

*United States Marine Corps  
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2076 South Street  
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Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

# **Master of Military Studies**

## **Theater Engagement Planning – Resourcing CINC Requirements**

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abstract (maximum 200 words) <b>THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER IS TO EXAMINE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S THEATER ENGAGEMENT PLANNING (TEP) PROCESS AT THE COMBATANT COMMANDER IN CHIEF (CINC) LEVEL AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS NECESSARY FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS TEPs AT THE CINC LEVEL. THE PAPER DISCUSSES THE BRIEF HISTORY OF PEACETIME TEP, THE STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL DOCUMENTS THAT INFLUENCE TEP, TEP PLANNING REQUIREMENTS, SHORTFALLS AND WEAKNESSES IN THE CURRENT TEP PROCESS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEP. THE READER IS LEFT WITH AN APPRECIATION FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF PEACETIME ENGAGEMENT, THE WEAKNESSES IN THE CURRENT TEP PROCESS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEP.</b>		
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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** Theater Engagement Planning-Resourcing CINC Requirements

**Author:** Major Robert E. Wallace

**Thesis:** The effectiveness of the geographic combatant commanders-in-chief Theater Engagement Plans are hampered by two major weaknesses: (1) global prioritization of the Prioritized Regional Objectives and (2) appropriate allocation of forces and resources to the various geographic combatant commanders-in-chief.

**Discussion:** In 1997, the Department of Defense issued the geographic combatant commanders-in-chief a new and revolutionary planning requirement: Theater Engagement Planning (TEP). TEP is primarily a strategic planning document intended to link geographic combatant commanders-in-chief (CINCs) planned regional engagement activities with national objectives. As a strategic document, TEPs are developed according to strategic guidance entitled Prioritized Regional Objectives (PROs). Approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), PROs are assigned to each CINC and prioritized as Tier I (vital), Tier II (important) and Tier III (humanitarian and other interests). In effect, PROs are the foundation of all TEPs, and surprisingly are the catalyst for the major weaknesses in the TEP process. The overriding weaknesses with the current PROs are that the prioritization method (the system organizing the objectives) and the objectives themselves do not support either strategic or operational decision making requirements regarding engagement.

The solution lies in a reformed PRO method that establishes engagement priorities across all combatant commands and re-distribution of resources to effect their

accomplishment. The reformed PRO method is necessary to effect accomplishment of those engagement objectives deemed most important at the national level. Absent this change, the CINCs will continue to affect those engagement objectives that their resources allow, which may or may not align with the national objectives. Recently, the CJCS issued a concept of change in TEP that is poised to make sweeping changes to TEP. Centered around the issue of simplifying the TEP process, the CJCS is recommending four major changes in the Theater Engagement Planning process:

1. Improve the Prioritized Regional Objectives
2. Enhance Strategic Concept development
3. Refine concept reviews
4. Reduce administrative requirements

Unfortunately, the CJCS recommended changes fail to address the two major weaknesses in TEP today: global prioritization of PROs and redistribution of forces and resources.

**Conclusion:** As a relatively new and maturing document, changes and improvements have been, and will continue to be, incorporated into the TEP process. The CJCS's recent position on simplifying TEP planning, and making it easier and less burdensome, are examples of the maturing nature of TEP. To continue in this vein and for TEP to realize its full purpose, intent, and utility, the following recommendations are considered essential:

1. The Secretary of Defense (SecDef) and the CJCS through the CPG / JSCP, must globally prioritize all Tier I PROs. Global prioritization of Tier I PROs is the only method that will give the SecDef and the CJCS the ability to identify, focus upon, and evaluate the status of our nation's most vital engagement objectives.

- Of equal importance will be Joint Staff feedback from the CINCs on Tier I PROs that cannot be accomplished due to resource shortfalls. Where shortfalls occur, the Joint Staff will be responsible for enhancing the CINCs resources to accomplish the Tier I PROs or accept the risks associated with not achieving a Tier I PROs.
2. The SecDef and the CJCS, through the CPG / JSCP and in coordination with the CINCs, internally prioritize each CINC's Tier II and III PROs. Prioritization is required to inform the CINCs - who again are limited by force and resource constraints - which Tier II and III PROs are most important to accomplish. Of similar importance are the CINCs identification to the Joint Staff those Tier II and III PROs that cannot be accomplished due to resource shortfalls and the risks associated with not achieving the Tier II and III PROs.
  3. Assignment of forces for engagement. The SecDef, through the Forces For Unified Commands memorandum, or the CJCS through the JCSP, must assign CINCs forces for engagement. The current methods of forces and resources apportionment are simply unrealistic for TEP planning and execution. While it is expected that global prioritization of Tier I PROs will resolve some of the current resource shortfall issues, the Tier II and III PROs will remain hostage to the current forces and resources structure unless changes are made to affect a better balance between the "have" and "have not" CINCs. However, do not mistake the quest for an appropriate balance of forces and resources between the CINCs as a call for parity of forces and resources across all CINCs. What is sought and

required is an equal balance of forces and resources by CINCs to accomplish their assigned engagement mission.

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## **Theater Engagement Planning: Resourcing CINC Requirements**

*“Through overseas presence and peacetime engagement activities such as defense cooperation, security assistance, and training and exercises with allies and friends, our Armed Forces help to deter aggression and coercion, build coalitions, promote regional stability and serve as role models for militaries in emerging democracies.”<sup>1</sup>*

In 1997, the Department of Defense issued the geographic combatant commanders-in-chief a new and revolutionary planning requirement: Theater Engagement Planning. Theater Engagement Planning is “primarily a strategic planning document intended to link geographic combatant commanders-in-chief planned regional engagement activities with national objectives.”<sup>2</sup> Stated another way, Theater Engagement Planning is a conscious effort to add discipline and visibility to the engagement activity planning process by requiring geographic combatant commanders-in-chief to identify what engagement activities they are planning to conduct, and the purpose for conducting the engagement activity. Though accustomed to conducting engagement activities, the combatant commanders-in-chief have been – prior to 1997 and the mandate for Theater Engagement Planning - unaccustomed to linking engagement activities to defined national objectives, or developing a disciplined engagement plan that was to have visibility throughout the Department of Defense. As a result, Theater Engagement Planning, a new and comprehensive plan that stretches into all areas of

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, December 1999, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual., *Theater Engagement Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO , 31 May 2000), A- 1.

peacetime engagement, has become an evolving process that will continue to mature over time.

One element of the Theater Engagement Planning process that has been and remains difficult to answer accurately is the requirement for combatant commanders-in-chief and the Services to identify in the Theater Engagement Plans detailed engagement resource information. Specifically, geographic combatant commanders-in-chief are required in the Theater Engagement Planning process to identify engagement activity resource requirements and shortfalls in personnel, equipment, and funding. To date, three Theater Engagement Planning cycles have been completed, and all combatant commanders-in-chief Theater Engagement Plans have referenced engagement resource shortfalls in personnel, equipment, or funding. To address their resource shortfalls, the combatant commanders-in-chief have attempted to leverage their Theater Engagement Plans as justification for acquiring additional resources in personnel, equipment, and funding. Hence, Theater Engagement Plans have become documents with resource implications.

