NATO's Bold New Concept—CJTF

U.S. Navy (Milton R. Savage)

Dutch and American personnel assisting Kurdish refugees near Zakhu, Iraq.

By CHARLES L. BARRY

NATO is modifying its decades-old integrated military structure to create rapid deployment combined joint task forces (CJTFs). For Americans the task force concept is scarcely new—it was a staple of U.S. doctrine even before the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act directed that greater emphasis be given to joint and combined warfare. Other NATO members have also used the concept in such places as Zaire (1991), the Persian Gulf (1991), and Falklands (1982). In fact, NATO itself relied on joint and combined doctrine for collective defense throughout the Cold War.

Why is the CJTF initiative news? What is unique—unprecedented in military doctrine—is NATO's bid to incorporate the task force concept, which is traditionally used for ad hoc coalitions as a *modus operandi* of a standing alliance. NATO's forte has been robust, highly integrated but static military structures with a fixed mission. The task force concept is characteristic of short-term, quick-reaction contingency forces created and deployed for a specific crisis. If successful, the NATO CJTF will be a hybrid capability that combines the best attributes of both coalition and Alliance forces: rapid flexible crisis response and a trained, ready multinational force backed by an in-place infrastructure. CJTF will be a stand-by capability for conducting peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations. It will be a multinational force, seasoned by regular exercises and trained in common procedures, ready to respond in time of crisis.

NATO's immediate peacetime missions have changed even though at its core it remains an alliance for collective defense. The two-hour reaction criteria for corps-sized formations to meet a Soviet attack and the layer cake static defense on Western Europe's borders are gone. NATO has responded to the *out-of-area or out-of-business* challenge to its existence with a determined reply that it will stay in business. For the Armed Forces some aspects of the CJTF concept will be familiar while others will not. Grafting a rapid response asset to the consensus-driven NATO Alliance will not be easy. It is one thing to develop concepts and doctrine for one nation and quite another to deploy the forces of 16 nations. Success depends upon innovative thinking and a serious commitment to adapt. As CJTF begins to acquire form and substance, it is worth examining the concept

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USS Deyo with Danish navy Lynx helicopter on flight deck.

U.S. Navy (Nathan Jones)

and its implications for U.S. doctrine, force structure, and operations planning.

NATO Adapts

CJTF is the latest in a series of NATO adaptations as the Alliance struggles to keep up with changes and remain relevant in a vastly different security environment. On balance, NATO has sustained admirable momentum in its commitment to transform. Broadly speaking, there are three main objectives in the fashioning of a new NATO. First, the Alliance is adjusting its structure to new missions and priorities. The most important mission is managing crisis. If NATO cannot do that it cannot meet the needs of its members. Crisis management calls for smaller multinational forces with the flexibility for contingencies over a wide geographical area. Second, the Alliance is extending security and stability beyond NATO's borders, especially to the new democracies of the East where crises are most likely to occur. Third, NATO has acceded to the wishes of its European members to develop a collective defense capability of their own known as the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI). The CJTF concept addresses all three objectives.

NATO has already taken a number of steps since the end of the Cold War to further these objectives. Each step has been part of the evolutionary process essential to change in a consensus-driven institution. The nature of each action lays the foundation for further steps. As the January 1994 summit approached, forces and headquarters had been reduced, but the command structure and crisis management system remained essentially as designed for collective defense under article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Meanwhile, planning for peace operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina already pointed to the need for readily deployable forces for out-of-area missions. Moreover, more progress was demanded on reaching out to the East and on ESDI.

