

Two Hats



M-1A1 during Persian Gulf War.

for the Joint Force Commander?

By DAMIAN J. McCARTHY and SUSAN A. MEDLIN

DOD

Although the Persian Gulf War was waged a decade ago, it should continue to be studied. Joint doctrine has not resolved many contentious issues raised during that conflict. Among them is whether a joint force commander (JFC) should be dual hatted as a service or functional component commander. The following article assesses doctrine for organizing both joint force and component commands. It then considers organization for Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Finally, it examines the ground operations planned

and executed in 1990 and 1991. The campaign presented the Commander in Chief, Central Command (CINCCENT), with challenges that could have been avoided with a more dynamic theater command and control structure and prescriptive doctrinal guidance.

Joint Doctrine

Subordinate forces can be organized in many ways. Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, declares that “a JFC has the authority to organize forces to best accomplish the assigned mission based on the concept of operations.” JFCs can establish functional component commands and designate commanders (see figure 1, Possible Components in a Joint Force). The primary factors in selecting a functional component

Major Damian J. McCarthy, USAF, is a member of the crisis action group at Allied Air Forces South and Major Susan A. Medlin, USA, is serving at U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command; they collaborated on this article while attending the Armed Forces Staff College.

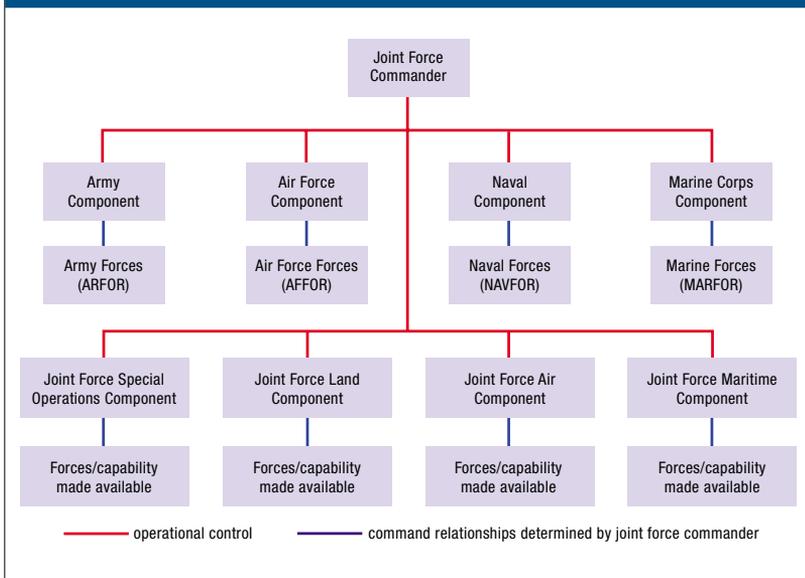
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Figure 1. Possible Components of Joint Force



joint doctrine provides no recommendation, except for JFACCS, on designating functional components

commander are the nature of operations, service force mix, and service command and control capabilities. Usually the service with the preponderance of forces provides the functional component commander. Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, further defines conditions under which JFCs establish a functional component as when “the scope of operations requires that similar capabilities and functions of forces from more than one service be directed toward closely related objectives and unity of command and effort are primary considerations.” Joint Pub 3-0 concludes its consideration of the organization of forces with three statements:

- Most often, joint forces are organized with a combination of service and functional components with operational responsibilities.
- Joint forces organized with Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force components will still have Special Operations Forces organized as a functional component.
- JFCs will normally designate a joint force air component commander (JFACC), whose authority and responsibilities are defined by the establishing JFC based on the JFC’s concept of operations.

Joint Pub 3-0 includes figure 1 above, which is also used in Joint Pub 0-2 as an example only of how to organize a joint force.

Joint doctrine provides no recommendation, except for JFACCS, on designating functional components. Joint Pub 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines joint force land, maritime, air, and special

operations component commanders, but only in regard to JFACCS does it state that “the joint force commander will normally designate a joint force air component commander.” If JFCs do not designate a functional component commander they are effectively in control of this function and dual hatted. For example, if JFCs decide not to designate a joint force land component commander (JFLCC) but employ both Army and Marine Corps units through maritime and Army forces commanders, they provide unity of effort between the forces and act as both JFC and JFLCC.

