

Organizational Change in the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency

**A Monograph
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Abstract

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION AGENCY by MAJOR William J. Griffith IV, USA, 47 pages.

The creation of the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in 2003 was a monumental, yet incomplete organizational step towards integrating border protection operations. Customs and Border Protection is constantly improving integration and unity of effort among its operational components: the Office of Field Operations (OFO), Office of Border Patrol (OBP), and the Office of Air and Marine (OAM). In October 2010, Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano approved CBP Commissioner Bersin's request to initiate a Joint Field Command (JFC) configuration modeled on Department of Defense regional unified commands. A JFC groups all elements of OFO, OBP, and OAM in a defined geographical area under one regional commander and headquarters. Although CBP has not conducted a formal assessment of the first JFC in Arizona, confusion surrounds the appropriateness of joint configurations in CBP and any decision to continue implementation across the organization. The question is, is the CBP effort likely to succeed?

Joint Field Command – Arizona is only a year old so there are no meaningful empirical measures of effectiveness available. Therefore, this study drew from organization theory to determine why CBP needed to change, to assess the change itself (the JFC), and to examine CBP's implementation of the change. Henry Mintzberg's typology regarding basic organizational configurations provides a means to classify CBP's structure and establish the requirement for change. Insight from organizational design theorists, homeland security experts, and military strategist Everett Dolman provide a valid framework for assessing how well the JFC meets CBP's requirements. Models of organizational change, like the Burke-Litwin model, facilitate an assessment of CBP's transformation because they identify factors influencing the durability and acceptance of reforms.

As a functionally diversified organization, CBP represents only a superficial integration of border security agencies because the configuration reinforces functional stovepipes— the bane of integration and unity of effort. Internally, this arrangement hinders effective resource management and over burdens leaders at its strategic apex. Although the JFC appears to inject another level of hierarchy into the organization, it is plausible that the JFC can accommodate the competing mechanistic and organic configuration pulls on CBP better than its current configuration. Additionally, the JFC accounts for the individual cultures of OFO, OBP, and OAM and provides an opportunity among them for senior leader development. However, CBP did not create an implementation plan which consequently has led to confusion among CBP's change strategists, implementers, and recipients. Confusion among CBP personnel has resulted in a matrix configuration in practice.

The JFC organizational effort is not foredoomed, but it is at a crossroads. Reasons giving CBP leadership pause are more a function of CBP's implementation methods and normal cultural resistance than the merits or demerits of joint commands within CBP. Therefore, ongoing and future change efforts should be accompanied by a formal implementation plan based on the insight of organization change models to help ensure the durability of change and likelihood the desired change will be accepted by CBP personnel.

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Introduction

Large government bureaucracies seldom initiate massive organizational change efforts on their own, but the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is a year into such an effort. Executive leaders in CBP must now decide whether to continue implementation efforts across the agency or not. Established in 2003 as an operational arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Border Protection does not yet have the nationwide name recognition of other key departmental agencies like the Transportation Security Administration or the Coast Guard.¹ However, with a mission to protect the American public against terrorists and the instruments of terror while facilitating legitimate trade and travel, CBP is vital to national security as the United States' primary federal law enforcement agency responsible for securing U.S. borders at and between ports of entry.² Customs and Border Protection is comparable in size to the active military forces of Canada or Australia, commands the largest budget in the DHS, and operates the largest law enforcement air force in the world.³ In 2011, CBP denied entry to over 500,000 people attempting illegal entry to the United States, seized 5 million pounds of narcotics, and facilitated \$2.3 trillion in trade.⁴ A product of the government's rapid reorganization and

¹ The seven operational arms of the DHS are Transportation Security Administration, Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement, Secret Service, Federal Emergency and Management Agency, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "CBP Mission Statement and Core Values," Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/mission/guardians.xml> (accessed December 29, 2011).

³ Customs and Border Protection employs 58,000 personnel and its \$12 billion budget exceeded the Coast Guard by \$1.5 billion in FY2012 and \$1.9 billion in FY2013 U.S. See U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Office of Air and Marine Overview," Department of Homeland Security, http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/air_marine/cbp_air_marine_overview.xml (accessed on March 26, 2012); Office of Management and Budget, "Fiscal Year 2013 Budget of the U.S. Government," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2013/assets/budget.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2012); Department of National Defence, "National Defence and the Canadian Forces: Personnel," Government of Canada, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/pri/1/index-eng.asp> (accessed January 28, 2012); Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, "Background Note: Australia," U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2698.htm#defense> (accessed January 28, 2012).

⁴ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "CBP's 2011 Fiscal Year in Review," Department of Homeland Security,

shuffling of agencies post 9/11, CBP continually improves its organization and operations to carry out its critical mission in a complex border security environment.

One recent CBP adjustment is significant because it represents a major structural break from the status quo. In October 2010, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano approved CBP Commissioner Bersin's request to implement a Joint Field Command (JFC) in Arizona. The JFC integrated CBP's three operational components in a defined geographical area under one regional headquarters and commander. Those primary operational components are the Office of Field Operations (OFO), the Office of Border Patrol (OBP), and the Office of Air and Marine (OAM). Customs and Border Protection deliberately modeled the JFC on Department of Defense joint service unified commands because CBP felt military concepts of joint organization and operations were applicable to their modern requirements.⁵ Previously, separate lines of authority ran from field elements of OFO, OBP, and OAM to each component's national headquarters.

Separate lines of authority meant that before the JFC, authority among CBP's functional components did not converge under any one leader until reaching the Commissioner of CBP himself. The Office of Field Operations as an organization is a descendant of the Customs Service established in 1789 and the United States Border Patrol dates back to 1924. Members of these highly specialized components are well accustomed reporting only to authorities within their agency.⁶ Establishing a JFC and appointing a single commander with authority spanning CBP components in a region represented a momentous shift from the traditional way of coordinating OFO, OBP, and OAM operations.

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/news_releases/national/2011_news_archive/12122011.xml (accessed on April 1, 2012).

⁵ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "CBP Joint Field Command in Arizona" (information brief, 2011), slide 2.

⁶ The third operational component, the Office of Air and Marine, was not a legacy border security agency in its own right. Border security air and marine personnel and resources were consolidated during initial DHS organization efforts and not formally migrated under CBP until 2004.

Establishing a JFC was also noteworthy because it seemingly contradicted conventional wisdom on two fronts. First, within the OBP an old adage contends that the best law enforcement is local law enforcement.⁷ Levels of hierarchy are limited and staffs are primarily administrative. At first glance, the new JFC concept potentially pulls authority and power away from the local level and puts tasking authority in the hands of a decision maker that may not be familiar with a subordinate organization's local efforts. In addition, conventional wisdom in the Information Age pushes organizations to decentralize, flatten, and become networked. At least from a "block and wire" organizational chart perspective, the CBP's JFC concept appears to do the opposite by injecting another level of hierarchy, centralization, and information management into the organization.

Customs and Border Protection's effort to create joint organizations runs counter to the traditional practices of the CBP operating units and, at first glance, to Information Age organizational theory. Expanding the use of joint organizations to other border regions may prove difficult or dysfunctional. Initially CBP seemed committed to further implementation, but conflicting opinions now exist on the appropriateness of joint configurations even though no formal assessment has taken place. Is CBP's JFC effort foredoomed? A conceptual assessment facilitates determining whether the JFC concept should be implemented elsewhere in the CBP and whether implementation actions need improvement. Concepts from the field of organizational theory facilitate such an assessment.

Before the merits and demerits of the JFC concept can be assessed, it is necessary to examine CBP's traditional organizational structure to determine why there was a need to change. Henry Mintzberg's typology regarding the basic organizational configurations provides a means to classify CBP and its three primary operational components. Classifying the components

⁷ Telephone interview with Border Patrol Agent Justin Bristow, Patrol Agent in Charge, Wellton Station, Yuma Sector, February 7, 2012.

permits an assessment of how well each was suited for its traditional mission in the context of the border security environment. Contrasting the suitability of the components, and CBP overall, with the demands of the contemporary border security environment brings to light why CBP needed to change.

After determining CBP's need for change, it is pertinent to assess the structure CBP wanted to implement in Arizona- a regionally aligned joint configuration embodied by the JFC. Organizational design theorists, strategists, and homeland security experts outline appropriate systems and network characteristics that an agency like CBP should consider when designing their structure. An awareness of these considerations enables assessment of the JFC concept in principle. The organizational theory provides a means to conclude whether the JFC concept is fundamentally flawed or a valid concept for CBP.

Regardless of the JFC's merits, it can fail if implemented poorly. *How* an organization implements change can be as important as the change itself.⁸ Organizational theorists again provide valuable insight. The Burke-Litwin model offers a framework for prioritizing the organizational factors of change. Others outline the importance of an implementation plan and the considerations surrounding incremental or wholesale change. Evaluating how CBP carried out organizational change will help understand the configuration CBP ended up with in practice and whether problems associated with JFC are more a product of CBP's implementation than the original concept itself.

The results of this conceptual assessment suggest it was appropriate for CBP to adopt the Joint Field Command in Arizona because the configuration facilitate meets the demands of the contemporary border security environment better than the status quo. The configuration's flexibility enables CBP strategic agility in operations across the varied border regions of the United States. The organizational structure also facilitates the unified command, efficiency, and

⁸ Todd D. Jick, *Managing Change: Cases and Concepts* (Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin, 1993), 201.

accountability required by a large federal law enforcement agency better than informal ad hoc alternatives. Therefore, leaders in CBP should not allow cultural resistance and short-term challenges to derail further efforts to integrate Field Operations, Border Patrol, and the Office of Air and Marine under regional Joint Field Commands nationally. However, CBP can improve the likelihood that its varied components accept the JFC by modifying the way it implements change. Addressing those needs may help overcome some of the short-term challenges associated with JFC Arizona and provide valuable lessons for long-term organizational change.

