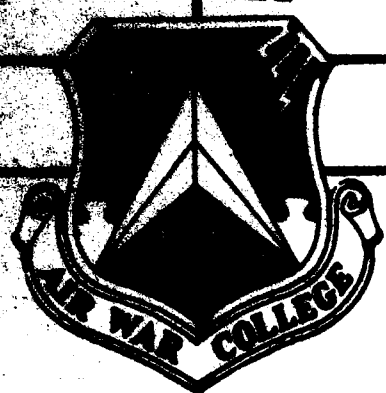


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RESEARCH REPORT

JOINT TASK FORCE OPERATIONS
IN THE PERSIAN GULF

LT COL JAMES W. FONDREN, JR

1989

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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JOINT TASK FORCE OPERATIONS
IN THE PERSIAN GULF

by

James W. Fondren, Jr.
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Colonel Michael Heenan

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

May 1989

DISCLAIMER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Joint Task Force Operations in the Persian Gulf

AUTHOR: James W. Fondren, Jr., Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

Iranian Revolutionary Guard (Pasdaran) attacks on Kuwait's shipments of oil from the Persian Gulf drove the Sultanate of Oman to seek international help in protecting its fleet of commercial oil tankers. In response, the Reagan administration saw this as an opportunity to bolster its influence in the region, deny increasing Soviet influence among the littoral Gulf states, and limit the spread of Iranian religious fanaticism. The intimidation of Kuwait and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council by Iran was an outgrowth of the Iran-Iraq War and threatened vital US interests in the Gulf. US interests in the region are the continued free flow of oil, freedom of navigation, and deny the spread of Soviet hegemony in southwest Asia.

US military forces evolved into a joint task force under US Central Command. Joint plans were conducted to protect all flagged Kuwaiti tankers from Iranian guerrilla warfare at sea. The authority of the Commander in Chief, US Central Command to conduct joint operations has been significantly increased by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. This law played an important role in US military engagements with Iranian forces; furthers the concept of "jointness"; clarifies the role of the Secretary of Defense; and, strengthens the role of the Chairman, JCS. It impacts the way US military officers at all levels plan and execute military operations. Recommendations are included to correct the process of joint military actions.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

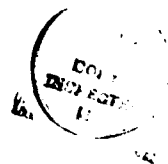
Lieutenant Colonel James W. Fondren, Jr., (B.S., Louisiana Tech University) received his commission through the Reserve Officer Training Corps in 1970. Overseas assignments include Guam, Thailand, and Germany. During the period 1971-1978, Colonel Fondren commanded five separate Headquarters Squadrons, served as an Executive Support Officer in Munitions and Field Maintenance Squadrons, and was Protocol Officer in HQs United States Air Forces in Europe. From 1978-82, he served as the Wing Executive Officer, 4950th Test Wing, Executive Officer, Airlift and Training Systems Program Office, and Configuration Control Officer, KC-135 Modernization Program Office.

During the early period of the Space Transportation System (space shuttle) launches, Colonel Fondren was reassigned to Patrick AFB, Florida as the Chief of Protocol and Executive Agent for conferences held at the Eastern Space and Missile Center. Following this assignment, he served as the Protocol Officer to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from July 1985 to July 1988. In this position, Colonel Fondren served General John W. Vessey, Jr. and Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr. and was entirely responsible for the Chairman's Counterpart Program.

Colonel Fondren has completed the Squadron Officer School, in residence, and Air Command and Staff College by seminar. He is a graduate of the Air War College, Class of 1989.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine Persian Gulf operations in light of past deficiencies in some operations since the turn of the century. Congressional critics have commented for years on the failure of the military services to perform together in an effective and efficient manner, but saw little reform taking place within the Department of Defense (DOD). Recent Joint Task Force (JTF) operations in the Persian Gulf will be compared to historical examples of past military deficiencies. (K) —

The problem of cross-service cooperation has been exacerbated by the technological revolution, changes in United States (US) security interests in a dynamic and interdependent world, and perceived resistance to change by the services.^(1:1) Underscoring these issues is the 1986 congressional testimony of former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, "Without such reform, I fear that the United States will obtain neither the best military advice, nor the execution of military plans, nor the provision of military capabilities commensurate with the fiscal resources provided, nor the most advantageous deterrence and defense posture available to the Nation."^(1:III) In light of recent defense acquisition scandals, budget, and manpower reductions, the call for reform gains increasing credibility during a new era of constant or declining resources.

Historical examples of past military deficiencies were researched in a 1986 study by the staff of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, CSASC, and form the litmus tests for addressing congressional concerns over interservice competition. They reflect the negative aspects of command and control gone awry, lack of interservice cooperation, the need for equipment interoperability, and inadequate unified command plans. These indictments of the military services resulted in congressional deliberations for the need to pass laws making evolutionary changes to improve joint operations. Following an examination of DOD organizational problems. This paper will address changes in the law directed by Congress to strengthen the authority and responsibility of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and the Unified and Specified Commanders (CINCs).

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was intended to integrate the capabilities of all four services under the operational leadership of the CINCs to provide effective national defense. The law recognizes that no service can win a war on its own and requires a combination of each service to defeat an enemy. This is the backdrop for military operations conducted in the Gulf, and the exercise of increased authority by the Chairman, JCS and the Commander in Chief, US Central Command (CINCCENT) to improve efficiency of military operations in the Gulf. Based on a review of Joint Task Force Middle East (JTFME) operations, conclusions will be reached and recommendations made for future joint military operations.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF DOD ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

Case 1: The Spanish-American War

The United States invasion of Cuba was a classic example of the consequences of lack of unity of command and inadequate interservice cooperation. Command of naval forces was divided and a sharp personality clash exacerbated the problem which caused the fleet to be split into separate parts of the Caribbean. This placed US naval forces in danger of destruction piecemeal by the Spanish fleet.

At Havana Harbor, the Army and Navy commanders disagreed sharply on tactics. In fact, Army-Navy relations were so strained that at the end of the campaign, the Army commander refused to allow naval representatives to sign surrender documents and claimed all captured Spanish naval forces. The conflict was settled in Washington and the Navy was allowed to take charge of the Spanish vessels. (1:354)

Case 2: Pearl Harbor

Although many factors contributed to this disaster, the structure of the chain of command was a major problem. There were two separate chains of command in Hawaii and only President Roosevelt exercised authority over both commanders. No one below the level of the President had access to all incoming intelligence and could do a comprehensive analysis of all intelligence information, nor did any one at that level have the

time or responsibility to do such an analysis. What further resulted was a complete failure by the Army and Navy commanders in Hawaii to coordinate and integrate operations and facilities for reconnaissance and defense. (1:355)

Case 3: The Battle for Leyte Gulf

The greatest naval battle in history was, by a narrow margin, almost the largest naval defeat since Pearl Harbor. The major problem which the US Navy encountered at Leyte Gulf was a lack of unity of command which nearly proved decisive.

Naval forces in the Pacific were divided into Third Fleet, reporting to Admiral Nimitz in Hawaii, and Seventh Fleet, reporting to General MacArthur. Thus, neither fleet cooperating in support of the American landing at Leyte had a common superior below the level of the informally created body of the JCS in Washington. No field commander had unified authority.

