



Days of Future Past:

Officer on board
USS Hornet studying
reconnaissance photos
of Hong Kong.

Naval Historical Center (Charles Kerlee)

Joint Intelligence in World War II

By JAMES D. MARCHIO

Ample experience has demonstrated that neither Army intelligence nor Naval intelligence is complete without the other. On theatre and higher level, joint intelligence is necessary. Liaison and interchange of information is not enough to secure complete exploitation.

—Report issued by the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area (November 8, 1945)

Joint intelligence existed long before the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Persian Gulf War. During World War II, joint intelligence organizations and operations were initiated at national and theater level. These efforts increased collection, enhanced production, and expedited dissemination of critical intelligence to commanders as well as national policymakers. The emergence of joint intelligence between 1942 and 1945 and its fate after the war provide valuable lessons for today. The problems it confronted—conflicting intelligence reports, inaccurate battle damage assessment, and inadequate

dissemination—remain familiar to JTF commanders and J-2 staffs today. So too are problems posed by bureaucratic infighting over roles and resources as well as reluctance on the part of some to fully support joint efforts.

Ultra and *Magic* are terms that frequently come to mind when military professionals and scholars discuss the role of intelligence during World War II; but *joint* is a term that deserves inclusion in such discussions. While lacking the impact of *Ultra* or *Magic*, joint intelligence efforts contributed to Allied operations in virtually every theater. Joint intelligence operations enhanced collection, improved production, and expedited dissemination of critical information. Nonetheless, joint intelligence efforts during the war were neither universally accepted nor appreciated.

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Origins of Joint Intelligence

Several forces played a role in shaping the evolution of joint intelligence operations during World War II. Intelligence failures in the first year—from Pearl Harbor to North Africa—were the most important factors that pushed reforms and, in turn, joint intelligence. However, the changing nature of the conflict, the British experience, and bureaucratic battles over a national intelligence organization which predated the war all influenced how joint intelligence emerged.

Senior military leaders were aware of intelligence problems and were leading proponents of

joint intelligence operations emerged at both national and theater levels

joint solutions. General George C. Marshall and Admiral Ernest J. King recognized that national intelligence was fragmented. Multiple agencies were producing intelligence without coordination. This led to duplication, incomplete analysis, and inadequate dissemination. Ultimately what was provided had little use to planners, decisionmakers, or operators. As Captain Ellis M. Zacharias, USN, observed: “We found that very little truly valuable information was produced which higher echelons could accept as absolutely reliable and useful for orientation and action.”

The conduct of the war in Europe and the Pacific also played a large role in determining the extent of joint intelligence operations. In trying to satisfy the requirements of large-scale offensive operations, intelligence personnel slowly discovered that the solution lay with joint efforts.

Joint intelligence bloomed during 1943 and 1944 as U.S. forces transitioned from basically defensive to offensive operations requiring extensive interservice cooperation. The island hopping campaign in the Pacific and Allied operations in the Mediterranean and in Europe emphasized large-scale joint operations which, in turn, required joint intelligence. As one senior naval intelligence officer observed about the central Pacific: “As we move westward the Army part is becoming more and more important. We need Army men we can expose to Ultra and who [can provide] . . . assistance in Army Order of Battle, in Army Air Force Order of Battle, and if they have such a thing in Army traffic analysis.” Increased land-based air operations and massive bombing in both theaters likewise generated requirements for target and flak intelligence and post-strike analysis.

The availability of new sources also increased the need for joint intelligence exploitation. Little intelligence other than Ultra was initially available in the autumn of 1942; but the volume of captured documents, prisoners, and aerial photographs increased greatly as operations began in

the Solomon Islands and North Africa. But problems arose with added requirements. Duplication of effort, competition over collection resources, delayed or unsuitable dissemination, and conflicting assessments over enemy losses increasingly affected military and civilian intelligence support. For instance, in arguing for creation of a special joint body to weigh enemy casualties in March 1943, the secretary of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) lamented that a joint estimate of casualties had not yet been made; moreover, estimates available in Washington varied by over 100 percent.

