

## THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND FROM OPERATIONAL TO STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

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## THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND FROM OPERATIONAL TO STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS

Be careful on how you view activities in the region – do not look at it through a “soda straw.” This whole region is in turmoil...

— GEN John P. Abizaid<sup>1</sup>

Throughout 2004 and 2005, General John P. Abizaid, USA, Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), frequently noted that one of the main reasons for establishing a four-star subordinate headquarters in Iraq had been to free CENTCOM to think strategically, but the staff still tended to focus on operational level issues. In his effort to focus on the strategic level, Abizaid was working against long standing organizational and cultural habits that pull commanders and staff away from the strategic level and toward the operational level of war.<sup>2</sup>

As military historian and theorist Antulio Echevarria has noted, “the American way of war tends to shy away from the complicated process of turning military triumphs, whether on the scale of major campaigns or small unit actions, into strategic successes.”<sup>3</sup> This tendency has been highlighted by the performance of the combatant commands. When contingencies have occurred, they have tended to focus on the operational level of war. Since many problems are isolated and brief, this approach has met with some success. When faced with wide-ranging, enduring challenges, however, this approach has proven woefully inadequate.

### The Doctrinal Role of the Combatant Command

Current joint doctrine recognizes three levels of war: strategic, operational, and tactical.<sup>4</sup> The strategic level of war is defined as the level “at which a nation ...develops

national ... strategic security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to achieve these objectives.”<sup>5</sup> The operational level is defined as “the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas.”<sup>6</sup>

While at first glance these definitions appear to be clear, upon close examination it is apparent that there is no obvious demarcation between the strategic and operational level. Indeed, joint doctrine states that “[t]here are no firm boundaries between [the levels of war].”<sup>7</sup>

Yet for the concept of levels of war to have any utility, some practical distinction has to be made. On this point doctrine is much less helpful. Joint doctrine states that “[l]evels of command ...are not associated with a level [of war].”<sup>8</sup> Army doctrine, on the other hand, states that the levels of war “correlate to specific levels of responsibility and planning,” and “clearly distinguish between headquarters and the specific responsibilities performed at each level.”<sup>9</sup> Joint doctrine discusses the levels of war largely in terms of the size, duration, and scope of activities.<sup>10</sup> Army doctrine emphasizes the immediate impact of activities, and states the level of war an action occurs at “is determined by the perspective of the echelon [conducting the activities] in terms of planning, preparation, and execution.”<sup>11</sup>

These different approaches make it difficult to determine at what level a particular action occurs. Is it determined by the size and scope of the action? Or the effects? Or is it the level of headquarters planning and conducting the action? This question is not simply academic. While commanders and staff must be cognizant of all levels of war, to be effective they must remain focused on the level of war relevant to their role.<sup>12</sup>

Combatant commands were established by the Unified Command Plan, first promulgated in 1946. During the Cold War combatant commands focused on countering the Soviet Union through large scale, conventional military operations, which fostered an operational approach.<sup>13</sup> Current joint and Army doctrine clearly envision combatant commands straddling the strategic and operational levels of war. Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations*, states that “CCDRs are the vital link between those who determine national security and strategy and the military forces or subordinate JFCs that conduct operations.”<sup>14</sup> FM 3-0, *Operations*, includes a diagram showing the relation between the levels of war and functional responsibilities (see Figure 1). Theater strategy, a combatant command responsibility, is shown at the strategic level, while campaigns, also typically a combatant command responsibility, are shown at the operational level.<sup>15</sup>

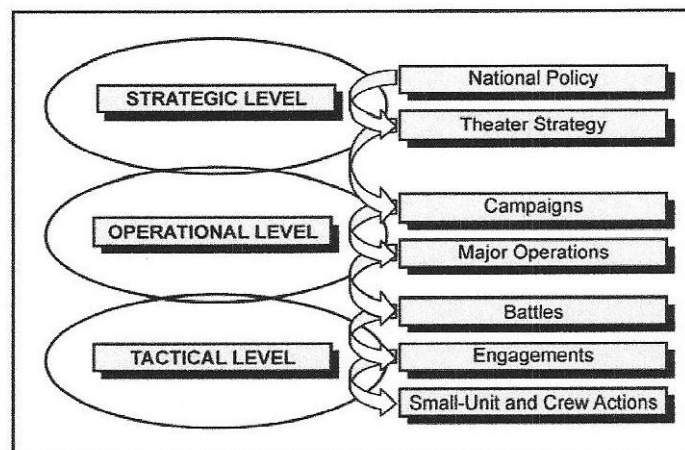


Figure 1: Levels of War

At the strategic level of war, combatant commanders participate in strategic discussions with the most senior national and coalition leaders. Their strategy is “thus an element that relates to both US national strategy and operational activities within the

theater.”<sup>16</sup> The operational level focuses “on the design and conduct of operations using operational art...to design strategies, campaign, and major operations and organize and employ military forces.”<sup>17</sup> Combatant Commands perform this function by producing campaign and operations plans and orders.<sup>18</sup>

According to doctrine, therefore, combatant commands function at both the strategic and the operational level of war, and the distinction between these levels is ambiguous. This is a recipe for confusion. It also makes it easy for the combatant commander and his staff to focus on the operational level at the expense of the strategic.

### Organization and Culture

The ambiguity between the strategic and operational role of combatant commanders is exacerbated by the structure of their commands. While combatant commanders can use a variety of components and subordinate task forces to conduct operations, typically the only permanent structures are the service components.<sup>19</sup> The service components are usually also designated as functional components, with the Army service component functioning as the joint land forces component commander (JFLCC), the Air Force component functioning as the joint forces air component commander (JFACC), the Navy component functioning as the joint forces maritime component commander (JFMCC), and the Special Operations Component functioning as the joint forces special operations component commander (JFSOCC).<sup>20</sup>

The use of functional components forces the combatant commander to serve as the focal point for integrating component activities into a coherent, joint effort. This drags him down to the operational level. His headquarters becomes lowest level of

command considering the employment of all types of forces, while his subordinates focus on only one domain, be it air, land, or sea.

These doctrinal and organizational structures exacerbate the natural tendency for commanders and staffs to reach down to the lower levels of war. There are a number of cultural reasons for this, including a desire to be involved in the “action,” to contribute to the most pressing problem, and to work within one’s comfort zone.

Most officers spend the bulk of their careers operating at the tactical and operational levels.<sup>21</sup> Senior officers, in particular, have extensive experience at these levels, but, given normal career progression, the vast majority of them, including combatant commanders, are comparatively inexperienced at the strategic level. When a major operation occurs, it is easy for commanders and their staffs to focus on the levels where they are experts.

Military culture deliberately fosters a culture of initiative and responsiveness. A natural result of this is that, when a contingency occurs, everyone wants to participate. While admirable, this also pulls both commanders and staff from the strategic to the operational level. When a contingency occurs, be it humanitarian disaster, non-combatant evacuation, or major combat operation, all eyes focus on that problem.<sup>22</sup>

The tendency to focus on the operational level is also driven by the demand for information from senior political leaders. When a contingency occurs, leaders from the President on down demand immediate, detailed information on operations. This forces commanders at all levels to obtain this information, driving senior commanders down to the operational and even tactical level. Their staffs, in an effort to stay one step ahead, start collecting information that they think might be requested, leading the entire

headquarters to focus on the immediate and low level.<sup>23</sup> The drift toward the operational level also leads to an increasing focus on the military element of national power, at the expense of the diplomatic, informational, and economic aspects.<sup>24</sup>

Like a gravitational force, the combination of these doctrinal, organizational, and cultural factors exerts a steady, unseen pull away from the strategic level and toward the operational level. This does not create major problems as long as operations remain discrete and relatively short. However, if there are multiple contingencies, theater-wide problems, or enduring situations, falling away from the strategic level and into the operational level can prove disastrous. To stay focused on the strategic level, commanders must consciously strive to continually counteract the steady attraction of the operational level.

