



## ASPECTS REGARDING THE DEFENSIVE OPERATIONS OF THE MECHANIZED (INFANTRY) BRIGADE IN THE JOINT CONTEXT

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Throughout history, military action has undergone a permanent process of evolution and diversification, both in terms of scope and with respect to spatial, temporal and material dimensions. The trend that is becoming more and more pronounced is that all operations, including defence, will have a common goal, because they can no longer be carried out in a single environment, but both in the physical environment (land, air, naval, cosmic), as well as in the virtual environment (electromagnetic - cybernetic). At the same time, the need for flexibility in preparing and conducting operations against an opponent with fluctuating combat potential highlights the need to form joint task forces. Flexibility implies that this force, adopting a certain modular organization, be able to carry out operations specific to armed struggle, when such operations are required and also the same force, but in another modular organization, to be able to, in an optimal time, to perform stability and support operations.

**Keywords:** defensive; joint operations; multinational; maneuver; command and control.

At the very beginning the weapons systems were located on large areas, and the victory was decided in just a few hours and in broad daylight, in recent wars, the maneuver to hit the enemy is executed from thousands of miles away, and the blows have devastating effects. This stage has been reached due to the evolution of military equipment, the possibility of concentrating the firing power, from and in all operational environments, ensuring a vulnerability and losses as low as possible among the own forces and the civilian population, as well as the almost unlimited expansion of the battle space.

The analysis of the military conflicts carried out in the last century highlighted the fact that there were no operations of a single category of forces, but only joint operations. Thus, starting with the invasion of Poland, continuing with the landing in Normandy (Operation "OVERLORD" - 1944), which revealed, for the first time, the typical characteristics of a combined operation, until the Gulf Wars (Operation "DESERT STORM" - 1991 and Operation "IRAQIFREEDOM" - 2003) or from Afghanistan (Operation ENDURING FREEDOM - 2001), in which an integrated "system of systems"

was used, using aviation or naval support elements. We believe that the modern aspect of the combined operations was best highlighted in the Gulf and Afghanistan wars, when forces and means from all categories of forces were used, based on a single plan.

The military conflicts of the last two decades have highlighted new guidelines and concepts regarding the conduct of military operations, characterized by rigorous planning, complexity, dynamism, rapid concentration of forces and means, integrated logistical support, use of high technologies and combined actions of all categories of forces. At the same time, practice showed that military operations no longer have a strict geographical delimitation, being able to be carried out over long distances and having a very short reaction time, largely determined by the mobility factor.

The goal of this paper is to emphasize the importance of conducting a joint operation, especially defence, in the overall preparation and conduct, in a timely manner, in a dynamic and complex operational environment.

### Conceptual delimitations regarding the joint operations

The concept of the *joint operations* entered the universal military scientific circuit in the first half of the last century, with most military theorists

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agreeing that the initiator of the concept of airborne operation is V.K. Triandafilov who, in 1926, formulated, for the first time in military art, the theory of the development of the military operation in the depths of the enemy territory - the theory of operation and deep combat, using aviation and air landing troops.<sup>1</sup>

In the currently known and accepted sense, the terms *integrated operation and joint military action* were first used in military theory in the late twentieth century, with military experts considering that there were two significant events that preceded their official discussion, namely: The Falklands / Falkland War in 1982 and the American action in Grenada (Operation "URGENT FURY") in 1983. The Americans were the first to draw the appropriate conclusions from these confrontations, fully understanding that new technologies offer the possibility of hitting at a great distance, which led to the configuration of new ways of engaging forces and, implicitly, the emergence of new doctrinal concepts: "the air battle - 2000 and the deep battle."<sup>2</sup>

The concept of *joint operations* has been continuously improved and developed, based on the lessons learned from the main conflicts in recent decades, which show the evolution of military operations, both conceptually and as actions. These conflicts, in which both ground, air and naval forces were involved, in all areas of confrontation, provided the right ground for the conduct of complex joint operations (aero-terrestrial, aero-naval, aero-terrestrial-naval), but each with their own peculiarities. The typology of these military conflicts has demonstrated the inefficiency of the unilateral conceptions of the domination of a certain category of forces, demonstrating that only through their cooperation and, especially, through the capitalization of resources, the desired final state can be reached.

