SHAPING Arms Export Policy

U.S. Air Force (Dean Wagner)

By SUMNER BENSON

Joint force commanders and joint planners have an obvious interest in the balance of forces in regions where they may be called on to conduct operations. Understanding foreign capabilities requires exchanging information with friendly governments and collecting intelligence against other governments—traditional activities technologically updated for the information age. Commanders and planners also have an opportunity to help shape regional environments by influencing policy on arms exports and conventional arms transfers. To have an impact, planners must recognize that in the mid-1990s the transfer of conventional weapons poses genuine dilemmas that make it difficult even for experienced and conscientious policymakers to establish firm guidelines. Some dilemmas are rooted in the differing goals found in legislation on arms sales while others stem from a strategic environment which, according to General Gordon Sullivan, Chief of Staff of the Army, is shifting "from the unitary and relatively predictable adversary we knew in the Cold War, to the diverse, ambiguous, and dynamic threats that we confront today."[1] Some emerge from the enhanced importance of economic competitiveness.

Summary

Joint force commanders and planners can exercise a positive influence in shaping regional security environments through their roles in developing arms exports policy. To be effective this process must take into consideration economic and security factors that work for and against such exports. This includes fostering regional stability, curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and bolstering economic competitiveness. A review of the relative benefits of placing American manufactured avionics on MiG–29s recently helped frame an important policy on upgrading foreign aircraft. The Joint Staff, combatant command staffs, and service staffs can play a part in drafting export policy as the administration addresses issues like the integration of technology on foreign platforms, transfer of theater missile defense systems, and initiation of international cooperation on restraining conventional arms transfers. This could influence the kind of weaponry that the Armed Forces face on a future battlefield.

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED
1995		**00-00-1994 to 00-00-1995**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
Shaping Arms Export Policy	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **National Defense University,Institute for National Strategic Studies,Fort Lesley J. McNair,Washington,DC,20319**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			
unclassified	**unclassified**	**unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**8**	

Strengthening Collective Security

There are three arguments in favor of arms exports. First, these exports can help allies and friends defend themselves against existing and emerging threats. According to the Arms Export Control Act that governs such sales, the United States and other "free and independent countries" have "valid requirements for effective and mutually beneficial defense relationships" and for "international defense cooperation."[2] America has sold weapons to and shared technology with friendly nations to increase interoperability and lower costs to all parties concerned. As planners in both the European and the Pacific Commands know, there is extensive cooperation among NATO members, Japan, and South Korea. Moreover, in the Persian Gulf War the Department of Defense released technology previously available only to treaty partners to Arab coalition members.

The administration is building on this cooperation. In April 1993 then Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology John Deutch informed the NATO Conference of National Armaments Directors that DOD intends to "create a renaissance of defense cooperation" across the Atlantic.[3] Secretary of Defense William Perry, former Secretary Les Aspin, Under Secretary for Policy Frank Wisner, and Under Secretary John Deutch all have told Japan that the United States wishes to increase military cooperation with that nation.

exports can help allies and friends defend themselves against existing and emerging threats

Arms cooperation with Japan and other Asian nations bolsters the strategy of cooperative engagement which U.S. Pacific Command has developed to support strategic goals.[4] Also, U.S. Central Command and the Saudi air force reportedly are discussing the integration of communications systems in conjunction with the Peace Shield Command and Control Air Defense System which American companies are building in Saudi Arabia.[5]

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Efforts at arms cooperation will be limited by declining defense budgets in most countries, by industry and legislative pressure to keep production at home, and by a belief that military-related technology is key to economic competitiveness. Nonetheless, the United States and other nations probably will develop significant cooperative programs that will support future military operations. For instance, it is reported that although European countries are reluctant to purchase the all-U.S. Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS), they may accept an approach that allows them to put American radar and electronics on a European airframe.

Countering Proliferation

The second incentive for arms exports is countering the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced conventional weaponry. Aside from declared nuclear-weapon states (United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China), at least twenty other nations have acquired or are attempting to secure weapons of mass destruction. In most areas where U.S. forces could conceivably be engaged on a large scale, such as in Korea or the Persian Gulf, likely adversaries have chemical and biological weapons. Moreover, North Korea, Iraq, and Iran appear determined to acquire nuclear weapons. These nations have evaded international nonproliferation controls, such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime, and developed indigenous capabilities to produce weapons in part by actively seeking dual use (civilian and military) technologies abroad, both legally and illegally.[6]

Former Secretary of Defense Les Aspin identified increased proliferation as a major threat (along with regional instability, reversal of reform in Russia, and economic dangers).[7] The Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs testified before Congress that "proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles, and advanced conventional arms, as well as the technologies which are necessary for their development" represents the "most critical security threat we face."[8]

DOD is dealing with this problem in part by working with friendly nations to identify and counter ballistic missile threats to U.S. and allied forces in Europe, the Middle East,

and Northeast Asia. Washington and Tokyo, for example, have discussed deploying the upgraded Patriot missile and the projected Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile in Japan to deter or defend against a North Korean attack by nuclear weapons carried on ballistic missiles. The United States has also discussed theater missile defense with South Korea and members of NATO.

