

## Letters . . .

### The Meaning of Jointness

**To the Editor**—Your readers owe Admiral William Owens a debt of gratitude for addressing the real meaning of jointness in “Living Jointness” (*JFQ*, Winter 93–94). Since the unifying theme of *JFQ* is jointness, it should be treated exhaustively and with precision. “Living Jointness” offered sound ideas and brilliant examples of jointness, yet the article could give the impression that there is a choice to be made between specialization and synergism. This is a false dichotomy, however, since synergy depends on selecting specifics.

The power of a synergistic organization of forces rests upon the discrete capabilities of the constituent forces and added strengths gained from combined or mutually reinforcing operations. This is true within components. Army combined arms doctrine does not simply blend infantry, armor, and other capabilities; it assigns suitable missions to specialized forces so that the total force is capable of accomplishing an assigned mission. The combined arms organization relies upon the competence of expert infantry, armor, and other forces. Both naval battle groups and Air

Force composite wings similarly depend on the strengths of specific forces working in carefully crafted relationships. The capabilities of the joint force depend on integration (hopefully synergism), but of what? Service capabilities. This is not to say that specialization is everything. But basic combat capabilities reside in specific fighting forces. Specialization is necessary for military effectiveness; you must first have specialized capabilities in order to later achieve synergy.

More important, synergy does not result from “blending” or simply “combining” discrete military capabilities. The verb used here is particularly important. Synergy can be gained only by carefully and deliberately crafting a new composite. Discerning, testing, developing, and verifying combinations of specific weapons systems and assets which yield the greatest aggregate—the most synergistic forms of joint force—is the no-kidding challenge for military professionals interested in warfighting effectiveness. Military effectiveness depends on excellence in weaponry and training employment tactics, component operations, joint operations, and strategy.

“Blending” forces and “finding the right balance” between specialization and synergy are effects, not goals. The object of joint force design should be combat capability.

—Lt Col Charles M. Westenhoff, USAF  
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of the Air Force

### What’s Best for the Team

**To the Editor**—As the commanding officer of the first west coast FA-18 squadron to integrate women, I carefully read “A Soldier Is a Soldier” by Rosemary Bryant Mariner (*JFQ*, Winter 93–94). Captain Mariner recommends that commanders tell personnel: “Anyone who has a problem with [integrating women into their units] can either get over it or get out.” That style of leadership has not served the Navy well in the past, and today it fuels the defiance of those who are opposed to the integration of women. I would suggest that commanding officers instead assemble their personnel and tell them: “Our unit is integrating women because it’s best for the team,” then professionally challenge each of them to meet their individual responsibility to the integration effort.

—Commander Jeffrey S. Ashby, USN  
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### The Liberation of Special Operations

**To the Editor**—The recent death of Colonel Charlie A. Beckwith, USA, brought back vivid memories for those who knew him or were acquainted with his career. There are images of Laos and Vietnam in the 1960s, of special operations in enemy-held territory, of brave deeds by soldiers who served outside the mainstream of the Army. Beckwith was a Special Forces officer when it was an unrewarding career path, long before Special Forces became a distinct branch. He lived through the trials of peers who found their ideas rejected by leaders who were bound by tradition. Careers were curtailed by special operations assignments: some were forced out, others felt lucky to get their majority before the magical twenty-year mark.

While more fortunate, Beckwith was nonetheless regarded as a maverick and something of a



“loose cannon.” I recall him defying convention in the mid-seventies at Fort Bragg—even after duty hours when he came to formal events in a camouflaged dinner jacket. His sometimes abrasive attributes surfaced in 1980 as he gained national attention after leading Delta Force on an aborted hostage rescue mission into Iran.

Eagle Claw (later known as Desert One), the ill-fated operation in Iran, served as a catalyst for special operations and joint operations. From this experience in southwest Asia we learned that when it came to planning, training, and equipment, special operations capabilities did not meet the need of the Nation for such missions. The operation also revealed significant failings in jointness. As Beckwith’s obituary in *The Washington Post* noted, “Investigators concluded that the Army, Air Force, and Marine personnel had not trained together before being selected for the mission and that the operation lacked a clear chain of command.” That investigation by the Special Operations Review Group, chaired by Admiral James Holloway, recommended that special operations as well as joint capabilities be

strengthened. Other lessons from Grenada three years later also accelerated reform. Subsequent debates in Congress led to the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Cohen-Nunn Amendment. The former law gave the Chairman and unified commanders new authority, while the latter created the U.S. Special Operations Command, a unified command with its own budget (for an examination of these events, see “Where Are Special Operations Forces?,” *JFQ*, Autumn 93).

Colonel Beckwith’s career was rooted in an era when joint and special operations were clearly not ascendant, when they suffered from service parochialism and also lacked command and budgetary support. His last operation marked the end of that era and the start of a new one. He lived to see special operations awarded a higher priority and gain greater acceptance within the Armed Forces.

—Paul C. Clark  
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and Diplomacy  
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