



1<sup>st</sup> Combat Camera Squadron (Cherie A. Thurby)

*If language is not correct, then what is said is not meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what must be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and art will deteriorate; if justice goes astray, the people will stand about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.*

—Confucius

# Defining Integrated Operations

By RICHARD D. DOWNIE

**C**onfucius emphasizes that the lack of clear language causes confusion and possibly disastrous consequences. As military, interagency, and multinational operations become more

complex and integrated, we need to say what we mean. In this vein, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Richard Myers, USAF, has taken an important step to clarify some terms, although this article argues that more

steps are necessary. General Myers has noted that we operate on nonmilitary and cross-border fronts, involving law enforcement, diplomacy, and finance, and we need to “transform our military competencies from joint operations to *integrated operations* [emphasis added].”<sup>1</sup> He also mentions the requirement for standardization across the joint force to maximize effectiveness. One of the first—and easiest—things we can standardize is the terminology we use to define important, though perhaps amorphous, operational concepts. In the past, we have loosely defined what are considered *interagency operations*. But what are *integrated operations*—and for that matter, what are interagency operations? Distinctions matter as we more frequently conduct operations that include counterparts

---

**Colonel Richard D. Downie, USA (Ret.), is Director of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies. He served as the first commandant of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation and is the author of *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War*.**

from U.S. Government and nongovernment agencies, private industry, and, perhaps more importantly, partners from allied countries and international organizations.

Toward the Chairman's goal of standardization, this commentary offers a taxonomy of terms to describe various types of interagency and integrated operations. The intent is to generate discussion on how to standardize the way we define and address such

### one of the first things we can standardize is the terminology we use to define operational concepts

operations. The faculty of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies at the National Defense University developed the terms. We based our approach on differentiation and categorization of the entities participating rather than on the functional objective of an operation (such as peacekeeping, disaster relief, or counterterrorism).

#### Taxonomy of Terms

*Joint operations, combined operations.* The explanations of the taxonomy start with basic terms on which most agree, then proceed to more contentious ones. Most members of the defense and security community routinely recognize and use the terms *joint* and *combined*. The Department of Defense (DOD), in its *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines *joint operations* as military actions conducted by joint forces or by service forces working together. The definition implies actions by the military forces of a single country. For instance, Operation *Just Cause* in Panama in 1989 was a joint operation that involved the elements of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines in a coordinated effort. The DOD dictionary refers to *combined operations* as those conducted

by military forces of two or more allied nations acting together for the accomplishment of a single mission. Operation *Desert Storm* in 1991, designed to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait, was considered a combined operation, as it involved a coalition of forces from the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and other regions.

*Interagency operations.* The lack of precision starts with the use of the term *interagency operations*, which I contend serves as an umbrella over various types of operations that should be defined separately. The term *interagency operations* evokes operations involving a variety of agencies; without further explanation, one might assume he understands the type of participants or agencies involved. Indeed, two individuals could conduct a discussion with very different impressions. What the specific operation includes or does not include is unclear. The receiver must ask additional questions. The divergence between what each speaker is saying may not be pronounced if they are from the same service or even represent two services working on the same staff. However, when a military official talks with his counterpart from the Departments of

State or Justice, there is great potential for misperception. That potential increases dramatically when one speaks with an international counterpart.

*Federal interagency operations.* A military colleague recently responded to my assertion that *interagency operations* is a vague term by declaring that joint staff officers have a common understanding of the expression and routinely use it. Without missing a beat, he defined interagency operations as those involving two or more U.S. Federal agencies—a worthy response. Clearly, an interagency operation can involve only Federal agencies. Take the example of a counterdrug operation to interdict a suspected narcotrafficker boat moving through Caribbean waters toward the U.S. coastline. An Air Force airborne warning and control system or Navy P-3 aircraft may identify a suspicious boat and pass the information to the Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) Operations Center. U.S. Customs, the Department of Justice, and other Federal agencies manning the operations center may direct a Coast Guard or Navy vessel to intercept the boat. If drugs are found, Coast Guard or Federal law enforcement officers seize them and apprehend the traffickers.



1<sup>st</sup> Combat Camera Squadron (Aron Allmon II)

**Commander of Combined Support Force 526, working with international militaries and nongovernmental organizations, briefing Special Coordinator for the Secretary General for Tsunami Relief, United Nations, January 20, 2005**

Salvadoran soldiers marking their participation in the Multi-National Division Center-South at Al Hillah, Iraq, Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.



55th Signal Company (Jose M. Hernandez)

Such interagency operations are conducted frequently at JIATF-S, a true interagency task force located in Key West, Florida, and commanded by a Coast Guard admiral—as well as many

### there are 16 joint terrorism task forces across the United States that link efforts and intelligence

other places every day. Within my colleague's definition, interagency operations can either include the military or not. For clarification, the taxonomy in the table refers to such operations,

involving only U.S. Government agencies, as *Federal interagency operations*.

*Domestic interagency operations.* However, others call operations that include state and local authorities as well as Federal entities interagency operations. For example, there are 16 joint terrorism task forces across the United States that link the efforts and intelligence available to the military and to Federal, state, and local law enforcement departments.<sup>2</sup> The intent is to permit these task forces to prevent, or respond more effectively to, terrorist

threats and activities. So how does one distinguish between those operations that involve only Federal agencies and those involving state and local authorities as well? Our taxonomy describes operations including entities at the Federal, state, and local levels as *domestic interagency operations*.<sup>3</sup>

*Integrated operations.* Recognizing the need to bring greater precision to how we describe various operations, General Myers coined the term *integrated operations*. After introducing the term *enhanced jointness*, he later defined integrated operations to highlight the participation of entities other than military forces:

*The term joint once referred to multiple services working together. That is the baseline. Many services, Federal agencies, allies and their governmental agencies, corporations, and nongovernmental organizations must cooperate to meet the full spectrum of military operations, from peacekeeping to battle to the transition to a lasting peace.*<sup>4</sup>

This distinction is useful. Nevertheless, the question becomes when and how interagency operations evolve into integrated operations. That is, where do integrated operations begin and interagency operations stop? An obvious divide is between operations involving one country and those involving more than one.

