REFORMING THE JOINT ACQUISITION PROCESS

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Introduction

        The Armed Forces have made extraordinary progress over the last several years towards become an increasingly joint and seamless force. However, the joint synergy has not gone far enough particularly in the area of joint acquisition and program management. **In order to fully realize the advantages that joint planning, training and interoperability are intended to provide to the Department of Defense, the acquisition process needs to be modified to provide greater joint oversight in order to overcome traditional Service parochialism with regards to funding acquisition programs.**

        Many skeptics to this argument will mention the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) or the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and point out that they fulfill this function. More specifically, with regards to joint acquisition programs, the current responsibilities of the CJCS to the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) are:

        a. Assess military requirements for major acquisition programs.

        b. Advise the SECDEF on capabilities prioritization.

        c. Provide programmatic advice to the Secretary of Defense for the Joint Programming Guidance (JPG) via the Chairman's Program Recommendations (CPR).

        d. Provide advice to the SECDEF on conformance of the Services' Program Objective Memorandums (POMs) to the priorities established in the strategic plans and by the COCOMs priority capabilities via the Chairman's program assessment (CPA).

        e. Provide alternative program recommendations and budget proposals via the CPA.[1]

        Therefore the current process allows the CJCS through his CPR to make recommendations on the Services' POMs to be published in the SECDEF's JPG. The CPA is his assessment of the Services' POM submissions of how well they conform to the JPG and the

Combatant Commanders' priorities. However, the CJCS has neither oversight responsibility nor capability to ensure that day to day operations are in keeping with his recommendations or in line with the Secretary's JPG or decisions. Furthermore, since the Services have the Title 10 responsibility to equip forces, and the resultant budgetary control over programs that responsibility entails, the Chairman does not have the ability to ensure that the services follow through with his recommendations through the Congressional budgeting process. Ultimately, the Services maintain ownership of their programs and the responsibility for prioritizing their funding against other requirements and justifying them before Congress. This not only entails sustainment and migration challenges but also operations and training issues.

In response to his responsibilities, the Chairman instituted the JROC to bring joint oversight over the requirements process. The JROC was also codified in Title 10, United States Code (USC), section 181, where Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to establish the JROC. The charter of the JROC says that it will:

a. Assist the Chairman in identifying and assessing the priority of joint military capabilities (including existing systems and equipment) to meet the national military and defense strategies;

b. Assist the Chairman in considering alternatives to any acquisition program that has been identified to meet military capabilities by evaluating the cost, schedule and performance criteria of the program and of the identified alternatives;

c. As part of its mission to assist the Chairman in assigning joint priority among existing and future programs meeting valid capabilities, ensure that the assignment of such priorities conforms to and reflects resource levels projected by the Secretary of Defense through the JPG.[2]

Therefore, while innovative and serving the Department of Defense's (DoD) goal to become a more "joint" force, the JROC does not have the authority or the capacity to go far enough to ensure that joint programs are fully implemented and budgeted. While chaired by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the rest of the JROC membership is made up of the Vice-Chairmen of the Services – a seeming conflict of interest where the services may trade support for program approval in order to continue service parochialism and priorities. Also, JROC responsibilities are limited to conducting requirements oversight for Acquisition Category 1 programs (defined as procurements more than $2.190 billion in FY 2000 constant dollars - DoD Instruction 5000.2) and they only provide advice to the SECDEF on future programs.

The JROC also has the same limitations as the CJCS. The JROC has no oversight of the budgeting process to ensure JROC-validated programs are adequately funded. Neither are there provisions to ensure the Services present the DoD-approved and prioritized programs to Congressional Authorization and Appropriation Committees with the same prioritization against joint equities. Furthermore, no mechanism exists for the day to day monitoring of programs to ensure authorized and appropriated funds are spent in the way that the JROC intended.

This paper will analyze several programs and use them as examples to highlight the flaws in the current system. In our conclusion, we will recommend changes to address these issues in order to continue DoD's journey towards a more joint and capable force.

Ballistic Missile Defense

Since the Services ultimately have to take responsibility for a program, who takes on the program when it is truly joint and no clear service lead is apparent?[3] The ballistic missile

defense system highlights this problem. In this situation, DoD created a new process to solve the problem.

The Missile Defense Agency's (MDA) acquisition process was a creative new approach in the development and procurement of weapons systems. This approach embraces the capabilities-based acquisition and spiral development process versus the historical requirements-based approach. Since January of 2002, MDA has restructured its approach to developing a fully integrated ballistic missile defense system. This restructuring will require a cultural and organizational paradigm shift because the new approach alters the traditional roles and responsibilities of acquisitions organizations, operational units, and contractors.[4] While the approach is not entirely new, this is the first time it has been utilized on such a large-scale program. Past DoD acquisition programs have bridged the gap between research, development, and operational use, however, the ballistic missile defense system is the first large-scale program to become operational while still in the research and development mode[5]. This aspect is unique as it calls into question operational and maintenance responsibilities for the system and alters the traditional DoD role of the acquisition community.

