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14. ABSTRACT Close air support (CAS) has been an integral part of the operational commander's scheme of maneuver since World War II and Korea. Since that time, each service has continued to refine its tactics, techniques, and procedures for conducting CAS. However, the amount and type of training devoted to CAS has varied between the services. The emphasis and quality of training has had a direct impact on the success or failure of battlefield execution. Recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven that "Joint" execution of CAS is continuing to improve. Both of these operations have also shown that there still needs to be improvement in our execution of JCAS. This paper will discuss lessons learned from previous operations to prove that JCAS will not only be relevant in the future - requiring a continued emphasis on its training - but that its continued improvement at the operational level of war will require more joint training at the tactical level.					
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Is Joint Close Air Support Close Enough for the Operational Commander?

By

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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13-02-2006

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Abstract

Close air support (CAS) has been an integral part of the operational commander's scheme of maneuver since World War II and Korea. Since that time, each service has continued to refine its tactics, techniques, and procedures for conducting CAS. However, the amount and type of training devoted to CAS has varied between the services. The emphasis and quality of training has had a direct impact on the success or failure of battlefield execution. Recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven that "Joint" execution of CAS is continuing to improve. Both of these operations have also shown that there still needs to be improvement in our execution of JCAS.

This paper will discuss lessons learned from previous operations to prove that JCAS will not only be relevant in the future – requiring a continued emphasis on its training – but that its continued improvement at the operational level of war will require more joint training at the tactical level.

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INTRODUCTION

The origins of close air support (CAS) date back to WWI when British aircraft of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) engaged in organized “trench strafing” of enemy troops.¹ For the U.S. Armed Forces, CAS originated during the “Constitutional Wars” in Nicaragua from 1926 to 1927 when U.S. Marines first started coordinating air delivered fires with the movement of ground forces.² Current Joint Doctrine defines close air support (CAS) as: “air action by fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft against hostile targets that are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces.”³ It could be argued that neither of these examples meets the current doctrinal definition of CAS, but in any event it is clear that aircraft have provided some form of firepower to the ground commander since the dawn of aviation.

CAS has figured prominently in the operational commander’s scheme of maneuver ever since World War II and Korea.⁴ Since that time each service, individually, has continued to refine its doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) for conducting CAS - to one degree or another. The amount of CAS training also varied from one service to another, as well as within each particular service. With the Goldwater / Nichols Act of 1986 the individual services were mandated by law to become more “Joint” – for close air support this merely entailed adding a “J” to the CAS acronym.

¹ L. W. Sutherland, Aces and Kings (London: John Hamilton, c. 1920), 250-259; quoted in Dr. Richard P. Hallion, “Battlefield Air Support: A Retrospective Assessment,” Airpower Journal (Spring 1990), 1.

² Mario E. Overall, “The Origins of Close Air Support: Nicaragua’s Constitutional War.” Air and Space Power Journal (2005). <<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apjinternational/apj-s/2005/2tri05/overalleng.html>> [13December 2005].

³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Close Air Support, Joint Pub 3-09.3 (Washington, DC: 3 September 2003), I-1.

⁴ B. Franklin Cooling, ed. Case Studies in the Development of Close Air Support (Office of Air Force History: USAF, Washington, DC) 295-333, 345-399; Bruce R. Pirnie, et al, Beyond Close Air Support: forging a new air-ground partnership (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005), 1.

During Desert Storm, JCAS was executed between the services, to some degree. However, this execution was for the most part de-conflicted rather than fully integrated.⁵ After Desert Storm, the services recognized that merely de-conflicting forces was not sufficient. Through participation in several conflicts, the services have continued to refine their integration of JCAS and its doctrinal development. This culminated in the overwhelming success of JCAS during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The success of this integration was due in no small part to the individual initiative and effort of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. Unfortunately, it is often this individual, and not institutional, initiative and effort that translates successful integration at the tactical level to the operational level. When properly synchronized in time, space, and with the supported maneuver forces, JCAS increases the effectiveness of the joint force.⁶ With this being said, has JCAS now evolved into a completely “synergistic” weapon for the operational commander?