The history of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) highlights this problem. Since the end of the Cold War, CENTCOM has been the most active combatant command, and the only one to conduct major combat operations, making its experience particularly relevant. Prior to 2001, major operations included EARNEST WILL, DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, RESTORE HOPE, and SOUTHERN WATCH. During this period, CENTCOM functioned primarily as an operational headquarters. Since these operations were generally limited in scope and duration, this did not present major problems. However, this operational focus was carried into Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), where it led to a loss of focus on theater-wide issues, with significant repercussions.

## The CENTCOM Experience Before 2001

CENTCOM grew out of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, a corps level command. It was created to counter a Soviet thrust toward the Arabian Gulf after the Shah of Iran, America's key regional ally, was deposed.<sup>25</sup> These factors gave CENTCOM an operational focus. When CENTCOM officially stood up on 1 January 1983, there was a perception that its "sole purpose was to go to Iran and wage World War III against the Russians."<sup>26</sup> It also had two major conflicts underway in its AOR: the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Although not directly involved in either conflict, the command watched both closely.<sup>27</sup>

When General George Crist, USMC, assumed command in 1985, CENTCOM still lacked a coherent regional strategy. Its main plan involved the commitment of five and two thirds divisions to counter a Russian move in Iran. CENTCOM also conducted all of its exercises from its headquarters, reinforcing its operational outlook.<sup>28</sup>

In 1987 CENTCOM conducted its first major operation, EARNEST WILL. This involved convoy escort and security operations to counter Iranian actions in the Arabian Gulf. General Crist assembled assets from all services to support this mission, but operational control remained at his level. He wanted to create a subordinate joint task force, but met stiff resistance from the Commander, Seventh Fleet.<sup>29</sup> By September 1987, he was finally able to establish a two-star JTF to oversee this operation. In Crist's words, "the whole operation worked because we had one guy in charge...I bypassed the component system because I thought it was a useful way to do business."<sup>30</sup>

Despite Crist's efforts, when General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, took command in November 1988, he found that he had to "rebuild CENTCOM from the

bottom up.” For “close to two years,” the command had been “focused almost entirely on war,” both the tanker war in the Arabian Gulf and support to Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup>

In August 1990, Schwarzkopf’s effort to refocus his headquarters on theater strategy was interrupted by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. He immediately started to act as an operational commander. In late August, he moved his headquarters to Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup> In September, he assembled a planning team to work on the ground war, reporting directly to him.<sup>33</sup> He did not form a subordinate unified command or JTF. Instead, throughout Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, he used his subordinate components.<sup>34</sup> U.S. Naval Forces Central (NAVCENT) functioned as the JFMCC, an uncontroversial decision since the other services had neither the interest in nor the capability to participate in maritime operations. Control of joint air units was more contentious. The issue of central management versus service control of fixed wing aircraft had been hotly debated since the Key West agreement and the creation of the U.S. Air Force, but an inter-service agreement had been reached, and DESERT STORM was the first test of the new JFACC concept, with U.S. Air Forces Central (CENTAF) filling that role.<sup>35</sup> There was, however, no JFLCC. Both ARCENT and MARCENT reported directly to General Schwarzkopf, making the combatant commander the de facto land component commander.<sup>36</sup> When the ARCENT commander, Lieutenant General John Yeosock, USA, had to return to Germany for surgery, Schwarzkopf assigned his deputy, Lieutenant General Calvin Waller, USA, to fill in for him.<sup>37</sup> This gave Schwarzkopf an interim commander he could trust, but deprived him of his deputy shortly before the ground war began, placing an even greater operational load on Schwarzkopf’s shoulders.



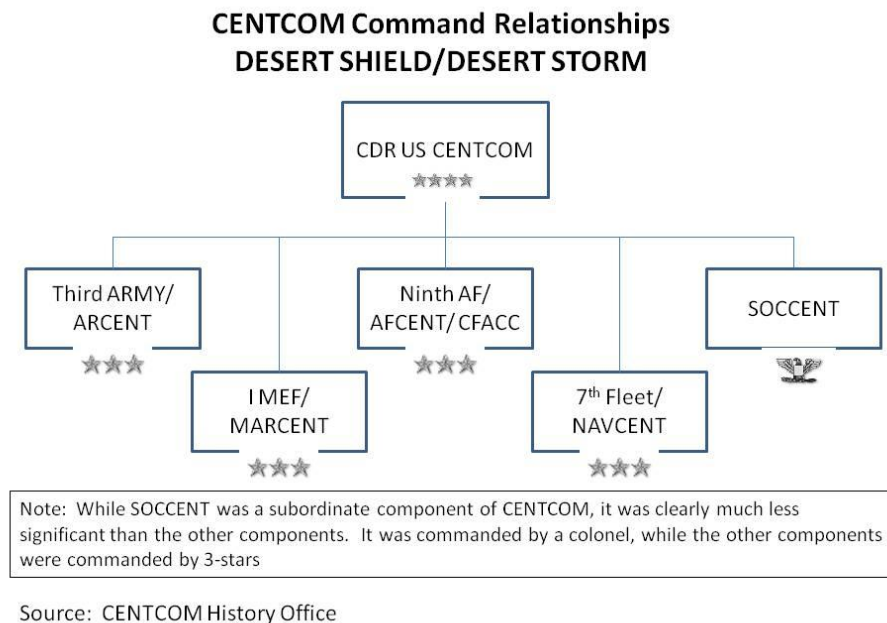


Figure 2: CENTCOM Operational Command Relationships during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM<sup>38</sup>

The reliance on components left the combatant commander as the joint integrator, and General Schwarzkopf was forced to constantly intervene in service and functional disputes.<sup>39</sup> For example, when complaints from ground commanders over the focus of the air campaign became a problem, Schwarzkopf had to assign his deputy to preside over a targeting board.<sup>40</sup>

While heavily burdened by his operational responsibilities, General Schwarzkopf recognized that his critical vulnerability was his ability to maintain the support of the Arab members of his coalition, and he devoted considerable effort to this.<sup>41</sup> Yet even this effort was largely operational, in that it was aimed at maintaining a coalition to conduct a campaign to liberate Kuwait.

CENTCOM's experience in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM highlighted the dangers of an operational approach. Whether as a result of his leadership style or the other demands on his time, General Schwarzkopf allowed his subordinate commanders a high degree of latitude. The result was a disjointed campaign that did not unfold as planned.<sup>42</sup> While he succeeded in maintaining the coalition and liberating Kuwait, this was more a testament to the inherent strengths of the U.S. military and weaknesses of the Iraqi military than a result of CENTCOM's planning and control.

More importantly, throughout this period, General Schwarzkopf and his staff were completely focused on the defense of Saudi Arabia and the liberation of Kuwait. Neither the commander nor his staff was paying much attention to the rest of the CENTCOM AOR.<sup>43</sup>

When DESERT STORM ended, uprisings against Saddam Hussein's government began in both the Kurdish north and Shi'ite south. In response to these uprisings, on April 5, 1991 the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 688, demanding that Iraq end its repression.<sup>44</sup> To enforce this resolution, the United States established a no-fly zone over southern Iraq, which was patrolled by coalition aircraft under CENTCOM command. Senior leaders assumed that Saddam would quickly comply. After more than a year of Iraqi recalcitrance, it became clear this would be a long term mission. In August 1992 the no-fly mission was designated Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, and the new CENTCOM Commander, General Joseph Hoar, USMC, established JTF Southwest Asia (JTF SWA) to conduct this operation.<sup>45</sup>

General Hoar also used JTFs for other major operations. In August 1992 he established JTF PROVIDE RELIEF to fly relief supplies into Somalia. When the

