

# Joint Task Forces: Options to Train, Organize, and Equip

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**I**N CHARLES E. HELLER AND WILLIAM A. Stofft's *America's First Battles, 1776–1965*, the authors conclude that “more glaring than poorly trained troops as a first-battle problem is the weakness of command-and-control.”<sup>1</sup> The authors attribute this weakness to “inadequate preparation of commanders and staffs for the real world of combat.”<sup>2</sup> In the last decade, the Joint Task Force (JTF) has become the U.S. military's instrument of choice for operational command and control. However, standing JTFs do not formally exist, and have not yet been adopted as the norm. Instead, they are created in response to an emerging contingency or crisis only to disband upon mission accomplishment.

The *ad hoc* nature of JTFs invites problems. A team formed while at the same time planning a complex operation must confront organizational and operational difficulties simultaneously. The advent of a crisis is the worst time to build the organization to respond to it. This article will review the process of creating joint

commands, the players and stakeholders, historical analogues, survey today's requirements for joint forces, and consider possible solutions. In the end, the future needs of joint command will require a mix of standing JTFs, standing JTF headquarters, and strategic reserve JTF headquarters.

## JOINT TASK FORCES

Large conflicts are fought by a geographic combatant command, while smaller conflicts are more likely to be fought by a temporary joint task force formed for a specific contingency. The unified commands “stand up” JTFs, which are quite often the Commander in Chief's (CINC) instrument of choice for prosecuting the operational level of war. Rather than theater-wide warfare as anticipated in the Cold War, today's crises are expected to erupt throughout the theater of operations independent of each other. The unified command may recommend a course of action to the National Com-

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mand Authorities (NCA) that requires standing up a JTF. If the course of action is approved, a Joint Operations Area (JOA) and mission is assigned to a JTF. The JTF is responsible for creating a more detailed course of action, and forces would be allocated to the new joint force commander.

The CINC is responsible for the training of forces assigned to him and has the authority to assign tasks to subordinate headquarters. U.S. Code stipulates that combatant commanders give authoritative direction to subordinate commanders and forces necessary to carry out the mission assigned, to include authoritative direction of all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics.<sup>3</sup> Frequently, unified commanders appoint a subordinate joint force commander and assign tasks to a JTF for a crisis or specified mission and time frame.

The current practice is to pre-designate three-star JTF commanders from each of a unified command's service component headquarters and for each unified command to maintain a core joint planning cell around which a JTF can form. These JTF commanders and selected staff are assigned primary duties in their service component headquarters. A JTF headquarters team trains infrequently. After training, the participants disperse and return to their service component commands. However, these "trained" JTF headquarters rarely deploy.

JTF headquarters—the country's primary tool for command and control of

the combined arms capabilities of the four services—do not exist. Partially as a result, the individual designated to command these diverse forces has a primary duty to a single service component headquarters. The same is true of the JTF staff and their equipment. For example, the information systems they use on a daily basis for command, control, and communications are the systems of their service, not joint systems.<sup>4</sup>

There appears to be widespread agreement that a JTF headquarters should be formed and maintained prior to crises. The Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph W. Ralston, stated that his experience as a joint force commander convinced him of the superiority of a standing joint force over an *ad hoc* force.<sup>5</sup> The Commander in Chief of the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM), General Peter J. Schoomaker, said unequivocally that his standing special operations JTF headquarters was essential to mission accomplishment.<sup>6</sup> The CINC of U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), General Charles E. Wilhelm, claimed that if he had a stable command team, the rest was relatively easy.<sup>7</sup>

But the military's treatment of JTF command and organization is inconsistent, varying across services and commands. Table 1 depicts CINC-designated joint task forces. In general, these JTFs do not exist except when scheduled for a week-long training event. Nor do they have assigned or apportioned

**Table 1. CINC-designated JTFS<sup>8</sup>**

<b>Unified Command</b>	<b>Component Base</b>
USACOM	XVIII Airborne Corps III Corps 2nd Fleet 8th Air Force II Marine Expeditionary Force
CENTCOM	I Marine Expeditionary Force
EUCOM	U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) U.S. Navy Europe (NAVEUR) U.S. Air Force Europe (USAFE) II Marine Expeditionary Force Special Operations Command Europe
PACOM	I Corps 7th Fleet III Marine Expeditionary Force Alaskan Command 3rd Fleet 13th Air Force
SOUTHCOM	II Marine Expeditionary Force

forces. In the table, Component Forces indicates the unit from which a three-star JTF commander is drawn.

But there is no consistent method for organizing joint task forces by type. While European Command organizes its JTFS by mission-type, be it humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR), noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO), and so forth, Pacific Command chooses to designate a first and second team, regardless of mission type.

