

BEYOND Goldwater-Nichols

By PETER W. CHIARELLI

Faced with organizing for a war, President Franklin Roosevelt informally established the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in 1942 and five years later the National Security Act institutionalized it—albeit in a diluted form—as an advisory committee to the President and the Secretary of Defense. At the time Congress insisted that the chiefs, though members of JCS, retain their responsibilities for organizing, equipping, and training the services. This dual-hatted role along with the modest size and power of the Joint Staff has been criticized by successive reforms ever since then.

Civil and military leaders including President Dwight Eisenhower, General Omar Bradley, and General Maxwell Taylor were

critical of JCS. Eisenhower named the Rockefeller Committee to study defense organization. In 1957 the committee said there was an “excessive workload . . . [and a] difficult mix of functions and loyalties” and blamed “the system and not the members” for the poor quality of advice [the JCS] provided to the National Command Authorities (NCA).¹

Eisenhower could not initiate reform. It took two unsuccessful wars (Korea and Vietnam), a failed hostage rescue mission (Desert 1), and criticism from a sitting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to bring about major reorganization. When the House of Representatives began hearings on de-

defense reorganization in 1982, the United States was engaged in the largest and most costly peacetime military build-up in the history of the Nation.

Toward Goldwater-Nichols

Three months before he retired as CJCS, General David Jones, USAF, proposed reforms in an article entitled “Why the Joint Chiefs of Staff Must Change.” At a minimum, he indicated, the United States needed to strengthen the Chairman’s role, limit service staff involvement in the joint process, and broaden training, experience, and rewards for joint duty.² The Jones plan was moderate yet significant in that he was still serving as Chairman at the time.

One month later, General Edward Meyer, the Army Chief of Staff, announced his support for the Jones reforms and went even farther. Meyer called for abolishing JCS

Summary

Service chiefs wear two hats: as advisors to the National Command Authorities and as advocates of parochial service interests. As a result divided loyalties have traditionally barred the Joint Chiefs of Staff from providing timely and effective advice to the President and the Secretary of Defense. After troubling operational experiences in Korea, Vietnam, and the Iranian hostage rescue mission, a hue and cry arose over reforming—or even replacing—JCS as an institution. Following years of congressional hearings the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act neither ended dual-hatting nor replaced JCS. It has, however, strengthened the role of the Chairman and promoted jointness. Organizational realignment under Goldwater-Nichols has not offset resource allocation problems which are “what the services do 90 percent of the time.” Replacing JCS with a National Military Advisory Council, and the Joint Staff with a general staff, are two long overdue reforms.

This article is an abridged version of the co-winning entry in the 1993 CJCS Essay Competition which was written by the author while attending the National War College.



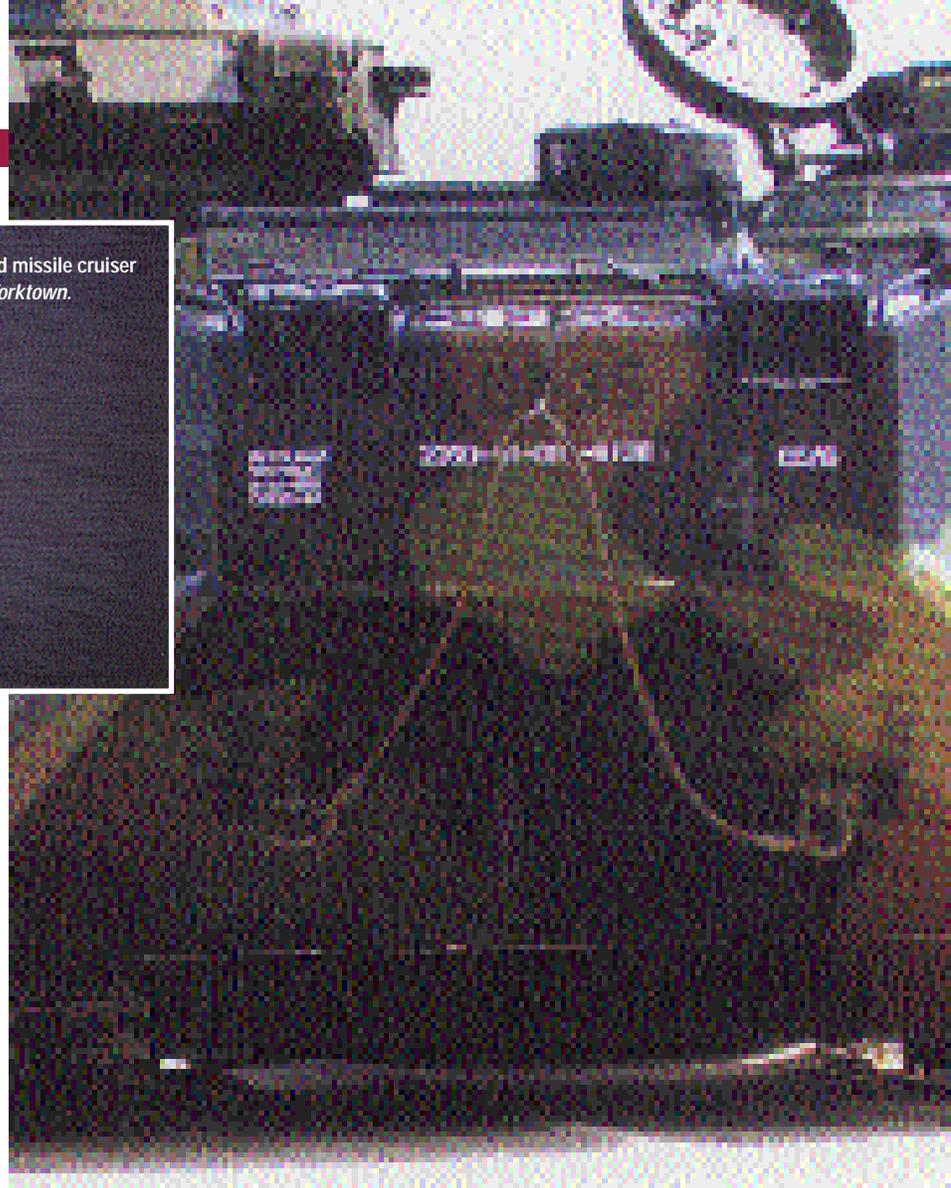
Guided missile cruiser
USS Yorktown.