In recognition of the resource implications, the Joint Staff initiated two changes upon completion of the inaugural 1998 Theater Engagement Planning cycle with the intent to address and implement the resource information gained through development of Theater Engagement Plans: 1) the submission time for completed Theater Engagement Plans was changed to precede the development of combatant commanders-in-chief Integrated Priority List and Services Program Objective Memorandums; 2) the planning period covered by Theater Engagement Plans was extended from five to seven years to overlay the Services POM cycle. The strategy behind the Joint Staff changes was to

utilize the resource information from the Theater Engagement Plans to impact the principal mechanisms by which the combatant commanders-in-chief are resourced: the Integrated Priority List and the Services Program Objective Memorandum . While arguably beneficial to the overall Theater Engagement Planning process, the Joint Staff changes have had negligible impact on addressing combatant commanders-in-chief engagement resource requirement shortfalls. Further, the changes implemented by the Joint Staff served to emphasize the resource-driven nature of Theater Engagement Plans by focusing on the combatant commanders-in-chief Integrated Priority List and Services Program Objective Memorandum versus the original intent of a strategy-driven document.

As a strategic document, Theater Engagement Plans are developed according to strategic guidance entitled Prioritized Regional Objectives. Approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Prioritized Regional Objectives are assigned to each combatant commander-in-chief and prioritized as Tier I (vital), Tier II (important) and Tier III (humanitarian and other interests). In effect, Prioritized Regional Objectives are the foundation of all Theater Engagement Plans, and surprisingly are the catalyst for the major weaknesses in the Theater Engagement Planning process. The overriding weaknesses with the current Prioritized Regional Objectives are that the prioritization method (the system organizing the objectives) and the objectives themselves do not support either strategic or operational decision making requirements regarding engagement.

At present, all combatant commanders-in-chief are reporting resources shortfalls necessary to accomplish their engagement strategy. Therefore, all combatant

commanders-in-chief are essentially requesting additional resources. In an era of constrained resources, the present distribution of forces and resources is unlikely to change with any degree of significance without guidance from the Joint Staff. The solution lies in a reformed Prioritized Regional Objective method that establishes engagement priorities across all combatant commands and re-distribution of resources to effect their accomplishment. The reformed Prioritized Regional Objectives method is necessary to effect accomplishment of those engagement objectives deemed most important at the national level. Absent this change, the combatant commanders-in-chief will continue to affect those engagement objectives that their resources allow, which may or may not align with the national objectives.

## **Background**

*“Our engagement therefore must be selective, focusing on the threats and opportunities most relevant to our interests and applying our resources where we can make the greatest difference”<sup>3</sup>*

To accurately analyze the Prioritized Regional Objective (PRO) weakness in Theater Engagement Planning (TEP) process and the PRO impact to combatant commanders-in-chief (CINCs) developed TEPs, an understanding of the national strategy and its inter-relationship with TEP is necessary. Guided by the administration’s 1997 National Military Strategy (NMS) of “Shape, Respond and Prepare Now,”<sup>4</sup> the Department of Defense (DoD), CINCs, and Service Departments began implementing a

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, December 1999, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, n.p., 1997.

national strategy that emphasized *shaping*, or engagement, with equal importance to DoD's traditional roles. Without question, the CINCs and Service Departments are adept at executing two of the three pillars of the NMS: *responding* when directed by the national command authorities (NCA) to world crises and *preparing* U.S. forces for potential or future conflicts. However, there is some discourse with regard to the *shaping* pillar. Many in and outside of DoD argue that the U.S. military has for many years conducted *shaping* or engagement activities on the international front and therefore view *shaping* as anything but new. Their opponents, however, argue that *shaping*, as a pillar of our NMS, is not a traditional role and diverts resources and energy from the U.S. militaries' traditional and primary roles of *responding* and *preparing*. Still others argue that, conducted properly, *shaping* will create an environment where *responding* is less likely. In the end, as the world's only super-power, the United States military must have a balanced approach to both *shape* the international environment and *respond* when directed. That said, *shaping*, as defined by the National Military Strategy is:

*“U.S. Armed Forces help shape the international environment primarily through their inherent deterrent qualities and through peacetime military engagement. The shaping element of our strategy helps foster the institutions and international relationships that constitute a peaceful strategic environment by promoting stability preventing and reducing conflict and threats and deterring aggression and coercion.”*<sup>5</sup>

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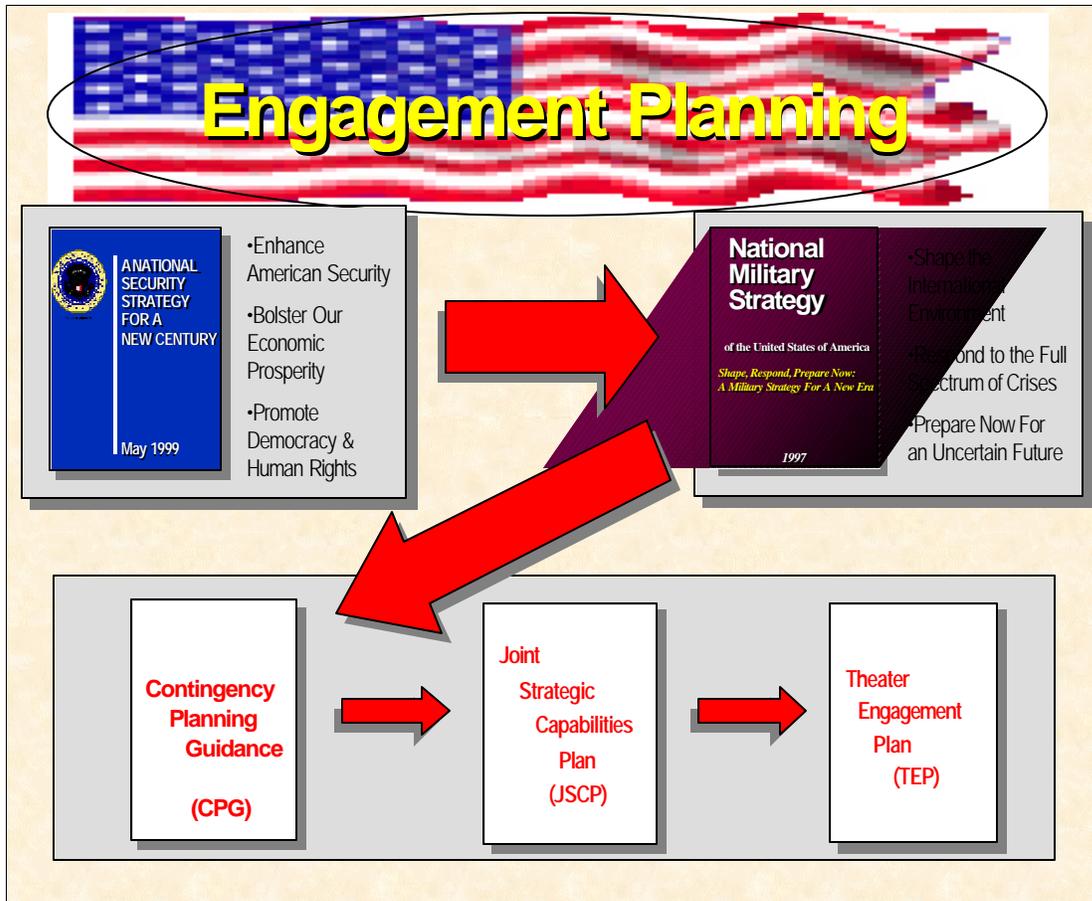
<sup>5</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, n.p., 1997

Certainly it can be argued – and with strong conviction - that the activities of U.S. post World War II occupation forces in Europe and Japan would qualify as engagement. In a more recent example, U.S. forces executing peace-enforcement operations in Bosnia may also qualify as engagement.

