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# The Army Directorate Role in the Modernization of the Turkish Land Forces

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The Army Directorate (ARD) of the Office of Defense Cooperation Turkey has played a pivotal role in assisting the Turkish Land Forces Command (Turkish Army) or TLFC modernize its forces from what was basically a 750,000 man dismounted infantry to a mechanized, armored force that is the largest in the region. In response to the external threat posed by the military build-up of its neighbors over the past decade, TLFC is going through a period of transition that began about 1990 and will undoubtedly take several more years to complete. It is simultaneously modernizing and reorganizing its force structure from one based on light infantry divisions to one founded on mechanized and heavy brigades. While all units have been reorganized on paper, equipment shortfalls are significant, and training and doctrine to embrace the new force structure are lagging behind.

On the positive side of combat readiness, the average Turkish soldier is well-motivated, nationalistic in orientation, and imbued with the legacy of the tenacious combat achievements of Ataturk, a highly decorated officer of World War I who is considered to be the father of modern Turkey. Since World War II, Turkey has played a major role as a steady ally of the United States, serving as the linchpin of the southern flank of NATO during the Cold War. Turkey proudly provided a superbly trained and motivated combat regiment to the United Nations forces in Korea. It also played a significant support role in the United Nations victory in Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and continues to provide the base support for UN Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq. Turkey volunteered to provide a mechanized task force to Somalia—including the overall UN commander. A Turkish reinforced mechanized battalion is currently employed in support of UN operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Through these actions and other NATO missions, the TLFC has proven a loyal and willing partner.

## PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS

The Army Directorate, with seven officers, four local nationals, and one U.S. civilian has attempted to provide the framework within which TLFC has conducted its reorganization. The primary method of equipment upgrades has been through the use of older, excess U.S. Army stocks provided under the auspices of MAP, MAP-merger, FMS-grant/loan programs, judicious use of sparse national budget funding, and most recently under the Southern Region Amendment (SRA) and cascading Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) excess defense articles programs. The actions taken over the past two years to complete the receipt of modern equipment, including 932 M60 tanks, 534 M113 Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), 72 M110A2 8" self-propelled howitzers, 12 MLRS launchers, and 38 AH-1 attack helicopters (28 AH-IPS and 10 AH-1W), have significantly enhanced Turkey's combat power and its ability to project that power to deter regional threats.



AH-1W, Super Cobra Attack Helicopter U.S. Marine version

Despite this success in acquiring selected hardware systems to support its transition, underlying problems exist in doctrine, training, and logistics that affect TLFC's combat readiness. TLFC lacks an integrated, strategic doctrine upon which to base force structure changes and training programs. Unit training is not focused on mission essential tasks, lacks realism, and is not conducted in a combined arms/joint environment. The need for an increased training OPTEMPO (operational tempo) to gain and maintain proficiency on new systems has not been fully implemented. The short period of mandatory service for conscripts, which form the bulk of the force, inhibits development of weapon system crew proficiency, a problem aggravated by the complexity of the newly acquired weapon systems. The lack of planning and funding, particularly the latter, have led to shortfalls in acquiring needed ammunition and repair parts. Unless, and until these issues are adequately addressed, the advantages in combat capability offered by the new hardware may not be fully realized.

TLFC's emphasis in the past has been on the fielding of equipment; it had to identify and acquire excess U.S. materiel as it became available. This has led to many gaps that TLFC now must close. As with the procurement of any new equipment, the support of that item, such as a Total Package Approach (TPA), must be included. Due to the time constraints involved with the draw-down of U.S. forces and the excess programs making these items available, many of the essential tenets of TPA were not completely embraced. This has created major shortfalls in such areas as developing basic logistics support infrastructure, maintenance capability, transportation, and most importantly, an established tactical training system. The incorporation of a war fighting doctrine that embraces new tactics and techniques necessary when fielding new equipment is paramount to success.

SAO officers in Turkey must be capable of communicating with Turkish officials at grade levels significantly higher than their own, have a full appreciation for cultural and historical influences, and, most of all, have technical competency. Language skills are of additional, but not primary, benefit. Senior Turkish officers relate favorably to the American presence in Turkey and to visits by senior U.S. military and civilian personnel to Turkey, as well as opportunities to visit U.S. Army facilities, both in the U.S. and Germany. Most recently, the commanders of the TLFC Infantry, Armor, Artillery, and Ordnance Schools, and members of their Training Commands

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visited the Combat Manuever Training Center (CMTC) at Hohenfels, Germany, where they had the opportunity to observe a brigade in training. It is anticipated that the information and observations they made during this visit concerning the need for doctrine, training to standards, training as a combined arms team, and the importance of maneuver training centers will be inculcated into the "school house" training in TLFC for maximum impact in the future. Additional trips such as this, involving general officers who are in positions to make changes and influence the future direction of the TLFC will be scheduled. As the effects of these trips and subsequent changes are implemented and reflected throughout the force, unit-level exchange training will become more appropriate.

