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Forward Presence in Turkey: Case Study

WILLIAM N. FARMEN and ERWIN F. LESSEL III

For more than two years the Joint US Military Mission for Aid to Turkey (JUSMMAT), located in the Turkish capital city of Ankara, has provided critical preparatory and coordinative support for operations in areas adjacent to Turkey. Specifically, in August 1990 JUSMMAT began coordinating with the Turkish General Staff for the retention of US Air Force tactical aircraft then in Turkey in training status, and deployment of additional aircraft to Turkey, as a show of force in support of Operation Desert Shield. These efforts continued until December 1990 when the military assistance group became actively involved in the planning and execution of Operation Proven Force—the air combat operations conducted from the Republic of Turkey as an adjunct of Operation Desert Storm. Beginning on 6 April 1991, as Proven Force was terminating and its personnel and equipment were being redeployed, JUSMMAT became directly involved in Operation Provide Comfort—the coalition effort to provide humanitarian relief to more than 500,000 Kurdish refugees who fled from the Iraqi forces of Saddam Hussein into southeastern Turkey. Provide Comfort continues today, with the Turkish government on 26 June having approved an extension of the operation through 1992.

This article focuses on the role and contributions of one military assistance group's support for Operations Proven Force and Provide Comfort. It describes the efforts made during the planning, deployment, employment, and redeployment phases of both operations, offering several considerations for future contingencies where nearby forward-deployed US administrative/logistical/technical/advisory support structures are already in existence. JUSMMAT, armed with an awareness of host-country capabilities, offered planners, operators, and logisticians the opportunity to more effectively implement contingency operations.

JUSMMAT

Since the establishment of JUSMMAT on 10 August 1947, its members have served as the focal point for Turkish-American military relations

by maintaining contacts between the Turkish General Staff, the Turkish Ministry of National Defense, the Turkish armed forces commands, the American Embassy in Ankara, the US European Command, and the Defense Security Assistance Agency. Aside from NATO commitments and agreements, the charter for the US military presence in Turkey is the US-Turkey Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement, signed in 1980.

This agreement requires JUSMMAT to be the single point of contact between the US Department of Defense and the Turkish General Staff (the US JCS equivalent) in all negotiations, coordination, and combined actions. As the US Defense Representative in Turkey, the Chief JUSMMAT serves as the senior in-country military point of contact between the Defense Department, US European Command, the American Embassy, and several noncombatant Defense Department elements in Turkey on one hand, and the Turkish defense establishment on the other.

JUSMMAT is a jointly staffed organization of 46 military members, representing all services, with 10 US and 73 Turkish civilian employees. The breadth of experience and varied backgrounds of these personnel enable the staff to deal successfully with numerous bilateral defense issues and problems. Officers of the various services have experience throughout the spectrum of duties within the branches and functional commands. Additionally, several of the Army officers are Middle East Foreign Area Officers who have had previous assignments in Turkey.

This forward presence in Turkey, in the form of a military assistance organization, has played a key role in implementing US foreign and military policy in the Middle East during those critical months in the fall of 1990 and spring of 1991 and continuing even to the present.

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Preparation and Planning

The planning for Operation Proven Force broke new ground in the US-Turkish relationship. For the first time, the United States conducted combat operations from the Republic of Turkey. Despite historic and deeply ingrained sensitivities to foreign activities in their homeland, the Turkish government and military fully supported US activities by approving virtually every request made. Sensitive Turkish political-military issues, such as the number of personnel and aircraft permitted in country, necessitated close coordination and cooperation among JUSMMAT, US European Command, and the American Embassy.

After US Air Forces, Europe, and US European Command developed the Proven Force operations plan, an advance planning and liaison team arrived in Ankara to augment JUSMMAT in its coordination of military operations with the Turkish General Staff and to begin implementation of the war plan. This advance team's deployment was an extension of the dialogue begun in August 1990 between higher headquarters and JUSMMAT. Without this essential coordination, the early assumptions made by planners would remain unvalidated, thus presenting significant and possibly even fatal obstacles to the concept. Early coordination with the host nation's military staff proved *absolutely essential* to successful execution.

The advantage gained by having in-country military members working the initial stages of an operation cannot be overstated. In the JUSMMAT experience, a knowledge of existing agreements, host-nation capabilities and limitations, bureaucratic procedures, local customs and language, military/political protocols, and operational and logistical coordination requirements was an enormous advantage. These features, as reinforced by the working rapport established with key Turkish General Staff counterparts, was vital in obtaining

Turkish approval for Proven Force and its myriad detailed implementive steps. The combination of military assistance group expertise and the technical and planning abilities of the advance team members was essential in laying the groundwork for developing the approved concept of operations and its proper execution.

