
Defense Organization TODAY

By JOHN P. WHITE

Since the National Security Act of 1947 unified the defense establishment, Secretaries of Defense have struggled to assign roles, missions, and functions among major DOD components, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, military services, and unified commands. Once responsibilities were actually assigned, securing performance of them—especially as various components exerted undue influence—proved an even greater challenge.

Successive Secretaries found that they lacked authority to force compliance. Other senior leaders—such as the Chairman and CINCs—also lacked means to carry out their responsibilities. Weaknesses in central civilian as well as military authority together with ambiguities in the original law promoted interservice competition in both military operations and resource allocation.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act addressed these issues by more clearly defining responsibilities and providing authority to perform them. Empowered by Goldwater-Nichols reforms, DOD has made great strides in preparing for joint operations and managing defense resources.

Operational Responsibilities

Among its major accomplishments, the Goldwater-Nichols Act distinguished between the operational

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The Secretary, President, and Chairman meeting at the Pentagon.



DOD (F.D. Ward)

contributions of the services and unified commands. That distinction provided a sound basis for effective and efficient operations by assigning the specific responsibilities for organizing, training, and equipping forces to the services, while delegating the planning and execution of those operations to unified commands. The sharp division of responsibilities among services, unified commands, and other DOD components eliminated much of the previous ambiguity.

Additionally, Goldwater-Nichols equipped the Chairman with a definitive role in relation to the service chiefs and CINCs, made him principal military adviser to the President and

Secretary, assigned the Joint Staff to him, and made clear that the chain of command ran from the President through the Secretary to the CINCs.

Before the act the services dominated DOD activities. Continuing service negotiations over their roles heavily influenced planning and operational decisions as well as resource allocation. The perspective of the Chairman and the ideas, needs, and plans of the CINCs did not sufficiently inform major operational and resource decisions.

Further, forceful exercise of institutional service roles—based on their individual areas of responsibility, such as unchallenged Navy leadership in

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Self-propelled howitzer,
Bosnia-Herzegovina.

55th Signal Company (Glenn W. Suggs)

maritime operations—diluted CINC plans for theater-wide joint operations which used their service components. Consequently, truly joint operations seldom materialized. In addition, CINCs were unable to influence service plans in the case of modernization or force development—though they were expected to fight and win with the forces provided by the services.

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By ensuring that CINCs had the authority to prepare for and conduct military operations, Goldwater-Nichols fundamentally changed the way in which DOD functioned. The law increased the authority of CINCs over planning, developing, training, and deploying forces for operations. At the same time, the Chairman—supported by the Joint Staff—assumed greater prominence as the channel of CINC influence over these activities. With the Chairman reporting to the Secretary and directing an effective staff (enhanced qualitatively by the Goldwater-Nichols requirements for joint duty as a prerequisite for promotion), a major reallocation of responsibilities occurred.

The conventional view assumes that the act tipped the scales in favor of jointness over service interests. Some believe that it somehow devalued service contributions to combat capability and too severely restricted their roles. This argument persists in viewing DOD functions through the prism of interservice and service-CINC competition.

In fact, however, the law defined and enhanced the value of the services by focusing them on core competencies which involve delivering combat capability to CINCs. Only the services can execute such functions. By emphasizing core competencies, Goldwater-Nichols strengthened the capability of each service to support CINCs in their warfighting role.

Service Responsibilities

The services remain the bedrock of military capabilities. Their unique competencies enable joint warfighting. Differing perspectives—framed by expertise in certain technologies and ways of warfare—are essential to operational success. The services organize, train, and equip forces with special capabilities and supply them to CINCs. The challenge, answered by Goldwater-

Nichols, was thus to orient the services toward those roles which grow out of their institutional strengths, supporting joint operations today while assuring the availability of effective forces for the future.