Other forces spurred joint initiatives. The British experience during the first three years of the war provided a combat tested endorsement of joint operations. London had operated a joint intelligence committee since 1940, using centralized, coordinated intelligence to guide military and civilian intelligence operations. Congressional prompting and previous efforts by the Joint Board to encourage joint operations and greater interservice cooperation added pressure as well. Finally, William J. Donovan’s push to establish a national intelligence organization—embodied first in the Coordinator of Information and later in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—generated further interest in reform and joint solutions.

An Organization Emerges

Joint intelligence operations during World War II emerged in each phase of the intelligence cycle—collection, production, and dissemination—and at both national and theater level.

Collection. One of the first areas to witness joint operations was collection. The creation of joint intelligence collection agencies (JICAs) in 1943 was intended to ensure adequate support at both national and theater levels. The Joint Chiefs and other national-level organizations recognized early that theater intelligence organizations had “neither the trained personnel nor the time to collect and prepare the information needed in Washington for strategic planning and training purposes.” In arguing for JICAs, proponents cited less duplication, more effective use of skilled personnel and resources, and reduced operational expenditures.

JICAs were operational in four theaters: North Africa (JICANA, later renamed JICAMED), Africa-Middle East (JICAME), China-India-Burma (JICACIB, which in 1945 became only India-Burma), and China (JICA/China). They were attached to their respective theater headquarters as separate staff sections. Composed of Army and Navy officers together with civilians and enlisted support personnel, JICAs ranged from 27 personnel in JICA/China to 77 in JICAME.

Namur Island,
Kwajalein Atoll, in
January 1944, prior
to pre-invasion
bombardment.



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JICAs performed three primary tasks. First, they collected, screened, and transmitted to Washington “all information, exclusive of combat intelligence, within the theater” desired by the War and Navy Departments. As theater collection coordinators, JICAs provided logistical support, tasking, and guidance to all human intelligence (HUMINT) sources, including OSS agents, in the JICA area of responsibility. Lastly, JICAs ensured lateral dissemination of pertinent intelligence among various agencies, military and civilian, within each theater.

JICAs were assisted by the Joint Intelligence Agency Reception Center (JIARC), created in August 1943 in Washington. JIARC managed administrative instructions and support to JICAs. Importantly, it coordinated War Department collection requirements and requests for information (RFIs) sent to theater JICAs. JIARC worked closely with theater JICAs to ensure the appropriate agencies or JICA assets were tasked to satisfy the collection requirement.

Production. At national and theater level, joint intelligence production accompanied joint collections. JIC was formed in 1941 to prepare daily summaries and such special information and intelligence studies as were needed by higher authority or indicated by the situation. The *J.I.C. Daily*, and later the *Weekly Summary*, partially met this requirement. JIC eliminated a host of largely redundant intelligence publications by replacing the OSS *The War This Week*, War Department *Situation and Capabilities of the Enemy*, and Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) *Fortnightly Summary of Current National Situation*.

Serving as the permanent JIC working committee, the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS) turned out intelligence estimates on enemy strength, capabilities, and intentions, and specialized technical subjects. Intelligence estimates drafted in 1942 reported on both German and Japanese economic and military status as well as studies on the “Feasibility of Supplying Russia via the Bering Strait” and “Axis Munitions Capabilities.” By 1943, JIS was working closely in producing intelligence estimates in direct support of the Joint War Plans Committee.

But efforts went beyond current and estimative intelligence support. The Joint Intelligence Study Publishing Board (JISPB), with representatives from the War Department G-2, ONI, OSS, A-2 [Army Air Corps], and Office of Chief of Engineers, was created in May 1943 when it became clear that the activities of G-2, ONI, and OSS were duplicative, particularly in preparing foreign area studies. Consequently, JISPB commissioned a series of joint Army-Navy intelligence studies (JANIS) that provided basic topographical data on likely operational areas. These studies included information from 20 government agencies and ranged from Bulgaria to Japan and Indochina. Over 2,000 copies of each JANIS study were disseminated.

