

# Cutting Defense Method Instead of Madness

By DAVID F. TODD and RALPH M. HITCHEN

the call for a blue ribbon panel is the time-honored method of dealing with thorny parochial issues

**A**mong the detritus of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994 can be discovered a provision establishing the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces. While the call for a blue ribbon panel to study a politically sensitive problem is a relatively ho-hum event—albeit the time-honored method of dealing with thorny parochial issues—the military ought to be alerted to the fact that this commission might really do something. As the pundits are quick to remind us, we live in a new era, and the commission’s recommendations may prompt far-reaching changes that otherwise would not occur.

Happily for those who cleave to the status quo, the roles and missions debate means turf, and past efforts to make the services come to grips with this issue have yielded predictably limited results. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reports to Congress on roles and missions every three years. In February 1993 General Colin Powell sent his “Report on the Roles, Mis-

sions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States” as required by the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986. The Bottom-Up Review—though not specifically aimed at roles and functions—indirectly evaluated areas of suspected overlap. Neither of these documents, however, proposed fundamentally altering the traditional allocation of roles and missions among the services.

But we are reaching a point where congressional frustration with military obstinance—real or perceived—might boil over. Senator Sam Nunn observed in a speech delivered in July 1992 that a thorough review of service roles, functions, and missions was needed because of the drastic change in the international order. The budget deficit and diminished threats combine to create high levels of public interest in downsizing (or *rightsizing*) the Armed Forces. And a steadily increasing turnover in Congress will eventually dilute the traditional “balance of power” on Capitol Hill that preserved and protected service-parochial interests during the Cold War. But the sacred cows may soon be slaughtered and rice bowls shattered—with the impetus coming from the all-encompassing review implicit in the mandate of the newly created Commission on Roles and Missions.

For the commission to have an impact it must distance itself from previous attempts

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to look at roles and missions along the traditional fractious lines of service components and showcase systems. It must find a way to evaluate military forces and capabilities within a common analytical frame of reference. Instead of comparing apples and oranges, it must compare apples and apples. One way to do this is by adopting a *strategy-capabilities evaluation methodology*.

Problems, Paradigms, and  
Frames of Reference

Many and probably most evaluations of roles and missions take on a service versus service perspective—endeavoring, for instance, to compare similar units or echelons like divisions, wings, carrier battle groups, etc. Such a methodology has the reductionist virtue of getting directly to the point, that is, the all-important questions of turf and budget, but it clearly lacks intellectual

special warfare assets; and interdiction from a range of land-based aerial strike assets with AV-8B, A-10, F-16, F-15E, F/A-18, F-117, F-111, AC-130, B-52, B-1, B-2 aircraft. Without an employment context—in other words, objectives—and an assessment of available systems and force elements, comparing heavy bombers with carrier-based aircraft is an exercise in futility.

Buzzwords to Methodology

The strategy-capabilities evaluation methodology is a two-phased process. In the first step, a strategy versus capability framework is used to correlate military capabilities through two parallel perspectives. One perspective, the *strategy process*, systematically extrapolates military tasks from national goals or interests. Borrowing heavily from the RAND Corporation's publicized *strategy-to-tasks* framework, the strategy process is a

## *Figure out what you don't do well, and then don't do it!*

—Attributed to Alf, the TV Alien

rigor as well as the thoroughness and relevance demanded by the real world of military operations.

For example, a direct comparison of the capabilities of heavy bombers versus carrier-based aircraft is inadequate. Only in a context of how the systems are employed—what operational tasks each might be called upon to accomplish—can valid judgments be made. One way to employ these systems might be to either disrupt or destroy military C<sup>3</sup> and other high value fixed targets. In this context the capabilities of bombers and carrier-based aircraft is compared in a meaningful sense. But to complete the analytical process other systems and forces must be considered. These include but are not limited to direct fires from attack helicopters and Special Operations Forces; indirect fires from field artillery, multiple launch rocket systems, and advanced tactical missile systems; direct action from electronic warfare assets; strikes from carrier battle groups with F-14, F/A-18, and A-6 aircraft, surface action groups with naval fire support and tomahawk land attack missiles (TLAM), nuclear-fuelled submarines with TLAM, and Marine

series of interrelated top-down decisions which link national goals and interests with operational objectives and tasks. Operational objectives represent agreed on criteria for the successful prosecution of military operations. The *service organizational hierarchy* parallels the strategy process. It is a systemic refinement of service roles and functions, with the ultimate goal of cataloging and defining operational capabilities of force elements available to a commander in chief. Correlating these analytical paradigms as illustrated below will, in turn, result in a strategy versus capability matrix.