With respect to Provide Comfort, the humanitarian relief effort, the rapid onset of the operation necessitated improvisation and flexibility. With over 500,000 Kurdish refugees on Turkey's doorstep, there was no time for an advance team to handle initial coordination. JUSMMAT personnel, fresh from the experience of Proven Force, stepped in to transform written directives into action by obtaining Turkish General Staff permission for the establishment of a coalition rescue operation and the employment of US forces. The initial response, from warning order to the first airdrop of relief supplies, took less than 36 hours.

Prior to the movement of any aircraft, equipment, or personnel into Turkey for these operations, JUSMMAT conducted extensive coordination with the Turkish General Staff and the American Embassy. Both at the government level in Ankara and the provincial level in southeast Turkey, JUSMMAT personnel presented concept briefings and discussed the operational and logistical details with Turkish officials to gain their support and approval. Once the government of Turkey approved the concept and plan, work began on coordinating specific details of the deployments.

The Deployment of Forces

The military assistance group involvement in deployment of forces to Turkey for Proven Force and Provide Comfort encompassed two distinct efforts. It was necessary for JUSMMAT first to obtain import approval for munitions, vehicles, and major items of equipment, and second to coordinate the diplomatic clearances that would enable military aircraft to fly into and out of Turkish airspace.

After the host nation approved the deployment of specific military units to within her borders, the Turkish General Staff required JUSMMAT to coordinate customs import approval. The Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement requires prior Turkish General Staff approval for the import, export, or transfer of all munitions, vehicles, and major items of equipment. Securing this customs approval was time-consuming because of the large volume of materiel and frequently changing Turkish customs procedures. During 1991 alone, for example, JUSMMAT processed more than 2300 separate requests covering more than 450,000 line items. And for every item imported, export notification was also required.

In close contact with Task Force and service component logisticians, JUSMMAT clearance coordinators worked with Turkish officers from the

Agreements Implementation Division of the Turkish General Staff's J5 (Plans and Principles) to obtain the necessary customs approvals. (Since import approval is required under the Defense and Economic Cooperation Agreement, J5 had the lead, with J4 as the coordinating directorate.) Having a military assistance group on scene avoided the delays and difficulties encountered by other coalition nations that lacked a preexisting support structure.

The government of Turkey and the Turkish General Staff gave specific approvals and limits covering the deployment and employment of fighter, tanker, and other support aircraft from airfields in Turkey. Consequently, daily management of the exact number of in-country fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters (approximately 200 during Proven Force and over 300 for Provide Comfort) was required. To accomplish this, JUSMMAT assisted units in obtaining the diplomatic clearances necessary for flights to and from Turkey, monitored counts of in-country aircraft for the Task Force and Turkish General Staff, and obtained the approval for deployment of additional aircraft to Turkey. Military assistance group personnel coordinated the details of several thousand aircraft movements with Turkish Air Forces Command, the Defense Attaché Office of the American Embassy, the Task Force Headquarters at Incirlik Air Base, and individual flying units.

While continuing to assist the deployment of forces to Turkey, JUSMMAT saw its total involvement expand exponentially, to include extensive support for combat and relief operations. JUSMMAT became directly involved with the Proven Force and Provide Comfort task forces once they became operational at Incirlik Air Base and other locations throughout south-eastern Turkey.

Operation Proven Force

With the outbreak of hostilities in January 1991 and again on the first day of relief efforts in April 1991, JUSMMAT activated a 24-hour Emergency Operations Center. To man it, the Operations Division, normally staffed with two action officers, was augmented to form an eight-man team. The Emergency Operations Center had ready access to key Turkish General Staff and Turkish Air Forces Command general officers, Turkish military crisis action teams, the Joint Task Force Headquarters staff at Incirlik Air Base, and the higher headquarters and component crisis action teams in Germany.

The Emergency Operations Center resolved operations and logistics problems, obtained customs clearances, coordinated the deployment of additional units, and frequently obtained permission for conducting combat operations not previously approved by the Turkish General Staff and the government of Turkey. Many such actions on the part of Emergency Operations Center personnel involved obtaining approval for urgent US requests affecting combat operations from Turkey into northern Iraq.

In order to cut through many of the time-consuming bureaucratic requirements faced by deploying forces, JUSMMAT sought to impress upon the host nation the need for military expediency. Once this need was fully understood and appreciated by the Turkish staff, they supported direct contact between the Task Force Commander and Turkish military forces without JUSMMAT having to act as go-between. As US forces arrived in country for Operation Proven Force, primary responsibility for employment operations rested with the Joint Task Force Commander at Incirlik Air Base. (For Provide Comfort, a Combined Task Force was formed reflecting its multinational participation.) The Joint Task Force staff coordinated directly with Turkish liaison officers and the Turkish 2d Tactical Air Force, which had airspace coordination responsibility for southeastern Turkey.

