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**THEATER CAMPAIGN PLANNING:
AN ANALYSIS OF NATO's NORTHERN REGION**

**A Monograph
by
Major Guy C. Swan, III
Armor**



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ABSTRACT

THEATER CAMPAIGN PLANNING: AN ANALYSIS OF NATO'S NORTHERN REGION by Major Guy C. Swan III, USA, 49 pages.

For many years the Northern Region has been considered of secondary importance to NATO theater military operations. But with the buildup of Soviet forces on the Kola Peninsula and within the Northern Fleet, Soviet regional TVD operations now have the potential to seriously threaten NATO's Atlantic SLOCs and even outflank allied forces in the Central Region itself.

NATO continues to respond by partitioning the Northern Region among the three major NATO commanders, SACEUR, SACLANT, and CINCHAN, instead of unifying it into a viable theater of operations. AFNORTH, the principal Northern Region warfighting command, may no longer be adequately structured or have the forces, operational depth, and agility to conduct a cohesive combined campaign that synchronizes *all* air, land, and sea operations in a theater where maritime influences have emerged as a dominant feature of the operational environment.

At the same time NATO's emphasis on the Central Region has limited serious investigation of the Maritime Strategy as a potential *theater warfighting concept* in the European context. The monograph examines the fundamental concepts of the Maritime Strategy to see if they have application in improving combined theater campaign plans in the Northern Region.

The monograph is structured as a case study focusing on campaign planning from CINCNORTH's perspective, looking at the Northern Region as a theater of operations and analyzing CINCNORTH's role in it. The criteria used for evaluation are the "seven tenets of a campaign plan" introduced by COL William Mendel and LTC Floyd Banks in recent articles in *Parameters*.

The monograph concludes that in the present operational environment (geography, threat, coalition aspects, etc.) AFNORTH, as presently structured, is not capable of conducting viable theater campaign planning. Further, the author feels that the distinct maritime nature of the area warrants consideration of the Maritime Strategy as a theater strategy. A model is offered to show how planning in this maritime theater should proceed. The monograph ends with recommendations for restructuring the theater, both in geographical terms and in the command's design itself.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	A THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT FOR ANALYZING CAMPAIGN PLANNING IN A THEATER.....	3
III.	THEATER OF WAR AND THEATERS OF OPERATIONS.....	6
IV.	THE NORTHERN REGION AS A THEATER OF OPERATIONS.....	12
V.	SOVIET THEATER STRATEGY AND WARFIGHTING CAPABILITIES IN THE NORTHERN REGION.....	14
VI.	CINCNORTH AND NORTHERN REGION CAMPAIGN PLANNING: AN ASSESSMENT.....	20
VII.	MARITIME STRATEGY AS A THEATER WARFIGHTING CONCEPT.....	22
VIII.	A SUGGESTED MODEL FOR CAMPAIGN PLANNING IN THE NORTHERN REGION.....	26
IX.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
	APPENDIX A: AFNORTH Command Structure.....	36
	APPENDIX B: Proposed AFNORTH Command Structure.....	37
	ENDNOTES.....	38
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	42
	LIST OF FIGURES:	
	1. NATO'S NORTHERN REGION.....	8
	2. INCORPORATING THE MARITIME STRATEGY INTO NORTHERN REGION CAMPAIGN PLANNING.....	28
	3. NORTHERN REGION THEATER OF OPERATIONS.....	31

I. INTRODUCTION

For many years the Northern Region has been considered of secondary importance to NATO theater military operations. But with the buildup of Soviet forces in the Northern Region, especially those on the Kola Peninsula and within the Northern Fleet, Soviet military operations now have the potential to seriously threaten NATO's Atlantic SLOCs and even outflank allied forces in the Central Region itself.

NATO's response to this threat is fragmented. The alliance divides responsibility for the Northern Region among the three major NATO commands (MNC), Allied Command Europe (ACE), Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT), and Allied Command Channel (ACCHAN). Allied Forces Northern Europe (AFNORTH), a subordinate headquarters of ACE, is the principal Northern Region warfighting command charged with planning and conducting a joint and combined campaign.¹ However, in view of the growing Soviet naval threat in the Northern Region, we must ask if AFNORTH still has an adequate command structure, the forces, operational depth, and agility to plan and conduct an effective campaign in a theater where maritime influences have emerged as a dominant feature of the operational environment? The Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) and Commander-in-Chief Channel (CINCHAN) have overlapping responsibilities for planning and conducting simultaneous yet separate maritime campaigns in the same general area, yet there does not appear to be a mechanism for developing a cohesive combined campaign plan that unites and

synchronizes *all* air, land, and sea operations for the entire Northern Region.

At the same time the Maritime Strategy has been criticized by those fixated on the continental defense of the Central Region as a US Navy political ploy and a global concept having limited utility in NATO military operations. Upcoming budget and force reductions are likely to further intensify scrutiny of the Maritime Strategy's global perspective and perhaps even limit the Navy's worldwide commitments. It seems prudent under these conditions to consider ways to refocus the Maritime Strategy at the theater level. Unfortunately, because of ACE's emphasis on a land-based forward defense, the viability of the Maritime Strategy as a *theater warfighting concept* in the European context has not been fully investigated. In a theater like the Northern Region, naval power and the warfighting aspects of the Maritime Strategy deserve a closer look to see if they have application in improving combined theater campaign plans.

This monograph seeks to accomplish three things: to improve general understanding of the Northern Region's operational environment and the Maritime Strategy, to offer a conceptual process for developing combined campaign plans, and to increase understanding of joint and combined theater command structures.

Underlying these goals are three fundamental theoretical questions we will seek to answer: First, in the absence of a clearly defined doctrine to guide joint and combined campaign planning, how should a theater CINC develop a campaign plan? Second, how should a

theater command structure be designed for a theater of operations where land and sea concerns may have initially been equal but have changed over time? And third, does the Maritime Strategy have viability as a theater warfighting concept and, if so, in what way?

The monograph will use CINCNORTH and the Northern Region as a case study to examine these questions. By looking at the Northern Region as a theater of operations and assessing CINCNORTH's role in that theater, we can determine if the theater command structure is suitable for the operational environment and whether it is capable of developing an comprehensive theater campaign plan. If the current Northern Region command structure is sound and the campaign planning process viable, CINCNORTH should be able to plan for the entire theater of operations himself.

II. A THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT FOR ANALYZING COMBINED THEATER CAMPAIGN PLANNING

In late 1988 two members of the US Army War College faculty, Colonel William W. Mendel and Lieutenant Colonel Floyd T. Banks, published two articles in *Parameters* which addressed the issues surrounding campaign planning at the theater of war and theater of operations levels. In these articles, Mendel and Banks summarize the findings of an extensive study of campaign planning they conducted in late 1986 and 1987. As part of their findings the authors offer two useful definitions which build on existing doctrinal publications:

Campaign: A military activity in which the commander of a theater of war or theater of operations coordinates, employs,

and sustains available resources in a series of joint actions across a regional expanse of air, land, and sea in order to achieve strategic objectives. It is a phased series of major operations along the intended line (or lines) of operations to bring about decisive results from battles. The effect of these phased joint operations creates the operational advantage, or leverage, that makes the enemy's position untenable. A key characteristic of a campaign is the commander's calculated synchronization of land, sea, and air effort to attain his strategic objective.