Though the lines may often blur between what is engagement or shaping versus respond, what cannot be disputed is that the U.S. military has for many years been actively involved in worldwide engagement activities. This is particularly evident following the end of the Cold War. Almost overnight, the U.S. found itself as the world's only super-power, facing both the challenges and opportunities of world peace that had avoided past generations. As stated by the 1995 National Security Strategy (NSS), “Never has American leadership been more essential - to navigate the shoals of the world's new dangers and to capitalize on its opportunities.”<sup>6</sup> Consequently, it seems only natural to turn to the one element of national power that has a history and capability of responding to the newfound world order – the U.S. military.

Of significant change regarding present day engagement is directly related to the evolving concept of engagement in two key strategic documents: the National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy. Beginning with the end of the Cold War, engagement has risen in importance, becoming an integral part of the United States NSS. Coupled with the advent of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act requiring the President of the United States to develop an annual NSS, engagement has become an increasingly emphasized issue as the various NSSs have evolved. Beginning with the Bush Administration's focus on “collective engagement” in the early 1990s, through the Clinton Administration's NSS of “engagement and enlargement” in 1995 and 1999, its

statement of “Our strategy is founded on continued U.S. engagement and leadership abroad,”<sup>7</sup> engagement has become a central feature of U.S. strategy. Thus, the NSS’s of the Post Cold War years have been both the catalyst for increased emphasis on engagement, and instrumental in moving engagement from a state of national intention toward a national objective.



Additionally, guided by the 1997 NSS and the Quadrennial Defense Review, the 1997 NMS established three pillars in support of the NSS: *shape* the international environment, *respond* to the full spectrum of crises, and *prepare now* for an uncertain future. This is more commonly referred to as the *Shape, Respond, Prepare Now* pillars

<sup>6</sup> U.S. President, A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, February 1995, i.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. President, A National Security Strategy for a New Century, December 1999, 3.

of the NMS. Under this strategy, engagement conducted by the U.S. military rests almost entirely under the *shaping* pillar, and has virtual parity of importance with the *respond* and *prepare now* pillars of the NMS. As a result of this increased emphasis and stress on engagement, engagement activities conducted by U.S. military forces now undergo a disciplined planning process that stretches from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to the U.S. military forces planning the conduct of engagement activities. The result: Theater Engagement Planning.

Gone are the days when the CINCs and primarily the Services enjoyed almost complete freedom, individually employing their forces with little if any strategic guidance. This is not to say that the CINCs lacked control of the Services or assigned forces conducting engagement activities in their AOR, but does suggest that the CINCs, lacking any strategic guidance on engagement, were more concerned (and rightfully so) with their primary mission of executing operations and responding to crises. That said, under the TEP process, the CJCS and the CINCs have assumed an active role in U.S. military engagement. Through the TEP process, the CINCs have developed engagement strategies that are coordinated with the Services and supporting forces for execution. Further, the CINCs engagement strategy is coordinated with U.S. Ambassadors and Country Team representatives inside the CINCs AOR to develop a common understanding and support for the CINCs engagement strategy. The result is a coordinated engagement strategy at the highest levels of leadership, executed by the Services and supporting agencies, in support of national engagement objectives.

## **The Theater Engagement Planning Process**

*Strategic Planning Documents.* The TEP process is driven by three key documents: the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG), the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual (CJCSM) 3113.01A – Theater Engagement Planning. The CPG and the JSCP provide strategic planning guidance to the CINCs, Executive Agents and Services, while CJCSM 3113.01A sets forth guidelines and procedures for the development of TEPs.

The CPG, issued annually by the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), is a classified document of limited distribution that contains contingency planning guidance and guidance on developing TEPs. “The content of the CPG is reflected in the JSCP ... with specific tasking to the CINCs, Executive Agents, Services, and Defense agencies responsible for accomplishing the direction contained in the CPG.”<sup>8</sup> The initial guidance for development of TEPs was contained in the 1997 version of the CPG and included the following:

1. Directed the development of regional CINC TEPs ... to include the full range of engagement activities...
2. Defined “Theater Engagement.”
3. Directed that TEPs be based on Prioritized Regional Objectives.
4. Established a submission, review and approval process.<sup>9</sup>

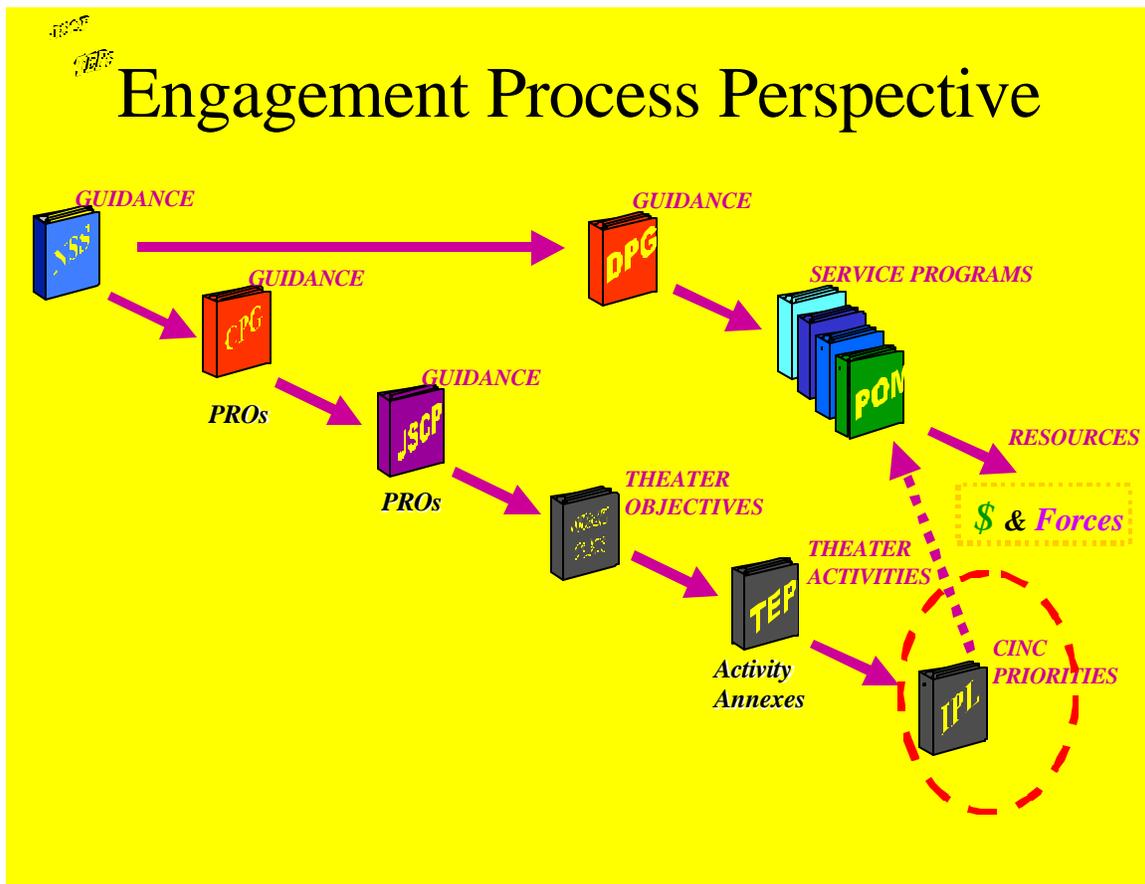
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<sup>8</sup>Department of Defense, National Defense University, *The Joint Staff Officer’s Guide 2000*, JFSC Pub 1 (Norfolk, VA: GPO, 2000) G-27.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, *Shaping the World Through Engagement: Assessing the Department of Defense’s Theater Engagement Planning Process*, Study, April 2000, 7.