Somalia relief effort turned into a full fledged military intervention in December 1992, he established JTF Somalia.<sup>46</sup> After the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the CENTCOM commander dispatched an element from the CENTCOM headquarters to serve as a JTF headquarters.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the use of JTFs, the CENTCOM headquarters clearly retained an operational orientation. When an Iraqi troop build-up in October 1994 threatened Kuwait, the next commander, General Binford Peay, USA, launched Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR to rush 28,000 troops and an additional 200 aircraft to the region. This operation used the same command structure as DESERT STORM, with CENTCOM acting as the operational commander executing through functional components. In September 1996, CENTCOM stepped in to take an active operational role when punitive air strikes were ordered against Iraq in Operation DESERT STRIKE.<sup>48</sup>

When General Anthony Zinni, USMC assumed command of CENTCOM in 1997, he found that the command had thirteen operational plans that gave the headquarters a “war-fighting orientation.” The headquarters also suffered from a “near-total focus on the Persian Gulf.” One of Zinni’s solutions was to increase the presence of forward headquarters to strengthen the functional component headquarters, so they would be ready to respond to a crisis.<sup>49</sup> When Iraqi intransigence led to more air strikes in 1998 in Operation DESERT FOX, CENTCOM again stepped in to play an active operational role.<sup>50</sup> Zinni also continued the custom of having CENTCOM act as the operational commander in major exercises, notably BRIGHT STAR, a pattern that had begun with the RDJTF and continued up to 2001.<sup>51</sup>

From 1983 to 2000, CENTCOM did not face sustained, theater-wide strategic threats. Instead, security issues tended to be viewed in a local context. This was highlighted by General Zinni's effort to "subregionalize" CENTCOM's AOR, dividing it into East Africa, the Arabian Gulf, Central and Southwest Asia, and Egypt and Jordan. He also developed specific country plans.<sup>52</sup> Iraq and Iran remained major concerns, but even these were viewed through a sub-regional context. Security issues remained geographically limited and (with the exception of Iraq and Iran) of relatively short duration. Even Iraq, a chronic issue in the decade after DESERT STORM, became a routine problem, with CENTCOM focusing its attention when a significant event occurred, such as VIGILANT WARRIOR or DESERT FOX.

In this environment, CENTCOM's operational orientation did not create significant problems. However, when CENTCOM found itself facing multiple, enduring, and interconnected major challenges, its bias for operations led it to focus on immediate combat operations and lose sight of the larger strategic situation, with serious consequences.

#### Operation ENDURING FREEDOM

The 9/11 attacks represented a sudden and radical change in CENTCOM's strategic environment. To meet this challenge Zinni's successor, General Tommy Franks, USA, defaulted to the established command structures and operational approaches that CENTCOM had used for the previous two decades.

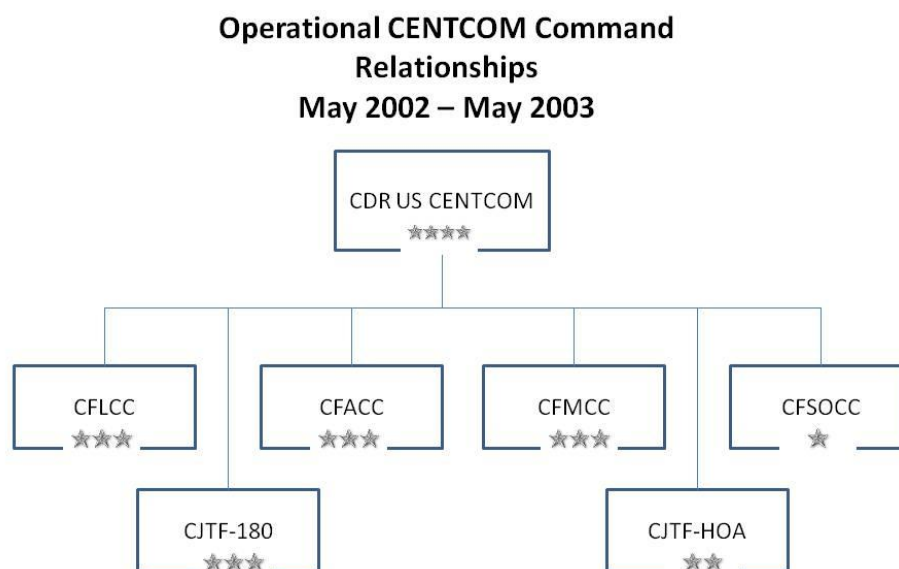
Much has been made of the radical innovation in the early phases of OEF, in which small units of special operations forces used precision fires to support the Northern Alliance. But the innovation was at the tactical and operational level. For

command and control, Franks built on the framework established by Zinni, using service components as functional components and acting as the operational commander. This time the functional components were preceded with a “C”, for combined, instead of a “J,” for joint.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Schwarzkopf, Franks created a CFLCC, designating Third Army/ARCENT to fill this role on October 8, 2001.<sup>54</sup>

This arrangement created many of the same problems that had occurred during DESERT STORM. General Franks had to integrate the actions of the components. This appeared to be a tremendous success during the initial phases of OEF, but it worked less well when Franks’ attention was diverted to planning for OIF. With CENTCOM focused on the next campaign, the functional components in Afghanistan had little oversight. As a result, the first major conventional action in Afghanistan, Operation ANACONDA, which took place in March 2002, had little CENTCOM involvement and was marked by poor coordination between the land, air, and special operations components.<sup>55</sup>

General Franks established a CJTF for Afghanistan on May 31, 2002, when he designated the XVIIIth Airborne Corps as CJTF-180.<sup>56</sup> CJTF 180 relieved CFLCC of responsibility for ground operations in Afghanistan, allowing CFLCC to concentrate on planning for Iraq. Despite its name, CJTF-180 was really a ground command and was almost entirely Army. It would have been more properly described as a CTF.<sup>57</sup> Two weeks before the establishment of CJTF-180, Congress authorized creation of the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan. This eventually became Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), a two-star headquarters responsible for

creating the Afghan army and police forces, and yet another command directly subordinate to CENTCOM.<sup>58</sup>



Source: CENTCOM History Office

Figure 3: CENTCOM Operational Command Relationships, May 2002 – May 2003

General Franks did not completely eschew the use of JTFs. As early as September 2001, CENTCOM began planning to create a CJTF for the Horn of Africa, built around the 2d Marine Division staff. CJTF-HOA stood up at Camp Lejeune, NC, on 19 October 2001, and arrived off Djibouti on 8 December 2001. The CJTF soon moved onto Camp Lemonier, an abandoned French Foreign Legion post, which it occupies to this day.<sup>59</sup> Under aggressive leadership, CJTF-HOA evolved into an effective economy of force effort that managed theater-strategic issues for the Horn of Africa and Yemen.<sup>60</sup> General Abizaid came to regard CJTF-HOA as “a model for how military forces might operate across the wider CENTCOM region in the future.”<sup>61</sup>

## Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

From late 2002 into early 2003, General Franks and the CENTCOM staff were consumed with the operational planning for the invasion of Iraq. Little thought went into the post-hostilities phase, known as Phase IV, since both commander and staff assumed that CENTCOM would turn over responsibility to some other organization.<sup>62</sup> Franks did realize that the functional component structure was not suitable for Phase IV, but did not develop an alternative or follow-on structure to manage military operations. In December 2002 the Joint Chiefs of Staff, anticipating the need for a military headquarters to support the post-war effort, directed Joint Forces Command to establish CJTF-IV, headed by Brigadier General Steve Hawkins, USA. CJTF-IV's relationship to CENTCOM and CFLCC was not specified, but it was charged with helping to plan for post-hostilities operations and to serve as the nucleus for a CJTF which would take responsibility for Iraq from CENTCOM when hostilities ended. Hawkins met with a cool reception when he arrived at CENTCOM, and was placed under the CFLCC commander in Kuwait. Hawkins' organization was given little attention, and by April 2003 it effectively disappeared as its personnel were reassigned.<sup>63</sup>