Campaign Plan: A plan that translates strategic guidance into operational direction for subordinates. It provides broad concepts for operations and sustainment to achieve strategic objectives in a theater of war or theater of operations. It provides an orderly schedule of strategic military decisions that embody the commander's intent. The campaign plan is the commander's vision of how he will prosecute his portion of the war effort from the preparation phase through a sequence of military operations to a well-defined conclusion that attains the strategic objective.²

The authors concluded that in virtually all of the theater-level commands they studied (US as well as combined) there was considerable confusion as to how to go about planning a campaign.³ In their view this confusion is the result of a lack of doctrine. They stressed that confusion will continue to reign until a comprehensive, overarching joint and combined doctrine is proposed and they praised such efforts as the OJCS Joint Doctrine Master Plan and FM 100-6, *Large Unit Operations*, as steps in the right direction. Significantly, the authors recognized the difficulty of developing a campaign planning doctrine that satisfies the unique strategic and operational needs of theater-level joint and combined commands worldwide. They also recognized that style and format are not as important as the campaign

development process and the content of the plans themselves. To this end they offered the following seven "tenets of a campaign plan" which theoretically and generically apply to any campaign planning effort. A campaign plan:

- Provides an orderly schedule of strategic military decisions; displays the commander's vision and intent.
- Orients on the enemy's center of gravity.
- Phases a series of related major operations.
- Synchronizes air, land, and sea efforts into a cohesive and synergistic whole; is joint in nature.
- Provides broad concepts of operations and sustainment to achieve military objectives in a theater of war or theater of operations; serves as the basis for all other planning and clearly defines what constitutes success.
- Composes subordinate forces and designates command relationships.
- Provides operational direction and tasks to subordinates.⁴

Returning to operations in NATO's Northern Region, in order to evaluate the ability of the principal allied theater commander, CINCNORTH, to adequately plan a campaign we will determine whether CINCNORTH can meet these tenets in his campaign planning effort and if he cannot, then offer solutions to help him do so. Further, due to space limitations the monograph will only be able to focus on the first four of these tenets. However, before proceeding with this evaluation it is imperative that we review doctrinal definitions for theaters of war

and theaters of operations. We also need to take a close look at the Northern Region itself from the NATO and Soviet perspectives. It will become clear as we go along just how important understanding the operational environment is to a CINC's ability to effectively plan a campaign.

III. THEATER OF WAR AND THEATERS OF OPERATIONS

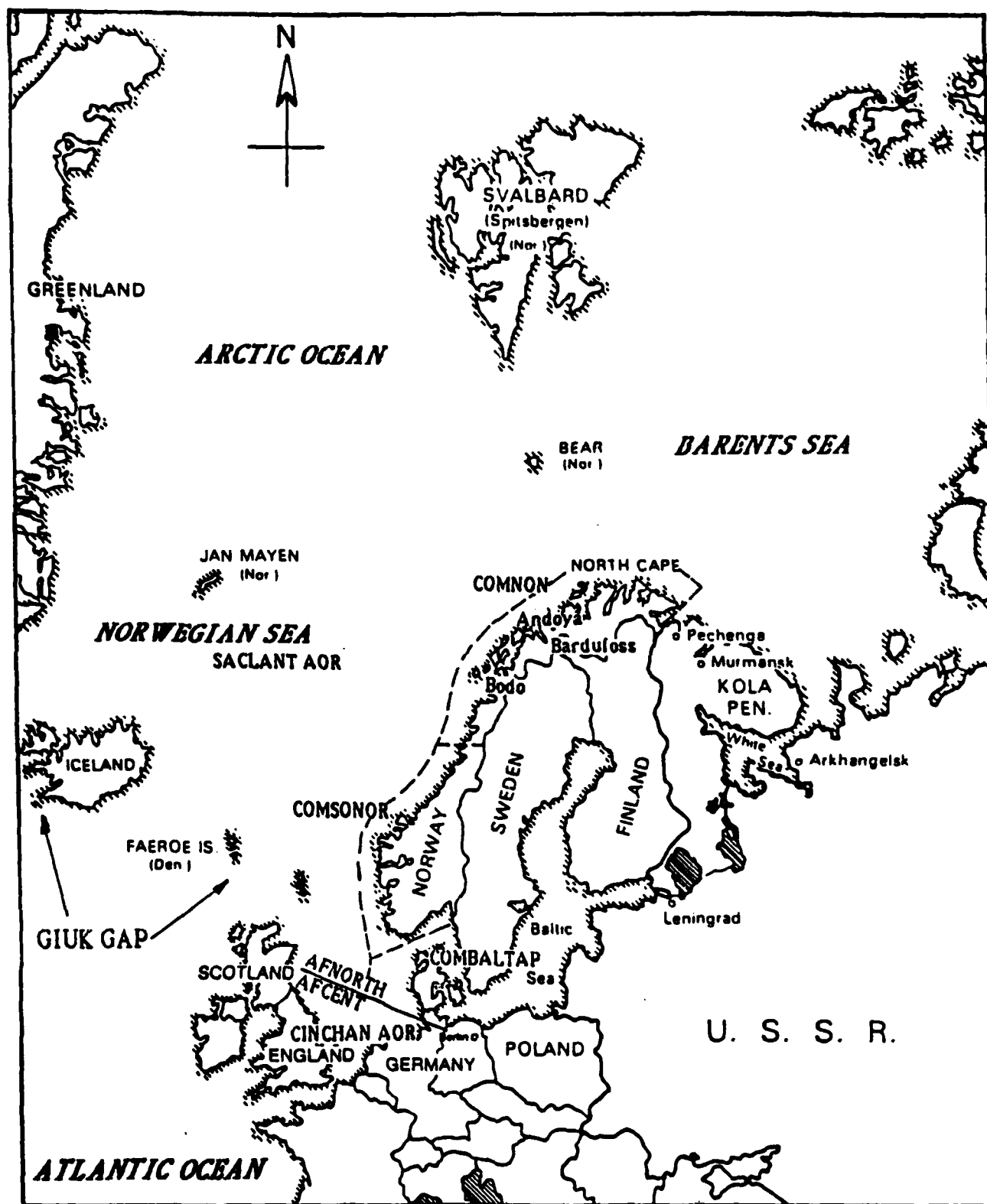
The first step in understanding the operational environment is determining what a theater is. JCS Pub 1 defines a *theater of war* as "the total land, sea, and air area that is, or may become, involved directly in the operations of war. A theater of war has no definable limits and may consist of one or more theaters of operations." A *theater of operations* is further defined as "a geographic area necessary for military operations, either offensive or defensive, pursuant to an assigned mission, and for the administration incident to such military operations." The commander of a theater of war generally operates at the strategic-operational level while the theater of operations commander normally functions at the operational level.

In NATO terms, the area of responsibility for ACE and its Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) is considered a theater of war and the areas assigned to AFNORTH, AFCENT, and AFSOUTH are subordinate theaters of operations.

As the principal subordinate commander of ACE responsible for military operations in the north, CINCNORTH oversees a large portion of northern Europe. Since 1951 CINCNORTH's area of responsibility (AOR)

has included Norway, Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein, and the coastal waters and airspace above them (see Figure 1). This huge area extends some 1750 miles from Kirkenes on the North Cape to Hamburg on the Elbe River yet on land it has even less operational depth than the Central Region--in some places this depth is only four miles!⁵ The emphasis in AFNORTH since its inception has been on a land-oriented forward defense against a Soviet ground offensive through Finland and/or Sweden.

To conduct military operations in this huge area CINCNORTH commands surprisingly few forces. Primary ground defense forces include the 12 brigades of the largely reservist Norwegian Army, the Danish Jutland Division, the German 6th Panzer Division, and other smaller mobilization units. CINCNORTH is dependent on rapid reinforcement by additional allied ground forces to augment these indigenous forces. The US is initially expected to provide a 15,000-man Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) which has prepositioned its equipment at Trondheim in southern Norway. The British and Dutch contribution is the UK/NL Amphibious Force, a combined brigade initially assigned to SACLANT and earmarked for early transfer to CINCNORTH. If not committed elsewhere, the light brigade-sized ACE Mobile Force-Land (AMF-L) could also be dispatched to AFNORTH's area. The Canadian government recently withdrew its 4000-man Canadian Air-Sea Transportable (CAST) Brigade from commitment to AFNORTH, a move with significant impact on CINCNORTH's land defense plans.⁶ Generally speaking, all these elements are best characterized



NATO'S NORTHERN REGION

Figure 1

as light infantry-type units capable of defending in the rugged terrain of Scandinavia, but possessing limited staying power. The question raised by the current CINCNORTH, British General Sir Geoffrey Howlett, is whether there will be sufficient warning time to mobilize these forces into a coherent ground defense and whether they can hold against overwhelmingly superior conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact for any length of time.⁷

CINCNORTH's strongest defensive card is allied airpower. Norway and Denmark possess small but modern air forces as does the Federal Republic of Germany. But command and control is difficult especially in the south where AFCENT's 2d Allied Tactical Air Force's area of responsibility overlaps into AFNORTH's area. Reinforcements from the US Air Force and elements of the British RAF round out CINCNORTH's air forces.

The weakest link in CINCNORTH's defense is maritime forces. In the face of a growing Soviet and Warsaw Pact naval threat in the Northern Region, CINCNORTH controls relatively meager forces of his own. Norway and Denmark possess naval forces only capable of limited coastal defense. The West German and British navies are considerably more capable but, even when combined with those of the other allies, they cannot challenge the combined strength of the Soviet Northern and Baltic Fleets.⁸ Only SACLANT commands the forces capable of defeating the Soviet fleets, principally the Striking Fleet Atlantic, composed largely of carrier battlegroups, surface action groups, and submarine attack groups from the US Second Fleet.