U.S. Navy

and replacing it with a National Military Advisory Council (NMAC) composed of senior flag officers from each service, one civilian, and the Chairman. NMAC members would be distinguished retired or active four-star flag or general officers serving on terminal assignments.

Meyer thought it imperative to end dual-hatting and free the chiefs to focus more clearly on service responsibilities. The make-up of the NMAC would preserve the preeminent role of military leaders in advising the NCA. The members would not be dependent on, and never return to, their respective services. This stipulation would ensure military participation on the NMAC and largely eliminate the perceived conflict of interest present in dual-hatting.

Under the Meyer plan the Office of the Secretary of Defense would relinquish its leading role in policy and program development, although it would assume a major implementation role in both peace and wartime. In addition, the three service secretaries



would lose some voice in policy matters but would have a stronger position in developing current and future force capabilities. The commanders in chief (CINCs) of the combatant commands would present their requirements in a series of continuous exchanges with the NMAC to initiate change. Meyer thought the arrangement would allow CINCs to exercise considerable influence on near-term programs.

The proposals by Jones and Meyer prompted hearings by the House Committee on Armed Services which opened in 1982, and the Senate Armed Services Committee began parallel hearings in 1985. A review of the testimony shows that service affiliation was the most reliable predictor of support for reform. The Army witnesses were more likely to advocate reform than those from the Navy, as suggested by the testimony of one former CJCS, Admiral Thomas H. Moorer:

... just as surely as the swallows return to Capistrano, the studies and recommendations

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U.S. Navy (Jeff Elliott)

Marines landing during an amphibious assault exercise.

concerning the Joint Chiefs of Staff crop up at periodic intervals. . . . This makes about as much sense as reorganizing Congress or the Supreme Court to stop disagreements. . . . Everyone fancies himself a field marshal.³

The Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, also opposed reforms despite the fact that various independent reports were nearly unanimous in calling for strengthening JCS. A report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, for instance, mirrored the Jones proposals. The reports and hearings increased reform momentum in the face of Reagan administration opposition. Congressman Ike Skelton introduced a resolution which paralleled Meyer's plan, and a Senate staff study examined DOD organizational structures and decisionmaking procedures. These initiatives clearly signaled that some type of JCS reform was in the offing as the services mobilized witnesses and considerable political power in efforts to minimize change. Among other things, the military

witnesses testified that strengthening the Chairman's role would somehow threaten civilian control of the military; but this man-on-horseback ploy was generally discounted by the civilian witnesses who had far more to lose in a shift in power. The result was the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 which among its many provisions:

- ▼ revised and clarified the DOD operational chain of command and JCS functions and responsibilities to provide for more efficient use of defense resources (Title I)
- ▼ assigned the CJCS the role of chief military advisor, including responsibilities currently assigned to JCS collectively, established the position of Vice Chairman, and revised Joint Staff duties and selection procedures (Title II)
- ▼ established a joint officer specialty occupational category and personnel policies to provide incentives to attract officers to joint duty assignments (Title IV).⁴

While not abolishing JCS, creating a National Military Advisory Council or a general staff, or ending dual-hatting, the Goldwater-Nichols Act made CJCS the principal military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense. Title I strengthened the CINCs' role as commander of all assigned forces, regardless of service. Finally, Title IV attempted to strengthen the Joint Staff and the staffs of unified and specified commands by improving the quality of joint duty officers.

