

U.S. Central Command



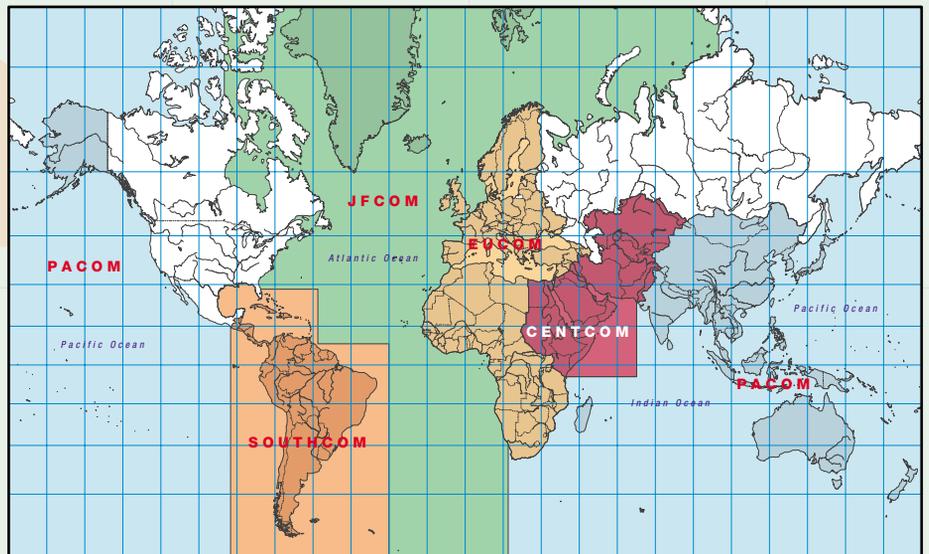
The CENTCOM area of responsibility includes 25 nations, ranging from Egypt in the west to Pakistan in the east, and from Kazakhstan in the north to Kenya in the south. It encompasses some 428 million people who represent 17 different ethnic groups, speak six major languages with hundreds of dialects, and live under distinct forms of government and various standards of living. The four subregions that make up the area are the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq (Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen), the Northern Red Sea (Egypt and Jordan), the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia, and Sudan), and South and Central Asia (Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan).

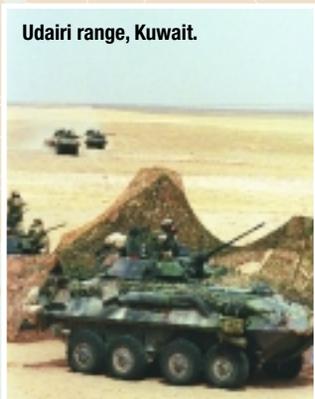
The mission of CENTCOM is to promote and protect U.S. interests, ensure uninterrupted access to regional resources and markets, assist regional friends in providing for their own security and regional stability, promote the attainment of a just and lasting Middle East Peace, counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other transnational threats, and rapidly deploy joint and combined forces to support the full range of military operations.

CENTCOM Headquarters, which has a staff of over 900 personnel, is located at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Its five component commands are: U.S. Army Forces Central Command (ARCENT), headquartered at Fort McPherson, Georgia; U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT), headquartered in Bahrain; U.S. Marine Forces Central Command (MARCENT), headquartered at Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii; U.S. Central Command Air Forces (CENTAF), headquartered at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina; and Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. **JFQ**



1= Combat Camera (Urn Varhegyi)





DOD (R.D. Ward)



U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility



U.S. Navy (Gregory S. McCreaahy)

See the CENTCOM homepage (<http://www.centcom.mil>) for details on the area of responsibility, component commands, theater strategy, subregional strategies, and other issues, or contact:

U.S. Central Command
 ATTN: Public Affairs Office
 7115 South Boundary Boulevard
 MacDill Air Force Base
 Florida 33621-510

Telephone: (813) 828-5895
 Fax: (813) 840-5692

Crossing Boundaries

Commanders in Chief and Areas of Interest

By RICHARD A. LECHOWICH

Unified commands encompass areas of responsibility (AOR) with many millions of people and diverse cultures, languages, topography, and climate.¹ U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) extends from the Horn of Africa to South Asia, a region which is home to three great monotheistic religions. Cultures vary from African tribes to desert Bedouins to the peoples of Central Asia who speak 16 major languages and more than 100 dialects. Given this demographic and environmental complexity, the Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command (CINCCENT), is confronted daily with a myriad of political-military issues. The intricacy of this situation is increased exponentially by the requirement to shape the strategic environment through long-term engagement. In addition, CENTCOM is the only command which is

not headquartered in its AOR and does not own forces, although this does not eliminate the need for engagement. U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) both face major geographic demands and demographic heterogeneity that require the application of resources over vast spaces.

