

The message from the National Military Command Center (NMCC) flashed on the screen of the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) command duty officer at 0200. The American Embassy had informed the CINC of its original assessment some hours earlier. Yet the message was jolting: immediately after a devastating earthquake had struck a small yet vital Pacific nation, guerrillas had attacked its capital. Urgent calls for help ensued. The prime minister warned that his country could no longer safeguard American lives and property.

The duty officer rushed the latest information to the CINC and his battle staff who were already assembling. Together they reviewed an assessment from the operational planning team (OPT) and activated the crisis action team (CAT). With details from the NMCC message, OPT recommended activation of joint task force (JTF) Decisive Response based on I Corps, a PACOM designated and trained JTF headquarters. A 35-member deployable joint task force augmentation cell (DJTFAC) was told to “purple-up” the corps staff. The DJTFAC team chief, part of OPT from the outset, made certain DJTFAC received the latest information to begin parallel crisis action planning while waiting to join the JTF staff.

By 0800, DJTFAC was on its way to join JTF Decisive Response with a copy of the OPT-drafted warning order. It stayed in radio contact with CINCPAC and the JTF headquarters during the trip, developing courses of action. Within hours, a single-service headquarters became a fully-functional JTF headquarters. American citizens at risk as well as an ally on the ropes had brought a rapid, decisive response by the United States through its unified headquarters in the Pacific.

TRAINING

the Pacific Warriors

By JAY B. YAKELEY III and HAROLD E. BULLOCK

USS Independence
leaving Victoria Harbor,
Hong Kong.

U.S. Navy (Independence Photo Lab)

Many scenarios involving the PACOM area of responsibility (AOR) demand an immediate though calculated response. How does the command maintain the ability to react? The answer is a combination of vision, planning, and rigorous training based on a two-tiered warfighting strategy. Under this strategy, a major regional conflict (MRC) which occurred in Korea would be handled by the commander in chief, U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC), and by the commander in chief, U.N. Command. Lesser regional contingencies (LRC) would be conducted using pre-designated, highly trained JTF headquarters in command of tailored component forces (tier two) with strategic guidance from tier one, namely, CINCPAC.

The two-tier strategy drives much of PACOM joint training. CINCPAC conducts frequent, rigorous training for each JTF. It includes classes, realistic command post exercises, and large-scale field drills. Exercises are designed around the training objectives of the JTF commander and include a comprehensive after action review (AAR). By comparing joint mission essential task list (JMETL) standards against training performance, JTF commanders arrive at a realistic readiness assessment and determine follow-on training needs. This creates a feedback loop, from training objectives to exercise design to post-exercise capability assessments and follow-on training goals. This process enables PACOM to focus joint training on regional demands and JTF commanders to tailor training to their needs. Independent inspector general assessment is a refinement that concentrates on the structure of training events. From initial JMETL-based readiness assessment through post-training reassessment, the PACOM program links tailored joint training to missions, culminating in effective warfighting.¹

Foundation for Readiness

The PACOM two-tiered command and control strategy—employing trained, pre-designated JTF headquarters to handle LRCs—is born of a uniquely challenging theater, an AOR that covers more than half of the earth's surface, stretching across 16 time zones. It contains 63 percent of the world population in emerging to highly-industrialized societies. The presence of the world's

seven largest land armies demonstrates the historical tensions in the region.² Dealing with such an AOR requires innovation, regional focus, and specialized training for both headquarters and forces.

CINCPAC, as tier one in the command and control structure, concentrates on three major tasks: enabling a JTF, providing strategic guidance, and synchronizing JTF actions with theater operations. The CINCPAC battle staff and operational planning team, in coordination with the national command authorities (NCA), both formulate a strategic course of action and evaluate JTF operational courses of action. The PACOM nerve center, the crisis action team, provides interface to NCA and coordinates information and sustainment flow to JTF.