The JSCP, also a classified document, is the CJCS's tool for transmitting planning guidance from the CPG, resource allocation information, and tasks for deliberate plans development (Operational, Contingency, or Functional) to the combatant CINCs. The 1998 version of the JSCP included a new chapter specifically for TEP: Enclosure E, Engagement Planning Guidance. Enclosure E serves three purposes: It 1) contains broad guidance for development of TEPs; 2) Identifies the Prioritized Regional Objectives that the combatant CINCs must address in their TEPs; and 3) Categorizes the Prioritized Regional Objectives in the following order:

1. Tier I: vital
2. Tier II: important
3. Tier III: humanitarian and other



*TEP Documents.* Utilizing the guidance contained in the CPG and the JSCP, the CINCs and Executive Agents are required to develop two additional planning documents to complete the TEP process: The TEP Strategic Concept and the TEP Activity Annexes. CJCSM 3113.01A provides the guidelines and procedures for developing the TEP Strategic Concept and Activity Annexes. The TEP Strategic Concept, as defined by CJCSM 3113.01A is:

“...a narrative statement of how engagement activities will be employed to support achieving the CINC’s or Executive Agent’s objectives. The TEP Strategic Concept becomes the foundation of the TEP and includes the commander’s intent, prioritized objectives, and a general discussion of the engagement tasks and activities and an assessment of current engagement progress toward completion of regional objectives. Additionally, it identifies at the program level the forces and other resources required to accomplish the regional objectives.”<sup>10</sup>

As the foundation of the CINCs and Executive Agents TEP, the TEP Strategic Concept is formally updated and reviewed by 1 April every two years and addresses priorities, objectives, and resource issues at the program level for the next seven years. Revisions inside the two year submission requirement may be required if “...*there are*

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<sup>10</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual., *Theater Engagement Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO , 31 May 2000), A-10,11.

*significant changes in the security environment or the applicable prioritized regional objectives published in the CPG/JSCP are changed.”<sup>11</sup>*

The CINCs and Executive Agents develop TEP Activity Annexes in support of their Strategic Concepts. Similar to TEP Strategic Concepts, the Activity Annexes plan for seven years. However, unlike the TEP Strategic Concepts, the Activity Annexes are formally reviewed and updated every year by 1 October. Additionally, the TEP Activity Annexes identify by time (fiscal year) and category the forces and resources necessary to support the TEP Strategic Concept. The CINCs and Executive Agents are required to identify, in detail, the force and resource requirements for the first two years of the TEP Activity Annex; in progressively less detail, the out year requirements are also identified. The TEP Activity Annex force and resource requirements are identified in the following categories of engagement activities:

1. Operational Activities: peacekeeping, peace enforcement, humanitarian relief, and counterdrug operations
2. Combined Exercises: CJCS or CINC sponsored exercises, bilateral or multilateral exercises.
3. Security Assistance: foreign military financing (FMF), foreign military sales (FMS), international military education and training (IMET), enhanced international military education and training (E-IMET), excess defense articles (EDA), and direct commercial sales (DCA).
4. Combined Training: unit or individual training with forces of other nations.

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<sup>11</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual., *Theater Engagement Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO , 31 May 2000), A-4.

# Engagement Categories



Combined Exercises



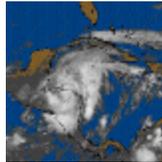
Operations



Military Contacts



Combined Training



Humanitarian Assistance



Security Assistance



Combined Education

5. Combined Education: foreign defense personnel attending U.S. education institutions.
6. Military Contacts: senior officer visits, ship port visits, regional conferences, staff talks, etc.
7. Humanitarian Assistance: excess property donations, disease prevention and control teams, medical readiness, etc.
8. Other Engagement: optional, but may include arms control and treaty monitoring, as well as other activities not captured above.

To address the force and resource requirements identified in the TEP Activity

Annexes, the CINCs are directed through the JSCP to use, as a point of departure “...assigned forces (from the Secretary of Defense’s Forces For Unified Commands memorandum), those rotationally deployed to the theater, and those that have historically been deployed into theater to support engagement activity requirements.”<sup>12</sup> The result of this broad guidance from the JSCP is force and resource uncertainty that requires a tremendous amount of effort for CINC TEP planners to overcome. This elevates a weakness in the TEP process that can be traced through the entire development and execution of CINC TEPs. The JSCP - the primary strategic planning document guiding CINC TEP development - does not assign forces for engagement.

*Global Family of Plans.* By 1 October of each year, the CINCs are responsible for having submitted a completed TEP – which includes the Strategic Concept and Activity Annexes – to the CJCS for review. Specifically, the Joint Staff J-7, Conventional War Plans Directorate, is the CJCS agent responsible for coordinating the review process. All CINC TEPs are reviewed by the Joint Staff directorates, Services, and supporting CINCs, and are guided by the following review criteria:

1. Adequacy. “...determines whether the scope and concept of planned activities are capable of satisfying the JSCP-taskings and other objectives stated in national-level policy documents.”
2. Feasibility. “...determines whether, in the aggregate, the activities contained in the TEP Activity Annexes can be accomplished using available resources and whether or not additional resources are required to meet proposed levels of

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<sup>12</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual., *Theater Engagement Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO , 31 May 2000), A-9.

engagement activity.”

3. Acceptability. “...determines whether the contemplated course of action is worth the cost in manpower, material, and time involved; is consistent with the law of war; and militarily and politically supportable.”<sup>13</sup>

If discrepancies are identified during the review process, the responsible CINC is charged with bringing the issue to resolution. Upon completion of the review, the CINC TEPs are integrated into a Global Family of TEPs (which is essentially the combined package of all CINC approved TEPs), forwarded to the CJCS for approval, and finally, the CJCS Global Family of Plans is forwarded to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP). OUSDP conducts a review of the Global Family of TEPs in order to make appropriate recommendations to the Secretary of Defense prior to development of the following year’s CPG.