As the war proceeded, JUSMMAT used its good offices to get the Turkish General Staff more directly involved. During the latter stages of the Desert Storm air campaign, for example, it was arranged for several key Turkish officers to visit the Central Command Headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. For these visitors, the trip reinforced the need to focus Turkish attention on critical areas such as command and control relationships and communication requirements. This firsthand look at coalition cooperation in the execution of Desert Storm will have a positive effect on Turkish military thinking as they continue the modernization of their military forces and confront the challenges their geographical position imposes.

In the area of security assistance, the JUSMMAT team continued its normal functions, though on an accelerated basis. For example, TOW missile and repair parts shipments, training programs for Patriot missile crews, and air refueling training for tactical pilots were all arranged on short notice, reflecting special US concern for security assistance to Turkey during a period of increased tensions and open hostility. The security assistance workload also increased owing to the increased availability of funds and the requirement for expeditious handling of this money to meet many short-notice war-related requirements.

Most of the actions described above in support of Operation Proven Force were still ongoing at the beginning of Provide Comfort. The differences between these two operations—one combat, the other humanitarian—required far-reaching adaptation and readjustment on the part of the JUSMMAT team.

Operation Provide Comfort

The Provide Comfort humanitarian relief operation stands in stark contrast with the Proven Force combat air operations conducted from Incirlik Air Base. The primary challenge facing commanders was establishing a workable logistic system for an enormous relief effort while operating in an inhospitable environment. Southeastern Turkey, near the Iran-Iraq-Syria border, is a difficult area, marked by intractable mountains, rudimentary government



CPT Cabrin Carlson

A crowd of refugees storms a bread truck during JUSMMAT's first visit to Cukurca, in southeastern Turkey, as part of Operation Provide Comfort.

infrastructure, drug trafficking, and indigenous rebel factions. Adding the cold weather and snows of late winter and 500,000 Kurdish refugees to this environment made for a near catastrophic situation.

To assist with the coordination of relief efforts, JUSMMAT activated a forward coordination cell in Diyarbakir, Turkey, during the second week of operations. In addition to being the site for the Turkish 2d Tactical Air Force headquarters, Diyarbakir is home to the State of Emergency Area Governor, the top Turkish civilian authority in southeastern Turkey. The team deployed consisted of Chief JUSMMAT, a Turkish special assistant/translator, an Army military assistant fluent in Turkish, a senior Air Force logistician on loan from the US Logistics Group located in Ankara, and an Air Force civil engineer. Also, US Air Force Space Command personnel from nearby Pirinlik supported this effort with administrative assistance.

This team undertook the task of assessing relief requirements in the mountainous southeastern region and coordinating short-term needs and longer-term sustainment requirements between local Turkish officials and the Combined Task Force at Incirlik Air Base. The military assistance group concept for Provide Comfort logistical support to southeast Turkey, developed on scene, was the plan ultimately employed by the coalition. The forward cell provided authoritative coordination assistance to cope with a broad spectrum of challenges. For nearly three months members of the cell worked with senior Turkish officials to assist the expeditious return of Kurdish refugees into camps and towns in northern Iraq.

In addition to the forward coordination cell, several JUSMMAT logistical personnel and Foreign Area Officers were brought into southeastern Turkey to assist deployed coalition forces. Initially, the military assistance group planned to deploy only personnel with logistical expertise, but soon realized that it was more efficient to use the organic logistical capabilities of the deployed forces while tapping the joint staff's Foreign Area Officer knowledge in local language, customs, religion, politics, host-nation military, etc. This proved to be a prudent course.

Foreign Area Officers deployed to the towns of Hakkari, Silopi, and Yuksekova, where they employed their expertise to coordinate coalition efforts with local civilian and military authorities. The assistance provided at these forward locations, warmly welcomed by Turkish authorities, helped grease the skids for the enormous relief effort. Other military assistance group personnel acted as liaison officers to the Combined Task Force Headquarters at Incirlik Air Base and the American Embassy in Ankara.

The Redeployment of Forces

With the rapid successes of Proven Force and Provide Comfort, attention quickly turned to the redeployment of US forces. While the mechanics of redeployment for both operations were similar, they were considerably different as to pacing. Proven Force redeployment occurred overnight; Provide Comfort redeployment is being phased as its operations continue.

In almost every operation the redeployment of forces develops a momentum of its own as everyone, with the mission accomplished, anxiously awaits the return home. Even with this momentum, extensive behind-the-scene logistics coordination is necessary, particularly in Turkey, where the timely withdrawal of deployed units depended so much upon notifying the Turkish General Staff and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs of impending unit movements.

For Proven Force, the coordination of munitions, equipment, and vehicle clearances between JUSMMAT and the Turkish General Staff was so expeditious that the redeployment was executed almost as quickly as the deployment. But even as the last documents of the combat operation were coordinated, the deployment of Provide Comfort forces began and the entire flow reversed. This was truly a test of logistics perseverance and administrative flexibility.