Joint production also emerged in target, technical, facilities, and battle damage assessment intelligence. In late 1942, the Joint Army-Navy Assessment Committee (JANAC) was convened at Marshall's request to provide more accurate estimates of enemy naval strength and to eliminate service disputes over enemy naval and merchant losses. This committee functioned throughout the war and produced reports with detailed information on each sinking. Similarly, the Joint Target Group, Technical Air Intelligence Center, and Joint Airfield Group brought together officers from each service and often representatives from OSS, Foreign Economic Administration, and Royal Air Force in the hope of avoiding redundant and conflicting production. Launched between June and November 1944, these activities proved essential in identifying Japan's strategic vulnerabilities and guiding allied exploitation efforts.

Joint intelligence production extended to theater level as well. Each JICA, for instance, produced limited theater intelligence, conducting studies when other means were unavailable. The most significant theater production effort, however, occurred in the central Pacific, with the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area (JICPOA). This activity was established in September 1943 to collect, collate, evaluate, and disseminate strategic and tactical intelligence for the commander in chief, Pacific Ocean Areas. Truly joint, it fully integrated representatives from all the services. By 1945, it had 1,800 personnel assigned to its facility in Hawaii as well as hundreds at its Advanced Intelligence Center (AIC) on Guam and at other locations. JICPOA became an intelligence factory, producing various area handbooks, maps, and intelligence summaries aimed at supporting theater combat operations. The products were used by operational planners and commanders in drafting plans for operations from Galvanic (Tarawa) to Downfall (the invasion

of Japan). In fact, JICPOA weekly production eventually reached 2,000,000 sheets of printed intelligence and over 150,000 photographic prints.

Dissemination. Mirroring and facilitating collection and production were efforts in the area of dissemination. Both JIARC and the Joint Electronics Information Agency (JEIA) had key roles in speeding dissemination of critical intelligence. JIARC, for example, formed a joint selection panel for prompt inspection, selection, and centralized distribution of all JICA reports. The panel helped reduce the number of copies needed from the field while providing a more efficient mechanism to disseminate information. JIARC also managed courier service to ensure prompt, secure delivery of JICA-collected intelligence that made weekly distribution runs and provided direct contact and exchange of opinions between intelligence officers in Washington and those in the field.

The purpose of JEIA was to improve dissemination of time sensitive technical intelligence. Established by the Joint Communications Board in October 1943, its efforts to speed dissemination of electronic information among and within the Army, Navy, and the Office of Scientific Research and Development were critical to maintaining our lead in radio communication, radar, and electronic devices, and in developing effective countermeasures. As part of the JEIA effort, a joint panel met daily to examine collected information. When necessary, critical technical intelligence reports were reproduced overnight and disseminated the next day. JEIA also prevented needless duplication and unnecessary dissemination by cross-checking incoming reports against previously received ones. JEIA processed 10,000 electronic documents during its two-year existence, with nearly 80 percent on an expedited basis (16–24 hours).

Resistance and Success

Establishing and operating joint intelligence organizations like JICA, JICPOA, JISPB, and JEIA was anything but quick or easy. Initiatives to vest more power in joint bodies met resistance at national and theater level throughout 1942 and 1943. Moreover, even when launched many joint intelligence efforts were not as broad or binding as some had hoped. Ambivalent support resulted in ad hoc committee arrangements based more on voluntary cooperation than structured agreements or procedures.

The failure to set up the Joint Intelligence Agency (JIA) is the most poignant example of such resistance. Although backed by King and Marshall in Autumn 1942, JIA was never established. The original proposal envisioned a strong,

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centralized agency that could unify disparate intelligence collection, production, and dissemination efforts by the services. After favorable review by the Joint Chiefs, the JIA proposal was returned to both the War Department G-2 and ONI director for further study and development. Yet significant differences remained. Ultimately a compromise was forwarded to JCS in March 1943 which reduced JIA authority and role. But the Joint Chiefs were reluctant to approve it. Admiral William D. Leahy told his colleagues that he saw no reason to establish the agency. He asserted that JIC was performing all the necessary intelligence functions for JCS. He warned that "it would be inadvisable for urgent information of an intelligence nature to be delayed by being passed through an additional agency." Responding to Leahy's concerns, King asserted that "there should be no delay whatever, but rather that a more valuable product should result." General Henry H. ("Hap") Arnold suggested that the subject deserved more study before approval; thus JCS directed the deputy chiefs of staff to review the issue further.