In October 1993 the United States proposed the CJTF concept as a means of establishing a genuine European military capability that was "separable but not separate" from NATO's integrated military structure. At the same time, CJTFs serve the purpose of projecting security and stability to the East by giving NATO the flexible military structure to address tasks such as peace operations. NATO heads of state approved the CJTF initiative at their summit meeting in January 1994.[1]

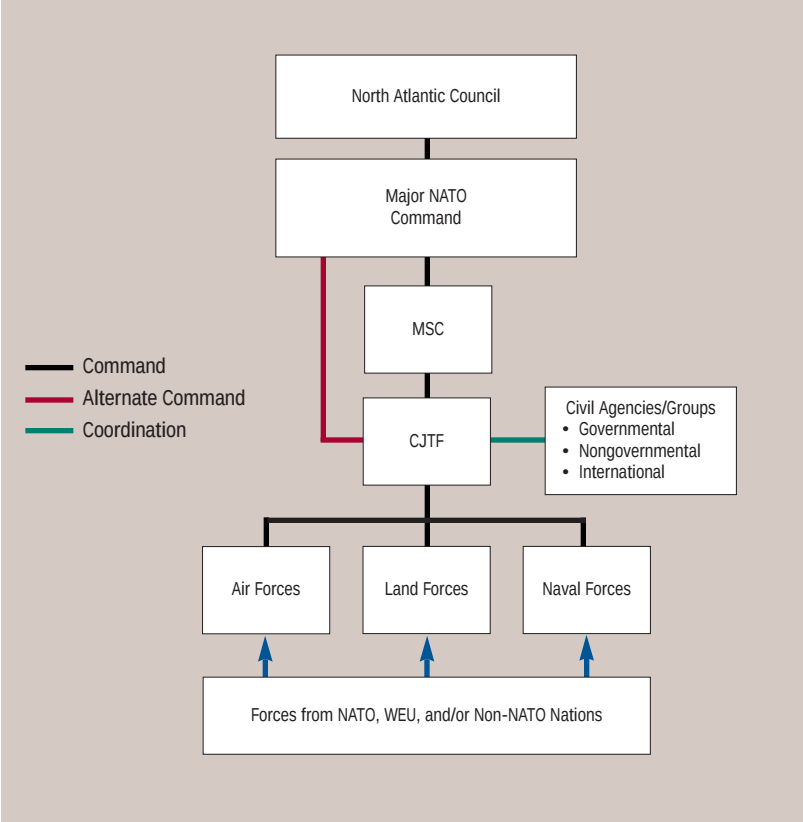
Defining CJTF

Joint doctrine describes a task force as a temporary force for carrying out a specific mission and as primarily operational (versus strategic or tactical) in nature. JTFs involve components from two or more services while combined task forces include forces from two or more nations.[2] Although U.S. doctrine does not define a CJTF per se, its character can be easily derived from these building blocks.

An immediate issue is to agree on definitions since an unambiguous lexicon is essential to a solid conceptual framework.[3] NATO has yet to arrive at a definition of CJTF. However, in light of the NATO summit language on CJTF and related U.S. doctrine, a CJTF can be described as a multinational, multiservice task force consisting of NATO and possibly non-NATO forces capable of rapid deployment to conduct limited duration peace operations beyond NATO's borders, under the control of the NATO military structure, the Western European Union (WEU), or even a coalition of states.

Since early 1994 work on CJTF has been progressing on three levels. First, at the Military Committee (MC) level and above, political aspects of definitions, terms of reference, and oversight are being resolved. Predictably, the resolution of such issues is

Command and Control Concept for NATO-Led CJTF



moving slowly as representatives of 16 nations seek agreement. Second, at the Major NATO Command (MNC) level, a tri-MNC working group under the executive agency of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) has completed a draft operational concept for CJTF command and control (C^2).[4] The draft is now being considered by Allied military and political authorities. Meanwhile, Allied Command Europe (ACE) and Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT) have begun to study procedures, training, and equipment requirements. The aim is to agree on a CJTF concept as soon as possible, and conceivably conduct an initial exercise evaluation in 1995. In meeting these objectives the development of a C^2 concept is the most pressing requirement.

