



*Cavalry Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division drive an M1A2 Abrams tank over the Sava River. (Photo courtesy of the Joint Combat Camera Center)*

## Getting There Was the Battle: Part II

This second half of a historical assessment of the U.S. deployment in Operation Joint Endeavor, continued from the March–April 2014 issue, focuses on the Implementation Force deployment in Bosnia and the deleterious impact that the downsizing of logistics units had on force projection capabilities.

■ By Dr. James P. Herson Jr.

In early December 1995, U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) area support groups were ordered to execute the rail movement of designated Task Force Eagle (TFE) and national support element forces into Hungary and Croatia from multiple railheads in Germany. The groups in turn tasked their base support battalions to execute the planned rail flow.

However, the battalions had difficulty pushing units out of Germany because of rapid changes in the task organization and composition of TFE and national support elements in Tazsar and Kaposvar, Hungary. Train orders and railcar configurations changed frequently because of USAREUR and European Command fragmentary orders.

Those orders modified Implementation Force (IFOR) and intermediate staging base (ISB) unit compositions, which were predicated on late breaking and often contradictory guidance from the Department of Defense (DOD) and NATO.

### Coordination Complications

Like many units in USAREUR,

the base support battalions were not promptly informed of the numerous and often conflicting deployment changes.

Their organizations had also suffered major personnel losses during the drawdown, and their knowledge of moving and deploying units was rusty. Despite the battalions' efforts to adjust to the dynamic changes dictated by echelons above them, the backlog of frustrated cargo trains and troop passengers grew.

USAREUR (through V Corps) planned to establish an ISB in Hungary to facilitate the further deployment of IFOR's TFE into the former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Such a site would give both USAREUR Forward (FWD), which was a derivative of the V Corps headquarters with a few USAREUR staff members, and TFE an opportunity to better shape the subsequent move into the FRY.

Placing the ISB in Hungary was politically advantageous and would likely be viewed as a neutral choice by the warring factions to its south and east. Moreover, keeping the ISB outside the NATO area of responsibility in the FRY would enable USAREUR to avoid losing control of its forces to NATO prematurely.

It appeared that since the V Corps did not have a direct role in Operation Joint Endeavor, it opted to "command the deployment" as a means of participation, albeit at the periphery and unfortunately inexpertly.

USAREUR decided to keep the deployment categorized as an in-theater movement and ruled out the use of time-phased force deployment data and the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System for transportation deconfliction (after discovering that several headquarters had populated databases without cross-coordination). USAREUR instead chose to use Microsoft Excel to create a transportation synchronization matrix.

This decision unfortunately froze out participation by the U.S. Transportation Command, which had

expertise and assets that could have been of major assistance given the theater's paucity of organic transportation capabilities and general lack of logistics wherewithal.

Many USAREUR units experienced excessive turmoil connected with the deployment. This turbulence was sometimes caused by their own higher headquarters, largely because of the way deployment information flowed through commands and units and the impact of late breaking diplomatic inputs on the formal military planning process.

The impact of the Clinton administration's imposed compartmentalization on the way planning information and orders were passed was particularly difficult to offset.

At the tactical level, for example, a deploying battalion commander from the 1st Armored Division (TFE) recounted, "I often felt overcome by all the changing deployment requirements coming down from USAREUR, V Corps, and the 1st Armored Division [1AD]. It seemed like not a day passed in which a new idea failed to filter down, requiring the expenditure of more time and effort. . . . On any given day, I would receive telephone calls from all three levels of command (USAREUR, V Corps, and 1AD) regarding some deployment requirement."

It was evident that the U.S. and NATO military planning process for a peacemaking deployment instead of war was fractured, confused, and stymied by nonpublicized national concerns and post-Cold War inertia. Overall the V Corps did well in preparing for a possible deployment to the FRY; however, attempting to command the deployment by itself created many of the very problems it had sought to avoid.