More bureaucratic delay and reorganization within G-2 and ONI eventually sealed the fate of JIA. In late March, the Army deputy chief of staff recommended against the G-2/ONI directive, proposing a vastly different structure based on joint regional intelligence organizations. The first such organization would control activities in the Western Hemisphere south of the United States with headquarters in Miami. G-2 concurred with the regional proposal but expressed doubts about whether this structure would work in combat theaters. ONI, on the other hand, refused to commit to the proposal until its internal reorganization was completed. The joint deputy chiefs advised JCS in May that the case was in the hands of the Navy and that action was suspended. Six more months of inactivity prompted the joint deputy chiefs to recommend that the proposal be removed from the JCS agenda and pursued as "practical."

Even approved initiatives reflected such ambivalence and constraints on joint organizations. For instance, the directive authorizing JICAs generated considerable disagreement between G-2 and ONI over both the breadth of their mission and the control of intelligence assets. The narrower G-2 interpretation won out. Nevertheless, JICAs were almost abolished shortly after standing up. They were operated on a trial basis for three months with a restriction "that no additional JICAs be established until those [in operation demonstrate] that the organization is sound;

that it can operate in harmony with the wishes of the theater commander, and that its product is commensurate with the cost in personnel and money."

Similar opposition arose at theater level. Despite strong support from the Marine Corps as well as Pacific Fleet for forming a joint intelligence center in Spring 1942, JICPOA did not become a reality for another 14 months. In response to CINCPAC, the vice chief of naval operations noted that after looking at inherent difficulties in directly initiating such a joint project, it was preferable to constitute the activity as primarily a naval center.

Why were the initiatives opposed? Several related explanations emerge. Foremost was the belief that joint organizations did not fully appreciate service-unique requirements. Consequently, they could not meet individual service needs or those of component commanders. Interservice as well as intraservice friction also undermined support. Despite many cooperative G-2/ONI projects during the war, each maintained its own separate intelligence structure and resisted any attempts to restrict its operations. Intraservice discord likewise made joint efforts more difficult to conduct. How could consensus be reached among the services when the Signal Corps and G-2 were battling over control of Ultra information within the War Department?

Joint intelligence also faced difficulties because it required new organizations, procedures, and thinking. Joint intelligence initiatives confronted bureaucratic inertia and a legacy that viewed intelligence as a service prerogative. Collecting, producing, and disseminating intelligence jointly forced officers trained by individual services to operate in very different ways. Moreover, without a strong proponent or institutional sponsor in the intelligence community, joint intelligence initiatives encountered an uphill battle.

Ironically, progress in joint initiatives undermined larger, more comprehensive efforts such as JIA. Opponents cited progress in operating JICAs and JIC in arguing against further measures. Similarly, wartime requirements were a dual-edged sword, spurring joint initiatives while warning against excessive tinkering in the face of the enemy.

Finally, the personalities, viewpoints, and intelligence requirements of theater commanders and their staffs were key to how joint intelligence was received. Unlike the Pacific Ocean Area, the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) never developed a joint intelligence organization. According to the after-action report, the reason was that the chief of staff failed to recognize its importance and G-2 lacked the power to accomplish it. One observer confirmed this situation, noting that efforts to

**Joint Intelligence
Command Pacific
Ocean Area at Pearl
Harbor.**



**Nimitz visiting fleet air
photo squadron on
Guam, May 1945.**

create a joint organization in SWPA were unlikely to succeed: "I am fully aware of the fact that politics and personalities make any such reorganization impossible."

Ultimately the operational records of such activities were their best weapon in overcoming opposition and silencing criticism at national and theater level. JICA, JANIS, JEIA, and JICPOA were lauded for their efforts and products. The chief of staff, Pacific Ocean Areas, praised JANIS studies, indicating that they were indispensable references for the shore-based planner. Similarly, JICPOA earned high marks for designing and producing a target-area map acceptable to all ground, naval, and air forces. And JEIA success in cutting the dissemination time for important intelligence information from 60 days to 16 hours was much appreciated by military and civilian organizations and contributed considerably to advancing the electronics and counter-measures program.