In January, President Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive 24, which gave the Defense Department primary responsibility for post war activities in Iraq.<sup>64</sup> To accomplish this, On January 20 Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld created the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), under retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner, USA. However, ORHA's relationship to CENTCOM was never defined<sup>65</sup> Franks and the CENTCOM staff, deeply involved in operational planning to

include regime change, did not get the relationship clarified, and allowed post-war planning to remain vague, undefined, and unresourced.<sup>66</sup>

OIF began on March 19, 2003, with the ground war kicking off the next day. Franks remained deeply involved in the operational aspects throughout the invasion.<sup>67</sup> On May 1, President Bush declared that major combat operations had ended.<sup>68</sup> Garner and the first elements of the ORHA staff arrived in Baghdad on April 21, but their time there was destined to be short. On May 6, President Bush announced the establishment of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), led by Ambassador Paul Bremer, to oversee the occupation of Iraq. Bremer arrived in Baghdad on May 12, and the CPA replaced ORHA on May 13.<sup>69</sup>

Once again, CPA's relationship with CENTCOM and the military forces in Iraq was not clearly defined. Although ORHA's relationship with CENTCOM was unclear, Garner had clearly worked for the Secretary of Defense. Officially, Bremer also reported to the Secretary of Defense, but Bremer obviously believed that he reported directly to the President. A few days after arriving in Baghdad, Bremer issued CPA Regulation No. 1, which outlined the CPA's authority. This regulation established the CPA as the pre-eminent authority in Iraq but acknowledged its limited authority over the military. Given the lack of clarity in command relationships, the military commands in Iraq acted as supporting headquarters, and treated CPA as the supported command.<sup>70</sup>

#### New Command Arrangements

After the capture of Baghdad, CENTCOM quickly transitioned to focus on redeployment.<sup>71</sup> At the end of April, Franks decided to retire, setting a date in July. With major combat operations over and only a few weeks left in command, Franks was

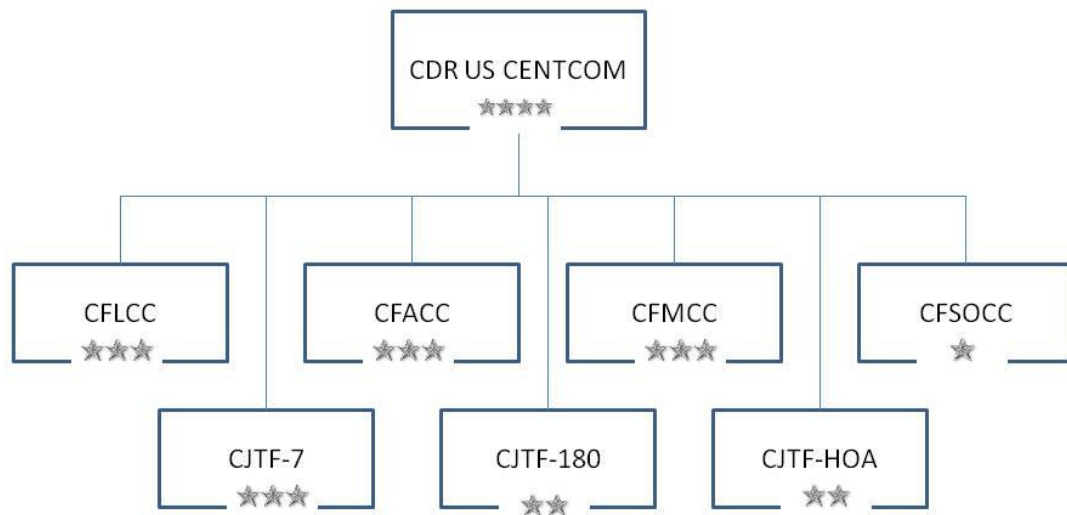


clearly not fully engaged.<sup>72</sup> This was mitigated somewhat by the fact that his Deputy Commander, Lieutenant General John Abizaid, USA, was named as his successor.<sup>73</sup> But it was during this transition period, between Frank's decision to retire and his relinquishing command, that CENTCOM established its post-hostilities command structures.

On 27 May 2003, CJTF-180 transitioned from a three-star to a two-star headquarters. Command of CJTF-180 then rotated among various division headquarters.<sup>74</sup> It was still really a CTF, not a JTF, and the transition to divisional staffs further reinforced its single-service and tactical orientation.<sup>75</sup>

In Iraq, CENTCOM did not use General Hawkins' CJTF-IV<sup>76</sup>. Focused on quickly redeploying both the CENTCOM and CFLCC staff, General Franks decided to use the V Corps headquarters as the basis for a new organization, CJTF-7.<sup>77</sup> The corps commander, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, USA, had been nominated for this position in April, when he was in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division and in the midst of deploying to Kuwait. He assumed command only a few days before transitioning to CJTF-7. The corps was a tactical level headquarters, and had been focused on its tactical mission. It now had to transition to covering the full spectrum of operations from tactical to theater-strategic, as well as become a joint headquarters and assume a much wider variety of missions. It required significant augmentation and eventually grew from a staff of 280 to more than 1,000, but this took considerable time, and meant effectively building the staff from scratch.<sup>78</sup>

**Operational CENTCOM Command  
Relationships  
June 2003 – November 2003**



Source: CENTCOM History Office

Figure 4: CENTCOM Operational Command Relationships, June 2003 – November 2003

CENTCOM's continued operational focus, inattention to Iraqi government institutions, and failure to consider employing all the elements of national power through an interagency approach played a major factor in the deterioration of conditions in Iraq starting in the summer of 2003, a deterioration which continued until a significant increase in troop strength and operational methods, known as "The Surge," was implemented in 2007.<sup>79</sup>

The failure to establish robust JTFs in Iraq and Afghanistan made it difficult for CENTCOM to focus on broader strategic issues. As both CJTF-180 and CJTF-7 struggled, CENTCOM was forced to focus on the operational level to assist them. By

the autumn of 2003 it was clear to General Abizaid that it was simply beyond the ability of one headquarters to span the full spectrum of war from tactical to theater-strategic, and that senior headquarters were required in both Iraq and Afghanistan. CENTCOM established Combined Forces Command Afghanistan (CFC-A), a three-star command in November 2003. Both CJTF-180 and CSTC-A became subordinates of CFC-A. This allowed CJTF-180 to focus on the operational and tactical levels, with CFC-A focusing on the theater-strategic and operational levels.<sup>80</sup>

Establishing a senior headquarters in Iraq was more challenging. Senior officials in Washington were reluctant to create a new four-star command, but by January the Secretary of Defense agreed to establish a new theater-strategic headquarters for Iraq. It took another six months, however, to identify the right officer for this job, get him confirmed by the Senate, and establish the staffing requirements for the new headquarters.<sup>81</sup> In the spring of 2004, CJTF-7 began the process of splitting into two new commands: Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I), a four-star theater-strategic headquarters, and Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), the operational headquarters. During the past year, it had become clear that establishing robust, professional Iraqi security forces was crucial to achieving the United States' strategic objectives. This mission had been under CPA, but CENTCOM now established Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), a three star headquarters under MNF-I, to accomplish this task.<sup>82</sup> These arrangements were in place by the beginning of July 2004.<sup>83</sup>

