

Military Under Foreign Command

I, (NAME), do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.

The oath of enlistment is sworn by all members of the military. It does not encompass nation building or peacekeeping in troubled foreign countries in which there is not a vital US interest. The idea that US military may be placed under foreign command to fight in conflicts that aren't a clear and present danger to the United States and its constitution should be anathema to any politician or military commander.

Diplomats and politicians seem to habitually try to ingratiate themselves with foreigners by making promises of support and cooperation with foreign nations. A historical precedent for this can be traced to the aftermath of World War Two, where the United States was the de-facto authority in place in many liberated and occupied countries. The responsibility we had to govern these areas until they were capable of responsible self-governance, coupled with the interference we had to contend with from the Soviet bloc morphed our worldview into that of the world's police. This view, appropriate in its day, has outlived its usefulness. Progressive politicians and pundits, have no problems using the military to support their worldview, and are willing to subordinate our military resources to a foreign or international command for obscure political purposes. Paradoxically, they do this while they reduce the military to a shadow of its former self.

Foreign or international control of US military forces is unacceptable for a variety of reasons:

1. US national interest: The motives and goals of other countries or groups like the UN are frequently not aligned with, or run counter to, those of the US national interest. Many members of the UN body actively seek to reduce the power, resources and influence of the US.
2. Misuse of American troops: Placing US forces under the active control of a foreign or international body opens the door for misuse of these forces. US military under foreign or international command could be seen by foreign commanders as a disposable asset. Such a commitment becomes a lose-lose situation for the US: any apparent achievements will be credited to the "exemplary international leadership" while failures would often be assigned exclusively to the US forces.
3. Political opportunism: Placing US forces under foreign control opens the door for opportunistic foreign politicians and strongmen to misuse American forces to their own benefit.

4. Supporting American cultural values: The American Military operates under a military code and military law that has been fashioned around American cultural values. Foreign countries or councils may not share these values or worse, reject them. This can only lead to operational conflict.
5. US doing most of the hard work: The very nature of the US military is that it is the most highly trained, well-equipped force in the world. For this reason, any military venture involving the US military implies that the US forces will be doing much of the heavy lifting in combat and support. If the US military is taking the primary role in a combat situation, it should do so under US command. If the US military is taking a secondary role, one must question the advisability of the US even contributing to such an operation.
6. Military operations require trust: Those at the point of the spear must trust their commanders that they're being employed appropriately, and the senior command must trust their subordinates to effectively execute mission assignments. This trust is eroded when a unit is under command of a foreign commander. The more disparate the culture of the different countries, the more likely that an international command structure will fail. Units will be suspicious of orders from foreign commanders, and commanders will be skeptical of the ability of the units under them.

As a sovereign nation, the United States has the responsibility to maintain its sovereignty and not allow its citizens or soldiers to be placed under foreign control.

Coordinating with Military Coalitions

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, it's been uncommon for a western country to unilaterally wage war when necessary. Cultural, geographic and economic ties dictate that western nations will normally go to war as part of a coalition. When a rogue nation upsets the international status quo, it becomes the responsibility of the international body of nations to set things right, and this often means use of force. Whether with other nations that have an interest, or under the umbrella of the United Nations, this means coalition warfare.

Coalition warfare has a spotted history, and is rife with complexities and weaknesses unknown to a unilateral force. Lines of communication are often complex and slow from command to execution. Coalition forces have different ways of doing things, and members of a coalition are naturally suspicious of the capabilities and motives of their foreign partners. Decisions are often made as much for political purposes between the partners as they are for military necessity. In the early 19th century Napoleon took advantage of these weaknesses among the numerically superior coalition forces to divide and conquer most of Europe.

When considering entry into a coalition action, US military and statesmen should consider the goals and means of the coalition, and the level of commitment of the partner nations. The first question should be whether the proposed operation is of vital interest to the US. Merely being a part of a treaty organization such as NATO should not be sufficient cause for participation if that organization seeks a non-defensive use of force,

presumably for peacekeeping or regional stabilization. If such an operation is proposed, we should take heed of the wisdom of President Washington:

“The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.”

For this reason, any US citizen should rightfully question the advisability of involving US combat forces in such matters as peacekeeping missions in the Balkan States, or supporting rebel forces to overthrow a dictator such as Muammar Qaddafi. While such operations may be in the vital interests to some nations inside NATO, they are not necessarily in the vital interests of the United States, and US forces should not be committed to such endeavors.

In the event a foreign operation is determined to be in the vital interests of the United States, such as the attempt by Saddam Hussein to seize the bulk of the mid-East oil production, the USA should make clear that, as the primary contributor of combat power to the conflict, the theater will be under operational control of the USA. Coalition forces who contribute combat power will coordinate with American forces at the appropriate command levels. They should not be under the direct command of American forces, nor should American forces be under their command. Combat tasking should be accomplished cooperatively, and missions only assigned by the sovereign command structure of the units in question.