The emergence of the concept of joint operations marked the beginning of a reevaluation process and the limitation of the use of the concept of independent operations (land, air, naval). The new concept synthesizes an already existing reality in the modern combat space, as operations of a single category of forces can no longer be carried out, but at the same time, the operations carried out by the categories of forces, in their entirety or through components, represent joint operations fundamentals.

Next, I will present the concept of joint operation as highlighted in military theory. In the Romanian Army, joint operations are defined as "the totality of land, air and maritime actions carried out by a group consisting of forces or elements and means belonging to several categories of army forces, in the appropriate environment specific to each of them, in a geographical area determined, in a unitary conception and under a single command, exercised by a joint operational command, in order to achieve strategic objectives."<sup>3</sup>

Although it seems to be a comprehensive definition, it is still limited to the physical nature of the action, not taking into account other components of the operation, such as information or social, and regarding the purposes of the operation together, I appreciate that there is no clear difference between the strategic, operational and tactical levels, because by the action of a small forces, operational or strategic level effects can be obtained.

The American literature defines joint operations as "military actions performed by joint forces and, if necessary, supported by other structures in the force categories, based on clearly specified command relations, without necessarily being constituted as a joint force."<sup>4</sup>

Opposed to previous definition, this is a synthetic and comprehensive one, which extends, compared to what we have presented so far, the structure of the forces performing the joint operation, including forces that are not actually part of the joint force, but which support it in certain stages of the operation to facilitate its fulfillment of the ultimate goal. One such example is the deployment of the combined force or components thereof, by sea or air, from one area of operations to another with non-combined naval or air transport.

Some military analysts consider that, no matter how current the operational importance of a category of forces, the future belongs to the joint operations, carried out in a multidimensional combat space and in a multinational framework. In the Romanian Army, the multinational concepts involve "conducting joint multinational operations, together with forces belonging to NATO member states or partners, but also with forces belonging to other states, within coalitions."<sup>5</sup>

NATO's doctrine defines multinational operations as "operations involving armed forces from two or more states acting together"<sup>6</sup>, and the



US Army as "military action by forces of two or more nations in a coalition or alliance."<sup>7</sup> In order to be able to operate in a coherent and efficient way in joint multinational operations, conditions for interoperability and a common operational image must be ensured at the level of the joint force.

Therefore, the preparation and conduct of such operations requires the formation of joint forces. It is estimated that the joint force capable of conducting the joint operations will aim to achieve domination across the spectrum, on the one hand, through the integrated use of dominant maneuvering, precise enemy engagement, logistical concentration and complete force protection, and on the other hand, by achieving information superiority and a unique and integrated command and control system.

I believe that the analysis of the joint operation can be done only in the context of understanding the new feature of military operations, which involves their development in a large space, where the societal environment is an essential component, which includes an extremely active information component. Under these conditions, the operations imply the integrated and united involvement of all the categories of forces that intersect, complement each other and are inter-conditioned dimensionally, informally and actionably with the other societal fields.

The joint operation must be planned, carried out and conducted to achieve the ultimate goal set by the upper echelon, which becomes an essential part of the operations.

When we refer to the purposes of the joint operations, I consider that the issue must be viewed from two perspectives, political and military. The politico-military aims, the results and the finalities of the assembled operation clarify its role in the armed struggle and, as a whole, in the war. The success of the joint operations is based on the joint effort of the components of the force under a single command which will execute the actions based on a unitary conception. The simultaneity of the actions of the components offers the possibility to selectively hit the main power poles in the opponent's device, simultaneously from the ground, water and air, as well as from the electromagnetic environment, in order to isolate them.