This point about CINCNORTH lacking strong maritime forces is important. Because of the ruggedness of the terrain and lack of geographical depth in this area, CINCNORTH must rely on the agility of air and naval forces to give operational depth to his land defense.

To command and control these forces CINCNORTH's command is subdivided into three sub-regional commands (see Appendix A): Allied Forces North Norway, Allied Forces South Norway, and Allied Forces Baltic Approaches. Because each of these sub-commands has its own air, land, and sea components, they function more like regional joint task forces. While this may appear to be a judicious use of available forces, it does piecemeal AFNORTH's forces across a wide area of operations and hinders CINCNORTH's ability to concentrate at decisive points.

Unlike the Central Region where land lines of communication (LOC) play an important role in the sustainment effort, CINCNORTH has almost no capability to sustain his forces overland. Virtually all logistical support for AFNORTH operations, as well as the majority of the forces needed for the initial defense, must come by air and sea along lines of communication over which CINCNORTH exercises neither geographical nor operational control. And since these LOCs flow directly to the subcommands, he must rely on SACLANT and CINCHAN to command and control the sustainment effort.

As SACEUR's primary subordinate commander in northern Europe, it devolves on CINCNORTH to be the principal campaign planner for this area. However, CINCNORTH's area of responsibility must not be

confused the much larger Northern Region which has broader strategic and operational implications.

IV. THE NORTHERN REGION AS A THEATER OF OPERATIONS

The Northern Region (as opposed to CINCNORTH's assigned AOR) encompasses a vast geographical and hydrographical expanse that includes the Norwegian, Barents, Greenland, and North Seas; the Svalbard (Spitzbergen) Island archipelago; Iceland; the Faeroe Islands; the Scandinavian, Kola, and Jutland Peninsulas; the portion of the FRG north of the Elbe River (Schleswig-Holstein); the Baltic Sea; and the Baltic Straits. At the strategic level, control of this area could have a far reaching effect on the outcome of a NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation in Central Europe. For NATO, control of the maritime reaches of the Northern Region ensures survivability of critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) from the continental United States. Conversely, the area is vital to the Soviets in achieving their two main strategic objectives in the region: protecting their nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBN) and projecting their naval power into the Atlantic and Channel sea lanes to interdict allied SLOCs.⁹ Also, and quite significantly, the region represents a potential operational axis of advance that could enable the Soviets to "envelop" NATO from the west.

In a short war in Europe the battle for control of the extreme northern and maritime reaches of the Northern Region would probably have limited immediate impact on Central Region land-air operations.

But a thrust through the Baltic Sea against the Jutland and Schleswig-Holstein defenses could play a crucial role in unhinging allied defenses in the center. In a protracted war scenario the Northern Region's maritime character would take on significant, if not decisive, importance largely because of the area's relationship to the allied sustainment effort. In short, both alliances have vital reasons for placing considerable operational and strategic emphasis on the Northern Region.

If the Soviets choose to operate maritime forces in the Atlantic before or during a conflict in Europe, the critical sea transit routes from its major ports on the Kola Peninsula through the Barents and Norwegian Seas take on strategic meaning. There are simply no other geographical alternatives for bringing the Northern Fleet to bear in the Atlantic.¹⁰ However, they will probably still be able to operate submarine forces out of the region by way of the polar ice cap.

Similarly, the Soviets have concentrated an extensive array of strategic defense assets on the Kola Peninsula. The Kola Peninsula today is referred to as the largest military complex in the world. The shores of the Kola and the White Sea are the home base of the Northern Fleet, the Soviet Union's largest and most formidable naval force.¹¹ As we shall see shortly, over the last two decades the Soviets have built the Northern Fleet into a force capable of challenging allied naval power in the Northern Region.

The Kola represents one end of the shortest aeronautical route from the continental United States to the Soviet Union.¹² Second, early

warning and defense against long-range US bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) afforded by Soviet forces on the Kola are of the utmost importance to national survival. Likewise, the striking time for Soviet manned bombers and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) launched from the Northern Region greatly reduces US reaction time. And third, the prospect of NATO air forces operating out of Norwegian airbases within 300 miles of these installations is probably very unsettling to the Soviets and would prove inviting for early attack, seizure, or neutralization.

NATO, and in particular the United States, views control of the Northern Region as vital to the defense of the Alliance. In strategic terms the Soviet Northern Fleet represents a real threat to the Atlantic bridge and the overall Alliance sustainment effort if it is permitted to penetrate the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap and operate unchecked in the open seas of the Atlantic Ocean.¹³ The offensive nuclear threat to the territorial US posed by the strategic nuclear submarine (SSBN) arm of the Northern Fleet is another serious threat.¹⁴ Control by hostile forces of the Danish Straits and the adjacent landmasses of Jutland and northern FRG would effectively isolate Norway, NATO's northernmost member, from the other allies and would permit uninhibited access by the Soviet Baltic Fleet to the North Sea which could threaten cross-channel operations, if not the United Kingdom itself.

When the Northern Region is viewed from this broader perspective it is clear CINCNORTH's area of responsibility plays only a

part in NATO's overall response to Soviet threats in this vast area. Indeed, NATO's response at this time is not a simple theater of war-theater of operations arrangement but a complex, and often confusing, combination of NATO commands. Command responsibility for the Northern Region is split among several commanders in addition to CINCNORTH: CINCHAN, who exercises control over the English Channel and the southern North Sea; SACLANT, who is responsible, among other things, for naval operations in northern European waters (the North Atlantic, the Norwegian Sea, the North Sea, etc.); and CINCENT, who exercises control over air defenses for Schleswig-Holstein, despite his primary responsibility for the Central Region.¹⁵ The number and variety of joint and combined commands responsible for overlapping areas and missions in the Northern Region make effective combined campaign planning difficult, if not impossible.

V. SOVIET THEATER STRATEGY AND WARFIGHTING CAPABILITIES IN THE NORTHERN REGION

The Soviets' approach to warfighting in the Northern Region parallels their approach to other theaters. The area is of immense military importance to the Soviet Union and they do not consider the area a "flank" of the Central Region as do the US and its NATO allies. Instead, the Soviet Union considers the area a theater of operations (TVD) significant enough to be one of the operational branches of the *STA VKA* (High Command).

The Soviets define a TVD as the

vast territory or part of the continent with the seas

around it, or, the water areas of an ocean, or, sea with islands and the adjoining coastline of continents as well as the air space above them, within the limits of which the strategic grouping of armed forces deploy and military operations may be waged.¹⁶

The Soviets have arbitrarily divided the Eurasian landmass with its adjacent oceans and seas into six continental, six sea (maritime), and three ocean TVDs. The Northwestern TVD is primarily responsible for warfighting in the northwestern USSR, Finland, Scandinavia, northern Scotland and Iceland. The Northern Seas Maritime TVD (MTVD) would be initially subordinate to the Northwestern TVD.

In their subdivision of the European theater, the Soviets count Denmark and the Baltic Sea MTVD as parts of the Western TVD together with the rest of the Central Region of NATO including the FRG and BENELUX countries.¹⁷ Naval, air and airborne units based or operating within the boundaries of these TVDs initially come under the direct control of the continental TVD commanders.

It is expected that TVD ground forces stationed on the Kola Peninsula would be organized as a "front" for operations against AFNORTH. In the opening days of operations in the Northern Region, the Northern Fleet would be subordinated to the Northwestern TVD commander to support the early phases of a land campaign in north Norway, principally to provide security on the maritime flank of the main effort overland. But the Soviets also consider the Northern Fleet an "operational-strategic" or "higher operational" formation capable of conducting independent strategic or operational missions in an ocean or maritime TVD.¹⁸ It is conceivable that the Northern Fleet would revert

to this more independent role once the land campaign had succeeded in securing tactical and operational objectives and land-based air cover could be provided to the fleet. Under these conditions the fleet could then project its considerable power into the Atlantic to achieve the strategic goal of interdicting NATO's vital SLOCs. The Soviet scheme to achieve these goals offers an interesting example of the interrelationships among tactics, operational art, and strategy.