Joint close air support must continue to be improved, in order to provide the Joint Force Commander (JFC) the most efficiently lethal combination of air and ground firepower. In order to maximize its effectiveness on the battlefield of tomorrow, JCAS requires more integrated joint training. This paper will analyze lessons learned from our most recent conflicts to articulate that we continue to re-learn the same lessons, that were written in blood, over-and-over again. The most significant shortfall in JCAS lies in the fact that our training, for the most part, is not sufficiently integrated, but de-conflicted.

ANALYSIS

The requirement for JCAS is determined in the apportionment and allocation phase by the Joint Force Commander (JFC) through the Joint Force Air Component Commander

⁵ Jim Garamone, “Joint Ops Key to Military Lessons Learned from Iraq.” *American Forces Press Service* (July 9, 2003), 1. ProQuest [January 3, 2006].

⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-1.

(JFACC).⁷ The exact amount, if any, will depend upon the nature of the conflict. During Operation Desert Storm, estimates place JCAS sorties at approximately fourteen percent of the total.⁸ The lack of determined Iraqi resistance made CAS a peripheral aspect of the war and although it supported the ground attack it was “not considered vital” to the ground attack’s success.⁹ Twelve years later, the use of air power to support the Joint Force Land Component Commander’s (JFLCC) objective jumped to approximately fifty percent of the sorties and seventy eight percent of the ordnance dropped during Operation Iraqi Freedom.¹⁰ In conjunction with the increased numbers of JCAS sorties, recent technological advances have given rise to a large increase in the use of precision guided munitions (PGM) in the execution of JCAS – such as the Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) and AGM-114 Hellfire.¹¹ One would think that with this increase in the use of precision munitions and the experience gleaned from conducting more JCAS, the end result would be more “synergistic”. In many cases it was, but there are still too many instances where the sums of the parts do not equal the whole.

OEF was one of the first opportunities for U.S. forces to demonstrate their ability to conduct fully integrated JCAS.¹² For the most part, the services integration and/or de-confliction proved effective, but Operation Anaconda demonstrated some severe shortfalls on both the air and ground sides. Major General Hagenbeck, Commanding General, 10th

⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-8.

⁸ Marine Corps Reconstruction Report, quoted in Gulf War Air Power Survey Vol. IV part 2 (Washington, DC: 1993), 245.

⁹ Thomas A. Keaney and Eliot A. Cohen, Gulf War Air Power Survey: Summary Report (Washington, DC, 1993), 110-111.

¹⁰ CFACC Assessment and Analysis Staff, Operation IRAQI Freedom – By The Numbers (Assessment and analysis division, 30 April 2003), 5; Staff Sgt. Jason L. Haag, “OIF veterans discuss lessons,” American Forces Press Service (July 31, 2003) Accessed: January 1, 2006, 1.

¹¹ Ibid, 11.

¹² Congress, Senate, “Lessons Learned During Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Ongoing Operations in the United States Central Command Region,” Congressional Record, 108th Congress, 1st sess., July 9, 2003, S. Hrg. 108-654, 20.

Mountain Division (Light) and Commanding General, Coalition Joint Task Force Mountain in Afghanistan stated that: “a ground force commander does not care about the number of sorties being flown or the number and types of bombs being dropped and their tonnage. Those statistics mean nothing to ground forces in combat. All that matters is whether or not the munitions are time-on-target and provide the right effects.”¹³ He also stated that fixed wing pilots faced some procedural and maneuvering challenges: “It took anywhere from 26 minutes to hours (on occasion) for the precision munitions to hit targets.”¹⁴ This demonstrates two yardsticks that are essential for successful JCAS: one for effectiveness – the ability to hit the target – and the other for efficiency – time required to hit the target. Another contributor to these failures occurred at the operational level when Maj. General Hagenbeck’s staff failed to adequately integrate with the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) during the planning process.¹⁵

This could be viewed as an isolated instance, specific to OEF, where JCAS came up short. However, Lt. General Moseley, 9th Air Force and U.S. Central Command Air Forces Commander, and his staff believed there were several areas, after Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), which still needed improving: “even though OIF demonstrated a marked enhancement in overall air and ground coordination and is the contemporary example of employing lessons learned from ongoing joint and composite force training, an analysis of combat operations during Operation Enduring Freedom and a variety of pre-OIF ‘rehearsals,’ there are still