### **Assessing TEP’s Early Years**

As a relatively new and revolutionary plan, the full jury is still out concerning the value added, and utility of, the current TEP process. This indecisiveness is due in large part to weaknesses in the current TEP process that culminate in a product that varies in value at the strategic and operational levels. Two major weaknesses addressed hereafter, are reforming the Prioritized Regional Objectives (PROs) method and redistribution of forces and resources. The attributes of the PROs and forces and resources weaknesses are many. They are found at both the strategic and operational levels. Therefore, focusing at the strategic and operational levels provides a useful framework to discuss the

positive outcomes of TEP thus far, and find some inherent weaknesses residing in the current TEP process.

As discussed earlier, at the strategic level there are multiple policy and planning documents that emphasize and address engagement as fundamental to our national strategy. Sweeping changes in recent National Security Strategies and National Military Strategies have moved engagement from an afterthought to a front row seat in our national strategy. Stated recently in the 1999 NSS, “Our strategy is founded on continued U.S. engagement and leadership abroad. The United States must lead abroad if we are to be secure at home.”<sup>14</sup> That said, the issue of whether or not to engage abroad is a mute point. What is of significance is our method of engagement, and more specifically, the U.S. military role in engagement.

While the NSS and NMS describe the importance and purpose of engagement, the strategic planning documents that describe the intent and objectives of engagement are the CPG and the JSCP. As elements of the Joint Strategic Planning System – the primary method by which the CJCS provides strategic direction to the CINCs and Services –the CPG and JSCP have until recently been focused on providing guidance to the CINCs and Services to accomplish their warfighting missions. In response to the 1997 NMS pillars of *Shape, Respond, Prepare Now*, the 1997 CPG addressed the engagement issue for the first time by providing PROs specifically for engagement and in support of the *Shape* pillar of the NMS. Further, the PROs are restated in the JSCP as specific planning guidance for development of CINC TEPs. It is with the PROs that the first major

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. B4-5.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. President, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, December 1999, 3.

handicap in the TEP process is identified; as strategic planning guidance, the issues with the PROs are magnified at the operational and tactical levels.

The PROs provide the foundation upon which all CINC TEPs are built; PROs are, in essence, the Achilles' heel of TEP. Their importance cannot be overstated. The CINC's engagement strategy, objectives, and activities - planned and conducted - must be in support of accomplishing the PROs. Otherwise the CINC's TEP, when reviewed by the Joint Staff, will not pass the "adequacy" review criteria. The shortcomings with the current PROs are five-fold:

1. Lack of global prioritization.
2. Lack of PRO prioritization within each CINC.
3. Many of the PROs are written as tasks (specific) versus objectives (broad).
4. There are simply too many PROs. Practically any engagement activity a CINC plans or executes can be linked to a PRO.
5. PROs are aligned by DoD / Department of State regions versus by each CINC's geographic area of responsibility / the Unified Command Plan (UCP) – the UCP assigns each combatant CINC a geographic area of responsibility. (though separate issues, points one and two will be combined due to their inter-relationship)

*Global Prioritization.* The PROs assigned to each CINC via the CPG/JSCP are separate, relatively distinct, and are prioritized as:

1. Tier I: vital - interests that are "...of broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety, and vitality of the nation."<sup>15</sup>
2. Tier II: important - national interests that "...do not affect national survival, but do affect national well being and the character of the world."<sup>16</sup>
3. Tier III: humanitarian and other interests – "...the nation may act because US values demand a response..."<sup>17</sup>

While the PROs are certainly not void of any prioritization (Tier I, II, III), the current Tier prioritization approach leaves too much ambiguity and is insufficient to affect efficient strategic decision making at the Joint Staff level or engagement planning at the CINC level. This is especially troublesome considering that each CINC has multiple PROs within each Tier and no guidance to determine PRO priorities – most important to least important - within each Tier. In effect, the current PROs have become watered down to the point that they provide little value or significance outside the administrative planning requirements. In an era of low density/high demand forces and resources, the PROs do not provide an effective mechanism for the Joint Staff or the CINCs to make strategic decisions on engagement such as arbitration of force or resource shortfalls (for example, which Tier I PROs between the CINCs is most important to achieve).

To solve the PRO dilemma, global prioritization of all Tier I (vital) PROs is absolutely necessary. To accomplish global prioritization, all CPG/JCSP directed Tier I PROs should be developed and prioritized from most important to least important at the

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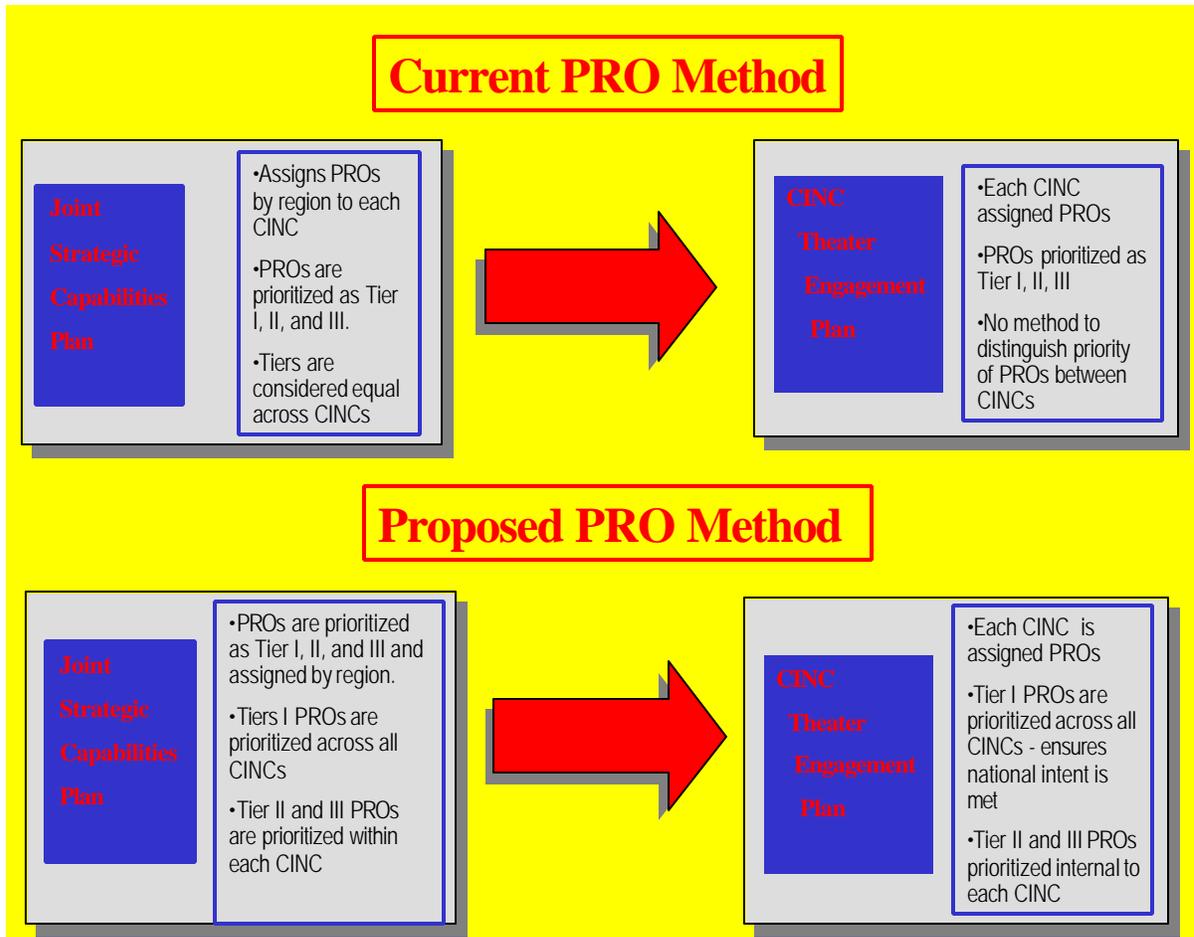
<sup>15</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual., *Theater Engagement Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO , 31 May 2000), GL-6.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*

