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USS *Harry S. Truman* (Christopher Wilson)

# How Joint Are We and Can We Be Better?

By CHUCK HARRISON

**T**he U.S. military does not have a system in place to institutionalize, direct, or even require regular joint tactical training. When I discuss this deficiency with senior military officers

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and civilian analysts, they point to the Goldwater-Nichols Act as testament to our jointness. We believe that the Goldwater-Nichols Act cured most of our ills and pronounced it good enough. But it is not good enough, and there is ample evidence. We need to develop a management system to ensure effective training at the joint tactical level.

Because of the nature of its mission, the Army depends on the other services for help. It relies on the Air Force or Navy for close air support from their fixed-wing bombers, supplies, weapons, and for movement to a combat zone. It depends on the Air Force for command and control, strategic attack, and interdiction as well as such forms of intelligence as the Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System.

The other services depend on the Army to provide security around airfields and ports and along ground routes. But by and large, these are missions that the Army prepares for during internal training. The tactics, techniques, and procedures for these operations do not change when working with other services and do not require training with them. The special operations community does conduct considerable joint tactical training and has a system that ensures that it takes place. Since the Army is the service most dependent on the other services,

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this article focuses on joint training involving the Army, but the lessons apply to the entire joint community.

It is important that we define *tactical training* to ensure that the debate does not become entangled with the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which addressed strategic issues and joint operational level training. Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms*, defines the *tactical level of warfare* as:

*The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. Activities at this level focus on the ordered arrangement and maneuver of combat elements in relation to each other and to the enemy to achieve combat objectives.*

The *operational level of war* is defined as:

*The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to accom-*

### **joint coordination, and explicitly joint fires coordination, seemed to improve during Operation Iraqi Freedom**

*plish the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about and sustain these events. These activities imply a broader dimension of time or space than do tactics; they ensure the logistic and administrative support of tactical forces, and provide the means by which tactical successes are exploited to achieve strategic objectives.*

The tactical level of war, for the Army at least, is that of the division and below but will increasingly become that of the brigade and below. Therefore, it is increasingly important to conduct joint tactical training for

the Army brigade, or what the Army will refer to as the *unit of action*.

### **How Joint Are We?**

Recent combat experiences suggest that we are fighting as an integrated joint team. However, integration problems remain. Major General Frank Hagenbeck, USA, Commander, 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, started an interservice debate over his contention that close air support (CAS) was unresponsive during Operation *Anaconda* in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> Joint coordination, and explicitly joint fires coordination, seemed to improve during Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, although command, control, communications, and intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I) digital systems are still incompatible among the joint forces. The timeliness of CAS did not seem to be a widespread problem during *Iraqi Freedom*, but there are concerns due to lack of tactical training and understanding of the capabilities of the CAS pilots from the Army perspective and the capabilities of ground forces from the perspective of CAS pilots.

The 3<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division's after-action report from *Iraqi Freedom* has positive things to say about the availability of CAS during its rapid advance to Baghdad. The report specifically gives accolades for the enlisted tactical air controllers assigned to the brigade combat teams. However, the controllers experienced problems in talking pilots onto the targets, delaying CAS in a counterfire role against Iraqi artillery. This was reportedly due to the inability of the pilots to identify the targets and a misunderstanding with ground forces on what constituted positive identification of targets as enemy. While the ground forces were satisfied with their counterfire radar acquisitions as a positive identification, the special instructions (SPINS) for the pilots did not authorize engagements based on acquisitions alone. On the surface, this appears to be a rules-of-engagement problem and should be addressed accordingly. But if the ground

forces had trained more with live pilots prior to the war, they would have known that SPINS normally requires a CAS pilot or observer to positively identify targets. Additionally, the situation in Iraq was skewed by the fact that the fixed-wing aircraft were nearly all rigged for bombing rather than counterair. This is important because in a conflict with a country with fighter jets, many of our fixed-wing assets would conduct counterair operations rather than bombing. Therefore, it is imperative that each CAS aircraft is used efficiently and effectively.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 is widely praised as having reformed the Department of Defense (DOD) and contributed to making the U.S. military the most powerful ever assembled. Today's capabilities to plan and operate at the strategic level are unequaled. Prior to the legislation, officers often avoided joint duty, preferring to stay within their services. Goldwater-Nichols forced the services to send some of their best personnel to joint billets by setting an objective that joint officers would be promoted at the same or higher rates than officers not joint qualified. Additionally, the law created critical joint billets that had to be filled by the services. As a final incentive, the law made it mandatory for all officers to be joint qualified prior to flag rank. Many believe that the law has changed the military culture. However, the cultural change is only now filtering down to the operational level. It is imperative to ensure that it continues to the tactical level.

