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Overview of Military Operations of US Arms Forces During the First Gulf War

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this papers is analysis for military actions conducted by US Arms Force during Desert Storm operation in Iraq. This concern gives insight into new US attempt for military operations outside national borders following conclusions from unsuccessful military campaign in Vietnam. After 1989, US made more brave political decisions for participation in solving worldwide concerns. Origin for such state of affairs was gradual “Soviet Imperium breakdown”, that was general challenge for American foreign policy and safety. The United States began introducing *New World Order* vision in last decade of the twentieth century, that was created by G.H. Bush. American army obtained the role of executor in the performance of settled assumptions. The first military test was Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

Keywords: Gulf War, US Forces, Iraq, George H. Bush, Saddam Hussein

1. INTRODUCTION

The United States have the strongest arms forces in the world. The following aspects are decisive for theirs status: high military budget (several times higher than the budget of other international players), human resource condition (number of officers etc.), ultra-modern armament and equipment and ability of conducting military operations in any part of the globe. However, such forces did not always meet the settled expectations, what was documented by casus of conducted armed hostilities at territory of Afghanistan, Iraq, and

formerly Vietnam. All such hostilities have one common element – lacking collective ability for neutralization of irregular enemy's troops. It was particularly seen in the battles taking place in urban-type areas. It is a very worrying matter, because twenty-first century will be characterised with highly frequent local wars, where the subject very hard for unequivocal identification will be standing face-to-face, according to analytics.

Nevertheless, we should remind that USA arms forces still remind the greatly coordinated system in right order. Theoretically, one very small troop can successfully stand up to two or three times stronger enemy (it obviously depends on the range of conditions, i.e. enemy's position, enemy's training level, equipment and armament, territory for military actions). According to the US military strategy, army is still the key instrument in the strategic counteraction to military and political threats and one link in foreign policy, among many others (D. Robert Worley, 62-63).

2. THE INTERVENTION OF US ARMS FORCES DURING THE FIRST GULF WAR

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi arms forces commanded by Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait. It was second war unleashed by Iraqi dictator within last ten years. First war against Islamic Republic of Iran took eight years and its costs exceeded the expectations of not only the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini, but also Saddam Hussein's. That time, aggression against the Emir of Kuwait led to more radical consequences.

Annexing Kuwait evoked immediate indignation of international society, generally the United States. Washington was predicting quick spreading of warfare inside to the territory of Saudi Arabia, what could negatively influence on the purchase and transport costs for natural resources. Decision of president Bush and National Security Council was unequivocal, namely American arms forces had to be sent. In the beginning, one Airborne Group comprising of over 2 thousand soldiers was sent for the protection of the country with two mosques. According to one author: "The purpose of such formation was establishing the American presence and informing Hussein, that when routing on the south he will be confronted with Saudi Arabia and United States, both"(Stephen Tanner, 44). In the next step two aircraft carriers, several US Navy ships (i.e. „Eisenhower”, „Independence”), Land Force troops equipped with ultra-modern M-1 Abrams tanks, AH-64 Apache assault aircrafts and Marine Expeditionary Units were sent to the area of action.

Maintenance of such number of soldiers, as well as expert equipment located hundreds of thousands of miles outside national borders costed American tax-payers about 1 million dollars in one month. Following this, president George Herbert Bush presented plan to the Congress in which he unequivocally declared that offensive operation had to be conducted, instead of awaiting for developing situation. He spoke similar words to United Nations forum. In the end, president got the consent of parliament, despite numerous objections of opposition and sole citizens, and on November 29, 1990, the United Nations Security Council adopted the respective resolution in which it gave Iraq time for voluntary leaving the Kuwait, until January 15, 1991. It should be emphasised, that in case of breach to UN directive, Hussein's troops should be forced out from Kuwait with means of military force. Despite such warnings, desired result was not obtained. Finally, international society sent the coalition of soldiers from 29 nations to the Middle East, under commandment of the United States. General

Norman Schwarzkopf became commander-in-chief (*Resolution 678 (1990)*, United Nations Security Council).

Table 1. US Arms Forces delegated to warfare in Persian Gulf.

| Date | Land Forces | Total |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| September 1, 1990 | 31,337 thousand | 95,965 thousand |
| November 7, 1990 | 124,704 thousand | 266,096 thousand |
| January 15, 1991 | 245,290 thousand | 422,041 thousand |
| February 22, 1991 | 296,965 thousand | 533,608 thousand |

Source: Frank N. Schubert, Theresa L. Kraus, *The whirlwind war: the United States Army in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm*, St. John's Press, Washington D.C 2016, p. 25.

On January 17, 1991, the Coalition forces began the operation under “Desert Storm” code name. In the beginning, the warfare was limited to strategic bombing raids held by American MH-53 Pave Low helicopters and invisible to radars F-117A Nighthawk aircrafts, that were flying in 415th Tactical Fighter Squadron, at that times. Over the course of time, this decision proved to be reliable. It was indicated that application of other units would have been quickly revealed by enemy’s sensor system. According to official data, USAF shot down about 1.6 thousand enemy objects in nearly 400 various locations (Por. Harold P. Myers, 3). Therefore, the result was impressive with simultaneously minimum own losses. On the one hand, such result was obtained with missile technology and precision of aircraft tracking system. On the other hand, it was obtained with over-exceptional skills of pilots. They practically always acted under strong stress. Bad weather conditions additionally limited theirs range of sight. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the real elite of American air force troops participated in tasks, and the majority of pilots graduated the elite American air force training of “Top Gun” type (Xavier Jackson, 2017).