*National integrated operations.* While General Myers' strict definition of integrated operations focuses on multinational operations, we also need to distinguish and describe operations that involve many disparate participants within the confines of one country. The relief effort following Hurricane Andrew in Florida in 1992 involved Federal, state, and local emergency management and law enforcement entities, the military, the Coast Guard, and nongovernmental organizations such as the Red Cross, not to mention private businesses and churches across the country. To distinguish between integrated operations

within one nation and those involving multiple countries, our taxonomy sets *national integrated operations* apart from *multinational integrated operations*.

*Combined integrated operations.* Some in the defense and security community use *joint, interagency, multinational* to describe a type of operation that also fits in the *integrated operation* category. This variant involves multiple military services and government-level

### governmental agencies work with their Iraqi counterparts at the national, regional, and municipal levels

entities from more than one sovereign country—but no nongovernmental entities. An example would be Military Observer Mission, Ecuador–Peru. This multinational peacekeeping effort helped resolve a border conflict that erupted between Ecuador and Peru in 1995. Representatives of military forces and of foreign affairs and defense ministries from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States monitored and coordinated this groundbreaking accomplishment. While our taxonomy

could have used the phrase *joint, interagency, multinational* for the sake of consistency—to identify clearly this variant as an integrated operation—we selected the term *combined integrated operation*.

*Multinational integrated operations.* General Myers' definition of integrated operations actually refers to a multinational operation. A prime example is the international relief effort responding to the tsunami in Southeast Asia in

late 2004. This initiative included military forces and governmental agencies from many nations; nongovernmental agencies

such as the International Red Cross, OXFAM, and CARE; international governmental organizations (IGOs), including the United Nations; and private industry partners who donated aid and relief supplies. The postwar reconstruction in Iraq, also called a *stability and support operation*, falls into this category. In addition to the militaries of many coalition countries accomplishing a variety of tasks, governmental agencies such as the U.S. Departments of State, Justice, and Defense work with their Iraqi counterparts at the national, regional, and municipal levels. IGOs such as the United Nations are involved in election assistance, while many multinational companies take on tasks ranging from fixing oil field machinery to constructing and repairing buildings, roads, power grids, and other infrastructure projects. In short, our taxonomy labels what General Myers calls an *integrated operation* as a *multinational integrated operation*.

Returning to the opening quotation, Confucius exhorts us to avoid arbitrary statements. In that spirit, and with General Myers' effort to achieve standardization in mind, this commentary seeks to provoke debate on how to describe more accurately and efficiently today's

nontraditional operations. While we have tried to capture the variety of interagency and integrated operations based on the participants involved, there are other ways to approach such a categorization. Moreover, there will be disagreement on terms. Some may question whether a separate category is warranted if one or more participants listed in a type of operation is missing.<sup>5</sup> Such issues and the discussions they generate will help bring greater precision to how the defense and security community understands and discusses interagency and integrated operations. As the Chairman's term *integrated operations* reflects the growing participation of disparate national and international entities, achieving clarity is increasingly important to building greater understanding, unity, and interoperability with interagency, nongovernmental, and foreign counterparts. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Richard B. Myers, "A Word from the Chairman," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 37 (April 2005), 5.

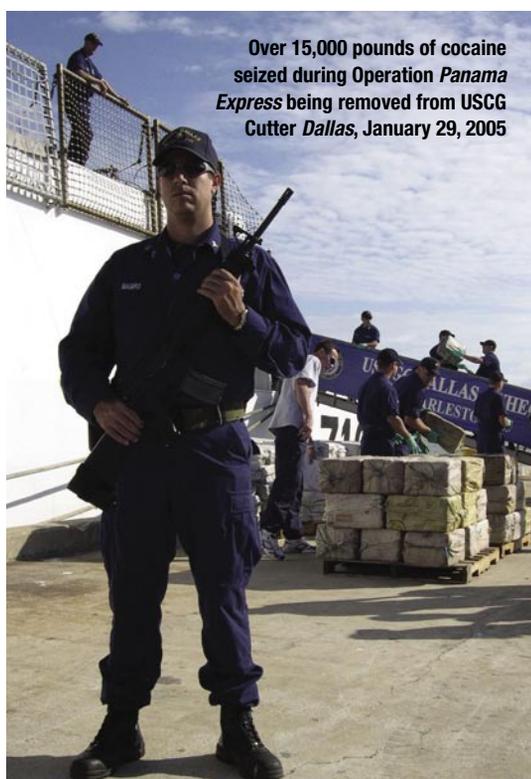
<sup>2</sup> Note that the use of *joint* in this example of joint terrorism task forces is not consistent with the military usage, which again highlights the requirement for standardization across all participants.

<sup>3</sup> Although the Intergovernmental Personnel Act uses *intergovernmental operations* to describe activities involving governments at the Federal, state, and local levels, this phrase fails to distinguish varieties of domestic municipal, state, regional, and provincial governments from sovereign national governments.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Myers, "A Word from the Chairman," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 36 (January 2005), 10.

<sup>5</sup> In other words, does the fact that a nongovernmental or an international governmental organization does not participate mean that the activity is not a multinational integrated operation?

The Center for Hemispheric Studies is located at the National Defense University and is one of five DOD regional centers.



U.S. Coast Guard (Tony Russell)