## TRAINING

TLFC capabilities for training individuals and conducting small unit light infantry training are generally good. Branch schools provide appropriate instruction in basic skills for junior officers and soldiers; graduates are knowledgeable and capable. The technical NCO program, designed to provide up to 50,000 graduates over the next decade, will fill a rapidly growing need for better qualified leaders to operate and maintain the more sophisticated equipment TLFC has acquired. This is necessary because the average conscript is not in service long enough to acquire the requisite skills. Training in light infantry tactics, a TLFC mainstay before its transition began, is well understood and executed.

Training capabilities in combined arms and joint operations are weak, however. The lack of a capstone doctrine (i.e., a set of principles for the assignment of wartime missions to combat units), plus the lack of combat maneuver training centers and training simulation systems, contributes to somewhat weak unit sustainment training, particularly for the newer mechanized infantry and armor units. TLFC units do not routinely conduct combined arms training. Joint training exercises between TLFC and the other Turkish armed forces are not often conducted. Integration of combat functions is also not fully implemented. Again, the lack of approved, disseminated doctrine that is tailored to the threat, missions, and force structure of the TLFC, is a liability.



Turkish Land Forces armored amphibious exercise

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The U.S. can best provide training assistance by:

(1) Continuing to provide professional military education courses for selected individuals through the IMET program. U.S. funding for IMET for Turkey should be restored to the levels of the early 1990's to provide opportunities for more TLFC soldiers. As the U.S. Government has significantly decreased IMET for Turkey, the number of current and future senior leaders familiar with our procedures is dropping. This will lead very quickly to a generation of TLFC leadership that may no longer be the strong proponent of U.S. equipment, training, and procedures as we have seen in the past.

(2) Continuing to provide orientation/training visits for senior TLFC officers and NCO's to U.S. Army training centers and schools. TLFC general officers who are in a position to influence the development and implementation of doctrine and effective training programs should be the target audience of these visits. Their input back into the training and, just as importantly, into the budgeting process of TLFC will have the most direct beneficial effect. As doctrine is developed and implemented, and training standards are upgraded, TLFC unit training at U.S. training centers as well as U.S. Army/TLFC unit exchange training will become possible.

## **DEFENSE COOPERATION**

The Government of Turkey continues to look toward Western defense industry for co-production and joint venture opportunities for political and budgetary reasons. As discussed above, the decreasing flow of security assistance funding from the U.S., coupled with pressures for additional materiel caused by the modernization of the force, makes this area of cooperation even more important than in the past. Current DCA programs include:

(1) **Armored Combat Vehicle (ACV).** FMC and their joint venture partner, Nurol (FNSS), began producing the ACV in 1991. The plan calls for 1,698 vehicles to be produced over an eight-year period in four variations (Infantry Fighting Vehicle, Armored Personnel Carrier, Mortar Vehicle, and TOW Vehicle). The total project cost exceeds \$1.5 billion. Only 200 vehicles have been formally accepted by TLFC to date. Problems with the delivery of major components and, most recently, issues involving the appropriate level of armor protection have plagued the program. The successful results of recent U.S.-conducted ballistic testing did eliminate the latter issue as a stumbling block and resulted in the acceptance by TLFC of approximately 100 additional vehicles. Funding and component delivery problems remain, however. In addition, ODC Turkey convinced TLFC to appoint a program manager to oversee this program. This will help keep the user in the process.

(2) **Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) Co-production.** The Turkish government, after reviewing the second draft MOA from MICOM to co-produce 1,500 ATACMS, elected to drop this program since the US has again stated it will not provide rocket motor technology to Turkey due to Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) restrictions. The rocket motor coproduction had been a key element in Turkey's desire to initiate this program. There is little possibility that this program will come to fruition unless technology transfer issues can be resolved.

(3) **Ammunition Technical Data Packages (TDPs).** A number of TDPs were requested by the Minister of National Defense and are in the final stages of preparation by the U.S. With the large number of older weapon systems that Turkey has acquired, a very large market opportunity exists for the local production and consumption of ammunition. As yet, Turkey has failed to capitalize on this to the fullest extent, as the growing worldwide market for potential third country sales appears to be a viable option to generate national income.

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## CONCLUSION

In an effort to overcome the majority of these problems, ARD has taken on two major tasks. The first is to re-focus the procurement effort toward the year 2010. The second is to integrate the key planners and decision makers of TLFC into the planning and procurement process, using the Program Management Executive as the model to emulate. These efforts have attempted to move TLFC from questions such as how to maintain and sustain the older equipment they currently have, which is quickly becoming obsolete and deleted from U.S. inventories, to ones where the issues surround how to field, train, integrate, and sustain modern battlefield systems such as M1 main battle tanks and AH-1W attack helicopters into Turkey's strategies and doctrine. Both of these efforts will help establish programs that should systemically lead to the development of equipment and doctrine to execute it in support of their strategic requirements. Further, by "partnering" Turkey to U. S. equipment, we have also established a benchmark for NATO standardization and interoperability that will ensure mutual support for years to come between these two allies.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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