### **Leaving Germany by Rail**

Transporting USAREUR units by rail from Germany to the FRY should have been smooth administrative movements, given the extensive and routine use of rail by units to get to gunnery and training areas.

However, the Operation Joint Endeavor rail deployment instead became a major international transit debacle.

French rail strikes, unforeseen impacts of German post-Cold War railroad privatization, a lack of deepwell cars for oversized equipment, unplanned commandeering of early train flow by V Corps, inflexible fiscal authorities, and other factors made moving the U.S. IFOR a major logistics hurdle.

A 3rd Corps Support Command (COSCOM) transportation staff officer shared, "Rail operations proved to be exceptionally difficult in the ISB due to changing unit priorities, increased flow of combat units and a compressed time line. . . . The backlog got so bad that around 16 December, with 10 cargo-laden trains waiting on Hungarian rail lines, that the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary gave the military an ultimatum: unload the trains more quickly or temporarily hold any further trains from leaving Germany."

### **The Transportation Battlefield**

Like the other portions of Bosnia, the U.S. sector lacked a modern transportation infrastructure. However, unlike the British and French IFOR sectors, the U.S. sector was bordered by the Sava River.

Because there were no standing bridges linking Bosnia to Croatia over the Sava River, most of TFE would have to conduct deliberate river crossing operations to meet the Dayton Accords' stringent boots-on-the-ground occupation requirement. Even after a successful bridging, difficult terrain, mines, and decayed infrastructure caused onward movement to be a challenge.

The conditions of Bosnian railroads were marginal. Since the beginning of the FRY civil wars, little railroad maintenance had been conducted in Bosnia or eastern Croatia. Washouts, sabotage, bridge destruction, and railbed degradation ruled out the primary use of railroads for heavy force insertion into the contested province.

When the Dayton Accords were signed on Dec. 14, 1995, almost no railroads were operating in Bosnia.

Shipping the U.S. IFOR from the port of Bremerhaven, Germany, had been carefully considered. However, the sail time from Germany to the Adriatic ports of Split or Ploce,

control Agency (TMCA) lacked sufficient staff, planners, and movement control personnel, all of whom are vital in planning, sequencing, and controlling large multimodal, cross-border echeloned unit movements.

The shortages seen at the theater level in transportation command

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“Our plan is to go in fast. . . . We expect to have more than half of the force in and operating in Bosnia within three weeks [of signing the treaty], and the entire force there in six to eight weeks.”

—*Secretary of Defense William J. Perry,*  
*December 7, 1995*

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Croatia, would take nearly eight days (not counting loading and off-loading if a ship was available) under perfect conditions.

Once the ships were unloaded, truck drivers dealt with narrow hairpin turns and poorly maintained bridges of uncertain weight classifications while exiting the port.

Port availability was also an issue. Both ports were used to capacity by Great Britain and France and could not accommodate American requirements without significant delay. Given the compressed timetable of the Dayton Accords for U.S. boots-on-the-ground, USAREUR could not rely on moving forces by sealift; it would simply take too long.

Therefore, the most viable method of moving U.S. forces into Hungary or Croatia from Germany was by road and rail. M1070 heavy equipment transporters (HETs) and other Army ground transport systems then moved the forces forward into Bosnia.

Transporting TFE using USAREUR's diminished truck fleet from rail sites in Hungary or Croatia was the best method of getting the U.S. IFOR into Bosnia on time. Other transportation alternatives would take too long and miss the Dayton Accords' occupation deadline.

The 1st Theater Movement Con-

and control were also seen further down in the movement control chain.

The two remaining movement control battalions (MCBs) left in USAREUR had already been stretched extremely thin because of downsizing. The 27th MCB, part of the 3rd COSCOM, was deployed to the ISB and the FRY to control the flow of forces from Hungary into the NATO area of responsibility. The 1st TMCA's 39th MCB stayed in Germany to push trains, aircraft, and convoys forward to the Hungarian ISB or Croatia.

