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14. ABSTRACT The current directive to develop strategically minded, critical thinking military leaders, proficient in operational art and promoting unified action, has driven the need for continuing joint professional military education. The Officer Professional Military Education Program (OPMEP) is clearly defined, resourced and tied to promotions as the forcing function. In contrast, the Enlisted Professional Military Education Program (EPMEP) recognizes a need for continuing education and provides guidance; however, it does not establish the resources and forcing function that comes with the OPMEP. Today's Command Senior Enlisted Leaders (CSEL) serving in assignments as the CSEL of the Unified Commands (COCOM) at the theater strategic level of war are faced with unique challenges that require mature leadership qualities that can only be developed through years of service training, joint professional military education and operational experience. This paper will examine some of the COCOM CSELS to determine their duties, roles and responsibilities, the nature of the leadership qualities required, and the process to develop them. In addition we will look at what the Navy is doing to develop CSELS. Finally we will draw some conclusions and make recommendations on how to improve the process to better develop and prepare individuals to step into the role of a COCOM CSEL.					
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Newport, R.I.**

**DEVELOPING COMBATANT COMMAND
SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS**

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.

Signature: _____

23 October 2006

Abstract

DEVELOPING COMBATANT COMMAND SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS

The current directive to develop strategically minded, critical thinking military leaders, proficient in operational art and promoting unified action, has driven the need for continuing joint professional military education. The Officer Professional Military Education Program (OPMEP) is clearly defined, resourced and tied to promotions as the forcing function. In contrast, the Enlisted Professional Military Education Program (EPMEP) recognizes a need for continuing education and provides guidance; however, it does not establish the resources and forcing function that comes with the OPMEP. Today's Command Senior Enlisted Leaders (CSEL) serving in assignments as the CSEL of the Unified Commands (COCOM) at the theater strategic level of war are faced with unique challenges requiring mature leadership qualities that can only be developed through years of service training, joint professional military education and operational experience. This paper will examine some of the COCOM CSELs to determine their duties, roles and responsibilities, the nature of the leadership qualities required, and the process to develop them. In addition we will look at what the Navy is doing to develop CSELs. Finally we will draw some conclusions and make recommendations on how to improve the process to better develop and prepare individuals to step into the role of a COCOM CSEL.

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INTRODUCTION. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) has challenged us to develop leaders that are “*Strategically Minded, Critical Thinking, and Skilled Joint War-fighters.*”¹ Aligned with the Chairman’s vision, the Chief of Naval Operations challenges the Navy to “*develop 21st century leaders*”.² Such leaders must be competent in operational art and understand the importance of *unified* action. In the context of current global events, unified action requires not only joint service, but interagency and multi-national cooperation as well. Today’s Command Senior Enlisted Leaders (CSEL) working in the joint environment, at the theater strategic and operational levels of war, in support of the commanders of the Unified Commands (COCOM), perform in complex roles and relationships requiring advanced qualifications and the *mature leadership qualities* that can only be *developed* through years of service training and education, joint professional military education, and operational experience.³

The current architecture as set forth in the Capstone Concept of Joint Operations (CCJO) springs from the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The cornerstones of the CCJO are the Chairman’s Vision for Joint Officer Development (JOD) and the Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy (EPMEP). These provide the roadmaps for developing the 21st Century Combatant Commanders and Command Senior Enlisted Leaders. The Unified Command Plan establishes the missions and responsibilities of the COCOM. These require unity of effort within the staff and senior leadership team of the COCOM. This paper will examine some of the COCOM CSELs to determine their duties, roles and responsibilities, the

¹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development (Washington, DC: 2005), 2.

² Mike G. Mullen, “CNO Guidance 2006: Meeting the Challenge of the New Era: Owners and Operators Manual,” All Hands, (January 2006): Insert.

³ Ripka, Mark (CSM and CSEL of USJFCOM), interviews with the author; 31 August and 20 October 2006, “The goal is unified action. Look at the doctrinal definition of ‘Unified Action’ you will find it includes Joint, Interagency, and Multi-national. To achieve this goal, CSELs will play a pivotal role.”

nature of the leadership qualities required, and the process to develop them. In addition it will look at what the Navy is doing to develop CSELs, for the purpose of drawing conclusions to make recommendations on how to better develop and prepare individuals to step into the role of a COCOM CSEL.

