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## Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) and New Missions for NATO

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### SUMMARY

The January 1994 NATO summit meeting in Brussels approved a U.S. proposal that would help restructure NATO command arrangements and forces to meet the more varied military security demands of the post-Cold War era. The allied decision to create "Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF)," if successfully implemented, could give the United States and NATO more flexible military options for dealing with contingencies in and beyond Europe, for example when intervention capabilities are needed to support a United Nations peace operation. CJTF could become the main way for the United States to develop more effective sharing of global military burdens with its European allies. The plan would accommodate joint U.S.-European missions as well as operations mounted by the Europeans with little or no direct U.S. involvement. And, the new command arrangements could accommodate participation of forces from non-NATO allies: for example, the new democracies that aspire to NATO membership. Implementation, however, will require that the United States continue to commit significant military assets to NATO, that European allies stem the recent decline in defense spending, and that they reorient at least some of their forces to support possible CJTF missions.

### WHAT IS A CJTF?

The term "Combined Joint Task Force" is composed of a string of specific, but relatively straight-forward, concepts of military organization. A *force* is any grouping of military capabilities, manpower and equipment, construed in organized units. A *task force* is such a grouping that has been organized to achieve a specific mission or task. A task force usually is disbanded as soon as that mission is accomplished, and the units return to their parent commands. (A *standing task force* is organized to deal with what is viewed as an ongoing military requirement.) The addition of the term *joint* means that two or more military services (army, navy, air force or marines) are part of the task force. The term *combined* means that the forces of two or more nations are involved.

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NATO already has had experience with combined and joint task forces. In 1960, NATO created the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force as a small, multinational grouping of land and air forces ("combined" and "joint") that could deploy on short notice anywhere in the command's territory. NATO has established several naval task forces: the Standing Naval Force Atlantic (1967), the Standing Naval Force Channel (1973), the Naval On-Call Force for the Mediterranean (1969), and the Standing Naval Force Mediterranean, which replaced the On-Call Force in 1992. Implementation of the CJTF initiative would make such operations the rule rather than the exception in the organization and operation of NATO forces.

## ORIGINS OF THE CJTF INITIATIVE

The CJTF initiative is the latest step in the process of adapting NATO military cooperation to the post-Cold War world. The road leading to the concept began with the review of NATO's strategy mandated at the NATO summit meeting in London on July 5-6, 1990. The review produced a "new strategic concept," approved at the NATO summit in Rome in November 1991. The new strategic concept described the risks to allied security as "multifaceted ... and multi-directional." The NATO leaders agreed that forces "will be developed to permit measured, flexible and timely responses" to crisis situations. According to the concept, NATO defenses "will rely increasingly on multinational forces," because multinational units reinforce alliance solidarity and "provide a way of deploying more capable formations than might be available purely nationally...."

## CJTF PURPOSES

The United States, led by then-Secretary of Defense Aspin, proposed CJTF in 1993 as the way to make NATO's military structure more responsive to post-Cold War military and political conditions.<sup>1</sup> The intent was to provide flexible command arrangements within which U.S. forces and those of allied and other nations could be grouped to take on a wide variety of missions beyond the borders of alliance countries. The proposal had three goals:

- to give NATO's force and command structure sufficient flexibility to respond to Alliance security requirements and new missions beyond Article 5 contingencies (in other words, beyond defense of allied nations from direct attack), including requests from the U.N. or the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for NATO to provide military intervention capabilities;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>There currently is little published material on NATO's CJTF initiative. Discussions with U.S. and NATO officials provided background for this report. The analysis also draws on "Trans-Atlantic Security and the Development of a European Security and Defense Identity: A View from the U.S." by Col. S. Nelson Drew, published as a Special Issue of The Alliance Papers by the United States Mission to NATO, Brussels, Belgium.

<sup>2</sup>Such missions could include a wide range of operations requiring the use of military forces in and around Europe, in the Middle East, or elsewhere.

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- to facilitate the dual use of NATO forces and command structures for Alliance and/or Western European Union (WEU) operations, encouraging European nations to undertake missions with forces that are "separable but not separate [from NATO]" in the context of an emerging European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI);<sup>3</sup>
- to permit non-NATO partners to join NATO countries in operations, exercises and training as envisioned in the "Partnership for Peace," a U.S.-proposed program of military cooperation open to all non-NATO European states that was also initiated at the January 1994 summit.