Movement control procedures broke down early in the deployment. As a V Corps observer noted, “In fact, the deployment was neither orderly nor deliberate, because Operation Joint Endeavor immediately went off the synchronization matrix.”

A 3rd COSCOM battle captain explained, “Once the 27th Transportation Battalion, with their two understrength movement control teams, the 15th and 30th, deployed, the entire function of movement control support for all remaining forces in Germany was suddenly thrust upon the TMCA. This, coupled with the deployment and the TMCA's own personnel shortage, left a gaping void in movement control capabilities in theater.”

## The Great Train Robbery

As a force provider, V Corps likely recognized that its primary force provider mission would be complete after it got the 1st Armored Division and its attached elements onto the northern banks of the nearly frozen Sava River. In order to facilitate control of the deployment under the aegis of meeting Title 10 requirements, V Corps established a forward headquarters (USAREUR FWD) at Taszar Air Base to help meter the flow of follow-on forces and establish a forward operational headquarters presence.

As well intentioned as this mission command may have been, it initially caused more problems than it solved.

As the Combat Studies Institute found, “the decision [to establish the USAREUR FWD headquarters] was allegedly made for two reasons: to keep the U.S. Transportation Command out of the deployment process and thus speed up the movement of force and also to retain USAREUR control over the deployment of U.S. Army forces.” Essentially, planners chose control rather than enhanced logistics capabilities.

Getting USAREUR logistics elements to the ISB and ready to receive soon-to-follow 1st Armored Division forces (in reality, they arrived almost concurrently) for reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) required that the first series of trains from Germany be composed of adequate logistics forces and key enablers to establish RSOI capability in Hungary.

However, several hundred logisticians along with their hundreds of trucks, trailers, containers, and equipment entering German railheads for loading (having already been called forward for movement) were met with a big surprise.

Unknown to USAREUR's movement control community and base support battalions, the first several logistics trains bound for the ISB and Croatia were abruptly comman-



*NATO and U.S. forces constructed a second bridge over the Sava River in December 1995 to accommodate rising civilian and military traffic. (Photo courtesy of the Joint Combat Camera Center)*

deered by the USAREUR crisis action team to move its own headquarters into Hungary.

This created a major problem and a ripple of schedule conflicts that became magnified further down in the rail plan. It caused hundreds of U.S. troops to be left in unheated railcars in Croatia for days.

Trains laden with vital U.S. equipment were lost to the system when aggravated European railroad officials had them pushed to inactive sidings to relieve pressure on their train systems. Thousands of other U.S. troops experienced significant delays in Germany, and the uncertainty of the mission timeline in-

creased the anxiety felt by the deploying troops' families.

### **Actions and Consequences**

Exacerbating the rail situation, the USAREUR commander's decision to insert a cavalry squadron into the rail flow had not been factored into the rail plan. Moving this combat force up in the queue pushed back the arrival of logistics units and other essential enablers.

One of many consequences of this decision was that the frontloaded cavalry unit was unable to offload itself in Croatia because the logistics units that were trained and equipped to unload them were left

back in Germany.

Delaying the deployment and establishment of important logistics capabilities (and their headquarters for command and planning) in the ISB, the hijacking of trains, and the resulting lack of materials-handling equipment for unloading and executing cargo operations at destination points further worsened international rail problems and contributed to the slowing tempo.

Pushing back the arrival of the 3rd COSCOM and 21st Theater Army Area Command (TAACOM) headquarters—both of which could furnish information on the deployment, establish the ISB, and syn-

chronize the flow of forces—made them incapable of responding to increasingly impatient requests by the already in place USAREUR FWD headquarters.

Thus, without full staffs and equipment, these now late arriving logistics organizations could not adequately process, refine, and control the deployment.

Further degrading the nascent logistics command's establishment

event over their radios; fearing that numerous Soldiers were drowned. Water rapidly reached 15 feet above ground level, washing away equipment and personal effects in the cataclysm. When dawn broke, however, every Soldier was miraculously found alive and without serious injury.”