Current organization

It is important to appreciate the history behind CBP's current configuration to understand why there is a need to change and how CBP is changing as an organization. Customs and Border Protection's three primary operational components, Office of Field Operations (OFO), Office of Border Patrol (OBP), and the Office of Air and Marine (OAM), were stitched together after dismantling and shuffling functional elements of immigration, customs, and agricultural inspection components from across government.⁹ These three components conduct the bulk of field level (tactical) federal law enforcement activities that fulfill CBP's border security mission. Because CBP is a conglomerate of component agencies, not a uniform organization, each component requires examination. Characterizing these functional components from an organizational theory standpoint provides a better understanding of CBP. Although it is less than a decade old, CBP's component building blocks are products of long individual histories.

Field Operations is the largest operational component of CBP and responsible for the land, sea, and air ports of entry into the country. The Office of Field Operations represents the

⁹ U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Border Security: Key Agencies and Their Missions (RS21899, May 9, 2005)*, by Blas Nunez-Neto, <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/library/P12.pdf> (accessed April 1, 2012).

legacy U.S. Customs Service and can trace a lineage back to 1789.¹⁰ Over 80% of OFO's 27,000 employees are federal law enforcement officers responsible for the day-to-day customs, immigration, and agricultural inspections at 327 ports of entry across the United States and 15 preclearance sites overseas.¹¹ Their uniforms are navy blue and OFO officers are the CBP personnel most visible to the public because of their role checking passports and screening personnel for entry into the U.S. To form the current OFO within CBP, the legacy Customs Service added agricultural inspectors from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but lost its own investigative components and fixed wing aviation assets.

The Office of Border Patrol (OBP) is the operational component of CBP responsible for border security between the ports of entry. Border Patrol's 20,000 agents wear dark green uniforms and patrol primarily along the U.S. land borders with Canada and Mexico. Contrary to popular conception and misprint, there is no "Customs and Border Patrol." The Border Patrol is only one component of CBP. Although mounted watchmen of the U.S. Immigration Service patrolled the border as early as 1904, the Border Patrol was not officially established until 1924.¹² Border Patrol is unique from Field Operations and the Office of Air and Marine in two capacities. First, the Border Patrol remained intact in its migration from one government department to the other over the years.¹³ Secondly, the Border Patrol is fiercely aware and proud of its colorful and

¹⁰U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "U.S. Customs Service- More than 200 Years of History," Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/about/history/legacy/history2.xml> (accessed on January 29, 2012).

¹¹U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Field Operations Offices," Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contacts/cmcs/> (accessed on January 29, 2012).

¹² U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Border Patrol History," Department of Homeland Security, http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/border_patrol/border_patrol_ohs/history.xml (accessed on January 29, 2012).

¹³ Ibid., and see Kelly Lytle Hernandez' *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

heritage as an agency.¹⁴ Although the OBP had to relinquish its own investigative components and aviation assets, OBP's move to CBP was the easiest among CBP's component agencies.

The Office of Air and Marine (OAM) is the third operational component of CBP. Aviation and maritime platforms were removed from the legacy Customs Service and Border Patrol agencies and consolidated as an entirely new component that, after some initial DHS reorganizing, eventually landed in CBP. Air and Marine's 1,200 agents traded in Customs blue and Border Patrol green for OAM's tan uniforms. They operate the world's largest law enforcement air and maritime force consisting of 290 planes, helicopters, unmanned aerial systems, and 250 maritime vessels.¹⁵ Air and Marine's mission is "to protect the American people and the nation's critical infrastructure through the coordinated use of integrated air and marine forces to detect, interdict and prevent acts of terrorism and the unlawful movement of people, illegal drugs and other contraband toward or across the borders of the United States."¹⁶

Although OFO, OBP, and OAM have different organizational cultures and fulfill highly specialized roles in CBP, they share structural characteristics. They are "bottom heavy" and rely on professional officers and agents in the field to execute the fast decisions demanded in border security missions. Like most traditional law enforcement organizations, there are only a few levels of authority between the agents and officers in the field and executives.¹⁷ However, each component does have a very structured command hierarchy and robust administrative and support staffs at the headquarters level.

¹⁴ See Erich Krauss and Alex Pacheco's, *On the Line: Inside the U.S. Border Patrol* (New York: Citadel Press, 2005).

¹⁵ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Office of Air and Marine Overview," Department of Homeland Security, http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/air_marine/cbp_air_marine_overview.xml (accessed on March 26, 2012).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Gregory F. Treverton, "Addressing 'Complexities' in Homeland Security," working paper, RAND Corporation and Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Swedish National Defence College, (Vallingby, Sweden: Elanders, 2009), 13.

A useful way to categorize organizational structures is by applying Henry Mintzberg's configurations. Henry Mintzberg is an often-cited contemporary expert in the fields of business management and strategy formation. He contends configurations result from the combination of an organization's parts, coordinating mechanisms, design parameters, and situational factors.¹⁸ There are six general configuration models: entrepreneurial, machine, professional, diversified, innovative, and political.¹⁹ No typology or model can perfectly classify or account for the unique attributes of actual organizations so in reality organizations may exhibit the attributes of multiple configurations. Field Operations, OBP, and OAM primarily display the characteristics of Mintzberg's two bureaucratic forms of organizations- the machine and professional organizations.

The machine style configuration is fairly common and associated with "structures fine-tuned to run as integrated, regulated, highly bureaucratic machines" like an automobile company, airline, or the post office.²⁰ Structurally, a machine configuration is pyramid shaped. Leaders at the strategic apex link to the operating core of workers through a line of middle managers. Machine configuration attributes include highly specialized and routine tasks, formalized communication throughout the organization, large-size units, functional grouping of tasks, centralized power for decision-making, and an administrative structure with a sharp distinction between line and staff.²¹ It is typical of executive government and law enforcement organizations like OFO, OBP, and OAM because it facilitates accountability and transparency to the public. Machine style configurations tend to have an operating core responsible for completing highly

¹⁸ Henry Mintzberg, "The Structuring of Organizations," in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., by Henry Mintzberg and James Brian Quinn, ed. David Shafer (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 155.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Henry Mintzberg, "The Machine Organization," in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., by Henry Mintzberg and James Brian Quinn, ed. David Shafer (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 265.

²¹ Ibid.

specialized, but simple tasks. While these tasks are typical in mass production companies, they are not in law enforcement agencies. Officers and agents work in a complex environment requiring quick and autonomous decisions. This demand exerts a pull on OFO, OBP, and OAM that machine configurations cannot accommodate, but a more professional configuration can.

Professional configurations work well in what Mintzberg considers stable and complex organizational environments. A stable environment is one in which there is a steady demand for an organization's services. Because it is likely people will continue to evade border entry laws well into the future, there is and will be a stable demand for border law enforcement services. A complex environment requires personnel to address a wide variety of needs at the lowest level of the organization and negates centralized decision-making. In a complex organizational environment, decision-making is decentralized to professionals. It takes these highly trained individuals with standardized skill sets to deal with all the unique aspects of border law enforcement.²² Professional configurations are, therefore, bottom heavy and more flat than pure machine organizations. Accordingly, OFO, OBP, and OAM each represent blended machine and professional configurations.

Customs and Border Protection as a functionally diversified organization

Why is it important that OFO, OBP, and OAM represent machine-professional configurations? Because it affects how CBP exists and functions as a whole. When the architects of the DHS created CBP, they simply redrew the organizational chart to group OFO, OBP, and OAM under one administrative headquarters. This arrangement fits Mintzberg's diversified configuration. Diversified organizations are "a set of rather independent entities coupled together

²² Mintzberg, "The Structuring of Organizations," in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., 158.

by a loose administrative structure [where] each division has its own structure.”²³ Given OFO, OBP, and OAM represent distinct professional-machine organizations grouped under a parent headquarters along functional lines, CBP can be more accurately labeled a *functionally* diversified organization.²⁴ There was no organizational evolution to reach CBP’s current state; CBP spontaneously came into being as a large functionally diversified organization. Whether this functional (status quo) or a regional (Joint Field Command) diversified configuration is more appropriate for CBP is the question at hand. Classifying CBP as a functionally diversified organization allows the use of organizational theory to analyze both desirable and undesirable characteristics of that configuration.

On one hand, a functionally diversified configuration can be desirable because it can achieve economies of scale through specialization and limit duplication of effort.²⁵ Specialization enables efficient career development, training, and generates “capacities that simply could not be created by groups of generalists.”²⁶ Although CBP’s officers and agents are generally similar in their overarching border protection roles, there are highly specialized field level technical and tactical tasks associated with efforts at and between the ports of entry. For example, the technical skills, training, and equipment required by Field Officers to carry out inspections at ports of entry differ from the tactical skills, training, and equipment required by Border Patrol agents operating between the ports of entry. Field Operations, OBP, and OAM represent highly specialized

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Divisions in diversified organizations are usually broken down functionally, regionally, or by customer type. See Mary Jo Hatch and Ann L. Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 299. Border protection activities in CBP are managed and viewed purely along three functional lines: roles at ports of entry (OFO), between ports of entry (OBP), and the air and marine support to both (OAM).

²⁵ Hatch and Cunliffe, 298.

²⁶ David S. Alberts and Richard E. Hayes, *Power to the Edge: Command... Control... in the Information Age*, Information Age Transformation Series (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program, 2003), 40.

organizations designed to execute specialized border protection functions. This positive aspect of diversified organizations promotes expertise and efficiency.

On the other hand, most negative issues with functionally diversified organizations occur because the configuration inhibits the ability to coordinate across functional components effectively. One reason is the prevalence of functional silos, or “stove pipes,” which result from personnel who demonstrate a greater loyalty to their functional component than to the organization as a whole.²⁷ This is especially true in an organization like CBP where the functional components are historically accustomed to approaching problems on their own and the command structure reinforces this myopic approach. In 2009, Allan Carr, a CBP program analyst, identified “stove piped approaches” as a major factor that hindered CBP’s efforts to achieve an integrated CBP border security approach.²⁸ Only high-level leaders atop the strategic apex can bridge functional silos. Power is tightly centralized because only the high-level leaders have a holistic understanding with which to make informed decisions and allocate the authority to implement them.²⁹

This arrangement led directly to CBP’s immediate two reasons for implementing the JFC: better resource management and to improve the commissioner’s span of control. Before establishing the JFC, CBP headquarters spent millions of dollars every month supporting personnel detail requests in Arizona.³⁰ For example, if OFO was short officers at a port of entry in Arizona they would simply submit a request up the OFO line of authority instead of first

²⁷ Hatch and Cunliffe, 299.