There are ongoing efforts by U.S. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) to create a Joint National Training Capability (JNTC). These initiatives show great promise in bringing joint forces together in the live, virtual, and constructive environments to train at the operational level. The Deputy Secretary of Defense formally established the joint national training concept in January 2003 and made JFCOM responsible for the initiative. JNTC is envisioned as linking the tactical,



Checking Patriot equipment during Exercise Foal Eagle, Korea, March 2003

U.S. Air Force (Reynaldo Ramon)

operational, and strategic players in a single exercise to increase joint effectiveness. Although the approach shows promise, little has been accomplished in bringing the joint players together at the operational and tactical level.

An operational-level exercise was recently conducted by III Corps headquarters, acting as the coalition joint task force (CJTF) headquarters. CJTF commanded and controlled forces from Arizona to Texas in live, virtual, and constructive environments and

declared the exercise successful. The III Corps Commander wrote an article arguing that the exercise validated the joint training concept.<sup>2</sup> Although we should applaud the efforts of all involved to execute and validate this difficult and overdue training event, we should ask just how joint the exercise was and at what level. The table in the article showed the training audience for the exercise, but conspicuously missing was any participation from services other than the Army.

Potential participants are listed in the table below, with their involvement annotated.

Was this joint training? As the author pointed out, this was a test to validate the JNTC concept, but it seems implausible to validate a joint training system when the full joint team is not participating. Even if the joint forces air component commander or the Combined Air Operations Center took part, there was no tactical participation of CAS or reconnaissance aircraft.

### Looking for Opportunities

Discussions with numerous former and serving battalion and brigade commanders and former combat training center (CTC) observer/controllers indicate that joint tactical training is simply not happening often enough. Where it does occur, it takes place mainly through a valiant effort, mostly by an individual Army staff officer or Air Force air liaison officer (ALO), who must persuade other joint forces to become involved. The following are just a few examples from my own experiences serving in both the United States and the Republic of Korea.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade (Air Combat) is U.S. Forces Korea's reserve in the event of conflict on the Korean Peninsula. It consists of two AH-64 Apache helicopter squadrons and a Patriot air defense battalion. Plans call for elements of the brigade to work with the Navy during the early stages of a potential conflict. The brigade conducts over-water training for this eventuality both with the Navy and independently. Because no other Apache unit in the Army has a similar mission, new crews must learn the particular tactics, techniques, and procedures. Training with the Navy is key to executing the operation. However, there is no mechanism to ensure that this training takes place other than the good relations between 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the fleet. There is no command above either of the organizations responsible for planning and resourcing joint training. The result is that scheduled joint training is sometimes cancelled due to changes in

### Potential Participants

Element	Participation
Joint Force Air Component Command	None
Combined Air Operations Center and Battlefield Coordination Detachment	Fixed Cost Contracting
Air Force/Navy/Marine Corps fixed wing attack	None
Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD)	None
Lethal and nonlethal SEAD	None
Joint Airborne Command Center/Command Post	None
Airborne Warning and Control System	None
Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System	(Simulation Only)
Unmanned Aerial Vehicle	(Simulation)
Combat Search and Rescue	None

Source: Thomas F. Metz and Christopher A. Joslin, "Time to Train How We Fight: Validation of the Joint Training Concept," *Army Aviation* (December 31, 2003).

the operational calendar for one or the other commands with little regard for the priority of joint tactical training.

When I served as a squadron commander in 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade, my staff searched for opportunities to train in a joint environment, especially in live fire conditions. Since we had a low priority on live fire ranges in Korea, we turned to the Air Force 25<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (A-10s) to conduct training. This proved to be a beneficial opportunity for both organizations because they had access to a range, and both

### **we should not depend on tactical-level commanders to find joint training opportunities**

received excellent joint air attack team training while over water. Although this worked occasionally, we should not depend on tactical-level commanders to find joint training opportunities as the only alternative.

The 2<sup>d</sup> Infantry Division is the Army's forward-deployed ground force in the Republic of Korea. The division executes quarterly brigade-level exercises to keep its edge honed for combat. My squadron participated in the training because the division's Apache unit was undergoing training back in the States as a Longbow battalion. The division had issued an operations order to the brigade that was conducting the training, and the brigade had completed its analysis and was issuing its operations order to the subordinate commanders and to the division commander. Unfortunately, the exercise had to be conducted with no CAS and critical training was lost.