Conflicts emerging from this new process were recently identified during an upgrade of a missile warning radar system to support the missile defense system. Executing the missile defense program in a research and development mode, while also having elements of the system designated as operational, created challenges for the Integrated Tactical Warning and Attack Assessment (ITW/AA) community. The president relies on the ITW/AA system for aerospace warning, missile warning and defense of the United States. Recently, while the missile defense system was in research and development, the Beale AFB PAVE PAWS radar, which provides radar missile warning coverage to the western United States, was at the mercy of MDA's

development program. This meant that the missile defense development program had priority over the operational ITW/AA system when it came to PAVE PAWS system upgrades. While Air Force Space Command is both the force provider and operator of the PAVE PAWS radar, the missile defense system upgrades to the PAVE PAWS radar has direct SECDEF support through the MDA versus the traditional ownership by a Service. Had the PAVE PAWS missile warning hardware and software upgrade been at the Service level, the program would have been significantly delayed due to real world operational requirements of the PAVE PAWS radar. Once the upgrade to the PAVE PAWS radar is complete and can support missile defense, it is still unclear which organization will be responsible for operations and maintenance of the radar. This radar upgrade is only the beginning of future upgrades to the ITW/AA system in support of missile defense.

The MDA's acquisition process is still maturing. While a limited ballistic missile defense system was recently declared operational in response to North Korea's missile tests in July 2006, the overall ballistic missile defense system program management will remain with the MDA. Will the MDA take on the look of the old Strategic Air Command days where they were both the MAJCOM fighting for money and the warfighter[6]? There may not be formal turnover from the acquisition community to the Services for many of the missile defense elements and components[7]. The MDA will both test and operate the ballistic missile defense system while on alert and during day to day operations with a mix of contractors, National Guard, and service members. The contractor's direct logistic support versus the traditional service led logistics tail will maintain the system. This is a significant break with existing DoD processes and will serve as a model for the development and fielding of future large scale joint systems[8].

There is currently a mature system in place for transitioning a system from research and development to operational use that allows the Service to formally identify and allocate funding to train, operate and sustain the system. However, a variety of factors enable the ballistic missile defense system to operate outside the standard DoD process. Although these factors appear to be unique to the missile defense system, they may have relevance to other future joint systems. A major distinction is that the ballistic missile defense system elements and components will be fielded in very small numbers. For example, only a small number of ground-based mid-course interceptors are initially planned. This is in contrast to historical weapons systems that are mass produced using a rigid process and require a long logistic and maintenance tail. Additionally, the ballistic missile defense system will not require a large number of military personnel to be trained and equipped[9].

A second unique factor in this process is that the ballistic missile defense system is providing a capability that does not exist today while most DoD weapon systems under development are replacing or upgrading existing capabilities. This means the ballistic missile defense system integration testing, both horizontally and vertically, occurs across the entire system, as opposed to the long series of formalized processes and regression tests that existing systems and upgrades are required to accomplish to ensure the new system or upgrade does not degrade existing capabilities. Additionally, the ballistic missile defense system requires an unprecedented level of integration from sensor to shooter in order to meet strict time constraints to identify, track, and engage incoming ballistic missiles. This unique requirement is better suited by maintaining central management of the entire system throughout development and possibly operationally throughout the life of the program[10]. This gives the warfighter a joint combat capability independent of single Service control. Will net-centric unique requirements

for quantity, quality, access, speed and guaranteed delivery of joint and combined data drive a new process that keeps programs out of a single service's hands?

The MDAs unique process was brought about in January 2002 when the Secretary of Defense restructured the program. SECDEF changed the program's direction by canceling the missile defense operational requirements document (ORD) which had mandated key performance parameters (KPP) for each missile defense element. By canceling the ORD, SECDEF conveyed the message that success in the missile defense battle was only achievable if the ballistic missile defense system was seen as a synergistic whole. In contrast, the missile defense's ORD had divided the missile defense elements into separate managerial and technical elements[11].