### Operational CENTCOM Command Relationships July 2004 – January 2007

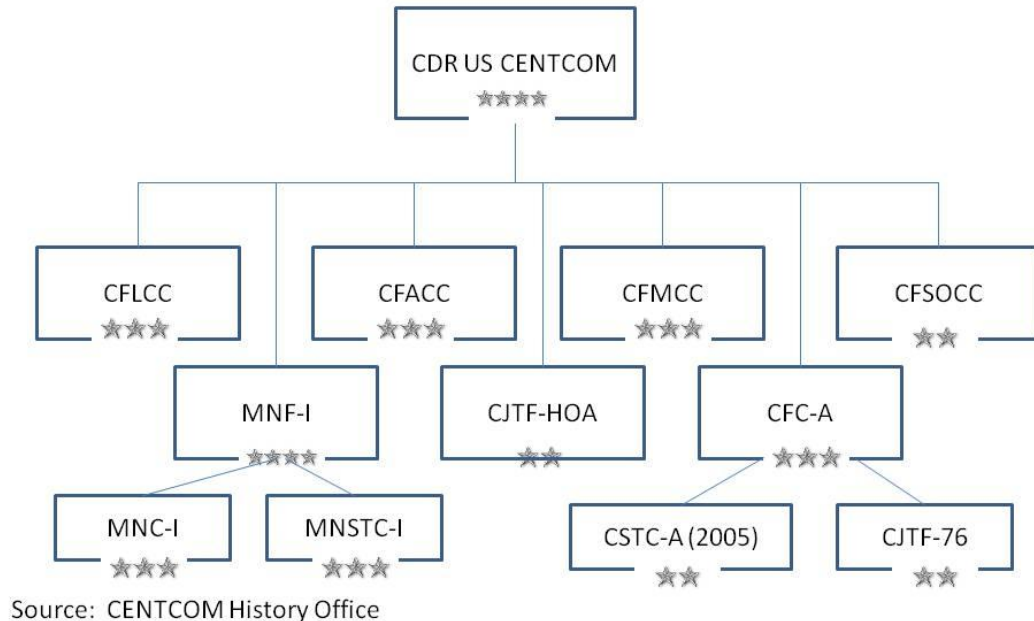


Figure 5: CENTCOM Operational Command Relationships, July 2004 – January 2007

This structure dramatically improved operations in both countries and allowed CENTCOM to become a truly strategic headquarters. Freed from the need to worry about operational issues, Abizaid worked to focus his staff on AOR wide threats and issues, and to build a coalition and “whole of government” approach. Innovations included the creation of a Strategic Communications Branch to coordinate messaging in the era of satellite television and the internet; creation and development of a Interagency Task Force; a focus on building and maintaining the coalition; and interaction with senior policy makers in both the administration and Congress.<sup>84</sup>

CENTCOM also began to focus on the links between conflicts across the AOR. Abizaid began to emphasize the links between the Afghan and Pakistani insurgencies.<sup>85</sup>

The foreign fighters and financing that supported them came from almost every corner of the AOR and many areas outside the AOR, and CENTCOM could now focus on disrupting these links. Perhaps most important, General Abizaid began to realize that CENTCOM did not face a series of local conflicts. Instead, it faced a regional insurgency, which he dubbed a “pan-insurgency,” fueled by an ideology communicated through the internet and satellite television.<sup>86</sup> Defeating this insurgency would require a sustained, integrated effort, an effort the CENTCOM commander and staff could not coordinate if they remained focused on operations.<sup>87</sup>

The wisdom of these command relationships was reinforced in 2007. As part of the transition to NATO control in Afghanistan, CFC-A gradually turned over control of the battle space to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Abizaid emphasized that this would probably work “as long as CFC-A’s capabilities as a headquarters was transferred to GEN McNeill’s [Commander ISAF] staff.”<sup>88</sup> This process was complete by October 2006, and in January 2007 CFC-A was disbanded. This made both CJTF-76 (formerly CJTF-180) and CSTC-A direct subordinates to CENTCOM. This arrangement undermined unity of effort, and ISAF’s staff was not able to replicate the capabilities of CFC-A. CENTCOM again was drawn down to the operational level while the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated.<sup>89</sup> A senior-level headquarters was clearly needed. On 4 October 2008, U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USF-A) was established as a four-star headquarters, with the commander dual-hatted as Commander ISAF. ISAF also realized that it needed to separate the theater-strategic and operational functions, and established the ISAF Joint Corps (IJC) as a three-star operational headquarters, mirroring the MNF-I/MNC-I structure used in Iraq.<sup>90</sup>

## Lessons from the CENTCOM Experience

CENTCOM's experience shows that organizational and cultural factors pull combatant commanders and their staffs to the operational level; they have to make a conscious effort to remain at the strategic level. As long as problems remain limited in time and space, an operational focus does not necessarily lead to problems. But when the commander and staff focus on the operational level, they lose sight of strategic trends in the AOR, be it an emerging crisis in another part of the AOR, or the fact that the operational crisis is part of a larger problem. Operational focus also leads to a concentration on the military element of national power, instead of a "whole of government" approach.

This occurred in OEF/OIF. General Franks and his staff, following the well-established template, took an operational approach to the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, they failed to think through the broader strategic issues, and failed to advocate for plans and resources needed for the post-hostilities phase, including the non-military elements of national power.<sup>91</sup> CENTCOM's failure to think strategically and to consider all elements of national power contributed to the rapid deterioration of the situation in Iraq from summer 2003 to the beginning of the Surge in 2007, and to the worsening situation in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2009.

After assuming command General Abizaid realized that it was imperative to establish appropriate structures to conduct operations and allow CENTCOM to focus on strategic matters and interagency issues. He accomplished this through a mix of functional components and JTFs.

For operations primarily focused on one domain, such as air and sea, and filling a supporting role, the functional component approach has served well. By using CFACC to control air operations throughout the AOR, CENTCOM ensured that air assets could be quickly and easily directed where needed. The CENTCOM commander balanced requirements between the main campaigns, apportioned resources, and then allowed CFACC to conduct the operational planning and targeting. CFMCC took responsibility for the counter-piracy and other maritime missions, again allowing CENTCOM to operate at the strategic level. Both of these components were clearly supporting the JTFs, however. CENTCOM's role was to apportion resources between the JTFs, not to coordinate across domains or to balance competing operational visions.

For major operations, JTFs have proved effective. In the Horn of Africa, with about 1,500 troops CJTF-HOA effectively managed strategic issues for the entire sub-region in an effort Abizaid regarded as a model for the future.<sup>92</sup>

CENTCOM's most important innovation has been the use of two JTFs for major campaigns: a senior JTF to focus on theater-strategic issues, including the integration of all elements of national power, combined with a junior, operational level JTF. This has allowed CENTCOM to concentrate on the AOR and national strategic level, and to focus on interagency and coalition coordination.

### Recommendations

For good reason, the military fosters a results oriented, "can-do" culture focused on supporting the men and women on the front lines. This culture, combined with a tendency to gravitate towards the familiar, breeds a tendency to focus on the operational and tactical level of war at the expense of the strategic level. To counteract

this, joint and service education, starting at the earliest levels, must teach officers the importance of thinking across all levels of war while remaining focused on the appropriate level for the headquarters they are serving in. The goal must be to educate officers to recognize the tendency to drift toward the lower levels and to maintain their focus on the higher levels without reducing their enthusiasm and instinct to support the troops in harm's way.

In many ways modern media have flattened the levels of war. With modern communications, an act at the lowest tactical level can be instantly broadcast around the world, with profound strategic consequences.<sup>93</sup> The solution to this is not, however, for commanders to extend direct supervision to the lower levels. Instead, commanders must identify the critical issues and provide their subordinates with the tools to needed to navigate these issues. In 2003 and 2004, General Abizaid's operational focus made it difficult for him to implement an effective strategic communications plan. One result was the Abu Ghraib scandal.<sup>94</sup> In contrast, the MNF-I and USF-A commanders have effectively educated their forces to think about the strategic effects of individual actions.<sup>95</sup>

To avoid the problems experienced by CENTCOM during OEF/OIF, joint doctrine requires two minor revisions. First, instead of placing combatant commands at the nexus of the operational and strategic levels of war, joint doctrine needs to clearly state that combatant commands operate at the strategic level, and should use components or establish subordinate JTFs for operational requirements. This will not preclude combatant commands from acting at the operational level when necessary. But, given the powerful tendency to concentrate on the lower levels of war and neglect the higher



levels, a firm doctrinal statement will help commanders keep themselves and their staff focused at the strategic level.