Imperative for Coordination

CINCs are stretching resources to accomplish missions within their areas of responsibility. Planning is intensified because of the synchronization of multiple regional commands, component commands, and defense agencies across the unified command plan. In CENTCOM, most nations in the area of interest demand daily coordination with other commands.² For example, the Middle East peace process permeates the political-military atmosphere of the entire AOR, but Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and North Africa fall in the EUCOM area of responsibility. Turkey influences not only the Middle East

Lieutenant Colonel Richard A. Lechowich, USA, is Saudi Arabia/Bahrain desk officer in the Near East Branch, Politico-Military Division, Directorate of Plans and Policy at U.S. Central Command.



Secretary Cohen in Sinai.

CH-46 in Turkey, Avid Response.

DDO (J.D. Ward)

U.S. Navy (Leland B. Corner)

but also the politics of the newly independent states of Central Asia. Moreover, it is in the EUCOM area of responsibility. The Indo-Pakistani situation has become more tense and

cross-boundary cooperation between CINCs stems from continuing or imminent conflicts

violent. In addition to pitting two well-armed conventional powers against each another, friction on the Indian subcontinent risks escalating conflict between the latest members of the nuclear club. This threat requires national level management and specific actions by CENTCOM for Pakistan and by PACOM for India.

Cross-boundary cooperation between CINCs stems from several causes. These include critical threats from continuing or imminent conflicts. The Arab-Israeli conflict, Operation Northern Watch, and the India-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir exemplify international tensions that require close monitoring and absorb vast resources with little immediate progress to show for the effort. CINCs must also cooperate to maintain programs and institutional mechanisms. Examples include the Partnership for Peace (PFP) and Middle East

peace process. Transnational issues such as refugees, desertification, water supply, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental degradation also call for cooperation.

International tension and violence require the most monitoring and absorb many resources. When issues such as the India-Pakistan nuclear testing are serious enough to engage the National Command Authorities (NCA), an interagency working group may be formed to coordinate U.S. policy. Presidential Decision Directive 56, entitled "Managing Complex Contingency Operations," is one tool used by NCA to bring this group together.³ Its predecessor was National Security Decision

peace process. Transnational issues such as refugees, desertification, water supply, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and environmental degradation also call for cooperation.



Medical supplies for Brilliant Lion, Cameroon.



USS Enterprise during Desert Fox.

86th Communications Squadron (J. Snow)

U.S. Navy (Brian McLaughlin)

Cross-Boundary Coordination

When a crisis transcends regional boundaries the onus is put on the Joint Staff to respond. However, it delegates immediate synchronization to the warfighting CINCs involved. CENTCOM does this through the activation of its crisis action team and operates 24 hours a day to ensure that all operations are coordinated and deconflicted. In addition to immediate crisis response, major commands (MACOMs) organize cells to coordinate ongoing operations across boundaries. Two such efforts are Operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch. The latter is a CENTCOM-only operation, originating in the states of the southern Arabian Gulf with the mission of enforcing the southern no-fly zones. The implied mission of protecting the Shi'a of southern Iraq and preventing large scale Iraqi movement to threaten the southern Gulf is also partly assigned to Joint Task Force Southwest Asia. This organization is largely based in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait while, conversely, Northern Watch is based in Turkey and has the mission of enforcing the northern no-fly zone and, by extension, protecting Kurdish groups from the Iraqi regime.

These concurrent operations must be coordinated on airspace, electronic warfare, targeting, intelligence, and policy to ensure flight safety and prevent friendly fire incidents. They accomplish these objectives through conversations among commanders, message traffic, and most importantly by exchanging liaison officers. A small EUCOM cell is situated at CENTCOM headquarters with responsibility for information exchange and managing the friction of the situation. It is integrated into the Operations Directorate at CENTCOM and coordinates one of the most active combat theaters in the world. Reliable, secure, and redundant communications are the key.