strategic level (NCA/DoD/DOS), and then distributed to the operational commanders (CINCs) via the JSCP. Once accomplished, the Joint Staff (strategic level) will now have definitive guidance on Tier I PRO priorities worldwide, and the CINCs (operational level) will have CINC centric Tier I PROs reflecting national priorities of importance. This method utilizes a national level decision making process to determine and prioritize our nation's most vital PROs and, through distribution of the PROs to the CINCs, clear guidance to the operational commanders for execution. In the end, the process of global prioritization of PROs practically guarantees engagement targeted at those PROs determined to be of highest value to the US.

This is not to infer that the Tier II and III PROs (important, and humanitarian and other interests respectively) are not important enough for prioritization, or that they should not be prioritized. On the contrary, the Tier II and III PROs should also be prioritized, but not at the national level. The Joint Staff - in coordination with each CINC - should be responsible for determining Tier II and III PRO priorities for each individual CINC. During the Tier II and III prioritization process, each CINC should be evaluated separately, not in the aggregate with other CINCs. The result is that each CINC will receive via the JSCP Tier II and III PROs that are prioritized within each Tier and are separate and distinct for each CINC. The distinction between the Tier I (global prioritization) PROs, and Tier II and III (CINC centric prioritization) PROs is necessary to keep focus on and effect those PROs most crucial to U.S. engagement strategy: Tier I PROs.



Global prioritization of Tier I PROs will certainly generate an immense amount of debate within the halls of DoD, but considering their importance, the change is absolutely necessary to realize our engagement strategy. Global prioritization is likely to affect numerous positive changes over a period of time. However, if approved, three impacts will materialize immediately, or at least in the near term. 1) Prioritization of all CPG/JSCP directed Tier I PROs (from most to least important) will undoubtedly affect forces and resources allocation between the various CINCs – a major attribute of the weakness in today’s TEP process. This is a huge issue that will generate intense discussion within DoD, and between the CINCs and Services. Also, it is fair to say that most likely the current “have” CINCs (CINCs with the predominate amount of forces

assigned – U.S. Joint Forces Command, U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. European Command) will have some amount of forces and resources allocated to the “have not” CINCs (CINCs with practically no forces assigned – U.S. Central Command and U.S. Southern Command). In the end, global prioritization of Tier I PROs will most likely force DoD to readdress the current alignment of forces and resources, which today is essentially a Cold War holdover with forces and resources aligned predominantly toward Europe and the Pacific. While this alignment is perhaps accurate with regard to *responding*, global prioritization of Tier I PROs is very likely to redirect forces toward other regions of the world in support of *shaping*.

2) The CINCs will have weighted (prioritized) Tier I engagement requirements to address with the Joint Staff, Services and supporting agencies thereby strengthening the CINC’s position in the engagement / resourcing arena. Closely related to the preceding issue, all CINCs with Tier I PRO resource requirement shortfalls will – depending upon the ultimate prioritization of Tier I PROs by CINC – be on equal footing with one another when bartering for forces and resources. At present, if a CINC has resource shortfalls there are no established priorities above the CINC level to arbitrate to the Joint Staff or Services. In effect, CINCs deliver engagement requirements and shortfalls with no established priorities. Not so with global prioritization, those PROs determined to be essential – Tier I – will be weighted in accordance to our national strategy / prioritization.

3) The global prioritization process will most likely act as a filter reducing the overall number of Tier I PROs the CINCs are responsible for accomplishing. Currently, there are simply too many Tier I PROs for the CINCs to accomplish. It follows logic that if utilizing a

disciplined process to establish and prioritize those Tier I PROs determined to be most important to achieving our national strategy, a reduction in their number will occur.

Of lesser importance are issues three through five. Many of the PROs lack consistency in the manner they are written. Far too many of the PROs are written as tasks (detailed and specific) versus objectives (broad and enduring), thereby reducing the CINC's flexibility to achieve the PRO using a variety of engagement programs or activities. Next, there are simply too many PROs assigned to each CINC. This issue becomes more apparent when the number of PROs assigned to each CINC is taken under study. A recent tally shows that each CINC is assigned between 30 and 55 PROs, and an average of 10-15 of the PROs are Tier I. In today's resource constrained environment, it is simply unrealistic to expect the CINC to engage upon even the majority of the PROs assigned to any degree necessary for accomplishment. Further, with the large number of PROs assigned to each CINC, almost any engagement activity the CINC or Services conduct are in support of the CINC's engagement plan / PRO. Finally, the assignment of the PROs needs to reflect the geographic responsibilities assigned to the CINCs through the Unified Command Plan (UCP). Currently, several CINCs share the responsibility of accomplishing multiple PROs, because the PROs are assigned along DOS and DoD regional lines versus CINC geographic areas of responsibility. In other words, the regional lines used by DOS and DoD cross over rather than line up with CINC UCP assigned areas of responsibility. Though the issues above are less imperative than the global prioritization issue, they are necessary to address and resolve in order to reduce the cascading effect they have on the CINCs during TEP development and execution.

*Allocation of Forces.* A second attribute in the weakness of TEP is the allocation of forces. As previously mentioned, the JSCP provides the CINCs with specific guidance for development of TEPs. Enclosure E of the JSCP, Engagement Planning Guidance serves three purposes: 1) It contains broad guidance for development of TEPs; 2) Identifies the PROs that the CINCs must address in their TEPs; and 3) Categorizes the PROs into Tiers I, II, and III. While the JSCP provides force allocation information for development of assigned deliberate plans (operational and contingency), it does not address force allocation for CINC TEPs. Instead, CINCs are directed to “use for planning purposes a combination of forces from Active and Reserve assigned in the Forces For document, those rotationally deployed to the theater, and those that have historically been deployed for engagement activities.”<sup>18</sup> While this method of assigning forces may be acceptable to the “have” CINCs, it is less than acceptable to the “have not” CINCs and may only serve to put the U.S. engagement strategy at risk.