The opening phases of a Soviet campaign by the Northwestern TVD would probably see the Soviets launching an overwhelming land offensive through the Finnish wedge supported by naval forces, perhaps to seize the airfields and ports of north Norway. Success at this tactical level would have distinct operational implications in that control of the airfields would serve to protect the Kola bases by eliminating NATO's capability to strike. Tactical victories would also free the Northern Fleet of the NATO air threat in the Norwegian Sea thus allowing unimpeded operations. With these operational objectives achieved, the Northern Fleet would be capable of breaking out of the Norwegian Sea. In short, the seizure of Norwegian airfields and even of all Norway is only of tactical and operational significance. The strategic impact comes from the Soviets' ability to project the Northern Fleet south to cut the SLOCs upon which the survival of NATO's main effort in the Central Region will depend. Under these conditions the Soviet center of gravity in the Northern Region, the "hub of all power and strength" to achieve strategic objectives, is the Northern Fleet and its associated air arm consisting of:

- 45 SSBNs of 20-30,000 tons displacement.
- 36 cruise-missile submarines of 1200-1500 tons displacement.
- 92 attack submarines from 1000-4800 tons displacement.
- 2 Kiev-class VSTOL aircraft carriers.
- 11 cruisers, 19 destroyers, 47 frigates, 15 small warships (minelayers, torpedo boats, etc.).
- 13 amphibious landing ships.
- 380 aircraft supported by 340 fighters from the Archangel air defense area.

These figures represent large percentages of total Soviet naval ships:

- 55% of SSBNs
- 55% of cruise-missile submarines
- 45% of attack submarines
- 2 out of 3 deployed aircraft carriers
- 30% of cruisers
- 7% of the amphibious craft

These numbers increase significantly when the forces of the Baltic Fleet are added. For instance, a large portion of Soviet amphibious shipping (53 ships) is assigned to the Baltic Fleet for its operations against the Jutland Peninsula and other coastal areas of the Central Region. Likewise, the allied navies of the Warsaw Pact contribute sizeable forces to support naval and amphibious operations in the Baltic Sea area.

While most experts agree that in the last ten years the Soviets have sought improvements to develop a balanced naval force, a significant effort has been placed on upgrading the SSBN and nuclear attack submarine fleets.¹⁹ The formidable TYPHOON class SSBN with its titanium double hull and 20 MIRVed SS-N-20 SLBMs is already in service.²⁰ Other older classes like DELTA are also being retrofitted

with improved MIRVed SLBMs. In addition the Soviets are fielding a new generation of sea-launched land-attack nuclear cruise missiles (SLCM): the SS-N-12 and SS-NX-21.²¹

In recent years the Soviets have placed great emphasis on the strategic offensive role of the SSBNs and much of the Northern Fleet's surface and attack submarine operations has shifted to protection of these critical systems.²² "Bastioning," a strategy to seek sanctuary for SSBNs in the inaccessible coastal waters of Northern Region, emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s but is slowly giving way to a more tactically and operationally offensive role for the fleet as the inventory of available attack submarines increases. But because of the NATO anti-submarine warfare (ASW) threat in the region, it follows that control of critical airfields in Norway must also be linked to Soviet operations in the region, especially if they intend to project their attack forces into the north Atlantic.

The Norwegian airfields, the largest of which are located at Andoya, Bardufoss, and Bodo, can best be characterized in Jominian terms as decisive points, the seizure or retention of which are vital to striking at the opponent's center of gravity. For NATO, the airfields are key to the allied ASW effort from the GIUK Gap to Norway's North Cape and represent a potential staging area for air operations against Soviet military facilities on the Kola. These same bases are also important to any allied effort at interdicting the Northern Fleet's surface operations throughout the region.

The Soviets remember clearly how effective German airpower operating out of Norway was in protecting naval units striking the allied lend-lease convoys to Murmansk in World War II. Today, Soviet control or neutralization of these airbases is equally important for bastioning and maritime power projection to be successful.²³ The greatest operational advantage the Soviets would accrue by capturing these airfields, as has been noted, would be to turn the tables on NATO and extend the capability of their powerful land-based Soviet Naval Aviation (SNA) force. From Norway this force could project deep operational fires well into the Norwegian and North Seas as well as into large areas of the north Atlantic. With the recent addition of 48 "navalized" BACKFIRE bombers and the likely deployment of some BLACKJACK bombers to SNA when fielded, Soviet long-range airpower over the Norwegian Sea represents a prime challenge to US and allied naval operations in the waters of the Northern Region.²⁴

In short, it is no longer appropriate to regard the Northern Fleet as an expendable force which must survive long enough to get off one nuclear salvo in the first few hours of war. Indeed, the blue water character of the "new" Northern Fleet now allows the Soviets to pursue open ocean operations that could have a decisive strategic impact.

Land forces that could be committed to an offensive against the northern portion of AFNORTH's area considerable and include six to eight motorized rifle divisions of which two category 2 divisions are currently stationed on the Kola Peninsula near Pechenga. The Soviets are capable of transporting the additional motorized rifle divisions at a

rate of one per day from the Leningrad Military District to reinforce the Northwestern TVD. In addition, one airborne division is maintained at full readiness in peacetime on the Kola.

To supplement these land forces, the Northern Fleet maintains an organic category 1 naval infantry brigade which was expanded in 1984 from 1800 to 3000 marines. It has also discarded its 20 older PT-76 amphibious tanks and replaced them with 50 T-62 main battle tanks and 150 BMPs. A *spetsnaz* unit of 1000-1300 commandos is also believed to be colocated with the naval infantry brigade.²⁵ Overall, the strength of Soviet ground forces on the Kola is estimated to outnumber Norwegian forces as much as 30 to 1.²⁶ Even with the other available and reinforcing forces already discussed, CINCNORTH's command is far outweighed by standing Soviet units.

VI. CINCNORTH AND NORTHERN REGION CAMPAIGN PLANNING: AN ASSESSMENT

Based on the definitions in sections II and III above SACEUR is responsible for developing a theater of war campaign plan for all of ACE which seeks to attain *alliance* strategic objectives (for example, deter war, respond to aggression, insure territorial integrity of member nations, etc.).²⁷ In support of SACEUR's campaign plan, CINCNORTH should develop his own theater of operations campaign plan which seeks to achieve *theater* strategic military objectives (for example, defend or regain NATO territory, deny Soviet use of friendly airfields and ports, prevent interdiction of SLOCs by defeating the Northern Fleet, etc.) through the attainment of operational objectives.

As we saw in the sections outlining the Northern Region's operational environment, the correlation of forces favors the Soviets who will have the strategic and operational initiative to seize objectives like Norwegian bases early. Based on the geographic scope of the Northern Region and our assumption that the Northern Fleet is the Soviets' center of gravity in the north, the land battle in AFNORTH has only tactical and operational implications while the maritime battle holds the theater's strategic military decision. If CINCNORTH's initial forward land defense fails, another operation or several phased major operations will be necessary to regain lost territory. Further, even if CINCNORTH were successful in his defensive operation, the theater's "flashing sword of vengeance" would still be manifested in a maritime-based counteroffensive phase designed to destroy the Northern Fleet and regain lost alliance territory. Under the present command structure, assigned areas of responsibility, and force allocations CINCNORTH is only capable of fighting the opening major operation of a much larger campaign that must include subsequent maritime operations to achieve overall theater strategic objectives. Clearly, then, CINCNORTH is not presently in a position to meet Mendel and Banks' first two tenets of providing an orderly schedule of strategic military decisions and phasing a series of related major operations.

Mendel and Banks state explicitly, "the campaign plan synchronizes land, sea, and air efforts against the enemy center of gravity." As we have shown, CINCNORTH cannot effectively synchronize the air, land, and sea efforts for the entire Northern Region

into a cohesive and synergistic whole because the maritime forces necessary to challenge and defeat the Northern Fleet belong to SACLANT. As noted earlier, this is fundamentally a unity of command issue in that CINCNORTH, SACLANT, and CINCHAN are conducting independent campaigns in overlapping areas of responsibility. In spite of this, SACLANT is the commander with the forces capable of attacking the Soviet center of gravity, not CINCNORTH. Therefore, under the present theater structure, CINCNORTH cannot meet the campaign planning tenets of synchronization and orienting on the enemy's center of gravity.