The Hierarchy

Other situations that require CINC cross-boundary coordination are engagement activities with either long historical roots, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the India-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir, or follow-on activities from crisis operations such as Desert

Directive 311, "U.S.-Soviet Defense and Military Relations," which established such a group in 1988 to ensure that defense and military contacts with the Soviet Union conformed to the American position. It also required that all "public and private statements of U.S. policy, visits and proposed agreements developed in the course of discussions" be vetted through the interagency group. This guidance will then be passed through the Joint Staff to the

concerned CINCs for action and inclusion in their planning.

The second factor is national policy that supersedes geographic and AOR boundaries and requires CINCs to coordinate on programs and institutional mechanisms. Examples include PFP and the multinational forces and the observer mission in Sinai.

Fox. NCA has directed that CINCs write theater engagement plans (TEPs) to institutionalize the scope of their activities within AORs. The plan requires that all activities be examined to ensure support for national objectives. Although grounded in common sense, this process is more demanding than it appears. To achieve this endstate CENTCOM uses the theater strategy planning system (TSPS).

The TSPS for CENTCOM is modeled on the more mature system used in EUCOM. Both include subregional working groups that meet at least once a year. Staffs can attend the meetings of other CINCs to provide visibility and cross-fertilization and to save time and money. However, staffs must also have adequate information to represent their commands at the working groups. CINC representatives must be prepared to discuss exercises, training, security assistance, exercise-related and military construction, international education and training, and humanitarian assistance, to name some examples. Because this data is a moving target, capturing and accu-

crossing boundaries increases the difficulty at each organizational chart crease

rately representing it across directorates within the same command is challenging task for Staffs.

When a regional working group cannot solve a problem, activities can be coordinated at the national level in other working groups. One such issue is security assistance weapons transfers. A simplified type of interagency working group meets regularly or as needed to consider weapons release requests from worldwide sources. CINCs submit input after internal staffing to the group, which takes a formal vote. Occasionally the interagency working group will defer, delay, request clarification, or attach conditions to a proposed sale. The conditions are relayed to CINCs through the Joint Staff for additional coordination. Weapons transfers can cross



Handling aid supplies in Mozambique, Atlas Response.

786th Communications Squadron (Ken Bergmann)

command boundaries and often require different commands to explain their positions. The process can also be contentious because two CINCs may have different positions on the same system. For example, advanced air-to-air missiles may be favored by EUCOM but not by U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). Because these weapons require Mode IV IFF transponders, which are standard in NATO but not in Latin America, there would be disagreement concerning their utility for each AOR.

Interagency working groups are usually event-driven and entail regional or country-specific issues that necessitate policy decisions, such as defense cooperation agreements. While the Office of the Secretary of Defense is charged with negotiating such agreements, many operational details are initially delegated to CINCs. Once a workable draft is staffed by a command and the Pentagon, it is forwarded to other concerned agencies for coordination. After a round or two of comments, the draft agreement goes to an interagency working group for approval. The meetings are normally chaired by a representative of the National Security Council and decisions are generally reached through consensus. The Joint Staff represents the interests of commands and serves as the

conduit between them in formulating specific DOD positions. When required or requested, the Joint Staff may facilitate contact between commands, who may send representatives to working group meetings to support presentations when the issues are particularly contentious or complex.

Conferences can be useful for cross-boundary coordination. In addition to planning, recent topics at events proposed or held under CENTCOM aegis include environmental security, exercise scheduling, planning, and cooperative defense against weapons of mass destruction. Participants vary like the topics, but cooperation among unified commands is important in almost every case. For example, communications, reconnaissance, intelligence, early warning, and location capability make U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM) support vital in any contingency operation and in most peacetime engagement.

The transnational issues—terrorism, drug trafficking, environmental degradation—demand national level policy guidance and cross-boundary unified command cooperation.⁴ For example, dirty money can be moved across any boundary with the click of a mouse, requiring CENTCOM, EUCOM,

and SOUTHCOM to assist host nations. A comprehensive counterdrug program calls for numerous coordinated programs such as crop substitution, police training, assisting host nation legal systems, counterinsurgency training and assistance, and interdiction. Drugs originating in the CENTCOM area of responsibility could be detected by SPACECOM, survive crop eradication, and be tracked across the AOR in transit to EUCOM for transshipment. EUCOM would then monitor the movement while alerting

engagement planners from key agencies can outweigh the cost, particularly when the agenda is disseminated and participants are prepared. Players normally include CINCs, selected staff members, services, Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Country team members and Department of State staffers are also valuable. Including involved interagency group members provides additional buy-in from important players, but DOD cannot force their involvement. Additionally, alternative views expressed by na-

