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JOINT EXPEDITIONARY FORCES: A STEP BEYOND

By

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Maritime Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy

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ABSTRACT

Dramatic changes have swept the world over the last decade. The United States' military has not been left untouched by these changes. In particular, the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and declining defense budgets have significantly altered the manner in which the military views its future structure and operational concepts. Experimentation and innovation will be the keys to sustaining the United States position as the world's preeminent power.

This paper will explore a concept of routinely employing and deploying Joint Expeditionary Forces (JEF) in response to the changes we are witnessing. The JEF concept melds the adaptive joint force package first proposed by Admiral Miller in 1992-93, and the Civil Military Operations Center as outlined in *Joint Pub 3-08, Vol. I*. Joint military forces integrated with the interagency organizations that have become increasingly involved in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) provides a synergistic effect that could not be matched by military forces alone.

INTRODUCTION

We live today in an era perhaps unprecedented in the annals of history. The tides of change have swept across the shores of the globe at a breakneck pace over the last decade. Significant events that we have been witness to during this decade include the end of the Cold War, societal disintegration in places such as Bosnia, Haiti, and Somalia, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) on a scale previously unmatched.

Comparative leaps and bounds rather than the incremental steps that measured technological advances of previous generations today measure technological advances. The current Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has produced new generation sensors, weapons and communication technologies at a dizzying rate. Unlike previous generations, the military is no longer the lead innovator in technology as "...technological breakthroughs come faster in the civilian sector and spin off into the defense industries."¹

The impacts of these changes on the military have been significant. United States defense budgets have declined nearly 40% since 1985 in inflation-adjusted terms², and are expected to remain static at \$250 billion per year through 2001. Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) have risen to a position of dominance in discussions concerning future force structures. There has been a shift in focus from individual weapons and platforms to the integration of systems designed to produce overwhelming preponderance on the battlefield. Time has replaced space as the preeminent critical factor³. The distinctions between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war have become increasingly blurred⁴.

Despite the significance of these changes, the military has made slow progress in adapting. Each service remains guilty of institutional parochialism and vigorously defends against any attempts to alter their Cold War force structures. More importantly, however, is

the lack of any real attempt to adapt the methods in which we routinely employ forces. Expeditionary forces have become a *cause célèbre*, but only in a service specific context.

This paper will briefly examine the forces of change that have brought us to this juncture in history, propose the concept of operating integrated military and interagency Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) packages routinely, and discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of operating such forces.

FORCES OF CHANGE

There have been three critical forces that have induced the inexorable change the military has had to adapt to since 1986. First amongst these is the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (86-PL99-433); second, the influences of the RMA; and third, the declining U.S. defense budget.

GOLDWATER-NICHOLS DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE REORGANIZATION ACT

This legislation is arguably the single most critical factor of change that has influenced the military over the past dozen years. In response to the series of operational failures in the 1970's and 1980's, Congress passed this act to more fully integrate the armed forces.⁵ The results of this Act have reverberated through the corridors of the Pentagon and each base, station, port, ship and aircraft within the military.

There were eight congressionally declared purposes for this legislation⁶:

- To reorganize DOD and strengthen civilian authority;
- To improve the military advice provided to the President, National Security Council, and Secretary of Defense;
- To place clear responsibility on the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands for the accomplishment of missions assigned to those commands;
- To ensure that the authority of commanders of unified and specified combatant commands is fully commensurate with the responsibility of those

commanders for the accomplishment of missions assigned to those commands;

- To increase attention to strategy formulation and contingency planning;
- To provide for the more efficient use of defense resources;
- To improve joint officer management policies;
- Otherwise to enhance the effectiveness of military operations and improve DOD management and administration.