BACKGROUND The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act (GNA) of 1986 was designed to establish unity of command and to achieve unity of effort among the services. The operational chain of command was streamlined from the President of the United States to the Secretary of Defense and directly to the unified commanders. The operational authority of the service chiefs shifted to an advisory role and became centralized with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), who is now the principle military advisor to the President, the National Security Council and the Secretary of Defense. Within this framework, the service chiefs maintain Title 10 functional responsibilities to organize, train, and equip the forces of their Military Department. The role of force provider belongs to Fleet Forces Command, Joint Forces Command, and Special Operations Command. They provide the soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines required by the combatant commands. The need to achieve unity of effort in these joint commands is what drives the requirement for joint military education.⁴

Late in 1988 in support of the GNA, the House Armed Services Committee Panel on Military Education recommended a two phase process to develop *joint specialty officers* (JSO). The Officer Professional Military Education Plan (OPMEP) was implemented to comply with the law. Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) provides the two phase process and is accredited by the joint staff. Phase I is taught at the Junior Service Colleges

⁴ Ike Skelton, Whispers of Warriors: Essays on the New Joint Era. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press), 1-30

and Phase II at the Senior Service Colleges. Completing both phases, in addition to a Joint Tour, are the requirements for eligibility to apply for a JSO designator.

To further support implementation of the GNA, the 2005 Ronald Reagan Defense Authorization Act directed the Secretary of Defense to provide a strategic plan to develop Joint Professional Military Education and manage joint officers in support of DOD missions. Legislation is the driving force behind the CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development (JOD). This legislation provides both the resources and forcing functions (it is tied to promotions) to accomplish the goal of developing individuals capable of leading the force into the 21st century. The Capstone Concept of Joint Operations (CCJO) sets the architecture for the future *force to be developed* with the target *time (2012-2025)*⁵

Joint Officer Development (JOD). The white paper entitled *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development (JOD)* provides course and bearing for developing the leaders of the next generation of joint war-fighters. The *assumption* made by the JOD is that future military operations will be jointly planned and executed by multi-service, inter-agency and multi-national coalition partners across the full range of military operations (ROMO). In light of the global war on terrorism (GWOT), and the large number of small wars and failing states around the world, this assumption appears to be relevant and is aligned with the National Security Strategy (NSS). The overarching concepts of the Chairman's vision, with respect to the development of our future military leaders are: *Strategically minded, Critical Thinker, Skilled Joint War-fighter*.⁶ An important question is, "*Do these descriptors of desired leadership qualities apply to all leaders or to officers alone?*"

⁵ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1.

⁶ Ibid, 2.

Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy (EPMEP). The (EPMEP) signed by Chairman Pace, Oct. 28, 2005, establishes the need for and provides guidance to achieve the goal of jointness through developing knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes appropriate for enlisted levels, E-1 through E-9 over the course of a career. The EPMEP states,

“The expansion of the joint operating environment to all levels of war necessitates the expansion of JPME to enlisted personnel. While not mandated by law (as is the case for officers), this policy is a recognition that operation in joint, interagency, multinational, and coalition warfighting organizations and staffs requires that joint learning objectives must be made available to all enlisted personnel”⁷

Like the OPMEP, the EPMEP provides the basic framework for an education continuum. However, it has serious shortfalls that limit its effective implementation. First, in order to provide opportunity and access to all enlisted personnel, it must be resourced. Second, and equally important, it needs to be tied to a forcing function such as promotions, to provide incentive. The EPMEP will take time to produce effective CSELs that understand the joint environment and are ready to assume operational and strategic level assignments. Between now and the time it takes to produce these CSELs, how do we prepare today’s enlisted leaders to be more effective in their expanding roles?

Unified Command Plan (UCP). The UCP delineates duties and responsibilities of the nine Unified Commands. Of these, five are geographic combatant commands and four are functional combatant commands. Each of these has a very diverse, complex set of duties, responsibilities, authorities, and networked relationships to achieve objectives across the entire range of military operations (ROMO) in both supporting and supported roles. The incumbent flag / general officer serving as the COCOM commander selects the prospective

⁷ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Enlisted Professional Military Education. (Washington, DC: 2005), A-1.

CSEL from a slate of nominees provided by the Military Departments. Requirements to submit applications for consideration vary based on the specific functional or geographic COCOM. Common prerequisites include: Keystone Course graduate, CSEL experience at the flag / general officer level of command, joint experience, and in some cases, TS SCI clearance.⁸

DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS. To determine the duties, roles, responsibilities, and assess the nature of the individuals suited for these positions, we will examine a cross section of CSELs currently in these assignments and some of the issues with which they are faced.