CJTFs must be formed as separable—but not separate—parts of NATO's integrated military structure

The composition and designation of potential CJTF forces is the third level of work, but for practical reasons that process is less pressing. If a crisis erupts, forces can be cobbled together in ad hoc CJTFs, as illustrated by Desert Storm. Although not optimal and far short of the vision of what CJTF will provide, NATO members and other potential CJTF contributing states can provide suitable forces. Ultimately, CJTFs will offer a much greater opportunity for success than ad hoc coalitions.

Command and Control

The conceptual underpinnings of CJTF C^2 are few but important: first, it must support the three main objectives of the NATO transformation process outlined above; second, it must ensure that collective defense requirements can take priority if they arise; third, it must preserve both the transatlantic nature of the Alliance and the single integrated military structure; and finally, it must be done with minimum added cost. This means that CJTFs must be formed as separable—but not separate—parts of NATO's integrated military structure, and that they rely upon the resources of selected Major Subordinate Commands (MSCs).

Whatever C^2 concept is ultimately approved, it must provide for timely responses to crises beyond NATO borders, ensure smooth coordination between the Alliance and WEU, and be able to accommodate staff participation by non-NATO nations (especially Central and East European) both during pre-deployment planning and task force operations.

The functional requirements of CJTF headquarters include assimilating and disseminating intelligence; receiving and committing forces; and maintaining communications among subordinate, higher, and "lateral" elements such as humanitarian agencies, local civil authorities, or even other militaries. The conduct of logistical sustainment and the management and control of airspace are other tasks that must be designed into CJTF headquarters.

Present plans call for CJTF headquarters staffs to be created in selected ACE and ACLANT MSCs and built around the personnel and equipment tables of the host MSC. An MSC might also task subordinate commands to provide assets for CJTF headquarters and receive added resources from other MSCs. When not involved in operations, the designated CJTF commander, a

general or flag officer from the host MSC, will direct a small nucleus staff with responsibility for CJTF administration, operational planning, training, and exercises.

Which of NATO's eight MSCs will host a CJTF headquarters staff has not been decided. NATO must always consider more than just military factors in command arrangements. For both political and geographic reasons ACE may form a CJTF capability in all three of its MSCs: Allied Forces Northwest Europe (AFNORTHWEST), Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT), and Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH). ACLANT might create only one or two CJTF headquarters under Striking Fleet Atlantic (STRIKEFLTLANT) or Eastern Atlantic (EASTLANT) commands. Both ACE and ACLANT will develop capabilities for any type of CJTF, consistent with the flexible intent of the concept: land-based, sea-based, or sea-based deploying ashore.

No response times have been agreed upon for deploying lead CJTF elements; but typically once a mission has received political approval an immediate military response is expected. Thus an initial deployment timeline, of probably less than one month, will be a factor in concept development. When alerted for either an exercise or actual contingency operation, CJTF headquarters will come up to full strength by drawing on the assets of the host MSC as well as other staffs. The CJTF headquarters primary staffs will have trained as a close working team and remain generally constant from one operation to the next. However, the actual headquarters size will be tailored to the size of the operation and the requirement for special staffs. A fully augmented CJTF could be quite large and provide C^2 for large multinational forces drawn from all services and many outside agencies. Conversely, a much smaller CJTF might be deployed to provide C^2 for a small contingent of only land and air forces.

U.S. Army (Charles Reger)

German crew performing takeoff check en route to El Bon drop zone in Somalia.

Task force lines of command must lead back to the MNC responsible for article 5 defense in the region concerned since a CJTF operation could escalate into a defense of Alliance territory or forces. For WEU-led CJTFs, procedures to recall a force to NATO control must be developed and exercised since, even for WEU states, territorial defense is considered to be, first and foremost, a mission for NATO. Once deployed, a CJTF could report either directly to a regional MNC or through an MSC, depending on the mission. One factor is whether the CJTF is land-based or sea-based. The benefits of an intervening headquarters generally increase for land-based operations while maritime forces tend to operate over greater distances without additional C^2 echelons.

