APPROACHES TO THE ROLE OF THE HOST NATION SUPPORT IN STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT

Marius Hrab
“Carol I” National Defense University, Bucharest, Romania
mariusss_hrab@yahoo.com

Gheorghe Minculete
“Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania
minculetegh@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The structural changes determined by the increasingly dynamic and volatile evolution of the security environment, the new elements in the command and force structure at national and allied level, have led to legislative amendments accordingly. This paper aims to analyze the host nation from the perspective of the forces deploying on its territory by determining how regulations have evolved in this area and highlighting the main capabilities whose development at the host nation level can support the deployment. We have chosen to analyze the documents governing the addressed areas at NATO and US level and to conduct a case study relevant to the subject.

KEYWORDS: host nation, deployment, expeditionary, Desert Shield, RSOM

1. Introduction

The current military context, whose main characteristics are circumscribing to global, dynamic and unpredictable threats (Presidential administration, 2020), generates the need to identify responses from the same category. At the national level, “the projection of military capabilities for participation in the extended national security” (Ministry of National Defense, 2021, p. 13) is one of the strategic level effects stated by the Romanian Military Strategy and the development of force projection capabilities in areas of strategic interest is one of the directions for development set out in the White Paper of Defense (Ministry of National Defense, 2020, p. 37). Deployment is part of the force projection process and the host nation (HN), if it exists and is defined, is inevitably a part of the forces’ path on their way to the final destination (Minculete, 2015, pp. 188-190).

In this paper, our intent is to analyze the host nation from the perspective of the forces deploying on its territory, to determine the role of HN in the deployment process and to identify the main capabilities that need to be developed at HN level to support deployment. Having these goals, we have chosen to analyze the relevant documents for the subject and conduct a case study in a limited version (the host nation support to Operation Desert Shield deployment process), to validate, concretize and motivate some theoretical aspects, especially to answer the question regarding the manner in which the host nation
supports the deployment process. We extracted qualitative but also quantitative data whose analysis can give us the opportunity to interpret and quantify objectively certain aspects of interest. We did not intend to review the documents in order to extract definitions, principles or responsibilities, excepting the ones we considered relevant for the purpose of this research; the intention is to identify the new elements stated in the specific legal provisions, to analyze the reasons that generated them and, especially to highlight the way the capabilities developed at HN level could be used in operations.

2. Conceptual Developments Related to Host Nation Support in Operations

The last few years have been marked, from our point of view, by numerous structural changes at NATO level, determined by the increasingly dynamic and volatile evolution of the security environment. New elements in NATO's command and force structure, such as the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC), whose full operational capability was achieved in September 2021 (Knappe, 2021), logistical elements such as the Standing Joint Logistic Support Group (SJLSG) or the eight NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) operationalized and dispersed on the flanks of the Alliance, in Sofia (Bulgaria), Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Vilnius (Lithuania), Bydgoszcz (Poland), Bucharest (Romania), Bratislava (Slovakia) and Székesfehérvár (Hungary) (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe 2022), have led to legislative changes accordingly.

Thus, in 2021, both the NATO doctrine for the deployment and redeployment of forces and the one related to host nation support (HNS) were updated, with implications in the process of deploying forces in expeditionary operations. Compared to the previous version, the Allied Joint Doctrine for Host-nation Support in 2021 (NATO Standardization Office, 2021b) contains some novelty elements, contributing, from our point of view, to a better understanding of the phenomena and a more detailed look at some key operational issues.