Commanding the Storm

The coalition organized in the Persian Gulf consisted of forces from 33 nations, presenting General Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, CINCCENT, with serious difficulties for command and control. For political reasons, Schwarzkopf agreed upon a parallel command structure, with the Arab forces under Lieutenant General Khalid bin Sultan of Saudi Arabia acting as Commander, Joint Theater of Operations. According to one assessment, by allowing Khalid to wield authority over what would become known as Joint Arab Task Force, “Schwarzkopf at once lightened his own overburdened workload and smoothed relations with the Saudis.”¹ Moreover, CINCCENT organized theater air components under a functional command and named Lieutenant General Charles Horner, Commander of U.S. Central Air Force, as JFACC to provide centralized planning, decentralized execution, and the integration of both service and allied air capabilities.

Given the magnitude of CINCCENT responsibilities, naming a joint force land component commander would have enhanced the unity of effort. Schwarzkopf was conscious that his span of control could be overextended by his many tasks: “I found myself mired in administrative chores: briefing congressional delegations, giving press interviews, heading off cultural problems with the Saudis, and fielding bureaucratic questions from Washington.”² General Colin Powell, USA, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, repeatedly suggested that Schwarzkopf establish an overall commander for ground forces, fearing that the land offensive was consuming too much time and energy on the part of CINCCENT.

But Schwarzkopf decided to retain JFLCC responsibilities. It was not politically possible to put Arab forces under U.S. control or the preponderance of U.S. forces under Arab command. CINCCENT was also reluctant to create another major staff headquarters, which would be required to control both Army and Marine Corps



Lieutenant General Khalid bin Sultan.

DOD (Jose D. Trejo)

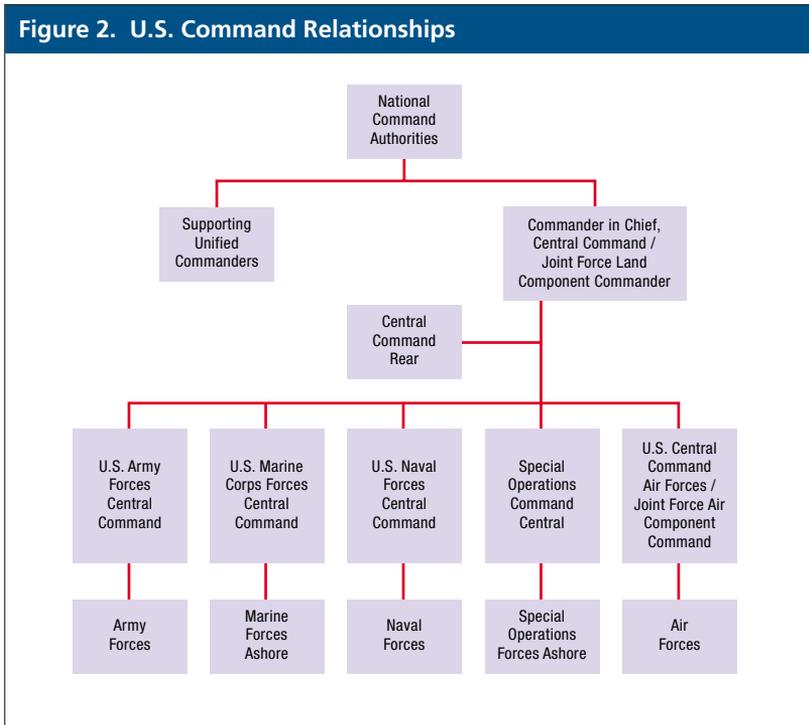
compete with both the Marine Corps and Arabs for attention from CINCCENT. “This rather convoluted arrangement certainly went against the principles of simplicity and unity of command,” according to one official history. “That it was made to work as smoothly as it did was attributed to the powerful personalities and professionalism of the senior commanders.”³

The Scheme of Battle

Schwarzkopf had devised a plan whereby VII Corps would make the main attack. On the right flank, the Joint Arab Task Force and Marines began the offensive with artillery and naval gunfire, while 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade feinted an amphibious landing off the coast of Kuwait. The Arab and Marine attack into Kuwait would fix the enemy in position and distract it from the flanking maneuver in the west. On the left flank, XVIII Airborne Corps would conduct simultaneous ground and air assaults. VII Corps would start the main attack 24 hours after the offensive began, breaking through the weak western part of the enemy line to reach the rear of the forward enemy forces in Kuwait, attack their flank, and destroy three Republican Guard divisions in southern Iraq. On the left flank, the 24th Mechanized Division would support the attack forward to the Euphrates and block the Iraqi retreat.