¹³ Robert H. McElroy, “Afghanistan: Fire Support for Operation Anaconda,” *Field Artillery* (Sep/Oct 2002) 4; Military Module, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁵ Bruce R. Pirnie, et al, 59.

areas to improve.”¹⁶ The primary area that needs improving is reducing or preventing fratricide.¹⁷

Fratricide

*“Fratricidal fire and misplaced bombs were the rare exception when measured against the total number of close support sorties launched. But one such episode creates an aura of mistrust and interservice hostility out of all proportion to the casualties incurred.”*¹⁸

Webster’s defines fratricide as: “one that kills a sibling or countryman”.¹⁹ In the case of JCAS we are talking about killing or injuring a “brother in arms”. The exact cause of each fratricide depends on the particular case, but the common theme - in most instances - is improper identification or a lack of situational awareness.²⁰ Each instance of fratricide is tragic and diminishes the overall effectiveness of JCAS, demanding constant effort to reduce or eliminate it.

Historically, the combat losses of U.S. forces have continually diminished since World War II. Unfortunately, the amount of fratricide, as a percentage, has not. Estimates after W.W. II, place the percentage of friendly fire casualties at two to three percent of the total; Vietnam eleven percent; Desert Storm twenty-three percent; and OEF thirteen percent.²¹ Although these estimates are not solely attributed to JCAS, it is important to

¹⁶ Staff Sgt. Jason L. Haag, “OIF veterans discuss lessons,” American Forces Press Service (July 31, 2003) Accessed: January 1, 2006, 1.

¹⁷ Congress, S. Hrg., 20; Jim Garamone, “Joint Ops Key to Military Lessons Learned from Iraq,” *American Forces Press Service* (July 9, 2003), 1; Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, “Briefing on the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq,” U.S. DOD News Transcript (September 9, 2003), 1; Brig. Gen. Robert W. Cone, “Briefing on Joint Lessons Learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom,” U.S. DOD News Transcript (October 2, 2003), 9. <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod.htm>> [January 3, 2006].

¹⁸ B. Franklin Cooling, ed., 539.

¹⁹ Webster’s New Explorer Dictionary and Thesaurus (Springfield, MA: Merriam - Webster, 1999), 209.

²⁰ Brig. Gen. Robert W. Cone, 9.

²¹ Michael Clodfelter, Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000 (Jefferson, NC, 2002), 657; “Friendly Fire”, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/friendly_fire>, [16 January 2003], quoting pentagon source. The total of these percentages are not entirely attributed to close air support. The numbers differ slightly between sources due to the reporting processes used in the calculations.

recognize the potential for JCAS to be one of the largest contributors due to its inherent nature of occurring within “close proximity to friendly forces.”²²

During OEF, one of our first opportunities to execute integrated JCAS, there were three instances of fratricide in which four people were killed and twenty-seven injured.²³ The deadliest occurred on December 5, 2001, when three U.S. Special Forces soldiers and several Afghani fighters were killed by a GBU-31 JDAM in with many others being wounded. The U.S. combat controller requesting the JCAS inadvertently directed a B-52H to attack his own position due to a mistake with his GPS receiver.²⁴ The lessons learned from these incidents were available prior to OIF and resulted in doctrinal changes to the JCAS publication. However, it was by no means the end of fratricide as a direct result of JCAS.

During OIF, the Pentagon estimated eleven percent of the 115 deaths during major combat operations occurred as the result of friendly fire.²⁵ Unlike the previous incident in OEF, during OIF an A-10 Thunderbolt II fired its 30mm cannon at a company of U.S. Marines on March 23, 2003 in An Nasiriyah, Iraq.²⁶ This incident occurred while the Marines were involved in a firefight, resulting in eighteen killed and seventeen wounded.²⁷ The CENTCOM report concluded that not all of the deaths or injuries were the result of fratricide and further discovered that some causes could not be conclusively determined.²⁸

²² Joint Chiefs of Staff, ix.

²³ U. S. General Accounting Office, citing DoD, “Military Readiness: Lingering Training and Equipment Issues Hamper Air Support of Ground Forces,” U.S. GAO Report 03-505 (May 2003), 34.

²⁴ Bruce R. Pirnie, et al., 57.

²⁵ George Cahlink, quoting Pentagon, “Fog of War”, Government Executive, (1 July 2004), Lexis/Nexis [30 January 2006].