### **THE FIRST STEPS**

The first step in any restructuring of military capabilities is normally to provide the necessary command and control arrangements. This is essentially where the NATO leaders started in Brussels. They gave broad direction to NATO's senior governing authority, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), with the advice of NATO military authorities, and in coordination with the Western European Union, to "develop this concept and establish the necessary capabilities." NATO officials began working to implement the decision and are scheduled to report on progress at the next scheduled meeting of the NATO foreign ministers on June 9-10, 1994.

The French Government, which participates selectively in NATO military cooperation, required that the project remain under the direct sponsorship of the NAC to ensure that French officials would have a full say in the development of CJTF arrangements. In fact, the first problem encountered was the need to create a new committee to take into account the French requirement for NAC political control and the desire of the U.S. and other allies that NATO military authorities be represented in the shaping of CJTF plans.

According to the U.S. proposal, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) should direct his three Major Subordinate Commands (MSC's) -- Allied Forces Northwest, Center, and South -- to designate from within their headquarters a General Officer and a staff to serve as a standing contingency CJTF headquarters for their region. One or any combination of the three CJTF headquarters units could be assigned forces to conduct missions.

The CJTF would normally be available for missions accepted and conducted by NATO as a whole, including the United States. But the CJTF could also be used for missions taken on by the NATO European allies who are members of the Western European Union. In such a case, the CJTF commander, instead of receiving guidance from and reporting through NATO channels, would wear a WEU hat and report through a WEU command structure, ultimately under the political direction of the WEU Council of Ministers. If NATO assets (for

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<sup>3</sup>The goal of developing a European Security and Defense Identity -- a European pillar for the transatlantic alliance -- was set in the Treaty of Maastricht among the members of the European Union.

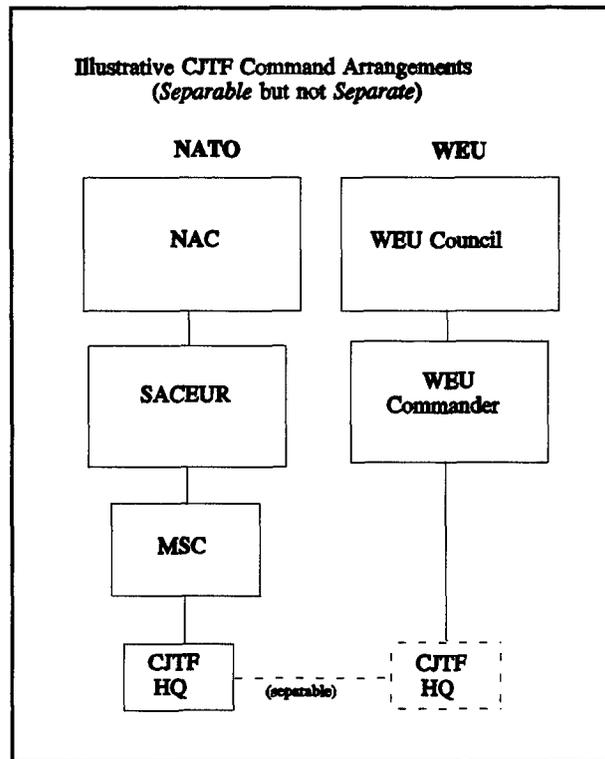
example, NATO's Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft) were to be used by WEU, those assets could be placed under the operational control of the WEU commander when supporting a WEU operation. This would require regularized liaison and effective communications between NATO and WEU political and military authorities.

Currently, the Europeans lack the full range of airlift, command and control, and intelligence capabilities to take on most missions beyond their national borders. In the U.S. concept, if the WEU were to take the lead on a CJTF mission, the United States would not transfer operational control of strategic assets to WEU command, but would provide services to WEU, such as transporting forces and providing intelligence support. CJTF therefore would facilitate U.S./NATO provision of capabilities for European-led operations, while at the same time meeting U.S. pressures for allies to carry a larger share of global military burdens. For some time, the need for U.S. support will likely give the United States decisive influence over the choice of missions.

