

Landing Swedish marines.



U.S. Navy (George Sisting)

Transforming Joint Exercises and Readiness

By STEPHEN J. MARIANO

In recent years *transformation* has largely replaced the term *revolution* to describe change in military affairs. Although assertions about doctrine, organization, and technology that fueled the debate over the revolution in military affairs have been moderated, they remain fundamental to

understanding the nature of war. Moreover, the initial focus on the military-technological aspects of revolutionary change has expanded to include doctrinal and organizational change.

The military has embraced transformation and begun to examine future ways of training, organizing, and equipping forces to deliver transformed capabilities to commanders in the field. Some innovation is driven by technology, but its implementation largely results from the struggle to

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modernize. While technology influences military developments and the services manage their assets, combatant commanders must employ the forces provided to them and integrate doctrine, organization, and technology to accomplish complex missions. Fighting and winning wars is the priority of unified commands, but training and readiness are primary peacetime objectives.

U.S. European Command (EUCOM) reviewed training, exercise, and readiness within its region and found that transformation depends on well-aligned military objectives, structures, and forces as well as good relations with allies. Although the review focused on operating and personnel tempo rather than technological or doctrinal change, it fit squarely into the broader framework of the transformation project.

When EUCOM began examining its training and exercise program before 9/11 because of a concern over

exercise planners are working to replace the legacy of the Cold War, including so-called campfire exercises

waning readiness, several major points emerged:

- training and exercises must be transformed from a schedule based on legacy events; rather they must be based on contemporary joint and combined warfighting requirements

- NATO exercises are important indicators of Alliance cohesion as well as substantial joint and combined training venues but are often based on antiquated requirements

- Partnership for Peace (PFP) exercises are vital security cooperation events but often fail to provide quality coalition interoperability training

- increased collaboration with NATO force and exercise planners is essential to improving the exercise program for U.S. forces.

Exercise planners on the strategic, operational, and tactical levels are working to replace the legacy of the Cold War, including so-called campfire exercises.



UH-60s transporting multinational force.

30th Communications Squadron (Scott Wagers)

How Training Failed

Increased operating and personnel tempo and decreasing resources led EUCOM to examine training. High tempo was considered to have a negative impact on readiness, and it was thought that an overextended exercise program contributed to the problem. The review identified requirements and compared them to exercises to determine if the existing program decreased readiness. It found that several exercises did have a deleterious effect.

Although it initially seemed that there were too many exercises with the same objectives, a closer look indicated that there were too many requirements for available forces and budgets. And a detailed survey revealed that the rationale for legacy events was complex. Many were classified as readiness exercises but were designed to improve capabilities. Still others were dubbed as security cooperation events and were largely designed to improve political-military relations between the United States and other nations. While it was known that some exercises focused on readiness and others on the campfire, neither the events nor the requirements were created equally.

U.S. forces participated in most European tactical level exercises because of the access to excellent training

ranges, unique deployment prospects, solid coalition/interoperability training, and operational use of geostrategic sites. Opportunities to fly with and against MiG-29s, train with live-fire rockets from attack helicopters, or deliver ordinance at night are attractive. At sea, commanders and crews of American vessels openly maneuvered, signaled, and tracked Allied or PFP ships in northern and eastern waters. But other exercises were important politically and provided visible support of NATO or other treaty obligations, afforded rare opportunities, or were directed by the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, or combatant commander.

It also became clear that other exercises remained on the schedule because of the inertia in budgets, planning, and bureaucracy. Exercises dropped off the NATO schedule but remained on the U.S. calendar as bilateral or single-service events. Others, like PFP exercises conceived in 1994, had outgrown their usefulness. In some cases only a few Americans participated, but the services expended a disproportionate level of resources in supporting deployment, participation, protection, sustainment, and redeployment. Some events, like exercises based on contingency operations plans, were based on Soviet-era threats that appear anachronistic.

F-15s and MiG-29s,
Sentry White Eagle.



