Chile's Joint Initiative with the US

Implications and lessons learned for Joint Multinational Relationships

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In a rapidly changing and multi-polar world, national security is a team sport. In saying this, we recognize that not only is the world of defense planning and operations inherently joint, but it is also inherently multinational. The need for growing interoperable multinational forces has been most recently recognized by Chile as they work to stand up a truly joint Special Operations Forces Command. In doing this, they will create a full spectrum operational joint force and headquarters that from its inception will be interoperable with United States (US) Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The US armed forces learned from difficult experience that even after creating the initiative to develop a truly joint force, the challenges of creating that joint force are many and nuanced. Leaders of today's armed forces in the US will usually be the first to admit that the lessons of "jointness" continue to be learned, but after more than twenty years in conflict utilizing a joint construct, the armed forces of the US have a number of case studies and experiences building joint forces from which to draw to assist allies and partners. Chile enjoys a historically strong relationship with the US armed forces and geographically occupies a unique space that influences both US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) and US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). There are challenges ahead for Chile as they continue the initiative to complete building a truly joint force; and there are many benefits for the US to partner with and support Chile so that both countries can increase mutual opportunities for security and defense through a strong and secure interoperable hemispheric partnership.

Why a US Joint Force? A Brief History

The cooperation and unity of effort between the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps was vital to the US efforts in World War II in the Pacific theater, yet a more formal and succinct method of managing and supervising forces was needed. Following WWII, the National Security Act of 1947 was enacted to better align military forces, ensuring that each branch had a clear line of communication with

the highest levels of governmental leadership. However, the US military still lacked a formal structure, staff, and resourcing that could synergize military forces across the branches rather than within the branches.

In a stroke of succinct correspondence, President Dwight D. Eisenhower said to Congress in 1958, "Separate ground, sea and air warfare is gone forever. If ever again we should be involved in war, we will fight it in all elements, with all services, as one single, concentrated effort."[1] This statement spoke to the inherent nature of evolving warfare that required forces to synchronize efforts to create joint effects on the battlefield – gone was the luxury of a single-pronged approach to our nation's military operations.

Through the following 30 years, and the conduct of two major wars in Korea and Vietnam, the organization of the US Department of Defense (DoD) remained relatively stable. However, asymmetric threats and emerging challenges brought on by events in late 1979 would require a change in how the US military would address the manner in which they trained, thought, and fought its adversaries. A special operations mission by the US military in reaction to the Iran hostage crisis in November of 1979 was to be a major catalyst in developing the US joint force.

A group of Iranian university students seized the US Embassy in Tehran leading to a diplomatic standoff that culminated after a grueling 444 days. This crisis overshadowed the presidency of Jimmy Carter and, in part, led to his defeat by Ronald Reagan. In the fifth month of the hostage crisis, then President Carter authorized a covert rescue mission named Operation Eagle Claw that had military Special Operations Forces (SOF) rendezvous at a chosen refuel site Southwest of Tehran, Desert One, prior to conducting the rescue.[2] The Special Forces arrived at Desert One, but they never attempted the rescue. The hostages were finally set free after diplomatic efforts that culminated on 20 January 1981, during negotiations in Algiers, Algeria.[3]

The operation was an utter disaster that led to the death of eight U. S. servicemen. There were a multitude of reasons for the failure, but the most impactful is that prior to meeting at Desert One, the rescue force had never trained together as a consolidated team.[4] During the after-action reviews, one observer recalled:

> The participating units trained separately; they met for the first time in the desert in Iran, at Desert One. Even there, they did not establish command and control procedures or clear lines of authority. Colonel James Kyle, US Air Force, who was the senior commander at Desert One, would recall that there were, "four commanders at the scene without visible identification, incompatible radios, and no agreed-upon plan."[5]

When a nation needs its military to conduct complex operations, the missions cannot be executed haphazardly and without proper preparation. The separate branches of the US DoD were operating and training without full integration of all the military services. This created friction at best and proved deadly at worst.