Generating Reform

Since World War II there have been several attempts at defense reorganization, but only two succeeded. In January 1947, the Army-Navy Compromise (or Norstad-Sherman) Plan fell short of the integration that many predicted would follow the war. The Armed Forces mobilized from little more than a cadre force in the interwar years to the largest and most powerful military machine in the history of the world. It experienced operational success in every theater. However, there were many who argued that inter-theater, intra-theater, and intra-service rifts both prolonged the war and cost lives (vis-à-vis Nimitz versus MacArthur, Navy versus Army, and Pacific versus European

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theaters). The most crucial lesson was the prominence of joint operations. Eisenhower stated that “separate ground, sea, and air warfare is gone forever” and warned that the Army-Navy Compromise Plan was the embodiment of “service systems of an era that is no more.”⁵

America abandoned isolationism and emerged as a superpower following World War II. At the same time the Armed Forces shrank from wartime strength levels and industrial conversion preoccupied the defense base. In addition, there was considerable pressure to cut defense budgets to fund civilian programs neglected during the war. The result was increased reliance on strategic nuclear weapons as opposed to large and expensive conventional forces.

The Army-Navy Compromise Plan in 1947 did little more than create a loose confederation among the services. Rather than integration, the Air Force became a separate service which further complicated attempts to institutionalize joint warfare. Legislation enacted in 1949, 1953, and 1958 strengthened the authority of the Secretary of Defense and increased his staff. Between 1958 and the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act the only significant organizational change occurred when the Commandant of the Marine Corps became a full member of JCS in 1978. Pressure to preserve service autonomy squelched all attempts at reform before the Jones and Meyer proposals.

Throughout many hearings that led to Goldwater-Nichols, operational failures in Vietnam and Desert 1 were cited as evidence of a need for reform. Even Grenada, where the United States *won*, gave serious concern over the lack of progress in executing joint operations. Inadequate joint doctrine, equipment interface problems, and more casualties than anticipated caused many within the Armed Forces to rethink the need for increased jointness. Listening to military leaders today it is difficult to believe there was ever opposition to JCS reorganization. Overall

Goldwater-Nichols is regarded as a success, given subsequent joint operations in Panama, the Persian Gulf, and Somalia.

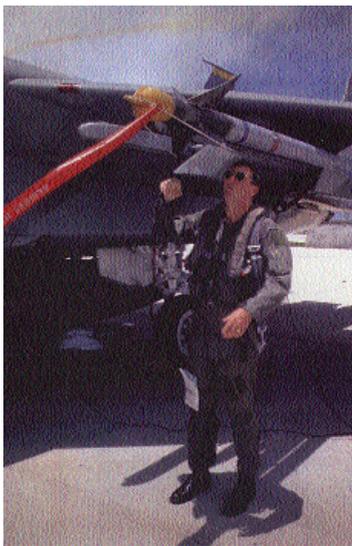
The Post-Cold War Era

For over two years the services have been downsizing to meet force levels recommended by CJCS and adopted by the Bush administration. Added budget savings proposed by the Clinton administration mean more cuts. Thus, while the military has enjoyed operational successes since 1986, shrinking budgets and force structures will make future operations more challenging. This is not unlike the situation in 1947 which was difficult for defense planners and placed pressure on the military to address “difficult questions being asked by Congress and the American people about their Armed Forces.”⁶ If the President, Congress, and citizenry perceive the Chairman is unable to provide direction, they will go elsewhere for answers. Few, if any, senior officers will advocate further JCS reform because they believe the Goldwater-Nichols Act fixed what needed to be fixed. Nevertheless, that legislation—like the National Security Act of 1947 which formally established JCS—was a compromise. Both stopped short of instituting far-reaching proposals. Before asking whether further reforms are necessary, an evaluation of Goldwater-Nichols is in order.

What Goldwater-Nichols Achieved

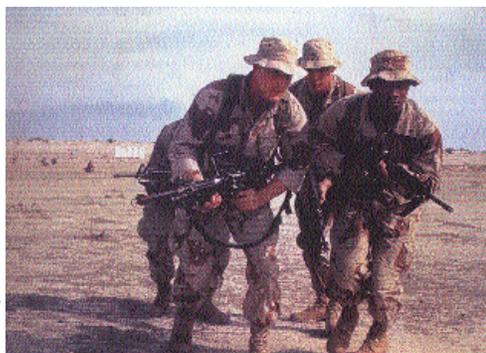
One seasoned congressional staffer, who was an architect of Goldwater-Nichols, contends that the most effective aspects of the 1986 law were directed at improving operational matters.⁷ This view is confirmed by both General Gordon Sullivan, Chief of Staff of the Army, and General Merrill McPeak, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who have emphasized that successful operational employments are proof that Goldwater-Nichols achieved what it intended to.⁸ When comparing the performance of the U.S. forces in Operations Just Cause, Desert Storm, and Provide Comfort with Vietnam, Desert I, and Grenada, it is hard to argue that change was not for the better.