VII. MARITIME STRATEGY AS A THEATER WARFIGHTING CONCEPT

In the last section we concluded that while CINCNORTH is indeed a key player in combined operations in the Northern Region, his command is not structured to develop the kind of comprehensive theater of operations campaign plan that is required. We were led to this conclusion through the recognition of the dominant role maritime forces are expected to play in a Northern Region campaign. If we accept that the Northern Region is largely a maritime theater, then it is incumbent upon us to examine the Maritime Strategy as it might apply to the development of theater campaign plans in this area.

The Maritime Strategy is intended to be a conventional, offensively-oriented warfighting strategy. The concept is designated "maritime" rather than "naval" because it is essentially a combined arms concept for maritime theaters, not simply a strategy for the

employment of submarines and carrier battle forces.²⁸ Theoretically, the aggressive "spirit of the offensive" inherent in the Maritime Strategy has deterrent value because it represents a willingness by the US to meet Soviet challenges with a clear exercise of military power. While the US Navy is prone to express this concept as global and strategic in nature, it does offer some features which apply to the operational level of war, especially in theater campaign planning and warfighting.

The concept is broken down into three sequential phases:

Phase 1: Deterrence or transition to war.

Phase 2: Seizing the initiative.

Phase 3: Carrying the fight to the enemy.

While these phases do not represent a specific time schedule or campaign plan, they do provide a useful framework for planning.

Phase 1 seeks to "win the crisis, to control escalation, and...make our intentions clear to cede no area to the Soviets by default...through the early worldwide, decisive use of seapower."²⁹ If such deterrence fails, rapid forward deployment of military forces becomes critical, especially in defending decisive points like the Norwegian airfields and in forcing Soviet attack submarines, surface ships, and aircraft into a SSBN protection role.

During Phase 2 allied maritime forces would seek to exploit their qualitative advantage in ASW, aviation technology, command and control, and pilot training to seize control of the airspace over the Northern Region. Vital to this phase is the security or retaking of the

Norwegian airfields and concomitant attack submarine operations to help clear the way for surface battlegroups.

"Carrying the fight to the enemy" in Phase 3 is dependent on sufficient attrition of Soviet naval and SNA forces. Then "carrier battlegroups and amphibious task forces would press home the initiative to destroy Soviet forces, regain lost territory, and support the theater land campaign."³⁰ While this concept of challenging the Soviet fleet in its own home waters is not new it does have important theater warfighting implications in that it seeks to strike at the Soviet center of gravity in the Northern Region, the Northern Fleet.³¹ Dr. Robert S. Wood, Dean of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies at the Naval War College, is quick to add that the offensive flavor of phase 3 "does not mean a foolhardy rush of forces into the Norwegian Sea but a sea, land, and air campaign partially sequential in character. The viability of various mixes and sequences requires intense campaign planning, gaming, and exercises."³²

Success in phases 2 and 3 relies on the ability of the SACLANT to project adequate forces and transport the reinforcements so desperately needed by CINCNORTH. The principal maritime forces available to SACLANT are three: Standing Naval Forces Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT) and the two components of the Maritime Contingency Force Atlantic (MARCONFORLANT): the Striking Fleet Atlantic and allied amphibious forces.³³

The STANAVFORLANT's 5-8 multinational destroyers and frigates are currently little more than a NATO presence in the

Norwegian Sea. However, this force could buy time for reinforcement by the Striking Fleet and amphibious forces. The Striking Fleet may comprise up to 2 to 4 aircraft carriers with 140-380 aircraft and supporting surface vessels. In addition to the US Second Fleet contribution to the Striking Fleet, some of these vessels could come from the US Sixth Fleet, so the size of the Striking Fleet may be dependent on the concurrent theater situation in AFSOUTH and Indian Ocean areas. Planners project a minimum deployment time of 10 days for these elements to reach the theater.³⁴ Primary amphibious forces include a follow-on Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF).³⁵ This force would be deployed to reinforce the earlier deploying MEB and other indigenous allied units, but full deployment might take several weeks.

This concept for conducting a maritime-base campaign in the Northern Region fits broadly into NATO's 1981 Concept of Maritime Operations (CONMAROPS) which emphasizes the need for keeping the initiative, containment of the Warsaw Pact fleets, and forward deployment as the principles behind NATO operations at sea, especially in the waters north of the GIUK Gap.³⁶ Reviewed in 1987, CONMAROPS remains essentially a defensive concept designed to maintain the status quo command structure in the north by attempting to coordinate the maritime efforts of the three NATO MNCs in the Northern Region. It is not a concept upon which a unified campaign plan which concentrates allied strength against an opponent in the theater can be based. The Maritime Strategy, though, does provide the necessary direction and

incorporating the fundamental concepts of the Strategy into a coherent theater campaign plan is crucial.

VIII. A SUGGESTED MODEL FOR CAMPAIGN PLANNING IN THE NORTHERN REGION

Mendel points out that campaign planning at the theater level must begin with the CINC's formulation of a *theater strategy* which applies to his entire area of responsibility throughout periods of peace, crisis, and war. Further, this theater strategy serves to

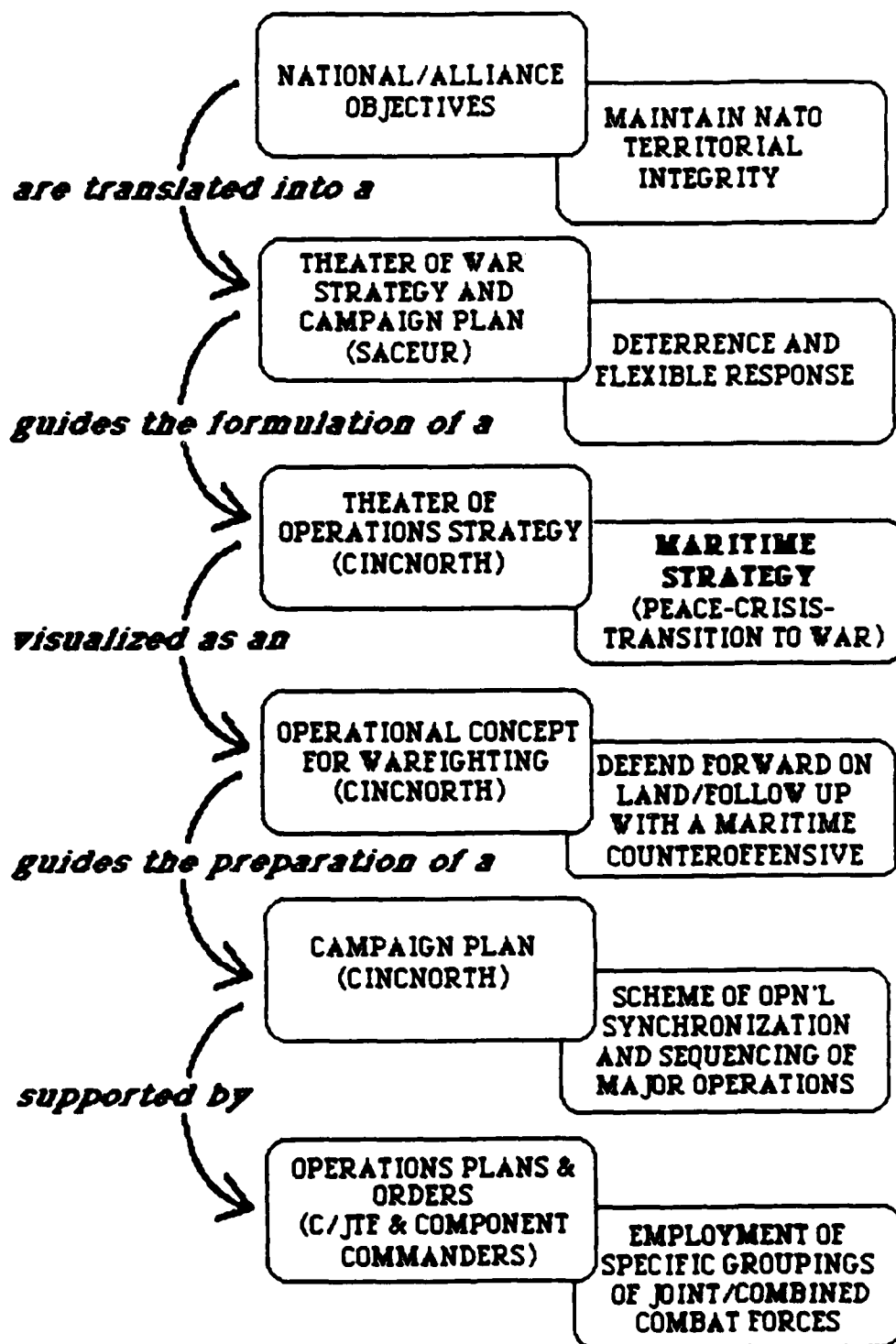
establish in peacetime those conditions that will facilitate military operations in war and the war termination process at the end of active fighting. *The CINC's strategy provides broad conceptual guidance for deterrence and prosecution of regional war...*The CINC's strategy is expressed in general terms of ends, ways, and means, with such objectives as "deter war" and "protect the seaward approaches to North America;" such concepts as "US conventional forces will be forward deployed" and "naval presence will be maintained along sea lines of communications;" and such broad categories of resources as "Marine expeditionary forces" and "division force equivalents."³⁷