The process by which joint intelligence was produced also won praise because it yielded quality results with limited resources and disseminated it quickly and appropriately. In evaluating its own accomplishments, JICA concluded that the coordination effected by its theater JICAs in the collection of non-operational information

and intelligence eliminated much duplication and resulted in a much greater proportion of intelligence as distinguished from unevaluated information reaching Washington. The JICA report cited the agency's "joint character . . . for an economy of personnel and a reduction in unnecessary duplication." The JICPOA experience provided an even stronger endorsement of joint intelligence and the synergism of joint efforts. The end result was enhanced support to military commanders and policymakers.

War's End

The final months of the war and its aftermath are indicative of how far joint intelligence had progressed in four years. Yet this period also highlights the reservations some still held regarding joint operations. Encouraged by success during the war and praise in various after-action reports, several joint organizations continued after the cessation of hostilities. JIC continued to serve the Joint Staff and government policymakers, providing current intelligence and other support. In discussing its future after Japan's surrender, JIC



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Powerful supporters of joint intelligence.

observed: "It is axiomatic that joint strategy and planning should be based upon joint intelligence [and] . . . this need is not limited to the period of hostilities." Similarly, JISPB remained operational, both completing JANIS on-going studies and beginning studies on potential operational areas. JEIA also continued operations; but its mission and authority were reduced when it became a subcommittee of the Joint Communications Board.

New joint intelligence efforts were even begun in the wake of Germany's defeat. The Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency (JIOA) was created in June 1945 to continue collection, processing, and dissemination of technical intelligence started earlier in the war. In addition, JIOA was tasked

with identifying and transporting German and Austrian scientists to the United States for interim and long range exploitation, efforts codenamed Project Paperclip.

But most joint intelligence activities were disbanded. Neither service approved a proposal to continue JICAs and JIARC. Consequently, JICAs in the Mediterranean, Africa-Middle East, India-Burma, and China theaters were deactivated between August and December 1945. JICPOA was likewise disbanded in October 1945 while JANAC continued in operation until 1947.

Several factors explain the short lifespan of joint intelligence. Most importantly, conditions changed. The end of the war greatly decreased

consumption at national and theater level. It also decreased the need for large volumes of intelligence and its rapid dissemination. Domestic political pressure to demobilize and cut military spending also spurred efforts to dissolve wartime overhead. With established Army and Navy intelligence organizations in place, some saw joint intelligence agencies as redundant and expendable. Opponents cited the increased coordination and additional bureaucratic layers required for joint operations as justification for dissolution. Many reservations about joint operations voiced early in the war remained and were strengthened by these arguments. In fact, as late as March 1945, joint intelligence was not being fully accepted. In discussing efforts to establish a joint air intelligence cell at the Advance Intelligence Center on Guam, an officer at JICPOA complained of "the heart-breaking road ahead," with many giving only "lip service" to the concept of joint intelligence, lamenting, "some days I feel we are making progress in that direction; some days I feel we are slipping backward." While JICPOA eventually created the air intelligence cell, its experience suggests that jointness was not universally accepted or appreciated. In fact, less than two months after Japan's surrender, Marshall was appealing yet again for a better intelligence system, advocating one with a joint agency as its centerpiece.

Lessons of the Past

Joint intelligence in World War II faced many of the same problems as today. The Persian Gulf War dramatically illustrated that conflicting battle damage assessments and inadequate or slow dissemination did not disappear with the defeat of Germany and Japan in 1945. The criticisms of intelligence voiced during and after Desert Storm by General Norman Schwarzkopf and others in many respects echoed King, Marshall, and Congress fifty years earlier. The problems of JICA in managing national and theater collection assets and responding to various RFIs in 1943 also have not diminished over time—nor have more efficient uses of resources or impediments to doing so. Many would agree that the claim by JISPB in 1945—that "few intelligence activities in Washington take the trouble to find out what other people are doing in their own lines" which caused "needless duplication of work and conflicting information"—is still an accurate criticism.