Third Fleet's plan to protect the San Bernardino Strait with a new unit--Task Force 34--to take on heavy Japanese surface forces was intercepted by the Japanese, and led Seventh Fleet to assume it was free to concentrate on the other major entrance to the Gulf, Surigao Strait. Third Fleet abandoned the landing force and proceeded out of the Gulf to attack Japanese carriers (a decoy)--the vessels that would have formed Task Force 34 went with Third Fleet. Seventh Fleet was never informed that Task Force 34 was never formed; the San Bernardino Strait and Seventh Fleet's flank were unguarded as the Japanese attack came through the Strait.

Third Fleet ignored Seventh Fleet requests for assistance until Admiral Nimitz intervened with his famous message, "Where is Task Force 34? Whole world wants to know." By the time Third Fleet returned, the battle was over. (1:357)

Case 4: The Capture of U.S.S. Pueblo

The lack of action by military forces in the vicinity of the Sea of Japan to come to Pueblo's assistance can be traced to problems with the US military command structure in the region--specifically, the lack of unification at levels subordinate to the unified command.

1. There were no forces dedicated to support a ship on a "minimal risk" operation.

2. No single commander in the vicinity had adequate forces under his authority to deal with the seizure.

3. Efforts of commanders below CINC, U.S. Pacific Command (CINCPAC) to coordinate their forces resulted in no action taken.

"According to the staff report, although the capture of the Pueblo painfully demonstrated the dangers of inadequate unification at levels below the unified commander, this problem remains essentially unresolved today, almost 20 years later." (1:358)

Case 5: The Iran Hostage Rescue Mission

On 24 April 1980, the US military undertook the rescue of 53 Americans held hostage in Tehran, Iran. Code-named "Operation Eagle Claw," the mission failed and resulted in

deaths of American servicemen as well. The following deficiencies were identified with the operation. (1:359)

1. Planning.

A previously approved JCS concept plan (CONPLAN) offered a framework for organizing, planning, training, and executing military responses to terrorist actions. However, the JTF adopted very little of the JCS CONPLAN; instead, the JTF improvised and relied upon ad hoc arrangements to perform most of its tasks. The plan that evolved required a complex series of ground and air movements involving personnel of all four services. (1:359)

2. Training.

The general responsibility for supervising training was carried out in part by two JTF officers who still worked in their regular duty assignments outside the JTF headquartered in Washington. Neither officer was responsible for overall management of the joint training activities, and no one had charge of helicopter training. The failure of the JTF to centralize responsibility for joint training reflects the historical difficulty that the services have had in training together, even when such joint training was essential to the success of a specific operation. (1:360)

3. Organizational Problems.

According to Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski, Assistant to President Carter for National Security Affairs, all four services insisted on participating in the mission even though

the participation of all four was unnecessary or even harmful. Dr Brzezinski further stated that, ". . . interservice interests dictated very much the character of the force that was used . . . and that did not enhance cohesion and integration." (1:361)

Case 6: The Grenada Operation

After-action reports and professional journals reflect that despite the success of Operation URGENT FURY, there are serious problems in the ability of the services to operate jointly. These problems have their roots in organizational shortcomings. (1:364)

1. Concept of the Operation.

The JTF Commander had no Army personnel on his staff, therefore, one Army general officer and two majors were assigned to his staff on an emergency basis (as advisors). With better organizational arrangements, much of the improvisation by small unit commanders could have been avoided. (1:365)

2. Communications.

Army units could not communicate with the Navy and Marine Corps because each service continues to purchase its own communications equipment which often isn't compatible with the equipment of other services. (1:365)

3. Fire Support.

Fire support from the Navy to the Army was a serious problem because prior coordination was poor to nonexistent. These failures illustrate the inadequate attention paid to the

conduct of joint operations and resolution of problems such as fire support doctrine. This could have been overcome had the JTF Commander augmented his staff with qualified Army personnel. (1:366)

4. Lack of a Unified Commander.

The JTF Commander failed to appoint a single ground commander to coordinate Army and Marine forces on the island until day two of the operation. Organizational problems such as areas of responsibility and coordination of effort could have been better solved by a unified ground commander. (1:368)

5. Logistics.

Organizational shortcomings caused serious logistics problems which revealed deficiencies in logistics planning resulting from rapid deployment of the JTF. This problem was compounded by the failure to use the Joint Deployment Agency to coordinate the rapid deployment of forces. There were problems even within the services to identify unit logistics requirements; the 82nd Airborne Division deployed with no vehicles and the men had little more than what was in their rucksacks.

Backups in airlift slowed provisioning of troops and no one identified a requirement to provide food for prisoners of war. Lack of trucks, fuel, and supplies led US forces to commandeer their requirements from local sources. (1:369)

CHAPTER III

GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ACT OF 1986

These embarrassing examples of past military mistakes served to confirm congressional suspicions that the military services operate in a manner too parochial for the public good. Thus, the Congress urged on by leading reformers (Senator Barry Goldwater, Senator Sam Nunn, and Representative Bill Nichols) passed legislation in 1986 to improve effectiveness and efficiency among the military services. By strengthening the power of the Chairman, JCS and the CINCs, as well as clarifying the role of the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), the Chairman and the CINCs have a much stronger voice in determining the kinds of forces, training, and equipment that the services provide the warfighters in the future. (2:996)

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 directs the resolution of complex problems resulting from DOD's past inabilities to improve cross-service cooperation. Under the Act, the CINCs are now active players in the budget process conducted by SECDEF annually. To improve overall effectiveness of their military capability, the CINCs can focus attention on military shortcomings during the DOD budgetary process. The Chairman and the CINCs must now provide advice to the SECDEF for remedies to interoperability problems; command, control, communications, and intelligence needs; strategic airlift/sealift shortfalls; equipment priorities; and

propositioning and sustainability at the time it's most needed-- allocation of funds to the services. (2:992)

It was the intent of Congress that the SECDEF should ensure that the authority of the CINCs is fully commensurate with the responsibility of those commanders for the accomplishment of their missions; increase attention to the formulation of strategy and to contingency planning; provide for more efficient use of defense resources; enhance the effectiveness of military operations; and, improve the management and administration of the department. (2:993-994)

Although the law did not give the SECDEF any new powers, it did make clear the authority and role of the SECDEF in DOD. The Goldwater-Nichols Act provides a framework in which the SECDEF can carry out effective mission integration in support of national security objectives. This includes a review of budget proposals by the CINCs for contingencies and selected operations, as well as alternative budget proposals to the service departments by the Chairman, JCS. The law also directed the SECDEF to consider revision of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) geographical area of responsibility to include the ocean areas adjacent to southwest Asia. To assist the Secretary in carrying out these provisos, the law also stated that the SECDEF shall consult with the Chairman, JCS. (2:1014, 1017) The course of "joint matters" in DOD will, according to the Goldwater-Nichols Act, be guided by "a strong executive with guidance on military issues by a Chairman, JCS

who is unbiased and insulated from vested service interests and parochialness." Under the law, however, only the SECDEF may transfer forces between combatant commands.(2:1013)

It was the intent of Congress that the Chairman, JCS should assist the SECDEF in his duties and be the principal military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the SECDEF.(2:1005) To carry out these and other new duties, the law provides the Chairman with increased authority and a wide range of responsibilities. For example, the Chairman can consult with the JCS on matters he deems appropriate for consideration/vote.(2:1005) The Chairman establishes procedures and agendas for the meetings of the JCS and now has the Joint Staff working for him as opposed to the corporate JCS body.(2:1009) The Chairman must consult with and seek the advice of the CINCs on their priorities during annual budget deliberations, and advise the SECDEF on the extent to which service program/budget recommendations conform with the priorities established in strategic plans.(2:1007) The role of the Chairman is to communicate decisions between the President, or SECDEF, and the CINCs; and, serve as the spokesman for the CINCs especially on operational requirements of their commands.(2:1013) The Congress also made it abundantly clear that the Chairman is not in the chain of command which runs from the President to the SECDEF to the CINCs, which does not confer command authority on the Chairman. It does delineate the Chairman's oversight of activities of the combatant

commands.(2:1013) Given that the Chairman is the only member of the JCS without formal duties in his parent service, the new law directs him to communicate truly independent views, rise above service interests as well as JCS corporate decisions, and assist the SECDEF in mission integration during the budget process on behalf of the CINCs. These reforms will further the reform of interoperability issues, joint service cooperation, and enhance the effectiveness of military operations.