Because JTF commanders are first and foremost service component commanders, the U.S. military lacks the trained command and staff team capable of tak-

ing on a wide array of joint operations. This in itself might be adequate justification for formation of standing JTF headquarters. But in addition to this fundamental flaw, a variety of trends characterizing the transition from the Cold War argue even more strongly for change.

## RECENT HISTORY

At the peak of U.S. force structure, forces were forward deployed in the planned theater of operations under command of the CINC that would employ them. Additional forces were

located in the Continental United States (CONUS) on active duty or in the reserves. U.S.-based forces were typically apportioned for planning to one unified command but could be allocated to another unified command during a contingency. Although an increasing portion of total force structure resides in CONUS after post-Cold War defense reductions, the number of unified commands and their geographic AORs remain.

As a result, fewer forces are available to meet the CINCS' needs. Combat forces, once dedicated to a single unified command, now have many contingency relationships with many unified commands. An Army unit formerly trained, equipped, and stationed on the German plains prepared to defend against a Warsaw Pact threat is now stationed in the United States prepared to fight in such diverse areas as the Balkans, Korea, Southwest Asia, Haiti, or Somalia.

EUCOM has undergone the greatest loss of dedicated, forward-deployed forces. U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM), once predominantly a naval command, has been the greatest recipient of forces as they return to CONUS. Its geographic responsibilities include the Atlantic Ocean and the eastern seaboard and recently have grown to include the entire continental United States excluding forces located along the U.S. Pacific Coast. The commander of USACOM is informally and unofficially called "CINC America," a departure from the command's Atlantic naval legacy.

Military operations short of full-scale warfare, such as the invasion of Panama and the air raid on Libya, do not require the full complement of forces at the disposal of a CINC. Yet even these cases require a significant and accelerated integration of specialized capabilities. While the CINC will likely prosecute military operations in the command's AOR, a JTF commander will conduct most military contingencies.

The geographic unified commands, as organizational headquarters, have been fairly stable in the second half of the twentieth century. The service component command headquarters supporting the unified commands have similarly remained stable. These permanent organizations have worked together for decades. The specific service units assigned to the unified commands exhibited great change over the same period; this is particularly true in the European theater. Even though the relationship between service units and unified commands change over time, the service units themselves—maneuver divisions and fighter squadrons, for example—are enduring organizations. As another example, naval forces, due to deployment cycles, rotate in and out of a unified command's AOR in the short term but are stable in the long term.

The JTF, on the other hand, is a temporary command created as a contingency emerges to command and control operations across a broad range of operations. The command and staff team must be built, a plan constructed,

tactical forces absorbed as needed, and military operations commenced. Cohesion, familiarity, plans, and systems must be built on short order. (Some JTFs remain operational for extended periods, but enduring and semi-enduring missions are more appropriately the domain of the unified and subordinate unified commands.) As a contingency ends, the temporary command terminates.

During the Cold War, deliberate planning—as in the 18 month JSCP planning cycle—for general war received the preponderance of attention and resources. All the while, crisis action planning was initiated for innumerable contingencies. A culture of deliberate planning remains in many quarters. However, the unified commands have increased their emphasis on time-sensitive planning. The change is most notable at EUCOM, once consumed by deliberate planning for theater-wide warfare but now dominated by contingencies like those in the Balkans and Africa. U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) remains focused on a specific major theater war (MTW) supported by extensive deliberate planning. CENTCOM also plans for a MTW, but it must also be prepared to respond to a variety of lesser regional contingencies and missions in its AOR.

Each combatant commander is assigned an AOR. The AOR assigned to a unified command is a large theater of operations. In the past, warfare, particularly in Europe, oriented on theater-wide operations. Today's unified commands may have several JOAs within

their theater, each JOA potentially independent of the others. The operational level of war links tactical actions to strategic objectives<sup>9</sup> and, quite often, the operational level of war is conducted by the JTF. For example, separate contingencies against separate threats on the Iraqi/Saudi border and at the Straits of Hormuz may require an air-land JTF and a maritime JTF, each with its own JOA. The unified commander would assign priorities, shift resources, and otherwise arbitrate between them. Alternatively, the unified command could conduct the operation as a single contingency within the AOR.

Closely related to the issues of assigned and apportioned forces in the past, large numbers of forces were forward deployed in the theater of operations. Since they lived in a theater, they were assigned to that theater. Today's reality of fewer forces permanently stationed abroad shifts an even greater burden to strategic mobility and rapid planning and execution.

