

Writing Joint Doctrine

By CHARLES M. EDMONDSON

Tasked with the distribution and review of joint doctrine publications at the Naval Doctrine Command, I quickly learned they fall into two categories. One consists of well written pubs that truly present joint principles and precepts, the other of thinly veiled service works masquerading as joint doctrine. The latter are not always as patently self-serving as one might suspect. One-sided, provincial publications are a result of the process used to write them rather than intentional efforts to force particular views on other services. It is my intention to briefly outline a systematic process for writing joint doctrine which offers equitable representation for all services.

The current process of writing joint doctrine formally begins with the designation of a lead agent by the Joint Staff. An agent might be an individual service, combatant command, or Joint Staff element charged with developing, coordinating, reviewing, and maintaining doctrine. Few rules or strictures obtain especially in the development stage. An agent may decide to write a pub or assign it to a primary review authority (PRA). In either case, however, Joint Pub 1-01, *Joint Publication System—Joint Doctrine and Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures Development Program*, sets out responsibilities to be followed by an authority in writing a doctrinal pub:

- ▼ consider existing joint and combined as well as service doctrine to ensure the draft reflects service and combatant command perspectives
- ▼ ensure that all sentences, paragraphs, and passages taken from previously approved pubs are quoted

Lieutenant Commander Charles M. Edmondson, USN, is a radar intercept officer currently assigned to the Joint/Combined Doctrine Division at the Naval Doctrine Command.

verbatim; changes to previously approved language resulting from developing joint doctrine will be highlighted for consideration during the staffing process

- ▼ employ previously approved terminology contained in JCS Pub 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, to the greatest extent possible.

Along with those responsibilities a PRA is *encouraged* to conduct coordination meetings to initiate early dialog with combatant command and service coordinating review authorities (CRAs). These meetings also highlight perspectives and/or doctrinal differences that should be considered in developing the initial draft. But the point is that coordination meetings or joint working groups are *not* required. Unfortunately, this means that a draft pub can be developed without joint input.

Often a PRA will simply assign the writing to an action officer with a warfare specialty that relates to the subject at hand or at least some background knowledge. The worst case is assigning it to an officer with little knowledge or practical experience of the subject. Either way, the process from then on is usually left up to the action officer who begins with a program directive (requirement) under one arm and a deadline under the other, and who determines the methodology and can:

- ▼ sit at a computer and write the pub alone
- ▼ hire a contractor to write the pub
- ▼ hold a series of joint working groups with subject matter experts from the services to jointly develop the pub
- ▼ undertake a combination of the above actions.

In fact, the joint working group is the best approach.

A good illustration of an agency that uses working groups is the Air,

Land, Sea Application (ALSA) Center. A four-service, major command-level agency that develops multiservice concepts, tactics, techniques, and procedures, ALSA was chartered by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Naval Doctrine Command, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, and Air Combat Command. The center is governed by the Joint Actions Steering Committee comprised of general and flag officers who represent the chartering commands. The ALSA process is centered on multiservice working groups which identify similarities and differences in service doctrine and facilitate the means to resolve differences. The groups are conducted in series and last three to five days depending on the complexity of the task. This results in a product that is forwarded to service doctrine commands for review and comment. Based on this review, ALSA may either reconvene a working group to resolve any conflicts or incorporate minor changes in the pub for final approval. While ALSA pubs are not subject to Joint Staff or CINC review, its products are uniquely joint.

ALSA has proven to be quite productive and, in mediating among the services, it has been used partly as the PRA for Joint Pub 3-09.3, *JTTP for Close Air Support*. While not chartered to write joint doctrine, ALSA has been successful at it largely through an effective use of multiservice working groups. Time and resources can be saved in this way by offering the best joint product in an expeditious and efficient way. Contentious issues will arise in dealing with the complexities of certain subjects and divergent service perspectives; such problems, however, are best dealt with if identified early in the process and resolved at the action officer level.

A number of points should be considered in forming working groups to develop joint pubs:

IN BRIEF

▼ work through service doctrine centers—identify points of contact and subject matter experts from various commands (a mix of O4/O5 level with all services equally represented and CINC participation constitutes a highly desirable working group)

▼ research prior efforts on the subject—build on extant material, avoid duplication, and remember that plagiarism is a form of flattery but that earlier efforts must be properly acknowledged

▼ ensure that follow-up meetings include the same participants—continuity is important

▼ PRAs must exercise control of groups—entertain all views, but when impasses occur, note them and press on; facilitate compromise (using different phrasing sometimes can satisfy all parties, but in the worst case take the contributions of all sides into account)

▼ PRAs must act as honest brokers and avoid parochialism—attempt to reduce acrimony within a working group (prior liaison with all members helps to clarify goals, schedule briefings, encourage parties to bring relevant material to the table which sets stage for productive work)

▼ the host should provide the best computer assets possible—all working group members should leave with at least a written outline of the pub's direction (this allows them to adequately brief their chains of command on progress, receive responses on contentious issues, and identify portions of the pub that may be show-stoppers in the review process).

The above recommendations are not all-inclusive, but they offer a starting point for forming joint working groups. Experience shows that

there is frequently more common ground among the services than may be apparent at first. Face-to-face arbitration, negotiation, and explanation will help dispel distrust and parochialism. There are admittedly some issues that working groups cannot resolve and that must be tackled at higher levels, which is to be expected. But most can be addressed at the working group level in a manner that is satisfactory to all members. Starting with a genuinely joint effort in writing a doctrinal pub not only communicates the appropriate intent to the consumer, it gives each service pride of ownership in the resulting product. That approach goes far to ensure the eventual approval of the draft document as a full-fledged joint publication.

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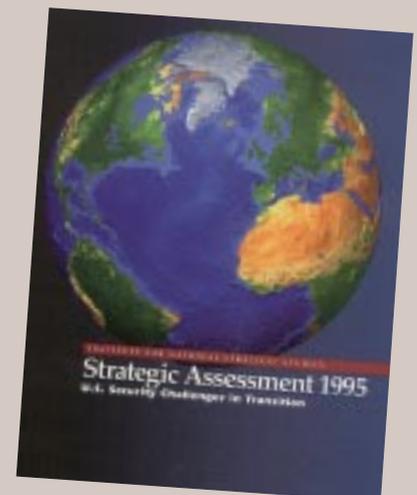
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