The legislation specifically prohibited CJCS from exercising military command over the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the Armed Forces; that is, the Chairman is not in the chain of



2^d Combat Camera Squadron (Val Gempis)

Conducting a pre-flight check of F-15 during Exercise Tandem Thrust.



U.S. Navy

Marines advancing during Operation Red Reef III in Manta, Ecuador.

command between the President and CINCs. Nevertheless, two features of Goldwater-Nichols enable the Chairman to assert considerable operational authority. The law specifically designates CJCS as the principal military advisor to the NCA.

He is encouraged, although not required, to seek the advice of the chiefs and CINCs. If the chiefs are not unanimous, in the words of Goldwater-Nichols, “the Chairman shall, as he considers appropriate, inform the President, the National Security Council, or the Secretary of Defense of the range of military advice and opinion with respect to that matter.” Furthermore, the President may—as Reagan and Bush did—“direct that communications between the President or the Secretary of Defense and [the CINCs] be transmitted through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”

In general civilian experts and military leaders seem convinced that the Chairman’s role was buttressed by Goldwater-Nichols. But few could state with any certainty

whether the legislation has improved the quality of advice provided to the civilian leaders. According to one former senior DOD official, JCS “frequently arrive with their advice after the train has left the station. Events in the real world do not wait for the present JCS system,

which is four layers of staffing to reach a compromise acceptable to each of the four services.”⁹ Others counter that because CJCS has more autonomy he no longer has to gather individual service views and develop a corporate position.

While reorganization is credited for operational improvements, some debate over whether it is structural change alone or the persona of General Colin Powell, USA—the current CJCS who is regarded as the most powerful Chairman since General Maxwell

Taylor—that has been the more significant.¹⁰ But despite Powell’s accomplishments, or perhaps because of them, others voice the concern that power may have shifted too far in the direction of CJCS and the Joint Staff as a result of Goldwater-Nichols. To be sure, the legislation both enlarged the Joint Staff and gave it greater autonomy and enhanced responsibility. However, it specified that “the Joint Staff shall not operate or be organized as an overall Armed Forces general staff and shall have no executive authority.” Yet some complain about an “imperial Joint Staff” and the direct access which CINCs have to the NCA, Congress, and the Chairman without going through the service chiefs and their staffs.

Resource Advice

In contrast to operational matters, Goldwater-Nichols did little to help resource allocation according to one observer:

*My biggest disappointment is the Chairman’s failure to be more involved in resource allocation. Resource allocation is what the services do 90 percent of the time. We expected the Joint Staff to put together resource requirements from the CINCs and compare that list against the service POMs [Program Objective Memorandums]. The Chairman does not have the power to modify service POMs; however, he can use his position to recommend changes to the Secretary of Defense. That has not happened. It is the name of the game in peacetime. I think it is time we went to a single joint POM.*¹¹

General Meyer’s proposal in 1982 for reorganization was based in part on the inability of JCS to do a horizontal, rather than vertical, examination of resource issues. Today, Meyer cites reports that the Air Force would recommend a delay in C-17 procurement to satisfy a portion of its budget cut as proof that Goldwater-Nichols did not go far enough.¹² He believes a recommendation to delay or scale back this program should not be the Air Force’s alone: “The C-17 is being developed *by*, not *for*, the Air Force.”¹³ General McPeak expands upon this point:

*There may be a conflict in programmatic issues. Today the services rely on each other. If the Navy cuts increased sealift out of their budget, I have a problem because I can’t get everything the Air Force needs to the war. The Air Force relies on sealift to move much of its equipment. If I give up on the C-17, the Army has a problem. I could get along without the C-17, but the Army can’t.*¹⁴

if the President, Congress, and citizenry perceive the Chairman is unable to provide direction, they will go elsewhere for answers

Lieutenant General N. E. Ehlert, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies and Operations, at Headquarters, Marine Corps, also voices concern about the expanded role of CINCs and their staffs as contrasted with the reduced role of service staffs in POM formulation: “I worry that when you serve on a CINC’s staff you don’t have a long-range view—you are more concerned about short-term, day-to-day problems that can quickly become a crisis.”¹⁵

Roles and Missions

Some of the foregoing concern was echoed in bipartisan criticism of the Chairman’s “Roles and Missions Report.” (Goldwater-Nichols requires submission of such a review to the Secretary of Defense every three years.) Senator Sam Nunn had called for a thoroughgoing review aimed at cutting the “tremendous redundancy and duplication” in the military.¹⁶ After being briefed on the report, Representative Floyd Spence warned that

the services “may have missed a chance to direct their own fate. . . . Efforts to further reduce defense spending may lead to a politically driven outcome that neither the military or the Nation can afford.”¹⁷ Even Deputy Secretary of Defense William Perry said the report “was a good plan as far as it went, but it didn’t go very far.”¹⁸

At issue is distributing power among senior decisionmakers. As a former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy characterized this problem more than a decade ago:

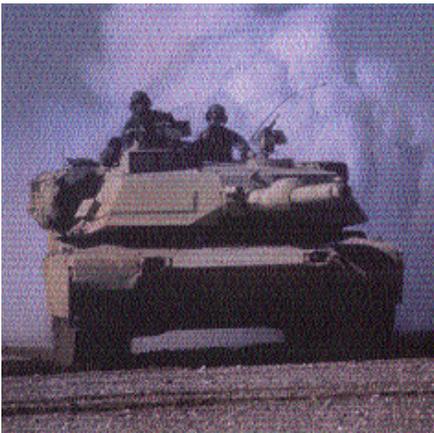
*The system is simply out of balance between service interests and joint interests. Because of the way it is set up there is a basic, built-in conflict of interest between the role of JCS members and the role of service chiefs. Indeed, it was deliberately designed that way to protect parochial service interests even at the expense of the joint interests of the Nation, the President, the Congress, and the Department of Defense.*¹⁹

This argument is central to those who have criticized the “Roles and Missions Report.” Although General Powell is adamant that his report to the Secretary of Defense “presents my views and is not a consensus

document,”²⁰ others suggest that it tackles few service sacred cows. In support of the Chairman’s view, however, Generals Sullivan and Ehlert cite the report’s proposal to designate Atlantic Command as headquarters for CONUS-based forces as proof the report is not a consensus document. Under this recommendation, Forces Command—a specified command responsible for all Army forces in the United States—will relinquish those forces to Atlantic Command: “While the services would retain their Title X responsibilities, the training and deploying of CONUS-based forces as a joint team would be a new mission for this expanded CINC. Unification of the Armed Forces, which began in 1947, would at last be complete.”²¹

General McPeak has dubbed the report a consensus document which is “at best tinkering at the margins.” He also said that “since there is a new administration with a new set of assumptions, we—or someone—will soon be preparing a new report. I’m afraid the military may not take the lead in the next review.”²² When compared to the other services, the Air Force had more at stake. The report looked at possibly consolidating space and strategic commands as well as at continental air defense, theater air defense, theater air interdiction, close air support, and aircraft requirements. These are all Title X functions that the Air Force wants to maintain, assume, or take the lead on. Recommendations perceived as consensus building by McPeak were likely viewed by Powell as what was needed “to maintain the maximum effectiveness of the Armed Forces.”²³ The question is not dissension when JCS formulates resource advice; it is whether those disagreements translate into predictable advice due to inherent conflicts of interest. If predictable—or perceived as such—the utility of the advice to the civilian leadership is diminished.

Goldwater-Nichols did not erase the view that the chiefs are prone to being parochial when providing resource advice. Now that the Chairman is the principal military advisor to the NCA, parochialism is only important if civilian leaders question CJCS advice. Asked to evaluate whether the



U.S. Army

M-1A1 Abrams laying down smoke during Operation Desert Storm.

report “stifled” his call for a review of roles and missions, Senator Nunn responded:

*No, I don't think the problem is Colin Powell. I think there are two Colin Powell reports. Phase one report really was what I think he believed and phase two was what he compromised in order to get it through the chiefs. So it's not a matter of one individual of Colin Powell [sic]. It's got to be every member of the chiefs.*²⁴

The Joint Staff

Prior to Goldwater-Nichols the Joint Staff was not perceived as elite and assignment to it was not considered a desirable career step. The system was characterized as stifling initiative since Joint Staff officers were dependent upon their services for advancement. But Title IV instituted the Joint Specialty Officer (JSO) designation among provisions intended to improve the Joint Staff and foster joint culture. Prerequisites for JSO designation are graduation from an accredited Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) program and completion of a joint duty tour. The legislation approved a limited number of designated joint duty assignments. In addition, Goldwater-Nichols contained two other provisions to improve the Joint Staff:

- ▼ officers who are serving in, or have served in, joint duty assignments are expected as a group to be promoted at a rate not less than that for all officers of the service in the same grade and competitive category

- ▼ officers may not be selected for promotion to brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half) unless they have served in a joint duty assignment.

General Powell credits Title IV with making the Joint Staff one of the best staffs in the world, and he sees JPME and joint tours as key to improving the quality of officers assigned to the Joint Staff. Furthermore, he states that “the authority given to the Chairman to review promotion lists from a joint perspective has paid enormous dividends in enhancing jointness. I am confident that without the power of legislation, we would not have seen the progress made over the past six years.”²⁵

Many observers agree with the Chairman and are convinced that Title IV has improved both the quality of the officers serving on the Joint Staff and their work. General Ehlert has noted that: “[The Marine Corps] used to send officers who were retiring to work on the Joint Staff—not since Goldwater-Nichols. Now we send our sharpest folks and so do the other services.”²⁶

