervise actions in the Horn of Africa, without interfering with the subordinate commander.²⁸ This authority enabled Commander, CJFSOCC to instill the sound organization of “unity of effort, unity of command, centralized planning and decentralized execution” from the beginning of the mission.²⁹

Initially, USCENTCOM prohibited CJFSOCC from establishing a Joint Special Operations Task Force due to the expectation of a necessity to establish a larger Joint Task Force once operations commenced. The lack of a Joint Task Force Commander to coordinate Special Forces and conventional forces and intelligence collection in the initial stages of *Operation Enduring Freedom* significantly reduced efficiency and rendered most efforts ineffective. Once initial forces deployed to Yemen, conducted foreign internal defense training with the Yemeni Special Forces and prepared to conduct counter-terrorism operations against Al Qaeda, the Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa was established. (At this time, the CJFSOCC Commander became subordinate to the JTF Commander).

Created in early November, just prior to the unilateral Predator attack on Al Qaeda leader Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi by the U.S., MG John F. Sattler (USMC) took command of the 1400 member Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa.³⁰ His command included

400 members aboard the U.S.S. Mount Whitney (LCC -20), another 900 support and QRF personnel stationed at Camp Lemonier, a former French installation in Djibouti, with the remaining personnel on the ground in Yemen, based from Sana'a and the surrounding area. Assigning a JTF Commander with overall responsibility for operations in the Horn of Africa allowed Commander, USCENTCOM to manage other matters of importance in his theater, unlike the command relationship during the first six months of *Operation Enduring Freedom*.

Technological advantages in the area of communications also allowed Commander, CJFSOCC and subsequently Commander, Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa to have immediate, accurate and reliable situational awareness of operations in Yemen from their command and control node wherever located in theater. Initially, a command and control node was established aboard the U.S.S. Belleau Wood (LHA -3); once communications were established in the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, the command and control node was moved ashore until the creation of the Task Force. Then the Combined Joint Task Force Commander moved operations to his headquarters aboard the Mount Whitney. The ability to install communications nodes with the required band width capable of providing worldwide voice and data, video communications and high speed data imaging allows unity of effort and command which further enhances centralized direction from Commander, USCENTCOM and decentralized execution in Yemen. In the Horn of Africa mission, a clear and effective command and control chain was established early and proved pivotal in conducting operations.

OPERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE: “Know the enemy and know yourself: in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.”³¹ Operational intelligence is always a critical factor in the

planning and execution of any operation whether against Al Qaeda or any other foe.

“Without timely and relevant intelligence, no operations plan could be successful.”³² “The most important roles of intelligence are assisting the Joint Force Commanders and their staffs in visualizing the battlespace, assessing adversary capabilities and resolve, identifying the adversary’s centers of gravity and discerning the adversary’s probable intent.”³³

Prior to initial warning orders, Yemen and the Horn of Africa were elevated in the U.S. intelligence collection priority. National level intelligence capabilities were employed to take advantage of superior communications and the processing of information into relevant substance; many puzzle pieces are required to accurately bring the picture together. Prior to deployment of the CRE, a National Intelligence Support Team was deployed to the U.S. Embassy in Sana’a in order to “push” timely intelligence data to the incoming ground force. In the United States, a joint fusion cell, composed of all supporting government organizations and military services involved in the operation, was created. These fusion cells enabled the “push/pull” method of intelligence flow, providing a common picture of the battlespace.

“Knowing about the adversary’s warfighting capabilities, limitations and his intentions, assumes greater significance in order to degrade his strengths and exploit his weaknesses.”³⁴ Although the U.S. employs superior signals intelligence, imagery intelligence, and open source intelligence, the U.S. intelligence community lacks sufficient human intelligence. Due to their organizational structure, ideology and strict operations security, Al Qaeda is extremely difficult to infiltrate. Bridging the gap in human intelligence was possible only through close coordination with other government agencies and extraordinary efforts by national intelligence collectors and U.S. Special Forces.

OPERATIONAL PROTECTION: “Protecting one’s forces and assets from a wide range of threats in peacetime, crisis, and war is one of the most important responsibilities of any commander.”³⁵ Although sometimes overlooked when employing Special Forces units, preserving the effectiveness and the ability of the force to survive is just as critical in the War on Terrorism as in a conventional war. Prior to the planning and execution of any mission during *Operation Enduring Freedom* or during operations in the Horn of Africa, the commander and his staff at all levels evaluated the risk versus the gain of the operation. Initial guidance for the Horn of Africa allowed the deployment of only those forces necessary to conduct foreign internal defense, direct action, and a limited support contingent in country, therefore limiting the exposure of hundreds of U.S. forces. All other support forces were located either afloat or in Djibouti or Qatar. All forces in Yemen were based at secure, remote compounds with heightened force protection measures. Operational protection was crucial in the planning and execution of all missions because of the clandestine tactics and techniques employed by Al Qaeda.