Bolstering Economic Growth

The third argument for promoting defense sales comes from the increased importance of foreign trade to the economy. For perspective, one should recall that when President Jimmy Carter tried to reverse the growth of arms exports in 1977, the initiative was perceived (except by defense companies) as a defense and foreign policy issue rather than an economic consideration. That is in stark contrast to the policies and perceptions of the nineties.

President Clinton has emphasized that overall arms exports are critical to economic growth

President Clinton has emphasized that overall arms exports are critical to economic growth while Secretary of State Warren Christopher instructed chiefs of mission "to support actively U.S. firms by seeking out market opportunities . . . giving [firms] our full backing in competitions for contracts and projects [and] keep[ing] a sharp eye on what foreign competitors are doing."[9] Within DOD, Secretary William Perry (while still serving as Deputy Secretary) stated, "We should not only be willing to sell equipment to foreign countries, but the government should be willing to help in certain limited ways." But he added, "provided that we can assure that sales do not risk proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear technology, and that we are not aggravating an unstable region in which regional wars are likely."[10] The Deputy Director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), which manages government-to-government arms sales, testified before Congress that "as our own defense spending decreases, defense exports have become much more important to the viability of individual U.S. defense firms and to our overall defense industrial base." This official also stated that "some of our important domestic defense programs" (such as the F–15 and Patriot) depend upon foreign sales "to keep production lines open and to preserve the jobs of highly skilled U.S. defense workers."[11] At a recent meeting a DSAA official commented: "You are still worried about Russia and China as military competitors. The competitors that industry is worried about are Britain, France, and Israel, because they are going after our share of the global defense market."

More widely, the administration believes that defense research and development (R&D) and defense sales have a significant impact on civilian production. For example, Laura Tyson, Chair of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, has pointed out that foreign sales by defense-related industries furnish companies with revenues to support long-term R&D for civilian as well as military products. In a study of international competitiveness she notes that "the countries that boast the major commercial aircraft producers are also the biggest arms-selling democracies."[12]

DOD has increasingly invested in dual-use R&D, given the Advanced Research Projects Agency a critical role in converting defense industry to civilian production, and created the position of Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Dual-Use Technology Policy and International Programs. Under Secretary Deutch has established a study group on global defense markets, and representatives of the Office of Management and Budget and the newly formed National Economic Council have attended meetings of the group.

Restraining Arms Exports

These three factors favoring arms exports are balanced and at times outweighed by equally strong considerations in favor of restraint. The first is a congressional injunction that the executive branch take the lead in trying to limit worldwide arms sales. Though the Arms Export Control Act supports defense sales that contribute to collective security, the act also states that it is the "sense of the Congress" that the President should "maintain adherence to a policy of restraint in conventional arms transfers." The act affirms that American policy is "to encourage regional arms control and disarmament agreements

and to discourage arms races." It notes that "particular attention" should be paid to "controlling the flow of conventional arms to the nations of the developing world." [13]

These congressional guidelines have helped hold down the technological level of weapons in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Further, they inject a note of caution into most decisions on arms exports. They reinforce the fact that, in contrast to foreign sales of commercial goods, the President is required under law to approve all sales of "defense articles" and "defense services." Although defense industries support more relaxed legislative guidelines, there is no indication that Congress thus far intends to make major changes.