SEAC. In October of 2005, for the first time in history the CJCS established the position of the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman (SEAC). The creation of this billet is an indicator of the Chairman's opinion of the importance of senior enlisted leadership at the national strategic level. The first SEAC to be selected was U.S. Army CSM William Gainey, formerly the CSM for The III Armored Corps and Fort Hood. Over the course of a 31-year career of superior performance, with a Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, and Meritorious Service Medal, SEAC Gainey has earned an associates degree and has held a wide variety of joint and service leadership positions. SEAC Gainey's JPME consists of extensive on-the-job training and the two week Keystone Course.⁹

The SEAC functions as advisor to the Chairman on all matters concerning joint and combined total force integration, utilization and development. This includes, but is not limited to, the development and enhanced utilization of senior Non-commissioned Officers for joint battle staffs. His roles include spokesman, strategic communicator and force

⁸ Joint Forces Command, Draft, Nomination requests for COCOM CSEL: SEAC, SOUTHCOM, CENTCOM, TRANSCOM

⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman(SEAC), <http://www.jcs.mil/seac/senior_enlisted_resp.html> (accessed 5 October 2006).

integrator.¹⁰ As spokesman, the SEAC carries the vision of the Chairman to all the enlisted force via a network of CSELs across the services and the combatant commands, cascading down through every echelon of the enlisted force. These lines of communication are two way, and as a spokesman for the entire joint force, the SEAC serves as the unified voice of the troops to the CJCS, the senior ranking member of the Armed Forces and principle military advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the President of the United States.

As a strategic communicator, the SEAC sets priorities to advise senior civilian leadership and mentor the entire force.¹¹ As a member of the Senior Enlisted Steering Committee (SESC)¹², he provides strategic insights to the Enlisted Military Education Review Council (EMERC)¹³. In addition, the SEAC provides Congressional testimony, and reports on joint enlisted issues and progress toward the development of joint professional military education. Although not directly in the chain of command, the SEAC serves to promote unity of command and unity of effort at the highest level of war, the strategic level. As with the Chairman, and all the Joint Chiefs, the SEAC's duties and responsibilities to the total force take priority over individual service culture loyalties. This takes maturity and a unique ability to look outward at the long-term well-being and development of the whole force.

USJFCOM. CSM Mark Ripka is the CSEL to the Commander of the U. S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM). The USJFCOM Commanding General serves in two

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Aligning Priorities," http://www.jcs.mil/seac/senior_enlisted_resp.html., Top Four: 1. Strengthen relationships between the SEA to the COCOMs, Service Chiefs and Joint Staff, 2.JPME, 3. Safety of the entire force, 4. QOL for all service members and their families. [5 October 2006].

¹² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy," CJCSI 1805.01 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, CJCS, 28 October 2005), GL-4. The SESC is made up of the CSELs of all the Service Chiefs, the CSEL of the USMC, the CSEL of JFCOM and the SEAC.

¹³ Ibid. GL-3. The EMERC is an advisory board to the Deputy Director, Joint Staff, for Military Education on enlisted joint education issues.

mutually supportive roles; first as the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (NATO), and second, as Commander, U. S. Joint Forces Command, he is the executive agent driving transformation for both NATO and the U. S. militaries.¹⁴ As a functional COCOM with trans-regional responsibilities, USJFCOM has the unique role of transforming U.S. military forces to meet the security challenges of the 21st century and for this, is functionally responsible to the Chairman.¹⁵ USJFCOM's mission is to; provide mission ready joint capable forces, and support the development and integration of joint, interagency, and multinational capabilities to meet the present and future operational needs of the joint force.¹⁶

CSM Ripka has 31 years of sustained superior performance, with experience serving in a broad range of assignments and leadership roles. He has a bachelor of science and a Master of Science degree, earned while performing his military duties. At USJFCOM, the CSEL functions to: provide the Commander assessments on Joint Task Force (JTF) and Functional Component Command SEL initiatives, capabilities and functions, to include feedback on transformation based on observations during Staff Assistance Visits (SAV), Mission Rehearsal Exercises (MRX) and Joint Center Operation Analysis (JCOA) visits.¹⁷ As a mentor and strategic communicator, CSM Ripka carries the joint message across all the Services and COCOMs. He lectures at all the Service Senior Enlisted Leader Development Academies, the Keystone Joint Operations Module (JOM), and serves as a member of the EPMEP SESC. In addition, he presents Congress the Joint SEL viewpoint.¹⁸

¹⁴ U.S. Joint Forces Command, "USJFCOM: Command Mission and Priorities", <<http://www.jfcom.mil/about/priorities.htm>>. (Accessed 5 October 2006).