²⁸ Alan Carr, “Regional Joint Border Commands: A Pathway to Improving Collaboration and Effectiveness for Border Control” (master’s thesis, Naval Post Graduate School, 2009), 16-17. Alan Carr is a program analyst with CBP.

²⁹ Hatch and Cunliffe, 299; Henry Mintzberg, “The Diversified Organization,” in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., 337.

³⁰ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, Division Director Integrated Planning Division, Joint Operations Directorate, Office of the Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, February 9, 2012.

coordinating laterally with nearby OBP stations to request local Border Patrol agents to support OFO's temporary need. Blinded within their own functional silos, individual components did not know they were submitting unnecessary requests from a corporate CBP perspective. According to a senior manager at CBP Headquarters, there was no holistic view of the money spent because "there were independent perspectives, no one really brought it together to total it all up."³¹ Excessive costs sparked the realization that CBP "was not joint, it was business as usual."³² It took millions of dollars before staff at the headquarters level in Washington realized it should and could be done more efficiently- that a regional CBP leader with responsibility and authority in Arizona could better manage resources than the current arrangement.

In addition, sub-optimal spans of control burden leaders at the apex of functionally diversified organizations. Managers "can easily become overburdened by decision making as the organization grows" since decision-making authority resides only at the "solitary pinnacle of authority" in functionally diversified organizations.³³ In a large agency like CBP, strategic leadership must deal with more people to resolve more field level problems because no mechanism exists to address them lower in the organization. This situation may have contributed to CBP Commissioner Alan Bersin's decision to reorganize CBP elements in Arizona because he did not want to have multiple accountable authorities in Arizona.³⁴ Instead, Commissioner Bersin wanted one leader in charge, "one belly button to push" in Arizona.³⁵ A single decision-maker in

³¹ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez.

³² Ibid.

³³ Hatch and Cunliffe, 299.

³⁴ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, February 9, 2012; telephone interview with Ronald Bellavia, Intelligence Director, Joint Field Command – Arizona, February 13, 2012.

³⁵ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, November 22, 2011.

the field would increase efficiency by eliminating the need for decisions to travel 2,000 miles and back.³⁶

Lastly, functionally diversified configurations may organizationally limit integrated law enforcement operations in the contemporary border security environment. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States recognized disparate agencies across the federal government were not equal to contemporary border security requirements. In their 9/11 Commission Report the commission concluded the government should combine agencies more effectively to achieve unity of effort.³⁷ The federal government established the DHS to achieve this unity of effort across the national homeland security enterprise. Border and transportation security resources merged within the DHS under CBP to “integrate specific departmental functions to enhance efficiencies and create greater accountability in one seamless border service.”³⁸ This objective is problematic given CBP’s current configuration, because diversified organizations are not really integrated organizations by nature.³⁹ Improving CBP’s organization to facilitate operations is critical as means to better contend with modern border security.

The contemporary border security environment is the current composite of the conditions affecting the use of border protection assets to secure the homeland against threats.⁴⁰ Given the

³⁶ Telephone interview with Ronald Bellavia, February 13, 2012.

³⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 399.

³⁸ U.S. Department of Homeland Security Press Office, “Border Reorganization Fact Sheet,” Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=45&content=4381&print=true> (accessed on March 12, 2012).

³⁹ Henry Mintzberg, “The Structuring of Organizations,” 158.

⁴⁰ Author’s adaptation based on the U.S. Army’s definition of “operational environment” used in Field Manual 1-02. US, Department of the Army, *Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 2004), 1-138. For an excellent explanation of the border environment and how responsibilities are shared between CBP, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and the Coast Guard see Alan Carr’s “Regional Joint Border Commands: A Pathway to Improving

varied expanse of U.S. borders and the volume of travel and commerce moving across them, border security has always been a “complex endeavor.”⁴¹ However, balancing the “need for rapid flow of legitimate people and goods with guarding against transnational threats” is more difficult because of globalization.⁴² The accelerated rate of globalization is a contemporary condition that “changes the tactics and organization of groups which are transnational threats” and further complicates the border security environment because of the interchangeability of criminal networks.⁴³ Accelerated globalization strains border security efforts and the ability of border violators to harness the technological power of the Information Age compounds the issue. For these reasons typical border concerns like terrorists, drug-trafficking organizations, and illegal immigrants are more difficult for CBP to interdict than in the past.

Terrorists now “innovate and adapt in response to changes in both counter-terrorism measures and independent events...form primarily through social networks...and [facilitate] resiliency in operations” because they are so decentralized and capable of diffused distribution of resources and information.⁴⁴ More so than ever, terrorists working alone or in very small groups are also capable of producing great destructive power.⁴⁵ Terrorist organizations typify ideal organic configurations because they are inherently flat, networked, decentralized, and because they behave as complex adaptive systems. Although CBP formed in response to this threat, as a

Collaboration and Effectiveness for Border Control” (master’s thesis, Naval Post Graduate School, 2009), 1-4. Alan Carr is a program analyst with CBP.

⁴¹ U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Border Security: The Complexity of the Challenge* (RL32839, January 24, 2007), by Jennifer E. Lake. www.loc.gov/crsinfo/ (accessed April 6, 2012).

⁴² Judith A. Warner, *U.S. Border Security: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 95.

⁴³ Warner, 95-96.

⁴⁴ Nancy K. Hayden, “The Complexity of Terrorism: Social and Behavioral Understanding, Trends for the Future,” Sandia National Laboratories, quoted in Gregory F. Treverton, “Addressing ‘Complexities’ in Homeland Security,” working paper, RAND Corporation and Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Swedish National Defence College, (Vallingby, Sweden: Elanders, 2009), 12. Original source unavailable.

⁴⁵ Treverton, 11.

functionally diversified organization, it is not necessarily suited to match or counter terrorist threats without reform.

Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) are also more formidable than they were before the formation of CBP. As authorities cracked down on Columbian drug operations in the late 1980's and 90's, Mexican drug traffickers became a significant border security threat. They have not stopped growing their influence and expanding their efforts to circumvent authorities on both sides of the border. Modern DTOs are now poly-drug, meaning they traffic more than one illicit drug, and, therefore, capable of adapting to black market and border security conditions.⁴⁶ Some believe DTOs behave like domestic terrorists or transnational organized crime organizations using terrorist tactics.⁴⁷ Others contend, "DTOs may be similar to insurgents attempting to infiltrate the Mexican state by penetrating the government and police."⁴⁸ Regardless, DTOs are exceedingly adaptable, open to innovations, flexible, and contribute to the complexity of the contemporary border security environment.⁴⁹

Traditional border problems have historically been adaptive. When Border Patrol efforts deterred illegal immigration in one region, illegal crossing attempts spread to other regions. When the government focused on air and sea drug smuggling routes from the Caribbean, smugglers moved to inland routes through Mexico.⁵⁰ This phenomenon is known in the border security community as the "balloon effect." Increased border security enforcement measures and efficiency after 9/11 have made it increasingly more difficult for traditional border law violators

⁴⁶ U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Rising Violence (R41576, September 7, 2011)*, by June S. Beittel, <http://www.crs.gov> (accessed December 5, 2011), 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., executive summary unnumbered page.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Paul Rexton Kan, "What We're Getting Wrong About Mexico," *Parameters* 41, no. 2 (2011): 37.

⁵⁰ U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Mexico's Drug Cartels (RL34215, February 28, 2008)*, by Colleen W. Cook, <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/> (accessed December 5, 2011), 4.

to violate the borders, but violators are more determined and capable than before. Rates vary by location and mode of transportation, but professional guides and smugglers now charge fees up to thirty times greater than fees in the 1990's to guide people through illegal entry routes.⁵¹ People attempting illegal entry to the United States now exploit global positioning technology, night vision goggles, cell phone communications, and smart phone applications to avoid interdiction by CBP personnel. Border criminals have also exploited technological ultra-light aircraft and semi-submersible watercraft to smuggle people and illicit goods into the U.S.

The characteristics of threats and problems in the contemporary border security environment exceed the capacity of any one federal agency, especially in fiscally austere times. Phrases like “whole of government approach,” “interagency collaboration and information sharing,” and “intelligence and risk driven enforcement,” dot the landscape of border security literature, critiques, and strategies. Recent studies call for increased oversight of inter-agency forums and increased information sharing among border security partners. For example, a 2010 Congressional Research Service study stated that it might be worth Congress considering if increased interagency cooperation would increase bureaucracy and hinder CBP border security efforts or increase efficiency by better allocating and deploying resources.⁵² A functionally diversified configuration inhibits CBP's ability to contribute to a whole of government approach because it impedes development of a comprehensive CBP approach.

Even though CBP was formed in 2003 to establish “a seamless border service,” as recent as 2009, it was far from achieving the unity of effort and integration envisioned by the authors of the 9/11 Commission Report and architects of the DHS. In 2009, A CBP program analyst reported the absence of a unified strategy that addressed border challenges for OFO, OBP, and

⁵¹ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, April 21, 2012.

⁵² U.S. Congressional Research Service, *Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol (RL32562, July 30, 2010)*, by Chad C. Haddal. www.loc.gov/crsinfo/ (accessed October 24, 2011), 31-32.

OAM. There was no strategy that addressed border challenges in terms applicable to all three components and, consequently, the CBP program analyst observed an unhealthy competition for resources between components.⁵³ As a functionally diversified organization, CBP represents only a superficial integration of border security agencies. A functionally diversified configuration makes it difficult to manage resources, strains centralized senior leadership, and is ill suited to meet the challenges posed by the contemporary border security environment. Therefore, from an organizational perspective, CBP cannot contribute to an integrated whole of government security approach better than any one of its components could prior to the establishment of the DHS or CBP. Integration and unity of effort did not magically appear because the status quo organizational arrangement of OFO, OBP, and OAM in CBP constituted little more than a grouping of slightly modified pre-9/11 border protection agencies under one headquarters.