The ultimate effect of this legislation on the operational forces has been an increased focus on jointness by each of the individual services.⁷ The codification of authorities and responsibilities of the regional and unified commanders have subjugated service parochialism at the operational level to some degree. Thus far, Goldwater-Nichols "...has enhanced the warfighting capabilities of the armed forces. Practically speaking, it has bounded the concept of jointness within the context of joint operations, particularly in terms of combat."⁸ Joint operations have now become the rule rather than the exception, particularly in response to crises around the globe.⁹

THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS (RMA)

Following closely behind the Goldwater-Nichols Act as an impetus for change within the military is the RMA. This topic has been widely discussed and debated in all forums relating to the defense industry. Despite all the attention this topic has drawn, however, there are still misconceptions as to what actually constitutes an RMA. Its present form is unarguably dominated by technological inventiveness, but it is an egregious error to define an RMA solely on the basis of technology.¹⁰

Perhaps Andrew Krepinevich, an author who has written extensively on the subject, offers the best definition of what constitutes an RMA:

“[A military revolution] occurs when application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combines with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptation in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of conflict. It does so by producing a dramatic increase – often an order of magnitude or greater – in the combat potential and military effectiveness of armed forces.”¹¹

The future of the U.S. military is leveraging itself heavily on the technological superiority it currently possesses. Precision weaponry, dominant battlespace knowledge, information superiority and maneuver warfare are the tenets of U.S. military strategy, and all have been either improved or made available by the technological explosion of the last decade.

Debates on future force structures and roles and missions have been heavily influenced by this technological superiority. However, there are certain cautionary tales rooted in history about states relying upon technological superiority to gain strategic success. States that have taken such an approach have inevitably failed to achieve those successes.¹² The strategic superiority sought by states through technical superiority “... must undergo substantive organizational transformation that enhances adaptability.”¹³

Thus, the current RMA has put the U.S. military at a crucial juncture in its history. The required adaptations implicit in securing the successes offered by an RMA would be the foundation for many of the decisions directly impacting the way that the military would conduct itself in the future. These decisions will involve future force structures, weapons and systems procurement, and roles and missions. The challenge will be to accept these required adaptations and not be tempted to replace the technology without replacing the old structures.¹⁴

BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS

Remaining true to its historical pattern, the U.S. military significantly reduced the size of its standing military forces and decreased defense spending at the end of the Cold War. Four rounds (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995) of the Commission on Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC) have resulted in the closure of 57 military installations, and the recommended closure of an additional 40 as of 31 March 1997.¹⁵ Active duty force levels have been reduced by approximately one half million since 1985, and current procurement accounts are seriously underfunded.¹⁶

The current environment of financial austerity has had a profound impact on the way the military thinks about its future. The defense budget has become a zero-sum game; perhaps the most significant battles each of the services will fight will be those waged in Congress over force and procurement funding. Despite the increased trend toward jointness, service parochialism is still a significant factor in the budget process.

Crucial decisions are being made today for tomorrow's military based upon the limited dollars made available for defense spending. These decisions will determine future strategy, force structures, weapon platforms, weapons, sensors and command and control systems to list but a few.

Budget-driven decisions pose some serious concerns. The recently completed Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) has sparked some debate in Congress on that very issue. Since the QDR was formulated within a specific budget limit,

“...many members of Congress have spoken out about their concerns that the QDR does not present other options and alternatives – which, although they may cost more, would at least give Congress some sense not only of the decisions made by planners in their development of the QDR strategy, but also the risks inherent in implementing that strategy.”¹⁷

The National Defense Panel (NDP), in its subsequent review of the QDR, has offered similar such criticism, particularly in the area of connectivity between strategy and recommended budgets and programs.¹⁸

CONVERGENCE OF FORCES

“As architects of our own revolution, we have to reach out to the future with open eyes and open minds – daring to experiment and ready to switch courses based on what we discover.”

Defense Secretary William S. Cohen¹⁹

The convergence of forces, comprised of Goldwater-Nichols, the RMA and declining defense budget, has induced dramatic changes on the military. They have caused the military to seriously review the way in which it presently conducts itself, but more importantly, the way it envisions conducting itself in both the near and distant future. Increased levels of jointness, reliance on technological superiority and scarce resources will determine the shape of future U.S. military forces. The post-Cold War environment that presents threats to U.S. security that are less clearly defined,²⁰ will determine how they are utilized.