Because the Sava River was now twice as wide, another float bridge was required to span it. A combination of U.S. Air Forces in Europe

ion could not provide the required two drivers per vehicle for any of its HETs because of its low authorized level of organization. This was an early symptom of the deleterious impact that the Army's tiered approach on manning and readiness had on actual named operations.

The unit drove approximately 60 percent of its 48 HETs on the first convoy to the ISB in mid-December 1995 and then flew its drivers back to drive the remaining HETs from Mannheim, Germany, to the ISB. The V Corps transportation battalion at best could provide an average of 1.3 operators for each vehicle in all its units.

Having sufficient HETs to move the heavy task force from the ISB along a 10-to-14-hour convoy route to the Sava bridge site and beyond required significantly more HETs and HET-qualified drivers than USAREUR had.

Consequently, HET management became one of the primary metrics used for deployment progress reporting.

Despite combining the HETs from the 1st Armored Division and 3rd Infantry Division with the V Corps HET assets (a total of 48 more HETs), a serious shortage of this key vehicle remained.

In desperation, USAREUR had 56 older model M911 HETs from the theater rebuild program sent to the ISB by rail. These systems were to be driven by contracted local Hungarian drivers supervised by Brown and Root contractors and military personnel in a provisional HET task force.

However, every M911 HET that came to the ISB was in a significantly not-mission-capable condition and could not be made operable quickly. Ultimately, the broken M911s remained stuck between aircraft revetments at Taszar Air Base until they could be moved by crane back onto railcars and returned in mid-1996.

Although establishing a provisional HET task force to move the

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“To many European politicians, the press, and the public, the seemingly slow deployment—in particular of the American portion—of the NATO Implementation Force to Bosnia, comes as a disappointing surprise.”

—Bruce E. Arlinghaus and Geoff Hopwood,  
*European Security, Volume 5, Issue 1, 1996*

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was an 11th hour decision by the USAREUR FWD commander on Christmas Eve 1995 to move the combined 21st TAACOM and 3rd COSCOM headquarters from a large three-story building into a series of wooden shacks across two base camps, thereby fracturing operations and planning.

### **Bridging the Sava**

Among the earliest USAREUR personnel to deploy were its engineers. Fortunately, most engineer units made it to the Sava bridge site close to schedule before rail flow modifications led to transportation chaos.

In late December 1995, as TFE engineers were constructing the bridge and readying float sections, a massive snow melt flooded the area. The Sava surged far over its banks during the night of Dec. 29, destroying much of the work already accomplished. Many feared that troops had been drowned in the icy darkness when the Sava surged with little warning.

The senior Operation Joint Endeavor historian noted, “USAREUR FWD monitored the disaster and listened to the unfolding and terrifying

(USAFE) aircraft, trains, and several oversized convoys from the ISB rapidly moved components of a second bridge from war stocks. Army heavy-lift helicopters flew pieces of the second bridge from Tuzla Air Base, where they had been hastily flown in by USAFE aircraft from Belgium and Germany.

With the bridge finally in place, elements of the 1st Armored Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team, led by Col. Gregory Fontenot, crossed into Bosnia on Dec. 31, 1995. Thirty days after the deployment began, approximately 23 percent of TFE had occupied the zone of separation sectors. Overall, the bridging operation took more than two weeks, almost twice as long as planned.

### **Convoys and Intermodal Chaos**

Given the rail problems and the need to get RSOI forces to the emerging ISB, USAREUR authorized some of its transportation units and other enablers to self-deploy by road to Hungary, a movement that took three days and covered more than 1,400 kilometers.

Notably, the heavy truck company in V Corps' transportation battal-

IFOR was explored, the amount of time and number of trained drivers, facilities, and HETs were insufficient to establish this enhanced HET capability.

Once TFE units arrived from Germany by rail to one of four small railheads in the vicinity of the ISB's 29th Area Support Group's "Dragonier City" in Taszar, they went through the RSOI process and were sequenced for onward movement. Convoys with up to 25 trucks per serial departed the Taszar staging runway from 0430 until 1100 hours with 30-minute intervals between serials.