The Joint Field Command

Organizational theorists contend, “The secret to proper organizational structure is to understand which roles or functions need to be decentralized and which ones are better left to centralized authority.”⁵⁴ This distinction stems from understanding an organization’s context, its environment.⁵⁵ Demands for efficiency and accountability pull CBP towards a centralized mechanistic machine structure. However, the regional geographic differences and a variety of threat conditions along the United States border introduce a level of complexity. A complex environment pulls CBP towards a decentralized configuration because survival in a complex environment requires flexibility, adaptability, and innovation.⁵⁶ Modern theorists feel network

⁵³ Carr, 16-17.

⁵⁴ Francis Fukuyama and Abe Shulsky, *The “Virtual Corporation” and Army Organization* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997), 46.

⁵⁵ Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform for Designing Business Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), 151.

⁵⁶ Hatch and Cunliffe, 110. Consolidation of concepts originally presented in Tom Burns and George Stalker’s *The Management of Innovation* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961).

type configurations facilitate meeting the requirements of a complex environment better than more traditional hierarchical organizations. Therefore, to be effective, a new CBP configuration must balance the competing pulls of centralization and decentralization in a way that meets several requirements. First, the new organization must improve CBP's operational resource management and ease the decision-making burden on senior leadership. Second, the new organization should improve interdiction operations in the contemporary security environment over CBP's current configuration. Finally, the new configuration must account for and respect the identities and cultures of OFO, OBP, and OAM.

Senior staff members in CBP's national Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination decided that the U.S. military's regional model of joint organization could meet their three major requirements.⁵⁷ Accordingly, in the fall of 2010, CBP Commissioner Bersin received permission from the DHS Secretary Napolitano to institute a Joint Field Command (JFC) in Arizona.⁵⁸ Establishing the JFC changed part of CBP's organization from a *functionally* diversified configuration to a *regionally* diversified configuration.

⁵⁷ The Office of Intelligence and Operations Coordination was split into the Joint Operations Directorate and the Office of Intelligence concurrent to establishment of the JFC.

⁵⁸ Memorandum from Alan D. Bersin through Rafael Borrás for Janet Napolitano, October 27, 2010, "New CBP Joint Field Command and Joint Operations Directorate," U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

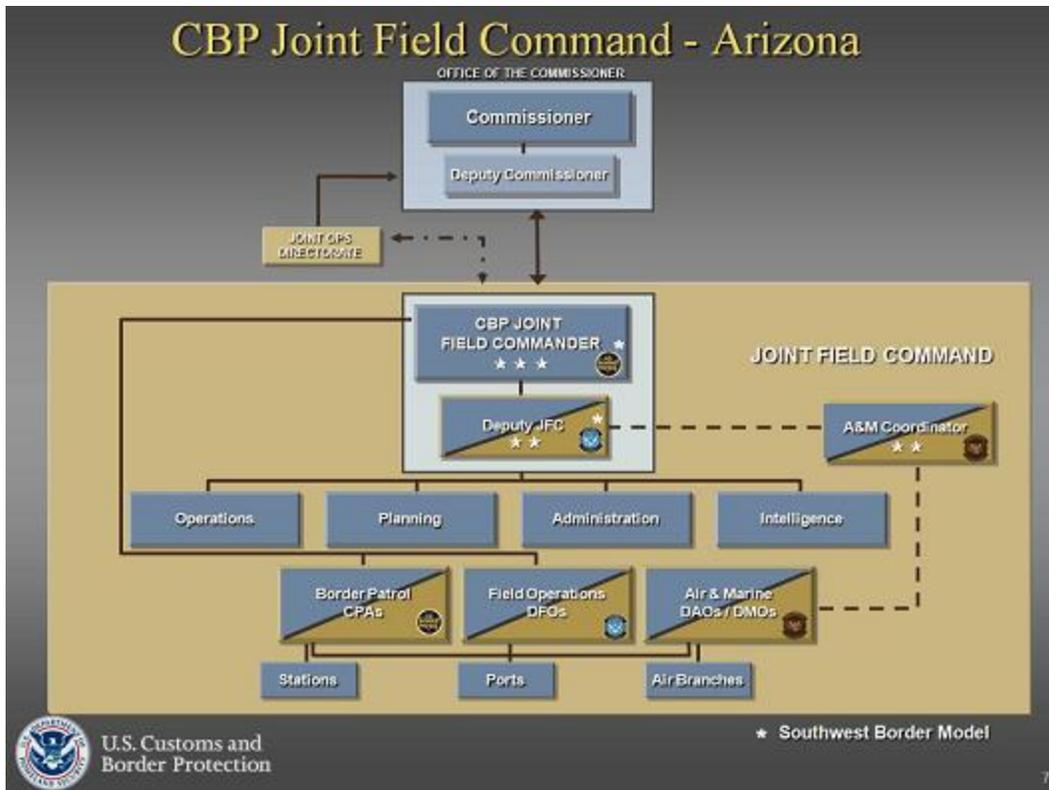


Figure 1: Organization chart, Joint Field Command - Arizona⁵⁹

In the new organizational configuration pictured above, the Joint Field Commander reports to the Deputy Commissioner. The current Joint Field Commander in Arizona is a Border Patrol agent and his deputy is a Field Operations officer. The JFC headquarters consists of four major staff sections where operations, planning, administration, and intelligence offices collectively form a Joint Intelligence and Operations Center. The head of each staff section can come from any one of CBP’s functional components, or a civilian CBP employee can also fill the position. The headquarters is in a CBP facility in Tucson and the positions are full time. The Director of Field Operations, the Border Patrol Sector Chiefs, and the Directors of Air Operations (represented by three boxes placed below the staff sections) operate under the direction of the Joint Field Commander. Previously those individuals answered only to personnel in their own

⁵⁹ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “CBP Joint Field Command in Arizona” (information brief, 2011), slide 7. Lines darkened for clarity.

functional chain of authority, not a CBP unified commander in the geographic region.⁶⁰ An Air and Marine Coordinator coordinates aviation and maritime support to OFO and OBP and helps apportion the high demand, low density national level aviation assets in Sierra Vista. The Joint Operations Directorate within CBP headquarters is akin to a “technostructure” in Mintzberg’s typology because it is outside the hierarchy of authority, but conducts deliberate planning and coordination that in part controls and influences the Joint Field Command on behalf of the commissioner’s office.⁶¹

The CBP’s Joint Field Command configuration is similar to a joint unified command in the military. The Director of Field Operations, two Border Patrol Sector Chiefs, and the Directors of Air Operations in Arizona with “two star” CBP rank now operate under the direction of one “three star” CBP Joint Field Commander. The new arrangement is analogous to the way regional service component commanders of the Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force operate under a “four star” unified commander in a given region. The JFC staff also resembles a military general staff with sections for operations, planning, administration, and intelligence. Representatives from OFO, OBP, and OAM lead and operate the staff sections, which is comparable to the way Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force personnel participate in a joint headquarters staff. While the JFC commander is responsible for CBP resources in Arizona and reports directly to the commissioner’s office, the highest-ranking chiefs of OFO, OBP, and OAM in Washington, DC

⁶⁰ The Director of Field Operations, the two Border Patrol Sector Chiefs, and the Directors of Air Operations still exercise tactical control over their functional subordinates at the respective ports of entry, stations, and air branches. Tactical control is “the command authority over assigned or attached assets, commands, or capability made available for tasking, that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or operations within a specific AO, necessary to accomplish missions or tasks as assigned.” Memorandum from Alan D. Bersin through Rafael Borrás for Janet Napolitano, October 27, 2010, “New CBP Joint Field Command and Joint Operations Directorate,” U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 2.

⁶¹ Mintzberg, “The Structuring of Organizations,” 144; Memorandum from Alan D. Bersin through Rafael Borrás for Janet Napolitano, October 27, 2010, “New CBP Joint Field Command and Joint Operations Directorate,” 2,3.

are responsible for organizing, training, and equipping their respective components.⁶² This arrangement is analogous to the distinction in the military between combatant commanders responsible for mission requirements and the departmental service chiefs responsible for organizing, training, and equipping their branch of the military.

The delineation of responsibility and authority in the new configuration addresses directly CBP's two immediate management requirements of improving resource management efficiency and easing the decision-making burden on senior leaders. According to the memorandum issued by CBP Commissioner Bersin and approved by Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano, "the JFC's responsibility will include operational resource strategic laydown [sic] and oversight and [the JFC] will report directly to the Office of the Commissioner."⁶³ The JFC commander serves as the CBP Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner's principle point of contact for all operations within Arizona.⁶⁴ This configuration enables efficient management of resources because it moves visibility and authority away from Washington and closer to the field. Feedback from the field level, JFC, and CBP headquarters indicates this is indeed the case.⁶⁵ For example, the JFC can vet, approve, and respond to an operational field request to collaborate with state or local authorities in an hour.⁶⁶

The new configuration also helps streamline command and control. First, it reduces the commissioner's decision-making burden by improving the command structure. Before the JFC,

⁶² The JFC commander is a CBP senior executive service law enforcement official with three star insignia. The ranking heads of Field Operations, Border Patrol, and the Office of Air and Marine are senior executive law enforcement officials with four star insignia.

⁶³ Memorandum from Alan D. Bersin through Rafael Borrás for Janet Napolitano, October 27, 2010, "New CBP Joint Field Command and Joint Operations Directorate," 2.

⁶⁴ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "CBP Joint Field Command in Arizona" (information brief, 2011), slide 2.

⁶⁵ Telephone interview with Border Patrol Agent Justin Bristow, February 7, 2012; telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, February 9, 2012; telephone interview with Ronald Bellavia, February 13, 2012.