If the US is the primary force in the theater, the US command must be the final arbiter in the strategic execution of the operation. If coalition member nations are reluctant to agree to that condition, they are welcome to withdraw. With this in mind, the US command must be careful to never place the US military in a situation where another nation may use political, diplomatic or military blackmail to force its operational will on the US. For example, in Operation Desert Storm, under these guidelines, if the Saudi forces had insisted that something be done their way over US objections, the ultimate answer could have been for the US to withdraw from the coalition and exit the theater. Yes, it's high handed, but it's our prerogative as the world's foremost military power to insist that if another country wants our help that badly, they must do things our way, or not at all. Any other arrangement is unacceptable. The United States should never be placed in the position of having to explain to the parents of dead soldiers that their children died to achieve the objectives of a foreign power.

A classic example that shows the inadvisability of an interleaved command is the Allied Campaign in France in 1944. The initial D-Day landings were made by roughly even numbers of British Commonwealth and American forces. But as the campaign dragged on, the Americans became more and more proportionally dominant on the battlefield. Still, the command structure was such that Eisenhower's second-in-command was Field Marshal Montgomery, and this interleaving of command was repeated down the staff structure. The British and Americans had different operational philosophies, and the interleaved command structure caused considerable friction and inefficiency. The capture of Paris was delayed for political reasons, so Free French forces could be given credit for liberating the city. Montgomery demanded a share of the scarce combat supplies to support his

advance up the coast of France that was measured in yards per day against a strong German resistance that had significant terrain advantages, depriving Patton of fuel and ammo that he could have used in his dash across central France that was making two hundred miles a day. Montgomery insisted on the strategically questionable operation Market-Garden operation, and Eisenhower, in the interests of diplomacy, acceded to his plan so the British would have a more prominent role in the defeat of Germany, instead of the more militarily sound option of having the British hold the left flank secure while Patton forced the Rhine farther upstream. Although ultimately successful, the experience of 1944 France provides a cautionary example of pitfalls to be avoided in coalition warfare. Under the coalition organization Eisenhower had in place for political purposes, decisions were made for reasons other than military necessity, and the war was arguably prolonged by as much as six months.

In summary, the American Military should never be subordinate to a foreign or international command. When an operation requires a coalition command, it should be cooperatively linear from the highest command levels downwards. An example of a cooperative command was operation Desert Storm, where the various nationalities were assigned mission tasking at the highest level, and left to their own command structure and staff work to execute their missions. Liaison officers ensured deconfliction with allied forces and established timetables where cooperation was necessary, but at no time were any nation's forces under direct command of anyone but their own staff.

American forces should not be involved in operations which are not under primary American control. Such control should be a precondition of our involvement in such an operation. The primary mission of the US military is to defend the US Constitution and the vital interests of US citizens. The necessity of any military commitment should be evaluated and rejected if it can't be traced to those two reasons.

References:

["Problems of Coalition Warfare: The Military Alliance Against Napoleon, 1813 – 1814"](#)

[Gordon A. Craig, 1965](#)

[Complexity in Coalition Operations: The Campaign of the Sixth Coalition Against Napoleon](#)

[The Keys To Successful Coalition Warfare: 1990 And Beyond AUTHOR Major Willie J. Brown, USMC](#)

[Washington's Farewell Address 1796](#)

MilitaryValues.org Principles and Mission

The content of these topical white papers from MilitaryValues.org is aligned with the organization's principles and mission statement. At the core is the protection of America and the founding principles—mainly summarized by freedom and liberty for citizens and a federal government with limited and enumerated powers. All of this is made abundantly clear in our Constitution and the founder's many writings. The US military's role to protect this is made very clear by the oath that is taken by military officers today:

"I, [name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same;

that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter. So help me God.”

For details on the MilitaryValues.org principles and mission statement go to www.MilitaryValues.org.

About MilitaryValues.org

The effectiveness of the United States military has been significantly compromised over the last 20 years by social engineering and politically driven decisions. This is especially true and serious with military units that face front line combat duties. In stark terms, this problem has unnecessarily cost the lives of our front line men and women—while many more suffer various combat-related physical and mental traumas. And there are untold tangents of pain and loss suffered by families, fellow soldiers, and others.

Combat units, and those that support them, greatly benefit from a culture in which there is a focus of effectively prosecuting missions and wars—and rejects unnecessary risk to the military personnel. This culture creates trust and increases effectiveness and loyalty—which is truly critical for the best shot at success in the complex and dangerous endeavor called combat. However on the other hand, if a military is constantly beat down by forces that do not care about its well-being—then a culture of distrust, failure, and despair will increasingly result. This second culture is what we have today in America’s military.

MilitaryValues.org exists to educate millions of citizens on what has gone wrong and how it can be reversed. We hope you will continue to our website and learn more!