U.S. Air Force (Jerry Bynum)

One complicating factor was determining the service-level, joint, bilateral, and combined nature of exercises. Many nominated by EUCOM for inclusion on the CJCS-directed list were not purple. They were service-oriented events that received CJCS-dedicated funding but offered little joint training. Often exercises were combined in name only or were classified as such by virtue of the presence of Allied liaison officers. Furthermore, several bilateral exercises were not joint and combined in nature. As a result of these findings, EUCOM discontinued such events as command-sponsored exercises to relieve the high-tempo problem.

Factors and Obstacles

There has been an almost mandatory commitment of critical resources and capabilities by the United States in NATO exercises. In the case of PFP efforts, participation extends access to Warsaw initiative funds. Without subsidies for travel, rations, and supplies, the involvement of these members would often be limited. Without their participation there would be no exercises since security cooperation with such nations is a primary objective.

A different situation surrounds NATO-only exercises, where Allied planners must factor high demand/low density U.S. assets into the equation. The American inability or unwillingness to share deployable communications,

satellite access, precision approach radars, aerial refueling, Patriot missiles, Apache Longbow helicopters, EA6-B Prowler aircraft, or Marine expeditionary units not only reduced training realism, but also strained Mons-Stuttgart and Brussels-Washington relations. The Armed Forces were reluctant to use these capabilities only as training aids for the less capable members.

Another difficulty arose as a result of changes in the NATO command structure in 1999, which reduced the number of commands, reorganized second level headquarters, and divided Europe into northern and southern regions. Although these changes were a

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positive step toward recognizing the new international security environment, exercises were not reduced in proportion to headquarters. New sub-regional joint commands were created, and training their commanders and staffs added events to the schedule. This misalignment resulted in inefficient participation by the United States in the overall exercise program.

A further complication is competition between the NATO combined and joint task force headquarters concept

and the EUCOM joint task force training model. Both concepts have been developed on parallel tracks for several years but have never been coordinated or sequenced.

NATO and EUCOM exercises are capstone events for both commands. They are approximately equal in size, train to similar objectives, and are closely timed each year. On one hand, the JTF model is based on delegating authority through a service component command and usually passed down to a one-, two-, or three-star headquarters. On the other hand, the CJTF headquarters derives from an existing joint headquarters. While command JTF missions focus on a full

spectrum of operations, from warfighting to noncombatant evacuations, CJTF scenarios are uniformly based on

corps-sized crisis response operations. American iterations are at least one generation of technology ahead of Allied exercises and are experimenting with simulated and live forces even though the computer and information system support for both programs is substantial. American participation in CJTF exercises is usually limited due to the competition for resources and the perceived cost-benefit ratio for potential U.S. participants.

**USS Kearsarge in
Mediterranean.**



U.S. Navy (Martin Maddock)

The exercises have common training objectives and demonstrate that there is room for increased cooperation despite differences in levels of command, operational reach, scenario, and technology. Under the right leadership, exercises could inform each other, share assets, and go a long way toward transforming Alliance and U.S. capabilities to command multinational forces.

Ready for What?

The problems went beyond managing resources or synchronizing exercise cycles. One lies in a misalignment between NATO objectives, headquarters structures, force capabilities, and the subsequent inability of the exercise program to reflect changes. U.S. commitment to NATO through the force planning process is a prime example.

The United States and other members of the Alliance offer forces for future operations through a structured process, which works in support of Article 5-based collective defense plans, designed to defend NATO from the Warsaw Pact. Clearly, this process has not kept up with new concepts and threats. The current strategic concept, for example, envisions out-of-area and

crisis response operations over traditional warfighting operations. It calls for more rapidly deployable forces but has been slow in eliminating old formations and establishing responsive capabilities. Consequently, U.S. forces are exercising against old concepts and requirements until NATO gets its vision of the future worked out.

