



The Joint Force

Live fire exercise in Kuwait, 2001.

AP/World Wide Photos (John McCormico)

A Decade, No Progress

By DOUGLAS A. MACGREGOR

Ever since the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the gaze of Congress has been firmly fixed on the need for jointness. The conviction that 21st century operations will involve land, sea, and air forces is buttressed by the perception that technological advances combined with the genius of the American military will transform the Armed Forces into an information age joint organization.

In theory, jointness is the means through which the National Command Authorities achieve unity of effort from diverse service competencies. Yet for many members of the military, the idea of jointness presents a Pandora's box of unattractive possibilities. Parochialism, not cooperation, remains the watchword despite the common deference to jointness. Although Congress has argued for years that increased jointness will produce a more efficient and effective military, Desert Storm together with the demise of the Soviet Union did not alter service attitudes. Operations against the former Yugoslavia offer further evidence that the single-service American way of war

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has changed little since the Persian Gulf War, leading Eliot Cohen to observe that there are “four single-service warfighting establishments.” These points notwithstanding, funding a Cold War legacy force, with its origins in the experience of World War II, may no longer be possible. It is not an accident that a budget of \$300-plus billion is critical to maintaining services that are downsized versions of the same military that mounted Desert Storm. This is significant because jointness, transformation, and fiscal reality are on a collision course.

After the Storm

Victory in the Persian Gulf led senior leaders to insist that ground and air operations against Iraq were joint. In reality there was little evidence for such a claim. Even though the Commander in Chief, Central Command, prescribed a chain of command and organized joint forces, operations largely conformed to World War II. Single-service warfighting organizations waged Desert Storm with only broad strategic guidance. Therefore it is not surprising that the services sought to exploit success to validate their doctrine, organization, and equipment.

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On the ground, the superior performance of the Army, especially in the culminating battles on February 26–27, should have afforded a strong argument in favor of a highly trained, superbly equipped force consisting primarily of combat troops organized and postured for rapid deployment in a new joint warfighting framework. Instead the Army of the Cold War simply got smaller.

Victory in the Persian Gulf became the Army rationale for preserving the status quo. None of its initiatives since the war, to include *Force XXI, Army after Next, Strike Force*, or the current *Army Transformation Initiative*, challenged the ten-division structure, the warfighting paradigm, or the institutional policies and mobilization



Intelligence analyst at Fort Bliss, Roving Sands '00.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Jim Varhegyi)

practices of the Cold War. Integrating the enormous and increasingly precise firepower of the Navy and Air Force with landpower should have figured into joint doctrine and postwar force design by the Army. Despite the potential for jointness in the Air Force expeditionary force concept, without basic changes in Army combat organization, the idea of organizing ground and air forces to operate in tandem did not translate into jointness.

The unwavering faith of the Air Force that extended bombing could have won the Gulf War by airpower alone did not advance the cause of jointness in that service. Instead, Instant Thunder, the air operation against Iraq, became simply a model for the future. Strategic airlift took second place to the F-22, the post-war centerpiece of operations by the Air Force. That regime security could be more important to Baghdad than a conventional strategy did not enter the analysis. Later, when formidable ground combat power was needed early to operate with airpower within a joint framework in the crisis over Kosovo, it was unavailable.

Naval forces were more circumspect in the wake of the Gulf War, because participation by the Navy had been significant in terms of numbers, platforms, and aircraft, but relatively modest in terms of actual warfighting. Another reason for self-examination was that in 1991 no other navy could challenge the Nation for control of the seas. Since recapitalization is expensive and time-consuming, the most intense soul-searching of any service is ongoing there. This was evident in the behavior and thinking of senior naval officers in the context of jointness.

Admiral Paul Miller, the first Commander in Chief, Atlantic Command (the forerunner of Joint Forces Command), became a champion of adaptive force packaging—repackaging land, sea, and air forces in units tailored for specific missions. His reconfiguration of carriers in the Haitian intervention that replaced air wings with Army air mobile troops and the concept of nodal warfare in littorals created possibilities for naval power in joint operations. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral William Owens, not only fostered experiments by placing Army tactical missile systems on ships, but organized the Joint Requirements Oversight

USS Coronado
off Hawaii,
Strong Angel.