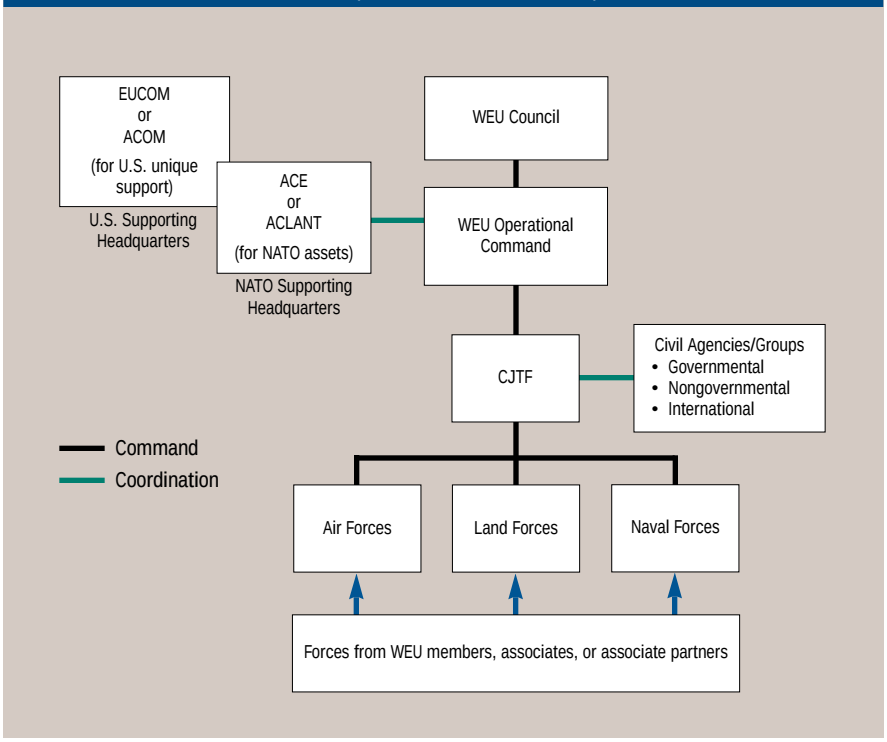
The CJTF will operate under agreed-on NATO standing operating procedures (SOPs) and standardization agreements (STANAGS). Non-NATO nations engaging in CJTF operations must be proficient in these procedures to successfully participate in contingencies. When a headquarters is activated national approval to allow all assigned personnel to deploy—irrespective of a nation's decision to contribute forces—will be needed to avoid degrading command and staff functions on the brink of deployment.[5] In addition to the NATO staff, non-NATO nations contributing forces to a CJTF will augment the headquarters with essential liaisons and staffs.

Since CJTFs can anticipate extended deployments, a personnel rotation plan will be needed for continuity in staff skills and operational tempo. As a point of reference, U.N. peacekeeping forces generally follow a six-month rotation plan. How long a CJTF must be prepared to operate remains unresolved. Historically, peace operations tend to endure, thus it is possible that a CJTF will have to operate (perhaps in a hostile environment) for extended periods.

CJTF Missions

An important consideration in developing the C^2 concept is the limited purpose of CJTF employment, that is, to conduct peace

Command and Control Concept for Western European Union-Led CJTF



operations outside the NATO area as defined in article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Peace operations (so-called non-article 5 operations) are described in NATO's MC 327, "NATO Military Planning for Peace Support Operations," and include conflict prevention, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and peace enforcement. The missions of CJTFs will fall into those four categories. Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) has drafted separate military doctrine for peace operations, excluding peace enforcement which is regarded as being adequately addressed in existing NATO and national military doctrine.

if NATO members agree, a CJTF headquarters and support could be provided to WEU

The geographical areas in which NATO may agree to deploy a CJTF is first of all a political question, although military capabilities and limitations are important. In contemplating the area in which a CJTF may be deployed, it can be assumed that any mission will aim to protect an Alliance interest. Likely interests include preservation of peace in the lands and waters immediately adjacent to NATO territory. Such security interests might also extend to distant areas where conflict could threaten European security and stability.