Disconnects between the Army and Marine battle plans appeared as planning for the ground offensive evolved. The Marine Corps had originally conceived an amphibious assault on a port south of Kuwait City (rejected by Schwarzkopf), and a deliberate attack toward Kuwait City to fix and distract enemy forces. The poor performance of the Iraqis at Khafji led the Marines to believe that the enemy was vastly overrated. Major General William Keys, the 2^d Marine Division commander, pushed for an accelerated tempo as found in his war plan. He believed that “the way to win a quick victory and hold down losses was to push as much combat power through the enemy fortifications as fast as possible, bypassing enemy pockets of resistance and thrusting into the enemy rear.”⁴

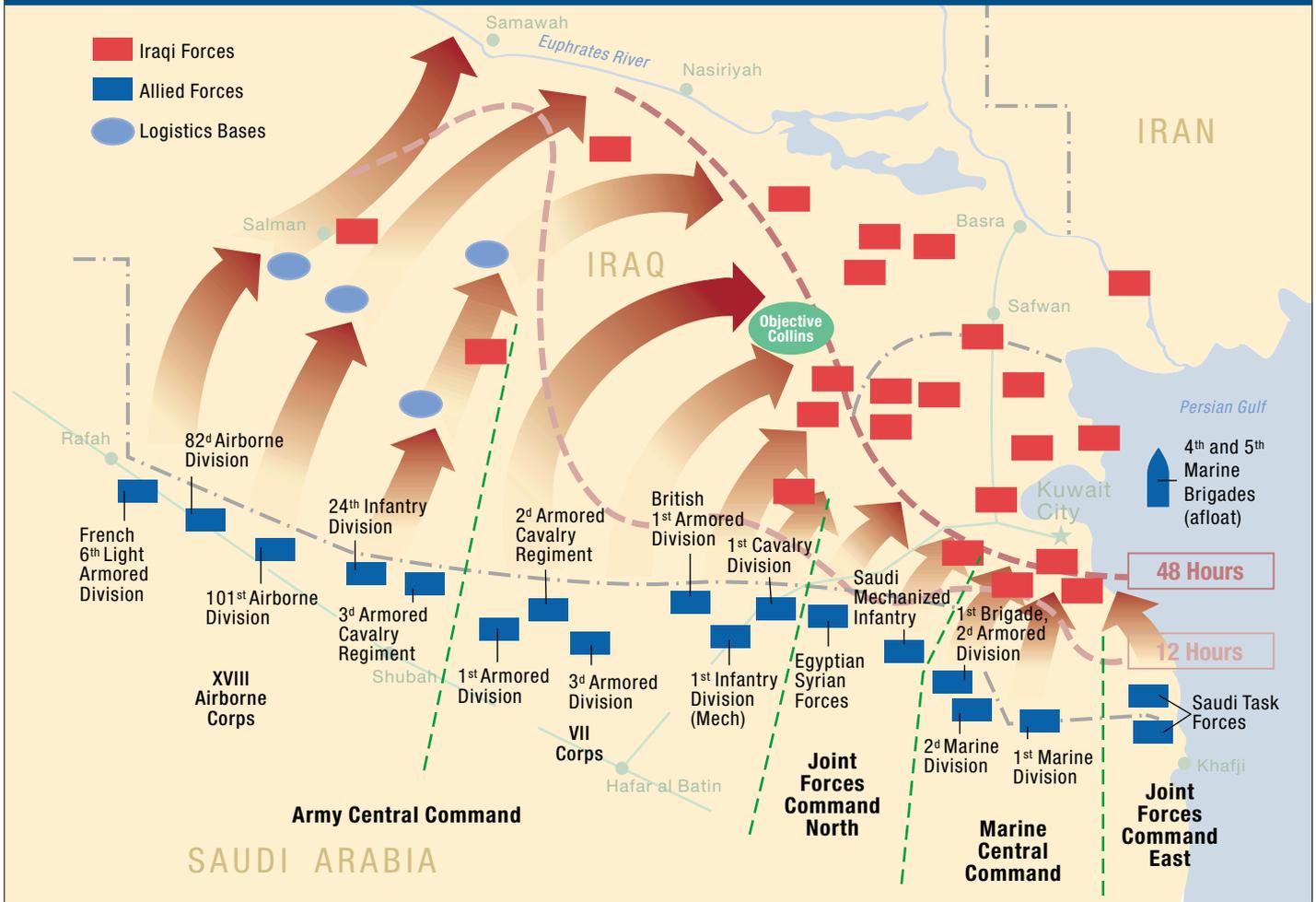
The Marines ended up with a two-pronged attack: the 1st Division would conduct a supporting attack on the right while the 2^d Division carried out the main attack on the left, punching through the Iraqi forces and racing north to seize the high ground west of Kuwait City. This would cut off the escape route for the forces in the urban center and southern Kuwait. General Walter Boomer, the Commander of U.S. Marine Forces Central Command, estimated that his forces would arrive in Kuwait City within three days.