The director of the then Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) did not have ultimate control over all the elements because the different element program managers reported to their respective Services and not to the BMDO. This made the management of the ballistic missile defense element complex and inefficient and made it nearly impossible to achieve a fully integrated system capable of meeting the strict time constraints and requirement for the guaranteed delivery of data. While the cancellation of the ORD was a big step, even more important was the decision by the SECDEF to transfer program management of some missile defense programs from the Services to the MDA. This broke a long standing process of the elements reporting to their respective Services and emphasized the DoD's new direction on joint material development programs and its willingness to change. While the ballistic missile defense system elements are now under MDA control, it has yet to be determined if it will be practical to transfer these programs back to the Services once the ballistic missile defense system elements have achieved a operating capability[12]. Will the Services want to acquire a system that already

has an operational and maintenance owner when they can easily utilize the combat capability of the system without the funding and manpower strain? If the ballistic missile defense elements are transferred to the Services, will this create organizational, budgetary, and operational stovepipes?

Joint Cargo Aircraft

A program that highlights the problem of lacking joint oversight over the budgeting process is the Joint Cargo Aircraft. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the US Army was forced to use C-23 Sherpa fixed wing aircraft and CH-47 helicopters for resupply due to the vast distances, lack of road infrastructure and the high threat risk to large convoys. While these aircraft performed their missions admirably they were twenty to thirty year old airframes and they soon showed their age in the harsh conditions. The Army recognized the need for a more capable platform to perform the intratheater lift and resupply missions and began developing a replacement. The JROC approved the Army's "Future Cargo Aircraft" requirement in March 2005.[13]

The US Air Force intermediate haul workhorse is the similarly aging C-130 Hercules and that service also set out to find a replacement aircraft. In addition to the overseas missions, the USAF candidate needed to also support new mission requirements for Homeland Defense as well as civil authorities during national disasters or crises.[14] In late 2005, the JROC acknowledged the joint requirement between the two services, directed a name change to the Joint Cargo Aircraft (JCA),[15] and assigned the responsibility to the Air Force to manage the program and procure the necessary systems.

According to the Air Force Print News in March, "both services [said] they expect delivery of the aircraft to the Army to begin in 2008, with 'source selection,' that is the choice of

the manufacturer, to be made by December 2006. The Air Force should take delivery of its first aircraft in 2010."[16]   Although the actual numbers may change, the Army agreed to purchase 75 aircraft and the Air Force 70.[17]

The Army placed $113 million in their 2007 Defense Budget to begin their purchase. When the Senate Airland Subcommittee asked the Air Force about the status of the JCA program, however, the Air Force responded that "it [was] nowhere near buying the aircraft." As a result, the subcommittee cut $109M from the Army budget.[18]   However, the House authorization committee left the money in the Army budget and so a Joint Congressional Committee will have come to a resolution between the two authorizations.[19]   While the current issue is still in debate and may yet be resolved, the fact that there is currently no mechanism in place to ensure that military Services adhere to DoD decisions and, more importantly, priorities during the acquisition process.

InfoWorkSpace vs. Defense Collaboration Tool Suite

The invention of the Internet and its classified cousins, and the subsequent arrival of these developments in the toolboxes of operational commanders, resulted in increases of many orders of magnitude in the amount of information at the fingertips of operators and planners in the field. Military operations, such as Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, occurring during the period in which these capabilities were introduced in the operational realm benefited from the explosion of information that had been newly made available. Unfortunately, however, they also suffered from the lack of organization and system compatibility that accompanied it. The lacking compatibility of the systems inadvertently created as many new problems as the availability of the information had solved. One area in particular where this

incompatibility was apparent was in the realm of strategic planning. Planning at the tactical level was relatively straightforward as it usually took place within a given unit or organization. At the operational and strategic levels, however, the magnitude of the required planning was such that a single plan required contributions from a multitude of planners representing numerous organizations. While the Internet and other tools of the Information Age facilitated the rapid movement of plan components around the globe, the proliferation of different planning tools meant that the transferred information could well wind up at an organization that did not have the tools needed to work with it. Such incompatibility issues proved especially frustrating when parallel and collaborative planning, intended to accelerate the overall planning process, rose to the forefront and took the place of sequential and serial planning methodologies.

In order to address the incompatibility problem, Congress, in 1999, directed DoD to address the problems caused by the lack of interoperability between various collaboration tools.[20] After a rigorous competition during which five collaboration tools were tested head to head, the Collaboration Tool Suite, eventually renamed the Defense Collaboration Tool Suite (DCTS), was selected as the tool best meeting the DoD requirements articulated in Joint Task Force collaboration tool requirements.[21] These requirements had been established by CJCS, working through the JROC, in 2000 and tried to incorporate the best capabilities from the plethora of existing tools into a single system.[22] The Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), charged with "planning, engineering, acquiring, fielding, and supporting global net-centric solutions to serve the needs of …DoD Components", was placed in charge of fielding the system.[23]