⁶⁶ Telephone interview with Ronald Bellavia, February 13, 2012.

there was no one federal officer in charge at any one part of the border security enterprise. Now, instead of dealing with one OFO director, two OBP sector chiefs, and two OAM directors in Arizona, the commissioner deals with one CBP representative. Second, although in the bulk of federal agencies “the purpose of civilian midlevel management is usually to reduce the span of control rather than develop plans to link strategy to tactical activity by multiple offices or business units,”⁶⁷ the JFC commander is empowered to link the activities of CBP functional components to achieve strategic aims. Finally, if used in practice like the military, the JFC can improve the commissioner’s interaction with a commander. In the military, command authority runs straight from the president to a unified commander. Command authority does not run through the individual Army, Navy, Marine, or Air Force service chiefs. The JFC offers the CBP commissioner the same luxury, bypassing unnecessary levels of functional Field Operations, Border Patrol, and Air and Marine component hierarchies.

It is a bit more difficult to assess how well the new joint configuration stacks up against CBP’s requirement to improve operational effectiveness in the contemporary security environment. Defining measures of border security effectiveness is inherently difficult. Additionally, because the JFC is only a year old, meaningful data are not available. However, even though there are no meaningful empirical measures of effectiveness available, it is still possible to assess the JFC from a theoretical perspective. In organization theory, the term network has evolved beyond meaning a specific type of organization. Instead, all organizations are in many ways a network wherein individuals connect to others by information or lines of authority. Military strategist Everett Dolman has defined four network-based principles that should be considered when designing an organizational configuration suitable for a complex environment. Everett Dolmans principles provide a valid assessment framework. Dolman contends that an

⁶⁷ Christopher M. Schnaubelt, “Complex Operations and Interagency Operational Art,” *Prism* 1, no. 1 (December 2009): 39.

organization operating in a complex environment “for military or any other purposes” should maximize nodes, maximize connections, maximize response sets, and minimize top-down control.⁶⁸

Maximizing nodes increases flexibility and adaptability, and improves the accuracy with which an organization can assess aggregate reactions to external change. This is true because more nodes means more chances to discover useful behavior.⁶⁹ Maximizing connections increases the efficiency of discovering useful behavior because the greater the number and variety of agent-to-agent interaction, the greater the insight into problems, and the quicker good ideas spread and bad ideas are eliminated.⁷⁰ High numbers of nodes and connections are desirable in any organizational configuration. Nodes and connections are network characteristics that encourage and facilitate information sharing, decision-making, and innovation.⁷¹ Increased nodes and connections also “flatten” an organization’s configuration because they use local environmental conditions and information to inform organizational decisions. “Flattening” enables command and control by removing the previous limits of organizational structures and architectures.⁷² Without networking, there would be no way for a bureaucratic organization like CBP to compete with almost totally flat and decentralized terrorist organizations.

The JFC flattened CBP in Arizona because it increased the number of CBP nodes and connections. The CBP’s previous functionally diversified configuration was an extreme example of an impoverished network. The only true node connecting OFO, OBP, and OAM authority was at the strategic apex of the organization, at CBP headquarters. Because of the functional silos,

⁶⁸ Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 178-9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Hatch and Cunliffe, 308.

⁷² Alberts and Hayes, 32.

field information and decisions had to travel up one silo to the central node of authority and back down another. Lateral ad hoc coordination took place, but because such coordination lacked authoritative backing, coordination and agreements were not binding. Joint Field Command – Arizona increased the connections, or agent-to-agent interactions, within CBP because the Joint Intelligence and Operations center of the JFC headquarters is essentially a mini-fusion center. The organizational structure of the JFC, at the headquarters in Tucson alone, added another CBP node and increased connections by bringing together Field Operations officers and Border Patrol agents to interact on operations that would not have occurred previously. Because of JFC-Arizona, “employees not normally assigned to projects in which they collaborate together were given the opportunity to do so.”⁷³ This diversity creates the potential to bring unique insight to long-standing problems and stands in stark contrast to the negative channeling effect of functional silos.⁷⁴ Establishing other regional JFCs nationally would have the same effect on a larger scale.

Dolman’s third principle, maximizing response sets, is the inductive ability to recognize and appropriately react to patterns.⁷⁵ Maximizing response sets is similar to the concept of agility because agility is the ability to react efficiently to changing conditions in the environment. It trumps the quest for optimization. The complimentary concepts of centralization and decentralization can facilitate agility and, therefore, maximize response sets.⁷⁶ For example, to react efficiently to changes in the environment an organization like CBP must make fast and comprehensive decisions, decision elements at odds with one another.⁷⁷ Centralized organizations have advantages with respect to speed and decisiveness, but decentralized organizations bring

⁷³ Telephone interview with Ronald Bellavia, Intelligence Director, Joint Field Command – Arizona, February 13, 2012.

⁷⁴ Everett Carl Dolman, 179.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Jamshid Gharajedaghi, 151.

⁷⁷ Treverton, 14.

more people to bear on a decision and can reach a higher quality decision. Decentralized organizations without clearly defined authorities may be paralyzed by internal disagreements, and they can be slower to act than their more centralized counterparts can.⁷⁸

The very nature of contemporary conditions on the border suggests there is no single optimal CBP arrangement that meets the demands of a complex and ever-changing environment. A perfectly optimized structure in one area may be dysfunctional in a separate area with different sets of challenges and opportunities. Border violators and organizations are adaptable themselves and always seeking to circumvent interdiction. Therefore, leaders in CBP emphasized an organizational configuration that enables strategic agility and response sets, the ability for CBP to leverage OFO, OBP, and OAM specialized strengths and centrally managed assets in a region, not an inflexible design or limited structural response sets.

The JFC concept enables more organizational and operational responses because individual JFCs across CBP can be tailored to suit the complexities of a specific region. For example, a Border Patrol agent leads the current JFC in Arizona, but a Field Operations officer could lead a JFC in a different region. This would make sense in areas like south Texas where border violators are more prone to using the ports of entry for illicit activities. At the regional and field level, JFCs can facilitate response sets because integrated and leveraged strategic intelligence and collection assets can inform and drive interdiction efforts at the local level. For example, aggregate container, vehicle, and illegal traveler patterns identified by Field Operations nationally can “provide a short description of enemy behavior patterns that the agent can apply to any situation, and allow the agent to independently interpret, modify, react to, and provide feedback on the utility of the pattern recognition rule.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Francis Fukuyama and Abe Shulsky, 19.

⁷⁹ Everett Carl Dolman, 179-80.

Dolman's fourth principle is to minimize top-down control. This allows CBP officers and agents to "operate freely...as informed by local conditions."⁸⁰ Minimizing top-down control decentralizes authority by distributing authority among individuals or units enabling them to experiment with new ideas and methods. Therefore, "useful means of coping with new circumstances are more likely to be discovered."⁸¹ The JFC concept does not hinder the ability of field level officers and agents to innovate because the fundamental flow of operations orders remains from the bottom-up. In contrast to the military and in accordance with the old Border Patrol adage that the best law enforcement is local law enforcement, CBP component operations plans are generally conceived and drafted at the lowest levels. Orders travel up the chain of authority when necessary to receive the requisite approval. The JFC improves adaptability by shortening approval times for operations plans and by resourcing those plans faster than previously because an authoritative body is closer to local conditions than the top-level leadership at CBP's strategic apex.

Although Dolman's four principles are important for addressing organizational issues in a complex environment, they cannot be fully implemented by a government entity. Government agencies like CBP must meet legal requirements for transparency and accountability. Hence, these organizations can never duplicate an ideally flat and totally decentralized configuration like some terrorist or criminal organizations. Even operationally, it is neither feasible nor necessary for CBP to abandon traditional interdiction methods or to decentralize totally operations.⁸² As is true in the military, there are operational capabilities in CBP that require centralized control. Strategic planning, fire support, logistics, medical evacuation, intelligence, and political factors

⁸⁰ Ibid., 179.

⁸¹ Francis Fukuyama and Abe Shulsky, 21.

⁸² Treverton, 178.

force the military to centralize some authority.⁸³ There are similar pulls for centralization in CBP. Customs and Border Protection is responsible for translating national policies and strategies into field border enforcement actions coordinated among state and local partners. That requires strategic and operational planning. There is no need for fire support or routine medical evacuation in law enforcement per se, but there is a need to centrally manage high demand and low availability assets in OAM. Intelligence and information sharing is just as vital to law enforcement operations as it is to military operations. Joint command configurations in the military support centralized authority and the JFC and its headquarters can facilitate authoritative direction in the CBP.

Finally, because CBP is a diversified organization, the new configuration must account for and respect CBP's component identities and subcultures. Organizational culture is discussed in more detail later, but simply stated, organizational culture is "what makes an organization distinctive and differentiates it from other organizations."⁸⁴ The organizational cultures of OFO, OBP, and OAM are sub-cultures in CBP. Organizational culture can impede or support change, so it is an important consideration in the implementation of the JFC. The new configuration must gain acceptance among OFO, OBP, and OAM cultures. The JFC concept appropriately accounts for CBP sub-cultures because it preserves their institutional identity and pride. The benefits of specialization identified earlier are preserved. There is no "gray" uniformed or universal CBP manager in the JFC just like there is no "purple" or generic military commander in military unified commands. Each CBP functional component is represented in the JFC and would presumably have the opportunity to command.

Regarding commands, the JFC also facilitates leader development better than CBP's current arrangement. In functionally diversified organizations, the professional development of

⁸³ Francis Fukuyama and Abe Shulsky, 46.

⁸⁴ Hatch and Cunliffe, 213.

senior leaders is difficult because there are no intermediate places in the diversified organization where potential leaders can lead all the functional components in any capacity.⁸⁵ Joint organizations in CBP facilitate subordinate leader development because leaders of regional JFCs gain experience directing the actions of all the CBP operational components. Before the creation of the JFC, only the commissioner held that border security perspective and those responsibilities.⁸⁶

In summary, it is theoretically plausible that the JFC concept can accommodate the mechanistic and organic configuration pulls on CBP. A joint organization aligned regionally can facilitate better resource management and relieve the decision-making burden on senior leaders. Although the JFC appears to inject another level of hierarchy and an information choke point into an existing bureaucracy, the JFC configuration can better facilitate operations in a complex environment as assessed using Dolman's network principles of organizational design. Additionally, the JFC configuration accounts for the required specialization and varied cultures of OFO, OBP, and OAM and provides a relatively equal opportunity among them for CBP leader development below the national level.