In the aftermath of the failed Operation Eagle Claw, a series of changes would be made to the DoD structure that eventually resulted in the force organization as we know it today. President Reagan directed the establishment of the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management to conduct a full-scale review of the DoD leadership structure and spending processes. This was chaired by former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard and became better known as the Packard Commission. From the Packard Commission there were several recommendations for budgetary overhauls that would affect how joint forces would organize and train. However, the commission's key findings included restructuring Command and Control (C2) for theater commanders directly under the Secretary of Defense via the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and strengthening the authority of the CJCS.[6]

From the Packard Commission recommendations, the US altered the structure of the DoD, strengthened the power of the CJCS, and provided a framework for managing the DoD that we know today.[7] The benefits of this joint structure lied in the continuous acculturation and integration of separate branches of the DoD into a unified model that can be utilized to execute complex missions that span across every domain.

The road to establishing the US joint force was not easy and joint force lessons continue to be learned. Often plagued with interservice rivalry and sometimes poorly planned or poorly executed operations, building and operating as a joint force required persistence by military leadership. The joint force structure was also expensive and caused some programmatic acquisition processes to grow in scope and cost.[8] True integration required time and the development of a joint culture which can take even longer.[9] But over the decades, as our DoD has matured, the benefits far outweigh the costs.

The operational capability and the interoperability that comes with maintaining a Joint Force for a nation's military is critical.[10] In today's complex security environment, a nation cannot afford to allow stovepipes in leadership to detract from the goal of defending national interests at home and abroad.[11] All nations share this charge, therefore, in the following pages we will explore examples of how this transition to a truly joint military structure can and has benefited partners of the US military in the recent past.

Lessons Learned in Supporting Development of a Joint Force Construct, Allies and Partners

The US military has been involved in institution building, training, advising, and operating with allies and partners nation forces for most of its history. The DoD policies across different authorities of security assistance and security cooperation programs have enabled our partners to build capacity and capabilities into consistently solid military-to-military relations. The DoD's strategy to build an interoperable joint force within our partner nations has been an uphill battle. This challenge is mainly driven by diverse political interests, control of resources, and the fundamental understanding of a Joint Forces Command by partner nations that have limited experience operating in joint conditions. The biggest hurdle for security assistance in the successful development of a joint force structure is the massive force organization overhaul that will be required to change how the recipient state is structured. In some cases, this re-organization is a complete institutional rebuilding approach.[12] Still, there are lessons learned from allies and partner nations who have successfully developed a joint force construct.

Numerous security and defense institutions around the world study US military history, structure, and doctrine. Many US partner militaries dissect the US military lessons learned through the different conflicts and wars to adjust or incorporate changes to improve their institutions. The Colombian military has not only examined, adopted, and implemented a joint force structure based on the US military organization; it has also established a military-to-military relationship like no other country in the hemisphere. This long-lasting and mature relationship has been very evident across US SOF who have been side-by-side in persistent engagements with their Colombian counterparts for more than 50 years.[13] This long-lasting relationship also helped influence the necessary transition of Colombian SOF operations into a more joint concept with an established joint and interagency C2.

Through programs like the US-Colombia Action Plan, Colombia is a leader in export of security training and development throughout the region to key partners in the form of institutional organization and training, and the Ministry of Defense Advisor (MoDA) provides strategic level advice for institutional development across the Ministry of Defense. The General Joint Command seems to be an emerging international security cooperation model in which both Colombia and the US play key roles.[14] As a counter to critics of the US foreign policy in Colombia, Jim Thomas and Chris Dougherty highlighted: "Colombia today is safer and more stable than it has been in generations. Although internal security issues remain, Colombia is now a net security exporter, providing counter-narcotic

training to numerous countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and West Africa."[15] The Colombian military is also unique in its region, as its one of the few militaries in the hemisphere that has a Joint Forces Structure that both provides operational guidance to the different services and has a Joint SOF Command.

The Colombian Joint SOF Command, *Comando Conjunto de Operaciones Especiales* (CCOES), catapulted synergistic operational effects based on the approach of joint C2 of SOF operations in Colombia. The "CCOES was essential to ensure that the *Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) lost more than half of its armed component and territory, becoming a diffusive, elusive, and difficult to identify enemy."[16] The Colombian transformation of Joint Task Forces (JTF) established the doctrinal baseline for joint operations. Throughout this process US military provided persistent guidance and advice on Joint force structure and doctrine to the Colombian military. From the initiation of their first JTF Omega in 2003, to the larger results of this organization at the strategic level, it is evident that development and implementation of a Joint Doctrine might be catalogued as the major innovation in the process of transformation of the Colombian Military Forces.[17]

