ASPECTS REGARDING THE ROLE OF AIR FORCE IN COMBATING GLOBAL TERRORISM

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Abstract: Global terrorism poses a growing threat to the international community. The political, economic, and informational instruments of power play primary roles in addressing and eliminating the root causes behind asymmetric extreme risk events, but the military instrument will prevent some attacks and retaliate for others.

Air force (AF) is one of the primary components of the military instrument in the battle against terrorism and contributes to current counterterrorist (CT) capabilities by providing global mobility for special operations forces, air superiority to protect those forces, and precision strike capability to target terrorist infrastructures. It also provides intelligence critical to deterring, preempting, and answering terrorist attacks, and provides psychological operations support to help erode terrorist will and popular support.

The traditional role of AF in combating terrorism in different steps of application is presented. The analysis of possible future improvements in AF is essential to enhance the CT capability effectiveness.

Keywords: Global terrorism, Air Force (AF), counterterrorist (CT) capabilities.

1 TERRORISM - A NEW CHALLENGE

Although terrorism has occurred long before the air force, the terrorist phenomenon is growing, promoting the fundamental problems of timeliness list. This new terrorism, the result of historical evolution, closely related to the evolution of society as a whole, is itself a process with global implications difficult to prevent and manage. Failure to ensure a response to terrorist actions will likely be interpreted as a sign of weakness and may lead to new and more spectacular terrorist attacks.

Unfortunately, terrorists are advantaged in this fight, especially when their targets are in a free and democratic society. Using the appropriate documents for international travel, terrorists can move freely in open societies and can choose the time, place and target their attacks. They claim that they are at war, but does not respect the laws of armed conflict and have no care to non-combatants.

Similarly, the same conclusions can be drawn in the case of countries that sponsor or coordinate the terrorism. These countries use the terrorism as a "strategic weapon likely to replace the conventional war."

We witness the transformations of conceptual and action, diversification and sophistication of methods of action of terrorists, including the use of the newest weapons and technology. Addressing the issues raised by contemporary terrorist phenomenon involving multiple approaches, including the military which still holds an important role.

From this perspective, linking the AF, particularly the aviation with the phenomenon has two aspects. On the one hand, the terrorism uses the aviation in its own interest as a way of asymmetrical preparation and on the other hand, air forces are engaged / involved in preventing and combating terrorism.

Dealing with the terrorism has become a priority on the agenda of state and collective security. Actions in this context bear the characteristics of a conflict atypical, unconventional. Countering the terrorist phenomenon proves difficult and complex, take place at all levels - local, regional and global - involving actions and operational-tactical level but a strategic temporal and spatial extent, the aviation contributes greatly to this feature of the battle.

Given the AF major features- action in the air environment, relative independence from the infrastructure ready on the earth surface, ubiquity - they will continue to play an important role in any counterterrorist operation (CT). The contribution of this category of forces has become particularly important, sometimes critical to the success of CT operations, and it is expressed in two ways: the supporting role such as collecting information or mobility, and the operational role those facilities such as terrorist strike.

Below we address some specific aspects of the air force participation in the fight against international terrorism. Starting from the analysis of such events, we present some aspects regarding the AF missions and the mode of actions.

2 AF’S MISSIONS IN COMBATING TERRORISM

They can be grouped into six categories: Air Transport, Air Superiority, Air Attack, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), and Psychological Operations.

Air Transport

For CT forces to be effective, it is vital for them to respond to terrorist incidents, and the AF to ensure the transport capacity needed for successful
CT operations. This includes the strategic AF to ensure global mobility by moving the CT personnel, equipment, and weapons everywhere in the world. Also, insertion and extraction of special operations forces (SOF) is provided by aircraft or helicopters.

**Air Superiority**

Although terrorist groups do not have their own AF, air superiority has occasionally been a factor in counterterrorism actions. Probably the most notable was the intercept of an Egyptian civil airliner by US Navy F-14/Tomcat fighters on 11 October 1985. The aircraft was carrying four Palestinian terrorists (plus their leader, Abu Abbas) who had hijacked the cruise ship Achille Lauro on 7 October and subsequently killed Leon Klinghoffer, a 69-year-old. The terrorists had surrendered to Palestinian Liberation Organization officials in Port Said, Egypt, and been granted safe passage to Tunisia by the Egyptian Government. The airliner was destined for Tunisia, but was intercepted by four F-14s from the aircraft carrier Saratoga and forced to divert to Sigonella, Sicily, where the terrorists were to be taken into American custody.

Some analysts equate the US Navy shootdown of two Libyan fighters over the Gulf of Sidra on 19 August 1981 as a CT response. Although the action was not a direct response to a specific terrorist incident, continued sponsorship of terrorist activities by Muammar Qaddafi and the Libyan government has certainly been a motivation for making this decision.