While more than 5000 military members and approximately 200 aircraft deployed to Turkey for Operation Proven Force, Provide Comfort forces have numbered as high as 17,000 US service and civilian personnel and over 300 aircraft. Although the sheer size of the forces has required a longer period of time for redeployment, the continuing threat to Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq has required a continuous security presence, therefore warranting a phased drawdown of coalition forces.

Even after more than nine months of involvement with Operation Provide Comfort, JUSMMAT continued assisting with the redeployment of equipment while coordinating additional agreements, customs and export approvals, aircraft diplomatic clearances, training authorizations, and other operations and logistics arrangements. These activities will continue until Provide Comfort is terminated and the last piece of equipment is redeployed from Turkey. But what happens after that?

Prospects for the Future

Once Operation Provide Comfort is completed and the last unit departs Turkey, JUSMMAT will remain on scene to face the formidable task of picking up the pieces. Those pieces will play an important part in the future US-Turkey military and political relationship. New and greater opportunities could present themselves if the United States and Turkey take advantage of the lessons learned during the past year.

Since future defense policy calls for greater reliance on forces deployed to contingency areas from the United States rather than forward-deployed forces, the role of those US military assistance personnel stationed in host nations becomes even more vital. In the case of Proven Force and Provide Comfort, a wealth of in-country expertise facilitated the deployment, employment, and sustainment of forces. On-scene military assistance group members helped deployed forces overcome countless obstacles during these operations. There are several lessons to be learned from the JUSMMAT experience with Operations Proven Force and Provide Comfort:

- *Capitalize upon the host-nation military assistance group.* Except in unique situations like that of Just Cause in Panama, where a sizable operational headquarters, logistics structure, and combat force were already present, the military assistance group is likely to be the only efficacious coordinative nucleus available. The fact that no other country is exactly like the United States puts a high premium on experienced people in country or on scene who have host-nation contacts and can use the local system to the benefit of the operation.

- *Validate planning assumptions.* With respect to contingency plan feasibility, restrictions, assumptions, and host-nation coordination requirements, go directly to the horse's mouth among host-nation officers and confirm all data which, if wrong, could jeopardize success. Be suspicious of planning assumptions, especially those which posit high degrees of host-nation support and cooperation. Fully utilize the host-nation military and government contacts already established by in-country personnel. It is vital to ask the right questions of those who can give the right answers.

- *Establish a comprehensive liaison network.* The importance of a web of specialized liaison personnel at forward locations, task force headquarters, the American Embassy, etc., cannot be overemphasized. Army Foreign

Area Officers proved effective in this capacity. Trained observers do more than watch—they understand what they see, and they have an appreciation for information that must be obtained and information that must be passed back.

- *Take the long view.* Every short-term decision carries a long-term impact. Understand the consequences of a decision before acting. Don't dictate to a sovereign state or circumvent its regulations for short-term gains. It will cost in the long run.

- *Be prudent in making commitments to the host nation.* Don't make promises that can't be kept and make sure that what is promised is legal. This is particularly important when—during the heat and pressure of an operation—the host nation requests equipment, services, or training covered by Security Assistance Regulations or US federal law.

- *Be philosophical about visits by VIPs and straphangers; prepare for them.* A constant stream of visitors—from generals and defense officials inspecting the troops, to politicians on junkets, to reporters on assignment, to the President of the United States visiting foreign dignitaries—will put great stress on the staff and require extra effort from the entire team. It goes with the territory.

- *Activate a round-the-clock Emergency Operations Center.* The establishment of a 24-hour contact center as a focal point for coordination is mandatory. Ensure it is staffed with sufficient rank and given the authority to resolve problems. Equip it with the administrative equipment (secure phones, computers, fax machines, copiers, etc.) necessary to get the job done.

- *Involve host-nation personnel in the operation, either actively or as observers.* Mutual learning is enhanced through cooperation and a two-way exchange of information and experience. Perhaps even more important, host-nation support and cooperation are likely to be more forthcoming if the hosts are made to feel they are part of the coalition team and have a proprietary interest in the proceedings.

Military commanders, staffs, and planners must take advantage of the military presence and expertise already located in potential contingency areas. During the operations in Turkey, JUSMMAT was joined by other resident organizations, especially the US Logistics Group in Ankara, the American Embassy, and the Defense Attaché Office, in fleshing out the in-country support structure to its fullest. Most certainly, a maximum team effort among all resident organizations will be requisite.

With the defense drawdowns now in store, military assistance groups will become a relatively larger part of the US forward military presence. We cannot afford to neglect any resource, however modest. Military assistance personnel must know, in detail, their area of operations and establish those key in-country contacts necessary to support higher headquarters and US foreign policy in contingency operations. Commanders and planners must have knowledge of available on-scene assets and properly employ them when necessary. □