The X Factor

In addition to CINC representatives for short-term working groups, MACOMs have liaison officers assigned or attached to staffs. Some examples include the CENTCOM representative at the U.K. Permanent Joint Headquarters and coalition-building officers employed during crises and contingencies. This representation has been formalized. A U.S. officer is permanently stationed in Britain and represents the command for purposes of policy, planning, and operations. This link highlights the role of constant clear communications among coalition partners. The difficulties of creating a common effort among one nation's services are well known. Adding another country with language, cultural, training, doctrinal, and logistic differences increases the level of difficulty. Agreeing on a common definition of the mission can take days rather than hours when language, culture, and doctrine diverge. Even countries with a common language and fifty years in the same alliance structure have problems meshing operations. Yet the British provide historical insight and alternative viewpoints on the region.

The prolonged institutional network NATO provides has helped CINCs execute combined operations. By contrast, responding to Iraqi aggression since 1991 has resulted in building ad hoc coalitions. Faced with Baghdad's refusal to comply with the will of the international community, the United States has been forced to create a consensus for the use of force. Because nations from all over the world have been involved, CENTCOM has needed to coordinate not only with other commands, but with the Joint Staff and other agencies.

When the international community decided to act, the Department of State began soliciting friends and allies to participate. As countries agreed in principle to join the coalition, CENTCOM was notified and the Joint Staff began preliminary planning. The headquarters planners evaluated the type of forces offered and the political implications of national participation. CENTCOM staff members then performed mission analysis and kept the Joint Staff informed. Based on this analysis,



C-130 crew in Marrakesh during Blue Sands '00/'01.

U.S. Air Force (Heather Cope)

friendly law enforcement agencies. Finally, either SOUTHCOM or U.S. Joint Forces Command could help domestic law enforcement agencies interdict the shipment and arrest the perpetrators. This description simplifies the intelligence, communications, and organizations but indicates the complexity of such events.

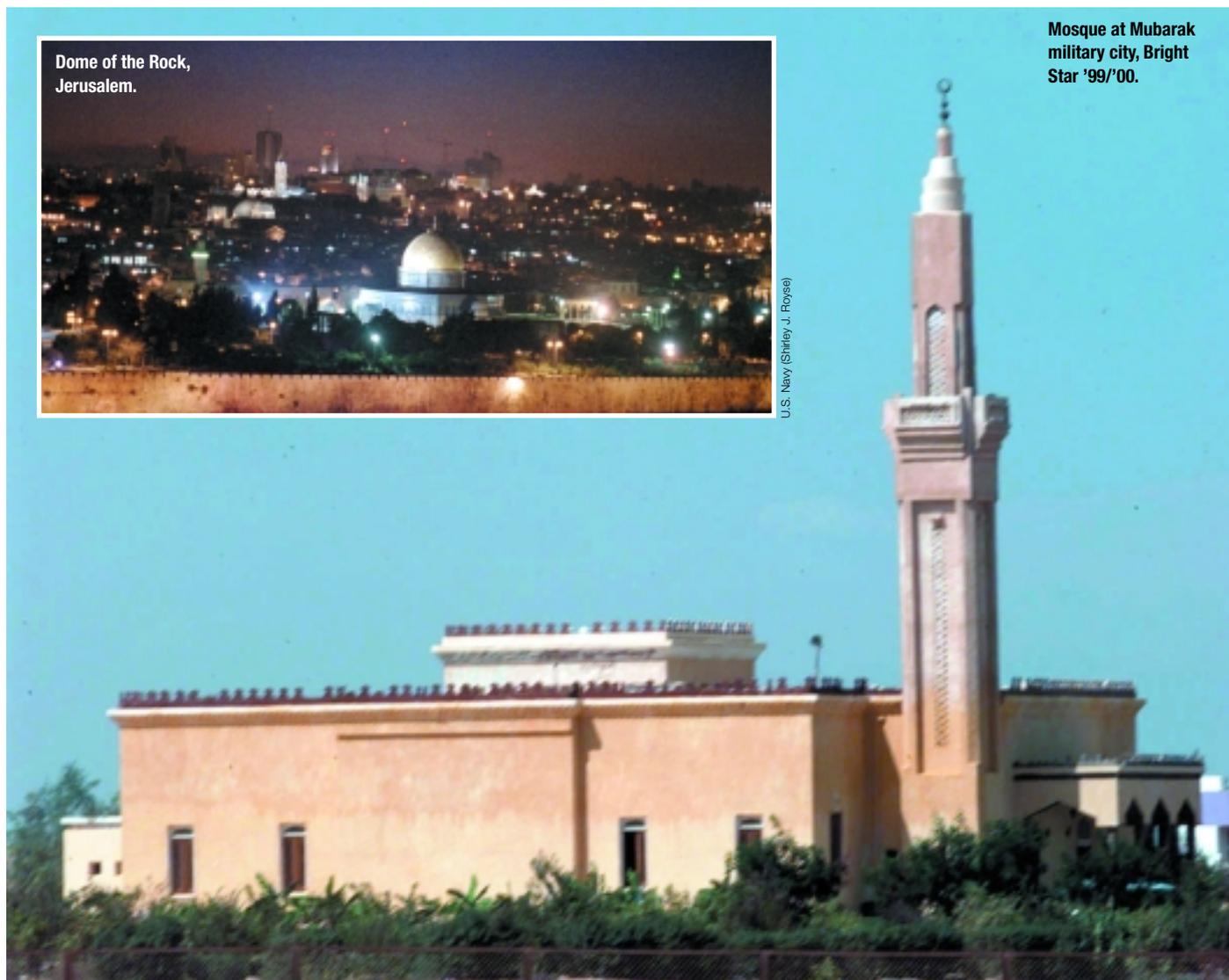
Planning conferences also serve as a tool for bringing together commanders and their staffs across boundaries. Among the advantages of these conferences are regular scheduling, the ability to attract a wide audience, and concentration of effort. The disadvantage is taking players out of the loop, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of other events. Bringing together the