Thus, some important indications in the form of a guide of good practices in the field of HNS are pointed out, regarding the prices and commercial additions practiced by the host nation, the taxes that can be applied and the profits collected (NATO Standardization Office, 2021b, p. 3). It also exemplifies the differences between HNS and non-HNS-specific sources of support, and lists the main relevant NATO legal authorities for regulating and implementing host nation support related to operations and other missions (NATO Standardization Office, 2021b, p. 6). Moreover, this new version of the doctrine regulates better the attributions and responsibilities of various NATO entities in the field of HNS. While the old doctrine stated responsibilities only for NATO commanders, the host nation and the beneficiary nation, in the current version, detailed and clear responsibilities are added for different echelons of NATO, starting from NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), strategic level (ACO-Allied Command Operations, ACT-Allied Command Transformation) and operational level (JFC-Joint Force Command/JTF-Joint Task Force) commands, and continuing with the support and integration units established and operationalized in recent years: SJLSG HQ – Standing Joint Logistic Support Group Headquarters, JLSG HQ – Joint Logistics Support Group Headquarters, JSEC – Joint Support and Enabling Command, NFIU – NATO force integration units, as well as with multinational commands.

From our point of view, another important aspect brought by the new doctrine is the one related to the information management system in the field of the host nation support. The new
doctrine defines the main products need to be developed collectively by the Member States: the NATO capabilities catalogue, the situation with the locations of the main elements of operational interest (ports, airports, reception, staging and onward movement facilities, training areas, border crossing points or convoy support centers) as well as the main supply routes (NATO Standardization Office, 2021b, 31). All these elements, the awareness of their existence, the exact location and the capabilities they can offer, are essential in carrying out the deployment planning and execution related activities. The instructions regarding how to prepare the various documents specific to the host nation support (HNS TA – Host-Nation Support Technical Arrangement, COR – Concepts of Requirements), inserted in the doctrine (NATO Standardization Office, 2021b, Annex D, Annex F) are equally important.

Generally, the current elements of the new doctrine on host nation support are regulated in line with structural and operational developments at all levels. An updated approach was needed, in line with both the newly emerging structural elements in the configuration of NATO’s command and force structure, and the normative acts governing HNS-related areas, already updated during the 2018-2021 period (AJP-4, Allied Joint Doctrine for Logistics, AJP-4.6, Allied Joint Doctrine for the Joint Logistic Support Group, reviewed in 2018; AJP-3, Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations, AJP-5, Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations, reviewed in 2019, or AJP-3.13, Allied Joint Doctrine for the Deployment and Redeployment of Forces, reviewed in 2021a).

What has remained relatively unchanged since 2013 is, however, the definition of host nation support, described as “civil and military assistance rendered in peace, crisis or war by a HN to NATO and/or other forces and NATO organizations that are located on, operating on/from or in transit through the HN’s territory” (NATO Standardization Office, 2021b, p. 1).

3. The Role of the Host Nation in the Deployment Process

In 2021, NATO’s approach to deployment was revised by updating STANAG 2532, issuing a new edition, and renaming the doctrine of deployment and redeployment – AJP-3.13 – Allied Joint Doctrine for the Deployment and Redeployment of Forces. The need to act in this way has its origins in the same structural and conceptual reasons that led to the amendment of AJP-4.3. According to current doctrinal provisions, the process of dislocation is described as “the relocation of forces from a national location to an assigned area of operations” (NATO Standardization Office, 2021a, Lexicon-3), consisting of activities related to the strategic movement, within and outside the national territory, as well as those carried out for the reception, staging, onward movement and integration of forces in the established area. Therefore, the deployment process involves the movement on the territory of several states, in order to transit them or to carry out the actual operation.

The US military, through the deployment doctrine updated in 2018 – JP 3-35, Deployment and Redeployment Operations, defines the process as representing “activities required to plan, prepare, and move forces and materiel from home station to a destination to employ an operational capability required to execute a mission” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, I-7). According to the US approach, the process of deployment and redeployment consists of four stages: planning; predeployment/pre-redeployment activities; movement; and joint reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (JRSOI) (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, I-5).
Corroborating the definitions established by the doctrines governing the support of the host nation and the deployment of forces (AJP-4.3, AJP-3.13, JP 3-35), we conclude that, on the path of deployment in expeditionary operations, there are several categories of states which can have the status of host nation. Depending on the location of the final destination, the Allied forces could be supported during deployment by states providing them different types of travel services (refueling of transportation means, field services for crews and passengers, specific services in ports and airports), storage services for various prepositioned stocks, as well as products or services needed to support the RSOM process (refueling equipment, field services specific to staging and troop marshalling activities, material storage and parking equipment, stock and oversized equipment transportation services, convoy support services during the onward movement, etc.).