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, Unified Command Plan 2006, 7.

¹⁶ <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/priorities>.

¹⁷ U.S. Joint Forces Command, "Organization and Functional Manual: Office of the Command Senior Enlisted Leader (J00CSEL)," USJFCOMINST 5200.11B (Norfolk, VA: USJFCOM, 7 September 2006). Abstract

¹⁸ Ibid. Abstract

USJFCOM is playing a key role in developing the ways and means to prepare CSELs for operational and strategic levels of leadership. As a member of the SESC, CSM Ripka has contributed to the EPMEP development and implementation. The white paper, Joint Command Senior Enlisted Leadership, a manifesto drafted by CSM Ripka and CCMSgt Brownhill provided the impetus behind forming the Keystone Course.¹⁹

Keystone is a two week CSEL course that prepares individuals to serve at flag or general level headquarters that are likely to become Joint Task Force (JTF) headquarters. The course parallels the Capstone Course for newly selected General and Flag officers and visits COCOMs, JTFs and senior leadership in Washington to explore the relationships and challenges of the joint environment. Included in the curriculum is a four day Joint Operations Module (JOM) and briefings at the National Defense University.²⁰ Keystone covers a lot of material and travel in a short period of time and is described by some as being, *“Too much, too fast! and for some, Too little, too late!”*.²¹ Education opportunities like Keystone need to be made available sooner and to more service members.

USSOCOM. CSM Tom Smith is the CSEL to the Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). In 2003 Secretary Rumsfeld designated USSOCOM as

¹⁹ Ripka, Mark, “Joint Command Senior Enlisted Leadership” (The Keystone white paper first written in 2003 with feedback from CENTCOM CSEL, revised several times since). Norfolk, VA, August 2006. “Helping our nations warriors through the operational challenges will require strong leadership. Today’s operating environment demands fully capable senior enlisted leaders at the tactical, operational, and strategic theater levels of war. To meet these challenges, our CSELs need to be better prepared than in the past. Unfortunately, little training and education existed for these individuals until very recently. To effectively employ the CSEL in a joint operating environment, the Operational and Expeditionary focused CSEL must:

- Be a trusted and integrated member of the ‘inner circle’ Command Leadership Team
- Develop capability by relationship and team building in a Combined, Joint, and Interagency operational environment
- Understand Combined and Joint Doctrine; command and control relationships; and combined and interagency capabilities and cultures
- Lead force integration, utilization and sustainment in the Combined, Joint and Interagency operational environment”

²⁰ Welcome to CAPSTONE. “CAPSTONE, KEYSTONE,” <http://www.ndu.edu/keystone/> (accessed 20 October 2006).

²¹ This is the author’s observation and opinion as a Keystone graduate.

the supported COCOM for the GWOT. This was reflected in the 2004 UCP and led to SOCOM's mission being expanded. The Mission Statement is:

USSOCOM leads, plans, synchronizes, and as directed, executes global operations against terrorist networks. USSOCOM trains, organizes, equips and deploys combat ready special operations forces in support of combatant commands.²²

This is unique in that USSOCOM has service-like Title 10 functional responsibilities, fills the role of a supported COCOM with trans-regional responsibilities, and is the force provider of SOF to the regional COCOMS.

Recently reporting to his assignment as the SOCOM CSEL, CSM Smith has 28 years experience in Special Forces working in an inherently joint community in a variety of leadership roles, most recently as the SOCPAC CSEL. While transferring to his current assignment, he attended the Keystone Course. In a recent interview with Tip of the Spear, CSM Smith said, "My primary role is to serve as the personal advisor to the commander and key staff on all matters concerning morale, welfare, professional development, effective use, and progress of the enlisted force and to ensure the commander's policies are known and understood by the enlisted force and to enforce those standards."²³

The GWOT led to increased demand for SOF. With a global AOR, SOF is conducting the full range of military operations (ROMO) in the GWOT and supporting five geographic COCOMs as the force provider. In addition, the expansion of Theater Security Cooperation Plan (TSCP) objectives across all the geographic COCOMs, SOF unique skills have made them the force of choice and a low density, high demand asset. This is reflected in the 2006, Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report, which calls for growing more SOF.

