

# Haiti and the Future of Warfare

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Excerpt from CRM 96-126.10 / June 1998

(Cleared for Public Release)



## Summary

Lately, there has been a lot of debate about how military operations are changing. Changes in information technology and the ability to transmit new types of information may be affecting the character of warfare. The end of the Cold War, along with other social and political changes, are also seen as important harbingers of change in the way military forces are used. Some believe that we are either in, or at the beginning of, a revolution in military affairs (RMA).

This study looked at what planning and events surrounding a recent operation, Operation Uphold Democracy, the U.S. led intervention in Haiti, tell us about the question: What do changes in technology and operations mean for the operational level (Joint Task Force) commander?

Operations in Haiti reflect several different aspects of how operational command, and the employment of forces at the operational level of war, is evolving.

- Today's operations require military commanders to play an active role in nonmilitary matters. By nonmilitary, we mean political, diplomatic, social, humanitarian, and other civilian concerns that do not relate directly to warfighting. In Uphold Democracy, Lieutenant General Hugh Shelton, the JTF commander, was involved in ensuring a successful and peaceful transition of power from the Cedras-led military government to President Aristide's new civilian government. Direct involvement in this process required General Shelton to be one of the first soldiers on the ground. He had to immediately begin the process of negotiation and intimidation required to lead the Haitian military government through the transition of power.
- To be successful, the operational commander must understand the *context* of an operation. Context refers to those elements of an operation that rely as much on the commander's judgment and understanding as his knowledge of the facts. These elements include the mission's definition, the enemy's intentions, the actions of other supporting forces, and the overall political situation. It is not that these are new elements of a military

operation. But the unique nature of operations such as Uphold Democracy requires a different approach—one that takes the context into account. Specifically, these operations require:

- *Anticipation* of problems that have not been seen before, even in lessons from similar operations
  - *Synthesis* of widely divergent sets of information and skills
  - *Understanding* of the broader historical, political, and social environment in which the operation is occurring
  - *Creativity*, or the ability to look outside of the current environment to find innovative solutions to problems.
- Improvements in both communications and intelligence collection and synthesis give the operational commander the ability to precisely and simultaneously target and attack those elements of an enemy's government that give it power and legitimacy. In Desert Storm, airpower was used to strike at important elements of Iraqi infrastructure. In Uphold Democracy, had U.S. troops needed to forcibly enter the country, they would have used Special Operations Forces (SOF), airborne paratroopers, and amphibious forces as a precision force, to simultaneously attack the small groups, weapons, and facilities that made up the Haitian government's power base.
  - The nature of political crises such as the one in Haiti makes actual military operations a last resort. Before committing to the use of force, our government tried many different methods to pressure the Cedras military government into leaving. These methods included economic, political, and social pressure, combined with information operations. The *threat* of military force was always present during this period. This threat had to be credible. The implication for military forces is that they may face a lingering period when they are required to be present and ready, but not active.
  - In operations where violence is a last resort, information operations will likely play a key role. Information operations allow the operational commander to persuade, intimidate, confuse,

or cajole the opponent into accepting the strategic objectives, ideally without the use of force.

In thinking about the implications of Operation Uphold Democracy for future operations, we found important, specific implications for naval forces.

We have already discussed the importance of a credible and sustainable military presence throughout all the phases of the crisis. Naval forces routinely perform the presence mission and are designed to linger in the vicinity of the objective while measures other than military force are brought to bear.

The Navy also offered the Unified Commander in Chief (CINC) and the Joint Force Commander (JFC) a way to obtain the operational flexibility they needed to conduct the operation. In Uphold Democracy, airpower was not the appropriate tool to accomplish the precise, simultaneous attack planned against the Haitian military government; Special Forces and airborne paratroopers were needed. Navy ships provided staging platforms for Army, Marine Corps, and Special Forces troops. Navy ships also provided platforms for command and control and information operations. When access to land bases is constrained, flexible employment of naval assets can help the JFC meet the demands of operations where using force is a last resort, and the military may be only one of many factors influencing events.