In addition to other important activities such as deployable force and the support elements training, the communication routes and the infrastructure preparation, the deployment involves planning the host nation support (NATO Standardization Office, 2021a, pp. 4-1). Establishing agreements with transit states or those whose territories overlap with the theater of operations can help cover different capabilities deficits (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, III-4) and reduce the amount of materials to be deployed in support of the operation. The elements that may be the subject of host nation support agreements are those relating to the necessary staging and field services, customs and border activities, construction, employment, transit or overflight authorizations, services at points of disembarkation, provision of transportation means or services, provision of security or elements of infrastructure (NATO Standardization Office, 2021a, pp. 3-8 – 3.9; Headquarters Department of the Army, 2018, 4-4).

Having clarified the basic theoretical elements related to the host nation support, the deployment of forces and the link between the two components of expeditionary operations, in order to achieve the goal stated at the beginning of our paper and concretize the doctrinal elements, we chose to focus on military actions carried out by modern armies, relevant to the present approach. The intention is to identify the main capabilities allocated by the host nations in support of the deployment process and to determine how they have acted and influenced the actions of the deployed forces.


Operation Desert Shield is the name given by the US Army to military actions started in August 1990 against Iraq led by Saddam Hussein, following its annexation of the neighboring state – Kuwait and threatening the security of the entire Arabian Peninsula. The purpose of the operation was to protect Saudi Arabia and its oil reserves from a possible advance of the Iraqi army, considered at that time the world’s fourth largest military force, in Saudi territory (Final Report to Congress 1992, p. 19).

The operation aroused our interest and we consider it relevant for our research, given that, being initiated without an early warning and without leaving too much time for preparation, it revealed all the shortcomings and issues which the US military had to cope with. At the same time, Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were conducted against a similar adversary, with an army that at that time was among the first in the world in terms of numbers and equipment, fighting near its own territory from which it could extract the resources needed to sustain the conflict. On the other hand, the case is one that is worth studying given that, at the beginning
of the conflict, the Iraqi army had the initiative; in these conditions, the way in which the deployment was planned and prepared is, from our point of view, adapted to critical operational conditions.

The challenges raised at the expected level, the US military being in the situation to cover distances between 7,000 and 10,000 miles by air and between 9,000 and 11,000 miles by sea (crossing the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal) from the east coast of the North American continent to the theater of operations (Matthews & Holt, 1992, p. 18). The need for support was a permanent requirement along the strategic route to the Persian Gulf area and during the RSOM process, in the theater of operations. The use of political, diplomatic and military tools to negotiate the provision of support capabilities at the right time and place was an important element during the operation.

Thus, three days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, on August 5, 1990, the President of the United States sent to Saudi Arabia a delegation led by the Secretary of Defense for consultations with the King of Saudi Arabia (Final Report to Congress, 1992, p. 58). Even before Operation Desert Shield was officially launched, the politico-military negotiations facilitated the establishment of the first details regarding the host nation support on Saudi territory. Immediately after this meeting, US Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, conducted another trip with about the same goal, this time to Egypt, to discuss details related to the deployment support with President Mubarak (Final Report to Congress, 1992, p. 63). On this occasion, in addition to obtaining permits to fly through the Egyptian airspace, access and transit through the Suez Canal were negotiated, an important maritime crossing point linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. The denial of the Egyptian authorities to transit the Suez Canal would have cost US forces an additional 12,500 miles to travel around the entire African continent to the theater of operations (Matthews & Holt, 1992, p. 18) and, consequently, the significant loss of time, the late arrival of shipped equipment and the overloading of the aerial transportation means and air routes.