²² United States Special Operations Command, Posture Statement 2006 (Tampa, FL: 2006), 4.

²³ Tom H. Smith, "Headquarters USSOCOM: Interview with USSOCOM's newest command sergeant major," Tip of the Spear, (April 2006): 30.

Developing the force to meet expanding roles and responsibilities in support of GWOT as outlined in the UCP in addition to the extensive trans-regional relationships in the dual role of a supporting and supported COCOM, poses unique challenges for the SOCOM leadership team and staff. One challenge faced by CSM Smith is meeting the requirements of the QDR by growing the force, while upholding the SOF Truths.²⁴ It will take time to grow the force called for in the QDR, during which we must accept a certain amount of risk in the form of high operational tempo and stress to the force and their families. CSM Smith will play a key role in leading these changes, managing the force and minimizing the risk.

USCENTCOM. Command Chief Master Sergeant Curtis Brownhill is the USCENTCOM CSEL. USCENTCOM is a geographic COCOM with two ongoing campaigns; OEF, OIF, a joint task force in Africa JTF Horn of Africa, in addition to the GWOT and numerous TSCP objectives. As a supported geographic combatant command, CENTCOM has the full range of military operations (ROMO) on-going simultaneously. These operations combined with the TSCP require extensive battle space circulation across the joint operational areas developing relationships with service and functional component commands, interagency coordination, and multi-national coalitions. The responsibilities of the CSEL include, but are not limited to:

providing operational and strategic recommendations on all matters concerning joint/combined force integration, utilization and sustainment of more than 200,000 U.S. and coalition forces that comprise the AOR; clarifies the Commander's wartime and security cooperation guidance and intent through components, sub-unified commands, and JTF staff and AOR circulation; coordinates with the SEAC and service SELs on manpower capability, and force development and sustainment to resolve issues across services and COCOMS; represents the command in diplomatic and mil-to-mil contacts to facilitate the development of partnerships to meet TSCP

²⁴ United States Special Operations Command, Posture Statement 2006 (Tampa, FL: 2006), 1. Note: SOCOM SOF Truths: 1. Humans are more important than hardware, 2. Quality is better than quantity, 3. SOF cannot be mass produced, 3. Competent SOF cannot be created after emergencies occur.

objectives; and works with Country/Embassy teams, inter-agencies and non governmental organizations to ensure unity of effort throughout the AOR.²⁵

As a senior mentor to the Keystone Course, CCMSgt Brownhill shares his views on the joint environment, and experiences as the CSEL of a geographic combatant command.

USSTRATCOM. FLTCM William Nissen is the Command Master Chief (CMC) for the U. S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), which is a functional COCOM responsible for the global command and control of U.S. strategic forces to meet decisive national security objectives. USSTRATCOM provides a broad range of strategic capabilities and options for the President and Secretary of Defense.²⁶ The mission statement is to:

“Provide the nation with global deterrence capabilities and synchronized DoD effects to combat adversary weapons of mass destruction worldwide. Enable decisive global kinetic and non-kinetic combat effects through the application and fusion of integrated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); space and global strike operations; information operations; integrated missile defense and robust command and control.”²⁷

FLTCM Nissen has 32 years of sustained superior performance in a wide variety of senior leadership assignments. He is a master training specialist with three warfare qualifications; submarine, surface and air warfare specialist. In addition, he is a graduate of the Capstone Course (prior to Keystone being implemented) and Executive Business Courses. Master Chief Nissen’s extensive leadership experience includes; Chief of the Boat, CMC of two aircraft carriers, the CSEL of Submarine Group FIVE, CMC of Computer and Telecommunications Station, San Diego, CA. and the U.S. Naval Academy. Prior to his current assignment, FLTCM Nissen had little to no joint experience, and as with most of the COCOM CSELS, he is currently in the process of writing and refining his functional job

²⁵ United States Central Command, (CCJ1). “Nomination for United States Central Command Senior Enlisted Leader”. Draft memorandum for distribution, **3 January 2007**.

²⁶ USSTRATCOM – HOME, “FLTCM (SS/SW/AW) William N. Nissen: Biographies,” <http://www.stratcom.mil/bios/nissen.html>. (accessed 5 October 2006).