In addition, no consensus exists between the national and NATO planners on the primacy of crisis response versus Article 5 missions. Collective defense is the *raison d'être* for NATO, and it did not go away when the crisis response mission was introduced. Its nature has changed, however, and 9/11 destroyed preconceptions about traditional Article 5 missions.

But the path to improved readiness is marked by promising signs about NATO force structure and the graduated readiness force concept. In its land-based form, eight member nations have volunteered corps-sized formations at varying levels of readiness as a multinational contribution. Properly trained, organized, equipped, and

employed, these forces should be better suited to cope with the crisis response missions envisioned in the strategic concept.

One challenge will be adjusting the NATO exercise program to meet the requirements of eight corps-sized headquarters. They must be trained before integrating them into the command and control structure, which will add to an already full schedule. Training all eight on a range of possible missions will take not only time, but support and large budgets. Until headquarters and force structures are synchronized with the NATO strategic concept, exercise planners must work on the margins of an outdated model and will be unable to deliver trained, ready, and transformed headquarters and forces.

Transforming Exercises

Because canceling exercises while awaiting force and command structure realignment is not feasible, EUCOM has focused on more realistic approaches. The first major step in getting the exercise program to better support readiness was reducing the number of exercises that were not

clearly traceable to a EUCOM or component joint mission essential task (JMET), a treaty obligation, or an event directed by the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, or combatant command. This scrub of non-JMET exercises revealed only a few events with little or no training value. As a result, EUCOM eliminated six of its 82 CJCS exercises. To make further reductions, it became necessary to decrease exercises based on other criteria, including the inability to address multiple training objectives or audiences. Withering resources—both service-specific incremental funds intended for joint exercises and the strategic lift resources that combatant commanders draw on to execute their programs—helped focus this effort.

The second step was working with Allied planners to forecast and determine a priority for U.S. resources inside the NATO program. A concurrent objective was the modernization of both programs based on the realities of the mission spectrum. Once EUCOM approached NATO with its shrinking

the reduced bilateral, single-service, and PFP exercise program succeeded because there was a parallel NATO program

resources, the latter was helpful in providing preferences on U.S. participation and capabilities. This also allowed NATO to examine its program. It should be noted that EUCOM participated in only 15 out of a hundred scheduled exercises. In most of them, U.S. headquarters and forces were not needed because other members could furnish a similar contribution. In some instances, Alliance capabilities, like the airborne warning and control system (AWACS), offered the same trained and ready asset at a lower cost.

Closer collaboration with NATO planners also included coordinating with the partnership coordination cell. It became obvious that the United States was often a key participant and could not withdraw from cooperation exercises because it was more often on the giving than receiving end of quality training. One example is a NATO/

Austrian tank during Strong Resolve '02.



U.S. Navy (George Sisting)

PFP exercise with a primary objective of developing PFP squad- and platoon-level tactics, techniques, and procedures. This exercise is atypical for a joint exercise focus and thus threatened further U.S. participation. Ultimately, that training allows PFP members to interoperate with other nations during peace support operations such as those in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Recogniz-

ing that most members have moved beyond campfire exercises by contributing to security commitments has helped in retaining a few unique exercises. NATO has recognized the progression of the PFP program and recently called for a more operationally focused partnership, allowing more vigorous training.

Other NATO or PFP exercises without immediate connections to current operations were less fortunate. Exercises with an overly service-unique or specific focus lost support. Maritime logistic, communication, or medical interoperability training, for example, is obviously needed, but given the reduction in resources these stand-alone exercises are being forced into often unwilling cooperation with larger, multiobjective, multiechelon training events.

The final significant decision reduced PFP and bilateral exercises. After examining the cost and benefit of

most command-led, owned, and operated exercises, it became clear that many had lost their luster. In several cases the host countries had gained entry to NATO (and needed integration into pure Article 5 exercises) or evolved their militaries beyond the campfire and to the point where they warranted regional exercises focused on more complex tasks and scenarios. With some countries, like Ukraine, the command has little room to modify the program.