Second, joint doctrine needs to clearly state that, for major campaigns, combatant commands may need to establish two levels of JTF: a senior JTF for the theater-strategic level, concentrating on integrating all the elements of national power, and a subordinate operational JTF.

The last recommendation does not require a change to current doctrine, but does need to become an ingrained “lesson learned.” For major contingencies, subordinate senior JTFs must be established as quickly as possible. The CENTCOM experience has demonstrated that it takes time to gain approval for a senior JTF, to source the staff, and then for the headquarters to become effective. In the case of both MNF-I and USF-A, this process took almost a year. Establishing JTFs should begin during the earliest stages of the planning process. The experience of OIF and OEF shows that by the time the need for a senior JTF headquarters is apparent, it is already too late. Every day that the combatant commander runs planning or operations is a day that he is not watching the rest of his AOR, and therefore a day that a new, graver threat may be emerging.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> GEN John P Abizaid to his staff, July 2005. Author’s notes.

<sup>2</sup> COL (Ret) James P. Herson, former Deputy Director, Commander’s Advisory Group, U.S. Central Command, interview with the author, May 5, 2010. COL Herson served as the Deputy Director of the Commander’s Advisory Group under GEN Abizaid from July 2003 to July 2005. The author served with COL Herson as a member of GEN Abizaid’s Commander’s Advisory Group, and also observed GEN Abizaid’s frustration with the staffs’ operational focus. GEN Abizaid frequently asked the staff to help him “think strategically.”

<sup>3</sup> Echevarria, comparing Russell Weigley's seminal *American Way of War* and Max Boot's *Savage Wars of Peace*, noted that the arguments of both authors reinforced this fact. LTC Antulio J. Echevarria II. "Toward an American Way of War" (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, January 2004), vi, [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/american\\_way\\_of\\_war.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/american_way_of_war.pdf), accessed May 2, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 13, 2008), II-1 – II-2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., GL-26.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., GL-22

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., II-1.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., II-1.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Operations*, FM 3-0, (Washington, D.D.: U.S. Department of the Army, February 2008), 6-1.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, II-2 – II-3.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Operations*, 6-2.

<sup>12</sup> This challenge is exacerbated by efforts to increase certainty on the battlefield through improved sensor and communications technology. Dubbed "Network-Centric Warfare," by flattening the levels of war, this approach intensifies the tendency to focus on the lower levels of war. It contrasts with the decentralized "Maneuver Warfare" approach championed by the Marine Corps, which emphasizes accepting the inherent uncertainty of the battle space and empowering subordinates to exploit this uncertainty. Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *The Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, January 5, 2005); U.S. Marine Corps, *Warfighting*, MCDP 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Marine Corps, June 20 1997); U.S. Marine Corps, *Command and Control*, MCDP 6 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Marine Corps, October 4 1996).

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the evolution of combatant commands, see Ronald H. Cole et al, *History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1999* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint History Office, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, I-3.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Operations*, 6-2. Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, notes that combatant commanders are responsible for producing theater strategies, theater security cooperation strategies, and plans and orders for specific contingencies. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operational Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 26, 2006), II-5.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, II-1 – II-2.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., II-2.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operational Planning*, I-9 – I-10.

<sup>19</sup> In this context, the Special Operations Component, although not technically a service component, is treated as analogous to a service component, since it functions in a similar manner.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 20, 2009), V-6 – V-7, V-17 – V-20.

<sup>21</sup> The Army defines the corps as the largest tactical unit (U.S. Department of the Army, *Corps Operations* (Washington, D.C.: October 29, 1996), I-1). Joint doctrine clearly identifies component commands and joint task forces as operating at the operational level (JP 3-0, II-2, II-12 – II-13). Given this structure, an officer can reach the rank of lieutenant general without serving above the tactical level of war. With the granting of joint credit for service on joint task force staffs, it is possible for an officer to rise to the four-star level without ever serving at the strategic level. In general, the only opportunity to serve at the strategic level is a tour on the Joint Staff or a combatant command staff. Under traditional assignment patterns, this will constitute one or at most two tours, consisting of as little as two years and at most four years of a thirty year career.

<sup>22</sup> The author has witnessed this tendency at every level from company to combatant command. This tendency was rampant during Operation RESTORE HOPE. After one company operation, the company commander told the author how much he “enjoyed” the opportunity to be “supervised simultaneously by every officer in my chain of command from the commanding general on down, and their deputies.”

<sup>23</sup> For example, during OEF, the CFLCC Deputy Commanding General for Operations, MG Warren Edwards, recalled that “[w]hen the SecDef started having a [press] briefing every day, it meant that for hours of the day you could not talk to the CENTCOM staff...you were unable to get a senior person to make a decision at CENTCOM because they were tied up prepping for the SecDef’s briefing.” Sean Naylor, *Not A Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda*, (New York: Berkley Books, 2005), 152-153. Other examples abound in Naylor’s book, and this tendency is also evident in accounts of Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM and OIF. See Michael R. Gordon and LtGen Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals’ War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1995), and Michael R. Gordon and LtGen Bernard E. Trainor, *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Joint doctrine lists four elements of National Power: Diplomacy, Information, the Military, and the Economy. Current joint doctrine also recognizes the importance of integrating these elements into a coherent effort. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, I-8 – I-10, chapter VII.

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Cole et al, *History of the Unified Command Plan 1946-1999*, 56-57, 63-67. During this period, this body of water was normally referred to as the Persian Gulf. However, out of deference to the sensibilities of regional partners, CENTCOM currently prefers to call it the Arabian Gulf. For consistency, this term will be used throughout, except in direct quotes.

<sup>26</sup> Gen George B. Crist, USMC, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Central Command, end of tour Oral History Interview with Dr. Hans Pawlisch, not dated, B-1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., B-4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., B-1 – B-4, B-12 – B-15.

<sup>29</sup> During this period, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (COMNAVCENT) was an additional duty for a Navy Captain selected for promotion to Rear Admiral (Lower Half) on the staff of the Commander, Pacific Fleet located at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Seventh Fleet was the operational headquarters responsible for the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. Edward J. Marolda and Robert Schneller Jr., *Shield and Sword: The United States Navy and the Persian Gulf War* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Navy Historical Center, 1998), 17, 35, 80.

<sup>30</sup> Gen Crist Interview with Dr. Pawlisch, B-17 – B-28, B-33

<sup>31</sup> GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf (Ret) and Paul Petrie, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 280.

<sup>32</sup> Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 327-328.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 123-126.

<sup>34</sup> Until recently, it was standard practice to have operational headquarters serve as service and functional components. Ninth Air Force served as U.S. Air Forces Central (CENTAF) and the JFACC/CFACC, Third Army served as Army Forces Central (ARCENT) and, when designated, as CFLCC. Prior to Desert Storm, the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Oman were in PACOM's area of responsibility. For Desert Storm, operational control of these areas was transferred to CENTCOM. The Navy designated the Commander, Seventh Fleet to serve as NAVCENT, and he also served as the JFMCC. In 1995 the Navy established Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. Commander Fifth Fleet also serves as Naval Forces Central and, since 2002, CFMCC/Commander Coalition Maritime Force (CMF). The Marine Corps has used a number of headquarters to serve as the CENTCOM component. Prior to 1990, the Marine Corps did not have a designated component for Central Command. For DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, the Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) was designated as Commander, Marine Forces Central Command (MARCENT). In 1992, the Marine Corps assigned the Commanding General, U.S. Marine Forces Pacific as Commander MARCENT (designate), to assume this responsibility when needed. In 1996, it established a MARCENT liaison cell at MacDill AFB, FL, and upgraded this cell to Headquarters, MARCENT in 1999, with a Deputy Commanding General focused on MARCENT. In 2001, The Commanding General Marine Forces Pacific was formally designated as Commander, MARCENT. Having one person serving as the component commander for two combatant commands proved unsatisfactory, and in 2005 the Marine Corps designated the Commanding General, I MEF as Commander, MARCENT. As OEF and OIF continued, most of the services decided to create dedicated component headquarters. On October 16, 2007, Headquarters, Department of the Army General Order No. 24 disestablished Third Army and designated this headquarters as ARCENT (although the headquarters continues to call itself "Third Army"). On 6 August 2008, the Air Force split U.S. Air Forces Central (redesignated as AFCENT in March 2008) and the Ninth Air