U.S. Navy (Peter Jones)

Council to promote jointness. Such institutional developments led the Navy into uncharted waters.

With a tradition of living on the strategic periphery, the Marine Corps moved more quickly than the Army to refocus on new forms of small-scale conflict. Recognizing that technology could enable smaller formations to be decisive, the Marines examined concepts for employing forces in Sea Dragon and Urban Warrior. Such exercises involved new operational concepts as well as the organizational structures to execute them. For the most part, notions of jointness extended only to the Navy, and despite innovations, the Inchon paradigm that dominates Marine Corps thinking and organization for combat did not substantially change.

The Marine Corps can argue persuasively that it already fields a JTF which integrates land, sea, and air resources—the Marine air-ground task force. Hence any efforts to increase

jointness that might reduce service autonomy and remove control over fixed-wing aviation or other assets are treated with suspicion. In addition, the Marines are among the most strident critics of the ramifications of the Goldwater-Nichols Act on training and officer development.

Jointness and CINCs

While the services struggled with jointness, CINCs discovered the way that the services responded to the pressures of joint operations under the control of unified commands. Clearly the services link specific weapons and communication systems to activities regarded as most vital to their missions. Therefore they seek to optimize the integrated performance of systems according to their needs rather than those of the joint community. As a result, as unified commands attempt to integrate

and apply service-optimized systems, they discover that service optimization produces suboptimum performance within the joint operational framework.

These points notwithstanding, knowing the joint task force will be the instrument of choice on the operational level, CINCs have pressed for increased joint training. General John Sheehan, USMC, who succeeded Miller, promoted joint operational level training and succeeded in bringing component headquarters to Suffolk, Virginia, for interoperability training. Even though service-based headquarters are not organized, trained, or equipped to command and control joint forces, this represented a step toward genuine joint operations. Sheehan could not change the practice of forming JTFs from single-service component headquarters. The services would not tolerate joint command and control structures or standing JTFs as replacements for single-service structures. In the battle between service and joint warfare, the former won.

The services grasped the revolutionary potential of emerging strike systems but would not abandon the World War II paradigm of service dominated command and control that obstructs the seamless integration of components with new air, space, and missile capabilities. In this regard, *Joint Vision 2010* and *Joint Vision 2020* are simply bumper stickers for single-service programs and do not prevent competing service requirements from dominating joint integration efforts.

Admiral Harold Gehman, while Commander in Chief, Joint Forces Command, raised the issue of competition between joint and service experimentation in 1998 as follows:

When it finally gets down to it, this is going to be a choice of resources and doctrinal issues. My intent is, and my charter is, and my resourcing is that I will be funded and manned and equipped to go out and get just as good an argument, with just as much research and development, and just as much analysis, and just as much field trial and wargames, that the joint way of doing something is just as good or better than the service way of doing it.¹

Global Hawk during first flight, 1998.



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A few years later, just before retiring, Gehman cited the constraints on accelerating transformation and recom-

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mended that his successors serve for up to eight years to outlast bureaucratic opposition and implement change. But as Kosovo demonstrated, innovation depends on organizational focus over a sustained period rather than any personal attempts to guide change.

The Balkans Experience

NATO strikes lasted for 78 days before Serbia agreed to pull its forces from Kosovo. The reasons for this decision were more self-evident than realized at the time. The withdrawal of support by Moscow under great pressure from Washington left Belgrade without assistance in its bid to retain control of Kosovo. Simultaneously, destruction of its meager economy, with

an output in 1998 that was less than two-thirds of the economic activity of Fairfax County, Virginia, made resistance useless without Russian aid. Belgrade could not retain Kosovo without such support. Serb women and children would starve or freeze. Finally, Moscow warned of a possible U.S.-led ground offensive.

At the same time, the Alliance faced grave obstacles in its mission to expel Serbian forces from the area. Although unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) found some excellent targets, for example, rules of engagement required double or triple confirmation before strikes. That made it difficult to develop an effective decision cycle because of the fear that a mistake at 15,000 feet would jeopardize air operations.