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction reinforces restraint in conventional arms transfers

Two current senior defense officials proposed a parallel approach to restricting international arms sales prior to being named to the Clinton administration. In a Brookings study, William Perry (now the Secretary of Defense) and Ashton Carter (now the Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Security and Counterproliferation) developed a concept of global cooperative security to replace the Western-oriented collective security of the Cold War. Under this concept all nations would work toward the goal of "restrain[ing] the ground forces and tactical air assets that provide the firepower for offensive operations." Moreover, they would "less stringently limit systems that are more or less unambiguously defensive and that can only be used to resist offensive intrusion on national territory." [14]

To reinforce the control of global arms transfers, the United States is seeking multinational agreements for restraint, particularly with regard to unstable regions and rogue states such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and North Korea. American diplomacy is concentrating on establishing a successor organization to the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM), through which NATO and Japan embargoed defense-related technology to the communist bloc during the Cold War; reviving the five-nation (United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China) initiative on arms control in the Middle East; and increasing the transparency of arms sales by means of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Maintaining Regional Stability

The second reason that the United States exercises restraint in arms sales (and urges other nations to do so) is to preserve specific regional military balances. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have stated that weapons proliferation contributes to regional instability around the world, indicating that "technology on the open market, such as high-resolution satellite imagery and space navigation and communications systems, may also give advanced capabilities to powers that could never afford to develop them on their own." [15] This is why Secretary Perry's statement of support for defense exports contained the cautionary note "provided that we can assure that sales do not risk proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear technology, and that we are not aggravating an unstable region in which regional wars are likely."

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction reinforces the requirement for restraint in conventional arms transfers. At the outset of the Gulf War, for instance, coalition commanders were particularly concerned about the possible Iraqi use of biological and chemical weapons. But the coalition victory depended upon maintaining superiority in advanced conventional weapons and preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction. Coalition air strikes were intended to destroy Iraq's air defense system and large inventory of tanks as well as Scud missiles and biological and chemical weapons plants. Iraqi air defenses and armor owed much to Western and Soviet transfer of weapons and technology.

A similar situation exists with respect to Iran. The United States strongly opposes Iran's development of nuclear weapons and acquisition of ballistic missiles from China and North Korea. These weapons, if deployed, would add a degree of terror to a broader military buildup that already troubles Iran's neighbors and threatens stability in the Gulf region. The United States has shown that the anxiety over Iran goes far beyond weapons of mass destruction by attempting to persuade its allies to ban the

Singaporean F–16.

Combat Camera Imagery (Marv Lynchard)

sale of civil aircraft which could transport troops and weapons for offensive operations and by considering an embargo on trucks which could support ground operations.

The United States also seeks to limit conventional arms transfers to South Asia, where both India and Pakistan are considered friendly nations. This region is a testbed for counterproliferation policy since these two countries reportedly possess nuclear weapons. In such an environment each side pays close attention to its rival's fighter aircraft capabilities. Because the United States wishes to avoid any action that could lessen its ability to act as an honest broker, DOD has responded with restraint to proposals that American companies help upgrade India's MiG–21 aircraft.

The Technological Edge

A final factor in restraining arms exports is the need to protect our lead in key technologies for both military and economic reasons. Defense officials agree that U.S. superiority in military technology must be sustained as troop strength and weapons drop. The Bottom-Up Review spoke of a technological revolution and stated that we must "maintain the technological superiority of our weapons and equipment." [16] The former Vice Chairman, Admiral David Jeremiah, observed that "increasingly, our [military] superiority depends on having the latest microchip, the latest superminiature sensor, or the most advanced information-processing software." [17] Furthermore, General Sullivan said that the "thrust of Army exploitation of the microchip is to improve battlefield awareness through horizontal integration and insertion of digital technology." [18]

Economic competitiveness also influences decisions on exports. The very sales that would furnish revenue to support military and civilian R&D could transfer advanced technology to major commercial competitors. Congress has stipulated that the Secretary of Defense must consider the effects on the defense industrial base of any existing or proposed memorandum of understanding (MOU) on arms cooperation. Congress also requires the Secretary to solicit the recommendations of the Secretary of Commerce on the trade implications of such MOUs and their potential effects on the "international competitive position of United States industry." [19]

U.S. Air Force (Buck Walker)

Turkish Rapier anti-aircraft missile system at Incirlik Air Base.

Technology reciprocity (a two-way street) is now key to armaments cooperation. In 1989 Congress conditioned acceptance of co-development of the FS–X fighter program on assurances of access to manufacturing technology for active phased array radars and composite aircraft wings, two areas in which Japan appeared to lead the United States.

The administration is trying to increase reciprocity in both civilian and military technology, particularly with respect to Japan. The President's national technology program calls for greater access to "foreign science and technology" as well as a "trade policy that encourages open but fair trade."[20] American trade officials are pressing Japan to guarantee industry a specific percentage of the Japanese market in semiconductors, telecommunications, and automobile parts. Senior defense officials have urged Japan to be more forthcoming in sharing military technology. One proposal is to exchange American military technology for Japanese dual-use technology.