The fundamental concepts phases of the Maritime Strategy discussed earlier fit this purpose neatly in that they outline how the CINC in a NATO maritime theater would deter, and if necessary, transition to war. Further, it provides an overarching concept for prosecuting the regional campaign to support the overall theater of war campaign plan proposed by SACEUR. In the Northern Region the Maritime Strategy, with its phased peace-crisis-war approach, represents a theater of operations strategy which can help guide

CINCNORTH's theater campaign planning effort. In order to depict how it could most effectively be incorporated into Northern Region theater campaign planning, the model in Figure 2 is suggested.³⁸ The intent of this model is to illustrate the linkages in the planning efforts from theater of war/theater of operations level down to tactical unit level and how the basic ideas of the Maritime Strategy help focus campaign planning in a theater dominated by naval and other maritime considerations.

Though the Maritime Strategy seem to fit well in this model as an operational commander's theater strategy, Mendel goes on to say that the theater of war/theater of operations strategy is much too broad for the actual application of military forces. This is especially true as the conflict moves through the peace and crisis phases to the outbreak of actual armed hostilities. At this point a campaign plan is needed to guide the warfighting itself, but before a comprehensive plan can be devised, the CINC must develop an *operational concept*.

The commander's operational concept is his visualization of how he intends to prosecute the campaign. It is necessarily broad in scope and purpose, providing only a general framework for follow-up planning. As shown in the model, an example of an operational concept in CINCNORTH's theater might include an initial forward defense on land followed up by a theater-wide maritime counteroffensive in order to achieve the overall objectives of the theater strategy.³⁹ Ideally, the operational concept should dovetail with the theater strategy and in this case it does. As we saw earlier in



**INCORPORATING THE MARITIME STRATEGY INTO
NORTHERN REGION CAMPAIGN PLANNING**

Figure 2

Section VII, a maritime counteroffensive is anticipated in Phases 2 and 3 of the Maritime Strategy.

Once the CINC has clearly defined his operational concept he can proceed with the development and preparation of the campaign plan itself. Expanding on Mendel and Banks' earlier definition, the campaign plan is essentially the CINC's "scheme of operational synchronization" of air, land, and sea forces within his theater of operations. Additionally, the campaign plan translates the CINC's vision and intent expressed in his operational concept into a more clearly defined sequencing of major operations.

Finally, depending on the nature of the campaign, the CINC's subordinate component commanders and/or joint and combined task force commanders formulate supporting operations plans and orders. These documents detail the tactical functions of specific groupings of combat forces and round out the overall theater-wide planning effort.

While this model represents only one approach to theater campaign planning, it does show how the Maritime Strategy can be used as a theater warfighting concept in an area dominated by maritime influences.

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

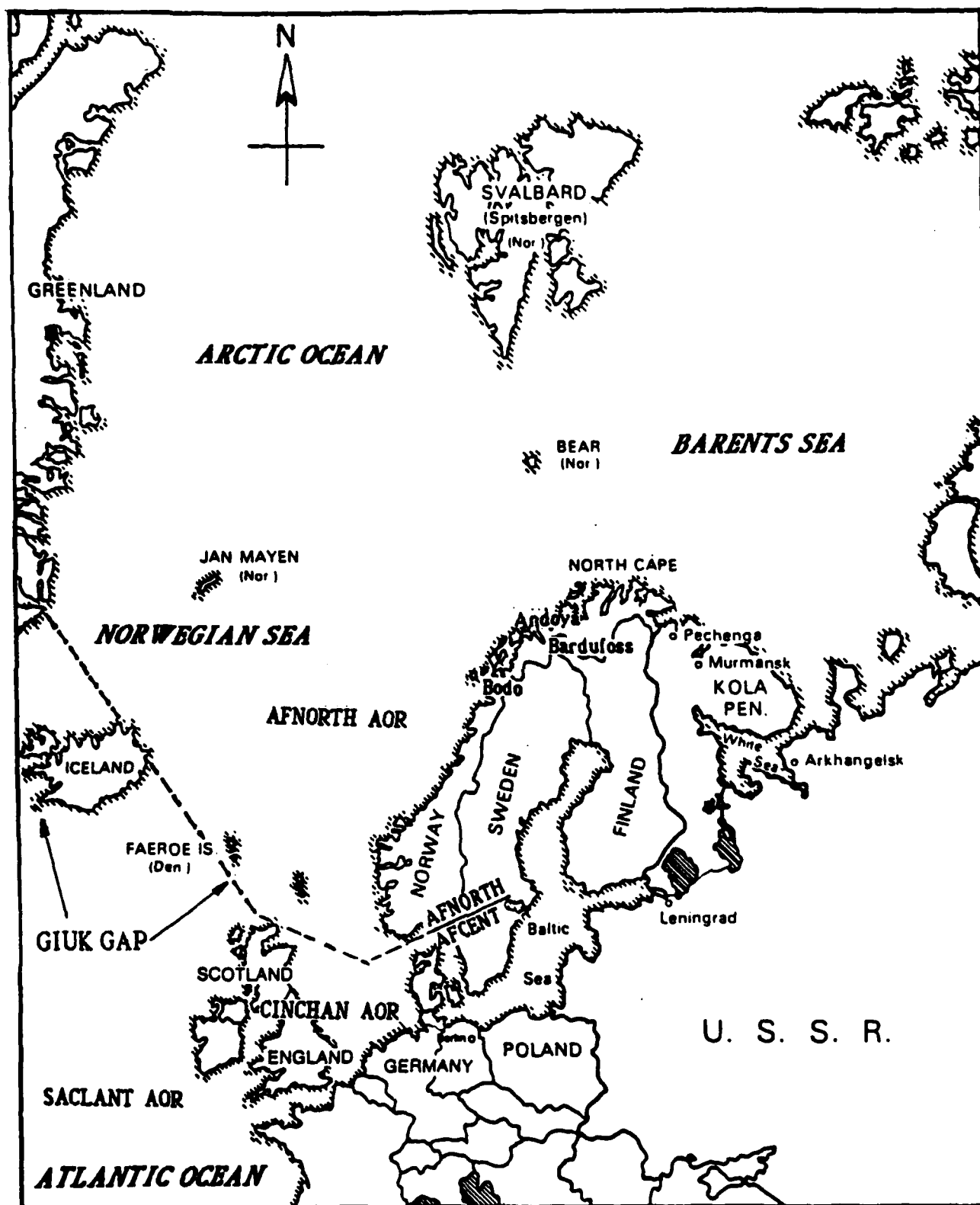
When NATO established AFNORTH in 1951 the primary concern in the north was Soviet ground operations against the Scandinavian and Jutland landmasses. The Soviet Navy was merely an auxiliary force, clearly unable to challenge US and allied naval forces. In the last

two decades, as we have seen, the scope of CINCNORTH's command has been overcome by the Soviet naval buildup to the point that his current AOR is now only a portion of a much larger maritime-oriented theater of operations. In fact, Dr. Milan Vego, senior analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses, feels that "because of the overwhelming Soviet strength on the Kola Peninsula and surrounding seas, Norway may already have been left behind the Soviet front lines."⁴⁰

Today, the Northern Region must be viewed as an entity, or theater of operations, that is uniquely an area which must be dominated through a naval strategy aimed both at the Northern Fleet and at power projection against the shore.⁴¹ This view is also needed to provide the operational depth and agility currently lacking within CINCNORTH's AOR.

Approaching the entire Northern Region as one unified theater of operations and fundamentally readjusting the areas of command responsibility would enhance unity of command and help focus the campaign planning process. The author recommends that a new, single theater area of responsibility subordinate to ACE should encompass all of the ocean areas north of the GIUK Gap, including the Norwegian and Barents Seas and their island chains; and all of the Scandinavian landmass (see Figure 3).