In the intelligence arena, the time needed for remote command centers to get information to pilots from other than Air Force sources was too long. The Air Operations Center (AOC) system proved too cumbersome to rapidly disseminate critical data to pilots on their way to target areas.

Army and Air Force systems were unable to quickly fuse and disseminate the pictures from joint and single-service intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance sources in the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Vicenza during a fast-paced conflict. In part this was a consequence of information overload, as well as the structural orientation of service systems.

The command and control structure also did not integrate service staffs and organizations in a single Kosovo engagement zone operations structure under the supported commander, the joint force air component commander (JFACC). Operation Allied Force was directed by a JFACC staff, not a combat operations, combat plans, and strategy staff. The JFACC/AOC organization did not reflect that JFACC was the supported commander. AOC required ground liaison officers from the Army who would have worked for the air component commander and advised on effectively attacking enemy ground forces. Moreover, launching NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia in March 1999 began the largest UAV deployment by Western forces since the Gulf War. Linking UAVs to CAOC via satellite illustrated the value of an effective joint system for coordinating operations with service air platforms and distributing imagery across services. The fact that most UAVs (except Air Force Predators) belonged to ground units raised questions on joint management, control, and direction of these vehicles. Without a joint operational architecture embracing theater forces, such questions were largely reduced to a fight among services for control and were not resolved.

A top-heavy Army command and control headquarters could not conduct joint operations. It declined to send representatives to JFACC targeting board meetings. That a corps headquarters with more than 500 officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers was necessary to coordinate a 5,000-man task force within the framework of an Air Force-based JTF reflected the rigidity of the existing Army multi-echelon, single-service command and control structure.

The Army refused to incorporate attack helicopters in air targeting orders. The approaches of the Air Force deliberate planning process and the Army movement-to-contact method collided. If operations went as planned, the Army would have sacrificed electronic warfare as well as other air defense countermeasures routinely provided to Air Force pilots. These diverse approaches left the joint commander with no alternative to inefficient sequential service operations.

Because naval aviators lacked adequate target-imaging systems to drop laser-guided bombs from F-14s and F-18s during training flights, they learned in combat. Naval aircraft hit less than half of their laser targets in Serbia, and thus Navy participation in joint operations was constrained.

The Joint Chiefs mobilized enough equipment, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance for two wars to carry out the bombing campaign. For example, every joint surveillance aircraft instructor was called upon, disrupting training for years. Kosovo also had a significant effect on real-world missions. With key assets such as tankers and electronic jammers rushed to Kosovo, the Air Force had to

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temporarily shut down no-fly operations over Northern Iraq. It reported the need for a period of six months to reconstitute forces after the conflict.

Service oriented operations also impeded joint logistics. While Albania lacked a deepwater port, its coastline favored joint logistics over the shore (JLOTS). But that did not occur. JLOTS has suffered from a shortage of funding and a paucity of realistic exercises for years, yet a sustained offensive depends on strategic sealift. U.S. forces were thus unprepared for anything other than the air campaign.

Although the military exists in a class by itself in the case of strategic



Marines operating simulation system, Urban Warrior '99.

Fleet Combat Camera Group, Pacific (Chris Desmond)

mobility, the Kosovo experience demonstrated an overreliance on strategic airlift, which in turn is dependent on a robust in-theater infrastructure that was inadequate in the Balkans. But little was done to exploit alternative means to move men and matériel. Army rotary assets could have moved equipment from ship to shore. Despite success with this type of joint operation in Haiti, it was not attempted in Kosovo.

Operations against Serbia demonstrated that the American way of war has changed little since 1991. The application of a single arm—air and missile power—allowed the enemy to adapt to the single threat—to hunker down and wait out the bombardment. Assumptions on omniscient surveillance technology in connection with battlespace knowledge and information dominance also turned out to be fallacious. In spite of enormous U.S. and NATO superiority in every category of technology, allied battlespace awareness was often manipulated by the enemy. Strikes on decoys indicated that the Serbs let daytime reconnaissance flights see real targets and then

replaced them at night, or that U.S. target analysts misinterpreted the information received.