The solutions to many problems experienced during the war are also relevant. The creation of theater JICAs and the national level JIARC provide lessons that may assist the recently activated Defense HUMINT Service (DHS). Similarly, the successes as well as shortcomings of JICPOA offer valuable insights into refining theater-level JICs in combatant commands. The same is true of the

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wartime experience of JISPB and the new Combined Intelligence Publishing Service in DOD.

Beyond these lessons, the experience of joint intelligence during World War II reveals that many of the same forces prevail today. The implications of intelligence requirements are foremost among them. Just as the shift from defensive to multiservice offensive operations drove the birth of joint intelligence in 1942–45, military, political, and fiscal realities in the post-Cold War period mandate a key role for joint intelligence. Increasingly, complex and varied operations other than war (OOTW) and organizations—including adaptive joint force packaging—demand that military and civilian as well as national and theater level intelligence assets work closely together.

Finally, the history of joint intelligence reveals many obstacles and sentiments that continue to impede joint intelligence initiatives and operations. Legitimate as well as exaggerated concerns over the ability of joint intelligence to adequately meet service and component needs first surfaced in World War II. So did parochial service interests that limited the authority of joint organizations, leading to loosely structured cooperation rather than required joint action. Current efforts to shield component intelligence assets and to ensure that joint doctrine is authoritative rather than directive suggest such sentiments have not disappeared. Today, as in 1942, both operators and intelligence officers must overcome such reservations. Given new and more complex missions, diminished resources, and the ever increasing importance of intelligence for smart weapons and future conflict, there is an even greater need to operate jointly.

The current atmosphere is conducive to jointness. Both the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Defense Intelligence Reorganization Act continue to spark joint initiatives. Bureaucratic as well as congressional pressure to reorganize the intelligence community—symbolized by the Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the U.S. Intelligence Community, efforts by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence under “Intelligence Community 21st Century,” and the decision to consolidate eight agencies into the National Imagery and Mapping Agency—auger well for joint operations. Technological developments—such as the joint deployable intelligence support system (JDISS) and joint worldwide intelligence communications system (JWICS)—and organizational changes facilitate joint operations. The creation of the National Military Joint Intelligence Center and strengthening the Military Intelligence Board should also help overcome resistance to joint intelligence operations.

Yet such optimism must be tempered. The joint environment may quickly become less hospitable as controversies over service roles and missions persist and related budget battles for limited resources intensify.

The relevance of studying joint intelligence operations is apparent. Even this brief look at the intelligence operations during World War II indicates that many lessons—paid for in blood and treasure—await rediscovery. History can assist the intelligence community in rapidly relearning these costly but valuable lessons, guiding its reorganization now as well as in the future. **JFQ**

NOTES

This article is based largely on materials in the National Archives, Naval Historical Center, U.S. Army Center of Military History, and Armed Forces Staff College. The bulk of formerly classified memoranda and reports cited are found in National Archives Record Groups (RG) 218 (CJCS Central Decimal File 1942–45), RG 319 (Army Staff, Records of Assistant Chief of Staff Intelligence), and RG 457 (National Security Agency). Other information was extracted from the Office of Naval Intelligence *United States Naval Administration in World War II*, guide no. 26a, vols. 1–4, July 10, 1946, Naval Historical Center; the Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Area (JICPOA) final report; U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, “Report of Intelligence Activities in the Pacific Ocean Areas,” October 15, 1945, Armed Forces Staff College; and the General Headquarters Far East Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, *Operations of the Military Intelligence Section GHO, SWPA/FEC/SCAP*, vol. 3, Intelligence Series (I), 1951, U.S. Army Center of Military History.

A variety of memoirs and secondary sources were also consulted. W.J. Holmes’ firsthand account of the creation and operation of JICPOA, *Double-Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific during World War II* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1979), and Thomas F. Troy’s comprehensive discussion of the birth of national intelligence, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Frederick, Md.: Aletheia Books, University Publications of America, Inc., 1981), proved to be most valuable.