Force into two separate commands. Ninth Air Force became a two-star headquarters, while AFCENT remained a three-star headquarters. The Marine Corps is planning to create a separate, more robust MARCENT headquarters. The Navy has no plans to change its current command arrangements. (U.S. Marine Corps History Division, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Central Command Lineage and Honors; U.S. Army Forces Central, FY 2007 Annual History, Chapter 1, 1-2; Marolda and Schneller, *Shield and Sword*, 72, 81; "USCENTAF to Become USAFCENT with Redesignation," U.S. Air Force Official Web Site, February 29, 2008, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123088409>, accessed May 10, 2010; "New Leaders Take Command of Redesignated AFCENT, Ninth Air Force," U.S. Air Force Official Web Site, August 6, 2009, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123162152>, accessed May 10, 2010; author's notes from briefing by CDR MARCENT to CDR USCENTCOM, CENTCOM Forward Headquarters, February 26, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 310-312. For a discussion of the conflict over joint control of fixed wing aviation, see Lt Col Stephen J. McNamara, *Air Power's Gordian Knot: Centralized Versus Organic Control* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, August 1994). For a more detailed discussion of the Single Manager issue in Vietnam, See Jack Shulimson et al, *The U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1997), 487-515.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 162, 300-301. The CENTCOM Command History shows SOCCENT, along with the Joint Communications Support Element, as part of the CENTCOM staff, and states that for DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM General Schwarzkopf "granted [SOCCENT] the status of a full component commander on equal terms with the other four components." (U.S. Central Command, Command History, 1990-1991, MacDill AFB, FL, I-19, III-151, information used is unclassified). Despite this statement, SOCCENT was clearly not as important as the service components. SOCCENT was commanded by a colonel, whereas the other components were commanded by three-star officers. The Special Operations Commander, COL Jesse Johnson, USA, is only mentioned four times in *The Generals' War*, each time only in passing. The commanders of Special Operations Command, GEN Carl Stiner, USA, and of Joint Special Operations Command, MG Wayne Downing, USA, played a much larger role in the use of special operations forces. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 119-120, 241-246.

<sup>37</sup> Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 438. General Yeosock returned to the theater after surgery in Germany and reassumed command a few days before the ground war began. (Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 446).

<sup>38</sup> In this context, "operational" contrasts with "tactical control" and "administrative control," and does not refer to levels of war.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, passim.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 320-321.

<sup>41</sup> Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, 312-491 passim, especially 334-339, 351-352, 385-391.

<sup>42</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, 429-432, 472-473.

<sup>43</sup> For example, in his memoir, Schwarzkopf does not even mention Operation EASTERN EXIT (5-6 January 1991), the non-combatant evacuation operation of Mogadishu. The CENTCOM official history for this period, which is more than 750 pages, mentions Eastern Exit three times, merely noting that the operation occurred (U.S. Central Command, Command History 1990-1991, information used is unclassified). This operation was conducted by two amphibious ships and the embarked Marine forces and did not require much attention from CENTCOM, but had a major contingency of any kind occurred during early 1991 CENTCOM would have been hard pressed to cope. The best account of the Operation EASTERN Exit is Adam B. Siegel, *Eastern Exit: The Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) From Mogadishu, Somalia, in January 1991* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, April 28, 1992); U. S. Central Command History 1990-1991, information used is unclassified.

<sup>44</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 688, 5 April 1991, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/24/IMG/NR059624.pdf?OpenElement> accessed 20 April 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Jay E. Hines, *A Brief History of the United States Central Command*, (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Central Command History Office, February 1995), 21; Lt Gen Michael A. Nelson, and VADM. Douglas J. Katz, "Unity of Control: Joint Air Operations in the Gulf – Part Two," *Joint Forces Quarterly* no. 5 (Summer 1994), 60.

<sup>46</sup> JTF Somalia was subsequently designated Unified Task Force Somalia, or UNITAF.

<sup>47</sup> Jay E. Hines, *USCENTCOM In Somalia: Operations PROVIDE RELIEF and RESTORE HOPE* (MacDill AFB, FL: U.S. Central Command History Office, November 1994), 16, 24; Gen Joseph P. Hoar, "A CINC's Perspective," *Joint Forces Quarterly* no. 2 (Autumn 1993), 57-58; Clancy, Zinni, and Koltz, *Battle Ready*, 339.

<sup>48</sup> Jay Hines, "History of USCENTCOM," CENTCOM History Office, 1999, unpublished ms.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 313-315.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Hines, *A Brief History of United States Central Command*, passim; Hines, "History of USCENTCOM."

<sup>52</sup> Clancy, Zinni, and Koltz, *Battle Ready*, 314. CENTCOM still uses General Zinni's sub-regionalization scheme. With the transfer of the Horn of Africa to AFRICOM, the regions are now the Central and South Asian States, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Levant (which now includes Syria and Lebanon), including Egypt.

<sup>53</sup> In many documents, the "C" is rendered as "coalition." Under current doctrine, these organizations should be "multinational" rendering them as the MNFLCC, MNFACC, MNFMCC, and MNFSOCC, but the designation of CFLCC/CFACC/CFMCC/CFSOCC has been used by CENTCOM since the start of OEF. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Multinational Operations*, Joint Publication 3-16 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 7, 2007), GL-2.

<sup>54</sup> ARCENT received a small number of Marine officers to help it fulfill its CFLCC role. Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, xxx-xxxi, 89; U. S. Central Command History Office, CENTCOM OEF Chronology.

<sup>55</sup> Although the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division headquarters, which conducted Operation ANACONDA, dubbed itself “CJTF Mountain,” it was not designated a CJTF by CENTCOM or CFLCC, was not joint, and did not have a J staff. Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 107; Sean Naylor, *Not A Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berekley Books, 2005), 45-183 passim, especially 87-95, 117-137, 152-156; Col Robert D. Hyde, Col Mark D. Kelly, and Col William F. Andrews, “Operation Boa: A Counterfactual History of the Battle for Shah-I-Kot,” *Military Review* vol. LXXXVIII, No. 5 (September-October 2008), 70-71. The problems with air-ground coordination led to a public controversy between the Army and Air Force. Rebecca Grant, “The Echoes of Anaconda,” *Air Force Magazine*, vol 88. no 4 (April 2005), 46-52, accessed from [airforce-magazine.com](http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2005/April%202005/0405anaconda.aspx), <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2005/April%202005/0405anaconda.aspx>, accessed May 1, 2010.

<sup>56</sup> The XVIIIth Airborne Corps and CJTF-180 was commanded by LTG Dan K. McNeill.

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Central Command History Office, OEF Chronology.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Central Command History Office, CJTF-HOA timeline, information used is unclassified.

<sup>60</sup> LtCol David A. Dawson USMCR, “CJTF-HOA trip report,” December 2006.

<sup>61</sup> GEN John P. Abizaid, *Statement of General John P. Abizaid, United States Army, Commander, United States Central Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of United States Central Command*, March 16, 2006, 32.

<sup>62</sup> COL (Ret) Herson noted that General Franks had been told by senior members of the administration “that some other organization would take responsibility for Iraq after hostilities ended.” COL (Ret) Herson interview with author.