tional-level participants help more focused commands to reach agreement. The biannual EUCOM conference on the Partnership for Peace program brings together American and foreign program coordinators and managers from the Joint Staff, services, and other agencies and focus on policies, procedures, and activities. Moreover, managers from CENTCOM also participate, including PFP representatives from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.



Dome of the Rock,
Jerusalem.

U.S. Navy (Shirley J. Foyse)



Mosque at Mubarak
military city, Bright
Star '99/'00.

55th Signal Company (Michael Karp)

the Department of State formally invited participation by the host nation. The Joint Staff notified the command of a member's location (like PACOM for New Zealand). Commands then developed load planning, strategic lift requirements, logistic support, command relationships, radio frequency deconfliction, and other details. CENTCOM would then contact the U.S. defense representative (USDR) in the host nation. This was often the individual best suited for direct coordination, based on his location in the American embassy. USDR was useful in helping coordinate the specific command relationships and in obtaining security clearances from the host nation. These national clearances then had to be

translated into the equivalent U.S. clearance. Access to classified information is a critical enabler in combined operations, and those nations without it were severely limited in their ability to contribute in a timely manner.

The liaison officers and advance parties usually moved by commercial air once the details of their country clearances, billeting, messing, and other matters were worked out between the losing command and CENTCOM. Due to small numbers of personnel and equipment items, this process was quick and allowed coalition partners to

establish themselves in forward headquarters. Movement of main bodies and equipment was much more complicated and again involved the Joint Staff, U.S. Transportation Command, CENTCOM, and losing commands. All deployment details passed among coalition liaison, CENTCOM, other commands, and USDRs, who were also often the answer of last resort concerning host nation issues. In theater, CENTCOM took responsibility for these details but kept the Joint Staff and concerned commands informed.

Another instance of a combined force is the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). Drawing from several African nations, its purpose is preemptive deployment on the African



Explosive ordnance disposal training in Kuwait.

1st Combat Camera Squadron (James D. Mossman)

continent as invited for peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian operations. Efforts to train, equip, and maintain ACRI forces involve elements from EUCOM, CENTCOM, and other nations.⁵ Exercises and training all require cross-boundary communication.

