97837 - Joining Zuhr and ‘Asr because of military manoeuvres

the question

We are working in the military, and we often have to perform some military maneuvers, only for training. Since these maneuvers are just like a real battle, in terms of using real weapons and other military tactics, like having a zero hour which is the time set for the start of a military operation. The soldiers at zero hour should take their positions according to the plan, whether on the ground or inside the military vehicles. After this no one is allowed to leave his position under any condition, just like a real war. During the operation we fire by real weapons like if we were in front of a real enemy. These operations sometimes take the time of one obligatory prayer or two, sometimes even more than this. The problem we face is that we cannot pray on time in congregation. For example, an operation starts at 11.00 until before sunset. This takes time for both Dhuhr and ‘Asr, and no one is allowed to leave to pray every prayer on time. The question here is: is it permissible in this case to pray Dhuhr and ‘Asr together? Knowing that leaving the operation for every prayer will mean achieving a lower grade for the training.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is permissible to join Zuhr and ‘Asr at the time of the earlier or later prayer in cases such as this, because joining prayers is a concession that is granted. So whenever one needs to join them, one may join them. Hence it is proven in al-Saheeh from Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) joined prayers in Madeenah at times other than times of fear or rain. It was said to Ibn ‘Abbaas: Why did he do that? He said: So that his ummah would not be faced with hardship., i.e., that they should not suffer hardship because of offering each prayer on time. End quote from Fataawa Noor ‘ala al-Darb by Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allaah have mercy on him).

You have to advise those who are in charge of these manoeuvres to choose times for them that do

not conflict with the prayer, so that the soldiers can join Zuhr and ‘Asr at the time of either the earlier or later prayer.

May Allaah be pleased with ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, who wrote to his governors in the regions: The most important of your affairs in my view is the prayer. Whoever prays regularly has protected his religious commitment, but whoever is careless about it will be more careless about other things. Narrated by Maalik in al-Muwatta’ (6).

And Allaah knows best.