forces, and perhaps Arab forces as well. Instead, Lieutenant General John Yeosock, USA, Commander of Third Army, would oversee the two U.S. corps along with French and British forces (U.S. command relationships are shown in figure 2).

As JFLCC, Schwarzkopf had control over the Marine Corps and the option of bypassing Yeosock and going straight to corps commanders. This created numerous demands. Yeosock had to

Ground Tactical Plan



the Army commanders focused on a methodical attack where available combat forces were massed

By contrast, the Army commanders, Yeosock and Lieutenant General Frederick Franks, of VII Corps, focused on a methodical attack where available combat forces were massed to deliver maximum power. Franks was determined to mass three divisions before taking on the Republican Guard. He was particularly concerned about any scheme that would leave his forces strung out with a piecemeal, one-unit-at-a-time attack on a narrow front.

When Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney arrived in Riyadh with Powell to review the ground offensive on February 8, 1991, there was “an opportunity to iron out the disconnects among the services. But even senior commanders gave little thought to how an accelerated Marine attack might affect execution of the Army plan. Whatever the Marine Corps did, they were seen

as a holding force.”⁵ Schwarzkopf was concerned about the plan. He thought it overly cautious, with emphasis on advance, stop, regroup, advance, stop, regroup. CINCCENT iterated his intent for the ground offensive.

*I do not want a slow, ponderous pachyderm mentality. This is not a deliberate attack. I want VII Corps to slam into the Republican Guard. . . . The idea is not to get to intermediate objectives and then stop to rearm and refuel. If you have divisions sitting around, you will present a huge target for chemicals and you will lose. You cannot have VII Corps stopped for anything.*⁶

Schwarzkopf was right. As one observer notes, the attack by VII Corps “was, by design, deliberate and cautious . . . clearly designed for evading risk of any disorganization while the corps won maneuver room. The cost of that care was obviously paid in time.”⁷

The Storm in Action

The JFACC arrangement under Horner worked fairly well. Coalition aircraft flew 109,976 sorties, dropped 88,500 tons of bombs, and shot down 35 enemy aircraft. By appointing a joint force air component commander Schwarzkopf achieved unity of effort in air operations though not without controversy. Since Horner had no functional ground counterpart, each service component had to make a case for air support individually during the campaign. The Army, in particular, felt slighted, believing it lacked adequate representation during planning.

Despite problems with targeting as well as tactics and procedures, the overall air component mission was successful and set the conditions for the land battle. The ground campaign began on February 24. The initial Marine distraction turned into breakthroughs as they pierced enemy front lines in several places. Reports indicated only minor firefights, with few casualties and growing numbers of prisoners. Schwarzkopf was faced with a decision. If he stayed with the original plan and launched the main attack in 24 hours, the Marines moving forward on the right flank might



Lieutenant General Horner with Saudi squadron commander.

be exposed to counterattack. Early success could also spook the enemy, causing it to retreat before coalition forces could encircle and destroy it.

After speaking with Yeosock and Khalid, Schwarzkopf decided to launch the main attack in the afternoon. The only dissenting opinion came from the Commander, Joint Arab Task Force, on the left flank of VII Corps, who was unable to react quickly to the change in plans. Schwarzkopf was willing to accept that risk as long as VII Corps was ready. Late that afternoon the main attack was launched.