The challenge for the U.S. military today is to determine how it will not only restructure its forces, but also in how it will employ its forces. As the world’s only superpower, the United States is presented with opportunities to innovate and experiment without any serious degradation to its security. To truly maximize the advantages of the RMA and operate within the fiscal constraints imposed upon the U.S. military, it is imperative to experiment operationally and organizationally during this window of opportunity.²¹

THE CASE FOR JOINT EXPEDITIONARY FORCES (JEF)

“The nature of modern warfare demands that we fight as a joint team. This was important yesterday, it is essential today, and it will be even more imperative tomorrow.”

*General John M. Shalikashvili²²
Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

U.S. forces have historically trained and deployed as service components, and joint operations were usually approached from a crisis perspective. Joint forces would be packaged to respond to various crises and threats as they presented themselves. The realities of today indicate that this approach is no longer feasible.²³ The military will only represent a portion of future measured responses, and in many scenarios will play a subordinate role.

What is required today, then, is an approach to bring the forces and agencies that will implement national policies together prior to a crisis.²⁴ Previous attempts to do this, such as Admiral Miller’s adaptive joint force package (AJFP) concept²⁵, were limited to a military perspective only. The concept for Joint Expeditionary Forces (JEF) integrates not only the military components, but also the other governmental organizations (GO’s), non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), and private voluntary organizations (PVO’s) that are increasingly required in the evolving and increasingly complex world stage.²⁶ *Joint Pub 3-08, Interagency Coordination During Joint Operations, Vol. ’s I and II*, provides a ready resource and reference on how to integrate the various agencies involved, though it falls short of proposing this coordination on a routine basis. The integration of these various forces and agencies on a regular basis is truly the synergy sought by Joint Vision 2010.

BUILDING THE JEF²⁷

The cornerstone for the JEF is the permanent joint military staff that will coordinate the forces assigned and direct its efforts from the training cycle through the end of

deployment. As envisioned, this staff will be nominally headed by a two star general/flag officer and organized along traditional military staff organizational lines (J-1, J-2, etc.). The JEF staff would be activated one year prior to its scheduled deployment (nominally six months), and forces from each service component will be designated, though these forces will not be formally assigned until after completion of service specific training.

The primary function of the JEF staff during its initial six months would be to determine the most likely missions it will be called upon to perform in the area to which it will deploy. Close liaison with the commander in chief (CINC) of the region to which the JEF will deploy is a prerequisite during this time period. As the JEF commander receives guidance from the CINC on his role in theater and his expected missions, he can begin to tailor his force package to meet these requirements. This allows the JEF commander to optimize his force structure and eliminate inefficient redundancies. The JEF commander would then formally request these specific forces from those designated for assignment by the service components.

This timeframe also offers the JEF commander and his staff the opportunity to train and integrate as a staff. One requirement that should be mandatory for the commander and his staff would be training at the Joint Training Analysis and Simulation Center (JTASK). Training there could take the staff from routine peacetime operations through full-scale war.

The subsequent six months will have the JEF commander responsible for training his assigned forces to the anticipated missions and designating the responsibilities of each of his component commanders. Forces assigned will be under the operational and tactical control of the JEF commander from this point forward. This period allows the JEF and component staffs and forces to truly integrate with each other and develop the tactics and techniques it

will use during deployment. As the forces begin to routinely operate with each other and truly begin to understand the capabilities of each component, it would be reasonable to assume that a fair amount of operational innovation could result.