An observer not familiar with the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) would probably think it is operated by a joint organization with full support of the joint team. Actually, the Army operates the center and depends on agreements with the other services, particularly the Air Force, for their participation in the training. The JRTC staff is constantly working to line up CAS sorties and lift aircraft to ensure

that brigades rotating through the center receive the best joint tactical training possible. But when CAS and lift aircraft are cancelled, the brigades are relegated to "replication," the bane of serious trainers everywhere. The fix is again an agreement between the services since JFCOM does not command combat forces in either the Army or the Air Force.

Finally, despite years of increased focus, with talking and more talking on joint operations by Congress, DOD, and military commanders at all levels, the General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a critical report on joint CAS training.<sup>3</sup> CAS for ground forces is a hot issue when joint tactical operations are discussed, but problems remain. The report specifically notes that the Department of Defense has had limited success in overcoming the barriers that prevent troops from receiving the realistic, standardized close air support training necessary to prepare them for joint operations. This is the result of four interrelated factors:

- ground and air forces have limited opportunities to train together in a joint environment
- home station training is often restricted and thus does not always provide realistic training to prepare troops to perform the mission
- the services use different training standards and certification requirements for personnel responsible for coordinating close air support
- within the individual services, joint close air support training is often a lower priority than other missions.

The report goes on to say that when CAS training for ground forces does occur, usually at one of the combat training centers, it does not meet the requirements of the ground commanders because units are not adequately trained prior to their arrival at the center. Additionally, the CTCs are the only maneuver training areas that offer adequate range areas to conduct realistic training, but individual brigades only get to train at the CTCs every 12 to 18 months. As the senior

aviation observer controller at JRTC in 2002–2003, I came to the same conclusions. Units conducted the training they needed prior to their arrival at the CTCs rather than executing proficiently on arrival. Reports from Army CTCs and the Center for Army Lessons Learned confirm that ground forces need to conduct more CAS training.

The Joint National Training Capability concept attempts to fix the training center problem by integrating the entire joint force. But brigade or battalion commanders will likely be involved less often than is currently the practice at the "dirt" CTCs such as JRTC and the National Training Center.

### **Why We Must Train Jointly**

The issue of joint training is important for the Army because the service is truly dependent on the other services for specific capabilities that do not exist in its inventory, especially CAS and airlift. Army and joint doctrine call for the close integration of ground and air components in executing tactical operations. A major problem, however, is that the individual services are responsible for training and equipping their combat units. Title 10, U.S. Code, defines the Army's



Members of air support operations squadron call in close air support during combat operations in Fallujah, November 13, 2004

55<sup>th</sup> Signal Company (Johncharles van Boers)

responsibility to organize, train, and equip forces primarily for ground combat.<sup>4</sup> Within the continental United States, the senior conventional Army commander is Commander, U.S. Army Forces Command, and he is responsible for training the forces within his command. Each overseas unit is led by a senior Army commander in the region, such as the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Commander in South Korea. The regional combatant commanders, such as U.S. Central Command's, have responsibility for war planning and fighting

**the regional combatant commanders have responsibility for war planning and fighting but no tasking authority to individual service organizations for training**

but no tasking authority to individual service organizations for training. Any joint training is accomplished by cooperation among individual commanders rather than any higher commander having the authority to direct joint training across the services. Some argue that this arrangement is acceptable and the military does not need another

training directive issued by a headquarters not in touch with the units affected. But the consequences of not conducting joint tactical training are potentially catastrophic.

The one command that has authority for directing and resourcing joint training is U.S. Special Operations Command. Joint training within the command is fairly routine since forces from all the services fall under one commander. Air support and operations for ground and maritime forces are coordinated and directed

by the higher joint headquarters and are only subject to change by that headquarters. However, because the command lacks CAS

fixed-wing aircraft, close air support remains a problem within the community; at least two incidents of friendly fire occurred in Afghanistan against Special Forces troops by CAS aircraft.

The GAO report cited earlier points out that there are no standards across the services for close air support

training or for how often controllers must train to the task. Air Force CAS controllers assigned to Army brigades and battalions are there only temporarily and are subject to the orders of their Air Force parent unit and may not be available for training with Army forces.<sup>5</sup> This issue becomes of even more concern as the Army transitions to units of action that are roughly equivalent to our current brigades, or more accurately to the brigade combat team that is formed from the standing maneuver brigade (infantry or armor) with all its support forces from other brigades within a division. Over the last decade, Army deployments have involved smaller and smaller units to the point that we are now putting battalion task forces and brigade combat teams on deployments that used to involve at least a division level commander and staff. Lower level commanders must therefore deal with increasingly complex issues. What has not been created is a system to ensure that joint training is taking place at the brigade and battalion level. Not only will joint tactical training become even more important, but also commanders at lower levels must become more adept at joint operations at the operational as well as the tactical level.