Schwarzkopf believed that VII Corps would push forward throughout the night, closing on Objective Collins in the morning. The goal, a flat desert area west of the main Republican Guard positions, would serve as a jumping off point for an attack on those enemy divisions. However, Franks worried that his forces would run out of daylight before completing their move through the breach in enemy lines, clearing minefields, and marking passage lanes. As the attack progressed into evening, a 20-kilometer gap opened between lead units and armored divisions moving through the breach. Franks decided to halt after informing Yeosock. "I advised him that we would more than likely suspend offensive operations for the night but would continue other combat operations such as aviation and artillery, as well as finish the passage of the remainder of the two armored divisions across the berm. . . . We would then resume offensive operations at first light."⁸

Yeosock didn't tell Schwarzkopf of this plan. As a result, Schwarzkopf made no attempt to slow down either the Marine offensive on the right flank, which was advancing rapidly toward Kuwait City, or the 24th Division, which had pushed hard through the night on the left flank, penetrating over 60 miles into Iraq by morning.

Early on February 25, Schwarzkopf was surprised to learn VII Corps had halted. He was beginning to see the campaign as shifting from deliberate attack to exploitation and was concerned over the methodical advance of VII Corps, fearing that the enemy might escape the trap. "I began to feel as if I were trying to drive a wagon pulled by race horses and mules."⁹ He ordered the 24th Division to slow its advance because of the disconnect with VII Corps, which continued to attack throughout the day (like other coalition forces) yet again stopped for the night, some 20 miles short of the objective.

On the next morning, Schwarzkopf learned that the enemy was beginning to retreat from Kuwait City. He was appalled to find that only a few elements of VII Corps had reached Objective Collins. He called Yeosock and expressed dismay, "John, no more excuses. Get your forces moving. We have got the entire . . . Iraqi army on the run. Light a fire under VII Corps."¹⁰

As the day unfolded it became clear Republican Guard divisions were organizing a retreat. Schwarzkopf then removed the brakes from the 24th Division, ordering it to push forward and seal off the Euphrates Valley. That day, Yeosock reported to Schwarzkopf that VII Corps had finally reached Objective Collins and would attack as soon as the armored divisions were on line.

M-60A1 with mine-clearing devices leads AAVs into Kuwait.



DOO

Yeosock called Franks and said that Schwarzkopf was unhappy with his progress. According to Franks, this was the first that he heard of this criticism. That afternoon VII Corps began engaging the westernmost elements of the Tawakalan Republican Guard Division.

Powell contacted Schwarzkopf and reported that the pressure to declare a cease-fire was increasing

Franks then reported to Schwarzkopf. Each man gives a different account of this conversation, with Schwarzkopf claiming that he had to push Franks to attack east into the Republican Guard. By contrast, Franks has said that he discussed his progress and future plans and that Schwarzkopf was pleased. To further complicate matters, international pressure was mounting for a cease-fire, and Schwarzkopf knew that the opportunity to destroy the enemy was beginning to disappear.

On February 27 the Joint Arab Task Force liberated Kuwait City. VII Corps reported that it had destroyed the Tawakalan Republican Guard Division overnight and were pursuing the other two

divisions, retreating toward Basra. Coalition forces continued to pound Iraqis moving north from Kuwait City. In midafternoon the corps cut through the Medina Republican Guard Division, and a remaining division, the Hammurabi, was on the run. Yeosock reported that this division would be destroyed in the next 24 hours.

Powell contacted Schwarzkopf later that afternoon and reported that the pressure to declare a cease-fire was increasing. Kuwait was essentially liberated, and media coverage of mounting Iraqi casualties was making the White House uneasy. Schwarzkopf asked for another day to destroy the Republican Guard. The Chairman relayed his concern to President George Bush and called Schwarzkopf again to report that the President contemplated declaring a cease-fire in six hours. Bush declared it at midnight on February 27. Kuwait was liberated with minimal coalition casualties. However, Schwarzkopf failed to achieve one major objective, destruction of the Republican Guard. As later analysis revealed, the Hammurabi Division escaped largely intact, as did senior Iraqi officers.

Marines entering Kuwait airport.



DOD (David McLeod)

Enemy vehicles in Euphrates valley.



DOD (Dean Wagner)

In large part, the failure to complete the destruction of the Republican Guard was caused by communication and synchronization problems on the ground. The most serious breakdown in the chain of command occurred between Franks and Schwarzkopf. The former was fully engaged in making contact with the enemy as the latter began to demand a pursuit. It was Yeosock's task to reconcile the conflicting views, to either get Franks to move faster or Schwarzkopf to slow down. His failure to do so exacerbated the problem.