OTHER RELEVANT HOA PLANNING FACTORS:

During the planning phase of the operation, two other considerations were critical to Commander, CJFSOCC and to the joint planning group. In all phases of deployment and execution, political–military coordination with the government of Yemen and interagency coordination between U.S. forces and many other governmental agencies were critical to mission accomplishment.

POLITICAL–MILITARY COORDINATION: Unlike access granted in Afghanistan during *Operation Enduring Freedom*, U.S. forces were not allowed unimpeded access in Yemen. From the deployment of U.S. forces, to the individual number of soldiers allowed in country,

all military actions were coordinated with the Yemeni government. In many instances, Yemen requested certain compensations in exchange for accepting U.S. proposals. Demands levied by the host country often burdened U.S. forces in the conduct of their mission. Ultimately, in exchange for better cooperation, the U.S. equipped the Yemeni Special Forces Battalion with modern weapons and other individual equipment.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION: During all aspects of the Horn of Africa mission, close coordination with the Department of State, U.S. Ambassador in Yemen and Country Team, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation proved vital to successful planning and execution. “Interagency coordination forges the vital link between the military instrument of power and the economic, political and/or diplomatic, and informational entities of the U.S. Government as well as non-governmental agencies.”³⁶

Each organization contributes a unique culture, specialized abilities, and skills to the fight; therefore, planners from all elements relied on detailed coordination throughout. In the Horn of Africa, the U.S. military relied heavily on other governmental agencies for access to certain critical elements to accomplish their initiatives. Of particular note, at present, *only* other governmental agencies are authorized to use deadly force in Yemen as demonstrated by the November 2002 Predator attack. Without authorization provided by the Secretary of Defense, U.S. military forces may only act in self-defense. Close coordination and the relationship between the military and other agencies fighting the War on Terrorism provided unity of effort. As declared by the Secretary of Defense, “the campaign against terrorism will require U.S. government agencies to work more closely with the military to fight this war.”³⁷ To ensure successful interagency coordination, the “Joint Task Force is considered

the operational focal point for a unified effort, centralized planning and decentralized execution.’³⁸

CONCLUSION AND TENTATIVE LESSONS LEARNED:

Though the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa was activated less than one year ago, the effective application of operational art in the planning and execution of those missions in the Horn of Africa highlighted critical issues, which all Joint Task Force Commanders must consider. Prior to expansion into a new theater and/or engaging terrorists worldwide, planning groups and commanders must guarantee effective command and control, intelligence, interagency coordination and political-military coordination.

COMMAND AND CONTROL: Failures in *Operation Enduring Freedom* demonstrated the essential nature of establishing effective command and control early in the mission. Startled by the events of September 11, 2001, the U.S. rushed conventional and Special Forces to Afghanistan, each conducting operations without unity of command or effort.

USCENTCOM did not establish a Joint Task Force until 10 months after their initial deployment (July 2002), when the majority of major battles with Al Qaeda and the Taliban were already concluded. Realizing the effects on the sequencing and synchronization of operations, a Joint Task Force was planned and executed in the Horn of Africa within 60 days of the mission. The creation and planning of this Joint Task Force early during the commitment of troops allowed a coordinated effort at both the tactical and operational levels.

Obviously, communications are an integral and vital ingredient to the art of exercising command and control. Without communications it is difficult to exercise command. The role of communication becomes very important especially when one considers the size and geographical spread of our forces. Communication enables us to

exchange, acquire and disseminate intelligence about the enemy and our own forces. Unlike Afghanistan, these key nodes were well established prior to the deployment of forces to Yemen. The requirement by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs for all geographic combatant commanders to establish a Standing Joint Force Headquarters by 2005 will dramatically enhance future command and control of all operations.

INTELLIGENCE: The need for reliable intelligence and for a capability within the U.S. government to collect, produce and disseminate information remains critical, especially when opening a new theater of operations. Facts about targeting, including the intentions of rogue states and terrorist, are important but hard to learn. One of the most critical deficiencies in the intelligence community is the collection of human intelligence. Such intelligence can complement other sources and, in closed societies, may be the single source of information. In order to collect this invaluable information, it will at times prove necessary to associate the U.S. with unsavory individuals or even criminals. There is also a need for economic and counter-terrorism intelligence preparation of the battlefield. Although these are new areas of intelligence collection, a significant advantage may be gained by tracking and “choking off” the financial resources of international terrorists. Counter-terrorism intelligence preparation of the battlefield should focus on planners and logistical needs to acquire weapons and materials for terrorist operations. In this regard, the order of battle would focus on terrorist cells as opposed to on military formations.