**Joint Interdependence**

There is much discussion about joint interdependence within the Department of Defense and specifically the Army. The argument is that we achieved the ability to deconflict joint operations sometime in the 1990s and moved on not only to deconflict but also to integrate joint operations in *Iraqi Freedom*. The argument, as articulated in *The Army Strategic Planning Guidance*, goes further to say that now, in order to reduce redundancies and gain efficiencies, we must become *interdependent*. That is, each service must depend on the other services for certain tasks so the entire force can function at the lowest cost. Given the Army's decision to reduce organic fire support assets in lieu of more ground

Army team loads Hellfire missile aboard Apache Longbow at Kunsan Air Base, South Korea, October 2004



8<sup>th</sup> Communications Squadron (Michael R. Holzworth)



Paratroopers board C-17 during joint exercise at Pope Air Force Base, May 2004

U.S. Air Force (Suzanne M. Jenkins)

forces, dependence on CAS is increasingly an issue. The bottom line is that support from the other services is necessary for Army success in current and future combat.

There are several options for improving joint tactical training ranging from redesigning the entire Department of Defense as “purple suiters” to maintaining the status quo. One is to align all tactical Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force combat elements for training with each other based on a re-

### the services must identify key joint tasks that offer high-payoff training

gional alignment under the combatant commanders of the unified commands. Combatant commanders would direct multi-echelon joint training and issue training development guidance to the service commands. Commanders of each of the aligned service component commands would then develop, resource, coordinate, and execute multi-echelon joint training. This method fits well with the new Army doctrine of a capabilities-based force that is ready to deploy, rapidly plug into a joint task force, and win the fight.

Another option is to charge the JFCOM commander with synchronizing assets to ensure that joint tactical training is taking place. A quarterly joint

training conference could take place similar to the current joint airborne/air transportability training conferences in which aircraft are resourced for parachute and transport training and operations. This system has enabled the Army to achieve mission success in maintaining parachute proficiency for an entire division of paratroopers and other conventional and Special Operations Forces (SOF). It has also worked for scheduling lift aircraft. The most logical extension of this conference would be adding close air support aircraft coordination.

Additional players in the joint coordination arena are Navy carriers for joint shipboard operations and naval surface gunfire. The subsequent close interaction of the entire joint team would inevitably bring up other training opportunities that would benefit all the services and further reduce redundancies across the board.

Prior to any of these options, the services must identify key joint tasks that offer high-payoff training. Obviously, CAS is one of those areas. The services should establish joint standards for aircrews, controllers, companies, battalions, and brigades that require training in key joint tasks. Next, enlisted tactical air controllers and ALOs should be assigned directly to the command they support.

Due to the changing operating environment, it is becoming more critical that all forces are able to operate together, including SOF. As a corollary, all SOF troops should be included in training conferences to better enable conventional forces to schedule training with them.

Electronic training sensors for ground and air combat forces are another key aspect of enticing units to train jointly. The Navy and Air Force are correctly concerned that aircraft training involve the replication of enemy air defenses, and both have built sophisticated training areas for their crews. The Army has sophisticated ground force training systems at their CTCs and increasingly at home bases, especially in the urban training environment. Nowhere in the military do we have both systems tied together to totally enable joint tactical training and hold commanders accountable. Decisionmakers should review all planned and current electronic training systems.

Warriors should not have to figure out how to fight jointly under fire. It is not that we are not training in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force; we just do not do it together well enough. We are executing together in combat, so let us not waste the lessons from the last several years of combat by failing to incorporate them into a truly joint training system. **JFQ**

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Franklin L. Hagenbeck, “Afghanistan: Fire Support for Operation *Anaconda*,” *Field Artillery Journal* (September-October 2002), 5–9.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. Metz and Christopher A. Joslin, “Time to Train How We Fight: Validation of the Joint Training Concept,” *Army Aviation* (December 31, 2003), 51–54.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, “Military Readiness: Lingering Training and Equipment Issues Hamper Air Support of Ground Forces,” GAO-03-505, May 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Title 10, U.S. Code, subtitle B, part 1, chapter 307, section 3062.

<sup>5</sup> GAO-03-505, 9.