Air superiority may also be used to protect CT forces engaged in a mission by providing them air defense from a state-sponsor’s air forces. Air superiority coverage may be overhead or on-call, reacting only if something goes wrong with the operation or to cover extraction of forces.

**Air Attack**

Probably the most visible CT airpower role is air attacks against terrorism-associated facilities. These attacks can be conducted by fixed-or rotary-wing aircraft or by cruise missiles. An example of the former is Operation Eldorado Canyon, the 14 April 1986 air strikes against Libya in response for the 5th April bombing of the La Belle discotheque in West Berlin in which an American serviceman and a Turkish woman were killed and over 150 people were wounded. An example of the latter is the Tomahawk cruise missile strike against the Iraqi Intelligence Service headquarters in June 1993 in response to the uncovered plot to assassinate former President Bush.

CT strikes can be preemptive or reactive in nature, and involve important considerations. While abstaining from argument about the legality of preemptive strike, other considerations include the need for meticulous targeting to avoid collateral damage and furnishing sufficient evidence to justify the strike to the international community. Strikes in reaction to a terrorist attack can be conducted to punish the perpetrators or sponsors and to send a message that such action will not go unpunished. However, retaliatory strikes must not be conducted purely for revenge, but should be motivated by clearly defined goals and objectives.

**Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance**

Probably the most important contribution of AF to CT is providing intelligence for planning and execution of operations and monitoring of terrorist associated facilities. CT planning and operations require timely, responsive, and accurate intelligence to succeed, and much of this intelligence gathering can be performed by manned or unmanned aerial vehicles, or overhead national assets (satellites). Although human intelligence (HUMINT) is the most important intelligence discipline for providing information on terrorist organization and intent, imagery intelligence (IMINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT) from air and space platforms also provide valuable information for analysis, planning, and execution. Further, space communication platforms also provide the means for rapidly and securely disseminating this information.

**Psychological Operations**

Psychological operations (PSYOP) can be used to deter or disrupt planned terrorist actions, and to erode their base of support within the local or general population. AF can play an effective role in these areas by deterring state-sponsors of terrorism through physical presence or shows of force. If there is concern a state may sponsor or direct terrorist attacks against a high level meeting of political leaders or a highly visible international event such as the Olympic Games (as North Korea implied with veiled threats against the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul) AF can be overtly deployed within striking distance of the sponsoring state as a visible reminder of the consequences for a hostile act.

Manned or unmanned aerial vehicles can also deliver PSYOP leaflets or conduct PSYOP radio or television broadcasts. These can be directed at the terrorists themselves as a warning of the consequences for their intended actions or the local or general population to erode the support base for terrorists and their cause. PSYOP can be used to counter terrorist propaganda, explain a recent CT terrorist strike or operation in the area, and explain care taken to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage in such a strike. Aircraft overflights can also be used as a form of PSYOP. For example, the mere overflight of Manila by USAF F-4/Phantom fighters was instrumental in thwarting a coup attempt against
the Corazon Aquino government in the Philippines in December 1989. Of course the possible benefits of PSYOP in a re-hostilities phase must be weighed against the tradeoff of compromising knowledge of terrorist locations or plans.

AF also provides other support to CT operations. Aircraft can provide logistics support through resupply and provision of CT ground forces in the field. Fighter aircraft and bombers can provide overhead or on-call fire support to CT hostage rescue attempts or equipment recovery missions. They can also conduct diversionary operations to focus attention away from the area CT forces are conducting or planning to conduct a mission.

To aid planners, a matrix is provided below to graphically illustrate when traditional air forces roles are normally employed in CT situations. The timeline extends from the entire pre- to post-terrorist attack period.

3 AF TARGETING A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

The effective way to employ AF against any targeted complex system is associated to a better understanding of architecture of the system and the identification of its centers of gravity.

We believe that in this case can be used as a model for analysis of systems, the known "model of the five circles". Summary of the model results from the assessment that each system (state, military or criminal organization, business, or even a human being), and hence the terrorist structure, it is organized around the same way: "… There is a leader or leadership entity controlling the organization. There are certain system essentials required by the organization to function or exist, and these essentials are moved through a supporting infrastructure. The organization has a population enabling it to function, and it has fielded forces to defend it from attack." This hierarchical relationship can be plotted in a chart consisting of five concentric circles.

The five components- leadership, essential elements, infrastructure, population, fielded forces - are ranked and placed concentrically from the center to the periphery, with their constituent features and functional-actionable. In addition to the interdependence of entities represented by each circle diagram illustrates their relative importance to the central element - leadership.