The second tier consists of six headquarters pre-designated and trained as either primary or alternate JTFs. The primary headquarters are I Corps, III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), and Seventh Fleet, while the alternates are Alaskan Command, I MEF, and Third Fleet. Each receives regular, focused training in JTF operations, and upon activation as a JTF are reinforced with the CINCPAC deployable joint task force augmentation cell.

DJTFAC is not a standing organization with specified manning, but a tailored organization (25–35 personnel) drawn from a trained pool of CINCPAC headquarters and Hawaii-based service component personnel with various specialties. These hand-picked augmentees provide joint and area expertise in key positions on the JTF staff and are specially trained in crisis action procedures at the operational level. All members perform normal staff duties at their parent commands while on call, thus saving the expense of a separate organization. Besides adding joint perspective and operational expertise, members provide theater-level expertise on Pacific region issues. In short, DJTFAC is a tool in the commander's box for transforming his staff from a single service or area headquarters to that of a fully-capable JTF.

Having described what DJTFAC is, it is equally important to indicate what it is not. While staffed largely by CINCPAC headquarters personnel, it is not "CINCPAC-forward." In fact, as an entity it vanishes on arrival. The CINC transfers operational control of all DJTFAC members to a JTF commander, and they are completely integrated into his staff. DJTFAC, though thoroughly versed in crisis action planning, is not limited to future operations planning. Members serve at the commander's discretion wherever their expertise is required, from personnel matters to operations to logistics to communications. A JTF commander can also request special staff such as medical, legal, and civil affairs experts.³

CINCPAC concentrates on enabling, guidance, and synchronizing JTF actions with theater operations

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Underlying the use of JTFs for contingencies short of an MRC is the assumption, backed by experience, that Pacific contingencies will likely be sudden, short, and relatively small. Examples are Operation Fiery Vigil (after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo) and Operation Sea Angel (following the massive 1991 floods in Bangladesh).⁴

JTF operations (training and contingency response) also are a principal way of furthering the CINCPAC cooperative engagement strategy. In part, this strategy seeks to further national objectives and foster regional peace through bilateral and multilateral contact.⁵

Unlike the European theater, with a strong NATO alliance structure, the Pacific depends on diverse bilateral and multilateral agreements to

planning and organizational abilities gained during joint training provide a foundation for full JTF capability

protect and enhance U.S. interests. Of the seven mutual defense treaties worldwide to which the United States is a signator, five are with nations in the PACOM AOR.⁶ Sustained and frequent military to military contact is critical to international relationships in the Pacific. Combined JTF operations are an excellent vehicle for such contact and enable our forces to strengthen interoperability with armed forces throughout the region.

Since specific missions cannot be predicted and JTFs do not exist until a mission requires one, innovation is needed to define JTF training. The six designated PACOM JTF headquarters face a full range of possible missions from humanitarian assistance to conventional warfighting. Forces assigned could vary widely in composition and size.

Because it is impossible to anticipate exactly what operations a given JTF might conduct, PACOM training rests on two joint mission essential task lists (JMETLs)—a theater-strategic list addressing tier one⁷ and an operational-level list shared by JTF headquarters.⁸ Both strategic and operational-level JMETLs contain tasks essential to mission success. JMETLs include measurable standards for each task, helping a commander to determine the readiness of his headquarters with respect to these tasks. By assessing performance at METL tasks, the CINC or a JTF commander determines key items that need further training and tailors exercises accordingly. This discourages designing an exercise around that of the previous year. It also allows the commander being trained to choose the objectives rather than leaving it to exercise designers.

