



The Coalition and US Central Command: Italian Contribution

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The Battle of Yorktown (Virginia) in 1781 was a decisive victory against the British achieved by a combined assault of American forces led by General George Washington and French forces led by General Comte de Rochambeau. Their coordinated action prevented the British Army commanded by Lieutenant General Lord Cornwallis from escaping by sea. It proved to be the last major land battle of the American Revolutionary War, as the surrender of Cornwallis's army prompted the British government eventually to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Since then the US, in nearly all major conflicts it has fought, has been able to build up a Coalition of forces. History links the success and the end of the American Revolution to the Battle of Yorktown, to this Coalition of the willing.

Therefore the foundation of a Coalition, as it is known today, is not a new idea: it has been an integral part of the past, remains so in the present and will continue to play an important role for the United States in the future.

In September 2001 the US and the Coalition of Nations, emerged as a consequence of the terrorist attack perpetrated by Al Qaeda on American soil to prosecute Global War On Terrorism (GWOT), which marked the first of a series of operations which have been conducted in the US Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR). In a few months, the tenth anniversary of the US forces engagement in Afghanistan will be celebrated. The US and the Coalition of 68 Nations have made a massive contribution in leading, participating and providing security and generating stability in Afghanistan with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the NATO led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), and in Iraq through Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and the NATO Training Mission.

From October 2001 onwards, the US has realised, or simply reaffirmed, the enormous strategic and political value that a Coalition provides and acknowledged that this support is paramount to set up the conditions for success for the multiple operations within CENTCOM's AOR.

From that initial idea of a Coalition, there exists today a complex organization represented by the Nations, which are represented in the Coalition Coordination Centre (CCC) and in the staff of CENTCOM, in Tampa, Florida. Their role, seen from the US perspective, is to provide an integrated support to the commander's strategic objectives.

Alliances and Coalitions, despite their significant advantages and disadvantages, are today, as they were in the past and will be in the future, an integral part of the common effort in the GWOT.

This article aims to highlight the Italian contribution to CENTCOM. In doing so, it is necessary to spend some time describing the complexity, in terms of history, resources and processes, which characterize CENTCOM from an Italian perspective.

The Unified Combatant Commands

Well before the end of WWII, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee envisaged the need to have Unified Combatant Commands whose responsibility should be geographically defined.

The implementation of this idea was developed during the 1945-1950 period. The example that was taken as the reference for the development of this project was the system in place during WWII for the conduct of operations in the European Theatre. However the experience of the Pacific Theatre, where the Navy and Army were in competition for command, was something that the Committee totally disregarded. The Navy





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supported the creation of the Combatant Commands as it didn't want to suffer the same ambiguities it faced in the Pacific.

On 14th December 1946, President Henry Truman signed the "Outline Command Plan" authorizing the implementation of all necessary measures to establish the immediate creation of six Combatant Commands and in 1949 three Functional Commands were added, increasing the total number of Combatant Commands to nine.

In 1986, the "Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act" established the first rationalization and reorganization of the structure of the Combatant Commands since their creation. Furthermore, this Act kept the geographical definition of responsibility but clarified the Commanders in Chief (CINC) responsibilities. In the following years some adjustments to the structure were required in response to geo-political changes, like the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a consequence the number of Functional Commands was increased to four¹.



US Central Command

The US CENTCOM, as known today, takes its origins from the "Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force" which was the US answer to the Iranian Crises and to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, with the objective to enforce the American position in the Middle East and Central Asia. The evolution process from the "Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force" to CENTCOM formally ended on the 1st of January 1986 when President Ronald Reagan signed the executive order.

The CENTCOM AOR, despite being the smallest amongst the six assigned to the Combatant Commands, comprises some of the most critical crisis areas on the planet. It consists of twenty nations², 530 million inhabitants, 22 ethnic groups, 18 major languages with numerous dialects, and Islam as the predominant religious, political and cultural power in the region.

The political situation is extremely complicated as in most cases modernity and external influences collide with socio-cultural dynamics characterised by strong ultra traditional roots. It is an area of contrasts which

1 - 'Joint Forces Command', 'Special Operations Command', 'Strategic Command' and 'Transportation Command'.
2 - Israel and Occupied Territories are not in the CENTCOM AOR.