Missions for a CJTF under WEU were outlined in the Petersberg Declaration and are akin to NATO's MC 327, and include humanitarian relief, rescue operations, and peacekeeping.[6] Also, an implied mission for CJTF planners is providing an increased reservoir of personnel experienced in crisis response. Many short warning missions such as noncombatant evacuation, disaster relief, and search and rescue, which may have to be executed by ad hoc coalition forces, should benefit from NATO's CJTF initiative and program training.

CJTFs under NATO

To make CJTFs adaptable to the inclusion of non-NATO forces as well as to employment under WEU, the tri-MNC planners considered three CJTF employment possibilities: a pure NATO CJTF, a NATO-plus CJTF that would include some non-NATO states, and a European-led/WEU CJTF. A CJTF headquarters could be deployed under any of these options, depending upon the political decision for employment and the nations involved.

A pure NATO CJTF could involve forces from up to 15 NATO members,[7] though even if NATO agrees to act some allies may not be willing or able to contribute forces. In some (perhaps most) scenarios the Alliance hopes to be joined by cooperation partner states, that is, those nations which have opted to join NATO's PFP program and have subsequently reached an agreement to provide forces for a NATO-plus version of CJTF. Theoretically, PFP is open to all 53 members of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); practically speaking, however, many smaller states are incapable of CJTF participation.

If NATO members agree, a CJTF headquarters and support could be provided to WEU which plans to solicit force contributions from its members, associates, and partners, 23 nations in all. In this last option, NATO military elements would probably assume a support role.

Since CJTF forces must be ready on short notice, the forces which nations might offer to a CJTF are likely to be NATO reaction forces, particularly the ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC); the ARRC Multinational Division, Central (MND–C);[8] or Standing Naval Forces, Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) and Mediterranean (STANAVFORMED).

CJTF-designated forces will have to be focused on peace operations and engage in significantly new training and exercise regimens. Some of the greatest challenges for NATO forces may come from strategic deployment and sustainment requirements. Units heretofore accustomed to a single mission close to fixed support bases will find themselves in scenarios more closely related to those of XVIII Airborne Corps.

U.S. Marine Corps Combat Camera (Jonathan Maness)

Italian officer on *USS Nassau* during Exercise Agile Provider.

NATO-Plus Contingencies

The potential for including forces of cooperation partner states in CJTFs is an important variation of the concept. Many scenarios suggest that crises will erupt in their geographic regions, and by themselves the cooperation partners have little hope of meeting demands of major crises. So planning, training, and exercising with NATO is an important prerequisite for participation in CJTFs.

The way in which cooperation partners will be exposed to NATO practices is through the other major initiative of the January 1994 summit, the Partnership for Peace (PFP). Under PFP's military cooperation program, partner militaries will be exposed to NATO procedures, standards, and schools, and participate in NATO exercises, especially for peacekeeping. In crises, skills honed under the PFP program can be used in CJTF operations, effectively extending the stabilizing role of NATO into the regions of partner states. Even if not actually called on to deploy, the planning and capability developed under PFP and CJTF exercises will lend a considerable sense of security to the partner states as military-to-military contacts deepen and the pool of personnel with NATO-partner experience grows.

Initially there will be significant problems to overcome, especially language barriers (the official NATO languages are French and English, but the working language in the NATO military structure is English). There will also be doctrinal differences in all manner of military operations. In the short term equipment incompatibility will not be fatal because NATO has long managed a wide variety of different items in all its major and not-so-major lines. However, to succeed in fast-moving contingency operations NATO must revive standardization and interoperability, especially in command and control. Some logistics standards, such as those for fuel and ammunition, must also be given more priority. These concerns aside, the capability exists today to operate together in a crisis just as was done in Desert Storm.