An invaluable lesson learned from Afghanistan and implemented in the Horn of Africa was the creation of an all encompassing intelligence fusion cell. Unlike typical Army or Corps analysis and control elements, this cell brought together all agencies, both military and nonmilitary, in an effort to share, analyze, and disseminate an accurate and complete

picture of the battlefield. Initially during *Operation Enduring Freedom*, conventional, special operations forces, national and other governmental agency combatants did not share intelligence collection and analysis information; the opposite was true of efforts in the Horn of Africa.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION: The War on Terrorism demands that the military work closer than ever with many U.S. agencies in our fight to disrupt and annihilate terrorist cells and organizations. Currently, the process at the operational and Joint Task Force level is inefficient and cumbersome. Despite the fact that all combatant headquarters have some liaison elements assigned, many others deploy to the fight and are assisting in the War on Terrorism without knowledge of the military players. As indicated by Joint Publication 3-08, a Joint Interagency Coordination Group at the combatant command level is essential and must be exercised in future unconventional military operations.

A close relationship has been forged between the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. Special Operation Forces. Combined operations between these two elements often achieved unity of effort through close coordination, but rarely achieved unity of command. This relationship should be nurtured to enhance future coordination and cooperation. U.S. Special Operation Forces and all interagency players must continue to expand the knowledge base of their sister organizations' tactics, techniques and procedures through joint training and exercises. Common terminology, interoperable equipment and communications will become increasingly important in future counter-terrorism operations.

POLITICAL–MILITARY COORDINATION: The importance of political–military coordination should never be underestimated. Although component commanders are assigned political advisors when opening a new theater of war in a sovereign country, all

Joint Task Force Commanders should also be augmented by such trained personnel. Having a political advisor at the Joint Task Force level would eliminate unnecessary obstacles and facilitate coordination with country teams. Usually, the country teams prefer to deal directly with the deploying force which allows direct coordination. Once a Joint Task Force is established, the component command should enhance the skills of the planning staff with training and experience necessary to conduct direct liaison with the receiving country team. Conversely, Joint Task Forces should also be required to establish a liaison with the country team.

In conclusion, as the U.S. continues the War on Terrorism, planning staffs and military commanders should study the Horn of Africa operation and *Operation Enduring Freedom* even closer than conventional confrontations. In order to defeat Al Qaeda, military planners must design strategies that achieve the initiative. A thorough understanding of operational art and its application in each situation, focused on the factors and functions of both friendly and enemy forces, and attacking the center of gravity of the enemy will assist staffs in achieving operational success. As the U.S. Special Operations Command assumes responsibility for the War on Terrorism, special operation commanders and soldiers will be engaged in a new kind of war where there are no rules. Lessons learned from Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa will enhance the planning of future Joint Task Forces when opening a new theater of war against Al Qaeda or any other military operations.

Notes

¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine Capstone and Keystone Primer*, Joint Pub 1 (Washington, DC: 10 September 2001), 34-35.

² Milan N. Vego, *Operational Warfare*, (Newport, RI: Naval War College publication NWC1004, 2000), 2.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press 2002), 11.

⁵ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989), 618.

⁶ Gunaratna, 223.

⁷ Gunaratna, 1-2.

⁸ Gunaratna, 8.

⁹ Seymour M. Hersh, "Manhunt," *The New Yorker*, 12 (December 2002): 66.

¹⁰ Gunaratna, 140.

¹¹ "Yemen," *The World Factbook 2002*, 01 January 2002, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>>, [19 December 2002].

¹² Wairagala Wakabi., "Somalia in the Crosshairs of the War on Terrorism.", *Africana Daily Articles*, 17 December 2002., <http://www.africana.com/DailyArticles/index_20011217.htm/>, [19 December 2002].

¹³ Gunaratna, 154-155.

¹⁴ Vego, 438.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Gunaratna, 73.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 2 (Washington, DC: 09 March 2000), GL-3.

¹⁹ Gunaratna, 3.

²⁰ "Yemen," *The World Factbook 2002*, 01 January 2002, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>>, [19 December 2002].

²¹ Vego, 29.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁴ “Yemen,” The World Factbook 2002, 01 January 2002, <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>>, [19 December 2002].

²⁵ Vego, 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

²⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures*, Joint Pub 5-00.2 (Washington, DC: 13 January 1999), II-1 and II-2.

³⁰ “Yemen: Hotbed for militant groups,” CNN.com/world, 30 December 2002., <<http://europe.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/12/30/yemen.background/>>, [06 January 2003]

³¹ Sun Tzu, The Art of War (New York: Oxford University Press 1963), 78.

³² Vego, 203.

³³ Joint Pub 2., I-1.

³⁴ Vinod Anand, “An Integrated and Joint Approach Towards Defense Intelligence,” Strategic Analysis, 8 (November 2000): 14.

³⁵ Vego, 277.

³⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine Capstone and Keystone Primer*, (Washington, DC: 10 September 2001), 45.

³⁷ Eric Schmitt, “A Nation Challenged: The Military; 4 Commanders Seek Staff Role for the FBI,” New York Times, 20 November 2001, sec. A, p. 1.

³⁸ Joint Pub 5-00.2., II-9.

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