A Pacific-Oriented Program

As mentioned above, the PACOM two-tiered strategy is designed around JTFs capable of responding to no-notice crises anywhere in the AOR. Pacific JTF training includes three distinct phases. The first, purely academic, is conducted by a small mobile team from the Readiness and Training Division of CINCPAC headquarters. Over two or three days instructors cover a variety of JTF responsibilities including crisis action planning, JTF structure, information management, and operational-level joint warfighting. Specialized tutelage also is offered to JTF headquarters sections such as J-1 or J-2. Moreover, electives are available which allow a recipient headquarters to customize instruction to organizational strengths and weaknesses. This is linked directly to the second phase of joint training, a staff exercise known as Tempest Express.

Tempest Express is a scenario-based, five to seven day event conducted by Readiness and Training Division and assisted by other DJTFAC members. Aimed at a JTF commander's primary staff, it includes specialized classes in staff integration and more detailed instruction on crisis action planning (CAP), but its main focus is to walk a staff through the CAP steps from mission analysis through campaign plan or OPORDER development. The emphasis is on process rather than product, with frequent breaks to discuss ways to approach various aspects of planning. Daily after-action reviews reinforce the learning process and resolve problems.

Tempest Express provides a single-service or geographically-focused organization with the skills to transition to a full JTF headquarters. Planning and organizational abilities gained during joint training phases one and two, combined with the joint staff augmentation of DJTFAC, provide a foundation for full JTF capability. This is tested in phase three—serving as a JTF headquarters in a major JCS exercise.

This phase-three JTF training exercise serves a number of purposes. First, it allows the commander and staff to put the lessons of phases one and two into practice. Second, it enables further bonding between DJTFAC members and an augmented headquarters. Trainers and mentors of phases one and two are an integral part of a JTF staff during phase three. On another level, the exercise program itself is key to developing regional affinities among allies and potential coalition partners. This streamlines command and control since JTFs often include members from other nations.

A major joint exercise orients participants geographically, politically, and organizationally. It is conducted in varied environments to maximize

training value and international interoperability while building mutual trust and confidence. Professional associations and exchanges also provide real value. An allied colonel on the combined task force (CTF) staff today may be his nation's commanding general tomorrow.

A diversity of exercise venues offers frames of reference that could not be duplicated outside the theater. U.S. and foreign forces that may fight together can train together, often in the same areas they would deploy to in an actual contingency. Even when the training is done in the continental United States, it often includes allied personnel from throughout the Pacific and retains a specific theater focus.

Realistic exercises such as Tandem Thrust, where the commander is sea-based and the JTF components often include Australian forces, and Cobra Gold, which includes Thai forces, further enhance JTF readiness and coalition experience. Countries such as Australia are now studying the CINCPAC JTF model for their own regional training.

With shrinking budgets and downsizing, PACOM works to achieve realistic training while minimizing the number of days individuals are deployed away from home station (PERSTEMPO). For example, CINCPAC has combined disparate service exercises under an umbrella JTF. This synergy allows JTF headquarters to experience joint operations without levying an added exercise load on subordinate forces.

Also, efforts are made to realistically represent senior authorities up to and including NCA.

In recent exercises, designers have employed cells at the National Defense University and the U.S. Army War College to accurately represent NCA actions. The lifelike play of "command-external" influences is critical to training tier-one (CINCPAC headquarters) as well as tier-two (JTF) forces.

High-fidelity simulation also requires JTF commanders (as well as U.S. Forces Korea and CINCPAC) to control large forces without the expense—in terms of dollars and operations tempo (OPTEMPO)—of fielding huge tactical formations. Ulchi Focus Lens, a vast simulation-aided war game held each year in Korea, is the largest such exercise in the world and has far fewer political ramifications than the better-known Team Spirit. Likewise, the simulation-based Tempo Brave exercise enables a JTF commander to wield large tactical forces without raising PERSTEMPO or OPTEMPO of actual units.

Another facet of the PACOM exercise program is the creative and realistic participation of

U.S. and Korean amphibious forces on Tok Sok Ri Beach.



U.S. and Thai Seals rappelling during Cobra Gold '95.