It was the intent of Congress that the CINCs should have "clear responsibility for the accomplishment of missions assigned to their commands; receive authority fully commensurate with the responsibility for the accomplishment of their assigned missions; increase attention on the formulation of strategy and contingency planning; and, enhance the effectiveness of military operations."(2:993-994) The law directs that the CINCs "submit a budget proposal for activities of the command as the Secretary (after consultation with the Chairman) determines to be appropriate for inclusion. These activities include joint exercises, force training, contingencies, and selected operations."(2:1017) Under the law, the CINCs have been given the power to "prescribe the chain of command to forces under them; organize forces as necessary to carry out the mission; employ forces necessary to carry out the mission; assign command functions to subordinate commands; and, give authoritative direction to subordinate commands necessary to carry out assigned missions, including authoritative direction over all

aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics."(2:1014) The CINCs now have authority, direction, and control over component commands to include concurrence in the selection of subordinate component commanders.(2:1015) Congress is hoping that attention to the CINCs' warfighting priorities will eliminate waste and inefficiency among the services as a result of their new role in the budget process and increased control over their component commands. The CINCs must be apprised of service related issues affecting their commands and now have the authority to direct the component commander to advise the CINC even on "matters for which the CINC has not been assigned authority."(2:1015) Under this arrangement, the CINC charged with the responsibility for executing military operations in support of national security objectives has the authority and the accountability to accomplish the assigned mission. This enables the CINC to prepare and organize in peacetime, from both a geographical reference and the proliferation of threats, for all the activities he must face at any level of conflict. The responsibility for military operations is vested solely with the CINC, which allows him to respond to crisis management with improved command and control utilizing his own operational command structure. The CINCs shouldn't have to fight component commander loyalties to their services which created friction, delay, and inefficiency in the past.(1:309) It is clear that Congress intended to strengthen the authority of the CINCs to eliminate "unity of command"

issues and service parochialness prevalent in the examples cited in Chapter II. The CINCs now have increased stature under the law to voice their requirements during budget review cycles in order to influence resource allocations under their control.

CHAPTER IV

PERSIAN GULF ISSUES

A review of the Persian Gulf Region will be helpful in understanding the nature of the threat to the US national interests, and the force structure selected by the Chairman, JCS and CINCCENT to combat hostile elements in the Gulf. Following this insight to the geopolitical issues affecting the littoral states in the Gulf, I will review Joint Task Force Middle East (JTFME) engagements with Iranian forces and discuss the progress in jointness directed by the 1986 law.

International attention was galvanized on the region during the oil crisis of 1973-74. The Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) rocked the world when they shut off supplies of oil from the Gulf.^(5:2) This alarming vulnerability to OPEC stimulated further exploration and production of domestic oil in the United States in such distant areas as the north slope of Alaska. Today, however, the United States can no longer maintain the level of oil production demanded by consumers. Domestic oil production in the United States dropped 4.8 percent between 1987-88 to the lowest level since 1977 and was 14 percent below 1970, the nation's peak production year.^(3:376) This downward trend is expected to continue even as demand rises.

Studies now show that US dependence on Persian Gulf oil will grow into the 1990s and beyond. Currently, about 15 percent of US oil imports (6 percent of total US consumption) originate in the Gulf, while NATO allies import 45 percent and Japan imports 65 percent. By the year 2000, the Persian Gulf will account for one-third of world oil production and reserves which enable it to produce 5-12 times current output.^(5:1) The region has the potential to control world prices and production of oil through the middle of the next century. In this context, the Persian Gulf is of major importance to the United States and its allies.

In response to the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, which cost the United States one of its "twin pillars" of strategy in the region, and the regional threat posed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter identified three principles of US policy in the Persian Gulf during his 1980 State of the Union Address.^(6:34)

1. Maintain the free flow of oil.
2. Deny the Soviets an opportunity to gain control of the region.
3. Support the independence and stability of the Gulf states.

Subsequent administrations have followed this policy.

The Soviet Union also has legitimate security interests along its southern border with Iran. During the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviets maintained links with both countries. However, due

to deeply religious Islamic antipathy for Soviet Ideology, both states view the Soviet Union with suspicion.(7:302) Soviet diplomatic gains in the Gulf have been impressive and its military presence in the Gulf, which assists in minesweeping operations, is considered both benign and nonbelligerent in contrast with US military forces which will be addressed in Chapter V. Furthermore, Moscow has improved its dialogue with the ruling families in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) who have been generally in agreement with the west except on the Arab-Israeli issue.

The United States has maintained a small naval presence in the Gulf to show the flag since 1949 under the US Naval Forces, Middle East Command. This changed to a larger force in 1987, in response to a request by the government of Kuwait to reflag 11 of its tankers in the United States. Kuwait's oil shipments were increasingly becoming the target of Iranian Revolutionary Guards at sea, and Kuwait requested US naval protection for its tankers. In 1985, there were 53 attacks by Iraq and Iran on oil tankers in the Gulf; by the end of 1986, this number grew to 106 attacks.(8:178) In order to prevent/limit Soviet influence through assistance to Kuwait, the Reagan administration offered to protect all 11 tankers. Kuwait is an important US trading partner with extensive economic assistance programs to developing countries that complement shared US international goals.(9:214) Following the "Iran Gate" scandals, US assistance to Kuwait presented an important

opportunity to demonstrate US commitment to the GCC states. However, during the Iran-Iraq War, Kuwait was providing economic assistance to Iraq, and allowing shipments of war materials to arrive at its ports for overland transfer to Baghdad. By assisting Kuwait, US neutrality in the war certainly seemed inclined to Iraq, although the US hoped for a future relationship with Iran at war's end. (5:3)

The GCC has been largely unable to protect the interests of its small members, like Kuwait, from intimidation by Iran. Independent-minded Kuwait has withstood Iran's revolutionary activities including terror bombings, Silkworm missile attacks, "accidental" air raids, and attacks on its shipping. (10:47)

In order to protect the 11 Kuwaiti oil tankers that were threatened by Iranian Revolutionary Guards at sea (Pasdaran), US forces in the Gulf were augmented by carrier and battleship battle groups in the North Arabian Sea. (11:13) This substantial increase in forces committed to Persian Gulf operations responded to two significant events. First, the attack on U.S.S. Stark by an Iraqi Mirage F-1, on 17 May 1987, that killed 37 US Navy crewmen and wounded 21. Second, the Bridgeton incident on 24 July, the first reflagged Kuwaiti tanker which struck a mine 20 miles west of Farsi Island, a Pasdaran stronghold. What is remarkable about the Bridgeton incident was US underestimation of the threat from Iranian mines. (12:197)