²⁶ “Friendly fire investigation findings released”, AFPN (30 March 2004), Macdill Air Force Base, FL, <http://www.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?storyID+123007336> [16 January 2006]. A full copy of the report is available at <www.centcom.mil>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Although unable to determine the exact number of casualties from JCAS, this is yet another example of a breakdown in the execution of JCAS.

Identifying fault is not the purpose of these examples, but they are evidence to support the fact that increased training is the way to prevent the vast majority of fratricides in JCAS. Technological improvements, such as Blue Force Tracker and the ability to digitally transmit target coordinates between air and ground forces, will aid in increasing situational awareness and friendly force identification, but experience has shown time and again that increased proficiency is the key element to reducing casualties caused by friendly fire.²⁹

Military Transformation

As previously stated, the amount of JCAS apportioned and allocated has apparently increased since 1991. This is not entirely due to the increased effectiveness of JCAS but more to the nature of the particular conflicts. With this being said, the question must be addressed as to whether the future will require an increase or decrease in the operational use of JCAS?

The U.S. Army is currently transforming the way its units are organized and how they will operate in future battles.³⁰ The Army's organizational transformation is requiring revisions in their doctrine that will have a ripple effect in the joint community.³¹ The Army is not alone in its quest to transform; the U.S. Marine Corps is exploring the concept of "distributed operations" which will lead to increased numbers of smaller units spread

²⁹ Brig. Gen. Robert W. Cone, USA, "Briefing on Joint Lessons Learned From Operation Iraqi Freedom", United States Department of Defense News Transcript (2 October 2003), 9, <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/tr20031002-0727.htm>> [3 January 2006].

³⁰ General Peter J. Schoomaker, and R. L. Brownlee, Chief of Staff of the Army, "Statement", U.S. Congress, House, Committee on House Armed Services, Army Transformation, Hearings before the Committee on House Armed Services, 108th Cong, 2d sess., 21 July 2004, LexisNexis®, [30 January 2006].

³¹ Bruce R. Pirnie, et al., 100.

throughout the battlefield.³² These institutional and resulting doctrinal changes will not only impact how each service interacts within the joint force, but will require a larger reliance on JCAS at the operational level of war. A RAND report conducted for the U.S. Air Force concluded that the U.S. Army's transformation will result in more independent maneuver brigades and a smaller number of organic artillery brigades, resulting in increased requests for CAS.³³

Doctrinally, "close air support can be used anywhere on the battlefield when friendly forces are in close proximity to the enemy."³⁴ The requirement for "detailed integration" lies not in the exact linear distance between forces, but in their proximity to the enemy, their integration of fires, or their movement.³⁵ Therefore, JCAS might be the best type of supporting fires in either the offense or the defense, especially if the battle space is non-linear, necessitating an increase in JCAS apportionment for the operational commander.

Training

If the assumption is made that JCAS will still be relevant and might actually be required more in future conflicts, a brief analysis of current training needs to be conducted. Under Title 10 authority each service chief is tasked with organizing, training, and equipping their forces to integrate into the joint force of Regional Combatant Commanders.³⁶ The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is tasked with formulating policies for the joint training of the armed forces.³⁷ Under this authority, he directs training priorities, with the first two being: "(1) units should train to support all plans to which they are apportioned" and "(2)

³² Headquarters, U.S Marine Corps, A Concept for Distributed Operations (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 25 April 2005), I-VII.

³³ Bruce R. Pirnie, et al., xvi.

³⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, ix.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ General Military Law, U.S Code, Title 10, subtitle's B, C, and D (2006) <<http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title10/title10.html>> [9 February 2006].

³⁷ *ibid*, secs. 153,a,5,b, (2006) [16 January 2006].

training emphasis should favor major war training over LC (lesser contingency) training.”³⁸

This is important to the JFC because the type and amount of training each service dedicates to particular combat skills will be a direct reflection of their initial combat capability. This also demonstrates why the JFC should be involved in certain aspects of training that are normally conducted solely by the individual services.