Because of the great success of JTF Omega in countering the FARC and consolidating national territory, other JTFs were created.[18] Colombia is in the right position to continue to advance its joint structure to a new level increasing the efficiency of military operations, as it contends with insurgent groups that take advantage of the political upheaval and changing social conditions. The US military continues to advance programs to assist with Colombia and other partner nations in the region, demonstrating its fitness and resolve as a hemispheric security partner. Special Operations Command-South (SOCSOUTH) pioneered the concept of distributed C2 and the establishment of the concept of a Special Operations Command Headquarters Forward (SOC FWD) in 2006, which enabled security cooperation for forces in Colombia and other countries in the region. It was also implemented globally by other US Special Operations Components across the globe.[19] This concept provides an example of the effectiveness of joint operations in countries that are willing to invest, just as in the US the efficacy of joint operations is seen most visibly in SOF.

Other countries such as Spain, Argentina and Australia have benefitted in establishing General Joint Command frameworks that established clear structure and responsibilities in the definition of capabilities, concentrating on those of a joint nature and standardizing requirements specific to all the different branches.[20] These countries have worked in the past with the US military to advise and assist in Doctrine, Organization, Training, Leadership, Materiel, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTLMPF) design. The 2022 National Defense Strategic Guidance directs the US military to strengthen major regional security architectures with

our allies and partners based on complementary contributions; combined, collaborative operations and force planning; increased intelligence and information sharing; new operational concepts; and our ability to draw on the Joint Force worldwide.[21] As identified by Barbara Fick, "the US Southern Command theater security cooperation and exercise programs have greatly enhanced regional partner nation capabilities for combined and multinational integrated operations in real-world contingencies."[22]

The Chilean Armed Forces are one of the most professionalized and specialized militaries in the region. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to advance interoperability operating in a joint structure. We will next review Chile's initiative to create a truly joint SOF capability and further develop their interservice interoperability, with the aim to take their security and defense efforts to the next level.

The Chilean Joint Special Operations Initiative: a Path to Hemispheric Partnership

The current structure of the Chilean Armed Forces, while similar in principle to the model of the US, has some distinct characteristics and differences. The Chilean government enjoys a similar relationship with the military that the US government does, in that the military is subject to civilian control. The Chilean President exercises power over the national military forces through the Minister of Defense. The Minister of Defense has a bureau and staff that includes the Estado Mayor Conjunto (EMCO) or Joint Staff. The EMCO is led by Lieutenant General Jean Pierre Desgroux Ycaza, the Chilean Chief of Defense (CHOD), a three-star general or flag officer who, with the help of his staff (the EMCO), serves as primary source of military advice, draft policy, and top-level strategic guidance to the Minister of Defense.[23] Chile contrasts with the US in the hierarchical position of the CHOD in that it is a general officer junior in rank to the individual service chiefs. In the US military, the CHOD is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is an equal four-star general or flag officer.[24]

Apart from the EMCO, and outside the authority of the CHOD, there are three distinct functional services of the Army, Navy, and Air Force that are each led by a four-star general or flag officer that is senior in rank to the CHOD. Each branch of the Chilean military trains, equips, and employs their forces as they are directed by the Minster of Defense within a given writ of defined parameters and jurisdictions. Each military service is given a separate budget and establishes its own priorities for execution of its respective resource allocations to meet defined required readiness and capabilities mandated by the Ministry of Defense. Each defense service claims jurisdiction over operations in its respective domain, such

that the Chilean Air Force (FACH) controls airspace, the Chilean Navy *(Armada*) controls maritime environments including ocean, littoral, and riverine areas, and the Chilean Army (*Ejército*) controls operations on land.[25]

Chile has established two geographic joint commands that are responsible for the northern and southern joint operations respectively. For instance, the commander of the joint forces in the north reports to the Chief of Staff of the EMCO, who has operational authority and forces provided by the individual services for defined periods and specified operations, as directed by the Minister of Defense. Within Chile, these joint commands face organizational and parochial challenges familiar to the US military's early joint construct. Joint Force Commanders report directly to the Minister of Defense through the EMCO, but they still are listed in the organizational charts of their respective service and their forces train individually as a service. Additionally, the Chilean armed forces have limited joint service drills where they are work towards establishing common standards. The competing equities and service biases create predictable seams and gaps in command and control where Joint Force Commanders are required to solicit service leadership for resourcing and support of assigned forces. However, the overarching vision, as expressed by top leadership, is one of aspirational jointness.