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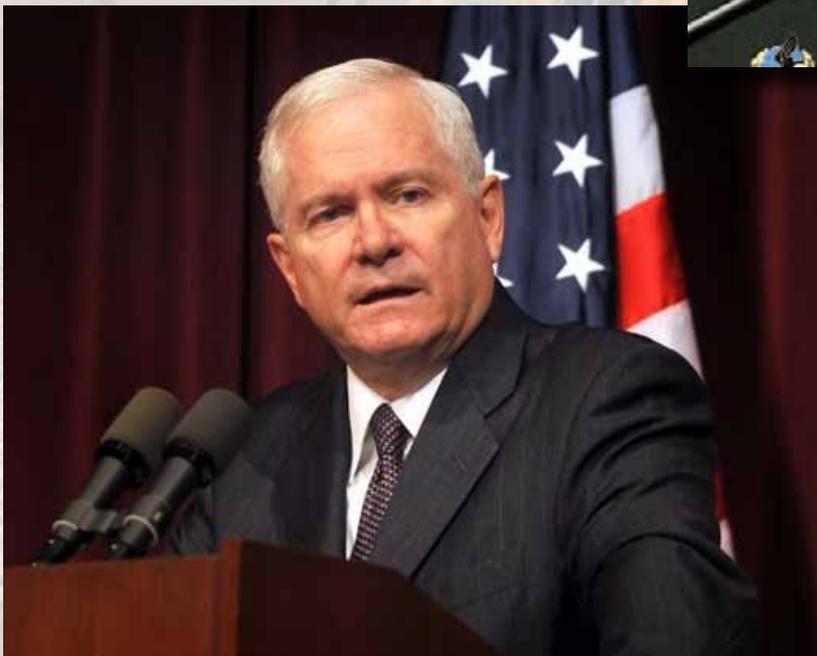
see some of the poorest countries in the world, as well as others in the highest pro-capita (\$100,000).

The Middle East and some Central Asia Nations hold 64% of the world oil reserve, 34% of overall oil production, and 46% of natural gas. Vital trade routes, like the Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Suez Canal, Arabian Gulf and the Straits of Aden and Hormuz, fall in the CENTCOM AOR.

In all honesty, CENTCOM does not own the biggest AOR but, without any doubt, it has to deal with some of the most challenging political and military situations that the US has ever faced. As shown by Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait in 1991 and in Kurdistan with Operation Provide Comfort and in 1992 in Somalia with Operation Provide Relief. In the 1990s a small number of operations were launched against threats posed by the regime of Saddam Hussein and some terrorist organizations. Thereafter Operation Enduring Freedom commenced in Afghanistan in 2001 and in 2003 in Iraq Operation with Iraqi Freedom. CENTCOM continues today to be committed to support, through security and assistance, the effort of the elected governments of Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2008, the Department of Defence, with the aim to relieve some of the responsibilities of CENTCOM and EUCOM, authorized the establishment of AFRICOM³.

However, CENTCOM's initiatives must also consider that direct threats against US interests, as well as nations in its AOR, are generated by a complex and interconnected system of relations including transnational extremism, hostile opposition and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These dynamics are made worse by the instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the current situation in Iraq, Iranian policies and initiatives, the deterioration of the situation in Yemen, militant Islamic movements and, as a consequence the lack of progresses in the Middle East Peace Process.

In an effort to respond to all of these challenges the CENTCOM mission is: "With



national and international partners, US Central Command promotes cooperation among nations, responds to crises, and deters or defeats state and non-state aggression, and supports development and, when necessary, reconstruction in order to establish the conditions for regional security, stability, and prosperity."

The CENTCOM challenge is that because the situation to overcome is so complex, the simple military approach is not feasible. Piracy and smuggling, economies that are not integrated regionally and globally, under-developed Nations, terrorist entities and organizations that support and promote them, sectarian rivalries and territorial disputes, all complicate the situation. These issues generate instability which results in more cases of poor governance.

3 - Egypt remains in CENTCOM AOR.



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As such, CENTCOM needs to be supported in its effort by a shared vision and resources which enable it to generate the conditions for regional security, prosperity and stability. The statement that these threats are not only harming the US, and are directed not only against the Nations in the region but all Nations that have interests in this part of the world, requires shared objectives.

This vision, introduced in December 2008 by Secretary Robert M. Gates and General David H. Petraeus, then Commander US CENTCOM, during the Manama Conference in Bahrain, aimed to generate both inside and outside the AOR coordinated synergies supported by common objectives, which would show adaptability and flexibility and the competence to direct a coordinated effort towards the potential or substantial emerging areas of crises.