Joint Combat Camera Center (Steve Thurow)

U.S. Navy (Melvin C. Farrington)



U.S. Air Force (Val Gempis)

Rangers boarding aircraft in Thailand.

coalition and allied forces. Both overseas and CONUS-based PACOM forces regularly join with their counterparts in theater. In a recent Tempo Brave exercise, an Australian army major general served as deputy CTF commander, and Australian officers and NCOs filled key billets throughout the headquarters. This same integration is found in other combined exercises in theater. Whether it is I Corps forming a CTF with Royal Thai armed forces or a III MEF-Australian Defence Forces partnership, regular training with potential partners is invaluable in preparing for future crises.

Yet any exercise, regardless of how well it is executed, has little value without a way of learning from its strengths and weaknesses. Too often this effort has taken the form of a “hot wash” focused on what happened rather than why it happened. PACOM recently integrated systematic after action reports (AARs) into each exercise. With the aid of experts from the Joint Warfighting Center and in-house trained observers, the AAR team objectively assesses command performance after each exercise.⁹

It should be remembered that during exercise design participant commands picked JMETL tasks for the training. Using JMETL, which sets standards for tasks, trained observers assess JTF performance on each task being exercised. At the end, an AAR facilitator guides commanders and their senior staffs through a review of exercise events, encouraging positive aspects and discussing weaknesses. This dialogue focuses on why a specific area fell short, not on who or what failed. A full AAR report is provided only to the commander of the organization under review. It is an objective tool to define goals for subsequent

training. It is not a means of reporting failure or success to senior commands.

The Payoff

The most obvious advantage of the PACOM approach to joint training is characterized in the phrase “train as you fight.” During the dedicated instruction phases (one and two), DJTFAC builds a reputation with designated JTF commanders and staffs as knowledgeable professionals. They are a known commodity by the time they integrate with JTF as DJTFAC during an exercise or contingency. This allows not only continuity in methodology, though that is critical. More importantly, as the same team deploys repeatedly to join with a JTF headquarters, they develop strong one-on-one relationships with their JTF counterparts. When DJTFAC deploys for a major exercise or contingency response operation, they have the full trust of a JTF commander and staff. Though hard to quantify, personal relationships and mutual understanding pay huge dividends in crises, where every second counts and staffs must start out at a dead run.

The PACOM approach to joint training and operations maximizes the capabilities of theater forces, CONUS and overseas-based. Even those based at home maintain a focus on the Pacific honed by the PACOM joint training program. The two-tiered strategy and phased training meet the needs of each command and refine joint skills. To ensure such a customized approach, training activities are based on a participating commander’s JMETL assessment, maximizing the benefit of each academic and practical exercise. CINCPAC tailors personnel support to its JTFs as well. The DJTFAC team that helps transform a single-service headquarters into a joint operational-level JTF is chosen to fit the needs of the augmented command as well as the crisis faced by that JTF.

Another aspect of the PACOM approach is efficient use of personnel. Those who conduct joint training are the same individuals who integrate into a contingency headquarters. Drawn from CINCPAC and service headquarters (PACAF, USARPAC, CINCPACFLT, and MARFORPAC), they are selected for expertise in service component and joint employment. However, except for CINCPAC J-38 which coordinates DJTFAC, they are not full-time trainers. When not deployed, they serve as action officers on their respective staffs, maintaining specialty and regional expertise. The skill of this training team, combined with the knowledge that the same officers and NCOs will be there when the proverbial balloon goes up, strengthens trust and confidence between CINCPAC and the second tier, the JTF commander.

In all areas, CINCPAC strives for a seamless transition between training and operations. Forces that expect to operate in the Pacific theater train there whether they are garrisoned in Japan or California. Furthermore, they train using the same command and control structure they would operate under during an actual contingency. Exercises are tailored to known or likely hot-spots in theater. CINCPAC also hosts frequent multilateral training. It may be overseas, afloat, or on the U.S. mainland. Combined training enhances forward presence in a region where most diplomatic interaction is accomplished through military-to-military contacts.