WEU-Led Operations

The offer to provide CJTFs to WEU creates different operational challenges, particularly in command and control. NATO will provide a CJTF headquarters to WEU with the approval of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) on a case-by-case basis. WEU has recently provided NATO with a concept paper outlining operational requirements for a CJTF but has yet to participate with NATO officially on concept development. The lack of direct coordination notwithstanding, some observations can be made on how a CJTF might operate under WEU and what the challenges will be.

Once a decision is taken in NAC to provide a CJTF to WEU, NATO will choose a CJTF headquarters element from one of its MSCs and prepare it for deployment. During the stand-up process, the CJTF headquarters will be mission and force tailored. At an appropriate point, control of the CJTF will be transferred to WEU. Along with the CJTF headquarters, NATO will provide support assets to sustain it. The forces will likely come from WEU member states who maintain forces answerable to WEU (referred to as FAWEU).

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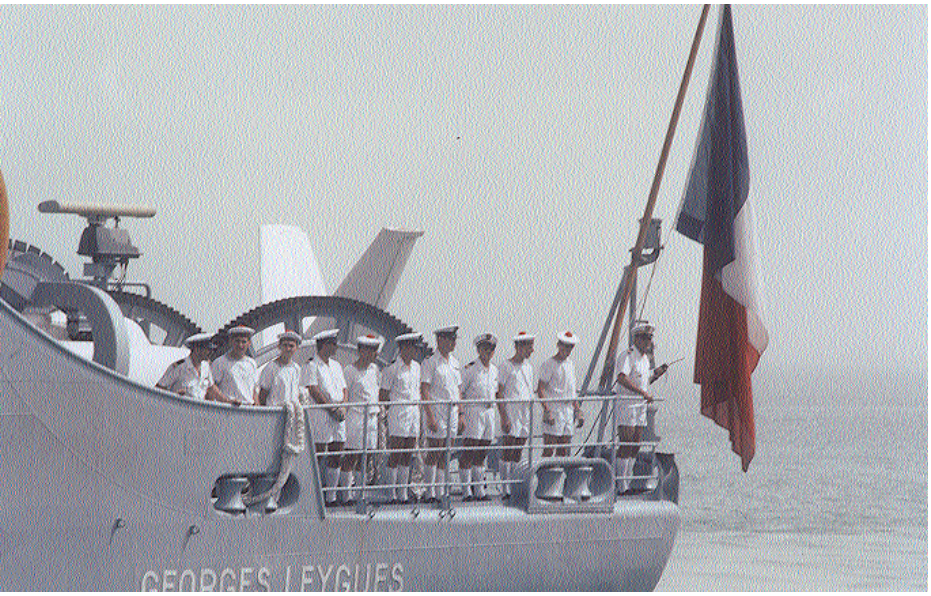

U.S. Navy (April Hatton)

French destroyer *Georges Leygues* in Bahrain during Operation Southern Watch.

Besides contributions by 10 member states, forces may also be offered by the WEU's associate members or associate partners.[9] In addition, the United States has agreed to support WEU operations with unique assets.

The size of a WEU-controlled operation, and hence composition of the CJTF headquarters and forces deployed, is expected to be smaller than NATO-led operations. This is based on the assumption that if a crisis is large enough to concern all of the Allies (not just European members), NATO would direct the operation. Another factor is that, while WEU missions are basically the same as NATO's, WEU is only in the initial throes of adapting to a new role and lacks a permanent military C^2 structure.