To help ensure that defense industries remain competitive a decade or two from now, DOD ordinarily prefers that American firms export finished military systems or components (end items) and the technology needed to maintain them. DOD is reluctant to transfer design, development, and manufacturing technology because this could strengthen foreign competitors.

The Joint Dimension

Joint commanders and planners bring two strengths to policymaking that involve the broad range of security and economic considerations which have been described. The first is a sense of urgency. Joint planners in Washington and regional commands must know as quickly as possible which weapons or technologies are going into each region. One flag officer on the Joint Staff told a recent meeting that he needed firm decisions on whether U.S. companies would be allowed to upgrade Soviet-built fighter aircraft worldwide. He could live with any decision; but his staff had to project the military capabilities of potentially friendly and hostile forces so that the CINCs could adjust operational plans accordingly.

Action officers adopt an even blunter approach to Pentagon policymaking. One member of the Joint Staff who will soon take command of an artillery battalion told his civilian counterparts: "I have a very practical interest in arms exports. I want to know which weapons my battalion may go up against." In this view (too easily overlooked in Washington) *destabilizing* weapons systems are those that prevent commanders from accomplishing their missions.

The second contribution that planners make to arms export policy is operational knowledge of weapons and technology. If members of the Joint Staff or regional commands start as amateurs in arms export procedures, they are already professionals in the substantive issues at stake. The Joint Staff, combatant commands, and services regularly review applications to sell weapons and defense technology abroad (that is, munitions licenses). Moreover, when a nation seeks a system that is substantially more capable than the corresponding one now deployed, the Joint Staff—often aided by regional CINCs—provides an assessment of threats to that nation and a judgment as to whether the proposed improvement is militarily justified.

Fighter Upgrades

In late 1993 and early 1994 the Joint Staff applied its experience in munitions licensing to help develop an important arms export policy. The Directorate for Strategic Plans and Policy (J-5) asked DOD to determine whether

American companies would be permitted to modernize MiG–29 fighters in twenty countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. J-5 maintained that these MiGs represent a quantum leap in capability over other Soviet-produced fighters that have been widely exported (the MiG–21 being described as an *entry level* system). Thus DOD had to consider that improvements in MiG–29 communications, navigation, radar, and weapons systems might change the military balance in regions critical to U.S. interests. Such improvements also could challenge American air superiority in those regions.

joint planners will influence the administration's policy statement on conventional arms transfers

Civilian as well as military staffs throughout the Pentagon accepted this determination. The DOD Arms Export Policy Working Group drew up a policy that specified whose MiG–29s can be upgraded and what level of technology can be provided. That policy takes into account factors such as foreign policy, regional stability, defense sales, and technological superiority.

Joint Staff and CINC planners also can help resolve difficult export cases concerning the integration of U.S. technology in foreign aircraft. American companies that specialize in defense electronics and systems integration see the growing global market for aircraft modernization as an opportunity to sell products beyond a shrinking domestic market. Some Pentagon officials support such sales as the only way to maintain the lead in many technologies critical to military superiority.

Manufacturers, however, believe that upgrades may reduce sales of new aircraft. In their view, integrating American avionics (the world's best) into Russian or European airframes offers a relatively cheap way for foreign governments to acquire modern fighter aircraft. That concern was expressed in the MiG–29 review by one senior officer who indicated that he did not want to put American weapons or technology on aircraft that could become a threat to our Armed Forces.

It will be hard to devise a DOD policy that satisfactorily balances these competing interests. Joint planners can help by assessing the relative military benefits of integrating U.S. technology on foreign platforms versus buying new U.S. aircraft. During the MiG–29 review one official stated that engineers in his office could describe the technical gains made from modernizing MiG avionics but that he needed the input of seasoned fighter pilots to grasp the real effect of modernization on the military situation in specific regions.

Beyond fighter upgrade policies, the Joint Staff, regional CINCs, and services are directly supporting the DOD counterproliferation initiative by determining which friendly countries face the greatest military threat from hostile ballistic missiles and what would be the most effective U.S.-allied defenses in each situation.

Finally, joint planners will influence the administration's policy statement on conventional arms transfers. The Joint Staff has been tasked to draft the section of that statement on weapons and technologies which if transferred could have a marked impact. Since opposing arguments on defense sales tend to offset one another, this operational and technical section may have a greater impact on arms exports than others dealing with broader policy and economic considerations.