Each unified command's training program focuses on MTWs and smaller-scale contingencies (SSCs). However, exercises increasingly emphasize humanitarian assistance, peace operations, and other military operations other than war (MOOTW).<sup>10</sup> Many of these activities do not employ the common force-on-force tactical operations, but deal with a broader range of issues.

*Joint Vision 2010* provides the vision of future joint operations, espousing information superiority. Billions of dollars are being invested in systems for

command and control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Many of these ostensibly are targeted for use by the JTF commander.<sup>11</sup> However, those JTFs that do exist are conducting operations around the world, and are unavailable to generate requirements for or experiment with these new tools and methods.

### SERVICE RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE OF COMBINED ARMS

The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps have each faced forming last-minute *ad hoc* combined arms headquarters and chose to adopt permanent headquarters from existing structures rather than incur the operational penalties associated with *ad hoc* commands. Individually, and in sharp contrast to their attitudes toward standing joint task forces, the services have chosen to organize to best prepare for operations across their own internal capabilities.

Competing demands of efficiency and effectiveness dominate the debate. Economies of scale may be achieved in garrison by building homogeneous organizations such as tank-pure battalions—which facilitate support by allowing tank crews, mechanics, repair facilities, and parts to be collocated. However, the military rarely fights with homogeneous organizations. Rather, it “task organizes” by bringing together heterogeneous resources to accomplish a specific task or mission. The term

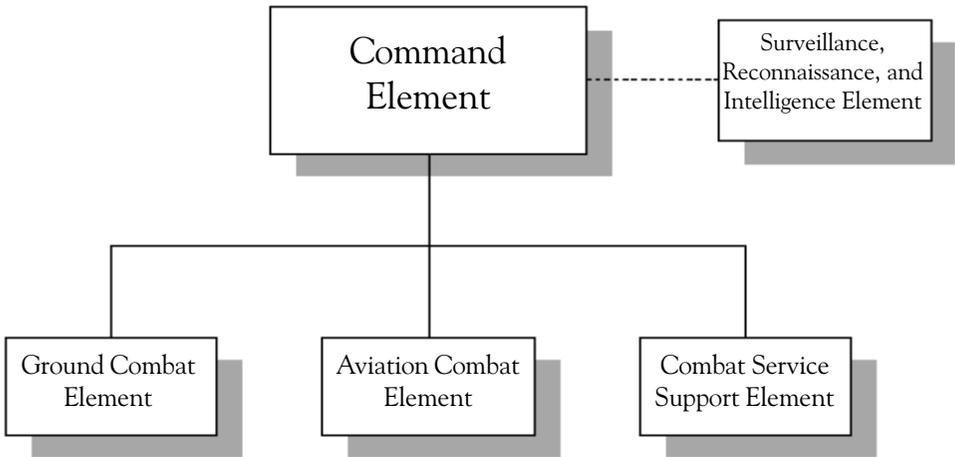
“combined arms” is used within the Army and Marine Corps to refer to this merging of armor, infantry, artillery, aviation, engineers, and combat support into a combined arms team. Although a homogenous organization may be efficient in garrison, it is not effective in combat, since a headquarters that has commanded a single combat arm is not organized, trained, or equipped to command a complex combined arms team. Therefore, integrating well-trained and well-equipped homogeneous forces into a heterogeneous organization at the last minute has no rational expectation of success.

#### Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force

In many respects, the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) is a microcosm of the JTF. Its general structure is shown in Figure 1. The MAGTF is most commonly employed in conjunction with a Navy Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). They bring together the combined arms of air, ground, and sea. In garrison, battalions are generally pure to achieve efficiencies. For example, infantry battalions, tank battalions, amphibious tractor battalions, and artillery battalions live and train together at their home station.

When forming a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU),<sup>12</sup> a trained infantry battalion is mated with other trained resources to form a battalion landing team, which forms the ground combat element of the MEU. Trained and ready rotary and fixed wing units are collected into an aviation combat element. The

Figure 1. Marine Air-Ground Task Force Structure



MEU would likely undergo training to qualify as Special Operations Capable (SOC). Finally, the MEU (SOC) and ARG marry up to form a potent combined arms team for deployment. All of the pieces were previously trained in the skills of their combat arm prior to assembling into a single, heterogeneous unit. All the pieces, that is, but the command element, which is the organization responsible for integrating the various combined arms into a coherent whole.

In the mid-1980s, the Marine Corps addressed that shortcoming by standing up permanent MAGTF headquarters. Today there are seven standing MEU headquarters. There are three in North Carolina, three in southern California, and one in Okinawa, Japan. In addition, there are three standing Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) headquarters, one each in North Carolina, southern California, and Okinawa.