This instrument, titled "Regional Security Architecture", has been designed to align the network of relations to the common security interest and those that are not exclusively CENTCOM centric. All of this requires a Multi Agency Approach in which Departments, Agencies, Non Government Organizations, US and international with the Coalition Nations and including the active participation of the local governments, to mark together to coordinate their efforts.

However, this vital initiative cannot be implemented without resources. In 2009, the United States allocated 513 Bn \$ to the Defence budget (3.6% of its Gross Domestic Product of almost 14,256 Bn \$). (foto n.8 "Tabella Anni Fiscali 2001-2011) Noting that 146bn \$ that was added to the Defence Budget for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), in the fiscal year 2009 the US actually committed 4.7% of its GDP to Defence.

Finally, observing the forecast expenditure for Fiscal Year 2011, based on priorities and programs endorsed by President Obama, the gross figure, including 159.3bn \$ for OCO, would be around 711bn \$, a 6.15% increase in the budget in respect to 2009.

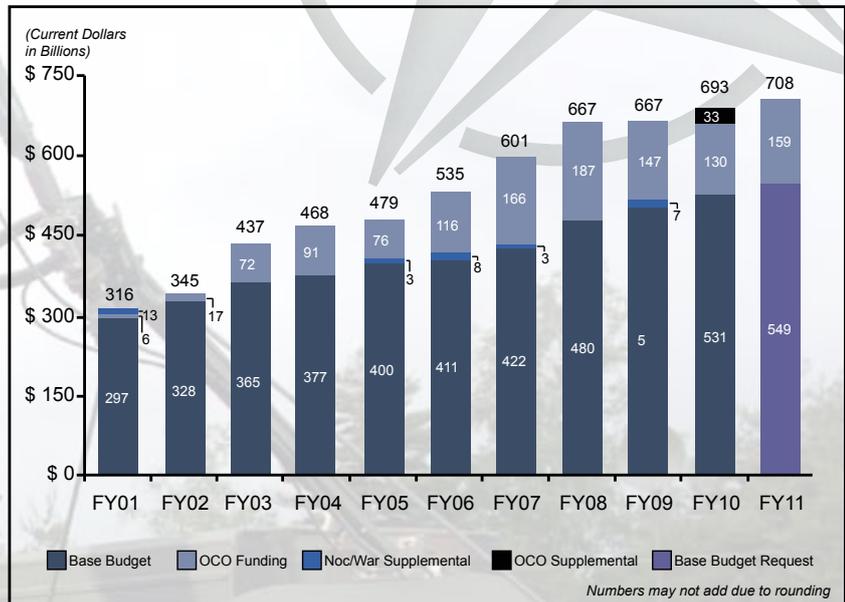
These figures do not show the full amount of

resources for which CENTCOM is the "customer" or on which it exercises a certain level of responsibility or control. It should not be forgotten that the active presence of the US in the region sees the commitments and the initiatives of other Departments, which support development of projects, the establishment of local government organizations, and the reconstruction effort in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The impressive financial outlay underlines the US commitment in an area where many occurrences have global reacting effects, and where CENTCOM has been present, without a break, for almost two decades.

The Coalition Coordination Centre And The Italian Contribution

One of the lessons learned from Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1991) highlighted the need to



DoD Budget \$ in Billions	FY2010			FY2011 Request
	Enacted	Supp	Total	
Base	530,7	-	530,7	548,9
Overseas Contingency Operations	129,6	33,0	162,6	159,3
Total Budget	660,3	33,0	693,3	708,2

Numbers may not add due to rounding
Discretionary budget authority



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establish an organization that is able and capable of supporting and integrating Coalition Nations into the planning and operations process, and serving as a focal point for all issues related to the Coalition. This was brought to fruition by CENTCOM J5 following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

In October 2001 the embryo of what would become the Coalition Coordination Center (CCC) was established. This organization, through the years, expanded to reach the size it is today. The primary function of the CCC is to be the coordinating office between CENTCOM and the Coalition Nations represented in Tampa. The Italian Joint Cell has been present in Tampa since 16th October 2001 following the decision of the Italian Government to play an active role in the GWOT. Its main responsibilities and functions are to act as the liaison and coordinating agency between CENTCOM and the Italian Joint HQ⁴ to ease the information exchange on current and future operations, and to establish relationships with other national entities represented in the CCC.

To discharge these functions, the Italian Cell is led by a Brigadier General who also acts as the Italian Senior Representative. This position is allocated on a rotation basis between the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Italian Senior Representative in this function is supported by a staff of experts in operations (Land, Maritime and Air), communications and intelligence. One officer is embedded in the CENTCOM staff and the Italian Cell retains the capability to detach liaison staff to other US Command or Coalition entities. Currently one liaison team is operating in Bahrain.