It has been said that because CINCs may have to face any weapon that enters their regions, they instinctively oppose transferring "anything more advanced than a spear." But the author also has heard field grade and general officers comment that "The President has said 'It's the economy, friend,' and we will support him." That tension will be felt by joint planners trying to evaluate the many factors that bear on arms export policy in the mid-1990s. If planners remember that their job is to explain how the weapons and technologies under review will affect operations, they can help shape decisions that will strengthen both national security and economic competitiveness. JFQ

NOTES

[1] Gordon R. Sullivan, "Projecting Strategic Land Combat Power," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 1 (Summer 1993), p. 9.

[2] Arms Export Control Act, Public Law 90–629 (as amended), section 1.

[3] Giovanni de Briganti, "U.S. Position on Arms Cheers Allies," *Defense News*, May 3–9, 1993, p. 16. See also "Pentagon to Revitalize the NATO-Nunn Programme," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, December 4, 1993, pp. 19–20.

[4] Charles R. Larson, "Cooperative Engagement," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 2 (Autumn 1993), pp. 82–87.

[5] Barbara Starr, "USA, Saudi Arabia Plan 'Crisis' Cooperation," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, November 13, 1993, p. 16.

[6] For an unofficial description of one aspect of the problem, see *Ballistic Missile Proliferation: An Emerging Threat, 1992*, produced by System Planning Corporation for the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (Washington: Department of Defense, 1992).

[7] Remarks by Les Aspin to the National Academy of Sciences, Committee on International Security and Arms Control (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) transcript, December 7, 1993), p. 1. See also Michael R. Gordon, "Pentagon Begins Effort to Combat More Lethal Arms in Third World," *The New York Times*, December 8, 1993, p. 15; John Lancaster, "Aspin Pledges New Military Efforts to Counter Weapons Proliferation," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 1993, p. 7.

[8] Statement by Lynn E. Davis, Under Secretary of State for International Security Affairs, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives (Department of State typescript, November 10, 1993), p. 1.

[9] David Silverberg, "Clinton Defies Wisdom, Backs Defense Sales," *Defense News*, May 17–23, 1993, p. 3.

[10] David Silverberg, "Perry Backs Limited Aid to Boost U.S. Arms Exports," *Defense News*, June 7–13, 1993, p. 24.

[11] Glenn A. Rudd, "U.S. Military Assistance and Sales to East Asia," *The DISAM Journal* [Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management] (Summer 1993), p. 86.

[12] Laura D. Tyson, *Who's Bashing Whom?—Trade Conflict in High-Technology Industries* (Washington: Institute for International Economics, November 1992), p. 160.

[13] Arms Export Control Act, section 1.

[14] Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry, and John D. Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security*, Brookings occasional papers (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1992), pp. 8, 10–11.

[15] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 1993), p. I–5.

[16] Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington: Department of Defense, October 1993), pp. 12, 33.

[17] David E. Jeremiah, "What's Ahead for the Armed Forces?" *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 1 (Summer 1993), p. 32.

[18] Sullivan, "Projecting Strategic Land Combat Power," p. 11.

[19] National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991, Public Law 101–189, November 29, 1989, section 815.

[20] William J. Clinton, *Technology for America's Economic Growth: A New Direction to Build Economic Strength* (Washington: The White House, February 22, 1993), p. 3.

Joint Force Quarterly

1994 Readership Survey

A questionnaire distributed to all readers of *JFQ* with issue number 3 (Winter 1993–94) yielded a total of 576 responses through June 30, 1994. The following summary of the survey's results provides a snapshot of the readers and their preferences during the journal's first year of publication.

Readership Profile

Of all respondents, 83 percent were members of the Armed Forces. The service affiliation of the active and Reserve component respondents combined was Army, 30 percent; Navy, 32 percent; Marine Corps, 7 percent; Air Force, 30 percent; and Coast Guard, 1 percent. Majors and lieutenant commanders comprised 29 percent of military readers; lieutenant colonels and commanders, 32 percent; colonels and captains, 19 percent; general and flag officers, 8 percent; and junior officers et al., 12 percent.

Readership Acceptance

Of the officers, 49 percent normally read *most* articles and another 41 percent read *some* of them. Other than feature articles the most stimulating contributions (ranked in order of popularity) were Out of Joint (or commentary), professional notes (The Joint World), book reviews, and letters to the editor. In terms of overall relevance, balance, and accuracy, 31 percent rated *JFQ* to be *excellent* and 65 percent either *very good* or *good*. In responding to how faithfully the journal met its purpose—to promote understanding of the integrated employment of land, sea, air, space, and special operations forces—28 percent stated that it was *right on target* and another 66 percent indicated that it met the purpose either *very closely* or *closely*. JFQ