We have come far in this regard over the last ten years. Strengthening the authority of CINCs to conduct joint operations and clarifying service roles have led to an even greater use of service capabilities. In a recent speech to an Air Force doctrine seminar at Maxwell Air Force Base, General Ronald Fogleman summarized, “We want each service to organize, train, and equip forces that are dominant in their medium. We strive to make our forces interoperable so that the joint force commander can combine them . . . for maximum effect.” The specific contributions of the services exploit their expertise. For example, they have principal responsibility for research, development, test, and evaluation of weapon systems for their individual mediums, as well as for developing and articulating innovative concepts for their employment. The services understand this responsibility, which in the case of the Air Force was characterized by General Fogleman as follows: “We owe it to the taxpayers to push the envelope of air and space employment to seek warfighting advantages that save lives and resources. We are the Nation’s premier advocates for extracting every ounce of advantage from operating in the mediums of air and space.”

The performance of all the services in this area is undeniable. Technological advances have afforded us the best military systems. The services engage in intramural competition in meeting this responsibility; but competition can be healthy in looking for alternative technological solutions. As the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces (CORM) concluded in its report, “Service competition has delivered innovative systems and technologies. The key is to manage such competition to assure that it is not wasteful.”

More broadly, service pride, tradition, competition, and cultures encourage them to “push the envelope” in their various roles. Further, the expertise, creativity, and professionalism



Marine tank retriever during CJTFEX '96.

brought to the staffs of unified commands by members of each service ensure that CINCs employ service forces effectively. But the services must also

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integrate their efforts into CINC utilization plans. Resource decisions must reflect the needs of CINCs as well as the institutional orientations of the services, and service operations must meld into joint operations.

Chairman and CINC Roles

To better support warfighting needs, Goldwater-Nichols complemented the responsibilities of the services with a stronger role for the Chairman in planning and resource allocation processes. This was not merely a cosmetic change, but a fundamental adjustment in the relationship among the Chairman, services, and CINCs. Today, CINCs have a direct input to planning and programming which is consistent with their responsibility for warfighting.

Adjusting the responsibility of the Chairman from consensus-builder to principal military adviser to the President and Secretary gave teeth to the Chairman's sponsorship of CINC concerns and provided more effective

joint planning, doctrine, and support. The intimate involvement of the Chairman and Joint Staff in key resource decisions—for example, the planning and programming of military forces—gives CINCs a strong voice in them. The role of the Vice Chairman as co-chair of the Defense Acquisition Board increases the joint view in acquisition decisions as well.

Furthermore, the Chairman controls joint doctrine, which is essential to defining how joint operations will integrate service-provided forces, and how joint commanders will conduct those operations. In other areas such as joint training, logistics, and command and control, the influence of the Chairman has grown commensurately.

Publication of *Joint Vision 2010* represents the most significant recent development in this maturing process. In the past, the services relied almost exclusively on their own visions of the future to guide decisions about developing forces. *Force XXI, Forward . . . From the Sea*, and *Global Reach, Global Power* are valuable documents in that they articulate service perspectives on use of their forces; but they are incomplete without a joint warfighting vision that ties them together and defines the total requirement. *JV 2010* accomplishes this by serving as a conceptual template for channeling the vitality and innovation of the Armed

Forces to leverage "technological opportunities to achieve new levels of effectiveness in joint warfighting." It focuses on achieving dominance across a range of operations required in the current era and beyond.

Joint Doctrine and Training

The services base their doctrine on experience and expertise in their mediums of operation. Joint doctrine guides the integration and use of these systems and forces in joint operations.

Goldwater-Nichols and CORM highlighted the need for the development and promulgation of joint doctrine. Assigning joint doctrine to the Chairman has already enhanced its development (together with increased funding for the Joint Warfighting Center). It has reduced the time needed to develop doctrine from four years to two. Improvements are evident in key areas, including doctrine for joint logistics, operations other than war, close air support, and theater air defense.

Closely related to doctrine is training, which is more than a set of annual theater exercises. It focuses on integrating service-provided forces from their earliest training events. This effort is encouraged by a joint training system which will be in place by FY98 to identify the funding levels required to fully resource CINC plans for joint training. The resource allocation process is already resolving CINC training concerns.