On 17 May, Marshal Chuikov, one of three Soviet tankers leased to Kuwait, struck a mine in the main channel leading to Kuwait's oil ports.^(13:4) Three more ships struck mines between May and June, and US maritime salvage executives warned that Iran was mining approaches to Kuwait's oil terminals.^(14:25) The Western Alliance nations and Japan finally reacted to the spread of the Iran-Iraq War outside the Gulf when several ships in the Gulf of Oman struck mines. The UK, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy dispatched mine sweepers and frigates to the Gulf, and Japan offered to pay for precise navigational aids to assist minesweeping operations.^(15:36) By September 1987, US forces in the Gulf comprised all four services including AWACS, refueling aircraft, patrol boats, frigates, minesweepers, attack helos, Marines, Navy Sea-Air-Land Teams (SEALs), Army Special Forces helicopters, and mobile sea bases.^(3:377) Under the authority given to him by the Goldwater-Nichols Act, CINCCENT directed a change in the command arrangement and established JTFME reporting directly to him and overseeing joint operations in the Gulf and North Arabian Sea.^(11:13)

In the thriving, bustling crossroads of commerce in the Gulf, the JTFME pursued a more demonstrative presence in the Gulf in order to blunt Iranian guerilla warfare at sea. This included retaliation for a Silkworm missile attack on a reflagged tanker (Sea Isle City) by destroying an Iranian oil platform; sinking the Iran Ajr for planting mines in

international waters; destruction of Iranian gas-oil separation platforms in retaliation for continued mining by the Pasdaran; firing on Iranian boats by US helicopters when fired upon by the Pasdaran; intercepting and disrupting Pasdaran raids; and aiding ships under Pasdaran attack. The United States and its allies in the Gulf successfully denied the Pasdaran the freedom to intimidate and bully commercial shipping. This led to a UN mediated truce between Iran and Iraq in the Fall of 1988. Today, JTFME maintains a watchful eye on shipping in the Gulf, and has reduced its forces in response to the lower threat of hostility.

What impact did the Goldwater-Nichols Act have on the employment of US forces operating under JTFME? Can we see a difference in the forces employed, command and control structure, and the exercise of new clout given to the Chairman, JCS and CINCCENT by the Act? A review of military engagements in the Gulf should provide answers to these questions.

CHAPTER V

US MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

US forces in the Gulf were tasked to provide safe transit for American flagged ships from Kuwaiti oil terminals to the North Arabian Sea. There was no precedent or checklist for this challenging task; it required innovation, ingenuity, and flexibility.^(3:378) Command and control systems that were initially inadequate to accomplish the mission were upgraded at CINCCENT's request and can now quickly bring all service resources to bear on any problem that arises. The Gulf is a bustling center of commerce, and shipping lanes are plied by hundreds of small boats daily. It is also used by the Pasdaran who mix among all the other small craft to harass and attack shipping. The problem of discriminating between friend and foe demanded constant vigilance for Army and Navy special forces.^(25:64) Countering guerrilla warfare at sea proved to be more difficult than originally imagined; i.e., the Bridgeton incident. This early incident and underestimation of the Iranian threat sent the Chairman, JCS and the Navy racing to overcome the lack of minesweeping capability that threatened future convoys.^(16:14)

The Bridgeton incident led to further changes in US force packaging in the Gulf. Army and Navy Special Forces, and elements of 24th Marine Amphibious Unit were rushed to the Gulf

along with helicopter mine hunters, mine sweepers, river patrol boats, and mobile sea bases. The JTFME was activated on 20 September with a short, flexible command line to CINCCENT. The "chop line" was moved further south to give CJTFME operational control over naval forces in the Gulf and North Arabian Sea. (17:671) Under this first change in command and control, COMMIDEASTFOR reported to Commander, JTFME (CJTFME) who was also the Commander, Carrier Group 5. This was subsequently changed to make COMMIDEASTFOR the CJTFME to eliminate duplication of efforts. (17:671) These changes were the direct result of CINCCENT's new clout under Goldwater-Nichols to more fully integrate and unify operational control over all forces in support of Persian Gulf operations, and dictate his own command and control arrangements. (2:1013) It also reflects the authority of the SECDEF to assign operational control of forces and areas of geographic responsibility after consultation with the Chairman, JCS. (2:1014, 1017)

Case 1: Operation Earnest Will

On 24 July 1987, the first convoy of reflagged Kuwaiti tankers ran into trouble 20 miles west of Farsi Island when the first of two tankers, Bridgeton, struck a World War I vintage contact mine. Suddenly at risk was the second tanker, four frigates, three cruisers, and a destroyer in support of the operation. Safely overhead, AWACS, KC-10, A-6, E-2C, F/A-18, and EA-6B aircraft protected the convoy from Silkworm missile attack and the Iranian air threat, but all these assets

including the surface fleet were helpless to guard against the subsurface threat of mines.(14:26) According to the Chairman, JCS this represented three failures by Navy planners: (1) the mine threat was underestimated (despite all advance warnings); (2) merging military and commercial interests have been a historical problem since World War II, which wasn't identified at the outset; and, (3) operational details were difficult to keep out of the press.(12:197) This created an embarrassing spectacle (shown around the world) of Navy ships anonymously lining up behind Bridgeton for protection because empty it could withstand further hits by mines.

The line of operational control inside the Gulf ran from the Commander, Middle East Forces (COMMIDEASTFOR) to Commander Naval Forces, Central Command in Pearl Harbor to CINCCENT at MacDill AFB to the SECDEF. COMMIDEASTFOR had OPCON of only naval forces inside the Gulf. The chain of command for naval forces outside the Gulf ran from the Commander, Carrier Group 5 (TF77 and TF70) to the Fleet Commander to the CINC, US Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) at Pearl Harbor to CINCPAC at Camp Smith HI to the SECDEF.(17:671) OPCON of Carrier Group 5 was not "chopped" to CINCCENT, and COMMIDEASTFOR had to have CINCPACFLT approval for naval air support. The imaginary "chop line" was the Strait of Hormuz, which created substantial friction between CINCCENT and CINCPACFLT.(17:672)

The Bridgeton incident illustrates several problems during Persian Gulf operations that the Goldwater-Nichols Act is

intended to correct. For example, the failure to bring to bear mine countermeasures in anticipation of the mine threat raises questions about the quality of Navy planning and ability to cope with warfare at the lower end of the spectrum of conflict.(23:41) This mistake is exacerbated by the knowledge that four ships struck mines in the same vicinity between 16 May and 19 June 1987, and the United States was warned days before the incident that Iran would likely mine the area around Farsi Island.(24:88) Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee raised their concerns over the gravity of the mine threat with the Chairman, JCS after the decision to reflag tankers was announced by the Reagan administration.(12:197) Admittedly, Navy planners underestimated the extent to which Iran would go to challenge US naval power and apply every weapon and technology at its disposal. However, funding and priority for modern mine sweepers and mine hunters were shifted to higher priority Navy programs as US reliance on this capability was borne on the shoulders of its NATO allies to provide these assets.

The CINCs had no advocate to influence the allocation of Navy expenditures in the past which resulted in the steady decline and capability of Navy forces and programs to counter mine warfare in the Gulf. Today, the CINCs participate in the Defense Resources Board and state their recommendations to the SECDEF on which programs the services should be allocating their funds.(27:4-6) Furthermore, the Chairman has oversight

authority over the CINCs and can submit alternate budget proposals to the SECDEF for consideration when he feels that service budgets fail to support the CINCs' priority programs. (2:1007) On a day-to-day basis, the Chairman is assisted in this review by the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS). OJCS has responsibility for reviewing service program objective memorandums in support of the five-year defense plan, critique them for adherence to Defense Guidance, and integrate the CINCs' warfighting priorities. (27:7-8) In the future, this will have a meaningful impact on the increased capability of the CINCs to conduct warfare across the spectrum of conflict.