Whereas RAND's strategy-to-tasks framework was designed to evaluate the procurement of weapons systems that would support theater or campaign operational objectives, a *strategy versus capability matrix* will identify what operational objectives a geographic or functional CINC must accomplish and compare those with the operational capabilities that service combat elements bring to the fight. The significance of all this for the current roles and missions debate—and the work of the newly-created, congressionally-mandated commission—is that by using the validated strategy-to-tasks framework, we have a tool to evaluate the utility of various force elements and the associated weapon

the strategy-capability methodology compares similar force *capabilities*—not force *elements*—among the services



C-17 Globemaster II.

U.S. Air Force (David McLeod)

systems within a common frame of reference—a tool that if used properly will enable us to identify service-specific capabilities that may be redundant.

The second phase of the strategy-capabilities evaluation methodology refines the analytical focus on suspected redundant capabilities as opposed to forces, avoiding a traditionally fatal detour into service component turf concerns. Decisions on reducing forces will inevitably be made, but only after a detailed evaluation determines whether the capabilities or forces in question—those that deliver capabilities we have identified—are redundant or complementary. Redundant forces can accomplish the same operational objectives and tasks as other forces. But while complementary forces may accomplish the same operational objectives and tasks, they also have unique capabilities that enable a wide range of applications.



Marine M-1 Abrams.

U.S. Marine Corps

This phase is the *force systems capability evaluation*, a structured process which compares forces suspected of being redundant. Validated criteria must be used for a thorough comparison of forces to see if they are either redundant or complementary. Representative criteria might include weighing advantages and disadvantages regarding the strategy-capability evaluation methodology. This methodology has a number of advantages that recommend it to the Commission on Roles and Missions and that could have a



Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

U.S. Army



U.S. Navy (Kenneth H. Brewer)

Guided missile cruiser  
USS Wainwright.

significant influence in debates over defense in general, and force reductions in particular. Using this methodology the commission will have an unassailable analytic device with which to reach its recommendations. First, it takes a framework of proven worth in force planning and acquisition matters—namely, strategy-to-tasks—and adapts it to evaluate force structure. Second, it compares similar force *capabilities*—not force *elements*—among the services. Apples can finally be compared with apples. Lastly, the methodology lends itself to establishing analytically derived common evaluation criteria.

In this way a significant amount of “gut feel” can be systematically weeded out of the process of evaluating force structure.

Applying this methodology will do more than merely identify redundant force capabilities. It will also illuminate the unique contributions of each force to the battlefield and the flexibility of complementary capabilities. Where redundancies are identified, the commission might recommend eliminating some force elements associated with those capabilities or, alternatively, conclude that the operational tasks associated with the capabilities are crucial and justify a degree of redundancy.

#### The Unkindest Cut

It appears defense spending will continue to be cut. Prudent military planners on the west bank of the Potomac would be wise, for example, to look seriously at how to divide a slice of the pie that amounts to no more than 2 percent of GNP. But the question now before Congress is not *how much* to cut, but *what* to cut.

We are endorsing a methodology that will endow the deliberations of the Commission on Roles and Missions with a serious degree of analytical rigor. Absent rigor, its recommendations may result in ill-advised, across-the-board reductions in the Armed Forces—with a multitude of proverbial babies being thrown out with the bath water. Such actions would clearly jeopardize the unassailable military superiority which the Nation enjoys and result in putting goals and interests at risk. There must be a clear understanding of what is at stake on both sides of the River, for it is a lot more than ships, aircraft, and divisions with historic lineages. To paraphrase a trendy political expression, it's the *capabilities*, stupid! **JFQ**