### Army Brigade

The Army adopted a standing combined arms headquarters in favor of the branch-pure regiment—for example, an infantry or cavalry regiment. The Army formerly employed regiments as the command level between battalion and division, as does the Marine Corps today. However, like the Marine Corps, the Army found it difficult to form a combined arms headquarters from a regimental structure. Therefore, Army divisions now have four combined arms headquarters called “brigades.” Three of the brigades are organized and trained to take on two to five maneuver battalions (armored, mechanized, or infantry), an artillery battalion in direct support, and other units provided by their division. The fourth brigade headquarters orients on aviation operations, mostly by attack and transport helicopters.

### **Navy Task Organization**

The Navy also maintains homogeneous commands. All aircraft carriers belong to a single “type command.” Frigates, cruisers, attack submarines, and ballistic missile submarines, for instance, each belong to a type-specific command. The type command is responsible for training the crew before deployment, and maintains responsibility over matters specific to a ship type while the ship is at sea. The ship is then assigned to a heterogeneous battle group or task force, which is responsible for command during employment—the Navy equivalent of combined arms operations.

Task force or battle group commanders reside aboard aircraft carriers or ships configured in advance for command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR). The commanding officer, most likely a Navy admiral, might choose the carrier for a complex land strike mission. Given the expeditionary nature of naval forces, it is too late to organize, train, and equip a command element when a crisis arises.

### **Composite Wings and Multi-Ship Missions**

The typical Air Force wing is homogeneous, such as a fighter wing. However, there are a small number of composite wings in the Air Force. The 347th Wing at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia is an example of a composite wing.<sup>13</sup> Two squadrons fly the supersonic, multi-role F-16. Another flies the legendary C-130 Hercules that can move personnel,

equipment, and supplies within a theater of operations. A final squadron flies the A-10 Warthog, an attack aircraft. The A-10 is a subsonic, two-engine jet that performs superbly in the close air support role. A headquarters and an air control squadron round out the composite wing.

It is difficult to imagine how such a composite wing would fight together in a separate air campaign. The benefits, however, are obvious when the wing is mated with an Army division. The 347th is located near the Army’s 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized)<sup>14</sup> at Fort Stewart, Georgia. Their close proximity allows them to train together on a regular basis, greatly enhancing their combat effectiveness. Collectively, an Army division and an Air Force composite wing constitute an impressive combat capability. This mutual support relationship is greatly desired by the ground commander,<sup>15</sup> but flies in the face of the Air Force’s desire for autonomy from the ground commander. One can easily imagine that a heterogeneous wing is more expensive to operate than a homogeneous wing due to the economies that can be achieved in maintenance and other overhead by supporting only a single aircraft type.

More than wings and squadrons, however, the multi-ship mission is where the Air Force practices combined arms. A mission may draw different types of aircraft together solely for the purpose of a single operation. A large strike mission might be composed of 32 bomb-carrying fighters, 16 fighter es-

corts, eight Wild Weasel aircraft to destroy enemy radar, four electronic jammer aircraft,<sup>16</sup> and 15 tankers to refuel the group.<sup>17</sup> An AWACS command and control aircraft may manage this and several other missions in real time. The Air Force has done an impressive job of building this extremely flexible combined arms capability, though some interoperability problems have occurred between Air Force and naval aircraft.

### **Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force**

There have been attempts at maintaining a standing JTF.<sup>18</sup> The evolution of the Rapid Deployment JTF into CENTCOM is instructive. The U.S. Readiness Command (REDCOM)<sup>19</sup> was once a unified command with responsibility for responding to crises around the world—specifically to those areas not part of another unified command's area of responsibility—and consisted mainly of CONUS-based strategic reserve forces.

The Arab-Israeli war of 1973 caused, among other things, a worldwide increase in oil prices. That led to a greater focus on U.S. interests in the region. For much of the history of the unified command plan, sub-Saharan Africa has been unassigned. By the mid-1970s, Cuban and Russian presence in the region forced U.S. military thinkers to reconsider U.S. geopolitical interests there. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan found that REDCOM's available air and sealift was capable of deploying only a single battalion to the region. Throughout REDCOM's history, its focus shifted quickly between sub-Saharan

Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and global contingencies. Throughout all of this, the European Command remained more capable of deploying air and land forces, and the Pacific Command remained more capable of deploying naval forces.

Several command arrangements were implemented over the years, such as a Rapid Deployment JTF subordinate to REDCOM, for planning and exercises, which would pass to the European or Pacific Command in a crisis. The Rapid Deployment JTF became a separate command in October 1981, with reporting responsibilities directly to the Chairman and the NCA, and eventually became the U.S. Central Command on 1 January 1983. REDCOM's responsibilities for strategic reserve forces in CONUS are now the domain of USACOM. It was often asked, why would one assign forces to a unified command such as REDCOM that will never employ them? Yet that is the situation today.