Due to the changes occurring in the various theatres, additional commitments, and new Coalition partners, and to better manage national resources, the Italian Cell, has evolved and adapted its structure and functionality to satisfy the new challenges.

CENTCOM today, provides an "international forum" that is unique and in which Nations are able to maintain or establish fast and effective bilateral and multilateral relationships that support any interaction between Nations and towards CENTCOM. In this "international forum", in which almost one third of the Nations in the world are represented, our national Cell represents Italy and highlights and enforces the importance of the role and commitment of our country.

The Combined Planning Group

In June 2002, General Tommy R. Franks, at the time Commander US CENTCOM, directed the establishment of an embedded planning staff inside CENTCOM. His vision was: "... a Combined HQ capable of planning, coordinating and executing military operations that leverage all elements of the OEF Coalition."

After the project was endorsed in November 2002, the Combined Planning Group (CPG) was activated as a part of the J5 "Plans & Policy Directorate" and at the beginning of December, the first Coalition Officer entered the CPG. From January 2003, Italy has had a permanent representative on the international staff of the CPG. At the beginning of January 2003, Full Operational Capability (FOC) was declared and the CPG became a reality inside the J5 at CENTCOM.

The CPG structure consists of a Director of Brigadier General rank and three branches led by Colonels. The first two branches are responsible for areas geographically defined. The Middle East Branch interests are focused on the Middle East, Levant and Arabian Peninsula, specifically Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Yemen and Egypt which remained, under the responsibility of



4 - Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze (COI).



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CENTCOM after the creation of AFRICOM, while Israel and Occupied Territories are in EUCOM AOR. The Central Asia and South Asia Branch focuses on Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgystan, Pakistan, Tajikstan, Turkmenstan and Uzbekistan.

The third branch, named Special Projects and Administration, is responsible for coordinating functions between the multinational staff of the CPG and the rest of the HQ. It is, with the exception of one Australian officer, exclusively staffed by US personnel due to accessibility of information, who can be called upon to perform special American only tasks.

At present, the CPG is represented by over 30 different nationalities, all coming from countries that agreed to join the US in the GWOT.

While remaining inside the J5, the CPG has evolved its function and today its reason for existence is to directly advise the Combined Forces Commander and staff on strategic to operational level plans and assessments, and political-military and civil-military analysis, based on independent, non US conditioned views based on peculiar experiences, cultures and sensitivities. It defines the uniqueness of the CPG that's an international body that supports the Commander with its assessments. All of this is summarized in its mission: "The Combined Planning Group conducts strategic assessments, political-military and civil-military analysis of the USCENTCOM AOR and external influences in order to advise the Commander USCENTCOM of strategic trends and support USCENTCOM theatre planning."

Moreover, the CPG is tasked to:

- Provide economic, geographical and demographic analysis,
- Identify strategic issues that will affect and, or influence CENTCOM,
- Analyze ongoing events and situations regarding AOR countries for their immediate or near-term effect on US Government and US CENTCOM policy and strategy over the next 5 years, and
- Assess transnational and external influences.

The current Italian representative in the CPG is the Levant Section Chief who is specifically responsible for Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and his responsibilities are extended to cover aspects of Israel and the Occupied Territories which directly effect CENTCOM and, for obvious reasons, the Middle East Process..

The CPG also has the opportunity to present directly to the Commander CENTCOM, on a quarterly basis, its non-conditional assessment and independent point of view on the AOR. In doing so, it provides the privileged opportunity of visibility of all nations that contribute to the Combined Planning Group.

Conclusions

From a factual and historical basis, the US does not want, nor is it in the position to deprive itself of a Coalition of Nations. International support to the coalition could be limited to a platoon or up to an infantry Brigade, one aircraft or an entire Wing, or simply a presence in Tampa to provide political support. The reality is that any mission carried out by the Coalition is something that the US does not need to do on its own.

The integration of Coalition forces, in support of CENTCOM, is an essential resource that pays dividends all the time. Full cooperation and coordination, as well as exchange of information, even within the limits of a Coalition, represent a fundamental pre-condition to pursue common objectives.

Without doubt, a strong and capable Coalition and bolstered by integrity is paramount for the security, stability and prosperity of the entire planet and represents the strategic objective for the US and CENTCOM, whose effects go beyond the boundaries of July 2011.