Remaining in the area of the strategic movement phase, it is important to emphasize the host nation support offered for the deployment process by European and African states. American ships and aircraft in transit needed the necessary infrastructure for stops, fuel for refueling, port and airport specific services, including for crews. To this end, important deployment support bases have been made available in countries such as Spain, Germany, France, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Egypt. At the same time, Turkey has authorized the staging of US and coalition forces on its territory and Eastern Europe countries have granted overflight rights for aircraft supporting the deployment in the Gulf area. An example of promptness was the Spanish port of Rota, which announced its availability to support the deployment of US forces within a few hours after the request. In support of airlift operations in Operation Desert Shield, many European countries had been granted host nation status, as they approved the overflight of airspace in support of the deployment. The right to land on 90 airports on the European continent was also obtained (Final Report to Congress, 1992, p. 590). The airports of Rhein-Main and Ramstein in Germany, Torrejon in Spain, Sigonella in Italy and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean are significant for Desert Shield deployment. Torrejon and Rhein-Main airports provided support for 84% of all US air missions to the theater of operations (Final Report to Congress, 1992, p. 440).

In the area of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, the host nations support have been prepared in advance.
Thus, since 1977, the United States has been part of an agreement with Bahrain in order to provide docking and shore-specific services for the US fleet in the Middle East, which has been stationed in the area since 1949. At the same time, since 1979, the US Department of Defense has negotiated with South African states such as Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya, as well as with Oman to increase their port capabilities available for US forces. Two years later, in 1981, the US also allocated government funding for the development of facilities in these ports (Final Report to Congress, 1992, pp. 428-431).

Saudi Arabia – the main state in whose territory the operation and RSOM specific activities were carried out as part of the deployment process, was also the main source of support granted by the host nation. The reception of US forces on Saudi territory took place in the ports and airports provided in support of the deployment. The operational situation necessitated the adoption of a strategy for the defense of the peninsula, which began with the security of the main disembarkation points, namely the ports and airports belonging to the two coastal cities – Al Jubayl and Ad Damman. Figure 1 presents the quantities of materials delivered to the theater of operations through Saudi ports and airports. The quantities highlighted for phase I of the operation are the most relevant for the deployment process, these being mostly unit equipment and materials and less materials for their resupply.

![Cargo delivered to area of operation by seaport](image1)

![Cargo delivered to area of operation by airport](image2)

Figure no. 1: Quantities delivered to Saudi Arabian ports and airports
(Source: USCENTCOM briefing to CJCS, March 1991, Matthews & Holt, 1992, p. 20)
During the operation, in the ports and airports of the two main cities that ensured the reception of forces, over 96% of the equipment were deployed on the maritime communication routes and over 58% of those arriving in the TO by air were delivered. At that time, Saudi ports had one of the most advanced infrastructure and technological elements for receiving goods. Thus, the port of Ad Damman had 60 piers for the handling of containerized or non-containerized goods, and the port of Al Jubayl – 20 piers. However, both ports and airports have raised serious issues regarding the available storage spaces available for deployed forces. Through the efforts of the host nation, they were gradually included in the operational circuit of the RSOM process, after having them emptied of the commercial items. At the same time, some inactive spaces and ramps were operationalized in order to meet the requirements of the deployed forces.