²⁷ Ibid. “About USSTRATCOM: Our Mission,” <http://www.stratcom.mil/>. (accessed 5 October 2006).

description.²⁸ It is interesting to note that of the nine unified commands, USSTRATCOM is the only one with a Navy Master Chief serving in the position of CSEL.

In the absence of a functional job description for the STRATCOM CSEL, it is helpful to examine the Navy SORM and the CMC Instruction. First it should be noted, that neither of these delineates between the functional job description of Command (tactical level), Force and Fleet (operational level) Master Chiefs. “The program and selection process is designed to stimulate free-flowing communications and ensure the highest standards of professionalism are upheld *at all levels within the chain of command.*”²⁹ Command Master Chiefs *at every echelon* “strengthen the chain of command by keeping the commander aware of existing or potential situations as well as procedures and practices which affect the mission, readiness, welfare and morale of Sailors in the command”.³⁰

ESG/CSG. It is interesting to note, despite the recommendations in the SORM *Command Master Chief at every echelon* the Navy does not source war fighting commands such as the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) or Carrier Strike Group (CSG) with a CMC.³¹ Two recent examples of an ESG becoming a Joint Task Force (JTF) are JTF Lebanon and JTF Pakistan. Neither JTF was resourced with a CSEL. Both the ESG and CSG are likely to become Joint Force Maritime Component Commands (JFMCC).³² By not providing these

²⁸ Nissin, William, (FLTCM and CSEL of USSTRATCOM), interview with the author, 29 August 2006: “There is no functional job description for my position. I’m in the process of writing it. The CG expects me to identify what I need to do and to GO and DO! We need to be able to identify what is required and adapt ourselves and the force accordingly. As I see it, a CSEL at the COCOM level is concerned with four focus areas: aid the vision of the CG, change agent, lead influence through relationships and enlisted advocacy.”

²⁹ Chief of Naval Operations, “FLEET, FORCE, CNO-DIRECTED, AND COMMAND MASTER CHIEF PROGRAM,” OPNAVINST 1306.2D, 19 December 2000. <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/mcpon/cmconst.html> (accessed 30 September 2006).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Nissin, William, (FLTCM and CSEL of USSTRATCOM), interview with the author, 29 August 2006: “The Navy needs to provide joint war-fighting opportunities such as the ESG and CSG that progressively prepare CMCs to compete and perform at this level. It should be tied to assigned responsibility and span of control, not just the number of enlisted billets authorized.”

³² Ripka, Mark, (CSM and CSEL of USJFCOM), interviews with the author; 31 August and 20 October 2006

strike groups with a CMC, the Navy is limiting opportunities needed to develop CMCs with war-fighting experience at the operational level of war and more importantly, depriving the strike group of the experience and perspective of a CSEL.³³ Developing operational and strategic level leadership requires more than just on-the-job training. It requires continuing education to develop the “*critical thinking skills*”, called for by the CJCS.³⁴ Aligned with the Chairman the CNO’s efforts to develop 21st century leaders can be seen in an innovative program at the U. S. Naval War College (NWC).

Navy War College. The Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education Program at the NWC in Newport Rhode Island is a pilot program. For the first time in history the NWC has authorized CSELS to attend in resident full-time student status and earn a Master of Arts degree in National Security and Strategic Studies. It is a proof of concept as part of the Professional Military Education Program for all Sailors.³⁵ The challenging curriculum is based on three core courses of study: Joint Military Operations (JMO), National Security Decision Making, and Strategy and Policy. Additionally, the curriculum satisfies the requirements for JPME Phase I and II. The purpose of this program is to, “develop fully qualified and inherently joint leaders among it’s cadre of senior enlisted Sailors in the same

³³ Zelibor, (RADM U.S. Naval War College), interview with the author, 25 September 2006. “Operational leadership is about exceptional influence in the joint arena. It isn’t just about officers; SELs at every level of command contribute to unity of effort. By not leveraging their talents, their experience, we are losing opportunities.”

³⁴ Ripka, Mark, (CSM and CSEL of USJFCOM), interviews with the author; 31 August and 20 October 2006, “We are under educating and under employing our enlisted. In order to be effective at the operational and strategic levels of war, we need to begin developing enlisted leaders in all the services earlier in their careers and give them opportunity to serve in joint jobs whenever possible.”