A second problem area revealed in the Bridgeton incident is the duality of command arrangements in Gulf operations. The Navy's concept of "in support of" forces caused serious friction between USCENTCOM and USPACCOM. (17:671) Under this command arrangement, CINCCENT did not have operational control (OPCON) over all forces committed to Persian Gulf operations. The carrier and battleship battle groups in the North Arabian Sea remained under the OPCON of CINCPACFLT who refused to "chop" these forces to CINCCENT. (17:671-673) This impasse between CINCCENT and CINCPACFLT resulted in generally acceptable compromise command arrangements until the Bridgeton incident. During this period, the SECDEF was the lowest official with command authority over forces inside and outside the Gulf which was an inflexible arrangement to cope with

time-sensitive, operational requirements. At issue was the need for naval air support by COMMIDEASTFOR without having release authority from CINCPACFLT. In response to the Bridgeton incident, the SECDEF (after consulting the Chairman, JCS) passed OPCON of all naval assets in the North Arabian Sea to CINCCENT. The SECDEF properly exercised his authority under the law to improve efficiency and the warfighting capability of the CINCs.(2:1013) Chopping naval forces from CINCPACFLT to CINCCENT was an absolutely necessary step to provide CINCCENT with control over the resources commensurate his the responsibility to accomplish the mission.

In passing OPCON of all forces supporting Persian Gulf operations to CINCCENT, the SECDEF also authorized the formulation of a JTFME with a joint staff to plan for the continued employment of all forces in the Gulf. A short, flexible chain of command running directly to CINCCENT, the SECDEF, and the President through the Chairman permitted rapid decision-making during future crises.(12:208) Any vestige of dominant service interest in the Gulf was severed as a result of the SECDEF's decision to pass OPCON of all forces, regardless of service affiliation, to CINCCENT and to establish the JTFME.

In the spirit of Goldwater-Nichols, new decisions were reached that previously would have been rejected because they were not primary service missions. The most important of these decisions was the one made by the Chairman to place Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) helicopters aboard Navy frigates because

of their night vision and surveillance capabilities boosted by their unusually quiet characteristics.(18:18) Navy and Marine heli- copters were tasked to ferry members of all services from point- to-point in the Gulf for planning contingency missions, moving small parts and supplies, and moving US forces to Bahrain for relief and relaxation.(25:64) Army and Navy SOF teams conduct surveillance over Pasdaran elements from mobile sea bases protected by Marine attack helicopters and Army surface- to-air defenses. As a result of the Bridgeton incident, CINCCENT's authority to unify his forces for total mission integration sets substantial precedence. CINCCENT's authority to establish command arrangements based on his estimate of what the situation calls for doesn't require JCS approval and would not have been possible prior to the new law.(12:208)

The Bridgeton incident pointed out the necessity to get real time or near real time intelligence into the hands of the on-scene commander and his forces. Intelligence has benefited greatly from the technological revolution and AWACS is a superb example of advances in this field. According to CINCCENT, "Real time intelligence, for the first time, is provided from national and theater sources on an almost continuous basis directly to the operators who need it most . . . surveillance and reconnaissance platforms will tell me if they (Pasdaran) come in toward our own ships, our bases."(8:174, 193) Acquiring timely and accurate intelligence reflects the strength of CINCCENT's

influence as a result of changes in the law. He also applied this clout to improving command and control systems in the Gulf. "Communications systems that were incompatible were quickly made interoperable." (3:378) "Satellite terminals, radio facilities, secure telephones, WIN and microwave links have been deployed to support operations where before there were virtually none." (8:216) To meet the need for reliable, secure communications between USCENTCOM Headquarters at MacDill AFB FL and CJTFME," Army and Air Force teams expedited full initial operational capability of Defense Communications Systems-Central Area nodes by forming units to accept the equipment." Equipment was provided from every available source including" special satellite antennas for command ships as well as satellite radio equipment needed to relay commands over 7,000 miles between CINCCENT and CJTFME." The primary success story was joint C3 interoperability, and the ability of the services to work together to provide effective end-to-end systems. (8:255-256)

Operation "EARNEST WILL" pointed out many deficiencies in Navy planning and JCS review; this incident is markedly different from the operations that would follow. Fortunately, the mistakes made during the first convoy mission didn't cost any lives, but it hurt US credibility and caused our friends in the Gulf doubt as to whether US commitment would stay the course. The effort to unify all forces supporting convoy operations into a fully integrated team would pay significant dividends when two months later, regular Iranian naval forces were caught in the act of laying mines in the Gulf.

Case 2: Iran Ajr Incident

On 21 September 1987, the Iran Ajr was captured in the act of laying mines in international waters. This incident was not a result of chance, but a rather carefully timed and executed trap by Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., Chairman, JCS. He personally briefed helicopter crews in the Gulf one week prior to the incident and provided the aircrews with clear rules of engagement and freedom to act.^(18:18) Admiral Crowe told COMMIDEASTFOR precisely what had to be done, "Catch an Iranian ship in the act of laying mines and seize the vessel intact."^(19:24) The Iran Ajr was first observed loaded with mines in the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.^(19:25) Navy P-3 and USAF AWACS aircraft tracked the ship as it left port on 18 September. During the night of 21 September, two MH-6 Cayuse Army helicopters assigned to Task Force 160, US Special Operations Command, observed the crew of Iran Ajr laying six mines in the water. Operating from USS Jarrett, these quiet helos remained undetected while COMMIDEASTFOR made the decision to fire on Iran Ajr and halt its minelaying operations. After two rocket and machine gun attacks, the Iranians finally stopped their activities and abandoned ship. Navy SEALs boarded Iran Ajr at daybreak and found more mines on deck. The international press provided coverage of this incident and the United States received much international support for the operation. The captured Iran Ajr was sunk, and its crew was returned to Iran with the help of Oman.

The relationship between successfully capturing Iran Ajr and the Goldwater-Nichols Act is the strength of the Chairman, JCS to provide advice to the National Command Authorities (NCA) on the most efficient and effective use of defense resources on behalf of the CINCs. (2:1005, 1013) This case also points to the role of the Chairman (under the law) to voice the decisions of the President or the SECDEF to the CINCs while clearly remaining outside the chain of command. Catching Iran Ajr was also a major victory for CINCCENT that vindicated his efforts to bring all four service elements operating in the Gulf under a single command authority who could effectively and efficiently integrate their capabilities in support of the mission. This is precisely the point the law intended to make. Selecting Army helicopters and placing them aboard Navy frigates unified the mission of two services into an integrated plan to apprehend a vessel committing an act of war.

Intelligence and command and control elements were operational when the surveillance and tracking of Iran Ajr began. No single service can be credited for the success of this effort--it was truly joint and all four services had a role in capturing Iran Ajr true to the spirit of Goldwater-Nichols. The capture of Iranian Ajr revealed a duplication of effort between COMMIDEASTFOR and the Commander, JTFME which CINCCENT quickly corrected. In order to increase efficiency and eliminate wasted effort, CINCCENT exercised the authority given

to him under the law and made the COMMIDEASTFOR the CJTFME also. This was a logical decision since it made the commander closest to the scene of action responsible for activities that he had to accomplish anyway; whereas the Commander, Carrier Group 5 (located in the North Arabian Sea) had to duplicate operations inside the Gulf aboard his flagship. Prior to Goldwater-Nichols, CINCCENT would have been subject to service approval to place the Army helicopters aboard Navy frigates and change the command arrangements he desired in the Gulf.