In 2003, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) released a report detailing to Congress that the DOD had shown limited success in overcoming barriers that prevented troops from receiving realistic CAS training that was required to prepare them for joint operations.³⁹ The report stated the causal factors were: (1) air and ground forces having limited opportunities to train jointly, (2) local training often being so restrictive as to be unrealistic, (3) services using different certification requirements for those responsible for controlling JCAS, and (4) within the services JCAS training was often a lower priority than other missions.⁴⁰ This report highlighted the critical shortfalls in training and their effects on JCAS. Prior to this report coming out, the DoD had given U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) the mission of overseeing the JCAS Executive Steering Committee to resolve inter-service issues dealing with standardized training and procedures.⁴¹ To facilitate this, USJFCOM uses the Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) to coordinate the military’s overall

³⁸ “Instructional Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan: FY 2002,” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual, (15 Dec 2002): CJCSM 3110.01C, Encl. B., B-5.

³⁹ U. S. General Accounting Office, “Military Readiness: Lingering Training and Equipment Issues Hamper Air Support of Ground Forces,” U.S. GAO Report 03-505 (May 2003), 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* For more information on a breakdown of specific service training see: CAPT. Scott Japer, and Maj. Michael Binney, “Joint Close Air Support Training Transformation,” Marine Corps Gazette, (May 2004), 73.

⁴¹ JO1 (SW/AW) Chris Hoffpauir, “USJFCOM’s Joint Requirements and Integration Directorate is working closely with several other organizations to standardize training and procedures for joint close air support,” USJFCOM Public Affairs, 2 August 2005. <<http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2005.htm>> [16 January 2006].

joint training efforts.⁴² The focus of the JWFC is normally on combatant command staffs, joint task forces, and the individual services.⁴³

USJFCOM initiated the Joint National Training Capability (JNTC) to coordinate service training schedules and inject more joint operations into what were traditionally service-specific events.⁴⁴ For example, the Western Range Complex event of 2004 was conducted between several sites in the Southwestern U.S. to integrate existing service training events including: a brigade rotation at the Army National Training Center, a Marine Corps Combined Arms Exercise (CAX) at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Navy Strike Group training in the vicinity of San Diego, and an Air Force Air Warrior exercise at Nellis Air Force Base.⁴⁵ This training is certainly a step in the right direction; however the majority of its emphasis is directed at the Joint Staff level and demonstrates interoperability through various amounts of command and control. Of the four causal factors from the General Accounting Office report in 2003, the first two have yet to be adequately addressed by either the services or JFCOM.

In 2005, the Government Accountability Office submitted a report to the Secretary of Defense detailing the need to more adequately plan and fund for the improvement of the military training ranges. This report examined the eight largest, of seventy total, major active-component training ranges from across the services and concluded that the military

⁴² U.S. JFCOM Website, "About the Joint Warfighting Center and the Joint Training Directorate," Joint Training Directorate and Joint Warfighting Center (J7/JWFC), <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/abt_j7.htm> [16 January 2006].

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Major General Gordon Nash, United States Marine Corps, Commander and Director for Joint Training, U.S. Joint Forces Command, "Statement", U.S. Congress, House, Committee on House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness and Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, Fiscal 2005 Budget: Training Issues, Hearings before the Committee on House Armed Services, 18 March 2004, LexisNexis®, [30 January 3006].

⁴⁵ Ibid.

ranges were in varying degrees of degradation that adversely affected training and readiness.⁴⁶ This report investigated each range with respect to its ability to meet current requirements that are naturally service or platform specific.

Unfortunately, the outcome might have been even worse had the report considered each range's ability to train the joint warfighting team. For example, the Fallon Range Training Complex (FRTC) in Fallon, NV, is used for the majority of U.S. Naval Aviations pre-deployment training. This range was identified as having an insufficient number of targets and lacking adequate systems to replicate current threats and targets.⁴⁷ However, since this range is primarily used for aviation assets – one exception being the Navy Special Warfare Terminal Controller Course (NSWTCC), which is also located at Fallon – there is no mention of the almost non-existent ability to simultaneously train aircrews with ground maneuver elements.⁴⁸ Assuming that several of the military ranges could even accommodate fully integrated joint training – for example, the Army National Training Center or the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center – it is easy to imagine these ranges quickly becoming limited by their capacity.

So, although many strides have been made in the arena of increasing integrated training, there remain several large roadblocks to its ideal solution. In part, this is why many units rely on individual initiative and effort, during training at the tactical levels, to ensure operational success in combat.

