

A NEW APPROACH



1st Combat Camera Squadron (Lemuel Casillas)

NATO

Standing Combined Joint Task Forces

By MICHAEL E. FIRLIE

Throughout its history the mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been collective defense, but now the Alliance has new peacetime missions and is shifting toward collective security. With the addition of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland to NATO, and the likely accession of Spain to the military command structure,

Major Michael E. Firlie, USA, is an exchange officer in G6 (communications) at German II Corps.

these changes present a challenge. In response the Alliance is modifying its integrated military structure. Changes have been made to the configuration of the major NATO commands (MNCs). And more initiatives are on the way.

Combined joint task forces (CJTFs) are one new approach. They are very mobile, flexible headquarters that can conduct limited contingency operations outside Alliance borders. CJTFs are presently being exercised within the existing structure at major subordinate command (MSC)

NATO airborne early warning command and control aircraft.



4th Combat Camera Squadron (Joe Cupido)

level. Although this is a good first step, this concept should be advanced further by establishing standing commands at the principal subordinate command (PSC) or joint subregional command (JSRC) levels.

New Era, New Concepts

Fundamental changes in the European security landscape in the late 1980s and early 1990s made large standing armies seem unnecessary and too costly. This was especially true given that Western Europe needed financial capital to speed economic recovery and to assist former Soviet-bloc nations in rebuilding their economies and

forming democratic governments. Moreover, NATO discovered that to remain relevant in the new Europe and promote democratic values, it would have to take on

nontraditional military tasks such as peace operations and humanitarian assistance. Thus the need arose to reduce the number and size of Alliance headquarters and enable them to deal with these new missions. Similarly, the United States began to reduce its military presence, allowing and ultimately forcing the Europeans to take more responsibility for their own security.

In summit meetings between 1990 and 1996, NATO made a number of decisions to further speed change. A major step was to increase European representation on higher staffs and in senior billets. The Schaefer Plan, introduced in 1993, made cuts and changes in various senior positions. Many posts traditionally held by American flag officers were transferred to European counterparts. At the same time, NATO defense ministers

proposed the CJTF concept as a way to address new missions and reorganize the integrated military command structure.

The concept is an extension of broader efforts to enable Europeans to assume a more active role and take on a greater share of collective security. The fact that they are appearing to step up to the plate in the military arena is a natural progression of what has been occurring in the last decade. European cooperation and collective leadership is not new, as demonstrated by the euro currency, Chunnel, Euro-Corps, and elimination of border controls. The most significant decision relating to security affairs was the endorsement of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) at the Madrid Summit in 1994. The defense initiative is essentially a European concept designed to allow member nations to voice their opinions on collective security and defense matters. It not only represents a recommitment to the importance of the Alliance but provides separate yet complimentary identities for European national defense policies. CJTF will help meet these objectives and provide a bridge to the Western European Union (WEU) as NATO transforms its command structure. The ESDI concept grew out of this agreement and a decision to develop WEU as a defense component of the European Union (EU). According to a NATO statement:

At the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Berlin in June 1996, NATO foreign ministers referred to the building of a European Security and Defense Identity within NATO as an essential part of the adaptation of Alliance structures. Its purpose is to enable all European allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities of the Alliance as an expression of their shared responsibilities and to reinforce the transatlantic partnership.

CJTF and ESDI were both obvious attempts to strengthen the European defense capability of the Alliance through WEU. At the Berlin Summit in 1996 the Alliance approved an agreement that cleared the path for CJTFs to be used as a vehicle for the growth of ESDI.