DOD is working to prioritize joint training requirements to guide the services in allocating readiness funding. A major step is the evolving role of U.S. Atlantic Command (ACOM) as joint force integrator and trainer. Through initiatives such as the Joint Training Analysis and Simulation Center in Suffolk, Virginia, ACOM is bringing a greater focus to the joint and combined training of assigned forces. These efforts are already paying big dividends by training commanders and staffs to plan and direct operations in the joint environment and by training forces to meet specific CINC requirements. Other initiatives include the joint simulation system—scheduled to be operational by FY99—which will distribute a

IMEF Combat Camera (A. Olgun)

Cautions on Goldwater-Nichols

A decade has passed since the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. This law sought to make two fundamental changes in the authority and functioning of the military side of the defense establishment. It strengthened both the advisory role of the Chairman and the command authority of unified commanders—combatant commanders as the legislation refers to them. As intended by Congress, this strengthening implicitly diminished the influence and authority of service chiefs and service commanders in the field. Proponents of the act viewed these officers as obstructionists to smooth national military command advice and cohesive multiservice operational coordination in the field. “Jointness” became a byword of military cohesion, and “purple” became the color of choice.

The law has proven effective in various ways. The services seem to understand each other better and work together more efficiently. The development and upward flow of military advice are unquestionably smoother, and that advice is arguably as good or better than it was in the “bad old, good old days.” Interservice relationships are stronger.

On balance, Goldwater-Nichols was sound, and its impact on the Armed Forces has been good. As we enter this law’s second decade, however, caution lights need to be observed as the generation of officers and the framers of the legislation—who lived on both sides of the reforms it wrought—depart with their vision of what it did and did not seek to do.

Caution light 1. Remember that effective jointness means blending the distinct colors of the services into a rainbow of synergistic military effectiveness. It does not suggest pouring them into a single jar and mixing them until they lose their individual properties and come out as a colorless paste. No army that has worn purple uniforms ever won a battle. Balanced military judgment and combat effectiveness depend upon service individuality, culture, training, and interpretation of the battlefield. The essence of jointness is the flexible blending of service individualities.

Caution light 2. Consistent with their explicit roles in law and their derived functions, the service chiefs and service component commanders are responsible for building forces which bring unique capabilities to the table. Recruiting, training, organizing, equipping, fashioning programs, making decisions, and acquiring resources to provide service capabilities is the business of service secretaries and service chiefs and of Congress. The creep of the Joint Staff into areas of resource allocation and program evaluation and their imposition on unified commanders—with a resultant administrative expansion and shift in emphasis toward programmatic—threatens the national-level focus on strategic military planning and advice and diffuses the operational focus at the combatant commander level.

Caution light 3. The Joint Chiefs, a corporate body of the Nation’s senior military officers, were formed as a council to provide military advice to, and implement decisions of, the President and Secretary of Defense. As Joint Chiefs, they bear dual identities. They are not simply service chiefs come to a meeting. The Chairman is their spokesman, senior among them, and designated principal military adviser—but not a commander. The member of the Joint Staff overheard during a disagreement among the chiefs as saying “This isn’t a group grope—the Chairman is in charge,” missed the intent of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. It is a “group grope” for effective military advice, and the Chairman can cast a deciding vote, but not a muzzling vote. Differentiate carefully between the roles of chiefs and those of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and service members who make up the council of military advisers to the Commander in Chief known as the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Caution light 4. Just as the Chairman is not a commander, the Joint Staff is not a general staff. Goldwater-Nichols is specific on that point. The Joint Staff is the hub around which service staffs are clustered to provide expertise, robustness, and depth. It is the blender of the rainbow of national military advice. Service views and advice—provided to the Joint Staff on behalf of each member of the Joint Chiefs—are ignored at the peril of balanced, joint military advice and cohesion within the joint system.

These are my cautions. They flow not from the intent of Goldwater-Nichols or from the improvements it effected but from the need for the upcoming generation to understand its intent and to avoid the consequences of misinterpretation.

—General Carl E. Mundy, USMC (Ret.)

common virtual environment among services, CINCs, simulation centers, and war colleges.

Likewise, the joint monthly readiness review, implemented by the Chairman in 1994, and the quarterly

Senior Readiness Oversight Council, chaired by the Deputy Secretary, provide the means to evaluate the readiness of CINC forces to include assessment joint training.