⁴⁶ U. S. Government Accountability Office, "Military Training: Better Planning and Funding Priority Needed to Improve Conditions of Military Training Ranges," U.S. GAO Report 05-534 (June 2005), 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 16.

⁴⁸ "Fallon Range Training Complex Manual" Naval Air Station Fallon: Website <http://www.fallon.navy.mil/fallon_range.asp> [9 February 2006]; Authors experience as instructor at Navy Fighter Weapons School, Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center, NAS Fallon, NV., 2002-2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS

So far this article has examined the recent performance of JCAS and its potential future use in order to prove that continued efforts at refining joint training are warranted. Recent experience and future transformation show that this effort is not only warranted but required. Although recent technological innovations in JCAS have helped it to evolve as an effective weapon for the operational commander, they can only improve it a limited amount. As recent lessons learned have shown, the one underlying theme for effective and efficient JCAS is people.

To this end, the entire joint force would do well to take a page from the U.S. Special Operations Command's playbook who's first two "enduring truths" are: "(1) Humans are more important than hardware" and "(2) Quality is better than quantity."⁴⁹ The conduit for focusing on our people and their quality is training. Saying that the joint force needs to integrate more successfully is nothing new. It has been proposed in several recent articles and papers.⁵⁰ Merely proposing it and actually executing it lay at the heart of our current dilemma with JCAS.

USJFCOM's JWFC is doing a commendable job leading the way for integrated joint training. With several exercises under its belt and full operating capability of JNTC scheduled for October 2009, JWFC is a step in the right direction for fully integrated training.⁵¹ However, with limitations associated with a majority of the military ranges, joint

⁴⁹ U.S. Special Operations Command, "Transforming the Force at the Forefront of the War on Terrorism." U.S. Special Operations Forces: Posture Statement 2003-2004, 30.

⁵⁰ LtCol. John M. Jansen, et al., "The Tower of Babel: Joint Close Air Support Performance at the Operational Level," Marine Corps Gazette (March 2003): 33-38; Michael W. Binney, "Joint Close Air Support in the Low Intensity Conflict," (Unpublished Research Paper, Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, CA: June 2003; CAPT. Scott Jasper, USN, and Maj. Michael Binney, "Joint Close Air Support Training Transformation," Marine Corps Gazette (May 2004): 71-78.

⁵¹ Major General Gordon Nash, 18 March 2004, LexisNexis®, [30 January 3006].

training must be fully integrated down to the tactical and unit level in order to facilitate greater operational success of JCAS.

Going back to the topic of individual initiative and effort, it is not uncommon to see individuals from one service calling acquaintances from another service in an effort to integrate training at the unit level. Sometimes this initiative pays off and integrated training is executed at the tactical level, but all too often training plans do not marry up and potential training opportunities are lost.⁵² This individual initiative is exactly what is expected of our junior leaders, but the time has come to take some of the burden off their shoulders and provide a measure of structure to this process. This is by no means an effort to stifle initiative, merely an initiative to combine each services individual training efforts to ensure a continued increase in JCAS performance.

Not only is our military in the midst of a transformation, for the foreseeable future the assets that we have available to train and fight with are only getting older. To use the U.S. Air Force as an example, in Fiscal Year 2004, the average age of all aircraft in the active duty fleet was 22.8 years.⁵³ Granted, this includes a wide variety of airframes that do not even conduct JCAS, but looking at the F-16 and A-10 alone shows their averages to be 13.3 and 22.8 years, respectively.⁵⁴ As these airframes grow older, the number and frequency of training opportunities will only decrease. Therefore, it is going to be even more critical to focus on the quality of training for individuals within the JCAS community. This not only applies to the aircrew but also to the ground forces. While it is important for the aircrews to

⁵² Authors experience as instructor at Navy Fighter Weapons School, Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center, NAS Fallon, NV., 2002-2005.

⁵³ "The Air Force in Facts and Figures: 2005 USAF Almanac" *Air Force Magazine* (May 2005), 67, ProQuest <<http://www.afa.org/magazine/mag2005/0505structure.pdf>> [16 January 2006].

⁵⁴ Ibid.

continue refining their TTP's for conducting JCAS, they are only half of the equation. The Joint Terminal Attack Controller's (JTAC) – that call in the air strikes – are the second half of the JCAS puzzle.