As JFLCC, Schwarzkopf was responsible for the synchronization of the ground campaign. But, as one critic noted, he allowed "each service to attack the way it preferred, with little thought about how an attack in one area would affect the fighting in another."¹¹ Thus the early success of

the Marine Corps caused the main attack to be advanced on very short notice.

Although Schwarzkopf expressed concern over the way Franks viewed the battle during the planning process, he did little to change it. He conveyed his reservations to both Franks and Yeosock before the ground offensive, but he did not remove either one from command; nor did he send either Yeosock or Lieutenant General Calvin Waller, USA, the Deputy CINC, forward during the ground campaign. Instead, from headquarters in Riyadh, he was continually surprised by the slow advance of VII Corps. Together with Yeosock and Franks, Schwarzkopf must accept some responsibility for the escape of the Hammurabi Division, because as joint force commander he was ultimately accountable for the supervision of ground operations.

Reflections on Command

As Desert Storm has demonstrated, problems arise when JFCs are dual hatted as functional component commanders. One problem is

focus. Can a single commander pay adequate attention to critical, immediate, diverse responsibilities? Schwarzkopf confronted many issues both before and during the ground attack. Prior to the counteroffensive he supervised every aspect of coalition, joint, and land component force planning as well as dealing with sensitive issues from international politics to media relations. Once combat operations began he was engaged in the actual land battle as well as conflict termination. Where was his attention needed the most—on the fighting at the front or on Washington and terminating the war? As JFC and JFLCC he had to deal with competing priorities personally and simultaneously.

The second problem is another consequence of dual hatting: where does a JFC staff focus, on the JFC mission or JFLCC issues? Schwarzkopf stated that he did not want another staff, but this meant that the JFC staff had to support him in both roles. Perhaps JFCs with decades of experience could function as JFC and JFLCC, but will their staffs have call on the same level of expertise? Can one staff have the resources for both functions? Even if Schwarzkopf was not overtasked in his dual roles, problems of synchronization in the ground battle suggest that his staff was unable to provide the assessments required for decisions based on unfolding events.

Another consideration is integrating operations among functional components. If there is no joint force land component commander or staff then there can be no lateral communication with the joint force air or special operations component commanders or their staffs. In addition, if JFCs are dual hatted there is a subordinate relationship with these component staffs. For example, had there been a JFLCC to address apportionment with a JFACC, the commanders might have been able to resolve issues before appealing to JFC. But the corps commander essentially had to skip a level of command and bring component issues to JFC. Schwarzkopf attempted to ameliorate this problem by using Waller to resolve cross-functional problems. But this solution suffered from the same drawbacks as Schwarzkopf faced himself—competing priorities and a lack of the dedicated staffs to deal with intractable joint issues. Ground commanders can address JFCs as JFLCCs, but they will always be JFCs just as their staffs will always be JFC staffs. If, for example, CINCCENT had appointed a JFLCC, the Army may have felt it had a

stronger voice in the prioritization of the air effort and the design and conduct of the overall campaign during Desert Storm.

The Gulf War was successfully executed. But its shortfalls also provide valuable food for thought. The issue of dual hatting is one case in point. There may never be another Desert Storm, but there will certainly be occasions when a decision will be made to dual hat JFCs as functional component commanders. Any operation on the scale of Desert Storm will inevitably present similar challenges. Given the capabilities of the Armed Forces, the necessity of conducting coalition operations, and the probability that future campaigns will call for high tempo, simultaneous activities, JFCs will require a strong command network. Plans should be made for sufficient staff support, theater assets, and service capabilities. The operational reach of JFCs must not be limited by a paucity of theater assets that prevent the establishment of supporting functional commands. A more dynamic theater command system must be matched by better doctrine on JFLCC operations and perhaps even a prohibition against dual hatting CINCs in large-scale contingency operations where greater efficiencies can be found in effective and responsive functional commands. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Roger Cohen and Claudio Gatti, *In the Eye of the Storm* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1991), p. 221.

² H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *General H. Norman Schwarzkopf: The Autobiography: It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 363.

³ Office of the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), p. 141.

⁴ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 291.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁶ Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 433–34.

⁷ Richard M. Swain, *Lucky War: Third Army in Desert Storm* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994), p. 335.

⁸ Tom Clancy and Frederick M. Franks, Jr., *Into The Storm: A Study in Command* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1997), p. 279.

⁹ Schwarzkopf and Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 456.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 461.

¹¹ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 432.



DOD (Pedro Ybanez)

Lieutenant General
Yoesock.