New Structures

NATO has already undergone major changes. Since 1991 overall forces have been reduced up to 40 percent with land forces down 25 percent, combat aircraft 30 percent, and U.S. strength cut by 66 percent from 300,000 to 100,000 in Europe. With respect to the integrated command structure (see figure 1), NATO first reduced the number of MNCs from three to two and Allied Command Europe (ACE) decreased MSCs from four to

CJTF and ESDI were both obvious attempts to strengthen the Alliance through WEU

Figure 1. Former Command Structure

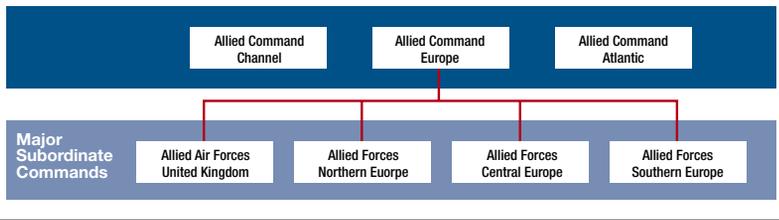


Figure 2. Current Command Structure

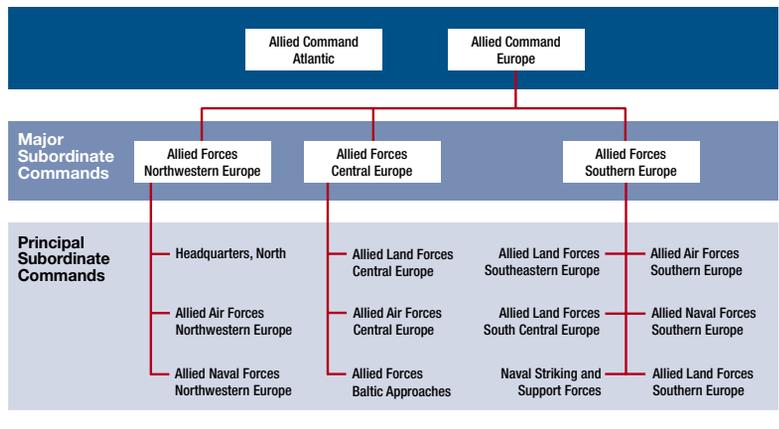
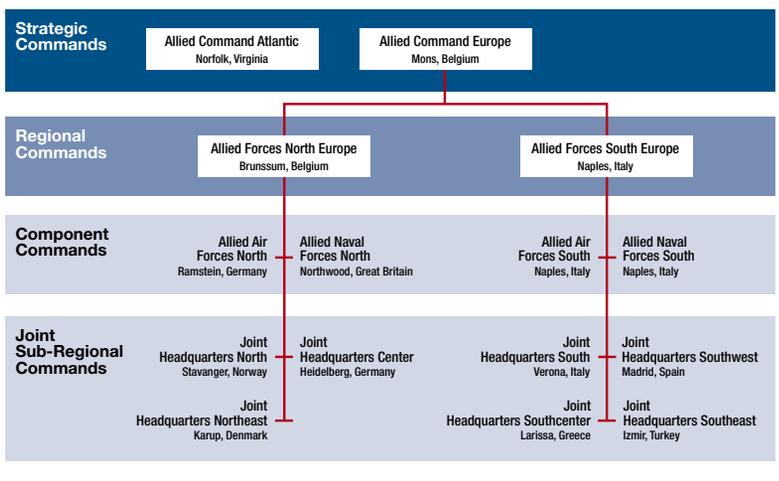


Figure 3. New Command Structure



three (figure 2 above). Under the new European command structure, ACE becomes a strategic command and MSCs will be redesignated as regional commands as shown in figure 3.

PSCs, specifically within ACE, are the key to the future structure of NATO. Their number will be reduced to eleven commands together with seven JSRCs and four component commands, all

subordinate to two regional commands (each with naval and air components). In order to meet political needs, JSRCs will be either established or relocated to ensure that each member nation has its share of headquarters. No JSRC will have an area of responsibility, but rather will have expertise in the region in which the headquarters is located (figure 3). Thus, when viewed in conjunction with the transformation of the command structure, CJTFs should prove better means of reorganizing JSRCs and serve as operational headquarters to address a range of missions in each region.