USJFCOM has again taken the lead in integrating requirements between services. In 2005, all of the services agreed upon two memorandums of agreement (MOA) that standardized training and certification requirements for JTAC's and Forward Air Controller's Airborne.⁵⁵ These MOA's directly address the, "(3) services using different certification requirements for those responsible for controlling JCAS" part of the problem that was previously described.⁵⁶ In order to play from the same sheet of music in combat we need to practice in the same music hall during training. To accomplish this, USJFCOM should initiate a program to more effectively allow units to integrate training down to the lower levels. This is not to say that USJFCOM should be responsible for the tactical training of each service when it comes to JCAS, but it should provide the avenue for communications between services, allowing for a more efficient process to coordinate training plans and schedules.

This in turn could open up opportunities for evaluating JCAS integration during training. This evaluation could lead to the establishment of a Joint Mission Essential Task List (JMETL) for JCAS execution. This JMETL could be derived from previous successes, as well as failures, and would allow the JFC an ability to accurately assess a unit's ability to be absorbed into the joint team at the operational level. This is not to say that a unit which did not accomplish a certain JMETL prior to getting into theater should be excluded from

⁵⁵ JO1 (SW/AW) Chris Hoffpauir, 3. <<http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2005.htm>> [16 January 2006].

⁵⁶ U. S. General Accounting Office, (May 2003), 2.

fighting. Instead, this could be used as a yardstick to compare units (both aviation and ground) and determine what additional training might be required in theater or if they should be integrated in another aspect of the OPPLAN, such as operational fires.

For example, if one of the items on the JMETL was: must be able to execute an on-call CAS mission and achieve the desired effects on target within ten minutes. An aviation unit that had not been able to achieve this JMETL prior to arriving in theater might require some additional training (if available) or plan to be used in a different capacity. This “yardstick” might also be useful from a planning perspective. If this same unit, that had not accomplished all of the JMETL tasks, was required for JCAS, the operational planners would have the information to support assigning this unit to an area with more experienced controllers. The JMETL’s would not be a tool for punishing or excluding particular units, merely a tool for objectively quantifying a unit’s ability.

While continuing to provide the stimulus for more integrated training, USJFCOM should also assist the services with developing a plan for the improvement of ranges, beneficial to not only the individual service’s needs but also those of joint force training. For example, if one of the ranges designed for use primarily with aviation was purchasing land in order to increase its ability to use stand-off air-to-surface weapons, such as the AGM-154 Joint Stand-Off Weapon (JSOW), USJFCOM could coordinate with ground units to determine if this acquisition of additional land would allow them to execute more effective joint training. Even if the ground units were only able to train battalions or smaller units it would still be a step in the right direction for facilitating joint training down to the lowest echelons.

CONCLUSION

JCAS has and will continue to be an instrumental component of the operational commander's success on the battlefield. With the future pointing towards more distributed operations, between smaller units, across a larger battlefield, while having less firepower, the need for JCAS is likely to be higher than ever. Even with recent improvements, Joint Close Air Support is not "close enough" for the operational commander.

At a time in our military when words such as transformation, synergism, network centric, and effects-based resound throughout each service, it is important to remember that the basic element essential to all combat is people. Placing more emphasis on integrating our existing training down to the lowest level will enhance not only the fighting ability of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines but also optimize their ability to be successful on the field of battle.

In a time of war against adversaries that live in the asymmetric arena, eliminating seams within our joint team will only serve to quicken their demise. The current method for JCAS training could develop into one such seam if we remain content with the status quo. From Operation Desert Storm to Operation Iraqi Freedom, our ability to effectively execute JCAS has improved. Even with this, there is still much room for further improvement. In the words of the Secretary of Defense, "Effectiveness in combat will depend heavily on jointness, and how well the different branches of the military can communicate and coordinate their efforts on the battlefield...achieving jointness in wartime requires building that jointness in peacetime. We need to train like we fight and fight like we train and, too often, we don't."⁵⁷ This requirement for joint training is not something that should be done,

⁵⁷ Major General Gordon Nash, quoting Secretary of Defense Hon. Donald Rumsfeld, 18 March 2004, LexisNexis®, [30 January 3006].

rather something that must be done. For as the age old axiom says “if you want to train to fight, you must fight to train.”

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