



French military intelligence services in contact with American forces during the Gulf War: what lessons can be learned?

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Military intelligence refers to "part of the wider defence intelligence system, which must enable the political authority to conceive, direct and conduct the defence of the nation, which is "intended to ensure at all times, in all circumstances and against all forms of aggression, the security and integrity of the territory, as well as the life of the population "1 . 1 In short, the aim is to collect, process and mobilise intelligence of military interest for the optimal deployment of French forces. In this respect, the Gulf War resulted in the reorganisation of the intelligence services while at the same time being part of the wider process of the "revolution in military affairs" (RAM) that began in the 1990s. Beginning in 1991, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, Operation Daguet was launched.

The Gulf War, an organisational turning point for French military intelligence?

The emergence of special forces units within the Army with the capacity to collect and process intelligence is already long-standing. Nevertheless, Operation Daguet was accompanied by a structuring of these services. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, a series of measures were taken: the establishment of a directorate dedicated to intelligence (DRM); the creation of a joint operational coordination body (CPOIA) and a special operations command (COS), to which was added the Joint Operational Centre (COIA). In addition, within the framework of European cooperation, military satellite intelligence (Helios) is developing. This is of course to the benefit of the French armed forces, without putting too much pressure on an already tight budget.

As Lieutenant-Colonel Rémy Portez² points out, the Gulf war accelerated the process of transformation and reorganisation of the French military apparatus, particularly in the field of human and electronic military intelligence. It has allowed for better interoperability with its Anglo-Saxon counterparts from an organisational point of view.

Specificity and autonomy of French military intelligence

Until the beginning of the 1990s, the French army suffered from a significant lack of electronic military intelligence. Until then, it was dependent on American capabilities. Subsequently, Defence Minister Pierre Joxe made the creation of the DRM one of his main objectives. This service was created in June 1992, barely 8 months after the end of the fighting. Lieutenant General Heinrich, its founder and first director, underlined the material assistance provided by the American Defense Intelligence Agency. This support enabled it to quickly become one of the leading intelligence services. On the other hand, emphasis was placed on the autonomy of French military intelligence while preserving its specificity, characterised by the importance given to human intelligence (ROHUM).

On the eve of the Gulf War, it seems that the weakness of the French intelligence system was primarily due to the absence of coordination bodies. In addition, the technical means were inadequate to the innovations of the time.

Abbreviations

JOC: Joint Operations Centre

SOC: Special Operations Command

CPCO: Planning and Operations Centre

CPOIA: Joint Operations Command

DRM: Directorate of Military Intelligence

1 - Order of 7 January 1959.

2 - See article Operation: " Daguet 1991 ", LCL @ Rémy Porte, p. 9

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