

Joint Military Commissions: A Model For Post-Conflict Negotiations In The Balkans And Beyond

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Abstract

Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, the 20 December 1995 to 20 December 1996, NATO-led Peace Enforcement mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B-H), exposed U.S. and Coalition commanders to the concept of Joint Military Commissions (JMCs) for the first time. JMCs were called for in Annex 1A of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Agreement, Dayton Accords, Paris Protocol or Dayton-Paris Agreement, concluded in November 1995, and formally signed in Paris on 14 December 1995 that ended the 3¹/₂-year-long civil war in B-H.

Peace operations require substantial interaction between military commanders and belligerent military or political leaders to prevent and resolve conflicts or to secure cooperation. During JOINT ENDEAVOR, the multinational divisions (U.S., French, and British) developed the JMC process to become the key control and liaison mechanism for compelling compliance with treaty tasks, as well as fostering conditions for the restoration of law and order within Bosnia.

As part of the process, commanders advised and assisted by linguists, intelligence analysts, political advisors, lawyers, and others set not only regular and recurrent meetings, but *ad hoc* ones as well, to bring together leaders of protagonist factions to negotiate agreements and to arbitrate or mediate disputes. Even at the tactical level, commanders found themselves engaged in a political process, wherein they could not expect to be successful using purely military principles and logic. They also needed the ability to understand and influence a variety of political interests, power struggles, cultural values, personalities, and perceptions of fairness or exploitation. These aspects of peace operations are not normally included in U.S. Army training curricula, but became part of predeployment preparations, mission execution during JOINT ENDEAVOR, then "right seat" transitional training for follow-on Stabilization Force (SFOR) elements.

This paper will describe the JMC process in Bosnia in particular, with comparisons and contrasts to other past JMCs including but not limited to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, North and South Korea, Kosovo, Uruguay, Zambia, as fora through which factions coordinate their military operations, whether formally designated JMCs or under other auspices, and the mechanism by which instructions can be issued and disputes arbitrated or mediated, as appropriate, when dealing with civil-military operations in the aftermath of armed conflict.