

The United Nations and Intergovernmental Organization Command Relationships: Part III of III

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Previously in *Joint Force Quarterly*, we provided command relationship overviews as they occur in both U.S. and multinational doctrine.¹ In this last installment, we take a broad look at command relationships as they exist under normal conditions within intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations (UN). Commanders must use caution not to exchange U.S. with UN or any other organization's terminology.

The United Nations

Founded in 1945, the UN is an international organization of countries committed to maintaining peace and security around the world.² Its charter is the foundational document that provides the UN Security Council (UNSC) with responsibilities such as establishing peacekeeping operations (PKOs).³ Currently with 193 member states and no standing army, the UN approaches member states for military force contributions. Member states that contribute forces to PKOs are called troop contributing countries (TCCs).⁴ Even though TCC forces operate under a UN command⁵ with blue berets or helmets with UN insignia, TCCs always retain full command⁶ of their national forces and may withdraw them at any time.⁷

Established by a UNSC resolution (UNSCR) with the agreement between warring parties, a UN PKO contains binding mandates with tasks such as supporting a cease-fire, peace agreement, or protection of civilians.⁸ Within the spectrum of UN PKOs, five activities are carried out by UN forces: peacekeeping (create conditions for peace, consent needed); peace enforcement (practices ensuring peace, consent not needed); peacemaking (establish equal power relationships

among actors); peace-building (civilian infrastructure); and conflict prevention (action taken in advance of a crisis). Although the terms *peacekeeping* and *peace enforcement* do not appear in the UN Charter, their legal basis is found in chapters VI ("Pacific Settlement of Disputes") and VII ("Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of Peace and Acts of Aggression").⁹

Within the UN mission structure, three levels of command and control exist. At the strategic level, the UNSC provides overall political direction. At the operational level, the UN Secretary-General provides executive direction assisted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). At the tactical level where the military component resides and appointed by the Secretary-General via submissions by member states to DPKO is the highest ranking military individual on the UN force, the UN Force Commander (UNFC) or head of military component. The UNFC reports to the special representative of the Secretary-General, also known as the chief of mission, and exercises UN operational control (UN OPCON)¹⁰ over all military personnel including military observers. Commanders of different contingents report to the UNFC on all operational matters and must not be given or accept instructions from their own national authorities that are contrary to the mission's mandate.¹¹ To reflect participation of TCCs in UN PKOs, an integrated command structure is normally adopted. Even though collaboration between TCC personnel is a strength in UN PKOs, common concerns are the capability of headquarters staff and its integration with a firm understanding of TCC military capabilities.

U.S. Support and Doctrine

The current U.S. position regarding command over American forces engaged in a multinational contingency operation is rooted in Article II of the U.S. Constitution, Title 10 of U.S. Code,¹² and further refined by

a group of Presidential directives. As Commander in Chief, the President of the United States always retains command authority over U.S. forces. Any large-scale participation of American forces likely to involve combat is ordinarily conducted under U.S. command¹³ or through a competent regional organization.¹⁴ Normally, the President will keep units formed in support of a UN mission under a U.S. chain of command; however, he will make the exception of placing units under UN OPCON/UN tactical control of a U.S. officer in a UN deputy commander position. Within the limits of UN OPCON, a foreign commander cannot change the mission or deploy U.S. forces outside the operational area agreed to by the President; separate units or divide their supplies; administer discipline; or promote anyone or change the internal organization of U.S. forces.