In developing NATO WEU agreements on CJTF, a central issue is identifying the role of SACEUR or Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT). One view is that either SACEUR or SACLANT could be designated as the "supporting CINC" to the WEU operational commander for the provision of NATO resources as well as for whatever U.S. assets are provided. This view is an extension of U.S. doctrinal relationships and will have to stand the test of Alliance scrutiny, particularly on the political side. Another concern is the adequacy of the political-military structure directing a WEU-led CJTF operation. The union has no structure to parallel the NATO Military Committee, International Military Staff (IMS), or MNCs. WEU is studying this problem but will not create a duplicative structure. Instead, it may strengthen its operational headquarters or have the state providing the headquarters be the intermediary between the WEU Council and the CJTF commands.[10]

Logistical Support

CJTF logistical support will be one of the greatest challenges for an alliance that has known only interior lines of communication, fixed bases, and a wealth of host nation support. NATO's infrastructure, logistics planning, and support must meet rapid deployments, long and potentially unsecured lines of communication, and bare base operations. While NATO will likely adhere to its longstanding principle of national responsibility for supplies and services as the primary means for CJTF support, there will be unique transport and distribution requirements. Depending on the operational environment and the size of the task force, logistics coordination might be handled by either the headquarters logistics staff or, in more demanding situations, designation of a separate combined-joint logistics command.

There will also be special logistical needs for headquarters and support elements assigned directly from NATO. Providing supplies and services to these elements will be a responsibility of the logistics coordination staff or center. When a CJTF is chopped to WEU for a European-led operation, NATO's logistics concepts and infrastructure system

U.S. Marine Corps Combat Camera (R.W. Oliver)

French Foreign Legionnaire on Onslow Beach at Camp LeJeune.

will follow and provide the same standard of support as if the CJTF were NATO-led. A comprehensive CJTF concept will have to provide for self-sustainment, a concept not often considered by Alliance planners accustomed to the availability of extensive host nation support. In most crises such support will be unavailable, and in humanitarian aid operations the CJTF cannot rely upon the limited resources which might be available for the population in need of assistance.

Communications and Information

Another major challenge will be to create the necessary communications and information system architecture to support a radical new operational concept. A deployed CJTF headquarters must be able to communicate not only through traditional rearward, lateral, and forward military linkages, but with local governmental, nongovernmental, and international agencies. The absence of deployable long-range, multiple-user systems has been identified as a critical shortcoming.

Lack of interoperable systems is a second critical deficiency. Though the NATO Integrated Communications System (NICS) is sophisticated, it is essentially fixed-based and not deployable. Nor is NICS designed for connectivity with non-NATO forces (such as East European partners). Absent also are any operational level NATO–WEU links.

In the near- to mid-term at least CJTFs will be heavily dependent on the United States and other national assets for strategic and operational support in communications and intelligence. In this regard, satellites will be particularly helpful in extending existing NICS networks to deployed CJTFs, either afloat or ashore. Some Europeans have voiced the goal of eventually acquiring their own communications and intelligence capabilities, at least for WEU. Current levels of defense spending, however, militate against the quick replacement of these national capabilities.

Operational Capability

Like any new undertaking, CJTF is far from an operational reality. There are formidable hurdles to negotiate before the concept's minimum requirements are met. National doctrines on techniques such as transferring a sea-based headquarters ashore, defining the C^2 linkages between commands, or airspace control must be honed by the Alliance and adapted for multinational uses. One bright spot is the existence of numerous STANAGS, refined over forty years for collective defense operations, which will be a valuable reservoir for further cooperation and new procedures.

Other questions, such as the division of labor among MNC, MSC, and a CJTF during operations, the degree of interoperability of on-hand communications and intelligence, training and exercise requirements and their costs, and the need for a detailed assessment of deployments and movement requirements of a CJTF, are virgin territory for NATO military planners. Fortunately, NATO military staffs have already begun to tackle these issues.