There is a footnote of concern about the capture of Iran Ajr. The decision to delay the Navy SEALs from boarding the ship until daylight was elevated all the way to the White House. (19:26 /) It would seem more prudent for this decision to have been made at a lower level, but this reveals the effect of improved communications capabilities on command and control during crisis situations. The technological revolution in command, control, and communications systems enable the Commander in Chief to actually step in and take control of ongoing tactical operations. Although there were no ill effects from this decision, it is a phenomenon that must be watched carefully since it bypasses the chain of command and could be dangerous under some situations. This is one of the concerns revealed in the aftermath of the failed rescue attempt of Americans held hostage in Iran during the Carter administration.

Case 3: Retaliation for Silkworm Missile Attack

On 16 October 1987, Sea Isle City, a reflagged Kuwaiti tanker was struck by an Iranian Silkworm missile in Kuwaiti waters; the American captain was blinded and 18 crewmen injured. The United States retaliated on 19 October by sending four destroyers to destroy an Iranian inactive offshore oil platform with naval gunfire; no injuries to Iranians were reported. The platforms were carefully selected military targets because of their use by Iranian Revolutionary Guards to direct Pasdaran attacks against commercial shipping.^(13:18) The Iranian occupants of the oil platform were given 20 minutes to evacuate before the Navy shelled the platform.

The plan was flawlessly executed and caught Iranian forces off guard. CJTFME decided that an amphibious landing force would not be used since the five inch guns on the destroyers were sufficient to eliminate the platform. Also in support of this operation, AWACS provided sea and air surveillance; Marines provided sharpshooters; and helicopters patrolled against Iranian small boats; Navy fighters were on alert to provide counter-air; and USAF air refueling tankers were prepared to support Navy aircraft if required. Oddly enough, the media focused primarily on how many rounds of gunfire were required to knockout the platform. The accuracy of naval gunners was not to be solely relied upon during the next and largest of the US engagements in the Gulf when an amphibious landing force was used against gas-oil separating platforms (GOSP) during Operation PRAYING MANTIS.

US retaliation for the Iranian Silkworm missile attack against Sea Isle City represents the deliberate planning process of target nominations by CINCCENT through the Chairman, JCS to the President and the SECDEF. The Chairman conveyed the President's decision to CINCCENT in accordance with the Goldwater-Nichols Act.(2:1013) The law also requires that in carrying out the decision of the President, the SECDEF will ensure that the CINC has authority, direction, and control over the forces required to execute the decision after first consulting with the Chairman, JCS.(2:1014)

The destruction of the Iranian oil platform conformed with all aspects of the law. The limited mission was planned by the staff of the Commander, JTFME and approved by CINCCENT and the SECDEF after consulting with the Chairman. The forces required to do the job were in place in the Gulf and contributed to the mission planning process under the command of CJTFME. The intent of Congress was satisfied when clear responsibility for carrying out the mission had been passed from the President and the SECDEF through the Chairman to CINCCENT.

Case 4: Operation PRAYING MANTIS

On 14 April 1988, USS Samuel B. Roberts was returning from an uneventful convoy trip to Kuwait when spotters observed mines in the water. As she attempted to backout of the minefield, Roberts struck a mine in the water that very nearly sank the ship. Navy divers arrived on the scene and filmed the unexploded mines. It was determined that the mines were freshly

painted and unencrusted by barnacles and algae which meant that they had recently been laid.(20:21) The mines were of the same type and serial numbers were of the same lot as those found on board Iran Ajr. Based on military advice by the Chairman, JCS and the SECDEF, President Reagan approved planned retaliation. The targets would be three Iranian GOSPs and the frigate Sabalan that had been terrorizing shipping in the vicinity of the Strait of Hormuz.(25:64)

On 15 April 1988, the staff of CJTFME planned Operation PRAYING MANTIS in retaliation for Iran's continued mining activities. The operation required three surface action groups (SAG) to conduct amphibious landings in the central and eastern Gulf and were lettered B, C, and D. SAG B employed a MAGTF to board and neutralize the Sassan and Rakish GOSPs; SAG C employed a second MAGTF to board and neutralize the Sirri GOSP; SAG D was charged with locating and destroying the Iranian frigate Sabalan. The MAGTF was scheduled to board the GOSPs via fast rope from CH-46 helos using naval gunfire in support of the assault phase. Once on board the GOSPs, Marines would plant demolition charges while keeping casualties and impact on the environment to a minimal.(25:65-66)

At 0755, 18 April 1988, the three SAGs took up their positions; SAGs B and C issued a five minute warning in English and Farsi to evacuate the platforms. Navy gunfire was a convincing show of force that accelerated evacuation by tugboat. At Sassan GOSP, it took extra rounds of naval gunfire to

convince reluctant Iranians that ZSU 23s provided no defense to five-inch guns. Accompanying the Marine assault team at Sassan were intel, photo, and explosive ordnance teams. However, at Sirri GOSP, naval gunfire started intense fires that prevented a Marine assault landing, but Sirri's destruction was as complete as if the Marines had detonated plastic explosives. At 1310, Sassan GOSP was destroyed by demolition charges and SAG B prepared for an attack on Rakish GOSP. (25:66-67) This attack was cancelled because it was too late in the day to begin another operation. Action was just beginning, however, for other US forces in the Gulf.

At 1300, SAG C was attacked with missiles fired from Joshan, an Iranian fast attack craft. USS Wainwright and Simpson returned fire with harpoon missiles that sunk Joshan. At 1352, Wainwright launched two standard missiles at approaching Iranian F-4s, but missed; the F-4s departed the area without further incident. At 1426, A-6Es flying combat air patrol were released to aid a distress call in the Mubarek oil field and were vectored to the vicinity by AWACS. (20:21) The A-6Es found Iranian Revolutionary Guard patrol boats attacking a US vessel (SS Willi Tide) and requested approval to attack the Iranians. The request was relayed to the White House via satellite through CINCCENT and the SECDEF, and was approved in only three minutes. (21:5) The A-6Es sank a 40-foot Boghammer and two smaller patrol boats with Mark 20 Rockeye Cluster bombs. (20:22)

At 1600, SAG D, in the vicinity of Abu Musa Island, came under attack by the Iranian frigate Sahand. Sahand fired on SAG D with no effect and refused to break-off its attack despite repeated US warnings. A-6Es flying combat air patrol struck Sahand with a Harpoon missile and laser-guided Skipper 2 bombs. USS Strauss also launched a Harpoon missile that impacted Sahand. (20:22) By 1700, Sahand was dead in the water and sank several hours later. This raised the question: Where was the sister ship, Sabalan? This was SAG D's real objective.