### **Marine Corps**

#### **Standing Joint Task Force**

In July 1995, the Commandant of the Marine Corps cited the need for a standing JTF (SJTF) headquarters oriented to expeditionary operations, much like the standing MAGTF headquarters. Over the following two and a half years, the headquarters established a proven capability. It supported the European, Southern, and Atlantic Commands at the low end of the conflict spectrum by augmenting real-world JTFs, participating in joint training ex-

ercises, and occupying its own facility. Future plans included the formation of an independent communications support element to provide dedicated C4ISR equipment. However, difficulty in acquiring the joint staff billets and support of the other services resulted in the SJTF being ordered to stand down.<sup>20</sup>

Each of the services have faced the problem of forming headquarters capable of practicing combined arms. Individually, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps decided to create permanent organizations rather than attempting to form *ad hoc* organizations at the last minute. Despite the attendant need to shift resources, service leaders realized that effective combined arms operations required better-organized headquarters. *Ad hoc* command did not work within the services, and should not be expected to work across services.

## FACTORS FOR AND AGAINST CHANGE

In 1947, CINCs were allocated geographic AORs and the Joint Chiefs of Staff—then basically a committee of service chiefs with no one in charge—determined which service would be executive agent for that region. Since the respective service chief selected the CINC, the service chief assigned executive agency was firmly positioned in the chain of command between the president and the CINC. Thus, drawing geographic boundaries at water's edge preserved service prerogatives as they stood at the end of the Second World

War. The Navy retained authority over the oceans through the U.S. Atlantic and Pacific Commands, and the Army retained authority over Europe and Northeast Asia.

While the practice of assigning agency has passed, the geographic commands retain strong service flavors. Service chiefs are now explicitly excluded from the combatant chain of command. The trend is toward greater authority to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) at the expense of the service chiefs. However, the chairman is not in command of any combat forces. One should expect that the services would see the JTF as just another layer of joint command above them and resist as they have in the past.

Forming JTFs from established component headquarters preserves service prerogatives. Service-based headquarters are not organized, trained, or equipped to command and control joint forces. However, they are sources of general officer billets and strong seats of power within a CINC's area of operations. Designating a component as a "joint" headquarters preserves service warfare at the expense of joint warfare.

Each service has personnel end-strength limits and is stretched thin as the defense drawdown continues. The last several years have witnessed a proliferation of joint commands and an attendant increase in joint staff billets. The services have increasingly complained about staffing joint organizations rather than staffing their own service organizations. The inabil-

ity to complete the staff of Camp Lejeune's standing JTF headquarters was due primarily to this problem. Congress has closely monitored and regulated the number of joint staff billets and has set upper bounds. Congressional relief is likely needed to support standing JTF headquarters.

Each unified command has come to accept that they cannot have the assigned forces they desire. The pool of available forces is simply too small. They must all rely on USACOM to provide trained and ready forces. However, they have not yet come to accept joint force commanders and staff provided by USACOM. In short, USACOM can provide forces, but the receiving CINC will provide joint command over those forces.

The exception was that EUCOM and SOUTHCOM would have accepted a CONUS-based JTF from USACOM, the standing JTF—when it existed—at Camp Lejeune. The Marine component command for both unified commands is II MEF. It should be noted that this JTF was not oriented on the more glamorous high-intensity or mid-intensity conflict that attracts resources to the various unified commands.

The end result could be that USACOM would indeed provide other CINCS with JTFs head to toe. Or, each regional CINC might dedicate resources to standing up true JTF headquarters. The later might require congressional relief to authorize an increase in joint billets. A third alternative is the status quo, service component-based JTF headquarters. The third alternative preserves the other unified commands' independence

from USACOM and would receive service support.

The services have steadfastly guarded their Title X responsibilities to recruit, train, organize, and equip forces. They each have invested heavily in information systems for command and control. The unified commands have used a variety of means to obtain command and control information systems that were not forthcoming from the services. The unified commands have the advantage over the JTF in that the unified commands exist, are commanded by a respected and powerful general officer, and have legitimacy under law. The JTF has none of these advantages.

It is unlikely that the services will support the creation of JTF headquarters, despite efforts like those of the Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune. Staffing joint billets and subordinating their senior component headquarters to yet another joint echelon will be seen as working against their prerogatives. The unified commands might well support the creation of standing JTF headquarters as long as they are assigned to the unified command and not USACOM.