In 1950, the UNSC established a UN command to stop Communist aggression in Korea. Through the years, international military presence in the Republic of Korea (ROK) declined from worldwide to bilateral. Eventually, UN member states called for the dissolution of the UN command in Korea and for the establishment of a ROK-U.S. combined command system. As a result, in 1978 remaining ROK-U.S. forces transferred from UN command to the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC).¹⁵ If conflict arises, the CFC commander will act in the defense of the ROK and technically could act as the commander of UN forces in Korea. When conflict occurs, U.S. forces will be either under "combined OPCON" and even possibly UN OPCON. *Combined OPCON* is a more restrictive term than *U.S. OPCON*, strictly referring to the employment of warfighting missions.¹⁶

Following military operations in Panama and Kuwait/Iraq in 1992, the President authorized National Security Directive (NSD) 74, "Peacekeeping and Emergency Humanitarian Relief Policy," outlining U.S. support for UN peacekeeping. In 1993, Policy

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Review Document (PRD) 13, “Peacekeeping Operations,” was drafted. It aimed to improve UN peacekeeping. However, PRD 13 did not come to fruition due to political pressures resulting from U.S. casualties in the UN operation in Somalia, which was commanded by a Turkish general and a dual-hatted U.S. deputy who was as the commander of U.S. Forces Somalia. Even though thousands of American troops were placed under UN OPCON for this mission,¹⁷ the UNFC in reality had little or no control over these forces since the arrangement of these attached forces was intended for utilization under the U.S. deputy.¹⁸

While Presidential directives in the 1990s articulated policies on peacekeeping, existing joint doctrine provided limited guidance. The first step toward filling that gap was joint publication (JP) development conducted by the joint doctrine development community led by the Joint Chiefs of Staff J7. The increase of JP development began in 1993 with the creation of JP 3-07.3, *Peace Operations*, and JP 3-07.5 (now JP 3-68), *Noncombatant Evacuation Operations*. In 1994, Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25, “U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations,” established instructions and clarified command relationship terminology for U.S. participation in peace operations. It also focused attention on the need for improved dialogue and decisionmaking among governmental agencies. Less than 24 months after the release of PDD 25, joint publications on stability operations, interorganizational coordination during joint operations, and foreign humanitarian assistance entered U.S. military doctrine.¹⁹ PDD 25 also laid the basis for PDD 56, “Managing Complex Contingency Operations,” in 1997, which institutionalized policies and procedures on managing complex crises.²⁰

When the UN released the *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations* in 2000, it exposed additional shortfalls in the execution of UN PKOs.²¹ In 2004, the President’s Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) was created to assist in filling those gaps by training peacekeepers and regionally building sustainable indigenous peacekeeping training capacity as primary objectives. Implemented through a close partnership between the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense (DOD), with State in the lead, GPOI is now another mechanism like troop contribution or financial assistance led by State and other congressional means of the U.S. Government supporting UN and regional

peace operations.²² Under a new development in U.S. policy last year, the President issued Presidential Study Directive 10, “Creation of Interagency Atrocities Prevention Board and Corresponding Interagency Review.”²³ This directive identified the prevention of mass atrocities and genocide as a core national security interest of the United States and directed the creation of an atrocities prevention board to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to preventing and responding to mass atrocities and genocide. As a result, military doctrine on the protection of civilians and mass atrocity response operations is being further developed and incorporated into joint doctrine and publications such as JP 3-07.3. In support of this doctrine, GPOI will play a key role in implementing the recommendations of the board when it comes to training peacekeepers who are often the first line of defense in preventing mass atrocities.

Other Organizations and Force Structures

When the UNSC determines that an operation exceeds the capabilities of the United Nations, the Security Council under chapter VIII (“Regional Arrangements”) of the charter can authorize a lead nation operation such as the UN-sponsored operations in Korea (U.S. led) and East Timor (Australian led). In January 1991, the *Desert Storm* coalition ejected Iraqi forces from Kuwait under the authority of a UNSCR. Led by an officer now called the U.S. Central Command commander, the United States and its Western allies operated under a parallel command that was separate from the Arab forces commanded by a Saudi commander.