Technologies developed since Desert Storm should have decreased decision cycle times and increased the ability to achieve battlefield effects more efficiently and effectively by employing all service capabilities during the Kosovo air campaign. But joint command and control concepts and procedures did not fundamentally change, and U.S. forces were unable to exploit opportunities offered by new technology. In Operation Allied Force, commanders and staffs from the services were not postured to exploit information opportunities. Effective procedures began to emerge by the end of the air campaign, but they should have been in place at the start. What is more, the distrust between ground and air commanders evident in 1991 persisted during the 1999 air campaign.

Shaping the Force

In the absence of a joint operational framework that integrates air, space, and missile power with ground combat forces, defeating an enemy will

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Jeffrey Allen)F-15E after mission,
Allied Force.

be expensive and time consuming—if it happens at all. Service components must be organized to fit into JTFs without intervening or redundant layers of command and control. Redefining service force modules as the lowest level at which operational units can accomplish core competencies is vital. At the same time, JTF headquarters must contain sufficient expertise from all services to make the deployment of redundant single service command and control unnecessary. Current service transformation programs do not address this need.

Enemies may attempt to strike early to outpace a U.S. military response and act decisively with weapons of mass destruction to deny access. Accordingly, service operational concepts and command and control structures that obstruct jointness will have a profound impact. As implied above, jointness is not an end in itself but rather a means to cope with the uncertainty and rapidity of change in a turbulent strategic environment.

If information superiority and battlespace dominance are the organizing imperatives that can determine how the services will fight in the future, then new joint operational concepts and joint-capable organizations are keys to success. Transformation that occurs without joint influence

and oversight will not change the single-service warfighting establishments.

The strong links between weapons procurement, doctrine, and organization for combat puts this problem into sharp relief. For instance, if the Navy buys joint strike fighters and new carriers, it is likely to operate in basically the same manner in fifty years as it does today. Moreover, this means that if joint control was exerted over service research, development, and acquisition, transformation to new structures for warfighting can occur. Unfortunately, service target information systems are being funded and the Armed Forces operate redundant assets. To date, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, Joint Staff, and U.S. Joint Forces Command have been unable to overcome this predicament and replace the World War II paradigm with one that shapes decisions on force design and acquisition. Service control of funding and influence in shaping such decisions remains unchanged.

The recent initiative to organize a core JTF is notable because it addresses many problems that resurfaced during the U.S.-led air campaign in Kosovo. As James Blaker has observed, “This is

a good idea, but we need to move to standing joint task forces. Everyone says it is not good to go to war with a pick-up team. This is a step forward.”² Yet organizing a standing JTF risks failure if it ignores the fact that when service specific visions for warfighting, backed by extensive plans for weapons modernization, are not included in joint plans, the influence of the joint community is marginal. After all, the building blocks of JTFs must be modules based on core competencies that reside inside the services.

Bureaucratic power does not shift voluntarily. Civilian leadership in the Pentagon, White House, and Congress is essential to the future of jointness. Until legislation as monumental as the National Security Act of 1947 is enacted to restructure the defense establishment within the context of reform, nothing of substance will occur. Lectures, demonstrations, and expressions of support by senior officers have not and will not yield tangible results to advance jointness and rationalize the allocation of increasingly scarce funds in the years ahead.

Perhaps the skepticism voiced by Alfred Thayer Mahan that no service can reform itself is valid. Change must come from outside to transform the military and realize authentic jointness. Otherwise the Nation could suddenly find that the Armed Forces are manning an expensive high-tech Maginot Line that will inevitably be outflanked. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Elaine Grossman, “As Lead Experimenter, Gehman Expects to ‘Duke it Out’ with Service Chiefs,” *Inside the Pentagon*, vol. 14, no. 48 (December 3, 1998), p. 2.

² Robert Holzer, “Stability at Top Is Critical to JFC’s Pentagon Clout; Also Calls for a Standing JTF Headquarters,” *Defense News*, vol. 15, no. 35 (September 4, 2000), p. 1.