Over the years, the various secretaries of defense have exerted little pressure in the unified command plan revisions. General Colin Powell was the first Chairman to use the powers granted by the Goldwater-Nichols legislation to push for major revision of the unified command plan, but fell short of his objectives. Congress may ultimately have to exercise its powers to force this type of reform over the objections of the services.

### Degrees of Freedom in Implementing JTFs

The above discussion has described the status quo in some detail. But what are the degrees of freedom available to explore solutions to the problem? The current method is reliance on the *ad hoc* formation of JTFs around a pre-designated joint force commander and staff from a service component of the respective unified command. That, clearly, remains an option. A second option is to create standing JTF headquarters. Such headquarters would have a commander and principal staff, a suite of information systems necessary for the command and control of joint forces, and access to training resources. A final option is to form standing JTFs from head to toe. This option is clearly the most expensive, but it might be expected to provide the most effective joint fighting force on short notice. It is also hard to imagine how to guess at the right assigned force mix to include absent a specific mission against a specific threat. These alternatives are not mutually exclusive. Each has merit under some set of circumstances. Whatever option is selected from the above set of three, the question remains as to whether a JTF (or headquarters) is a regional or national asset. In other words, is it an organization assigned to the unified command that might employ it, or is it a CONUS-based organization that could be allocated to a unified command when needed?

### Geographic or Functional Orientation?

Geographically oriented JTFs have the advantage of being able to familiarize themselves with the languages, cultures, infrastructure, and allied militaries in a specific region.<sup>21</sup> Geographic JTFs might well preserve service prerogatives if geographic boundaries are drawn in their favor.<sup>22</sup> However, depending on the functions chosen, a functional JTF might equally preserve service interests. For example, the preponderance of spaced-based assets is in the Air Force's area of interest.

It has been the habit to assign forces where they live. During the Cold War, significant forces were forward deployed, particularly in Europe. The post-Cold War period has found most forces living in the continental United States. Thus, they are assigned to the U.S. Atlantic Command. There is, however, no law or regulation that requires forces to be assigned where they live. The CINC is responsible for the readiness of assigned forces. Why not assign CONUS-based forces to the commands responsible for prosecuting the two major theater wars? Specifically, the political climate prevents the United States from stationing forces in Southwest Asia, but a principal threat is ostensibly there. The preponderance of forces that would participate in a Southwest Asian contingency reside in the continental United States, as does the unified command headquarters responsible for operations in Southwest Asia, Central Command.<sup>23</sup> Nothing would

preclude assigning CONUS-based forces to CENTCOM.

At one extreme, a JTF or JTF headquarters could be organized, trained, and equipped for a single mission in a single theater. For example, a JTF could be formed for high intensity air-land combat in Southwest Asia. At the other extreme, a JTF could be formed to prosecute operations across the entire war-fighting spectrum. A third alternative might focus a JTF on a modest range of military operations, such as low-intensity conflict (peacemaking and peacekeeping), humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. A JTF could focus on mission or on geography, or it could have a very diffuse focus.

## **THE REQUIREMENTS FOR JOINT FORCES**

Three contingencies drive force planning. Logically, they might also shape requirements for joint forces.

### **Southwest Asia Major Theater War**

The Gulf War is still a recent memory, and the possibility of a return to hostilities surfaces occasionally. There are several reasonable estimates of the forces required to respond to another high intensity crisis in the region. The Bottom-Up Review (BUR)<sup>24</sup> provides one such estimate. Reviewing that force structure is beyond the scope of this article. However, this potential major regional contingency will remain a source of force requirements into the foreseeable future. Its demands for stra-

tegic lift, pre-positioned equipment, and deployable command and control information systems will remain high.

### **Northeast Asia Major Theater War**

Current plans call for a huge strategic lift effort to move ground forces to Korea in the event that hostilities commence between North and South Korea. As most studies conducted outside the Pentagon have concluded, the North Koreans would likely make a desperate lunge toward the South's capital city, Seoul, only a short distance from the border. Such a drive, if successful, would culminate long before any U.S. forces not already in theater could arrive. Only a single U.S. division is present currently.<sup>25</sup> The South Koreans have approximately 20 infantry divisions on active duty with another 20 in reserve and available on short notice. Many studies conclude that the United States can make its strongest contribution, not with heavy ground forces, but with land- and sea-based air power.<sup>26</sup> This sort of conclusion does not justify heavy Army force structure, yet the CINC of U.S. Forces Korea has always been an Army general. Current war plans rely heavily on deploying large ground forces.