Implementation

There are three general steps to organizational change. The desired organizational configuration must be conceived, change must be implemented, and the new organizational configuration must be accepted.⁸⁷ In the previous section, the merit of the organizational concept was discussed. Now, entertaining the notion that *how* an organization implements change can be almost as important as the change itself, an assessment should be made on how Customs and Border Protection went about implementing the Joint Field Command. Models of organizational

⁸⁵ Hatch and Cunliffe, 299.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Jick, xiv.

change facilitate an assessment of CBP's effort because they identify factors influencing the durability and acceptance of reforms. This section examines the theoretical importance of an implementation plan first and then assesses CBP's efforts against the Burke-Litwin model which stresses transformational factors: strategy, leadership, and culture during reform. The section concludes with an observation that CBP's implementation efforts may result in a configuration that differs from the original JFC concept.

An important part of any journey is a travel plan. A journey may be filled with detours and setbacks, but a planned route increases the probability of reaching the intended destination by reducing confusion and identifying potential hazards or opportunities. Similarly, before an organization embarks on a journey of change it helps to design an implementation plan- a change plan mapping out the effort.⁸⁸ Popular organizational theorist and author John Kotter presents a rather linear implementation plan in his eight-stage process of change.⁸⁹ Professor Todd Jick contends there is no single best process and instead offers "ten commandments" as an "inventory of ingredients" for organizational change.⁹⁰ Although Kotter and Jick differ on the method, the important point is that noteworthy organizational change theorists stress the need for a change strategy and implementation plan specific to an organization's change process.

The absence of an official implementation plan has led to confusion among CBP's change strategists, implementers, and recipients. The first issue concerns the scope of the JFC concept. From CBP officers and agents in the field to headquarters personnel, there is confusion regarding organizational intent behind the JFC structure. Was the change meant only for Arizona or a model to be replicated by CBP components across the nation? The official memorandum signed by CBP Commissioner Bersin and DHS Secretary Napolitano authorizing the JFC concept

⁸⁸ Ibid., 198.

⁸⁹ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 21.

⁹⁰ Jick, xiv and 195.

indicates the original intent was to implement more than one JFC. The memo states that CBP's "first JFC structure will be established in Arizona" and also establishes a Joint Operations Directorate in CBP headquarters to "coordinate, as appropriate, with the JFC(s) to assist the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner in making joint operational planning decisions."⁹¹ However, recent CBP actions do not align with the apparent intent of the two-year-old memorandum. Customs and Border Protection components in Texas successfully lobbied the commissioner to gain approval to establish a disparate regional configuration called the South Texas Campaign. This new configuration resembles JFC-Arizona in that it has one commander for a regional grouping of CBP components, but differs in organizational structure.⁹² There are now three different command constructs on the southwest border: a JFC, the South Texas Campaign, and the status quo. Customs and Border Protection leadership's approval of a new command structure in Texas, an organization not called a Joint Field Command, sends conflicting messages to the field regarding support for the Joint Field Command concept.

There is also confusion among CBP personnel regarding the duration of JFC-Arizona, is it an enduring or temporary endeavor? If the JFC is truly modeled on military joint concepts, then it seems the JFC should be an enduring arrangement because a unified command in the military is a command with a broad and *continuing* mission.⁹³ From JFC-Arizona's standpoint, permanent positions are in place and the mission is clear, "the JFC is deployed to Arizona to build on and maintain successes of past leadership and integrated efforts."⁹⁴ However, at CBP headquarters uncertainty exists. There is an ongoing dialogue among change strategists within the Joint

⁹¹ Memorandum from Alan D. Bersin through Rafael Borrás for Janet Napolitano "New CBP Joint Field Command and Joint Operations Directorate," 2, 3. Emphasis added.

⁹² Ronald Bellavia, Intelligence Director, Joint Field Command – Arizona, e-mail message to author, April 12, 2012.

⁹³ Department of Defense, *JP 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2009), xvii. Emphasis added.

⁹⁴ Ronald Bellavia, e-mail message to author, April 12, 2012.

Operations Directorate over whether the JFC should have been communicated to the field as a pilot program rather than an organization wide reform.⁹⁵ On the issues of scope and duration, there is confusion across the breadth of OFO, OBP, and OAM's personnel because the guidance from CBP is not clear. A broad, yet official, JFC concept of operations implementation plan may have been useful for CBP because even a simple plan could have defined expectations and plans clearly.⁹⁶

Because implementation plans are useful during organizational reform, it is worthwhile examining the factors of organizational change that implementation plans address. A useful model to facilitate this assessment is the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change. The model highlights the interconnectedness between external and internal variables related to organization change and weights the importance of some variables over others.⁹⁷ Burke and Litwin contend an organization's external environment influences change above all else and that internally, three transformational variables are of greater significance than a host of transactional variables. The three transformational variables are an organization's mission and strategy, leadership, and culture.⁹⁸ Even though all variables relate to one another, the model hypothesizes transformational variables have more of an impact on reform efforts and transactional variables than the other way around.⁹⁹ This implies an organizational change effort prioritizing transactional variables without fully addressing transformational variables will create an undesirable dynamic likely to hinder desired change. Therefore, the following assessment of

⁹⁵ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, February 9, 2012.

⁹⁶ Jick, 194 and 198.

⁹⁷ W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin, "A Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change," *Journal of Management* 18, no. 3 (1992): 528-9.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 523. The transactional variables are: structure, management practices, systems (policies and procedures), work unit climate, task and individual skill, motivation, individual needs and performance, and individual and organizational performance.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 540.

CBP's JFC organizational change efforts focuses on the transformational variables of mission and strategy, leadership, and culture.

Mission and strategy in the Burke-Litwin model refers to a broad and enduring strategy in an organization, not a "change strategy." Although Mintzberg contends "structure ... no more follows strategy than the left foot follows the right walking," the Burke-Litwin model suggests CBP may have made a misstep establishing the JFC without linking it to a specific strategy.¹⁰⁰ Pairing the JFC concept with a particular CBP strategy would be beneficial because "the effective organization is one that has blended its structure, management practice, rewards, and people into a package that in turn fits with its strategy."¹⁰¹ Without the cover of a CBP wide strategy, the JFC change effort stands alone, vulnerable to accusations of "change for change's sake." This occurs because outside of an obvious failure of the current functionally diversified configuration, there is no sense of urgency across CBP personnel to change current structures, management practices, and rewards. Cultural resistance to change can fester. There is an opportunity for change strategists and leaders in CBP to address this shortfall because a new CBP strategy is in development.

The Joint Operations Directorate within CBP's headquarters is currently drafting an Integrated Border Management Strategy in partnership with CBP's Office of Policy and Planning.¹⁰² A cornerstone of this new strategy is the border corridor security approach. A border corridor concept acknowledges "illicit goods and people generally travel to the United States in distinct corridors—geographic routes that begin abroad, cross the border, and enter into the

¹⁰⁰ Mintzberg and Quinn, 132.

¹⁰¹ Jay R. Galbraith, "Strategy and Organization Planning," in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., by Henry Mintzberg and James Brian Quinn, ed. David Shafer (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 134.

¹⁰² Mickey Valdez, e-mail message to author, November 23, 2011.

interior United States.”¹⁰³ Collaborative interdiction efforts based on the corridor concept have been successful. In the fall of 2011, the Homeland Security Advisory Council’s Southwest Border Task Force (a panel of southwest border security experts) recommended that the DHS adopt a corridor security approach to border security.¹⁰⁴ Assuming the regionally based JFCs were aligned with major border corridors, the JFC configuration would support a corridor security approach better than the status quo because the JFC guarantees unity of effort among OFO, OBP, and OAM in a given region.

The second transformation variable in the Burke-Litwin model is leadership. Leadership is central to the Burke-Litwin model as it is in most change theories, but Burke and Litwin distinguish between executive leadership and management. Whereas management’s primary concern are transactional factors, leadership exists in the weighted realm of transformational change. “Leadership is executives providing overall organizational direction and serving as behavioral role models for all employees” and assessment includes “follower’s perceptions of executive practices and values.”¹⁰⁵ Leaders are crucial to transformational change efforts because often the impetus for reform stems from “newcomers or revolutionaries or from outsiders like a new CEO hired by a board of directors to shake things up.”¹⁰⁶ As a political appointee with no need for a law enforcement background, the commissioner of CBP can be just that outsider.

Commissioner Bersin’s fresh point of view, along with his desire to reduce his span of control, may have shaped his vision of the JFC. However, political appointees can be detrimental

¹⁰³ Alan Bersin quoted in Mark Rockwell, “Bersin Points to Corridor Security As Key to Stopping Border Violence,” *Government Security News*, November 12, 2010, http://www.gsnmagazine.com/article/21807/bersin_points_corridor_security_key_stopping_borde (accessed December 30, 2012).

¹⁰⁴ Homeland Security Advisory Council, *Southwest Border Task Force Report, Third Set of Recommendations, Fall 2011*, <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac-southwest-border-task-force.pdf> (accessed February, 2012), 3,4.

¹⁰⁵ W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin, 532.

¹⁰⁶ Hatch and Cunliffe, 186.

to efforts towards organizational change because they often have short terms and because they are “outsiders.” President Obama appointed Mr. Bersin as CBP Commissioner in 2010, but Congress never approved the nomination. Accordingly, Commissioner Bersin retired in December 2011—only ten months after CBP established JFC-Arizona. No evidence is presented to support this claim in CBP’s case, but anecdotal insight suggests change recipient officers and agents in the field may resist throwing their full weight behind the vision of an unconfirmed political appointee because of his temporary tenure.¹⁰⁷ The situation is not a matter of loyalty, but a practical hesitancy borne from a perceived cycle of short-lived leaders each with different and sometimes conflicting visions. The relative instability and consistency of CBP leadership may contribute to CBP’s collective resistance to change.