AWACS answered this question since it was tracking Sabalan. Upon observing the destruction of Sahand, Sabalan returned to Bandar Abbas and hid behind larger, commercial tankers, thus refusing to fight. At approximately 1800, Sabalan departed Bandar Abbas and fired surface-to-air missiles at the A-6Es flying combat air patrol and fired surface-to-surface missiles at SAG D. The A-6Es responded with a 500 pound, laser-guided bomb that reportedly went straight down the smoke stack and exploded in the engine room. The United States attack on Sabalan was called off when it was observed sinking at the stern from the effects of the single bomb dropped by an A-6E. The last event of the day was Sabalan being towed back to Bandar Abbas. (20:22)

Philosophically speaking, Operation PRAYING MANTIS represents a major change in joint planning for military operations compared to Operation EARNEST WILL (Bridgeton incident). The latter mission represented predominantly Navy

interests and deficiencies in planning contingency operations, whereas the former mission is characterized foremost by the requirements of the CINCCENT and the on-scene commander, CJTFME. During PRAYING MANTIS, exploitation of the inherent capabilities of each service permitted the CINCCENT and CJTFME to prescribe the chain of command for the mission; organize the forces considered necessary to carry out the mission; and, employ the forces as necessary to carry out the mission. (2:1013) Inputs to the plan were made by the four senior service representatives commanding units in the Gulf which contributed substantially to mission integration. Real integration of forces in the Gulf reflects the increased authority of CINCCENT under Goldwater-Nichols to exercise control over his commands and forces, and develop realistic plans to achieve strategic national objectives.

Operations PRAYING MANTIS and EARNEST WILL reflect a major difference in command arrangements. During the Bridgeton incident, OPCON of forces in the North Arabian Sea was exercised through CINCPACFLT, a Navy component commander, which created a loose confederation of forces at CINCCENT's disposal and represents the Navy concept of "in support of" forces. The retaliation for the Roberts incident represents "unity of command" under the subunified commander (JTFME). This is interpreted by critics as the difference between divided and undivided commands with forceful arguments on each side. (1:302, 319) Regardless of the relative merits of concepts such as "in

support of" forces and "unity of command," the CINCCENT requested this particular command arrangement, and the SECDEF, after consultation with the Chairman, agreed to give CINCCENT both the flexibility and capability to orchestrate the assigned mission as he deemed necessary. During the planning phase of Operation PRAYING MANTIS, normal service command relationships did not apply and service doctrine for amphibious operations was followed where it was possible.(25:65) To a degree, the command and control arrangements developed by unit commanders in JIFME were "ad hoc," but closely paralleled doctrinal functions that the Marines, for instance, had trained to. Doctrine, therefore, provided the basic training from which to depart during tailored mission planning and avoided the problem of "reinventing the wheel."(25:68)

During Operation PRAYING MANTIS, service dominance either through overriding objection or the action of service component commanders ceased to be a factor as occurred in the past.(1:4) The ability of CINCCENT to achieve national objectives by combining military capabilities of the individual services at the operational level was inarguably the major factor behind the success of Operation. This was a direct result of the increased authority given to the CINCs by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.

During Operation PRAYING MANTIS, a second incident of elevating the level of command decision to the Presidential level occurred similar to the Iran Ajr incident. While flying

combat air patrol, A-6Es received a distress call from Willi Tide, a US flagged supply ship in the Mubarek oil field. The pilots requested permission to engage hostile Iranian boats attacking Willi Tide, and the request was passed through CJTFME, CINCCENT, the SECDEF/Chairman to the President via satellite; the whole process took three minutes. (21:5) Authority was vested in CJTFME to make this decision as the on-scene commander and having the tactical vantage point, he could have made this decision. The CJTFME should have announced his decision, and in the absence of being overruled by higher command authority, his orders would have been carried out.

Since this is the second such incident, this study concludes that a trend exists to bypass the chain of command on operational matters during contingency situations. Unquestionably, the Commander in Chief has the authority to become involved whenever he feels that the situation exceeds previously stated guidelines or mission objectives. Although US naval air support to the Willi Tide went beyond the scope of Operation PRAYING MANTIS, it was still within the authority of CJTFME as the onscene commander. If the Iranian attack on Willi Tide occurred a week before the operation, would CJTFME have given permission for Navy pilots in the vicinity to render assistance? Very likely, yes. Was the Willi Tide the hopeless victim of Iranian frustration and inability to combat US naval forces and therefore the indirect object of Iranian retaliation? Again, very likely, yes. Given the Gulf Rules of Engagement

(ROE), the on-going operation, and US public support for protection of US flagged vessels in the Gulf, the President's decision was an obvious and simple choice that should have been made at a much lower level--CJTFME. This concern is one that other studies have referred to as the loss of initiative by tactical commanders. "When the NCA immediately scrutinizes every tactical movement, on-scene commanders may be reluctant to take decisive action. In today's fast-paced combat environment, such a loss of initiative may preclude effective military action."(1:323)

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

US military forces committed to the Persian Gulf have been very effective in integrating US national objectives. Politically and diplomatically, successful US operations have proven to our friends among the littoral Gulf states that we are a true and reliable ally. US forces severely blunted Iranian "guerilla warfare at sea" that interrupted commerce and was a threat to the lives of commercial tanker crews. As a direct consequence of US military efforts and those of her allies, we have maintained the principle of "freedom of navigation," and thus ensured the free access of oil in the Gulf. Regional stability has been maintained by sponsoring a United Nations truce in the Iran-Iraq War. US military commitment in the Gulf has constrained Soviet influence and prevented Iran's domination of small Gulf states, in particular, Kuwait.

Successful and effective US military operations in the Gulf have undergone significant evolution contrasted by predominantly Navy interests in July 1987 to truly integrated JTF Operations by September 1987. The broad and sometimes vague mission of the unified commands must take into account the likelihood and intensity of regional conflicts confronting US forces at the lower end of the spectrum. Various problems have impacted the unified commanders' ability to take effective military action during crisis management situations. Past

studies such as the Packard and Tower commissions and SASC study on defense organization recognize that some of these problems stem from predominant service interests and result in restrictions on the authority of unified commanders over component commands. Other problems identified are inability to influence budgetary allocations to services; lack of a CINC advocate at the policy-making levels of DOD; and, service resistance to support unification within the command of the unified commander."(1:3-8)

Congress has a dim view of problems that present an obstacle to efficient management within DOD that could also cause a serious US military defeat or loss of international prestige. During this present period of constant or declining budgets, Congress could no longer tolerate such inefficiencies and passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 in order to eliminate waste, duplication, and deficiencies in unified command plans and training. Congress made slight, evolutionary increases in the authority of the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the JCS, and the unified and specified commanders.

The Increased authority of these key leaders has had a substantial impact on US military operations in the Persian Gulf, and will continue to challenge conventional wisdom in the future. CINCCENT, for example, changed the force structure to counter the Iranian threat in the Gulf and was given the authority to control all forces supporting US military operations in the Gulf. The initial organization and

composition of forces on 22 July 1987, the date of the first incident involving convoy operations in the Gulf, was deficient in several aspects. First, US naval forces failed to cope with the threat of Iranian mine warfare. This resulted from Navy reluctance to send World War II and Vietnam era minesweepers to the Gulf. This represents predominant service interests taking precedence over CINCCENT's responsibility to conduct convoy operations in the Gulf. It also reflects the lack of a CINC advocate during past budget cycles to voice the concerns of the unified commanders for modern, mine countermeasure forces. This conclusion is borne out by subsequent SECDEF budget proposals. In the Fiscal Year 1990 Annual Report to the Congress, Secretary Carlucci proposes the Navy increase its mine warfare forces by 20 new ships and 7 helicopters "to maintain a capability of our own." (26:152) This will reduce US dependence on its NATO allies for minesweeping capability. This is a direct outgrowth of the Bridgeton incident and changes in the law that require the unified commanders an opportunity to be heard during SECDEF's budget review. The law directs that the Chairman, JCS be the advocate for the unified commanders during budget reviews and submit alternate budget proposals when there is a service conflict with CINC requirements.

