LETTERS

To the Editor—The most recent issue of *Joint Force Quarterly* (Issue 63, 4th Quarter 2011) contained many well-written articles that provided recommendations for improving today's joint processes and stimulating thought throughout the joint force. However, it appears that many articles were written with a disregard for the current national fiscal situation. Inevitably, pressure to reduce spending in an effort to control the national deficit will force the Nation and Department of Defense (DOD) to make some tough decisions over the next decade.

Despite the turnover of several key leadership positions over the past year, including the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the message on the fiscal issue has been both clear and consistent: the joint force needs to challenge status quo thinking and eliminate inefficient or outdated processes that are no longer necessary. The trade space is well defined: maintaining inefficiency will result in a loss of military capacity. Given the unequivocal guidance and gravity of the options, it was surprising that experts on and in the joint force and on Capitol Hill did not use the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 as an opportunity to assess the successes and limitations of this watershed legislation.

Several of the articles in *JFQ* also demonstrate somewhat constrained thought. It appears that joint practitioners have accepted the fact that Goldwater-Nichols created a box within which we now must try our best to operate, occasionally making minor improvements wherever practical. The innovative thinkers behind Goldwater-Nichols, whether one agrees with the outcome or not, were not as constrained in thought or action; they demonstrated bold thinking by challenging the assumptions of the day, and they implemented true reform. Today, the joint force is faced with a different set of challenges that may be even more complex than those of the early 1980s.

Achieving significant reform, particularly when it involves downsizing an organization as large as DOD, is a monumental task. It is difficult to conduct the objective analysis even to begin the process. Program managers, with the full support of the defense industry, will claim that Soldiers and Marines will surely die if their programs are terminated. Legislators do not want to risk reelection by appearing soft on defense or advocating cutbacks in programs that will result in lost jobs in their respective districts. Process owners and organization staffs will not step forward to recommend their respective concerns be terminated, as it would surely have a personal financial impact. There is no incentive in place to stimulate cooperation to scale back or terminate processes that were spawned during the Cold War or global war on terror. Therefore, it is important to recognize that many obstacles will be emplaced to defend the status quo.

Perhaps one naturally occurring consequence of jointness among senior leaders and practitioners was to foster a sense of group-think that now inhibits critical analysis of the effects of Goldwater-Nichols. Additionally, a challenge for military officers desiring to speak or write critically of Goldwater-Nichols is that their arguments can be easily dismissed as mere Service parochialism. Being stigmatized as anti-joint in today's military environment is the equivalent of being branded a communist in the McCarthy era. To overcome these factors, the contrarian analytical method of red-teaming must be continually applied to how we think, assess, and write about existing doctrine, processes, and organizations. Red-teaming is the ideal method for challenging an organization's plans, programs, and assumptions.

Despite the litany of statements from senior defense officials that all options are currently on the table, it is evident that many in the joint force are not seizing this opportunity to assess which joint processes are working efficiently and which need to be reduced or eliminated. Accomplishing this will again require innovative thinking on the level of Goldwater-Nichols—which begins with challenging both underlying assumptions and processes created during an era of practically unconstrained spending. Certain factors may serve as drivers of inefficiency; however, they will not be identified and corrected if they go unchallenged. Briefly, I will use several articles from *JFQ* 63 to apply this method.

In *Linking Military Service Budgets to Commander Priorities*, Mark A. Gallagher and M. Kent Taylor present a well-developed argument on a better approach to align combatant command (COCOM) requirements to Service budgets. However, two fundamental issues must be addressed before undertaking this analysis. First, does the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), a key component of the argument, provide an adequate return on investment? Before one can answer this question, one must fully identify and calculate the cost of all military, civilian, and contractor support used to manage the process, as well as the cost of overhead needed to navigate through the system. As a recent study from the Institute for Defense Analyses noted, over the past decade, JCIDS did not alter any solution originally proposed by a military Service, nor did it appear that the process has added value to the front end of the acquisition process for the programs examined. JCIDS also overlaps with the cumbersome Defense Acquisition Process and Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution System. This inefficient triad drives decisionmaking that is measured in years and decades compared to similar processes in the private sector measured in weeks or months. Does JCIDS contribute to unnecessary inefficiency?

Second, is the COCOM model still valid to prepare and organize for the full range of military operations that the joint force undertakes today? An organization model with a pedigree dating to the Cold War may no longer be appropriate (or affordable) to counter today's global security challenges. Since 1986, the DOD mission has evolved from containment and preparing for full-scale war to a new approach that emphasizes outreach and partnership capacity development, yet the COCOM organizational model remains largely unchanged.

Some may argue that the COCOM model is the best organizational model, but no one can argue that it is not an expensive layer of the defense bureaucracy. As the Defense Business Board reported in 2010, the 10 COCOMs were staffed by 98,000 personnel, with a budget of $16.5 billion—an amount slightly greater than the annual military expenditure of the state of Israel.

