Desert Storm 2010

by

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Desert Shield/Storm

Multitudes of articles, essays and errata have been written about Desert Storm, often to spotlight an individual armed service's point of view. The Gulf War's influence pervades today's military and naval strategy in various ways: in doctrine; in training; and, in particular, in the way we expect to fight future wars. Regardless of the manner it has been presented, Desert Storm's effect has heavily influenced the thinking of today's armed forces and appears that it will remain so in the near future. This remains especially true within the US Air Force where there have been "reflections" wondering if ground forces are now obsolete or at the very least, passe.

Referring to the relatively new Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD): speed, range, and flexibility of air forces—complemented by the accuracy and lethality of precision weapons and advances in command, control, and information gathering technologies—allows USAF to achieve mass faster than any other type of surface forces. Mass is an effect that air and space forces achieve through efficiency of attack. Today's air and space forces can alter the concept of massed forces. However, as we have recently seen, political considerations play an important part is allowing any type of operation to proceed. Aircraft and munitions must deploy and concentrate in a given area to become effective.

Meanwhile, ground forces on the battlefield must defend and attack, as appropriate. Nowhere was this truer than in Desert Storm, where aircraft from Europe and CONUS took literally weeks to arrive in the area. Complicating this even further is the number of commitments the services are involved in worldwide.

Consider a recent Air Chronicles' article where the adoption of ground force terminology to fit the article's call for an "Airpower Expeditionary Force – Ground Attack". In this article, "Combat operations essentially follow three lines. Operations to deny ground, operations to destroy units, and punitive strikes in a static ground situation" – or, as the article puts it, become an aerial "ground" force.

It seems that interdiction, preemptive and ground attack missions are to be wrapped in a new package, despite no real differences in aircraft missions since World War II. While one might argue that radar, GPS, etc, are revolutions in the state of the art, the basic missions remain the same -- "a rose by any other name…".

The new war-fighting technologies have allowed the Air and Space Force (the ASP, if you will, as in a poisonous snake) to usurp the missions that were usually fought with fixed bayonets. However, it can never completely reach this level at the same time. In all but possibly the smallest of combat actions, ground forces will have to engage the enemy and secure terrain. In any event, until air- and ground-launched weapons can be made to only determine or seek out the individual combatant (vs innocent civilians, not to mention "collateral" damage to nearby structures), it will fall to the ground troops to conclude hostilities. Every war, police action or punitive strike has proven this point.

Future Scenarios Today

Many of the scenarios used today in forecasting future conflicts 10-20 years from now are heavily weighted in the manner, means and tactics employed during Desert Storm.

Desert Storm is usually the launch point in most two Major Theater War (MTW) scenarios, as well. In fact, many single scenarios used today are Desert Storm retold for the nth time, using a 6-month (or compressed version) buildup – essentially Desert Shield. Usually this implies (near-) perfect pre-conflict intelligence – one of the major shortfalls *prior* to the actual Gulf War. As a result, most Desert Storm-like scenarios commonly used today are devoid of any realism and, as a consequence, the results are easily predictable *before* any models are run – Blue always beats Red, the United States always wins, etc.

Desert Storm 2010 - Preliminaries

Without any preconceived notions, Desert Storm 2010 was born a few years ago to satisfy the need for a scenario with more realism, not the pabulum spoon fed by the government or their subcontractors. The basic starting point in developing the scenario was plain: closely parallel US air, ground and naval deployments as they actually occurred in 1990, while upgrading equipment for all warring parties (as necessary) to accurately represent reasonable year 2010 Table of Organization and Equipment and Order of Battle expectations.

The basic premise and strategic design of the scenario was: Given an upgrade of all forces to 2010, what would occur if the Iraqis decided to aggressively continue onward into Saudi Arabia from Kuwait?

Given the passing years since 1990 and Iran's predictable military buildup, Iraq was configured to follow suit. When the scenario was constructed, the UN sanctions still in-place on Iraq were considered to have been lifted a couple of years ago. When sanctions are eventually lifted, Iraq is expected to quickly ramp up its military acquisitions. (Our use of precision weapons in recent years has upped the ante on what kind of weapons they'll be upgrading to.) This notwithstanding, Desert Storm 2010 could easily become Desert Storm 2015 or 2020, with minor alterations.

There were two significant differences injected into Desert Storm 2010 from the actual occurrence: 1) *No Dong* Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSMs) with; 2) Iraqi Sarin (VX) warheads atop. Both of these additions were adopted given known Iraqi developments in both areas prior to the onset of the Gulf War, Saddam's continued presence as head of state and an expected resumption of these programs after UN sanctions are lifted. The use of sarin warheads was limited to striking airfields inside Saudi Arabia. Necessarily then, USAF deployments to the theater were set further south than during the actual conflict. This situation was also deemed necessary given the probable FLOT/FEBA movement as Iraqi troops moved southward.

At the inception of the Desert Storm 2010, three Iraqi corps are online at Kuwait's southern border (from east to west: Republican Guards, II Corps and Jihad), followed by III Corps in the 2nd echelon – closely following the original 1990 example. The 3rd echelon (IV Corps) is enroute, not yet in place, as it moves in behind the 2nd echelon. The Special Forces Division of the Republican Guards is responsible for securing Bahrain and Qatar. Three Iraqi divisions were eventually detached to secure major population centers and vital military objectives achieved along the coastal route southward.

The Saudi Army and a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Brigade (played despite not at strength until 20 Aug during actual events), awaiting US air and ground deployments, are forced to fight a delaying action, trading space for time.

Some kind of control or baseline was needed in order to measure air power's contribution, so it was decided to first run a ground campaign through a theater-level model.