Personnel in the organization must accept changes in order for any implementation to take hold. To be accepted by personnel in the organization, the change must be conducive to or integrated into the organization’s culture—the third transformational variable in the Burke-Litwin model. However, culture can cut both ways during change. The culture may increase an organization’s “ability to pursue strategies on one hand, but sometimes impede strategic change on the other.”¹⁰⁸ This dynamic is compounded in CBP because as a functionally diversified organization CBP’s culture is a conglomerate of different subcultures. The Office of Field Operations, OBP, and OAM are products of their separate legacy histories and, therefore, governed by different “collection[s] of overt and covert rules, values, and principles that are enduring and guide organizational behavior.”¹⁰⁹ Their individual historical successes as separate entities (especially in the case of OFO and OBP) may form a center of gravity that resists change

¹⁰⁷ Author’s conversation with several Customs and Border Protection employees not otherwise cited in this document.

¹⁰⁸ Mintzberg and Quinn, 132.

¹⁰⁹ W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin, 532.

and anchors them in the status quo.¹¹⁰ To overcome this friction CBP chose to implement change incrementally by establishing only one JFC initially instead of uniformly establishing JFCs across all border regions. There are benefits and risks associated with incremental change.

Benefits and risks associated with incremental change result from how an organization balances the contradictory forces of strong culture and politics.¹¹¹ Strong culture “tends to draw behavior inwards toward a common core; politics drives behavior away from any central place.”¹¹² Within CBP strong individual cultures among OFO, OBP, and OAM result in politicking that drives them away from a unified CBP culture. This is more pronounced in large functionally diversified organizations like CBP because the greater the diversity and interdependence among components, the greater the power struggle and politics.¹¹³ For example, since the establishment of CBP “there is a lingering lack of trust that keeps any one [OFO, OBP, OAM] from ‘giving in’ to another office having control over the first office’s resources; or that another office may get more credit for success.”¹¹⁴ CBP must overcome internal politics by presenting the JFC as slightly different, but compatible with the strong cultures of OFO, OBP, and OAM.

The primary benefit of incremental change is that only it “reaches the deep level of cultural values and assumptions...and stretches the organizational culture to include new values alongside its old ones.”¹¹⁵ Incremental change also provides flexibility in a sort of “reversibility” because if the change does not meet with success, then it can be undone with minimal negative

¹¹⁰ Jay R. Galbraith, in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., 135.

¹¹¹ Mintzberg and Quinn, 391. The authors use the term ideology interchangeably with strong culture.

¹¹² Mintzberg and Quinn, 391.

¹¹³ John P. Kotter, *Power and Influence: Beyond Formal Authority* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 32.

¹¹⁴ Carr, 39.

¹¹⁵ Hatch and Cunliffe, 209.

impact to the organization. However, incremental change is slow and its reversibility carries risks. “Pockets of resistance have a chance to grow and develop when ... change is implemented slowly” because “a piecemeal approach [to change] gets bogged down in politics, individual resistance to change, and organizational inertia.”¹¹⁶ Without generating short-term wins and consolidating gains it becomes impossible to anchor change in the culture.¹¹⁷ Change is only superficial and “will not overcome the strength of the balancing forces to maintain the status quo.”¹¹⁸ This balancing force is even present within the JFC on the personal level. Change strategists in CBP refer to the need to overcome this phenomenon as “breaking cultural china” and it presents a challenge to the JFC concept.¹¹⁹ To overcome these risks “culture change must be planned as well as aligned with strategy and leader behavior” as outlined previously.¹²⁰

Cultural resistance across CBP and potential implementation missteps during the JFC change effort may prevent CBP from achieving the organizational configuration it intended. Instead of a configuration modeled on unified military commands, the JFC configuration in practice may resemble a matrix configuration. A matrix is a hybrid configuration that splits authority over subordinate components in some manner between a functional superior and a project manager.¹²¹ Matrix configurations evolved with the intention of combining the efficiency of functional configurations with the flexibility and responsiveness of divisional

¹¹⁶ Michael L. Tushman, William H. Newman, and Elaine Romanelli “Convergence and Upheaval: Managing the Unsteady Pace of Organizational Evolution” in *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3rd ed., by Henry Mintzberg and James Brian Quinn, ed. David Shafer (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 398.

¹¹⁷ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, 21.

¹¹⁸ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 101.

¹¹⁹ Telephone interview with Mickey Valdez, November 22, 2011.

¹²⁰ W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin, 529.

¹²¹ Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, 4th ed. (Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, Inc., 2008), 28-9.

configurations.¹²² Accordingly, matrix configurations can be beneficial because organizations can rapidly form appropriately specialized teams to accomplish specific projects.

To accomplish a specific project (or mission) functional components allocate personnel from their functional specialty while project managers are responsible for “planning, allocating resources, coordinating work, monitoring task performance, and ensuring ... [requirements] are met.”¹²³ Matrix organizations range from weak, balanced, or strong classifications depending on the project manager’s authority relative to a functional head over subordinates.¹²⁴ Because OFO, OBP, and OAM functional components still wield a significant amount of power relative to the JFC commander in Arizona, the resulting CBP configuration resembles a weak to balanced matrix configuration where the OFO, OBP, and OAM executive chiefs in Washington, DC maintain a significant amount of authority and power. The Joint Field Commander-Arizona resembles more of a project manager than an authoritative commander.

For example, in December 2011, the Chief of the Border Patrol oversaw the Border Patrol’s Tucson Sector change of command ceremony, not the Joint Field Commander-Arizona. This was symbolically significant because the Border Patrol’s Tucson Sector falls under the authority of Joint Field Command-Arizona. Customs and Border Protection leadership missed an occasion to serve as a role model and impress upon the organization the value it places in the JFC. Instead, CBP leadership’s actions reinforced cultural norms and the perception that command authority and power still runs through the Border Patrol functional component head, not the Joint Field Commander. From a follower’s perspective, this potentially marginalized the Joint Field Commander and weakened his position in the organization. This gives the impression,

¹²² Hatch and Cunliffe, 301-2.

¹²³ Ibid., 302.

¹²⁴ In a strong matrix configuration, a project manager’s authority is moderate to high, resources are available, and the project manager controls the project budget. In a weak matrix, a project manager’s authority is limited, resources are limited, and functional heads control the budget. Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge*, 4th ed.28.

that the current overall configuration in CBP resembles a weak to balanced matrix configuration in practice with heavy influence from the functional heads, especially the Border Patrol.

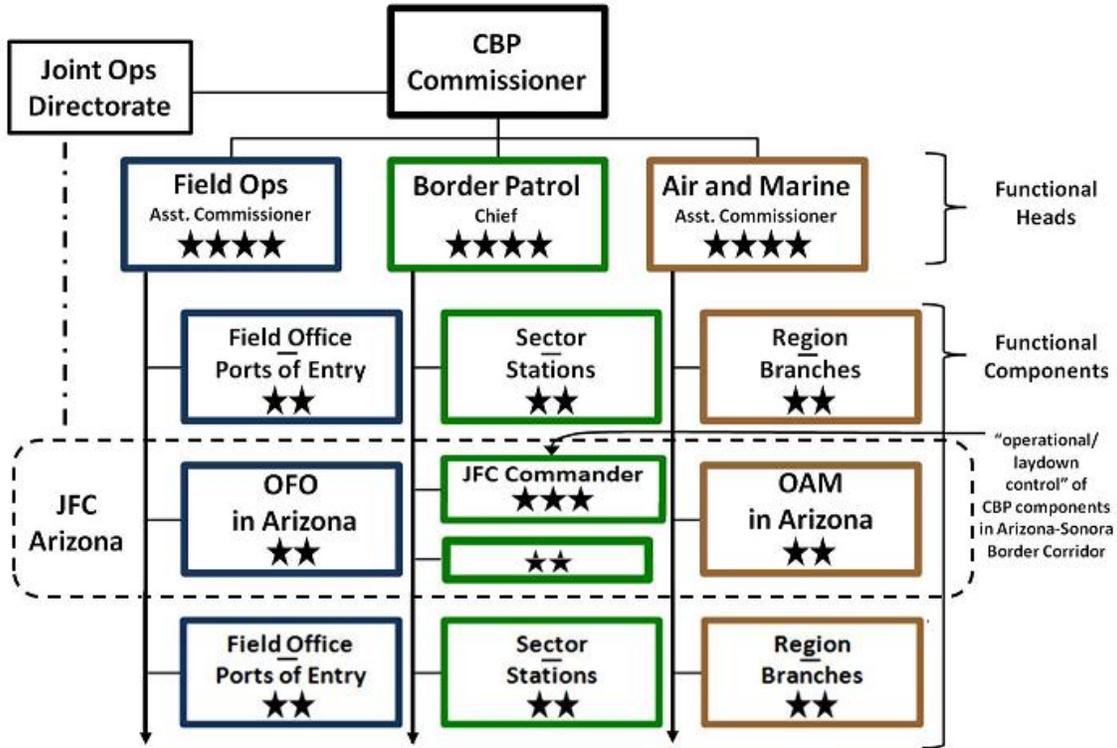


Figure 2: Representation of CBP in a balanced matrix configuration¹²⁵

An impression of this sort has the potential to hinder the large-scale JFC organization change efforts because the negative aspects of a matrix configuration conflict with the benefits of regional joint organization and its acceptance among OFO, OBP, and OAM cultures. Problems with the matrix configuration result from the “conflict built into dual lines of authority to which employees working inside the matrix are subjected” because a subordinate reports in some

¹²⁵ Operational/laydown control is “the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate components involving organizing and employing commands, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission within a specified area of operation...it does not, in and of itself, include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training.” Memorandum from Alan D. Bersin through Rafael Borrás for Janet Napolitano, “New CBP Joint Field Command and Joint Operations Directorate.”

capacity to two bosses.¹²⁶ In an organization with strong functional sub-cultures, like CBP, a balanced matrix configuration works against breaking from the status quo because weak to balanced matrix configurations leave the door open for political maneuvering, which counters cultural acceptance of the change effort.¹²⁷

Additionally, Customs and Border Protection's overall configuration is likely to resemble a matrix in practice rather than a true regional diversified configuration. It does not appear the Joint Field Commander in CBP has a say in the strategic budgeting process similar to the voice joint unified commanders enjoy in the military strategic budgeting process. Under the JFC concept, the JFC commander only has "operational resource strategic laydown" responsibility. There is no specific mention or perceived desire for the Joint Field Commander to have a say in CBP's strategic budgeting process. In the military, unified commanders can influence the DOD's strategic budgeting process under the Unified Command Plan framework. Joint organizations and operating concepts existed in the military before the Goldwater-Nichols Act. One of the key aspects of the Goldwater-Nichols Act was to empower unified commanders in the Department of Defense's strategic budgeting process by requiring service components to submit their budgets through the unified commander. Without a similar stipulation in CBP, the relative authority of the Joint Field Commander to the functional heads in OFO, OBP, and OAM will remain low and the overall CBP configuration will resemble a matrix configuration.