The key decision point for the JEF commander at this juncture is to decide which portion of his force will actually forward deploy. Based upon the regional scenario, it may not be necessary for him to deploy all of his assigned forces. Those forces that do not forward deploy still remain under his operational control, but their tactical control is assigned to the service component for continued training. These forces would be kept in a standby status until the deployment is complete or released by the JEF commander for reassignment by the service component. This keeps the JEF intact, although separated, and allows the JEF commander the flexibility to respond with a trained and integrated force should circumstances so dictate. Improvements in communications technologies (i.e. video teleconferencing, e-mail) enable the separated forces to remain connected.

INTERAGENCY INTEGRATION

As outlined above, the JEF concept is fairly conventional except in its approach to bring the forces together earlier for more complete integration and training. The novelty of the JEF concept will be its approach to integrate the various non-Department of Defense (DOD) agencies within the JEF. This is essentially a transfer of the working group concept utilized in the Washington arena to the operational level. It is also acknowledged that this will be the most problematic area of the JEF concept.

The interagency group will be functionally packaged on the JEF staff as part of the Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC) as described in *Joint Pub 3-08, Vol. I*.²⁸ The composition of the CMOC will be tailored in much the same manner as the military force has been – designed to provide expertise in the specific geographical region and anticipated

missions. Additional agencies could be added as circumstances dictate. The CMOC would not normally deploy with the military component, but instead coordinate activities from a headquarters in the United States during peacetime operations. In the event of a crisis, there would be a "fly away" team sent to the theater to organize and coordinate with the in-theater agencies.

Examples of the various tasks assigned to the CMOC include the following²⁹:

- Facilitate and coordinate activities of the JEF, other on-scene agencies, and higher echelons in the military chain of command
- Validate, coordinate and monitor requests from humanitarian organizations for routine and emergency military support.
- Coordinate response to requests for military support with Service components.
- Coordinate requests to NGO's and PVO's for their support.
- Coordinate public affairs matters.
- Convene ad hoc mission planning groups to address complex military missions that support NGO and PVO requirements.

The synergy of the JEF is gained from the integration of all forces of national power. The military component is enhanced by direct linkage to other agencies that can provide regional or technical expertise otherwise unavailable unless filtered through layers of bureaucratic channels. Additional value is added through the establishment of relationships of a more consistent nature than those formed in response to crisis. A more thorough understanding of the resources and constraints that each of the organizations bring to the table is gained by the closer working relationships that would necessarily be established. Finally, there would be a flow of continuity, coordination and communication between agencies as events unfold and escalate that is heretofore previously unmatched.

ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY THE JEF CONCEPT

Utilizing the JEF concept offers definitive advantages. As the U.S. military continues to evolve its planning and operations towards increased levels of jointness, the routine

practice of training and deploying joint force packages would appear to meet the criteria for creating synergy through greater force and interagency integration.

The primary advantage that can be attributed to the JEF concept lies in its force design and training. The tailored force design puts at the disposal of the JEF commander the assets he deems best suited for accomplishing his anticipated missions according to his vision and intent. Unity of effort is enhanced as the JEF trains and operates as a single force in pursuit of common tactical and operational objectives.³⁰ The desired synergy is achieved as "...multiple service capabilities allow an innovative JFC to combine joint capabilities, tactics, techniques and procedures in asymmetrical as well as symmetrical ways synchronized to produce a total military impact greater than the sum of its parts."³¹

The second significant advantage offered by the JEF concept is in its designed permanency. There are numerous examples in the past where single service forces were combined to respond to a crisis at the last moment based upon forces available at the moment. The commander and headquarters staff of these forces required short-notice augmentation, training and equipment.³² Having a permanent JEF headquarters and staff, trained and experienced in joint operations, would ameliorate this situation.

The third distinct advantage of the proposed JEF concept is its integration of the other agencies that have increasingly become intertwined with the military in MOOTW. Humanitarian groups are now training with the military in the innovative "peace games" sponsored by U.S. Atlantic Command (USACOM) at the JTASK.³³ As interagency involvement and integration is likely to increase,³⁴ the JEF concept brings these groups together at the very beginning and involves them in planning operations at the front rather than at the middle or end of the process. These organizations bring expertise and long-term

experience into the process, and often have intimate personal knowledge of the actors in the various conflicts around the globe. Finally, friction that results from organizational cultural differences or direction of effort can be significantly reduced by this approach.