Cooperation and coordination are important features of joint operations, which contribute significantly to success. Thus, different types of relationships are established between structures

and categories of forces, through which support is received or provided, based on the principle of ensuring the action complementarity of forces throughout the structure, in order to synchronize efforts and achieve maximum efficiency of actions.

Another important feature concerns the manner of command and control (C2) occurrence. In joint operations, command is centralized at the Joint Forces Command, being executed by the commander of the joint forces group, and operational control is executed by its commander, directly, or through component commanders, to whom different levels of authority will be delegated, clearly indicated by the order of operations. Within the action structure of the joint operations, I consider that military ground, air and naval actions will be carried out, supported, depending on the context and possibilities, by actions in cyberspace, based on a single plan of operations. These actions are performed by groups of assembled forces that may have different values, depending on the goal set, the forces, means and time available to carry out the mission.

### **Considerations regarding the place and destination of the mechanized brigade (infantry) in defensive operations**

In the joint operations, the mechanized brigade (infantry), part of the land component of the group of combined forces, is intended, in cooperation with elements from other categories of forces, to perform the full range of ground and airborne operations, independently, jointly or combined, within or outside the national territory. The land component of a joint operation is configured by the predominant nature of the terrestrial environment and the obvious share of ground forces in the whole operative device.

Based on the main elements of the joint operations, we can consider that the mechanized brigade (infantry) participates in such an action within a group of forces led by the Joint Forces Command, national or multinational (when the operation is multinational).

Thus, when the operation takes place on the national territory, the brigade can be in the following situations:

- within a group of forces consisting only of national forces, throughout the conflict, in this case



the leadership being the exclusive attribute of the commander of the Joint Forces Command, and the logistics are ensured by national effort;

- in a group of forces consisting only of national forces, until the deployment of NATO forces, then joining another group of allied forces, in which case the leadership is provided by the Allied Command, which will include modules of national staff, and logistics will be ensured by applying the concept of Host Nation Support.

When the joint operation takes place outside the national territory, under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the mechanized brigade (infantry) conducts joint operations in a group of multinational or allied joint forces, under the command of a NATO Joint Command.

Regarding the destination of the mechanized brigade (infantry) in the combined operations, I consider that this structure must be able to respond to any military and non-military threats, to be able to carry out dynamic actions and maneuvering at a fast pace, in all environments and conditions. These conditionings are determined by the characteristics of the type of military action which, according to current trends, may be conventional or hybrid.

In this context, I believe that the brigade is intended to ensure, together with the other components of the joint forces and, in particular, the air component, control of the spaces necessary for operations, to protect its own centers of gravity, to fix the opponent's forces and to participate in the execution of decisive operations. The analysis of the dimensions of the aero-ground operation demonstrates that there is a convergence of the actions of the land and air forces to fulfill the unique purpose of the operation.

The air component supports the brigade's defence operation by performing air operations against opposing forces, the main form of support being Close Air Support, as well as by performing air transport operations. An example of an indirect effect due to air force action is gaining control of the airspace that helps shape the area of operations in which brigade forces can act at the right time and place, without prohibitive air interference and to ensure the protection of forces. Indirectly, the possibility of designing military power, when and where it is needed, is ensured, creating an indispensable premise for gaining and maintaining freedom of action at the level of the entire assembled

force, but certainly at the level of the mechanized brigade (infantry).<sup>8</sup>

The air component can provide air close support to the mechanized brigade (infantry) during the movement, to ensure security, especially when this movement is performed in the area of combat actions. In the mechanized brigade (infantry)'s defensive operations, close air support can be executed, both with fighter jets and helicopters, being used to hit enemy targets in the immediate vicinity of their own forces. Thus, close air support provides the commander with extremely mobile firepower during the counterattack and can be executed anywhere in the area of operations. At the same time, aircraft can support the forces in the depth of the enemy's device, in the contact area or in the rear, depending on the type of defence, to support the maneuver (they can complete the maneuvering forces, integrating the fire executed by surface means); movement support (can support the movement of their own forces between positions); the attack of the penetrated enemy (they can engage the enemy who has exceeded the forces in the area of the main battle or who have penetrated the positions of their own forces) and for the support of the reserve.