Once a command structure with operational procedures is in place, the allies could start identifying national units that could be combined to constitute a task force. Command post and planning exercises could be conducted, and eventually field exercises to test the complete range of cooperation that would be required to make the CJTF concept operational. But for now, the CJTF is little more than the acronym itself. The headquarters have not been established, no forces have been identified for CJTF missions, and most of the procedures for political, financial and operational control remain to be agreed.

### THE LONG-TERM POTENTIAL

The CJTF concept has the potential to revolutionize military cooperation within the NATO framework. If carried to its logical conclusion, NATO countries would plan, equip and designate forces to join in CJTF missions. Allied political authorities would have at their disposal a variety of "Lego Legions" that could be mixed in force packages tailored for specific missions.



Preparing for CJTF missions, U.S. forces would plan, train and operate with units from NATO countries and from nations that have joined the Partnership for Peace program. Individual countries -- particularly smaller allies and financially-limited peace partners -- could take responsibility for specialized capabilities, limiting unnecessary duplication and making the most out of scarce defense resources.

The fact that the NATO countries would have such flexible capabilities at hand could help deter aggressive behavior in and beyond Europe. NATO countries would be better-positioned to make key contributions to U.N. peace operations, particularly those requiring more active enforcement activities than is usually contemplated in traditional peacekeeping missions.

### **POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS**

For the CJTF concept to work, a number of demanding conditions would have to be met, including:

- The CJTF approach will not work without continued U.S. leadership and force contributions. The United States would be required to keep significant military resources committed to NATO, and to restructure those forces away from their traditional roles in Central Europe (defending against a Soviet/Warsaw Pact threat) toward more coalition-oriented missions outside Europe;
- European allies would have to stem the decline in defense spending of recent years and reorient and equip some of their forces to be able to contribute to the varied coalition-style task force missions envisioned in the CJTF plan. Each European ally would have to develop a domestic political consensus in favor of taking on military missions beyond national borders. This will be a particularly difficult process in Germany, where political and attitudinal constraints may limit Germany's military contributions for some time to come;
- The United States and France would have to sustain and deepen the more pragmatic cooperation of recent years that has opened the way for a program like the CJTF. France has the potential to be the most important European contributor to CJTF operations. If French policy reverted to more nationalistic ways or the United States qualified its support for the European Security and Defense Identity, progress in establishing CJTF capabilities would be seriously hampered;
- Even with the best intentions in Washington and Paris and other allied capitals, making the CJTF concept work will be very demanding. To make allied forces capable of working effectively together as envisaged in the CJTF concept, further progress would be required in promoting standardization, or at least interoperability, of military equipment, supplies, and operating procedures. Such cooperation as has been developed among the participants in NATO's integrated command

structure would have to be extended to include France and Spain, which are not in that structure, and to any Peace Partners who might wish to make significant contributions to the CJTF.

In sum, making CJTF work in practice will require political commitment, resources, and good will on all sides. Otherwise, it will remain a nice idea that never makes it from the planning tables to the battlefield.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO'S FUTURE**

The CJTF has been chosen as the way to transform NATO's role for the post-Cold War world and to accommodate a more cohesive European role in the alliance. If the program is implemented, NATO will progressively develop military capabilities that could be used in a wide variety of contingencies. This would not guarantee that the United States or its allies would make the political decisions to use such capabilities, but if multilateral military force capabilities are available (as they were not at the outset of the Yugoslav crisis), policymakers would at least have the option to use them.

The creation of credible multilateral military intervention capabilities could play the same kind of constructive deterrent role that was played by NATO defense cooperation in the Cold War. Maintaining a credible defensive posture against potential aggression by the Soviet Union helped ensure that Soviet leaders were never seriously tempted to test NATO's capability to respond. It is not known how effective a deterrent the CJTF capability might prove to be against the lesser threats for which it is designed, but it presumably would be better for the interests of the United States and its allies than if no such capability existed.

If the United States and its allies cannot implement the CJTF concept, then NATO will appear increasingly irrelevant to security requirements, at least as seen from the United States. In such circumstances, the U.S. commitment to participate in European defense arrangements would continue to weaken. European nations might then be left to choose between making the large investments necessary to build stand-alone European defense capabilities or allowing defense efforts to decline further in the absence of a credible rationale for their national forces.