A particularly important issue for NATO is the impact of nondeploying CJTF headquarters personnel should nations exercise their prerogatives not to provide personnel assigned to a CJTF headquarters. Answers to these questions will require a firm grasp not only of the aims of the CJTF initiative, but also the multinational political and military context in which solutions must be devised. Some issues will require more time to solve, among them the dearth of English-speaking commanders and staff officers in East European militaries. No doubt language will be a barrier to interoperability for some time to come. On the institutional side, a long-term investment will be needed to develop the

modalities of close WEU-NATO cooperation in crisis response. These two organizations are just beginning to establish the transparency and reciprocity necessary for effective coordination.

the call to dedicate resources to CJTF will run up against the recent tide of defense spending cuts

Regardless of the intent to avoid costs, some expense will be unavoidable, such as capital investment in CJTF-specific equipment, training and exercises, and operations and maintenance. The call to dedicate resources to CJTF will run up against the recent tide of defense spending cuts, which still has momentum.

Well begun is half done the old adage goes. CJTF project officers within NATO and WEU have achieved much in spite of slow progress on political issues. Member states know that unless NATO can solve crises that threaten their interests, the Alliance will wither and die even as security problems multiply. They also know that Central and East Europe—where most of the instability that could re-kindle threats along NATO's borders is found—must be drawn closer to NATO to achieve a permanent peace in Europe. They know, too, that the fledgling ESDI of the European Union needs room to develop. That will lead to a greater balance in the North American-European partnership which many hope will keep NATO strong. CJTF, more than any other initiative since the Cold War, offers hope that these objectives can be achieved.

It is no surprise that CJTF faces many challenges before becoming operational, particularly with regard to C^2, logistics, and communications. Nonetheless, both ACE and ACLANT have the capability to respond to crisis now. This is most evident in the detailed planning that has gone into peace operations in the former Yugoslavia. The final CJTF concept may, in fact, reflect much of what is being learned daily by AFSOUTH in Deny Flight and Sharp Guard. If and when NATO is called on to perform peacekeeping duty there, it will deploy essentially a NATO-led combined joint task force. What this portends for the future of the Alliance is a completely new NATO capability that addresses the security concerns of its members and partners while preserving the nature of the most successful alliance for security and defense in history. That's worth pursuing. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] See NATO Declaration of Heads of State and Government at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Brussels, January 10–11, 1994, paragraph 9.

[2] See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JCS Pub 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987), pp. 76, 200–02, and 367; and Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3–0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), p. II–15.

[3] Competing definitions dog the broad doctrine of peace support operations, a NATO term which is identical to the U.S. term "peace operations." More confusion surrounds the category of "peacemaking," which in both U.N. and NATO parlance is a strictly diplomatic undertaking while WEU gives it the meaning that the United Nations and NATO reserve for "peace enforcement" which involves combat operations. The meaning of peace enforcement can also be misleading; the best examples are said to be the Korean and Gulf Wars.

[4] CJTF work was begun by NATO's three MNCs: ACE, ACLANT, and CINCHAN. But in July 1994 Allied Command Channel was phased out, leaving only Allied Command Europe and Allied Command Atlantic. Work continues in a bi-MNC working group.

[5] Nations with representatives assigned to CJTF headquarters staff positions will be asked to agree to deploying them even if they do not provide forces. However, the nature of a voluntary alliance is that deploying either forces and individual personnel remains a national prerogative.

[6] The Petersberg Declaration (June 1992) implemented the Maastricht Declaration which sought to have WEU develop a defense identity for the European Union. In creating a military planning staff, the declaration assigned the task of contingency planning for these missions.

[7] The sixteenth nation, Iceland, has no military forces.

[8] MND–C is operational and currently includes Belgian, German, Dutch, and British forces.

[9] In addition to ten members, there are two associate members and nine associate partners. For a list of WEU member countries see the chart on pp. 40–41 of this issue of *JFQ*.

[10] WEU C^2 at the operational level is ad hoc, with political authorities designating an operational commander/headquarters and a force commander, usually based upon national contributions; see WEU CM (93) 7, "Organization and Operation of WEU in Time of Crisis".