Unfortunately, while it DID set a standard, the selection of DCTS did not satisfy a number of DoD organizations which had been using other collaboration tools. One such tool, InfoWorkSpace (IWS), had been acquired by US Transportation Command and was well-liked

not only there but at several other Combatant Commands due to various capabilities that it had which DCTS did not.[24] Rather than acknowledge the reality of IWS' primacy, however, DISA solidified its position in favor of DCTS as the DoD collaboration solution. Lacking the directive authority to compel the commands to cease further expenditures for IWS and use DCTS, however, DISA had no choice but to stand impotently by while IWS not only continued to be fielded but ultimately became the collaboration "system du jour for theater and national commanders".[25] A regrettable result of this development is that the two systems continue to coexist at numerous organizations throughout the defense department; resulting in the need for duplicative training programs and funding lines to procure and maintain two systems which essentially do the same function. Additionally, DoD has had to sacrifice an incalculable amount in lost man hours and basic data reformatting and handling due to the needs of the two systems.

Recommendations

The transformation of its acquisition process is the next step DoD must take if it is to truly realize the advantages that joint planning, training and interoperability are intended to provide. Currently, Service parochialism, and the lack of any joint oversight beyond the establishment of requirements, conspires to ensure that individual Service equities, as opposed to those of the DoD establishment as a whole, dominate the acquisition process. The overall result of this arrangement is that despite the intentions of legislation like the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the empowerment of the CJCS and the Joint Staff, and the creation of organization like the JROC, individual Service priorities still trump those of the DoD in the acquisition process. As two senior researchers at the National Defense University recently noted, "Pentagon decision-making reforms since World War II are largely a history of efforts to curtail the power of the Services to veto joint solutions that serve the entire military better"[26]. This curtailment is still

only a dream. In order for DoD to "wake up" from its dream, the following recommendations are forwarded for consideration:

1) Relieve the Services of all procurement responsibilities and empower a single representative from the DoD to represent defense-wide equities for Congressional acquisition. Vesting procurement authority – i.e., the act of physically requesting program funding from Congress – at either the DoD or Joint Staff level instead of with the Services would remove a significant impediment to the effort towards increasing "jointness" by eliminating the opportunity for Service parochial interest to subvert Joint interests. An advantage of vesting this responsibility at the Joint Staff level would be the subsequent co-location of responsibility for determining and prioritizing joint requirements with actual acquisition authority. The Services would retain responsibility for developing their own requirements (for Joint Staff approval/prioritization) and managing the approved and funded programs: an acknowledgment of the primacy of the infrastructure the Services currently have for determining the needs of their forces and the utility of their program management processes. The retention by the Services of these responsibilities yields another advantage: the size of the Joint Staff would not have to be significantly increased.

2) Leverage Joint Forces Command's (JFCOM) role as the "joint force integrator" and its mandate for developing, evaluating, and prioritizing interoperable solutions to "problems plaguing the joint warfighter" by transitioning the responsibility for funding future DoD research & developmental efforts to JFCOM.[27] As the DoD authority for joint concept development and experimentation, joint training, and joint interoperability and integration, vesting acquisition authority for all new programs with JFCOM would provide the defense department with the mechanism to ensure emerging capabilities supported the DoD goal of moving towards joint

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interoperability. Empowered with the acquisition authority necessary to ensure that the development of future capabilities was done in accordance with a DoD-wide road map vice a Service-specific one, JFCOM's control of the purse would also give it leverage over not only the quality of the new capabilities but also the timing of their development and fielding. In this option, responsibility for programs already beyond the developmental phase would remain with the Services though, as those programs aged and were discontinued, JFCOM would ultimately have DoD-wide responsibility for acquisitions. This approach would provide more joint oversight of the acquisition process but would focus this oversight on new technologies and programs and leave established program lines in the hands of the Services: allowing for a less disruptive and gradual transition to a joint-based acquisition process.

Conclusion

Since the future of the military is mandated by legislation to be one in which joint-ness is valued over the dominance of any single Service, the Defense Department needs to rethink all of its policies and processes to ensure they are congruent with that mandate. To that end, transforming the acquisition process currently in use is a necessary next step in the goal of achieving true jointness as envisioned by the nation's political and military leaders in the mid-1980's when the Goldwater-Nichols Act was legislated into law. This paper advances two recommendations for consideration in effecting that transformation. One vests oversight and responsibility for program related acquisition with the Joint Staff and one taps JFCOM with the responsibility. There are doubtless many other ideas in the defense domain which espouse equally compelling positions. The method chosen to effect the change is not nearly as important as the need to engage in the debate over the need for change – and to act. In the final analysis,

the Department of Defense can only benefit by aligning its acquisition processes with the

strategic and legislated goal of greater joint interoperability.

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Endnotes

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