### **Operations Short of War**

Current operations include a plethora of operations short of war, what the Marine Corps formerly called small wars and what are now generally referred to as MOOTW.<sup>27</sup> These operations include humanitarian assistance and disaster

relief, evacuation of non-combatants during times of civil unrest abroad, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. The Navy/Marine Corps team and special operations forces consider these to be mainstream operations. Those organizations oriented on big wars find themselves to be ill-equipped and trained for such operations. These types of operations can be expected to continue to be frequent, demanding, and on short notice as long as the national security strategy is oriented on strong engagement abroad.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To best meet national security needs, the military planners must determine an appropriate mix of JTF structures as part of the annual and biennial processes that produce the *Unified Command Plan*, *Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan*, and *Forces For Unified Commands* memorandum. This process is already in place and is derived directly from the *National Security Strategy* of the President of the United States.

The tentative mix of JTF structures outlined below should be considered a point of departure from which more serious force structure analysis might begin. Admittedly, the list is likely too long (expensive) and too deep (in strategic reserve). Regardless of those flaws, the entire list is given to show the breadth of options available. A summary is presented in Table 2.

Two standing JTFs, from head to toe, are proposed. These JTFs would have a

permanent commander and staff assigned. Primary forces, too, would be assigned. Other forces may be apportioned that consider a range of responses to the eventual threat. One such JTF is proposed for a Southwest Asia scenario. The JTF would have assigned CONUS-based air and ground forces and rotating naval forces. Because the Central Command's CINC would employ the JTF, he should have training responsibility rather than USACOM. A second JTF is proposed for a Northeast Asian scenario, specifically Korea. It would be largely an air and maritime JTF recognizing the considerable South Korean ground capability, long-term defensive preparations, and long deployment delays for heavy forces from the continental United States.

In addition, the United States should create several standing JTF headquarters. Headquarters would have no assigned forces, only apportioned forces. Forces would be allocated as necessary. Headquarters could regularly participate in command post exercises without forces and the expenses entailed. One JTF headquarters would orient on high to mid-intensity air-land combat, although this might constitute an expense unjustified by the current geopolitical environment. It might be assigned to EUCOM, or it might be held in strategic reserve by assigning it to USACOM. Should force levels remain constant in EUCOM, it might be prudent to maintain the JTF in Europe from where it might deploy. Should forward deployed troop levels continue to drop, it might make

**Table 2. Recommended mix of JTF structures**

<b>Readiness Category</b>	<b>Forces</b>	<b>Mission Range<sup>28</sup></b>
Standing JTF, Head to Toe	assigned commander and staff, assigned and apportioned forces	(1) Southwest Asia MTW  (1) Northeast Asia MTW
Standing JTF HQS	assigned commander and staff, apportioned forces	(1) HIC-MIC range (3) LIC HA/DR range (1) Strategic lift (1) Coalition support (1) Joint combat development and experimentation
Strategic Reserve JTF HQS	designated commander and staff, no assigned or apportioned forces	(1) HIC-MIC range

more sense to maintain the JTF in the United States. Maintaining an additional high to mid-intensity JTF headquarters has the added advantage of providing positions that develop future generations of higher echelon, joint force commanders.

The European, Pacific, Central, and Southern Commands all have continuing requirements to provide assistance at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. Accordingly, the United States should develop three standing JTF headquarters that focus on this mission area. The Marines and Special Operations Forces have shown capability in this area. The geographic commands have

shown less resistance to having USACOM provide these JTFs.

U.S. allies rely increasingly on the United States to provide strategic lift, communications, and intelligence resources. It is conceivable that the U.S. contribution to some contingencies might be dominated by these resources and the coalition might provide troops on the ground. One JTF might focus on just the strategic lift role or also include the C4ISR role.

One standing JTF headquarters is proposed for joint experimentation and combat development, traditionally a service function. Some proponents have proposed a standing JTF, from head

to toe. Given current force levels and operational tempo, this seems impractical. Much of the joint experimentation with C4ISR can occur in a command post exercise environment, although eventually, experimentation will have to be moved to the field. Forces can be allocated for that purpose when necessary.

Finally, some JTF headquarters should be held in strategic reserve. Commander and staff would be assigned, but perhaps as a secondary duty. This recommendation is actually somewhat akin to the way JTF headquarters are currently formed from service component headquarters. Such JTF headquarters would not participate in training events unless, in the Chairman's judgement, the reserve of ready JTF headquarters was nearing depletion. The strategic reserve JTF headquarters might then have their readiness levels elevated through training and staffing.

## CONCLUSION

By creating the right mix of standing joint organizations, several benefits accrue to the nation's readiness. A standing JTF headquarters with assigned forces for the U.S. Central Command facilitates the highest level of operational readiness for a dangerous and relatively likely contingency. By building the organization and focusing training resources there, joint commanders and staff are less likely to suffer the fate of their predecessors in America's first battles.