When an operation exceeds UN capabilities and is regional, again under chapter VIII, the United Nations can authorize an organization to lead it. Two such regional organizations are the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and African Union (AU). Operating under a UN-sanctioned mission in 2001, NATO took over the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, which provides security in and around the capital. Soon after, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was established as a peacekeeping mission that focused on recovery and reconstruction. While acting under a UNSCR, few would argue the legality of a NATO military presence; however, when NATO acts under its own mandate as in Yugoslavia in 1999, undoubtedly the question

of legality arises.²⁴ UN forces do require a status of forces agreement with the host nation to be present in the country.

Established in 2002, the AU adopted UN doctrine as a framework for its own doctrine, which informs the development of the African Standby Force (ASF). The ASF is made up of five military brigades from the continent’s five economic regional communities and is intended for rapid deployment for a multiplicity of peace operations including the right to intervene in a member state in circumstances of war crimes, genocide, or crimes against humanity.²⁵ Forces under an AU command²⁶ are AU OPCON²⁷ to the regional organization’s force commander. Recently, the AU cooperated in military operations with the United Nations by deploying in advance of a UN force in Sudan’s Darfur region in 2006, which was later replaced by a UN-led UN-AU hybrid operation in 2007.²⁸ A concern of the ASF is that AU forces are largely underfunded and poorly equipped. The AU currently leads the peace operation in Somalia.

In addition to formed units, UN missions function with individual UN military observers (MILOBS). UN MILOBS are unarmed and observe, record, and report on the status of formal agreements. If a UN military force is present, MILOBS work in conjunction with the force but under a separate chain of command. Even though the United States has not recently provided formed units under the command of foreign commanders, it has provided individual MILOBS to UN missions. For US MILOBS, the Secretary of the Army is executive agent for DOD support to UN missions, and the responsibility for administrative control is with the U.S. Military Observer Group in Washington.

Conclusion

The U.S. military will continue to operate as a joint force and will likely participate in multinational environments addressing conflict and human suffering around the world. Command relationships at all levels will continue to challenge U.S. forces involved in all types of operations. Recently in Operations *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector* (Libya), command relationships and employment of air and maritime assets impacted five U.S. combatant commands and four Services as well as the mission’s transfer of authority to the multinational community. Commanders must understand the realities of different

levels of command relationships within U.S. chains of command and how American command relationships are impacted when those commanders or forces are assigned or attached to multinational coalition positions or operations. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ See George E. Katsos, "Command Relationships," *Joint Force Quarterly* 63 (4th Quarter 2011), 153–155, available at <www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/jfq-63/JFQ-63.pdf>; and "Multinational Command Relationships, Part II of III," *Joint Force Quarterly* 65 (2^d Quarter 2011), 102–104, available at <www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/jfq-65/JFQ-65.pdf>.

² See "UN at a Glance," *UN.org*, available at <www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml>.

³ Per other nations and organizations, *peacekeeping operations* are also known as *peace support operations*.

⁴ Per the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) "NATO Glossary of Abbreviations Used in NATO Documents and Publications," AAP-15 (2010), *troop contributing countries* are known as *troop contributing nations*.

⁵ *United Nations [UN] command* is the authority vested in a military leader for the direction, coordination, and control of military forces; also known as UN operational command. UN command has a legal status and denotes functional and knowledgeable exercise of authority to attain objectives or goals. See UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), "Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Policy," Ref. 2008.4 (February 2008); and *Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines* (New York: UNPKO, January 2008), 4.

⁶ *Full command* is equivalent to U.S. combatant command (command authority), also known as COCOM, for internal matters only and NATO full command; a UN Force Commander (UNFC) will not have full command over another nation's forces. See "Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Policy," 4.

⁷ *Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations* (New York: UNPKO, December 2003), 67.

⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 1674 (2006).

⁹ *Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines*, 17–18.