Once in Croatia or Bosnia, however, many truck drivers were forced to abandon their loaded trailers and return to the ISB without a retrograde load. Customer units had either moved or refused to accept their cargo for a variety of reasons, most frequently because they could not get them unloaded.

Consequently, hundreds of loaded trailers and palletized loading system flatracks littered the roads on both sides of the Sava because of a lack of an in-theater cargo transfer company (CTC) capability.

Having a CTC is critical when supplies and equipment come into airports, seaports, or railheads and require reconfiguration for shipment. USAREUR had none, having "rightsized" that capability. As the lack of a cargo transfer unit became acute, USAREUR requested a CTC capability from the Forces Command in the continental United States. Subsequently, a CTC platoon from Fort Bragg, N.C., arrived in mid-January 1996.

A small platoon element remained at the ISB to help run an ad hoc freight forwarding area (eventually augmented with a Reserve component unit, the 146th Transportation Detachment [Air Terminal Movement Control Team]).

The rest of the CTC platoon was attached to the corps' palletized loading system truck company in Croatia to help establish a container

yard near the Sava bridge to hopefully break the logjam.

For more than 75 days, RSOI, fuel, and container convoys ran from the ISB to TFE, often over roads that were nearly impassable. Surprisingly, the accident rate was relatively low in spite of the harsh winter environment, mines, and daunting black road conditions.

V Corps and 21st TAACOM transportation units ran more than 3,775 convoys back and forth between Germany, the Hungarian ISB, and the FRY from mid-December 1995 until Feb. 27, 1996.

More than 507 buses, 1,358 passenger aircraft, and 409 trains with more than 7,400 railcars were used in moving the IFOR and national support element. In total, more than 24,000 troops were transported, some 12,000 pieces of equipment moved, and more than 200,000 short tons of supplies and equipment were shipped in less than 75 days.

Unfortunately, the previously hard-learned lessons seen in the premature deployment of combat units at the detriment of logistics enabling forces in earlier U.S. operations was again ignored, thereby ensuring the IFOR deployment would ultimately take longer.

Deprived of appropriate logistics capabilities, in particular sufficient truck fleets and transportation troops, planners made the choice to retain a heavier combat arms composition instead of a more balanced blend of units with sufficient logistics capabilities. That decision proved to be a significant contributor to USAREUR's Operation Joint Endeavor deployment woes.

It also created increased risk for the troops, a salient fact not widely acknowledged by the period's senior military or political leaders.

U.S. troops were told that they would be in Bosnia-Herzegovina for only a year to implement the Dayton Accords. However, the number of U.S. Soldiers in that country remained sizable for nearly a decade.

Ultimately, more than 100,000 U.S. troops served in Bosnia until they were relieved by European Union forces in 2004.

Despite the stovepiped, multi-echelon, and international planning that was constrained by limited information sharing, convoluted diplomatic and military decision-making at multiple levels, insufficient logistics forces, cuts on the RSOI troop cap to less than 50 percent of what was needed, harsh weather, and other factors, USAREUR met the Dayton Accords' deadline as a force provider, but it was much later than what had been publicly promised.

By the time of its departure almost a year later, the IFOR had fulfilled many of the military provisions of the Dayton Accords. The political and economic provisions of that agreement, however, lagged far behind, necessitating the deployment of a temporary "covering force." That force later morphed into the semi-permanent NATO Stabilization Force, which finally departed in 2004.

Perhaps summing up the Operation Joint Endeavor deployment best, the 1st Armored Division's deployment officer-in-charge shared his opinion in a later U.S. Army War College monograph.

He wrote, "I have seen numerous articles and speeches in which people have lauded the deployment to Bosnia as a great success. I would characterize it as more of a triumph of the human spirit over an insane system, one that only narrowly averted catastrophe."

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