The question that must be formally addressed within DoD is should, or better yet, can forces and resources be assigned for engagement without jeopardizing the militaries’ primary mission of fighting and winning our nation’s wars, i.e., the *respond* and *prepare now* pillars of the NMS? Without question, TEP is a maturing document, and perhaps larger TEP issues have been at stake thus far. However, it is time for the Joint Staff to address the complicated and sensitive issue of forces and resources allocation for CINC TEPs if TEP is to fulfill its intent. Global prioritization of Tier I PROs will most likely resolve some of the force and resource allocation issues by default, but the imbalance of

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<sup>18</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual., *Theater Engagement Planning* (Washington, DC: GPO , 31 May 2000), A-11.

current day force and resource allocations between the CINCs is sure to continue, regardless if global prioritization of Tier I PROs is approved.

*Engagement Activity Annexes.* While the CPG and the JSCP are planning documents produced at the strategic level and passed down to the operational level (CINCs) to effect planning, the TEP Activity Annexes are documents produced at the operational level by the CINCs, and forwarded to the strategic level (Joint Staff, Services and supporting agencies) for review. The Joint Staff, Services and supporting agencies are responsible for conducting a review of the Activity Annexes based upon established review criteria of adequacy, feasibility, and acceptability. In layman's terms, the review is primarily conducted to evaluate whether or not the planned activities are capable of satisfying the assigned PROs, and whether or not the forces and resources are available to accomplish the activities referenced in the Annexes.

Unfortunately, after reviewing two cycles of CINC's TEP Activity Annexes – each CINC Annex numbering 400 or more pages – the Joint Staff, Services and supporting agencies found the Activity Annexes too complicated to conduct a meaningful review, and were essentially overwhelmed with the amount of detail the TEP Activity Annexes contained.<sup>19</sup> However, it must also be pointed out that the Activity Annexes, while beneficial to CINC and component planners, do not illustrate force and resource information in a format that is user-friendly at the Joint Staff and Service level. Additionally, the review was untenable due to the lack of computerized database program to aid sifting through the thousands of pages of engagement detail the Activity Annexes

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<sup>19</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Charles Lutes, Chief, Engagement Branch, Strategy Division, Joint Staff J-5, interview by author, 6 December 2000.

provided. Subsequent changes to the TEP process have not rectified the review problem, while the Activity Annex reporting requirements remain essentially the same, and a computerized database to support the review process has not fully materialized.

Contrary to the Activity Annex dilemma at the strategic level, the CINC's and service component planners at the operational level have - for the most part - found the utility of the Activity Annexes growing with each TEP cycle. This is due in large part to increased familiarity with the TEP process, CINC initiated improvements in planning engagement activities, and the entrance of computer database programs developed by several of the CINC's to assist their staffs in the planning and management of the Activity Annexes. To put the value added by the Activity Annexes into perspective, a few comparisons can be drawn between today and the period before TEP Activity Annexes.

1. The Activity Annexes contain seven years of planned engagement activities; the first two years reflect execution level detail while the out years reflect progressively less detail. Previously, few activities were planned beyond a two-year horizon, and those that were tended to be stovepipe programs (an example is the combined exercises program).
2. The Activity Annexes reflect the nuts and bolts of the CINC's plan for accomplishing his engagement strategy. Prior to the Activity Annexes, the engagement activities were not unified under a single plan or strategy.
3. During development of the Activity Annexes, the CINC's staff, Service components, and Country Team inputs are brought together in a unified effort. Previously, the CINC's staff, Service components, and County Teams performed

much of their engagement activity planning on their own accord, and essentially in a vacuum.

While the Activity Annexes are far from perfect and their development remains a laborious and consuming process for all involved, they are of growing value at the operational level. Given time to mature further, their strategic value has a great deal of promise and should become an asset in the near future.

### **TEP Way Ahead**

In a recent turn of events, the CJCS has issued a concept of change in TEP that is poised to make the most sweeping changes to TEP since the inception of TEP itself. Centered around the issue of simplifying the TEP process, the CJCS is recommending four major changes in the Theater Engagement Planning process:

1. Improve the Prioritized Regional Objectives
2. Enhance Strategic Concept development
3. Refine concept reviews
4. Reduce administrative requirements<sup>20</sup>

The focus behind improving the PROs is to redirect TEP from a resource-driven document to a strategy-driven document. In other words, rather than have resources drive TEP, the strategy, in the form of PROs, will drive TEP. To accomplish this goal, the CJCS's approach calls for a complete rewrite of the PROs into short and distinct objectives; improve PRO consistency between the regions; and prioritize the PROs

within the regions. While the proposed PRO changes are necessary and the effort is applauded, the changes fall short in one key area: global prioritization of Tier I PROs. Prioritization within each region/CINC at the Tier II and III level – as discussed earlier - is certainly a move in the right direction, but it is an incomplete move without Tier I global prioritization. In order for the CJCS and the Joint Staff to evaluate the progress or status of this nation's most important engagement objectives - Tier I – they must be prioritized globally. Global prioritization of Tier I PROs will be very hard business and politically sensitive work, but its resolution is absolutely necessary to avoid force and resource expenditures against lesser important objectives.

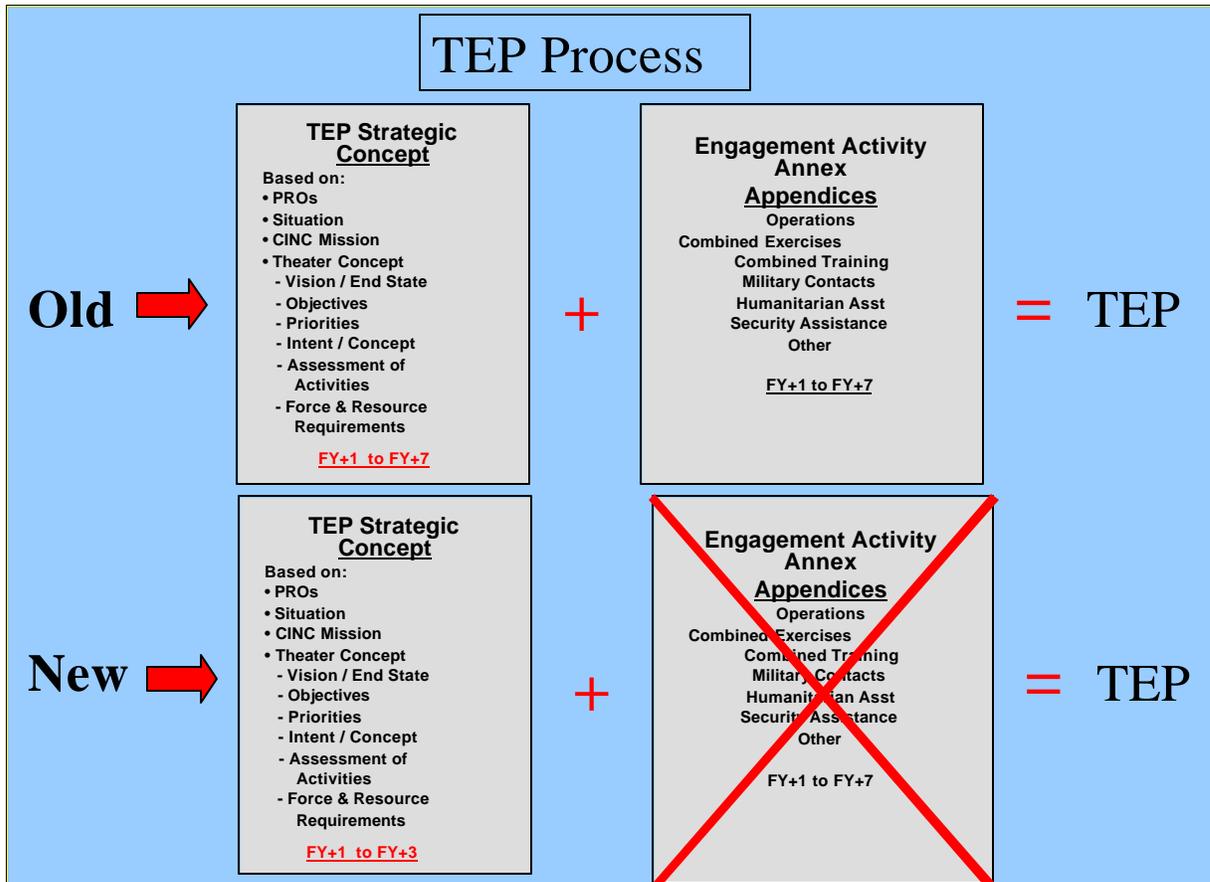
In changes two through four, the CJCS is essentially recommending voiding the requirement for development of the TEP Activity Annexes; reducing the TEP Strategic Concept to a planning horizon of three years versus the current seven years; strengthening PRO shortfall requirements; and reviewing the TEP Strategic Concepts for adequacy only (is the scope of the TEP Concept capable of satisfying the JSCP tasked PROs?). While attempting to simplify the TEP process, the most striking change to TEP – if the recommendations are approved - will be redirecting TEP from a resource-driven to a strategy-driven document. Accordingly, each CINC will be assigned new PROs that are prioritized within each Tier category with the responsibility of employing forces and resources to accomplish the higher priority / most important PROs. If a CINC has major shortfalls in forces and resources, they are to be addressed through the following avenues:

1. Via the TEP Strategic Concept (in a macro concept) for visibility to the Joint Staff
2. Identified in the various CINC and Service funding documents (CINC and Service Integrated Priority List).

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<sup>20</sup> The Joint Staff, *A Strategic Approach to Theater Engagement Planning*, Study, 29 January 2001, 3.

3. Reprioritize existing TEP resources
4. Accept the shortfalls and the risks associated.



While the CJCS changes are bold, they fall short of impacting a key area the CJCS intended to address in addition to the two areas discussed earlier as major weaknesses of TEP: redirecting TEP from a resource-driven document to a strategy-driven document; global prioritization of PROs, and allocation of forces and resources for TEP. Without global prioritization of the PROs and reallocation of forces and resources for engagement, the “have not” CINCs will continue to experience serious resource shortfalls with no alternative but to address their shortfalls to the Joint Staff and Services

in much the same manner and tone in previous TEP cycles. Simply stated, little, if anything, has changed. Resourcing TEP requirements will continue to dominate discussions concerning TEP. The playing field remains stacked in favor of the “have” CINCs and against the “have not” CINCs, and the CJCS has missed an opportunity to redirect TEP from a resource-driven to a strategy-driven document. To further mark this decision with misunderstanding, the Services have also expressed their desire for global prioritization of the PROs to alleviate current misunderstandings in engagement priorities across the CINCs. Perhaps further CJCS changes will be implemented incrementally over time, and global prioritization will in fact be on the horizon. At a time when recommendations are made to delete one-half of the TEP requirement (TEP Annexes) and refocus the other half (TEP Concept), now is the time to correct the deficiencies with the PROs and allocation of forces and resources. The planners and executors of TEP are welcoming change with open arms. It is therefore incumbent upon the Joint Staff to ensure the full measure of changes are implemented, thereby meeting the CJCS’s intent of redirecting TEP to a strategy-driven document, and finally increasing the utility of TEP across all CINCs.

## **Conclusion**

In just four years since its inception, the Theater Engagement Planning process has had a profound affect upon the CINCs and Services conduct of engagement. Guided by a national strategy on engagement, the Joint Staff directed - and the CINCs and Services responded by - implementing a revolutionary planning requirement linking national engagement objectives to CINC and Service engagement activities. The TEP

process has brought discipline to the world of engagement, tying our national engagement strategy through the CINCs and Services, and to the units conducting the engagement activities across the globe. Certainly past are the days when the CINCs and Services conducted engagement activities with little or no guidance and/or oversight. In an era of low density/high demand forces and resources, TEP has emerged as a document that adds discipline, oversight, and synchronization to the overall U.S. engagement effort.

As a relatively new and maturing document, changes and improvements have been, and will continue to be, incorporated into the theater engagement planning process. The CJCS's recent position on simplifying TEP planning, and making it easier and less burdensome, are examples of the maturing nature of TEP. To continue in this vein and for TEP to realize its full purpose, intent, and utility, the following recommendations are considered essential:

1. The Secretary of Defense (SecDef) and the CJCS through the CPG / JSCP, must globally prioritize all Tier I PROs. Global prioritization of Tier I PROs is the only method that will give the SecDef and the CJCS the ability to identify, focus upon, and evaluate the status of our nation's most vital engagement objectives. Of equal importance will be Joint Staff feedback from the CINCs on Tier I PROs that cannot be accomplished due to resource shortfalls. Where shortfalls occur, the Joint Staff will be responsible for enhancing the CINCs resources to accomplish the Tier I PROs or accept the risks associated with not achieving a Tier I PROs.

2. The SecDef and the CJCS, through the CPG / JSCP and in coordination with the CINCs, internally prioritize each CINC's Tier II and III PROs. Prioritization is required to inform the CINCs - who again are limited by force and resource constraints - which Tier II and III PROs are most important to accomplish. Of similar importance are the CINCs identification to the Joint Staff those Tier II and III PROs that cannot be accomplished due to resource shortfalls and the risks associated with not achieving the Tier II and III PROs.
3. Assignment of forces for engagement. The SecDef, through the Forces For Unified Commands memorandum, or the CJCS through the JCSP, must assign CINCs forces for engagement. The current methods of forces and resources apportionment are simply unrealistic for TEP planning and execution. While it is expected that global prioritization of Tier I PROs will resolve some of the current resource shortfall issues, the Tier II and III PROs will remain hostage to the current forces and resources structure unless changes are made to affect a better balance between the "have" and "have not" CINCs. However, do not mistake the quest for an appropriate balance of forces and resources between the CINCs as a call for parity of forces and resources across all CINCs. What is sought and required is an equal balance of forces and resources by CINCs to accomplish their assigned engagement mission.

Few, if any revolutionary changes in DoD are smooth and uneventful, and TEP is certainly no exception. A plan as broad as TEP – one that calls for change and touches multiple organizations and staffs throughout DoD – will undoubtedly open itself to criticism and nitpicking from all directions. Having weathered the initial storm, it is time

for the Joint Staff and the CINCs to roll up their sleeves, get serious about TEP, and address the changes necessary to make it a truly effective global engagement tool. The changes recommended above call for a *rallying of the wagons* within DoD, a unified effort to recognize the value of TEP, and the courage and selflessness to undertake change.



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