A fourth advantage of the JEF concept is in the area of military personnel management. The mandate for officers to obtain joint experience to be promoted to the flag/general officer level has created significant problems for each of the services. Competition between service and Joint billet requirements is an issue wrestled with daily by manpower experts. The JEF concept provides additional qualifying joint billets and would enable officers to obtain the joint experience required. More importantly, the JEF concept provides this exposure earlier in their careers at the tactical/operational level. This would ensure that officers acquire joint operational experience earlier in their careers, and provide the military with future generations of senior leadership fully inculcated in the tactical and operational value of joint operations.

This final point is strictly conjecture on the part of the author, and is in the form of questions that the JEF concept may help answer. If the JEF concept were to be implemented, how many of the redundancies among the services would be eliminated if it were found that their utility was marginal? How might roles and missions be redefined as joint operations gained primacy over single service operations? What type of budgetary restructuring would be necessitated as the military increased its integration and reliance on joint operations? Would service parochialism diminish? While it would be presumptuous to argue that the JEF concept would answer these questions and satisfy all the actors involved in them, it is interesting to speculate as to how many of these issues would be improved by employing the JEF concept.

CRITIQUE OF THE JEF

The primary critique of the JEF is expense. In the cost conscious environment in which the military must operate, the initial expense to begin operating under this concept would appear to be prohibitive. Cost savings from the elimination of redundant equipment and structures would not be realized for at least several years. There would be additional competition within each service, as funds must be reallocated within the service budgets to support this concept.

Training would also be a contentious issue from both cost and service specific perspectives. The cost issue might well arise at the CINC level, as that is currently where the bulk of the joint training budgets resides. In the JEF concept, the majority of these funds would have to be shifted to USACOM, as the bulk of the training of the JEF would occur while they were under his operational control. There would also be some service specific concerns as the JEF concept assumes that core competency training is completed prior to assignment to the JEF. This would force the services to align their training schedules to those of the JEF and its deployment schedule.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the JEF concept is in the integration of the agencies outside DOD. Increasingly austere budgets are not a DOD-specific issue. The same stresses and strains that this concept applies to military budgets are also applied to the budgets of these other agencies. Then there is the additional issue of convincing these agencies to commit both budgetary and human resources for a new, non-traditional mission. While all parties that would be involved in the JEF concept acknowledge the value of such integrated training and structure, the degree of value each perceives could only be gauged by their willingness to participate and commit resources.

SUMMARY

While admittedly not novel in its components, the concept of Joint Expeditionary Forces is novel in its approach in combining adaptive military force packages with the interagency organizations. Experimentation with this concept could result in novel solutions to international crises that have previously been unexplored because of a lack of cohesiveness and effort between the military and outside agencies. The risk involved is only to traditional roles and missions for all of the participants. As the concept matures with its implementation and resultant experience, it could conceivably lead to entirely new concepts and structures for the United States to utilize in the future.

The United States stands unchallenged as the world's only superpower at the dawn of the 21st century. This unique situation invites experimentation and innovation. Today may be the last opportunity the U.S. has to experiment with the operational and organizational changes that are required to fully realize the potential of the technologies the RMA has presented. The alternative is to realize that increased risk levels have closed the window of opportunity for change and innovation. For this reason only is the JEF concept worth exploring now.

Endnotes

¹ Alvin Toffler and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 142.

² John McCain, "Strategy and Force Planning for the 21st Century," *Strategic Review*, Fall 1996, 15.

³ John J. Sheehan, "Building the Right Military for the 21st Century," *Strategic Review*, Summer 1997, 5.