Nevertheless, the provision requiring completion of a joint assignment before promotion to flag rank will if it is not amended soon cause some potentially serious problems for all services. Congress enacted temporary exemptions and waivers during the transition to full implementation of Title IV. The two most important waivers, *joint equivalency* and *servicing-in*, expire on January 1, 1994. Without these waivers “the current trend suggests that in 1994, nearly one-half of those selected for brigadier general will not be qualified to serve in an Army position in their initial tour as a general officer. Instead, they must serve an initial two-year joint tour.”²⁷ This is not just a single service issue; in fact the Army is in the middle of the pack compared with other services. The only way to promote officers in this situation is by “good of the service” (GOS) waivers from the Secretary of Defense. If not, as Title IV goes into effect, their first assignment as flag officers will be a two-year joint tour. Unless service cultures change, such officers would fall behind their joint qualified contemporaries who go into service-specific operational assignments (e.g., assistant division commanders). This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the segment of the population given credit for JSO qualification includes those exempted from joint duty based on scientific or technical waivers which do not expire, such as those in fields like civil engineering, military police, and public affairs. Thus many of those who would require GOS waivers are warfighters, namely, combat arms officers, pilots, and naval line officers.

Supporters of Title IV claim that it has corrected serious defects in the Joint Staff system. All agree that high-quality officers are being assigned to joint billets and the quality of Joint Staff work has improved dramatically. If one purpose of the legislation was to force officers to regard joint duty as important, Goldwater-Nichols is an unqualified success. For any who missed this aspect of congress-

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DOD

F-15E fighter armed with Sidewinders.

sional intent it will become abundantly clear as transitional waivers expire. Many who thought they were competitive for promotion to general/flag rank may be passed over because they did not complete a joint assignment.

Nevertheless, there is concern that Title IV may not be the best way to foster joint culture. Officers that Title IV targets—warfighters—have an aversion to serving on any staff. Nevertheless a tour on a service staff is usually considered a prerequisite for anyone with aspirations. Exposure to service leaders can help to make officers competitive for command or selection to flag rank. The framers of Goldwater-Nichols were unwilling to establish a general staff with promotion authority and instead used Title IV as an incentive to stop high-quality pilots, combat arms, and line officers from avoiding joint duty. They wanted to create an environment in which duty on the Joint Staff would be accepted as analogous to duty on a service staff.

But Title IV did not create a joint culture capable of attracting the best-qualified officers to joint duty assignments. Officers do not compete for joint duty assignments; they go because they are required to by law. Once they finish their qualifying tours, they return to their service and jobs that will keep them competitive with their contemporaries for future promotion. Furthermore, they generally believe that if they support jointness to the detriment of their service while in joint billets, they will not get those all-important follow-on service jobs.

During the Vietnam War, Congress accused the services of promoting the practice of ticket punching whereby officers managed their careers by seeking assignments that helped their chances for promotion without considering the needs of their service. Once assigned, officers stayed only long enough to get credit for the assignments before they moved on to carefully selected positions. Joint duty should not be

something officers are forced to do. If joint warfare is indeed the future, as senior military leaders since Eisenhower have claimed, then joint duty should attract the best and the brightest in the military on its merits. There is more than a little irony in the fact that Congress reinvented ticket punching for the sake of jointness.

Goldwater-Nichols is like the Articles of Confederation—each is better than what went before; however, each failed to endow the new order it created with the authority needed to unify its parts. The Articles of Confederation created a weak national government where citizens of individual states invested legitimacy in their state first and Washington second. Goldwater-Nichols failed to go far enough in strengthening the Chairman, JCS, and the Joint Staff. The successor to Goldwater-Nichols must not legislate joint culture; it must ensure jointness is legitimate.

The value of this analogy ends here. The sole purpose of the services is to provide for the national defense; they are not persons or minorities to be provided with constitutional protections. Funding, organization, and integration decisions must be made based on what is best for defending the Nation, not on what is acceptable to any given service. We must move beyond Goldwater-Nichols so that critical decisions in the post-Cold War era support building the best military for the future.

Meaningful Reform

The end of dual-hatting must be the beginning of any future reforms. Expecting the chiefs, who are required by law to organize, train, and equip forces, to cut programs or personnel when they also represent service interests is unrealistic. Even when the chiefs provide truly joint advice on resource issues, the political leadership will often discount their recommendations. The Meyer proposal, as well as bills introduced in the House and the Senate in 1985, recommended abolishing JCS and replacing it with a National Military Advisory Council or NMAC. Goldwater-Nichols did little to change the conditions that prompted this proposal. In fact creating a NMAC remains more relevant today than it was a decade ago as one of its original advocates reminds us:

In 1982 it was difficult for me to find the time to wear both hats. The Cold War and a bipolar world was less complicated than a world where the United

*States is the only superpower and there are many "hot spots." The bipolar world provided a framework with which to quickly and accurately evaluate conflicts and their impact on U.S. vital interests. Minus that framework, this process is much more complicated and time consuming for JCS and the National Command Authorities. This problem is exacerbated by the time and effort required to downsize the Armed Forces. Expert military advice is more critical because fewer members of Congress, the President, and his advisors served in the military.*²⁸

The NMAC would be made up of one four-star flag officer from each service—not current service chiefs—selected from the retired list or on a final assignment prior to retirement.