<sup>63</sup> CJTF-IV was also known as CJTF-Iraq. Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 159-168; Dr. Donald P. Wright, Col Timothy R. Reese and the Contemporary Operations Study Team, *On Point II: Transition to a New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, May 2003-January 2005* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2008) 70-71, 139-141. GEN Tommy Franks (Ret.), *American Soldier*, (New York: ReganBooks, 2004), 329-431 passim, makes it clear how involved General Franks was in the operational planning.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon and Trainer, *Cobra II*, 171.

<sup>65</sup> Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 149-151.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 173-174, 183; Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 152-153; Col (Ret) Herson, interview with author.

<sup>67</sup> Franks, *American Soldier*, 432-530, passim; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 188-544, passim.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Central Command History Office, CENTCOM OIF Chronology.

<sup>69</sup> Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 153. Beyond the fact that by May 2003 things were clearly not going well in Iraq, it is not clear why President Bush decided to replace ORHA with the CPA. All accounts note that ORHA was severely under staffed and resourced, although the CPA suffered from this as well. GEN Abizaid noted that it appeared to him that LTG (Ret) Garner and Amb Bremer had very different mandates. Garner's guidance was to turn the country back over to the Iraqis as quickly as possible and keep the security institutions intact. Bremer had instructions to "go deep into deBaathification and to disband the Iraqi Army." Commander, USCENTCOM, interview with Dr. Pete Connors, Combat Studies Institute Contemporary Operations Study Team, MacDill AFB, FL, January 10, 2009, 3. See also Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 545, and Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 154-155.

<sup>70</sup> Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 153-155; GEN Abizaid interview with Dr. Connors, 5, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 526-529; Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 144-145, 157.

<sup>72</sup> Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 557-558; Ricks, *Fiasco*, 155-156; Franks, *American Soldier*, 530-532. It is telling that in his memoir, Franks has only one page of text between the approval of his retirement in early May and his retirement ceremony on July 7.

<sup>73</sup> GEN John P. Abizaid assumed command of U.S. Central Command on 7 July 2003.

<sup>74</sup> LTG McNeill turned over command of CJTF-180 to his deputy, MG John Vines. U.S. CENTCOM History Office, OEF Chronology. CJTF-180 was redesignated as CJTF-76 on 15 May 2004.

<sup>75</sup> This was highlighted by the Task Force's custom, starting in March 2007, of designating itself with the divisional headquarters' number, i.e. CJTF-82 and CJTF-101. U.S. CENTCOM History Office, OEF Chronology.

<sup>76</sup> CJTF-IV was intended to provide the basis for an organization designated CJTF-Iraq, but this organization was never established

<sup>77</sup> Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 144-145, 157; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 557-559.

<sup>78</sup> Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 144-149, 157-161.

<sup>79</sup> The title of Thomas Ricks' account of the Iraq campaign, *Fiasco*, neatly sums up the general assessment of the situation in 2006. For an account of the new strategy in 2007, see Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009). See also GEN John P. Abizaid, Commander USCENTCOM, interview with Dr. John Q. Smith, CENTCOM Command Historian, Camp As Saliyah, Qatar, October 12, 2006; LTG Martin E. Dempsey, Acting Commander, USCENTCOM, interview with Mr. David A. Dawson, CENTCOM Command Historian, MacDill AFB, FL, October 21 and 29, 2009, information used is unclassified.



<sup>80</sup> CFC-A was commanded by LTG David Barno. GEN Abizaid interview with Dr. Connors, 4, 6; VADM David Nichols (Ret), former Deputy Commander USCENTCOM, with LtCol David A. Dawson, CENTCOM Command Historian, Apollo Beach, FL, November 27, 2007; U.S. CENTCOM History Office, OEF Chronology.

<sup>81</sup> GEN Abizaid interview with Dr. Connors, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 175-176.

<sup>83</sup> MNC-I stood up on April 15, 2004, and was commanded by LTG Thomas Metz; CJTF-7 was officially redesignated MNF-I on May 15, 2004, and GEN George Casey assumed command on July 1, 2004; MNSTC-I stood up on 28 June 2004, with LTG David H. Petraeus in command. U.S. CENTCOM History Office, OIF Chronology.

<sup>84</sup> This is based on the author's observations as a member of the CENTCOM Command Group staff during this period. The CENTCOM Command History does not state when the Strategic Communications Branch and Joint Interagency Coordination Group were created, but it was in place by the summer of 2004. CENTCOM established a coalition Coordination Center shortly after OEF began, and this structure evolved throughout this period.

<sup>85</sup> GEN Abizaid interview with Dr. Connors, 7; GEN John P. Abizaid, Commander USCENTCOM, interview with Dr. John Q. Smith, CENTCOM Command Historian, MacDill AFB, FL, February 28, 2007, 3.

<sup>86</sup> COL (Ret) Herson interview with author.

<sup>87</sup> The author was a member of General Abizaid's Commander's Advisory Group that helped develop the concept of the regional insurgency, and a plan to counter this insurgency through a long, integrated effort emphasizing cooperation with partner nations at a level like CJTF-HOA rather than the use of large combat forces that were in Iraq at the time. This concept was given the working title "The Long War." The team disliked the title, since it implied long-term major combat, and from a strategic messaging standpoint reinforced the idea that the United States was at war with Islam, but was unable to come up with a better short term. After briefing this concept to President Bush in September 2005, the White House started to use the term "The Long War." Bradley Graham and Josh White, "Abizaid Credited with Popularizing the Term 'Long War,'" *Washington Post*, February 3, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/02/AR2006020202242.html>, accessed 26 April 2010.

<sup>88</sup> GEN Abizaid interview with Dr. Smith, February 28, 2007, 3.

<sup>89</sup> LTG Dempsey interview with Mr. Dawson, information used is unclassified.

<sup>90</sup> U.S. CENTCOM History Office, OEF Chronology.

<sup>91</sup> COL (Ret.) Herson noted that General Franks was clearly told not to focus on the post-hostilities phase. COL (Ret) Herson interview with author.

<sup>92</sup> GEN Abizaid, *Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Posture of United States Central Command*, March 16, 2006; GEN Abizaid interview with Dr. Smith, February 28, 2007, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Then Commandant of the Marine Corps General Krulak dubbed this factor “the strategic corporal.” Charles C. Krulak, “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War,” *Marine Corps Gazette* Vol 83, No. 1 (January 1999), 18-22.

<sup>94</sup> There is no way to guarantee that incidents like Abu Ghraib will not occur. However, a lack of supervision and a lack of understanding of the strategic implications of recording the humiliation of Iraqi prisoners clearly played a large role in this incident. U.S. Department of the Army, Investigation of Intelligence Activities at Abu Ghraib, August 23, 2004, Executive Summary and LTG Anthony R. Jones, AR 15-6 Investigation of the Abu Ghraib Prison and 205<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Brigade, defense.gov, <http://www.defense.gov/news/Aug2004/d20040825fay.pdf>, accessed May 1, 2010.

<sup>95</sup> Examples include the tactical directives issued by both commanders. See, for example, GEN David H. Petraeus, “Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” (Baghdad, Iraq: Headquarters, Multi-National Force-Iraq, July 15, 2008), <http://www.centcom.mil/images/multimedia/cg%20coin%20unclass%20anacondaguidance%2020july08.pdf>, accessed May 1, 2010; GEN Raymond T. Odierno, “Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” (Baghdad, Iraq: Headquarters, Multi-National Force-Iraq, September 16, 2008), [http://www.usf-iraq.com/images/CGs\\_Messages/odierno\\_coin\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.usf-iraq.com/images/CGs_Messages/odierno_coin_guidance.pdf), accessed May 1, 2010; and GEN Stanley A. McChrystal “ISAF Commander’s Counterinsurgency Guidance,” (Kabul, Afghanistan: Headquarters, International Security Assistance Force, not dated), [http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official\\_texts/counterinsurgency\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf), accessed May 2, 2010.