DESERT STORM 2010 OBJECTIVES

Iraq:

Realizing that the United States and allied nations will come to the aid of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the region:

- Achieve a rapid breakthrough of Saudi positions and destroy its tactical and operational reserves to reach their goal – Riyadh;
- Bypass strongpoints and pockets of resistance, leaving motorized rifle and infantry units to act as mobile exploitation forces to deal with these particular areas;
- Avoid built-up areas to maintain invasion momentum;
- Utilize *No Dong* SSMs in support of IAF CAS, OAD and Airfield attack missions.

Allied Objectives:

1. Gain and maintain air superiority;
2. Halt and roll-back the FEBA (especially targeting tank units);
3. Destroy Iraqi NBC capability;
4. Attack political and military leadership command and control;
5. Sever supply lines;
6. Liberate Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait.

Desert Storm 2010 - Results

Following this criterion, the Saudi secondary (actually occupying the final defense line) was established 100km north of Riyadh. Iraqi forces reached this position in 4 days in the 2010 scenario play.

Airpower is then applied to the scenario. Saudi air, USN carrier aircraft, naval cruise missiles, deployed B-1 and B-2 bombers from CONUS and other USAF aircraft are added to the scenario as they had (or, if new, how they could be expected to arrive in a future conflict) in the actual conflict. These aircraft immediately conducted CAS, interdiction and air defense missions, as appropriate, upon their arrival using whatever munitions they flew in with or what limited logistics trail had arrived. Prince Sultan Airbase (the main operating base for most USAF aircraft in Saudi Arabia today) and other airbases in the area were used as they were during the actual Desert Shield/Storm.

The rapid FLOT/FEBA movement southward into the Saudi kingdom quickly forces the carrier out of the Gulf and necessitated USAF deployment to bases in southern Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. Iraqi aggressiveness causes prepositioned equipment and deploying army material to enter ports in the southern portion of the peninsula. *No Dong* airfield attacks kept friendly airfields in Saudi Arabia down for varying times and forced their relocations in many instances.

Despite this application of airpower, the fall of Riyadh was delayed by *only* a single day in Desert Storm 2010.

General Conclusions

While a scenario, any scenario, is nothing but a "What if?" and is subject to limitations and constraints inbuilt into the model and the data it is filled with, it is important to draw certain tenuous conclusions based on its results, many of which are generally agreed upon today.

1. The chances that a 6-month buildup occurring prior to another war are extremely remote.
2. The ability to place large numbers of equipment and personnel into a theater of operations, unhampered by an enemy, cannot be counted upon to ever happen again.
3. Likewise, intelligence warning times will continue to vary.
4. The ability to, mobilize a suitable and sustainable military force response will vary, as well. Tailoring these reaction forces will take careful planning, to include distance, basing, port facilities, current and projected enemy combat actions, etc. Light infantry might be called for in one country while armored forces might be more appropriate in the country next door. F-22s might be unnecessary in a country with no air force to speak of but critical in another area.
5. Decisions in the initial use of airlifters for Air Force and Army requirements, for troops or equipment, etc, are among the critical questions that will impact any force deployments in the future.
6. Having the ability to rapidly deploy to any area of the world, given the United States' shrinking number of overseas bases, is probably the most understated and most important requirement that our armed forces will face in the future. The enemy won't wait for us to get there. (The AEF must have pre-propositioned assets that are ready when they arrive as they robust the initial forces -present airlift will never hack it.)
7. With such a rapid loss of territory, questions regarding the use of strategic platforms and/or weapons will likely have to be resolved earlier in the conflict, rather than later.

No one armed service wins a war -- it's a combined effort; all elements are necessary in order to win. How best to begin our entry into any future conflict will probably determine if we will succeed or, at the very least, how long it will take us to be victorious. Here, developing scenarios where Blue is overmatched, stretched too far or is slow to respond (if done properly) can be used to help develop force mixes that can have real potential value.

Erroneous, biased and inept scenarios also have no place in being used in a simulation program. Frequently, government-provided or "study house"- crafted

scenarios are merely reflections of either a particular military service's desires or what the civilian contractor is told or infers what they need to prove in order to help justify equipment acquisition or asset justification. Any semblance to reality is usually purely coincidental. Too often, the service creating a scenario is untrained in how the other services fight (and sometimes, how their own service does, as well). Much too often, however, "professional" academia and study houses are subcontracted by the military to create scenarios, complete with data, that are also erroneous, biased and inept in their own manner – most are a complete waste of taxpayer monies. The bottom line is that many of today's scenarios are nothing but fraudulent devices to backstop whatever military "need" is wanted or to prove a particular concept that already exists, however devoid of realism it may actually be.

While new simulations programs proclaiming jointness are coming on-line (e.g., JWARS), it is important that credible military and naval experts (in the fields of intelligence, logistics, operations, communications, et al) are brought into their construction and in the execution of scenarios. Combat experience, tactical and strategic backgrounds, etc, are important aspects that can help in the quality of a simulation program and in scenario creation – if for no other reason than a "reality check". Selecting multiple service units/agencies/centers, and civilian companies, etc, that have the knowledge and experience in a particular aspect of a scenario (e.g., SAMs and AAA or logistics, etc) could credibly serve in providing these checks. Prohibiting the use of new weapon or platform programs from altering any part of a scenario would force the proposed system to deal with reality on its own merits.

The creation of a single, joint agency to be responsible for all simulation programs and all scenarios might also be an idea worth considering. Currently, most branches of each service have simulations, each service has their own scenarios and there are an increasing number of joint simulations, as well. Rarely can/will a service have to fight singly, without the assistance of a sister. Therefore, inputs from the other services are necessary to create a valid scenario or a valid simulation program. If jointness is to have real meaning (which could also have cost savings), then one supra-agency would allow one-stop shopping and one-stop responsibility, as well.

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