Whether intended or not, a matrix configuration may guard against potential problems in a purely regional CBP configuration. There was a regional configuration when Border Patrol fell under control of the bureau of Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). The INS and Customs regional system unintentionally resulted in "regional fiefdoms" because Regional Commissioners "became very powerful...[and] lobbied against each other and headquarters for

¹²⁶ Hatch and Cunliffe 302.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

personnel and financial resources.”¹²⁸ Other unintended consequences included different personnel policies, different procedures, and an overall different way of operating across the regions.¹²⁹ The memory of the INS and Customs regional system may explain why the original CBP regional configuration initially recommended in the framing of CBP was never adopted and why the JFC concept is meeting resistance and results in a matrix configuration with a relatively weak joint field commander position.

If it is true that cultural resistance and current CBP implementation efforts will result in an overall matrix configuration, then it is more desirable for CBP to assume a strong matrix configuration like the one below.

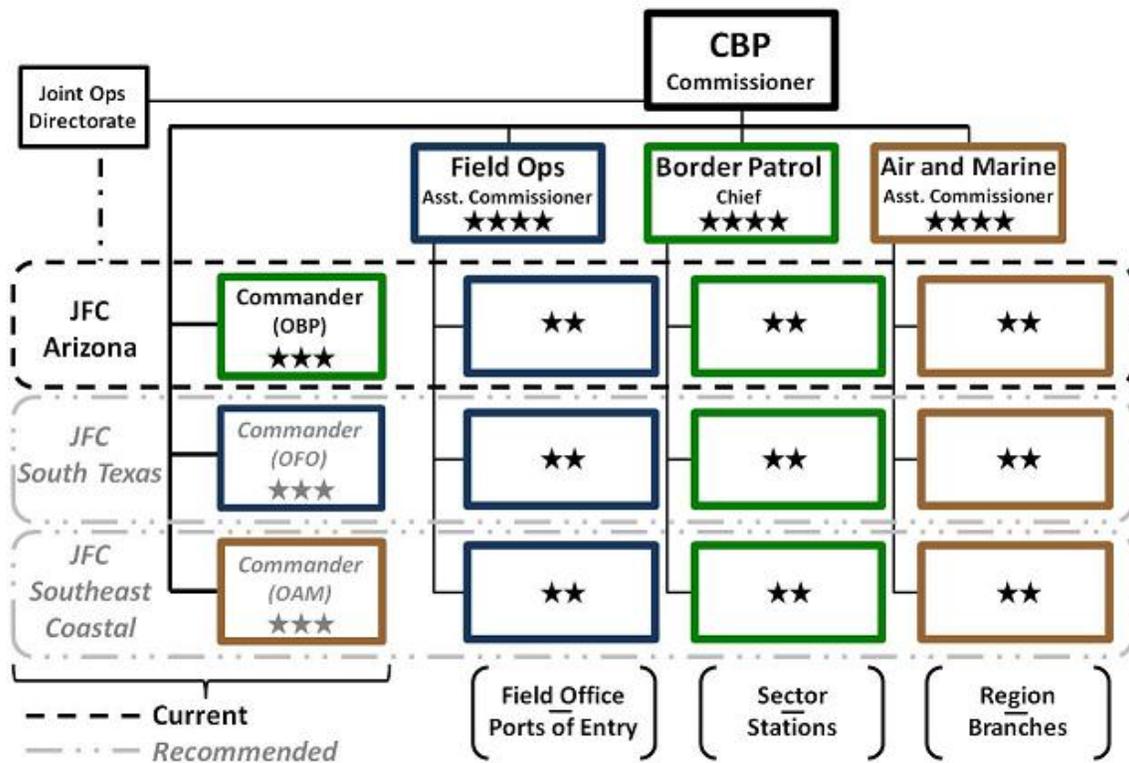


Figure 3: Representation of CBP in a strong matrix configuration

¹²⁸ Michael Kennedy, “Securing the U.S. Southern Land Border: Enhancing the Interagency Effort,” master’s thesis, U.S. Army War College, 2011, 21-22.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

The graphic portrays how CBP could start to organize in a strong matrix configuration with JFCs corresponding to border corridors. Rather than have different command constructs across regional border corridors it is more consistent and appropriate to use the JFC construct, or at least the JFC name. The JFC organization is flexible enough to work in various regions because CBP can tailor positional staffing (reference Figure 1) to suit the needs of individual border corridors. As illustrated by template JFCs in Figure 3, it may be more appropriate for CBP to prioritize establishing the next JFCs in corridors where the most suited commander is from OFO or OAM. For example, from an operational standpoint it may have been just as appropriate for a Field Operations officer to command the new command in south Texas as the appointed Border Patrol agent because a significant amount of illicit trafficking occurs at the ports of entry, relative to between the ports of entry, in south Texas. From an organizational change standpoint, it may have been more appropriate for a Field Operations officer to lead the South Texas Campaign because it demonstrates equity and helps obtain buy-in from more than one functional constituency. Regardless, CBP should follow a standardized naming convention for its joint regional configurations. Regional commands with similar task organizations and purposes, but dissimilar titles (Joint Field Command, Campaign, Alliance, etc.) place a burden on outsiders to determine who and what they are dealing with in CBP.

Conclusion

The post 9/11 creation of CBP and the consolidation of OFO, OBP, and OAM under one headquarters was a monumental, but incomplete step towards integrating border protection operations. As a functionally diversified organization, CBP's current configuration limits operational capacity because it reinforces functional stovepipes—the bane of integration and unity of effort. Internally, this arrangement hinders effective resource management and burdens leaders at the strategic apex. Research also suggests the current organizational arrangement is not the most suited for dealing with the operational complexities of the contemporary border security

environment. Modern organizational theory stressing the importance of maximizing network characteristics illuminates how the Joint Field Command structure modeled on the military's regional joint unified commands can theoretically facilitate the right blend of centralized and decentralized CBP activities required to thrive in a complex environment better than CBP's current configuration.

It appears CBP initiated the JFC without a formal implementation plan. Implementation plans are critical because they eliminate confusion and serve as a baseline for assessing change. Various models like the ones proposed by Kotter and Jick outline basic change steps while the Burke-Litwin model hypothesizes how three major variables; strategy, leadership, and culture, impact change. Ongoing and future efforts toward change within CBP should be accompanied by a formal change concept of operations document based on the insight of these models. Doing so will help ensure the durability of the change and likelihood it will be accepted by personnel in the organization.

Although this assessment facilitates an appreciation of how organization changes in CBP effect CBP operations, it does not address how the JFC affects CBP collaboration with external partners across the homeland security enterprise. For example, the primary collaborative forum for interagency border security cooperation in Arizona is the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats.¹³⁰ The JFC commander does not have a seat on the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats unified command committee, but his operational OFO, OBP, and OAM subordinates do. This means when it comes to collaborating with other federal, state, and local partners, the OFO,

¹³⁰ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Fact Sheet: Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats – Arizona / Sonora Corridor," Department of Homeland Security. http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/fact_sheets/border/arizona_factsheet.xml (accessed on December 29, 2011). The Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT) is a collaborative enforcement effort put in place in September 2009 that leverages the capabilities and resources of over 60 federal, state, local and tribal agencies in Arizona and the Government of Mexico to combat individuals and criminal organizations that pose a threat to communities on both sides of the border. A unified command committee of ten individuals, representing various regional border security stakeholders, leads the ACTT.

OBP, and OAM directors and chiefs in Arizona have more input than their boss, the JFC commander.

The progression from a functionally based configuration to a regionally based configuration is logical for an organization in CBP's situation. Customs and Border Protection displayed tremendous initiative attempting an organizational change of this magnitude on its own. Ironically, attempting significant organizational change not mandated by an external authoritative body such as the Congress caused CBP to incur risk. Because CBP chose to implement change incrementally and has the option to return to the status quo, the collective cultural resistance of OFO, OBP, and OAM is making that option a distinct possibility. The result is a hybrid CBP configuration stuck between the current functionally diversified configuration and the desired regionally aligned joint configuration. This matrix configuration, unintended as it is, may ultimately serve to hedge against potential future dangers with regional configuration. One of those dangers is the trading of counterproductive functional stovepipes for counterproductive "regional fiefdoms."

Given the JFC's theoretical advantages, CBP should at least consider a strong matrix configuration with consistent JFC task organizations and naming conventions. A balanced matrix configuration with weak regional JFC commanders relative to functional component heads will negate the network characteristic benefits of the JFC while elaborate and confusing titles will unnecessarily hinder CBP's recognition and branding efforts among interagency partners and the American public.

Customs and Border Protection's recent Joint Field Command organizational change effort is not foredoomed, but it is at a crossroads. The reasons giving CBP leadership pause are more a function of CBP's implementation methods and normal cultural resistance than the merits or demerits of regionally based joint organization. CBP leadership must recognize that no significant effort to implement change, even one for the better, escapes problems or resistance. The question CBP leadership should be asking is not 'do we abandon the JFC concept?' but

rather, 'how can we improve JFC implementation across CBP based on the lessons learned in Arizona?'

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