

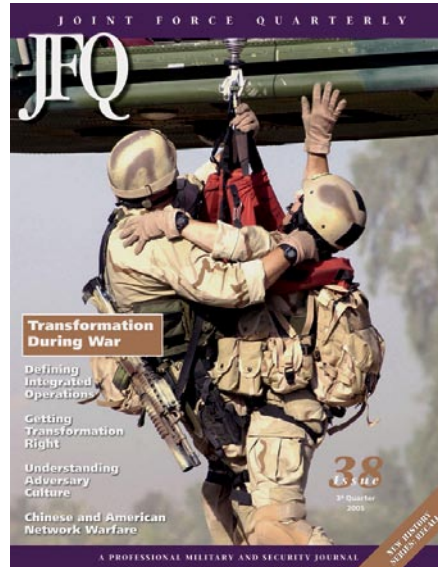
Letters to the Editor

To the Editor—Chuck Harrison’s article, “How Joint Are We and Can We Be Better?” (Issue 38, 3^d Quarter 2005), which appeared as a link on the Army Knowledge Online homepage, is right on the mark. LTC Harrison’s thoughts on the lack of a system to enforce joint training echoed my experiences as a junior officer.

Harrison evaluates an operational level joint exercise and notes, “We should ask just how joint the exercise was and at what level.” Different levels of leaders see training through their own lenses and their own positions. What looks joint to general officers or brigade commanders is far different than what appears joint to an Army or Marine company commander or platoon leader/commander at the tactical level. As Harrison points out, tactical training should “not become entangled with the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which addressed strategic issues and joint operational level training.” Put more bluntly, Goldwater-Nichols means little to sergeants, lieutenants, and captains focusing on joint tactical training. Senior officers who point to Goldwater-Nichols for joint training should ask sergeants and lieutenants what they know about Goldwater-Nichols. I believe they would get blank stares more than half of the time.

Harrison points out that “what has not been created is a system to ensure that joint training is taking place at the brigade and battalion level.” A building block in creating that system is to identify and broaden the definition of the joint mission essential task list (JMETL) and gates that we expect small units—platoon and companies—to be proficient in. We know that we need to train in close air support, but there is much more that we need to be proficient in, joint-wise, prior to deploying. However, our leaders at the division and brigade levels cannot necessarily define all of these tasks for us at the tactical level; these must be bottom-up tasks that platoon sergeants, platoon leaders, company and even battalion commanders identify. A good example is my Army infantry support platoon’s experience in Operation *Enduring Freedom-V* while our battalion, 2^d Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, was attached to the 22^d Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) for 6 weeks in Uruzgan province. My platoon

worked shoulder to shoulder with the Marine landing support platoon to rig and hook up external loads to CH-53E (Marine) and CH-47D (Army) aircraft. We had different unit SOPs, terminology, and equipment, but we figured out how to get the job done at our level (helped by the fact that the services use the same field manual for external hookups).



Once the 22^d MEU left, my platoon became responsible for the Tarin Kowt field landing strip as well, and received, unloaded, and uploaded USAF C-130 aircraft. Working with Marine CH-53Es and Air Force C-130s was not a mandated predeployment JMETL task. Junior leaders from all Services are figuring out this and hundreds of other joint tasks on the ground while deployed.

In summary, LTC Harrison’s article is right on target. A system to enforce joint tactical training needs to ensure that junior leaders have input into training needs other than close air support. Our joint experiences while deployed can help units—from the bottom up—identify JMETL tasks that need to be trained on back at home station. From there, senior leaders are back to LTC Harrison’s focus: building a system that is in place to ensure that the joint training actually happens.

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To the Editor—In “Defining Integrated Operations” (Issue 38, 3^d Quarter 2005), Richard Downie provided definitions for what he considered *integrated operations*, which included *integrated operations*, *combined integrated operations*, and *multinational integrated operations*. Each definition included a set of Services, agencies, and other elements that would be engaged in operations. To buttress his definitions, Colonel Downie appealed to statements from General Richard Myers, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

With all due respect, we believe that Colonel Downie’s effort fails in several respects. To be sure, operations he described as *integrated* do contain the elements he included. Recent operations, particularly those that are often categorized under the catch-all phrase *military operations other than war*, have involved the participation of every Service in the U.S. military, forces from other nations, American governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international governmental organizations (IGOs). To call the tsunami relief effort an “integrated operation,” however, is a considerable misuse of the word *integrate*.

Indeed, all of the entities involved in a mission may have the same goal. But their cultures and capabilities differ in degrees, sometimes considerably. Moreover, the term *integrated operations*, as defined by Colonel Downie, connotes a degree of command or control over these organizations, especially NGOs and IGOs, that exists neither by definition nor spirit. Thus, while there may indeed be unity of effort, achieving the desired end-state through an “integrated operation” may well be chimerical.

The concept of integrated operations becomes even more remote when one moves to the operational level of war. The differences in warfighting cultures and doctrines (or the lack thereof), and the presence of coalition partners whose national interests will at some point detract from both unity of command and unity of effort, serve to render integration impossible. This is often exacerbated by the personnel policies of the various Services. Varying rates of personnel turnover can result in instability and personality clashes that could detract from the proper coordination of operations, let alone integration.

Humanitarian operations render the notion of integrated operations even more fanciful. Downie used General Myers’ defini-

tion of *multinational integrated operations* and cited the tsunami relief effort in Indonesia as an example. Experience throughout the post-Cold War period, ranging from Somalia through stability operations in Iraq, indicates that at best one may achieve a degree of coordination that will contribute to the success of the operation.

Integration, or more realistically simple coordination, becomes virtually impossible to achieve with NGOs. The radical differences in organizational culture, methodology, and purpose, not to mention the sheer mutual distrust between NGOs and military organizations, render even the most rudimentary type of cooperation hard to attain.

We suggest that *coordinated operations* is a much more useful term to define the activities Colonel Downie described. Although understandably Service-centric in its orientation, Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, provides a good baseline for understanding the types of operations Downie spoke of: “The proper application of a coordinated force can produce effects that exceed the contributions of forces employed individually.” From this, perhaps we can develop more useful definitions of the types of operations we will be conducting in at least the near future.

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To the Editor—Congratulations to John Hurley for so eloquently describing what is emerging as a key element in the revolution in military affairs: cross-functional working



groups (“Cross-Functional Working Groups: Changing the Way Staffs Are Organized,” Issue 39, 4th Quarter 2005). As the senior analyst at Battle Command Training Program Operations Group Delta, I have witnessed working groups emerge over the past 5 years acting as key enabling components of information-sharing and knowledge management. Integrated working groups, combining expertise from multiple staff sections, have enabled a marked increase in both the veloc-

ity and veracity of information used to make decisions within military organizations. Technological enhancements in the form of Web portals for sharing information—especially for posting critical updates or changes, coupled with real-time collaboration tools that allow coordination in virtual meeting rooms—have freed us from many of the shackles imposed by time and space.

One statement in LTC Hurley’s article, however, raises a caution flag. He states, “Each action officer receives identical guidance, so there is no opportunity for a primary staff section officer to miscommunicate it.” Don’t believe it! Experience tells us that individuals interpret inputs differently, even if their inputs are exactly the same. Just look at the differences in accounts of eyewitnesses to an accident. Differing interpretations of an event is a part of human nature, so we must take them into account and mitigate their effects. Good staff work and strong management of meetings are not obsolete.

All in all, Hurley’s is an excellent article. He managed to capture in just a few pages some real nuggets that others should study and consider implementing in their own organizations.

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