Possible prerequisites might include duty as a CINC or on the Joint Staff. Former service chiefs would also seem particularly well qualified. However, membership could prompt accusations of parochialism—charges that the NMAC constituted nothing more than a repackaged JCS.

Originally Meyer included one senior career foreign service officer as a NMAC member; today he would expand that inter-agency approach by adding a second civilian, an economist. That emphasis coincides with Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's view that the poor performance of the U.S. economy is one of the major threats facing the Nation.²⁹ Although trained as an economist, General Meyer thinks few senior officers are schooled in economics to the extent necessary for high-level defense decisionmaking. In addition, civilian representation facilitates the interagency perspective required for many of today's nontraditional missions.

The NMAC would allow the chiefs to totally focus on Title X responsibilities such as organizing, training, and equipping their individual services. They and their staffs could propose and lobby for initiatives designed to support the national military strategy. The NMAC, with input from CINCs, would evaluate the proposal, priori-

tize it along with other initiatives, and formulate the final resource advice for the NCA. Meyer added that "a recommendation from the NMAC would add credibility to the chiefs' program or proposal."³⁰

The major advantages of the NMAC over the current JCS system are threefold. First, the make-up of the council would end the perception that joint advice—especially resource advice—is inextricably linked to service parochialism and ignores economic realities. Second, it would offer cross-service operational resource advice to CJCS and civilian decisionmakers. Third, it would be a full-time body whose members focused on the formation, implementation, and resourcing of a viable national military strategy designed to protect U.S. interests in the post-Cold War world.

Goldwater-Nichols established joint officer management policies to attract or compel high-quality officers to duty on the Joint Staff. Title IV was a compromise between the supporters and opponents of a general staff. The traditional argument against a general staff has been that it would jeopardize civilian control of the Armed Forces. The German experience—especially under Hitler—is raised as an example of a general staff run amuck. During four years of Goldwater-Nichols hearings historians pointed out that Germany never had a general staff and emphasized that civilian control of the military is such a strong, consistent, and essential tenet of American culture that the Nation would not be threatened by a general staff.

The NMAC should be supported by a general staff which is independent of all the services. It must be responsible for managing personnel and assignments and be given authority to evaluate and promote general staff officers. This would attract the best and the brightest from all services to a career offering upward mobility, that is, promotion and positions of responsibility comparable to those within the services.

The Acquisition Corps is a helpful, albeit incomplete, model for creating a general staff. Officers could volunteer or be requisitioned at various stages in their careers: some after command tours as lieutenant



Clearing the deck for a SH-3H Sea King takeoff.

colonels or commanders, others as colonels or captains, and a few after being selected for flag rank. There would be two tracks, service and general staff. General staff officers would be assigned to the field or the fleet for a service sabbatical designed to ameliorate the ivory-tower syndrome and regain operational currency while service officers could move onto the general staff to offer operational expertise and develop a general staff perspective to take back to the field.



DOD

CINCs and deputy CINCs could be service or general staff officers. If a CINC came from the general staff track, the deputy CINC would be drawn from the service track. One portion of unified commands

would be designated as general staff commands, the others as service command billets. The command of divisions or corps—and comparable naval and air commands—would be filled by flag officers from the service track. However, general staff flag officers could retain their service currency through assignments as deputy or assistant commanders (for example, as assistant division commanders, maneuver or support). Chiefs would be selected from among those officers who remained on the service track and the Chairman (a former CINC) from the general staff track.

Given that the general staff took the lead in resource issues, it would be larger than the existing Joint Staff. If the joint career track did not attract the quantity and the quality of officers needed, the general staff could access personnel data and requisition candidates from the services.

Congress has been and will remain a major obstacle to JCS reform since it may have the most to lose. As a former special assistant to the Secretary of Defense has stated:

*The attitude of the Congress towards JCS has been essentially opportunistic. When it has appeared that there might be profit in it, members of Congress occasionally have tried to play off the chiefs against their civilian superiors, though usually without much success. As a whole, the Congress has appeared happy to have JCS remain a weak compromise organization.*³¹

That observation, made over a decade ago, remains valid today. While Goldwater-Nichols made CJCS and the Joint Staff stronger, JCS was weakened. Will pressure to

reduce the budget deficit and maintain an adequate defense allow the Congress to support the reorganization proposed here?

There is a recent precedent set by Congress with regard to the relinquishment of its power. To depoliticize base closures, which are essential to downsizing and cutting the budget, Congress established a Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission and ceded authority to this body because experience indicated that it was necessary to “shield members from the anguish and the political hazards of picking which bases to close.”³² The NMAC would not have the autonomy of the Base Closing Commission, but it would be difficult for partisanship to discredit the advice of a distinguished council of military and civilian leaders. The politics of resource issues could require that a select group of members criticize advice formulated by the NMAC. However,

Congress has been and will remain a major obstacle to JCS reform since it may have the most to lose

a majority in Congress could hide behind its prestige when compelled to make difficult resource decisions.