Standing JTFs and standing JTF headquarters would provide a focal point for acquisition of command and control information systems. They would also enable experimentation with new methods of warfare as portended by advocates of a revolution in military affairs and by the information age. Expectations are high for increased warfighting effectiveness enabled by information technology and precision weapons. Realistic experimentation with these systems and new methods can both expedite and hone emerging capabilities as well as protect us from an over reliance on unproven concepts.

It is unlikely that the services and the CINCS will come to an agreement on this reform or its implementation. It is unlikely, absent a crisis, that a secretary of defense or president will expend the political capital necessary to accomplish this reform. Congress will likely need to legislate action.

## ENDNOTES

1. Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft, (eds.), *America's First Battles, 1776–1965*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1986), 328.
2. *Ibid.*, 330.
3. United States Code, Title X, Section 164 (c).
4. In Operation Desert Storm Army systems were employed for all ground component commands: specifically Mobile Subscriber Equipment (MSE). An Army heavy brigade was added to the 2nd Marine Division that did not have MSE. Remarkably, but given the long lead-up time, MSE became the Marine's system

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- of choice.
5. Personal communication, 8 September 1997, at the Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, VA. General Ralston was commenting on his assignment as commander of the Alaskan Command, a subordinate unified command of the U.S. Pacific Command.
  6. Personal communication, 27 August 1997, at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Then Lieutenant General Schoomaker was referring to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).
  7. Personal communication, 9 August 1997, Camp Lejeune, NC. Then Lieutenant General Wilhelm's actual words were "If you solve my staff turbulence problem, the rest is a self-licking ice cream cone." He was speaking from his position as Commanding General, Second Marine Expeditionary Force and Commanding General, Standing Joint Task Force at Camp Lejeune.
  8. Derived from personal visits to unified commands January through June of 1996.
  9. *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, Joint Pub 3-0, February 1995, II-17.
  10. Current guidance is found in *Joint Training Master Plan 1998 for the Armed Forces of the United States*, CJCSI 3500.02A, December 1996. For multiply-apportioned forces, CJCS training priority guidance is that units should train to support those plans to which they are apportioned with training emphasis favoring Major Regional Contingency (MRC) training over Lesser Regional Contingency (LRC) training; if apportioned to both MRC, training should favor the earlier contingency. The terms MRC and LRC have been replaced by MTW and SSC, respectively.
  11. For example, the charter of the recently created Joint C4ISR Battle Center specifically states that it is to provide an experimentation environment for the unified commands at the JTF level.
  12. The MEU is the smallest of the MAGTFs. The Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) or, more recently, the Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) is intermediate in size, perhaps based on a regiment. And the MEF is the largest, based on one or more Marine divisions.
  13. Three as of June 1995.
  14. Recently renamed from 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized).
  15. The Marine Corps is accustomed to this air-ground organization.
  16. The Air Force has retired its primary jammer capability and has no replacement in sight, thus increasing the burden on the naval services to provide that capability.
  17. The same mission might be accomplished with eight stealth F-117s and two tankers for refueling.
  18. *A Brief History of the United States Central Command*, United States Central Command History Office, MacDill AFB, FL, February 1995.
  19. The U.S. Readiness Command descended directly from the U.S. Strike Command (STRICOM) in 1971.
  20. "Standing Joint Task Force: Opportunity Lost," Mark T. Goodman and Richard M. Scott, *Marine Corps Gazette*, 82 (September 1998): 38-39.
  21. The Special Operations Command is a functional command with worldwide responsibilities. However, it subdivides the world into regions and develops regional expertise as one would expect of a geographic command.
  22. When congressional district boundaries are so defined, it is called gerrymandering.

23. The U.S. Central Command is headquartered in Tampa, Florida, at MacDill Air Force Base, along with the U.S. Special Operations Command.
24. *The Bottom-Up Review: Forces for a New Era*, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, 1 September 1993.
25. The 2nd Infantry Division is a non-standard Army division. It is composed of two tank, two mechanized, and two infantry, battalions, where a standard heavy division has mix of 10 tank and mechanized battalions.
26. For a recent example of such a study, see Michael O'Hanlon, "Stopping a North Korean Invasion: Why Defending South Korea is Easier than the Pentagon Thinks," *International Security* 22 (Spring 1998): 135-170.
27. *Small Wars Manual, United States Marine Corps, 1940*, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1940).
28. High intensity conflict (HIC), mid intensity conflict (MIC), and low intensity conflict (LIC) are designations no longer in common usage. They are used here, however, because they best express an intuitive partitioning of the conflict spectrum. The humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) designation is also employed here.