The general objective of 415th Squadron attacks were Iraqi nuclear plants, power industry and communicational infrastructure, command centres, munitions factories and air defence supportive systems, as well as particularly sensoric sub-system. Next, air force conducted precise attacks in every place where hostile troops were actually located. 39% of hostile tanks, 32% of armoured vehicles and 47% of artillery was eliminated within 38 days. After all, such activities were not so perfect. According to experts in the art, low number of detected SCUD missiles was disappointing (Por. John T. Corell, 32-33). We can justify such course of affairs with the fact, that they were mobile systems being providently hidden after every given shot, what very often disabled precise localisation, for obvious reasons. Moreover, air attacks were impeded with heavy rains and sand storms. As a matter of fact, sole pilots were forced to flights at low altitude. Enemy missiles could hit them in every minute. Major Jay M. Kreighbaum said that they were prepared for the worst (Por. Alberto Bin *et al.*, 88). Whereas assumption can be made that the scale of American air strikes was over-excessive. They got exclusive authorisation for liberating Kuwait, thus all theirs forces should be directed to such place. We can assume that USAF wanted to destroy the Hussein’s

military power in such a way, that future conquest of another nation would have been impossible.

In the meanwhile, massive campaign of Coalition land forces against Iraqi soldiers in Kuwait began on February 24, 1991. At that time about 545 thousand Iraqi soldiers were located at territory of Kuwait and nearby its borders. They disposed of 4 thousand armoured units and 500 combat aircrafts. The Coalition numbered 455 thousand soldiers in total, and American forces comprised over a half of their numbers. They were equipped with 3400 tanks and 200 strike aircrafts. Navy fleet provided additional support (1800 naval ships, i.e. aircraft carriers, patrol ships, so called minesweepers) and was based on the waters nearby the Gulf and on two seas: the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea (Por. Richard Lowry, 8). In general, Coalition forces had significant advantage in the air, whereas the numbers of armoured units was lower when compared with enemy forces. But they operated with modern equipment, what was decisive in final settlements and tipped the scales.

In the morning, Marines Corps units attacked the elements of defensive infrastructure. They quickly handled with first fortifications and when second opponent was found, enemy was fleeing from the field or laid down their weapons in order to evade open fire. Statistical data is worth of remembering, according to which about 16 thousand Hussein's soldiers were captured in the first day, and there was only one death in American forces (Por. Alberto Bin *et al.*, 90). In the following step, armoured forces grouped in VII Corps were led to action. Despite fatal weather conditions, a set of attacks onto enemy locations was conducted. To be precise, caterpillar vehicles of Iraqi soldiers were disabled, and sole soldiers were very often eliminated by simple driving over. The very important role in this part of operation had American Mechanized Division and Armoured Cavalry. Successful assault on the As Salman airport conducted on February 25, 1991 was the operation of key importance in the campaign, in which the resistance of several Iraqi armoured divisions was easily destroyed. Another key operation was conquering Busayyach city by VII Corps, after whole-night exchange of fire. Thanks to the victorious battle the units of Saudi Arabia and Egypt could drive into Kuwait City in the following day (Por. Norman Schwarzkopf, 492-494).

Finally, on February 28, 1991, parties engaged in the conflict announced armistice under influence of international society, and on March 3, 1991, truce was signed. Iraqi forces were totally forced out from Kuwait by Coalition forces in 4 days. In contradiction to common opinion, Saddam Hussein did not have such a powerful army in order to successfully compete the opponent equipped with the most modern technological innovations, who was prepared for all kinds of scenarios. In the operation liberating the Kuwait 149 American soldiers died and 458 soldiers were injured (Por. Richard Lowry, 186). It should be noticed that Americans used in the Persian Gulf the most modern armaments for the first time, that were not available for other nations at that time. We can distinct i.e. laser-tracked missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, F-117 Nighthawk aircrafts¹, artillery equipped with TACFIRE systems (Tactical Fire Detection System) automatically destroying selected object. Moreover,

¹ First machines of such type were introduced to military service in 1982. Lockheed-Martin company produced them with *stealth* technology. According to the relation of one high-rank commander, the existence of Nighthawk had to be kept in top secrecy by him and subordinates. We can assume that it was very clever move. If truth had been revealed, they would have been very interesting for foreign special forces, and such forces were settled for stealing or copying such unique designs. Probably the sole research phase costed tax-payers millions of dollars, not mentioning the manufacturing process and tests with remarkable price. Moreover, potential aggressor could have used the detailed knowledge of US aircrafts.

communication systems, such as *Defense Satellite Communication System*, *Air Force Satellite Communications System* were used on daily basis, supporting systems for tracking the enemy objects (Harvey M. Sapolsky, *et al.*, 63).

3. CONCLUSIONS

We may formulate several conclusions on the basis of US Arms Forces participation in “Desert Storm” operation. First, Americans prepared several scenarios and used the set of military means, generally non-military ones in the respective time and space. Second, US Arms Forces are continuously prepared for warfare against regular armies from hostile countries. They have most modern equipment and can obtain immediate advantage in air, what enables destroying strategic enemy objects in very short time without the requirement of great financial expenditures. Third, thanks to the modern technique they can limit casualties to minimum with means of used i.e. unmanned aerial vehicles. Fourth, the relocation process of enemy units is tracked with means of space satellite. Fifth, it was first time in the history of military conflicts when Americans showed the picture of war favourable only to them with means of mass media. Following this, problems with domestic and foreign public opinion was avoided (Jean Baudrillard, 26)².

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² Jean Baudrillard said “Information is like unintelligent missile that never hits target.” Whereas universality of such words is a matter of discussion, author should be acknowledged for own originality.

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