Making Coordination Work

Practical experience and organizational theory indicate that as the number of organizational boundaries

as the number of organizational boundaries grows, the difficulty of coordinating increases

grows, the difficulty of coordinating increases exponentially. These obstacles can be overcome through planning and sheer hard work with assistance from technology. But even with new information technology, seamless staff coordination is still a goal, not a

reality. Within staffs, action officers (AOs) communicate face-to-face or by telephone, e-mail, or fax to attain operational linkage. Once a common operating picture is obtained at headquarters, the next level of challenge arises. Unified commanders must bring together component staffs. In the case of CENTCOM, this means unifying the efforts of distant organizations. U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command (NAVCENT), is headquartered in Bahrain and U.S. Marine Forces, Central Command (MARCENT), is located in Hawaii (an 8-hour time difference from Tampa) while Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) is collocated with CENTCOM headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base. Even though U.S. Army Forces Central Command (ARCENT) and U.S. Central

Command Air Forces (CENTAF) are both situated in the same time zone as headquarters, they are located in Georgia and South Carolina, respectively. It is worth noting that the area of responsibility is 8 hours ahead of the headquarters, giving MARCENT a 16-hour time differential. Each of these organizations faces the same internal challenges for unity of effort, focus, and information flow. Moreover, each component is training, planning, organizing, and running operations in the area of responsibility.

CINCs and their component commanders can overcome this impasse with direct communications by telephone, video teleconferencing, or e-mail. This clarifies the situation among



F-15C patrolling no-fly zone, Northern Watch.

U.S. Air Force (Vince Parker)

general and flag rank officers. Such communications also must be furnished to directors and other staff principals lest impetus is lost. Information technology can assist staffs in this effort. TSPS includes the TEP management information system. Currently, it can only be accessed by the owners in that specific staff. However, as users continue to define the desired software characteristics, the contractor can write a program to permit sharing a global database by providing either total or selected visibility to designated users.

Finally, the Joint Staff serves as the primary conduit for CINCs to make cross-boundary coordination work. Again, AOs perform the day-to-day business of coordinating strategic

F-14D over Kuwaiti coastline.



U.S. Navy

NOTES

¹ Joint Pub 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines an area of responsibility as "The geographical area associated with a combatant command within which a combatant commander has authority to plan and conduct operations."

² *Ibid.* An area of interest is "That area of concern to the commander, including the area of influence, areas adjacent thereto, and extending into enemy territory to the objectives of current or planned operations. This area also includes areas occupied by enemy forces who could jeopardize the accomplishment of the mission." The area of interest herein describes those countries which are not in the area of responsibility but whose actions can affect mission accomplishment and/or the political-military environment.

³ PDD 56, "Managing Complex Contingency Operations" (May 1997), directs the Deputies Committee to "establish appropriate interagency working groups to assist in policy development, planning, and execution of complex contingency operations." Cooperation among agencies has been difficult to achieve in the past, as seen in the civil-military efforts in Vietnam. This directive strives to make interagency coordination mandatory, contrary to the instincts of many agencies.

⁴ Joint Pub 3-08, *Interagency Coordination During Joint Operations*, contains useful models on organization, planning, coordinating, and executing such operations.

⁵ See Dan Henk and Steven Metz, *The United States and the Transformation of African Security: The African Crisis Response Initiative and Beyond* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1997).

⁶ Frederick M. Lorenz and Edward J. Erickson, *The Euphrates Triangle: Security Implications of the Southeastern Anatolia Project* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1999), p. 52.

interests and feeding command concerns to the Pentagon. Most issues stay within directorates, but when more complex issues arise, interdirectorate or interagency staffing can be required in Washington where the process becomes more formal and is addressed through processes described above.

Although every aspect of U.S. policy and engagement is affected by multiple commands, conducting operations that cross unified boundaries are among the most difficult missions that CINCs face.⁶ Problems in coordination, communication, distance, and organizational theory combine to make these missions more complex than organizational charts indicate. Increased friction within and between commands is greater when allies are involved, even in NATO where this Nation has had a longstanding relationship.

Commands have formal and informal procedures to deal with such challenges. Education, exchange programs,

direct communication among commanders, and cooperation among headquarters, the Joint Staff, and working groups play a critical role. When lives or mission accomplishment are at stake, such as in Iraq, friction is usually overcome by hard work. Ongoing missions with lower threat levels, such as preparing ACRI for deployment, can be approached more deliberately but with no less dedication.

Informally, the staffs of all organizations involved interact as much as possible to resolve problems. Information technology helps by weakening the bureaucratic barriers but has not erased them. Crossing the invisible boundaries that separate CINC responsibilities is perhaps even more difficult today than when Clausewitz first formalized the concept of friction. Such battlefield seams as cross-boundary situations are a weak point for enemy exploitation. Commanders on all levels will still have to spend additional effort to ensure that these seams are covered. **JFQ**