I believe that firepower and aircraft mobility can make an immediate, direct and decisive contribution to the operation, helping the brigade to fulfill its mission, in particular by hitting inaccessible or difficult-to-employ targets.

The second type of support by the air component is the air transport of personnel, equipment, equipment and materials, as well as resupply in the area of operations (logistics transport), airborne forces and aircraft (vertical maneuver), medical and technical evacuation. It can be performed with a variety of aerial means, from light helicopters to jets. Helicopters must be an integral part of the brigade's scheme of maneuver, and an irreplaceable element of the design of the operation. Unlike airplanes, they can only carry light cargo over short distances, but can be used anywhere due to their flexibility.

Therefore, in the joint operations, I believe that the maneuvering of the mechanized brigade forces, combined with the support of the air component, is a key component of the operations, aspects that converge towards achieving success and reaching the desired final state.



Regarding the cooperation of the mechanized brigade (infantry) with the naval component of the group of assembled forces, this has been a basic element of the recent military conflicts, consisting of fire and movement support.

Fire support is the main means of supporting the brigade's operations. In the case of actions along or in the vicinity of a river, when the front line intersects perpendicularly or at a certain angle the watercourse, the river navy may carry out actions in support of the brigade. Thus, during the defence operation, when the brigade is supported with a flank on the river, the navy can secure the flank by naval fire, mining and actions to prohibit the maneuver of forces and means of the enemy on the flank of the brigade.

Also, another way of supporting the brigade by the naval component is the transport. The maneuver of forces and means performed by the brigade can be performed by transporting personnel, equipment, equipment and materials, as well as transporting and disembarking the river and sea landing.

The operation carried out jointly by the forces of the mechanized brigade (infantry) and units of the navy are coordinated and synchronized by the command of the assembled force. Also, at the level of the brigade and the naval unit with which it cooperates, liaison officers must be appointed through whom the exchange of information and the harmonization of the concept of operations must be carried out on a permanent basis.

Thus, I think that the joint operations have demonstrated their efficiency, compared to the operations carried out by a single category of forces, and the ability of the categories of forces to support each other, as well as the sum of their firepower have had the effect of increasing the probability of successful, but required a higher level of coordination and control.

As for the defence operation, it is carried out by the mechanized brigade (infantry) if it is no longer able to continue the offensive, which would lead to blocking, counterattacking and defeating the force. Defence is a specific form of armed struggle that does not directly lead to decisive victory, but must nevertheless be vigorously prepared and executed while maintaining initiative and exploiting success to continually counter the enemy's initiative, which can be achieved by combining actions, defensive with the offensive. Therefore, when there is no

real reason to remain in defence and the optimal conditions have been created, in order, the offensive resumes. By virtue of this desideratum, the defence operation comprises a fight or a succession of actions carried out in time, the final intention being to achieve the favorable conditions for winning and maintaining the initiative in order to subsequently launch decisive offensive actions.

As a rule, the mechanized brigade (infantry) defends itself in the upper echelon, this being the reason why the brigade commander respects the intention and falls within the actions of the large tactical unit of weapons assembled for the division or grouping of forces. In the space of responsibility of the upper echelon, the brigade can receive defence missions with different aspects, on more or less wide fronts, with exposed flanks, with large intervals between units or even subunits, depending on its place and role in the design. defence operation. The mechanized brigade (infantry) can carry out defence operations within the division or group of forces gathered as: cover force; within the forces of the 1st echelon; within the forces of the 2nd echelon or as a reserve.