As for the phase of onward movement of forces from the disembarkation points to the mission areas, things evolved with many difficulties. The communication routes made available by the host nation to the US forces and which were useful for the operation were poorly developed, in contrast to the port and airport infrastructure. Apart from the road infrastructure in the coastal area and the one that connected the big cities, the Saudi roads hardly met the needs of the deployed forces. Moreover, the railway infrastructure necessary for the movement of armored and heavy vehicles was almost non-existent, with important implications for the requirement to provide alternative options for transport of heavy equipment using road communications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Number of HETs provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US deploying</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Trucking Industry</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNS - commercial</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy - Military</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,310</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure no. 2: Sources for heavy equipment transporters (HETs) contribution to Operation Desert Shield/Storm
(Source: Final Report to Congress, 1992, p. 496)

All of these challenges to the deployment process have been partially addressed, including the consistent input of Saudi Arabia. The main operational difficulty at this stage was the provision of platforms for the transport of heavy equipment. The planners’ calculations resulted in the need for more than 1,200 heavy equipment transporters (HETs). The table in Figure no. 2 highlights the support provided by each source identified by planners during the operation, and especially in the RSOM process. In addition to the 333 HETs made available to US
forces, the host nation also delivered other types of transportation equipment, such as trucks, water and fuel tankers, various types of platforms, refrigerators, trailers. What is noteworthy in analyzing these aspects is that, without the more than 4,000 means of transportation provided by various entities, to fully meet transportation needs, US forces would have had to deploy in the theater of operations no less than 67 transport companies (Final Report to Congress 1992, p. 496).

5. Conclusions
The process of deployment in expeditionary operations consists of stages, activities and actors whose synergy is desirable for operational progress. The host nation support is not necessarily an element of the operation that falls exclusively within the area of responsibility of a third party. The planning of the HNS to obtain useful effects for the conduct of operations is the responsibility of the deployable force. The collaborative relationship with the host nation may be established once the operational planning process has been initiated or as early as possible, in support of a contingency plan. At the same time, the timely development of the capabilities that contribute to the deployment process requires early involvement of both the host nation and the deployed forces. Given these elements, in order to reach the most important conclusions of this scientific approach, we may affirm that:

(1) in expeditionary operations, the role of host nation is played by a variable number of states, depending on the distance and complexity of the strategic deployment route; it is important to be aware of this aspect, beginning with the earliest stages of the operation planning process, in order to identify them and establish contacts for the development of cooperation;

(2) the existence of pre-established arrangements can have useful effects on the speed and effectiveness of deployment; data on which states can support the deployment process and the detailed conditions are useful for advocating decisions regarding the path and points of support of the strategic movement and the RSOM process;

(3) transit and disembarkation points infrastructure are not always ready to facilitate a consistent military presence; even though Saudi ports and airports had advanced facilities for servicing commercial activities, the deployment of a large military force requires considerable effort and additional measures; at the same time, the complete abandonment of commercial activities to make way for the military ones is neither possible nor desirable;

(4) services required at ports and airports of disembarkation for the strategic means of transport are subject of the same rules as infrastructure; at the same time, temporary storage services for equipment and materials as well as the support for deployed staff need early assessment and consequently augmentation;

(5) both the strategic movement stage and the RSOM process are conditioned by the ability of the deployed forces to cooperate with the host nation in order to identify and efficiently use the available resources;

(6) the onward movement from the disembarkation points to the final locations assigned for the mission, requires massive efforts to transport personnel, combat materials and stocks, and, in particular, to transport armored equipment; railway or inland waterway infrastructure is best suited to facilitate this activity; in the absence of such facilities, the host nation support is essential to provide the specialized means of transport necessary for movement on existing paved or improvised roads.

The need for support in the context of expeditionary operations is constant and the host nation is one of the key elements in the deployment process. The existence and contribution of the capabilities generated at
the level of the host nation are very important; so is the process of planning this type of support, which is also difficult to conduct without consistent information and previous stable and effective high-level collaboration. That is why the development of contingency plans related to the most probable evolutions of the military context can be a solution for the early provision of the most useful planning details. Moreover, the existence of diplomatic relations with states expected to have the role of host nation, to streamline the transmission of information and facilitate the rapid development of useful agreements, contributes to supporting the specific deployment process planning and execution activities.

REFERENCES