The defense and security challenges of today highlight the need for a joint force. As one of the most economically developed countries in Latin America, Chile faces high levels of illegal immigration due to unforced policy errors of hemispheric neighbors, such as Venezuela and Nicaragua, which are experiencing an increase in emigration.[26] Unfortunately, Chile's ability to absorb large inflows of people have strained its social systems, with second order effects that include increased crime rates, social divisions and public discourse on socio-economic differences.[27] This has led to renewed opportunities for insurgents, trans-regional criminal groups, and malign state actors to coopt political movements and threaten national security across domains, to include economic and digital spaces. In addition to these internal threats, Chile faces historical regional tensions, which require continued conventional military readiness to defend established sovereign territorial lines; Chile's proximity to the Antarctic region is increasingly envied by regional and extra-regional state actors.[28]

In recognition of these asymmetric threats, the Chilean armed forces have redoubled their efforts to resolve the inevitable challenges of jointness and have identified SOF as a growth area in their joint force structure. Each Chilean military service has its own component of SOF: the Chilean Navy has the *Comando de Fuerzas Especiales* (COMFUES), which is comprised of SEALS, Marines, and Navy commandos; the FACH have the *Unidad de Tácticas de Apoyo de Fuerzas Especiales* (UTAFE), comprised of rescue and combat control operators that are

nationally certified as Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC); and the Chilean Army has three special operations sub echelon force structures made up of the *Brigada de Operaciones Especiales* (BOE), which are the counterpart to US Army Special Forces, the *Brigada de Aviacion de Ejercito* (BAVE), which is a small light aircraft SOF comparable to the US 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and the *Brigada de Inteligencia* (BINTE), a unique all source intelligence service dedicated to support special operations. Collectively, the three Chilean Army Special Forces (BOE, BAVE, BINTE) have reorganized into a pathfinder organization that they call the *Comando de Operaciones Especiales* (COPE) which the Commander of the Army, General Iturriaga, hopes will evolve into a truly joint SOF comprised of specialties from all the services that can operate across domains to confront the myriad of security challenges faced by Chile.[29]

Chilean armed forces' senior leadership continues to work through the nuanced challenges of establishing a joint SOF. As mentioned earlier, the US knows through painful experience that a joint force cannot simply be assembled at the beginning of an operation. Jointness requires training, rehearsal, and standardization of tactics, techniques, and procedures. In recognition of these challenges, the Chilean Army has led an inter-service effort under the initiative of an exercise build known as Southern Star, to create a training ground for a true joint SOF. The Chilean Special Forces have worked together with SOCSOUTH to build out this initiative. Through their dedication to a joint force construct, they are now able to capitalize on the US joint SOF expertise that other partner nation's individual services have difficulty in accessing and leveraging. This is made possible in part to the US joint SOF construct where the Commander USSOCOM is the force provider for US joint SOF from all services.[30]

In the effort to further define and implement a joint force, the Chilean military leadership has demonstrated initiative and resolve. While adequate resourcing of forces is always a contentious issue among services, the pathway has been initiated to re-align all Special Forces under the command of the COPE, to be administrated and led by the EMCO. The mechanics of individual services training and retaining SOF capabilities vital to their service, while still providing for the joint force to meet emerging threats to security and defense, will continue to challenge top Chilean brass. However, by moving to create a functional force that organizes, trains, and equips in an interoperable fashion with USSOCOM creates incredible bi-lateral access to expertise and mutual security and defense benefits between Chile and the US.

Conclusion

The path forward for a complete and truly joint force in the COPE still requires full integration with the Chilean Navy's COMFUES and the FACH's UTAFE, but the way forward has incredible promise. Chile's high level of operational capability and the discipline of military leaders to maintain strict adherence to the principle of subordination to civilian control of the military, is indicative of a leadership that can exercise diplomacy and implement organizational change. Additionally, the dedication of military leadership to tried and true western military values trends well for the coming frictions, compromises, and sacrifices that will have to be made by each of the individual service components in the development of a joint force. The ability to be interoperable with global forces creates the national security imperative to establish a fully joint force capability and USSOCOM is an organization that is well suited to support that growth. ❑

Notes

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