The most likely hurdle to meaningful reform is the Secretary of Defense. If a general staff were established, it would

take the lead in defense policy and program development, and the role of the Office of the Secretary of Defense would be relegated to implementation. It seems doubtful that Secretary Aspin would instigate reforms that led to this kind of realignment. If reorganization is going to occur, the current leadership of the Armed Forces—just like Generals Jones and Meyer in the early 1980s—must take up the banner of reform.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act made CJCS the principal advisor to the NCA and strengthened the Joint Staff. But negative reactions to the “Roles and Missions Report” indicate that this advice is discredited by perceptions that JCS is incapable of making difficult decisions. The challenges of the post-Cold War era call for replacing both JCS with an independent NMAC and the Joint

Staff with a general staff. The end of dual-hatting would allow the service chiefs to devote their time to parochial responsibilities. A full time NMAC could evaluate nontraditional threats and also provide credible, uninhibited advice to CJCS. Title IV improved the quality and output of the Joint Staff. Nevertheless, it has not fostered a joint culture capable of competing with diverse service cultures: a general staff would create a separate career path and develop a credible joint culture.

Neither Congress nor civilian leaders are likely to initiate reform. The Secretary of Defense commissioned a bottom up review of force structure and Congress is planning to look into service roles and missions. If the Armed Forces are to serve the Nation in confronting the challenges that lie ahead, perceptions of a military unable or unwilling to entertain any idea which is not supported by a consensus of all the services must be put to rest now and forever. The world is changing and it is time for the military to do the same through reform that goes beyond Goldwater-Nichols.

JFQ

NOTES

¹ This idea is also proposed by Edward C. Meyer in "The JCS: How Much Reform Is Needed?," *Armed Forces Journal International* (April 1982), pp. 82-90.

² David C. Jones, "Why the Joint Chiefs Must Change," *Armed Forces Journal International* (March 1982), p. 64.

³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services [hereafter referred to as HASC], *Reorganizational Proposals for the Joint Chiefs of Staff* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1982), pp. 151, 161.

⁴ Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Public Law 99-433, 99th U.S. Congress, October 1, 1986.

⁵ HASC Hearings 1982, p. 538

⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Report on the Roles, Missions and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington: Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 1993), p. x.

⁷ Interview with Archie D. Barrett.

⁸ Interview with General Gordon R. Sullivan, USA (March 12, 1993), and with General Merrill A. McPeak, USAF (March 8, 1993).

⁹ HASC Hearings 1982, p. 508.

¹⁰ Barrett interview.

¹¹ Barrett interview.

¹² David Evans, "Troubled Air Force Transport Investigated: C-17 Program May Be Cut or Canceled," *The Chicago Tribune*, February 19, 1993, p. 7.

¹³ Interview with General Edward C. Meyer, USA (Ret.) (February 22, 1993).

¹⁴ McPeak interview.

¹⁵ Interview with Lieutenant General E. Ehlert, USMC (March 16, 1993).

¹⁶ Barton Gellman, "Services Moving to Protect Turf: Powell to Rebuff Call to Streamline," *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1993, p. A4.

¹⁷ "Dellums Wants Broader Pentagon Study of Roles and Missions," *Aerospace Daily*, February 25, 1993, p. 309.

¹⁸ William Matthews, "Nominee Perry Warns There's No Turning Back on Drawdown," *Air Force Times*, March 8, 1993, p. 4.

¹⁹ HASC Hearings 1982, p. 548.

²⁰ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, Subject: "1993 Report on the Roles, Missions and Functions of the Armed Forces," February 10, 1993.

²¹ In addition to Forces Command, the Atlantic Fleet, Air Combat Command, and Marine Forces Atlantic will be merged. It is interesting to note that General Powell was FORSCOM commander prior to becoming Chairman. See CJCS "Report on the Roles," p. xii.

²² McPeak interview.

²³ CJCS Memorandum, "1993 Roles and Missions."

²⁴ Interview with Senator Sam Nunn, *Meet the Press*, NBC News (March 1993).

²⁵ Letter from General Colin L. Powell, USA, to the author (March 10, 1993).

²⁶ Ehlert interview.

²⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Personnel, Briefing Packet, Subject: "General Officer Joint Duty Qualification" [no date].

²⁸ Meyer interview.

²⁹ Address by Les Aspin at the National Defense University (March 25, 1993).

³⁰ Meyer interview.

³¹ HASC Hearings 1982, p. 523.

³² Elizabeth A. Palmer, "Commission Comes to Life, Vowing a Fresh Look," *Congressional Quarterly's Washington Alert*, April 20, 1991, p. 994.