¹⁰ *UN operational control* (UN OPCON) is similar to U.S., African Union (AU), and NATO OPCON: the authority granted to a UNFC in a UN peacekeeping operation (PKO) to direct forces assigned so that the commander may accomplish specific missions or tasks that are usually limited by function, time, or location (or a combination); to deploy units concerned and/or military personnel; and to retain or assign tactical command

(TACOM) or tactical control (TACON) of those units/personnel. *OPCON* includes the authority to assign separate tasks to subunits of a contingent, in consultation with the contingent commander and as approved by the UN headquarters. Other relevant UN command relationship terms include *UN TACOM* (equivalent to NATO TACOM), which is the authority delegated to a military or police commander in a UN PKO to assign tasks to forces under his command for the accomplishment of the mission assigned by higher authority; *UN TACON* (equivalent to U.S., AU, and NATO TACON), which is the detailed and local direction and control of movement, or maneuver, necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned (moreover, as required by operational necessities, the UNFC may delegate the TACON of assigned military forces/police personnel to the subordinate sector and/or unit commanders); and *UN administrative control* (ADCON), which is similar to U.S. and NATO ADCON as well as AU administrative control (ADMCON) and is the authority over subordinate or other organizations within national contingents for administrative matters such as personnel management, supply, services, and other nonoperational missions of the subordinate or other organizations. ADCON is a national responsibility given to the National Contingent Commander in PKOs. *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ *Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations*, 68.

¹² Michael Canna, *Command and Control of Multinational Operations Involving U.S. Military Forces*, Occasional Paper (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, August 2004), 3.

¹³ U.S. *OPCON* is the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. See Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 2012), GL-11. Other U.S. command relationship terms include *U.S. combatant command* (command authority) (COCOM), which is the nontransferable command authority, which cannot be delegated, of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces; assigning tasks; designating objectives; and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command (GL-5). *U.S. TACON* is the authority over forces that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned (GL-12). *U.S. ADCON* is the direction or exercise of authority over subordinate or other organizations in respect to administration and support (GL-5).

¹⁴ Canna, 7.

¹⁵ Kyung Young Chung, "An Analysis of ROK-US Military Command Relationship from the Korean War to the Present" (Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1989), 73–91, available at <www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA211800>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Canna, 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Entering into U.S. military doctrine were JP 3-07, *Missions Other Than War* (now known as *Stability Operations*); JP 3-08, which was renamed *Interorganizational Coordination During Joint Operations*; and JP 3-07.6 (now JP 3-29), *Foreign Humanitarian Assistance*.

²⁰ William P. Hamblet and Jerry G. Kline, "Interagency Cooperation: PDD 56 and Complex Contingency Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly* 24 (Spring 2000), 93.

²¹ UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Report on the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000.

²² The U.S. assessment level of the overall UN budget is around 27.3 percent, or \$2,126,382,000. See Marjorie Ann Browne, *United Nations Peacekeeping: Issues for Congress*, RL33700 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 11, 2011).

²³ This interagency effort was led by Special Assistant to President Barack Obama and Senior Director of Multilateral Affairs on the National Security Council Samantha Power, along with assistance from Deputy Assistant Secretary of State of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs Victoria Holt, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense/Special Coordinator for Rule of Law and Humanitarian Policy Rosa Brooks, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans Janine Davidson.

²⁴ Janka Oertel, "The United Nations and NATO," paper prepared for the Academic Council on the United Nations System 21st Annual Meeting, Bonn, Germany, June 5–7, 2008, 4.

²⁵ Jakkie Cilliers, *The African Standby Force: An Update on Progress*, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Paper 160 (Pretoria: ISS, March 2008), 1.

²⁶ *AU command* is the authority to issue operational directives only within the limits of the regional operational authority. See *African Union Peace Support Operations Standing Operating Procedures* (Addis Ababa: AU, 2008), 1.

²⁷ *AU OPCON* is the authority granted to military commanders in a peace support operation to direct forces assigned so the commander may accomplish specific missions or tasks that are usually limited by function, time, location, or a combination of these elements. Another relevant command relationship is *AU TACON*, which is the detailed and local direction and control of movement or maneuvers necessary to accomplish missions or tasks; it is delegable to subordinate commanders. *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸ Cilliers, 7.