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US-Russian Military Cooperation and the IFOR Experience: A Comparison of Survey Results

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Introduction

Over the last several months a joint US-Russian research team Learned have been conducting a study of the US-Russian military cooperation in IFOR.¹ It is composed of researchers from the Center for Military-Strategic Research of the Russian General Staff and the Foreign Military Studies Office of the U. S. Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned. In this endeavor the team developed a common approach to the project and worked out major research themes. The team, of which I have served as head, collected a wide range of open-source materials, including printed and electronic information, conducted interviews with key participants and collected survey materials from Russian and U.S. officer/participants. The US and Russian teams each wrote and shared working drafts of the project. FMSO translated the Russian draft into English. At present, we are in the process of transforming those drafts into a single document for publication.

The origins of this project are to be found in an on-going effort to assess this unique, post Cold War experience in military-to-military cooperation in the realm of peace operations. General George Joulwan, who as SACEUR, exercised command of NATO's multi-national peace operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was instrumental in forging the unique arrangement for operational control [OPCON] of the Russian brigade through his Deputy for the Russian Contingent, Colonel-General Leontiy Shevtsov. General Joulwan has placed special emphasis upon the value of the lessons that can be drawn from that cooperation.

The lessons learned on NATO-Russia interoperability should be institutionalized in both the NATO and Russian military planning process through joint seminars, conferences and working groups. These activities can build upon our successes of today and prevent these accomplishments from escaping the next generation of NATO and Russian military leaders. NATO nations, Russia, and all of Europe would benefit from the stability and predictability offered by such regular military cooperation.²

On repeated occasions he observed that IFOR's success depended upon the realization of the concept, one team, one mission. Indeed, it was under General Joulwan's leadership that a series

of US/NATO-Russian conferences were held. Sponsored by the George C. Marshall Center for the Study of European Security and the Russian Center for Strategic and International Studies, these conferences were held in Pushkin, Russia, in 1996, Garmisch, Germany, in 1997, and Moscow in 1998.³ These conferences were unique because they brought together many of the US and Russian senior commanders who took part in IFOR and SFOR.

Colonel-General Leontiy Shevtsov, who served as General Joulwan's Deputy for Russian forces in the unique IFOR command and control arrangement, has also noted the importance of the IFOR experience for future peace operations.

The lessons of this operation are now being studied in military academies and planning staffs of different countries. This has already led to the preparation of future common coalition operations. These will be different from earlier military operations because there will no longer be some type of global world war or a major conflict. Instead, we have to prepare ourselves and our armed forces for peacekeeping operations.⁴

General Shevtsov observed on another occasion that such operations are a key element in the emerging international security system. International peacekeeping experience has persuasively shown this to be a powerful political lever and an effective tool for maintaining peace and stability in various regions.⁵

Moreover, the development of NATO-Russia relations since the initiation of the IFOR mission has progressed to a point where such joint studies of NATO-Russian military cooperation are a mandated part of that relationship. The Founding Act, signed on 27 May 1997 in Paris, explicitly calls for such studies.

Russia's and NATO's respective military authorities will explore the further development of a concept for joint Russia-NATO peacekeeping operations. This initiative should build upon the positive experience of working together in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the lessons learned there will be used in the establishment of Combined Joint Task Forces.⁶

Thus, the larger, joint Russian-American study of the IFOR experience fits within the context of these recommendations and the mandate of the Founding Act. This joint Russian-American research project, which analyzes the experience of US-Russian Cooperation in peace enforcement operations under IFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the first such research project conducted by representatives of military research organizations of the United States and the Russian Federation.

The peace operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, conducted by the IFOR multi-national forces under NATO leadership, is unique and can be assessed as a case study relevant to the creation of a future mechanism for US-Russian military cooperation in the resolution of future armed conflicts. Taking into account the fact that the scale and significance of this operation do not have any analogies in the past or present, the experience of its preparation and conduct is broad and varied. The study and analysis of all aspects and elements of the operation have a universal

significance for the practice of peace operations. This makes the multi-sided approach to the evaluation of the lessons and prospects of such operations, which have been achieved, in the joint Russian-American project, even more important.

By assessing the US-Russian experience in IFOR, the Russian and American researchers have attempted to fathom the mechanism for the organization and conduct of IFOR through the eyes of those American and Russian officers, who participated in the peace operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a few short years these officers have gone from militarized confrontation in the heart of Europe to close cooperation in upholding the peace and security of Europe. In Task Force Eagle, the US 1st Armor Division, commanded by MG William Nash, provided the headquarters and two of the five maneuver brigades that made Multi-National Division (North) and the Russian Separate Airborne Brigade of the Russian Airborne Forces [VDV], commanded by Colonel Aleksandr Lentsov, operated under the division's tactical control (TACON). Along with the two other multi-national divisions, this force successfully executed the military provisions of Annex 1A of the Dayton Accords, which brought an end to the military confrontation that had been at the heart of the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In discussing this command arrangement MG Nash has stated: Unity of effort and a single chain of command is Lesson Number One for the future. Without the cooperation of American and Russian soldiers IFOR could not have succeeded and the study would not have been possible. One aspect of the research for that study deserves its own special treatment. This was a joint survey project conducted in late 1997 and early 1998 among Russian and American officer-participants in the Multi-National Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This article provides an analysis of the results of these surveys.

The Surveys

The survey was conducted in two parts. The Russian team from the Center for Military-Strategic Studies developed the instrument and conducted a survey of 45 Russian officer-participants between August 12 and October 12, 1997. The Russian researchers collected their results and then drafted an analytical report on the results of the survey, which they shared with the American team. During consultations with the American team in Moscow in December 1997 an agreement was reached to conduct a similar survey of American officer-participants. Mr. Robert Love translated the Russian survey results and their analysis. When the Russian team visited FMSO in December the combined team met with Professor Vicky Sherberger of the Development and Assessment Division of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College to get her expert advice on the drafting and administration of translated and adapted instrument to officer-student volunteers who had served in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In January and February 31 officer-students took part in the survey. On the basis of those results Professor Sherberger provided FMSO a statistical analysis of the results and relevant comments by those surveyed. A comparison of the results of the two surveys establishes a broad area of professional consensus among both populations, several areas of dispute, and two areas of ambiguity.

Areas of Consensus

The broad areas of consensus involve a number of issues related to the execution of the mission. Many of these issues were matters where professional judgement and experience played a

dominant role. There is overwhelming agreement that the withdrawal of the Multi-National Force from Bosnia and Herzegovina would lead to renewed armed conflict. (CMSS Survey 80% and FMSO Survey 87%). As the rest of our research confirmed, the military tasks associated with the Dayton Accords have been successfully executed. But a political settlement has not yet been institutionalized nor have the civil tasks in the same agreement been executed. They also agree that the success of multi-national peace operations depend upon the how carefully such operations are prepared. The Russian and American officer-participants emphasized the need for continued attention to operational planning (CMSS 82.2% and FMSO 81%), organizing supply and logistics (CMSS 80% and FMSO 77%), effective command and control (CMSS 75.5% and FMSO 74%) and maintaining coordination (CMSS 75.5% and FMSO 84%) in order to secure success in such multi-national peace operations. Both groups supported to a greater or lesser degree the need to improve coordination between commands and staffs and among the various national military contingents and with civilian agencies (CMSS 80% and FMSO 64%).

The consensus also extended to the importance of proper training of contingents and staffs for multi-national peace operations. Improved training to enhance cooperation was given a high priority by both survey groups (CMSS 71.1% and FMSO 84%). Both groups strongly supported the idea of training in civil affairs (CMSS 77.7% and FMSO 90%). While both groups endorsed the need for training in several other areas, the degree of support was significantly different. Thus in the area of training in the ways and traditions of the local populations a slight majority of Russian participants made it a priority (CMSS 66.6%), while American participants by an overwhelming majority stressed its importance (FMSO 97%). The same pattern of support held true for training in the rules of engagement (CMSS 64.4% and FMSO 100%) and in training for coordination with the peace forces of other nations and civilian agencies (CMSS 64.4% and FMSO 84%).

On several points there was a clear negative consensus. Both groups opposed the idea of having the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe assume responsibility for conducting multi-national peace operations. Only 4.4% of the Russian respondents and 10% of the CGSC respondents supported that idea. Both groups also agreed that the conduct of multi-national peace operations should not be entrusted to the military of a single nation (CMSS 100% and FMSO 71%). Both groups also agreed that multi-national staffing should not extend down to brigade-battalion. Only 2.2% of the Russian and 19% of the CGSC respondents supported this⁷ These shared professional judgments provide further evidence regarding the success of military teamwork in Bosnia. Cooperation has become the normal expectation. Mutual respect has gone a long way to overcoming very different military cultures⁸

Areas of Dispute

The single largest area of dispute in the survey results came in the area of strategic and operational command and control of multi-national peace forces. The sub-text of these disputes is the issue of NATO's role in post-Cold War European security and the nature of Russia's relationship to NATO. Russian forces took part in UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Russia, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, continues to see the UN as the most appropriate agency for conducting multi-national peace operations. American forces did not take part in UNPROFOR but were involved in UN-directed peace operation in Somalia. On this issue

a clear majority of those who took part in the Russian survey (CMSS 77.7%) favored a UN command and staff to run such operations. Only a small minority (FMSO 10%) of the Americans surveyed agreed with that proposition. On the other hand, an overwhelming number of Americans (FMSO 81%) endorsed the idea of a multi-national staff, i.e., NATO should conduct such multi-national peace operations, while only a small minority of the Russians surveyed (CMSS 20%) endorsed that concept. With regard to operational command and control of multi-national peace operations an overwhelming majority of those in the American survey (FMSO 90%) endorsed multi-national staff at the army and corps level, i.e., NATO's ARRC. Only a small minority of the Russians surveyed (CMSS 8.8%) support that concept. Since the Russian brigade was not under the ARRC's operational control and no Russian officers served on its staff, this divergence of opinion is not surprising. Given the opportunities provided under the Founding Act and the need of all participating militaries to reflect on the IFOR/SFOR experience, it would seem appropriate and beneficial to engage in a NATO-Russia dialogue on the issue of future command arrangements for multi-national peace operations.

Another area of dispute concerned the support of multi-national peace operations. International practice in peacekeeping operations during the Cold War, which usually involved observer missions, had been supported in part by the United Nations. Large-scale and protracted peace operations in the post-Cold War era have involved cases of both UN support and participant-country support, i.e., UNPROFOR and IFOR/SFOR. In the case of IFOR/SFOR each contingent has relied upon national supply and support. A significant majority of Russians surveyed (CMSS 95.5%) supported the idea that the international organization which formally mandated the operation -- in the case of IFOR in Bosnia, the United Nations -- should supply and support it. A minority of those in the American survey (FMSO 29%) endorsed such a course of action. The positions were exactly reversed on the issue of national support and supply. A solid majority of those participating in the American survey (FMSO 74%) endorsed national supply and support, while only a very small minority of Russian participants (CMSS 4.5%) agreed with that proposition.

There is some reason to believe that the serious financial crisis facing the Russian state and its Ministry of Defense may have influenced the Russian participants. At least some support for this proposition comes from the results to the question of improving the pay of those participating in multi-national peace operations. An overwhelming majority of Russian participants (CMSS 95.5%) agreed with this proposition, while less than a majority agreed with it among the participants in the American survey (FMSO 42%). This is, of course, more of an occupational than professional issue. It concerns the terms of service and morale rather than with professional values and conduct. But attitudes on this issue may be particularly relevant to the issue of whether peacekeepers see themselves as professional soldiers or as employees doing a job⁹

The final area of dispute concerned a clearly professional question at the very heart of multi-national peace operations. This involved the issue of providing training in languages of the local populations. On this issue an overwhelming majority of those involved in the American survey (FMSO 87%) endorsed the need for such training, while only a minority of the Russian participants (CMSS 22.2%) did. This difference, however, maybe culturally and linguistically conditioned. Russian as a Slavic language is close enough in structure and vocabulary to Serbian/Croatian to make rudimentary oral comprehension relatively easy. Since both Russian

and Serbian use variants of Cyrillic reading comprehension is also relatively easy. On the other hand only a handful of American military personnel have any familiarity with any Slavic language. Thus, some rudimentary training looms large in questions of interaction with the local populations. As we noted above, both groups endorsed the idea of training in the ways and cultures of the local populations.

Areas of Ambiguity

The areas of ambiguity involved issues where no strong majority on either side endorsed or opposed a particular proposition. There were only two such areas. One of them involved a distinctly professional question. On the issue of whether multi-national staffing should extend to the division-brigade level a minority of Russian participants (CMSS 35%) endorsed the idea, while a bare majority of the participants in the American survey (FMSO 55%) agreed. Given the possible scope and scale of future multi-national peace operations, this is a topic worthy of further study and discussion within NATO between NATO and Russia.

The second issue had a clearly political-military character and certainly involves national and international decisions. However, it also contains a military-technical dimension involving the professional judgment of soldiers as peacekeepers. This was the question of extending the mandate for multi-national peace operations beyond SFOR's 18 months. On this issue bare majorities of both the Russian and American participants (CMSS 51.1% and FMSO 64%) were agreed on the need to extend the mandate. Given their broad consensus on the prospect for renewed fighting should the multi-national peace force withdraw from Bosnia and Herzegovina, this ambiguity suggests that Russian and American military professionals were awaiting national political direction from their governments -- a positive sign regarding the health of civilian control of the military. At the same time it can also be taken as a clear professional concern that an open-ended military commitment without the resolution of the outstanding political issues of the Dayton Accords can not bring peace and stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The contributions of IFOR and SFOR to supporting civilian agencies in the execution of their missions have been and will remain critical to final success.

Conclusion

US-Russian military cooperation in IFOR/SFOR is a remarkable success story. Military professionals are in general agreement on the broad lessons to be learned from the tactical and operational experience gained in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These involve issues of deepening and broadening the military cooperation to make cooperation in future multi-national peace operations more effective. In this case practical military experience has had a positive effect on the politically charged issue of NATO - Russia relations and had no small role in the progress made under the Founding Act. At the same time strategic-operational issues have been at the center of areas of dispute. Thus, there is a compelling rationale for continued and deepened dialogue on these issues between NATO and Russia. The issue of protracted multi-national peace operations is being addressed. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina this issue involves military support of the civilian agencies charged with the political, social and economic issues of reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation of state and society. Deepening US-Russian military cooperation toward the development of an effective, combined peace enforcement

capability would be a logical and valuable step in forging a mutual security system for a peaceful and stable Europe.

ENDNOTES

1. The team was composed of General-Major Leonid Luzhkov (head of the Russian team), Colonel Yuri Morozov, and Colonel Yuri Dubov on the Russian side and Dr. Jacob W. Kipp, LTC (Ret.) Timothy Thomas, LTC (Ret.) Lester Grau, and Major Ray Finch III on the American side. Mr. Robert R. Love served as both translator and interpreter.
2. General George Joulwan, "SHAPE and IFOR - Putting Theory into Practice", NATO's Sixteen Nations, 41, No. 2 (1996), p. 22.
3. The proceedings of the first such conference held at Pushkin in September 1996 was published in: Vitaliy Naumkin, ed., U.S./NATO and Russian Cooperation, (Moscow: Tsentr Strategicheskikh i Mezhdunarodnykh Issledovaniy, 1997).
4. General-Colonel Leontiy Shevtsov, "IFOR's Russian Forces", NATO's Sixteen Nations, 41, No. 2 (1996), pp. 24-25.
5. General-Colonel Leontiy Shevtsov, Forward, in: "Lessons and Conclusions on the Execution of IFOR Operations and Prospects for a Future Combined Security System: The Peace and Stability of Europe after IFOR". Foreign Military Studies Office and the Center for Military Strategic Studies, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, forthcoming 1998), ii.
6. The Founding Act
7. The American staff of Multi-National Division (North) worked regularly with the NordPol Brigade where multi-national staffing extended not only to the brigade-battalion level but even to the company level in the case of the Baltic Company, composed of platoons for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
8. Tom Wilhelm, "With the Russian Brigade in Bosnia: Military Teamwork and the Success of IFOR", European Security, 6, No. 2. (Summer 1997), pp. 47-52.
9. On this issue and its impact on post-modern militaries see: Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood, eds., The Military More Than Just a Job? (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1998).