The preliminary analysis of terrorist structures is based on the five circles model (Tab 1). All terrorist organizations have a governing entity, individual or group, but the way the concrete execution of leadership is diverse: from individual arrived spontaneously, often ad hoc, leading the group, the leaders confirmed over time, coming from the religious political or military, sometimes with important public positions, heterogeneous groups of empirical work, the fairs organized command structure. Of particular importance is the leadership within a state that sponsors international terrorism or coordinates.

As essential elements can be identified C2 systems to transmit the decisions and directives of their leaders, networks/systems financing and logistical and material, including weapons, non-lethal means, identification and travel documents, and information for planning and executing attacks. Special emphasis is placed on advertising and media involvement because without public attention the terror is insignificant ignored.

Infrastructure is needed to transport terrorists, weapons and ammunition, equipment and other means of terrorism, and in some cases even for the hostages. They use various ways, including public transport system, but in some cases preferred means of transport that provide security and concealing their actions.

Training camps are required for indoctrination and training of members in the use of specific procedures and tactics of terrorism and use of weapons and ammunition supplied. In addition, the shelters are needed to plan and prepare attacks, or simply to protect terrorists.

The circle designated for population contains the elements of support, domestic or foreign, which allow operation of a terrorist organization. Internally, the organization has instructors, weapons manufacturers, engineers, financiers, etc.

Externally, there are family members who do not participate actively in the group activities, but can provide basic needs (food and shelter) for the survival of terrorists. For groups motivated by religious ideals, their adherents, even if not active participants in terrorist activities can provide financial support, moral and ideological. Also, there is an element in the population to which we refer to as "anti-people". This item is not actively involved in supporting terrorist group, but also supports the objectives and goals, and tolerates the presence of terrorist and their action’s methods.

The outer circle is the forces available to the terrorist organization formed in cells or units. From the perspective of combating terrorism, we think, given the number and dispersal, they are the least effective element and the most difficult employee. Except for the temporary prevention of terrorist operations, striking terror forces and media is often the most unproductive option if not provided by the capture or annihilation of an entire organization.
Tab. 1 International terrorist organization structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADERSHIP</th>
<th>SYSTEM ESSENTIALS</th>
<th>INFRASTRUCTURE</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>FIELDED FORCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrorist leaders</td>
<td>Commands and control</td>
<td>Transportation network</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Terrorist cells/units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overt political arm</td>
<td>Weapons development/procurement</td>
<td>Training camps</td>
<td>- Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overt military/paramilitary arm</td>
<td>Financial network</td>
<td>Safe areas/safe havens</td>
<td>- Co-religionists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td>Supply network</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Anti-population&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media leaders</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Sponsor</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engineers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Financiers</td>
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The model of five circles helps to understanding the functioning of terrorist organizations and, in this way, the identification and prioritization of objectives/targets to which they will operate. This is representing an important element in planning military CT operations.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Volatile nature of the complex and deeply subjective motivational factors, and action features grouped under the abstract concept of "terrorism" has led many to conclude that this concept can not give a satisfactory definition, but the phenomenon exists and must be fought with military means.

AF reflects the use of innovative technologies, efficient in CT operations.

Current conflicts have taken on new features by becoming unusual physiognomy, where laws and principles of war/conflict are no longer found at all. Therefore it’s necessary an appropriate approach, consistent with current conceptual and technical resources but also political, strategic and existing security.

Missions and mode of action of the AF is reviewing and determine, as a consequence, conceptual changes, organizational and technical. Thus, given the fact that terrorists often locate their headquarters or offices in areas heavily populated inside homes, schools, hospitals or religious buildings or cultural significance, it is necessary to improve the means of striking air strikes in order to increase accuracy and effects. Also, the need for secret missions and the increased danger of terrorists who are present in areas determined using UAS.

There is however an effective response to terrorism - a strategy of integrating all instruments of power to combat terrorists and their sponsors.

As a component of military power, the AF already contributes to this goal by providing global mobility of counterterrorist forces, air superiority to protect their actions, and precision attack against the terrorist infrastructure. AF provides critical information to stop, prevent or respond to terrorist attacks and psychological operations can support counterterrorist operations and can influence the will to eroding popular support. Developing means to enhance the effectiveness of air operations, planners of CT operations will provide options for decision making in the fight against terrorism.

However, because of many of the most fanatical terrorists, military force will not change unfortunately their commitment to the organization and cause. As counterterrorism measures aimed at stopping a terrorist attack, military action can prevent temporary or delay a terrorist action, or it may be terrorists to seek easier targets to tackle or find a more effective weapon category. Military force may also cause future attacks with retaliation or revenge character.

Ultimately, if a state sponsor of terrorist activity triggers a form of war against another state, the effective use of military power tools can lead to a cessation of its activities. If this action continues to escalate to war, he will remain below the level of terrorist violence that requires a counter-response. An effective employment of the AF will help to lower the threat of terrorism.
References


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