EUCOM-NATO Relations

The reduced bilateral, single-service, and PFP exercise program succeeded because there was a parallel NATO program into which it could be integrated. Although the Alliance program does not meet all command requirements, the decision to work within it for improved readiness was perhaps unique to European security. The reduction also was possible because of increased collaboration between U.S. and Allied exercise planners on all levels. This approach has solid capacity to influence readiness in the context of the Alliance but has its limits. U.S. participation in the program could overwhelm other NATO members, but EUCOM realizes its shortcomings. The remaining issue will be the speed with which organizations adapt to changes precipitated by the new strategic outlook, headquarters, and force structure.



AH-1W on artillery range, Alexander the Great.

U.S. Navy (Martin Maddock)

Consequently, there are three areas where EUCOM could team with NATO efforts:

- examining CJTF requirements, exploring synchronization, defining national roles on CJTF staffs, and exercise requirements
- integrating future readiness force exercises into existing NATO exercise programs
- reviewing PFP exercises to include more complex readiness and interoperability scenarios as national capabilities develop.

EUCOM is supporting efforts to examine exercise and training requirements; and by leveraging his dual role, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander, European Command, can continue or even accelerate transformation. The efforts outlined above may result in a European solution but will likely have limitations outside the theater.

Command Implications

Besides its implications for NATO leaders, several U.S. commands draw on the EUCOM experience. Commanders on all levels should be mindful that vigilance in reviewing objectives and requirements is integral to transforming capabilities. Only in this way can they ensure that their programs are improving readiness.

Respecting allied or coalition member requirements and working

within their constructs has proven vital to military capabilities and political cohesion on which militaries build programs and accomplish missions. Developing training and exercises to support the strategic concept of a command may seem fundamental to defense planning, but the path linking strategy to structures to forces and finally to an exercise program is riddled with fiscal and bureaucratic obstacles.

Perhaps the most interesting implications of the EUCOM effort involve U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM). Millennium Challenge '02 furthered the transformation of the warfighting capabilities of combatant commanders. Many issues arose in the exercise: creating multiechelon and multifunction training venues, organizing headquarters to deal with transformation, mixing live and simulated forces, conducting collaborative planning, matching different hardware and software, and establishing more responsive headquarters and decision-making processes. JFCOM is also tackling the commensurate rise of technical problems such as trained personnel, increased bandwidth requirements, and space systems support, areas in which the United States has a clear advantage over its allies. The exercise did not answer every question it posed, but the command is engaged in transformation and should deliver improved capabilities to combatant commanders. In particular, EUCOM can provide JFCOM with

input on both Alliance and multinational issues as well as receive the benefits of national transformation.

Finally, the recent NATO decision to create a functional strategic command to deal with transformation may provide the missing piece in the exercise and readiness puzzle. Along with the decision to separate the responsibilities of the Commander, Joint Forces Command, from his duties as Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic came an initiative to create another headquarters with similar functions. The NATO transformation command could provide a formal mechanism to transform a range of military capabilities. It is a work in progress, but this organization will go well beyond the scope of joint exercises and training.

Because of the dual-hatted role of its commander and unique relationship between staffs in Belgium and Germany, the Chairman assigned EUCOM the coordination and integration task for "U.S. participation in European NATO exercises and exercise-related studies." These events are small steps in transforming readiness and depend on aligning forces, structures, and strategic objectives. As the Commander, European Command, testified before the House Armed Services Committee, "Transformation is an ongoing process, however, not an endstate. It spans decades of innovation and experimentation. It is also not limited to technology, but includes change in our organizational structure, operational concepts, and business practices."

U.S. European Command is transforming its exercise programs to reflect contemporary mission requirements by continuing to deepen relations between its staff and NATO planners. Further work is needed to modernize the requirements in light of ongoing operations. Although the initiatives in the EUCOM exercise and training program review are evolutionary rather than revolutionary, they represent tangible evidence of military transformation in preparing for the next war, not the last one.

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