Under this proposal SACLANT and CINCHAN would have to provide some maritime forces to bolster the "new" AFNORTH. A reinforcement of CINCNORTH's maritime forces could take several forms. One is to expand STANAVFORLANT and transfer it to



NORTHERN REGION THEATER OF OPERATIONS

Figure 3

CINCNORTH on a full-time basis. Another option, suggested by naval expert Geoffrey Till, is the creation of a Standing Naval Force for Northern Waters (STANAVFORNOR),⁴² perhaps even reinforced with the remaining carriers of the Royal Navy. A third option would be to transfer command of the Striking Fleet from SACLANT through SACEUR to CINCNORTH upon its commitment north of the GIUK Gap. Like air forces, naval forces are inherently flexible and the Striking Fleet's ability to exploit its speed and power to move quickly to the theater would enable CINCNORTH to concentrate all maritime, land, and air forces at the decisive point of the campaign. Ideally, a combination of these options would ensure that CINCNORTH possesses sufficient forces to gain time to launch a theater maritime counteroffensive at the appropriate time. Further, the clear transfer of command authority in each option fosters unity of command in planning and execution of a campaign in this vital theater of operations. And finally, the realignment of areas of responsibility and forces would enable SACLANT and CINCHAN to better concentrate their efforts on maintaining security of the vital Atlantic and Channel bridges.

Clearly, the thrust of this paper has been to recognize and emphasize the importance of the maritime dimensions of the Northern Region. However, because the line between the land and the sea is blurred at the operational level of war, any prospective maritime counteroffensive launched by CINCNORTH will rely heavily on a secure land flank. This means that some way of strengthening CINCNORTH's land forces must be found, especially to maintain control of key air

bases. Early warning, rapid deployment of light forces, and prepositioning of equipment are only partial solutions. The key to ensuring a strong land flank rests on convincing the Norwegians of the necessity of either basing some heavier foreign forces in Norway or permitting more frequent and larger exercises in their country. Such forces need not be, indeed, should not be, US, but rather multi-national and European to represent a broad commitment to deterrence and an unwillingness to concede any territory to the Soviets in the Northern Region.

Because security of Schleswig-Holstein, the Jutland Peninsula, and the Baltic approaches are more directly related to allied success in the Central Region, AFCENT's area of responsibility should also be expanded to include this area. A former deputy commander, Allied Forces Baltic Approaches, Lieutenant General Heinz von zur Gathen supports this argument stating that "the defense of the Baltic approaches is closely linked to NATO's Central Region. Central Region land and air forces and those of the Baltic approaches are contiguous neighbors. They also face the same enemy.... It would seem logical for NATO to place the Baltic approaches under the command of the Central Region of ACE."⁴³

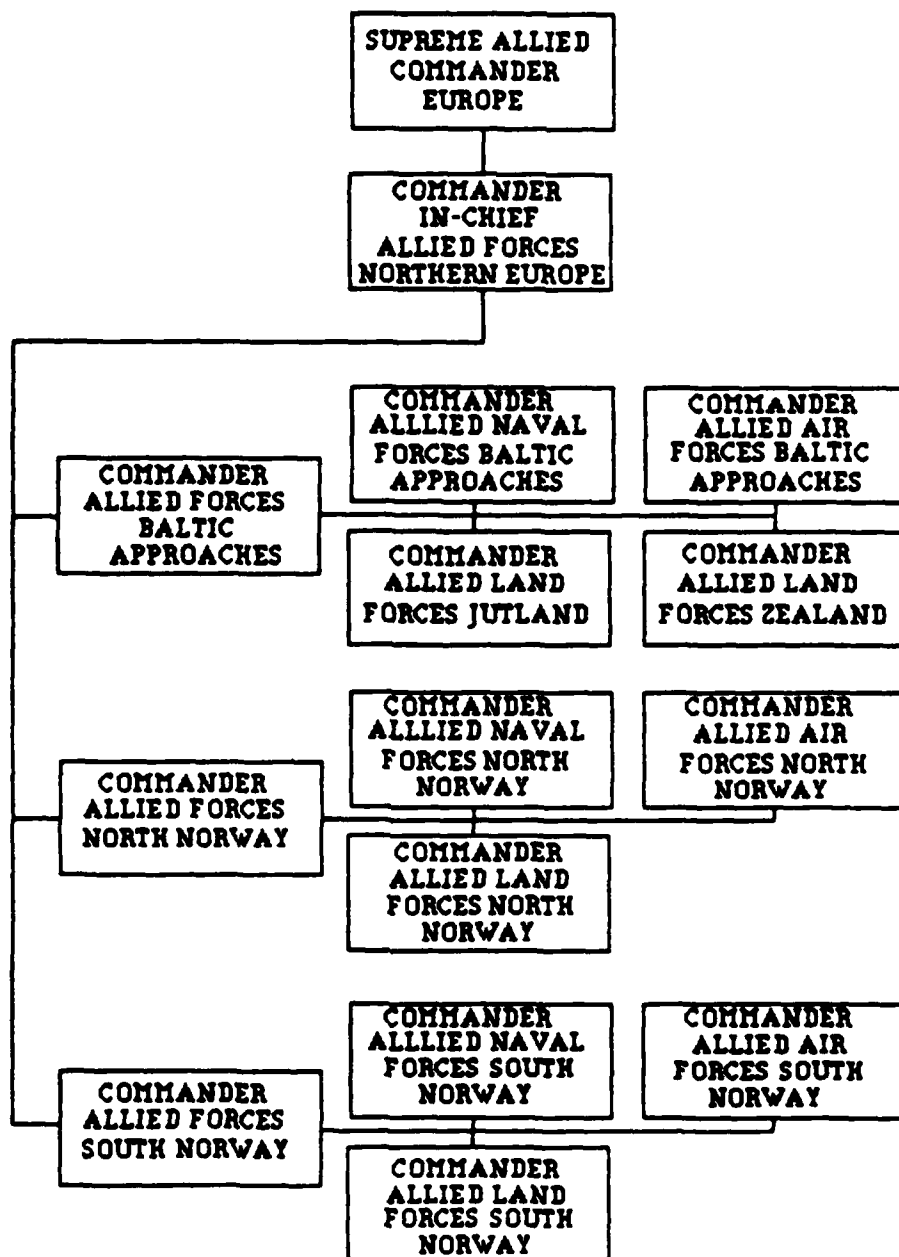
A second conclusion is that in the present operational environment, AFNORTH is no longer adequately resourced or structured to plan and conduct a multi-phased campaign in a theater where maritime factors hold the key to strategic military decisions. A major restructuring of the command is required. In recognition of the

decidedly maritime nature of the region, CINCNORTH should be a naval officer. To further enhance unity of command, CINCNORTH should be dual-hatted as the Commander, Allied Naval Forces, Northern Europe (COMNAVFOR) (see Appendix 2). This recommendation is supported by British Major General Sir Jeremy Moore who commanded British land forces in the 1982 Falklands War. General Moore refers to "the essential nature of the Northern theater as being a maritime one....(and that) for the most efficient execution of war in the command (AFNORTH) ought to be maritime."⁴⁴ COMNAVFOR would also exercise operational command of all allied amphibious forces transferred to him in time of war.