Multilateral training reflects the reality that U.S. forces are unlikely to operate unilaterally in any effort, be it disaster relief or combat. CINCPAC conducted a JTF commanders conference in April 1996 with emphasis on the balance between force readiness and multilateral engagement. Decisions reached at the conference will be incorporated in future training and operations.

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Recent exercises with the Japanese Self Defense Force in Yakima, Washington, provided the forces of both nations with important combined operations experience. Professional as well as personal relationships established among U.S. and foreign militaries, country teams, and regional agencies are force multipliers in crises where time is short and smooth integration is essential.

Personal trust and confidence is just as critical within the U.S. military team. PACOM JTF commanders know that the trainers working with them in a Tempest Express command post walk-through will be back for major JCS exercises or real world contingencies to serve on their staffs. The continuity between training and operations in terms of personnel and procedures smooths the transition to crisis operations, even when their nature cannot be predicted.

The benefits of the PACOM mission-driven, JMETL-based training are clear. The training is driven by commanders, not exercise designers. Guided by an assessment of his command's ability to execute its mission essential tasks, a commander specifies training objectives which drive training events. This applies whether he is the CINC or a designated JTF commander and results in training events tightly focused on force readiness.

Theater-specific training brings further preparedness. Commanders and their forces remain current in both Pacific politico-military affairs and theater command and control processes.

With increasing OPTEMPO and shrinking forces, a tailored regional orientation optimizes training.

In sum, the CINCPAC approach creates a seamless, broad-based link between actual joint operations and training to execute them. The two-tiered warfighting strategy used in joint training today is the one used in contingencies of tomorrow. The next crisis location may be the occasion for joint training. And importantly, those who execute the contingency operations of tomorrow—from the tactical warfighter to CINCPAC—are the participants in today's joint training.

The bottom line? The PACOM focused, high-quality joint training provides mission ready forces equal to the challenges of an unpredictable new world. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ CINCPAC (J-382), "JTF Training Concept," Information Paper, January 9, 1996.

² The seven largest armies are, in order, China, Russia, United States, India, North Korea, Vietnam, and South Korea. CINCPAC, Pacific Area Update Brief, February 1995.

³ CINCPAC Instruction 3020.11A, "Organization and Administration of the USCINCPAC Deployable Joint Task Force Augmentation Cell (DTJFAC)," January 3, 1994.

⁴ JTF Fiery Vigil (June 10–24, 1991), under Maj Gen William Studer, USAF, was tasked with the evacuation in the wake of the eruption. This JTF included the *USS Lincoln* carrier battle group, an amphibious ready group (ARG), and nearly the entire military community on Guam. JTF Sea Angel (May 11–June 15, 1991), commanded by MajGen Henry Stackpole III, USMC, accomplished humanitarian relief tasks following the flooding in Bangladesh. In addition to the *Tarawa* ARG, JTF-SA included Marine and Army troops as well as airlift provided by the Army, Air Force, and the Marine Corps, plus Air Force communications units.

⁵ Cooperative engagement aggressively employs the means available to PACOM—forces, assets, funds, programs—through forward presence, strong alliances/bilateral relationships, and crisis response. Using them, this strategy seeks engagement and reassurance in peace, deterrence and cooperation in crisis, and unilateral or multilateral victory in conflict. See "A Commander in Chief Looks at East Asia," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 7 (Spring 1995), pp. 12–13.

⁶ The nations include the Republic of Korea, Japan, Thailand, Philippines, and Australia.

⁷ CINCPAC Joint Mission Essential Task List, version 1.0, March 1, 1996.

⁸ CINCPAC JTF Joint Mission Essential Task List, version 1.0, 1995.

⁹ Joe Barto et al., "Joint Model After-Action Review System," *Common Perspective*, vol. 3, no. 2, (September 1995), p. 21.