Thus, a well-prepared defence involves a "combination of active and passive components that use the fighting and support units efficiently and skillfully to repel the decisive actions of the enemy"<sup>9</sup> in order to neutralize or annihilate its center of gravity in a relatively short time and with minimal losses.

Due to the considerations concerning the defensive operations carried out along continuous fronts, I consider that modern combat actions no longer allow the creation of such combat spaces and non-linear areas of operations will be chosen.

On the other hand, the discontinuity of the battle edge determines the isolated actions, in noncontiguous areas. At the brigade level, these actions can be prepared and carried out by battalion level forces (task forces) articulated by purposes, spatially and temporally, within the entire defence operation. Such actions take different forms and procedures of combat, in varying proportions and intensities, depending on the moments of their development, the action characteristics of the enemy, the area of operations and the objectives within it, as well as the nature and combat power.

Following the analysis, I think that, although the defence does not lead directly to the final



victory, it must be taken decisively to create the conditions to the offensive.

In order to achieve this desideratum, a favorable front line will be considered in conducting the defence operation, which can be established even with the deliberate surrender of a piece of land to allow the forces to occupy a strong alignment with possibilities of offensive retaliation. On the other hand, the support of aviation and, in specific situations, of the naval forces in the decisive moments of the defence operation is indispensable, because the integration of the action of all available forces and obtaining the synergistic effect leads to a significant increase of the defence effort.

### Conclusions

The concept of joint operations is one of the greatest challenges of contemporary military art. I believe that the analysis of the defence operation can be done only in the context of understanding the new physiognomy of military operations, which involves their development in a large space, which also includes an extremely active information component. Under these conditions, the defensive operations involve all categories of forces in an integrated manner, complementing each other.

As a result of my own analysis, I consider that, no matter how current the operational importance of a category of forces, the present and, especially, the future belong to the joint operations, carried out in a multidimensional combat space and in a multinational framework.

In order to be able to participate in joint multinational operations, in which defence operations constitute a definite chapter (Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty), the mechanized brigade must have operational capabilities to achieve interoperability with the other components of such a force.

Thus, the mechanized brigade must have the ability to position or redeploy its structures in various areas of operations, quickly and decisively, be able to make the connection between sensors, engagement systems and effects, be able to cover, in optimal time and wherever it is needed, logistical needs, as well as to ensure the protection of staff and own resources. Therefore, it is obvious that, in the current conditions and in the near future, in case of a military aggression on Romania, its defence is not possible only with the forces deployed in

peacetime in the area of aggression of the opponent, requiring the execution of combined armed forces, including mechanized brigades (infantry) from other peacekeeping garrisons in the area, where the aggression occurred.

In conclusion, the achievement of these objectives can be based on the application of common training doctrines, accompanied by the standardization of equipment and procedures, validated by joint training and participation in joint and multinational exercises.

### NOTES:

1 \*\*\* *Tratat de Știință Militară* (Treatise of military science), vol. I, A.I.S.M. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 126.

2 Marian Stancu, *Operațiile militare ale viitorului* (The military operations of the future), "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 58.

3 \*\*\* *Doctrina Armatei României* (The doctrine of the Romanian Army), Defence Staff, Bucharest, 2012, p. 136.

4 \*\*\* JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, USA Department of Defence, 2011, p. GL-11.

5 \*\*\* *Doctrina Armatei României* (The doctrine of the Romanian Army), Defence Staff, Bucharest, 2012, p. 70.

6 \*\*\* AJP-01(E), *Allied Joint Doctrine*, USA Department of Defence, 2017, LEX-6.

7 \*\*\* DOD, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, USA Department of Defence, 2021, p. 147.

8 \*\*\* AJP-3(B), *Allied Joint Doctrine for the conduct of operations*, USA Department of Defence, 2011, p. 1-9.

9 \*\*\* *Manualul pentru luptă al brigăzii mecanizate (infanterie, infanterie ușoară)* (Field Manual – Mechanized Brigade), Bucharest, 2004, p. 161.

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