Do these large, cumbersome organizations provide the joint force with the agility to prepare for and conduct military operations, or have they evolved into ineffective requirements-generating machines? Could much of the workload done at the COCOMs be accomplished more efficiently through a division of labor between the Joint Staff and Service headquarters rather than maintaining separate four-star commands? Perhaps the thought-provoking recommendations of *Harnessing America's Power* will provide the impetus for COCOM reform.

No serious discussion of joint processes and organizations is complete without mentioning the Joint Operational Planning and Execution System (JOPES). While having an established process for contingency and crisis action planning is essential for preparing military forces for and conducting operations, that process is complex and inefficient in its current form. Again, one must assess the end-to-end costs to conduct joint operational planning, which include personnel, training, and data support systems. Does the U.S. taxpayer get an adequate return on investment for this process?

Despite having a robust staff and mature plans in place at U.S. Central Command prior to Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, the staff still required additional Service augmentation to make final preparations and, in the end, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld chose not to use JOPES fully to deploy the joint force to Iraq. While personal decisionmaking contributed to the outcome, one has to question the overall effectiveness of this process. It would be interesting to compare the cost of planning for *Iraqi Freedom* with the cost of planning for much larger operations during World War II. How does JOPES compare? If the Services and Joint Staff worked collaboratively on developing and maintaining joint operational plans, could this process be simplified? Does JOPES remain unchanged because it provides the means to justify end strength?

In *The Joint Officer: A Professional Specialist*, Scott A. Carpenter provides a thorough review of the joint specialty officer system and raises several interesting questions. However, Commander Carpenter notes the growing need and high demand for joint officers that necessitate having a separate specialty without identifying the root cause. Since Goldwater-Nichols was passed 25 years ago, a significant amount of joint growth has occurred. I find it peculiar that while total force structure has shrunk significantly since 1986, the mechanism used to integrate Service capabilities has grown inversely proportionally.

When analyzing joint manning, what lessons can be drawn from the closure of U.S. Joint Forces Command? When the command was disestablished, several organizations were eliminated with no apparent effect on joint readiness or performance during two ongoing wars. Was there a validated requirement for creating these organizations, or were they created simply to facilitate joint officer development? How many similar offices and organizations still exist? As part of the ongoing efficiency efforts, DOD needs to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of all joint organizations to validate the need for so many joint officer billets; perhaps this will suppress the appetite for future growth. Finally, the practice of randomly creating joint qualified O–6s to develop the largest pool possible is no longer supportable and fiscally irresponsible when one considers the $500,000 price tag to punch the purple ticket.

After 25 years, we should use this opportunity to evaluate our investment in becoming joint. Goldwater-Nichols was not written to reorganize DOD merely for the sake of change; it was an effort to reform the behavior, organization, and outcomes of military action by forcing leaders to think and operate jointly. Increased investments immediately after the passage of Goldwater-Nichols could be justified in order to properly resource the reformation of the processes and organizations of the day. One flaw with the efforts to implement joint reform was that the conditions of success were not clearly articulated. Reform is neither continuous nor enduring; the endstate must be clearly defined. That raises a question: how joint must we be for Goldwater-Nichols reform to be considered a success? If full jointness is the desired endstate, perhaps we should be so bold as to consider eliminating the current military departments and creating a single military department with five Service branches for land, naval, air, special operations, and cyber/space. While I am not a proponent of this extreme option, we must recognize that trying to balance the Services' independence with integrated joint requirements is inefficient by its very nature. DOD will be forced to make some tough decisions over the next decade. Two extreme outcomes may be either to scrap the joint concept in place today and return to a Service-centric model, or go for full integration. It appears that we are currently somewhere in the middle with no clear method to assess the right amount of jointness.

Over the past 18 months, I have been involved in identifying Service-level efficiencies, and as part of this effort, I have had the opportunity to discuss this topic with former senior leaders and members of think tanks. One issue frequently raised is the negative effects of Goldwater-Nichols and its role as a cost driver. I find it perplexing that the great minds of the joint force, particularly those who have observed joint growth over the past 25 years, are not assessing jointness in the context of today's fiscal environment.

The intent of Goldwater-Nichols was to improve the operational effectiveness of our nation's military, but over time, jointness has taken on a life of its own. How effective Goldwater-Nichols has been over the past 25 years is still out for debate, but now the more relevant question may be, "How much jointness can we afford?" The original Goldwater-Nichols supporters could not have predicted the size and cost of the bureaucracy that the act spawned, nor could they have predicted the dire fiscal situation the Nation would find itself in two decades after winning the Cold War. Had these factors been known at the time, it is questionable whether Goldwater-Nichols would have passed in its current form or been implemented to the extent it has been. Given the current size of our national debt and growing pressure to reduce the defense budget, this is the opportune time to assess if Goldwater-Nichols/joint reform is needed. We need to be asking some tough questions to get the process started.

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