

Letters . . .

WARFIGHTING CINCS

To the Editor—After decades of parochialism, the Goldwater-Nichols Act attempted to right the balance between service interests and centralized authorities. As illustrated by the articles in your last issue (*JFQ*, Autumn 96), this law has moved the Armed Forces toward greater unity and efficiency. However, problems remain in areas such as military advice, joint operations, and resource allocation, suggesting to some observers that the reforms enacted in 1986 did not go far enough in strengthening centralized authority within DOD.

Goldwater-Nichols strengthened the authority of CINCs over service combatant commands to match their responsibilities for warfighting. However, recent operations reveal that CINCs have yet to fully overcome efforts by the services to encroach on the conduct of military operations and to consolidate their power over component commands. What is more, staffs of unified commands may need to be augmented.

Congress pointed to the Desert One rescue fiasco and Grenada invasion as symptomatic of the compulsion by services to carve out roles for themselves in every operation. Since passage of Goldwater-Nichols, the attempt to staunch service logrolling has met with mixed results. During Just Cause, SEALs assaulted Paitilla airport not because they were the right force for the job but to give the Navy a piece of the action and tout jointness. In addition, the Commandant of the Marine Corps lobbied the Chairman unsuccessfully for enhanced participation by his service.

The Marines had greater success in Desert Storm, convincing CINCCENT to alter his plan for the ground offensive to include the Corps. The original plan relegated the Marines to a holding action on the right flank as VII Corps swept forward from the left flank, with the aim of destroying the Iraqi Republican Guard in the rear by a giant left hook. Dissatisfied, the Marines agitated for a frontal attack on the enemy line that eventually came to pass. The Iraqi line crumpled immediately, enabling the Republican Guard to flee before VII Corps could reach them by the left hook. Thus, inclusion of the Marine Corps upset the timetable of the left hook and prevented the fulfillment of a key objective of the operation, destruction of the Republican Guard.

Service desires to grab a piece of the action also manifested themselves in airstrikes against Iraq in September 1996. Four Navy surface vessels and one submarine fired a total of 31 cruise missiles while two Air Force B-52s flew a 34-hour mission from Guam to fire another 13 missiles, even though one service could have done the entire job. The mission left the distinct impression that multiple services had been involved to divide the credit and highlight their capabilities.

Recent operations also raise doubts about whether strengthening of CINC prerogatives by Goldwater-Nichols has fulfilled congressional expectations for robust joint command authority and capability. CINC authority over service combatant commands has not been consolidated. During the Persian Gulf War, the Marines insisted on maintaining control over 50 percent of their FA-18s, thus weakening the authority of the joint force air component commander. As mentioned above, the Marines Corps balked at the original ground offensive plan. Indeed, no CINC has established a land

force commander to subsume all land forces beneath one joint commander. Thus no officer is in charge of ensuring that the Army and Marine component commands cooperate, and disputes are pushed up to the highest level such as the JTF commander or, in the case of Desert Storm, the CINC, who lacks the time to effectively referee Army-Marine relations. In essence, land forces are commanded by committee.

JTF commanders have experienced the lack of mission integration and jointness even more recently. The absence of fully integrated systems was a major cause in the April 1994 shutdown of two Army Blackhawk helicopters by Air Force F-15s during Provide Comfort. Also, the Army was reported to have interfered with the Implementation Force (IFOR) chain of command between the JTF commander and its troops in the field.

Even when a CINC's authority reigns supreme, Desert Storm raised other questions over the ability of a CINC's staff. The CENTCOM staff was so beleaguered by the stress of coordinating the deployment of troops that initial planning for the air campaign devolved to Checkmate, a group of air force officers cloistered in the bowels of the Pentagon. Moreover, the ground campaign was planned by the "Jedi Knights," four Army officers who had not known each other prior to the war. General Schwarzkopf assembled them partly for secrecy but also because of the nature of his staff. Both his director of operations (J-3) and director of plans (J-5) lacked the expertise to plan a ground campaign. Bringing in officers from outside to plan a major ground offensive did not speak well for CENTCOM organizational capabilities at the time of the Gulf War.

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THE NBC SPECTER

To the Editor—The article by Robert Joseph, "The Impact of NBC Proliferation on Doctrine and Operations" (*JFQ*, Autumn 96), was right on the mark. He describes one of the most troubling unresolved problems facing the Armed Forces: training and equipping when you do not understand how potential enemies might use chemical and biological weapons. The lack of validated models and simulations to accurately assess the effects of such weapons on both our forces and equipment presents a major challenge to senior military leaders. Hopefully your readers will start asking why this serious threat has not been adequately addressed.

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