CINC Warfighting Needs

DOD has also implemented changes to assure that decisions on allocating resources reflect the views of CINCs. The planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS) remains the basis of DOD resource allocation, though it has evolved in important ways in recent years. The services can no longer conduct planning, programming, R&D, and force development independent of the needs of CINCs. Today, several avenues, including submission of CINC integrated priority lists, are used to assess their needs. The Chairman’s joint warfighting capability assessment (JWCA) process, which



EA-6B landing on board
USS George Washington.

U.S. Navy (Craig McClure)

functions through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), builds on these assessments and develops options for the Secretary that track directly with service and defense agency programs and budgets. JWCA reviews capabilities for specified warfighting and support.

The services remain the primary sources of new mission needs statements that naturally reflect their preferences for warfighting—achieving dominance in their mediums. JROC reviews and validates such requirements in the joint context, with the goal of meeting the warfighting needs of CINCs as its primary objective. Chaired by the Vice Chairman, JROC includes the vice chiefs of each service. JROC benefits from JWCA and consultations with CINCs.

The JROC and the Defense Acquisition Board processes, led by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, are mutually

supporting systems that provide integrated and enduring decisions relating directly to the warfighting needs of CINCs. Both processes support resource allocation decisionmaking where the differing perspectives of the Chairman, services, CINCs, and DOD leadership converge. The Defense Acquisition Board and various program review processes, operated by the under secretary with representation from the Chairman and Joint Staff as well as the services, ensure the viability of service development programs within a joint context. In each case, decisionmaking integrates these perspectives of the service and CINCs.

Ultimately, the Secretary of Defense makes resource allocation deci-

CINC needs and the DOD drive for efficiency provided the impetus for numerous ongoing acquisition and management improvements. On a daily basis, DOD increases its reliance

the real issue is whether we have used the law to prepare for threats in the wake of the Cold War

on joint program management to use limited defense resources more efficiently. CINC warfighting needs and service programs both benefit from joint management in diverse programs such as a primary training aircraft and joint munitions. Likewise, support for

as giving the Chairman and CINCs clear authority over assigned service personnel and the ability to influence their careers gave new value to joint experience. Even more important were the requirements for joint education at the intermediate and senior service colleges and in the joint capstone course for general and flag officers. Joint education has broadened their experience and enriched their cultural development—enabling them to make even greater contributions to joint warfighting.

DOD has come a long way in executing the intent of Goldwater-Nichols. Arguments about changes in the relative power or influence of institutions miss the point. The real issue is whether we have used the law to prepare for the security challenges, threats, and missions which have arisen in the wake of the Cold War. In my view, the answer is yes.

But this evolution is not yet complete—far from it. Our goal is total battlefield dominance. Assuring that calls for more changes. Next year, DOD will conduct a quadrennial defense review as CORM recommended to examine the major issues we will confront in the 21st century. It will assess future international environments and develop a strategy to meet emerging threats. A fresh articulation of defense strategy will provide a framework for analyses of resources needed to meet force structure, modernization, infrastructure, and readiness requirements. Moreover, the review must weigh the need for further changes in defense organization ten years after the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. In my view, we are on the correct path but more must be done. **JFQ**



U.S. Air Force (Gudrun K. Cook)

sions in the context of PPBS with help from the Defense Resources Board, including representatives of the Chairman and services. Here, service views on long-range capabilities are rationalized with the necessarily short-term warfighting needs of CINCs.

Decisions that result from these efforts are taken at each phase of PPBS. Adjustments recommended in the past year attest to their success. These alterations include program changes to focus and limit unmanned aerial vehicles programs, procure additional C-17s, retire the EF-111, expand the use of the EA-6B, and adjust Marine munitions procurement to reflect joint capabilities.

theater combat forces benefits from the joint management of support in communications, logistics, and other areas of common need.

The real legacy of Goldwater-Nichols is that it changed the roles of the major DOD actors. It enabled the Joint Chiefs, services, and CINCs to focus on core competencies and encouraged them to work together. This landmark legislation also added a joint perspective to the outlooks of the services. Requiring joint duty as a prerequisite for promotion to flag rank as well