³⁵ U. S. Chief of Naval Operations. To NAVADMIN, “JOINT PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION FOR SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS.” Message R 271544Z AUG 06. The program requirements are: complete a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university, be a CMC/COB NEC (9580/79), complete a successful tour as CMC/COB, completed no more than 24 years active duty, be a US citizen eligible for a secret clearance, exhibit ability and desire to serve in CSEL positions at Major Commands in a variety of Joint assignments, and agree to be world wide deployable upon completion. 1-2.

manner that it develops officers who are skilled joint war fighters and strategic-minded thinkers”.³⁶

Conclusions and Recommendations.

There are nine unified commands, each with a very different set of missions. The COCOM responsibilities are dependent on the functional role or geographic area of responsibility and national strategic objectives. The accomplishment of these objectives requires unity of effort not just within a COCOM, but among all the COCOMs. This is accomplished through supporting and supported relationships and facilitated by the network of CSELs. The SEAC is the highest example of the level of responsibilities and the network that promotes unity of effort.

In addition, today’s world of globalization, advances in technology and the increased complexity of combined, joint operations, COCOM commanders, their CSELs and staffs are faced with the implementation of transformation in a complex, rapidly changing world. Here, relationships are the key to developing multi-national coalitions, interagency and multi-national organization cooperation. Cooperation and coordination is required to promote unity of effort, which in turn develops capabilities and power through relationships where supporting and supported command and control structures do not exist.

The COCOM duties, roles and responsibilities are evolving with the global environment and the CSELs are refining their functional role as they go! What remains constant is the nature of their role. The CSEL is a trusted and integrated member of the Command Leadership Team, the ‘inner circle’, working to develop capacity and capability through relationships and team building. This requires an understanding of combined and joint doctrine and the associated command and control relationships in order to lead force

³⁶ Ibid, 1.

integration, utilization and sustainment, all in a Combined, Joint and Interagency operational environment.³⁷

With their roles and responsibilities evolving, so to is the process to develop them. EPMEP is relatively new and not yet fully implemented. Once implemented, it will take time to grow the next generation of CSEL, a generation of inherently joint warriors. In the mean time, how will the U. S. Military develop CSELS to function at the operational level of war? It makes sense to invest up front in promising CSELS that have demonstrated sustained superior performance and still have time to serve. The NWC, in partnership with the MCPON and the CNO, have implemented a Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education Program. The other services should examine this program for consideration and implementation within their respective Service War Colleges.

The Navy should assess and consider expanding the program at the NWC to include opportunities in the junior classes of the Naval Command Staff College, for select front running Senior Chiefs, who have completed a tour as Chief of the Boat or Senior Enlisted Advisor. Proper detailing of CMCs receiving this education is an imperative to the success of the program at the NWC.

Although the Navy is making innovative changes in PME, education is only one piece of the equation to developing 21st Century leaders. Experience through practical application at the operational level of war completes the package. By expanding the ESG/CSG Joint Manning Document (JMD) to include CSEL positions, the Navy will provide that opportunity.

³⁷ Ripka, Mark, "Joint Command Senior Enlisted Leadership", (Keystone white paper abstract and authors notes as a Keystone graduate)

Linking the education to experience gained serving in operational level war fighting assignments completes the development, and justifies the investment in advanced education. The JOD describes Joint Officer Management (JOM) as a tracking tool for developing Joint Qualified Officers. A Joint Enlisted Management (JEM) tool should also be developed and implemented to track Joint Qualified Enlisted (JQE). This would lend itself to the detailing process of joint assignments. In addition, a single point of contact is needed to track joint Senior Enlisted Leader assignment opportunities through Joint Enlisted Management and correlate those to Joint Qualified Enlisted for tracking requisitions and rollers. The bottom line is, the Navy needs to develop more, and access current, joint, flag and general officer CSEL opportunities in order to develop CSEL experience in joint assignments and at the operational level of war.

If the U. S. Military is to *develop 21st century enlisted leaders*, that are, *Strategically Minded, Critical Thinking, and Skilled Joint War-fighters* then continuing advanced education must be provided and encouraged. Legislation to provide the resources combined with incentives will accelerate the process. Progressively challenging assignments within both the individual service and joint environment will further develop the intellectual capital and interpersonal skills needed to be a contributing member of the command leadership team, promoting unity of effort in the Combined, Joint and Interagency operational environment.

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