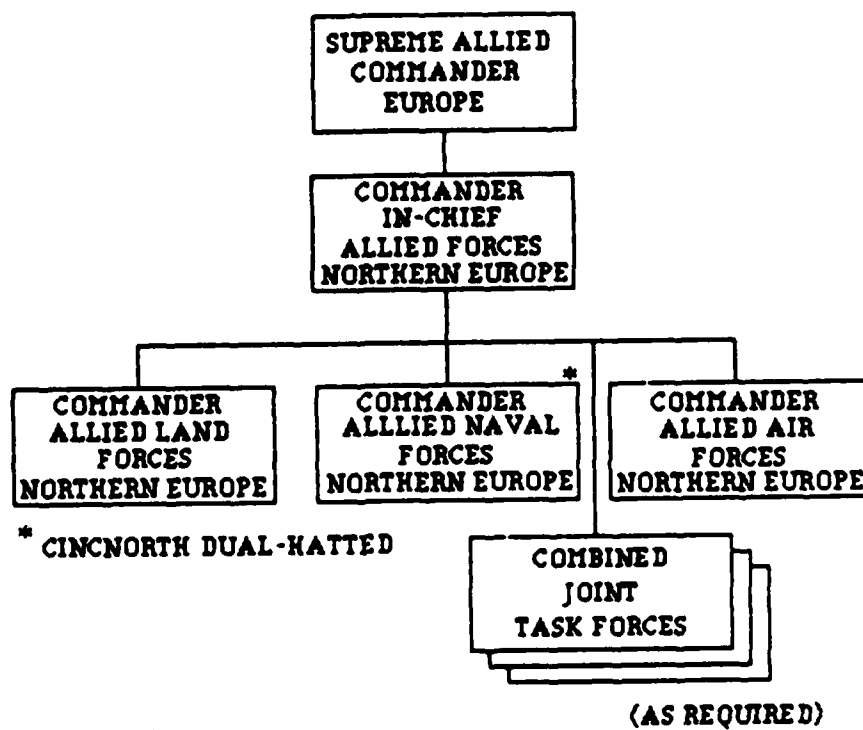
Paralleling the structure of AFSOUTH, CINCNORTH would have subordinate component commanders responsible for land and air operations throughout the theater. These commanders would be designated Commander, Allied Land Forces, Northern Europe (COMLANDFOR) and Commander, Allied Air Forces, Northern Europe (COMAAFNE). This structural change would eliminate the regional subcommands now in place, strengthen unity of command, and permit CINCNORTH to concentrate his forces at critical points in the theater instead of trying to defend weakly everywhere. CINCNORTH would still be able, under this design, to form joint and combined task forces for specific missions within the theater of operations. Overall, this comprehensive restructuring of AFNORTH would focus campaign planning responsibility in one commander instead of the current three.

Finally, the maritime nature of this theater of operations warrants a maritime approach to warfighting. Overall campaign planning within the Northern Region would be enhanced by applying elements of the Maritime Strategy to the planning process. Specifically, the concepts inherent in the Maritime Strategy have application in the Northern Region as a possible theater strategy for CINCNORTH. By incorporating this theater strategy into the campaign planning model introduced earlier, it cannot but help improve the overall process for preparing a unified combined campaign plan for the Northern Region.

APPENDIX A: AFNORTH Command Structure



APPENDIX B: Proposed AFNORTH Command Structure



ENDNOTES

¹Northern European Command (NEC) is an equivalent term used in NATO jargon for this command. For simplicity's sake we will use the term AFNORTH.

²Colonel William W. Mendel and Lieutenant Colonel Floyd T. Banks, "Campaign Planning: Getting it Straight," *Parameters* (September 1988), p. 45.

³The Mendel and Banks study examined four US Army component commands, four US unified commands, and six combined commands (NATO HQ, SHAPE, AFCEM, CENTAG, NORTHAG, AND CFC). Though their focus was clearly on the Central Region, the authors' conclusions certainly pertain to campaign planning in AFNORTH and the Northern Region, as well.

⁴Mendel and Banks, p. 46.

⁵General Sir Geoffrey Howlett, "Concepts and Future Capabilities in NATO's Northern Region," *Journal of the Royal Services Institute (RUSI)* (Autumn 1988), p. 13.

⁶The CAST Brigade is being withdrawn to augment the 4th Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (CMBG) in the Central Region. These two units will form the nucleus of a new wartime headquarters, the 1st Canadian Division.

⁷General Sir Geoffrey Howlett, "Alliance Defense of the Northern Flank," *NATO's Sixteen Nations* (December 1986), p. 22.

⁸H.F. Zeiner-Gundersen, "NATO's Northern Flank," in *NATO's Maritime Flanks: Problems and Prospects* (London: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1987), p. 13.

⁹Zeiner-Gundersen, p. 10 and Howlett, "Alliance Defense of the Northern Flank," p. 21.

¹⁰Laurence Martin, *NATO and the Defense of the West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1985), p. 31.

¹¹Milan Vego, "The Soviet Envelopment Option in a NATO Contingency: Implications for Alliance Strategy," in *NATO's Maritime Flanks: Problems and Prospects* (London: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1987), p. 91.

¹²Ellmann Ellingsen, ed., "Military Balance 1983-1984" in the *Norwegian Version of I.I.S.S* (Excerpt written under the auspices of the Norwegian Atlantic Committee, FR. HANSEN PLASS 6, Oslo 1), p. 1.

¹³Francis J. (Bing) West, Jr., "US Naval Forces and the Northern Flank of NATO," *Naval War College Review* (June-July 1979), p. 16.

¹⁴Commander Barbara E. McGann, "North Flank Maritime Offensive," (unpublished paper, Georgetown University, 1985), p. 7.

¹⁵Jeffrey G. Barlow, "NATO's Northern Flank," in the *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 1 May 1979), p. 16.

¹⁶*Sovetskaya Voennoye Entsiklopediya* (The Soviet Military Encyclopedia), Vol 8, (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1980), pp. 8-9.

¹⁷Lieutenant General (Ret.) Heinz von zur Gathen, "The Federal Republic of Germany's Contribution to the Defense of Northern Europe," in *Northern Europe: Security Issues for the 1990s*, ed. Paul M. Cole and Douglas M. Hart (London: Westview Press, 1986), p. 62.

¹⁸Vego, p. 104.

¹⁹Comments of Professor Roger W. Barnett, Captain, USN (Ret.), Georgetown University, 16 February 1986. Professor Barnett was one of the staff writers of the Maritime Strategy at the Department of the Navy before his retirement from active military service.

²⁰David B. Rivkin, Jr., "No Bastions for the Bear," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (April 1984), p. 39.

²¹Jacquelyn K. Davis, et. al., "NATO's Maritime Defenses," in *Naval Forces and Western Security* (London: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1986), p. 39.

²²Rivkin, p. 39.

²³General Sir Anthony Ferrar-Hockley, "The Influence of the Northern Flank on the Mastery of the Seas," *Naval War College Review* (May 1982), p. 18.

²⁴West, p. 17 and Norman Friedman, *The US Maritime Strategy* (London: Jane's Publishing, Inc., 1988), p. 174.

²⁵Vego, pp. 92-93.

²⁶Kirsten Amundson, "The Soviets' Northern Military Buildup," *The Christian Science Monitor* (20 April 1989), p. 18.

²⁷NATO planners emphasize deterrence vice warfighting and focus their efforts on the transition from peace to war and the preparation of General Defense Plans (GDP). Because campaign plans can be construed as having an offensive purpose, planning for operations beyond the initial forward defense phase is considered inconsistent with NATO's charter. While such political

restrictions are recognized, our concern remains the theoretical process for planning coalition warfare.

²⁸Robert S. Wood, "Maritime-Air Operations in the North," *Britain and NATO's Northern Flank*, ed. Geoffrey Till (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 94.

²⁹Admiral James D. Watkins, "The Maritime Strategy," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* Special Edition (January 1986), p. 9.

³⁰Major Hugh K. O'Donnell, Jr., "Northern Flank Maritime Offensive," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (September 1985), p. 28.

³¹Harlan Ullman, *Future Imperative: National Security and the US Navy in the Late 1980s* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1985), p. 17.

³²Wood, p. 99.

³³Ellingsen, p. 10.

³⁴Ellingsen, p. 11.

³⁵Colonel Joseph H. Alexander, "The Role of the Marines in the Defense of Northern Norway," *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (May 1984), pp. 185-186.

³⁶Geoffrey Till, ed., *Britain and NATO's Northern Flank* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 124.

³⁷Mendel, p. 43.

³⁸This model is based on a similar one found in Colonel William W. Mendel's article, "Theater Strategy and the Theater Campaign Plan: Both Are Essential," *Parameters* (December 1988), p. 45.

³⁹Another example of a commander's operational concept is CINCENT's *Operational Guideline* (Bonn, 20 August 1987) in which the CINC visualizes a campaign involving a "first battle," a "second battle," and perhaps "subsequent operations."

⁴⁰Vego, p. 98

⁴¹Colonel Thomas E. Campbell, "The Baltic Approaches: A Strategic Naval Alternative for the Northern Flank," unpublished research paper, US Naval War College, 22 June 1984, p. ii.

⁴²Geoffrey Till and Richard King, "A Standing Naval Force for Northern Waters?" *Naval Forces* (No. V, 1987), p. 16.

⁴³Gathen, p. 62.

⁴⁴Major General Sir Jeremy Moore, "Land-Air Operations in the North," in *Britain and NATO's Northern Flank*, ed. Geoffrey Till (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 137.

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