⁴ Stephen J. Blank, "Preparing for the Next War: Reflections on the Revolution in Military Affairs," *Strategic Review*, Spring 1996, 22. Sheehan, "Building the Right Military for the 21st Century," 12.

⁵ John J. Sheehan, "Next Steps in Joint Force Integration," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, 42.

⁶ James R. Locher III, "Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, 10-11.

⁷ For a discussion on the varying interpretations of 'jointness', see Mackubin T. Owens, "The Use and Abuse of 'Jointness'," *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1997, 50-58.

⁸ Michael C. Vitale, "Jointness by Design, Not Accident," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1995, 25.

⁹ There have been 52 separate instances in which military forces have been used to respond to crises of varying degree since December 1989, most of a joint nature. These include noncombatant evacuations, disaster relief, humanitarian relief, enforcement operations and combat. U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense 97 Almanac*, Issue 5, 42.

¹⁰ Michael Mazar, *The Revolution in Military Affairs: A Framework for Defense Planning*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 10 June 1994, 2. See also Williamson Murray, "Thinking About Revolutions in Military Affairs," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Summer 1997, 70.

¹¹ Definition attributed to Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., in Henry C. Bartlett, G. Paul Holman and Timothy E. Somes, "Force Planning, Military Revolutions and the Tyranny of Technology," *Strategic Review*, Fall 1996, 28.

¹² Bartlett, 33.

¹³ Blank, 18.

¹⁴ Sheehan, "Building the Right Military for the 21st Century," 11.

¹⁵ Department of Defense. *Defense Almanac 97-Issue 5*. (Alexandria, VA: 1997), 48.

¹⁶ McCain, 7.

¹⁷ Nathaniel French Caldwell, Jr., "Faint Praise: National Defense Panel Assesses QDR," *Sea Power*, July 1997, 49.

¹⁸ Phillip A. Odeen to William S. Cohen, 15 May 1997. "Assessment of the May 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review." See also Caldwell, 48.

¹⁹ "Pentagon Seeking to put Flesh on Bones of Joint Vision 2010," *National Defense*, July/August 1997, 46.

²⁰ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "Recasting Military Roles and Missions," *Issues in Science and Technology*, Spring 1995, 43.

²¹ Bartlett, 33.

²² "Joint Vision 2010: America's Military – Preparing for Tomorrow," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Summer 1996, 35.

²³ Sheehan, "Next Steps in Joint Force Integration," 42.

²⁴ Sheehan, "Building the Right Military for the 21st Century," 12.

²⁵ Sean A. Bergesen, "Adaptive Joint Force Packaging (AJFP): A Critical Analysis," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA: 1993), 2.

²⁶ Recognition that the future security environment dictates increased interagency efforts is not novel, but the topic is spurring increasing thought and discussion as to how to implement these efforts. See Ernest Blazar, "Working Groups," *The Washington Times*, 8 January 1998, A-5: 3-6. John Donnelly, "Top Marine: Bring Bankers and Greenpeace on as Planners," *Defense Week*, 24 November 1997, 9. Krulak, Charles C., "Not Like Yesterday," *Navy Times Marine Corps Edition*, 19 January 1998, 14.

²⁷ It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the details surrounding how many JEF's would be required, their specific personnel structure, or even the number and types of forces assigned. What will be discussed is generic organizational structure and anticipated responsibilities.

²⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff. Interagency Coordination During Joint Operations, Vol. I. (Joint Pub 3-08)(Washington, D.C.: 9 October 1996), III-16.

²⁹ Ibid. III-18 – 19.

³⁰ Sheehan, "Next Steps in Joint Force Integration," 42.

³¹ Vitale, 27.

³² Joseph W. Preuher, "Warfighting CINC's in a New Era," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, 50.

³³ Dave Mayfield, "In Suffolk Simulation Center, Multinational 'Peacegame' Resumes," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 21 January 1998, 1.

³⁴ Sheehan, "Building the Right Military for the 21st Century," 9.

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