In implementing a task force framework, the Alliance should draw on lessons of the past. CJTFs have been successful for the United States and other nations and should be incorporated in NATO operations. In this manner the Allies can rebuild their organizations based on structures that have proven useful in myriad operations, and they can keep the United States involved as a subject matter expert. NATO should anticipate that CJTFs will be multiservice, multinational task forces capable of rapid deployment for limited duration peace operations conducted beyond the borders of the Alliance and under the control of NATO or WEU. As stated at the 1994 summit:

The CJTF initiative . . . is intended to provide NATO a powerful new organizational concept for responding to crises by rapid deployment of forces. This initiative is designed to: (1) satisfy the requirements of the NATO Strategic Concept for more flexible and mobile forces; (2) provide a vehicle for NATO participation in crisis management and peace support operations; (3) facilitate operations with non-NATO nations such as the [Partnership for Peace members]; and (4) permit the use of NATO infrastructure and forces to support the evolution of ESDI.

Although no official CJTF structure has been adopted, draft plans appear to call for some form of a nucleus element. When a full-scale task force headquarters is required for an operation, an appropriate nucleus would be selected from an existing NATO headquarters based on the nature and location of the mission. This core element would then be augmented with added staff modules to complete the capabilities of CJTF. As one NATO statement explained:

In the course of developing the CJTF concept, the Allies have agreed that for NATO applications the "nuclei" of CJTF headquarters will be established on a permanent basis within selected Alliance headquarters. The WEU could request the use of a CJTF headquarters for an operation under its command. In some circumstances WEU operations could also be conducted with CJTF headquarters formed around a nucleus from headquarters answerable to the WEU.



NATO

The Chairman with NATO chiefs of defense staff.

JSRCs are already joint by nature and combined by virtue of the fact they are NATO headquarters

New Challenges

NATO may find that a nuclei concept is insufficient. PSCs (soon to be JSRCs) are a better means of forming and organizing CJTFs, not just as nuclei of possible CJTFs, but as standing task forces—even better, standing combined joint commands. While headquarters are being relocated and restructured to incorporate Spain and new members, JSRCs should be organized as standing combined joint commands that can deploy entirely. They are already joint by nature and combined by virtue of the fact they are NATO headquarters.

The position of U.S. European Command with regard to the CJTF structure is that PSCs should serve as potential task force headquarters but only with the addition of RC modules. This is a viable option; but PSCs/JSRCs should be reorganized based on a functional CJTF structure.

Such commands should be structured functionally, with joint force land component, joint force maritime component, joint force air component, and joint special operations task force commanders, and any other component as required. A functionally structured command would do well in a combined environment because there are no real service components. No Army, Navy, and Air Force commander would be dual-hatted as a service and component commander, as can often happen with joint task forces. Removing dual-hatted positions eliminates conflicts of interest by commanders who seek to use their own forces. Additionally, logistical support would not be an issue because it is already provided through national channels, just as NATO currently operates. For example, the land forces commander could control units from any number of nations during an operation. But in peacetime, no land forces would actually belong to the NATO JSRC. Instead they would remain under national control.

By establishing a select few JSRCs as standing combined joint commands, NATO would possess multiple, deployable command and control elements that could routinely train together. They could also concentrate their training by region and mission, which coincides with the concept of headquarters no longer having areas of responsibility but serving as experts in specified sectors. Training daily as a combined joint staff would benefit JSRCs and the Alliance. It would also help in command and control of the first category of forces available to support task forces—immediate and rapid reaction forces.

Moreover, assigned personnel would know the command would deploy as a unit. There would be no anxiety over who is going and who is not as occurs with ad hoc and nuclei or module concepts. In a period of smaller militaries and more frequent deployments, such prior knowledge enhances unit cohesion and performance. In crisis the Alliance could turn to highly trained, highly motivated staffs who are subject matter experts within a specific region.

By restructuring and realigning headquarters, NATO can also reduce costs and manpower. In addition, the selection of the JSRC level as the appropriate command level for the CJTF concept advances both U.S. and ESDI positions that JSRCs must be nationally funded. This would allow Europeans to assume a greater share of the cost of their own security.

Forming standing combined joint commands, structured as CJTFs within a new integrated military command arrangement, has three significant advantages. First, it will provide the Alliance with more mobile and flexible headquarters capable of conducting limited contingency operations. Second, it will allow these commands to train together daily with the same personnel they would deploy with. Third, it adheres to the policy of eliminating areas of responsibility and allows JSRC level commands to become experts in specific regions.

JFQ