Second, the forces allocated to CINCCENT did not address the possibility of subsequent contingency operations to counter the hundreds of Iranian small boats attacking commercial

vessels. In order to redress this problem, Army and Navy Special Forces and a Marine Air-Ground Task Force were sent to the Gulf to operate from ships and mobile sea bases. This was an innovative solution to the problem of not having base rights in any of the Gulf states for sea surveillance of Pasdaran activities. Hindering CINCCENT's authority over all forces inside and outside the Gulf was the limitation of CINCPACFLT control over fleet forces in the North Arabian Sea. (17:671)

Limited authority of the unified commanders over the service component commanders has been a historical problem from Congress' point of view. (1:307) The new law gives the unified commander authority over the component commanders. It permits the CINCs to prescribe both the organization of forces and chain of command to employ them that the unified commanders consider necessary to accomplish the mission as effectively and efficiently as possible. (2:1013)

In support of CINCCENT's request for "unity of command," the Secretary gave OPCON of naval forces in the North Arabian Gulf to USCENTCOM. (17:671)

Furthermore, the Secretary revised the USPACCOM and USCENTCOM geographical areas of responsibility to include the ocean area outside the Persian Gulf under USCENTCOM's responsibility. In carrying out these changes, the Secretary was advised by the Chairman, JCS in accordance with two provisions of the law which clarify and strengthen the role of the Secretary of Defense and strengthen the authority of the Chairman, JCS to provide independent counsel and advice to the NCAs.

The transfer of operational control over naval forces in support of USCENTCOM's Persian Gulf operations raises another issue. The issue is "unity of command" versus the JCS approved concept of "unity of effort." CINCCENT required a short, flexible chain of command over forces in the Persian Gulf with one commander over all four services supporting the mission. This chain of command worked very well in all (subsequent to the Bridgeton) military engagements in the Gulf; there were no further operational deficiencies like the Bridgeton incident. The JCS has never agreed to the term "unity of command." Rather, they agreed to terminology "by the Army and Air Force is unity of effort while the Navy and Marine Corps have no such doctrinal writings." (1:318) According to former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger:

. . . in our military institutions, the time-honored principle of "unity of command" is inculcated. Yet at the national level it is firmly resisted and flagrantly violated. Unity of command is endorsed, if and only if, it applies at the service level. The inevitable consequence is both the duplication of effort and the ultimate ambiguity of command. (1:319)

The SASC study attacks the Navy's concept of "in-support-of" forces:

While "in-support-of" forces could be those of any service, only US naval forces have traditionally used this concept. Naval forces have not been placed under the operational control of the commander of the joint operation, but rather have been "in-support-of" the joint operation. This concept essentially means divided command. (1:319)

It is the conclusion of this study that CINCCENT's concern for naval air support was justified and corrective action gave

CINCCENT "unity of command" over all forces supporting the mission which eliminated duality of command lines. "Unity of command" is one of the principles of war first espoused by the Baron de Jomini following the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, studied in colleges throughout the world, and practiced in every country except the United States. "Unity of effort" is a vague concept open to different interpretations by the services. It appears that "unity of command" is too restrictive for the services, therefore, the JCS uses the term "unity of effort" which satisfies each service.

In addition to overcoming past deficiencies in budget reviews, lines of authority and force structure, the new law provided CINCCENT with sufficient clout to resolve problems in communications and intelligence. Problems of interoperability were corrected with ingenuity and imagination by service technicians. Equipment was provided by all services or procured from off-the-shelf commercial sources. This gave CINCCENT and CJTFME low-cost, quick solutions to secure voice problems inherent in Navy-tanker communications. Reliable communications between airborne surveillance assets and support facilities for counter-mine vessels were assembled into a responsive network. Secure communications provided a vital link stretching from deployed forces in the Gulf to the White House which enabled timely command and control from USCENTCOM Headquarters at MacDill AFB FL. This enabled real-time and near real-time

intelligence from national and theater assets directly to the operators . . . an almost unheard of proposition in the past. Mobile sea bases and US Navy ships received outstanding protection by advance warning from surveillance platforms which frustrated Pasdaran attacks. The law directs the Chairman, JCS to be the CINCs' advocate, and the improved posture of US forces on alert in the Gulf reflects his success in getting SECDEF backing for service support of CINCCENT's requirements to carry out the mission.

Operations carried out by CJTFME reflect full integration and efficient use of service capabilities. Comparatively speaking, planning and preparation for employment of military forces in the Gulf have overcome deficiencies apparent in the Grenada Operation such as communications, organization, fire support, logistics, and lack of a unified commander. Troubling problems, such as "the seizure of the Pueblo, the Iranian hostage rescue mission, and Grenada were the result of failure to adequately implement the concept of unified command," according to the SASC study.^(1:7) Though this problem did not of itself contribute to the Bridgeton incident, "unity of command" contributed significantly to the success of follow-on convoy operations and US military engagements described in Chapter V which are characterized by the strength of integration and unification of all forces. The real issue is the substance of the law that authorizes the unified commanders to prescribe the chain of command, organize and employ forces as he considers

necessary to carry out the mission (with or without prerequisite JCS concurrence). This is the way of the future, and the CINCs are expected to exercise authority over warfighting forces in whatever manner deemed necessary to accomplish the mission. Opposition to the CINC's desires by the services or component commanders in the future will likely be resolved by the SECDEF, after consultation with the Chairman, JCS in favor of the unified commanders. This is an important point for members of US Armed Forces to understand since it will impact operational aspects of mission planning in the future.

CHAPTER VII

RECOMMENDATIONS

The services must at once recognize the authority of the unified commanders to fulfill responsibilities assigned by the NCA. Interoperability problems continue to plague the DOD, and the CINCs need to step into this issue at the policy level in order to increase efficiency and improve force integration. Fundamental changes in philosophy are necessary to resolve disputes between the services. CINCs have missions and the services have functions. The services must look at the unified and specified command missions to determine where priorities must be placed during budget allocations, especially in terms of how force levels and programs fit into the CINC's requirements to meet a full range of missions. To further this goal, service component commands should ensure that future service programs that enhance capability should also have the CINC's support.

Reform is required within the unified commands. Positions on the CINC's staff at the general officer level are rarely if ever rotated among the services. Encumbents are replaced by members of the same service, and this creates stagnation in strategic, resources, operations, and organizational thinking as well as deep-seeded suspicion and friction. This is not conducive to warfighting or strengthening the command mission to deter or prepare for war. Key joint billets should not be service specified based on the percentage of

forces assigned to the command by the services. The Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (OJCS) rotates general officers from all the services through its billets as do the defense agencies, and this has a healthy effect on the organization as well as ensuring service interests do not predominate in the joint arena. The CINCs should follow the OJCS model.

Persistent service interests fail to support the concept of unified command. This problem was observed on the stage of the college during this academic year (two years after the Goldwater-Nichols Act). These attitudes are a disservice to the nation. In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated similar concerns:

Because I have seen the evils of diluted command, I emphasize the each unified commander must have unquestioned authority over all units of his command Today, a unified command is made up of component commands from each military department, each under a commander of that department. The authority over these component commands is short of the full command required for maximum efficiency. (1:6)

The law attempts to correct long-suffering problems, and the unified commanders have the authority and control over forces envisioned by President Eisenhower. The CINCs must have the full support of the services to ensure continued unification of forces during peacetime planning and training. The JCS should either distance itself from the concept of "unity of effort" or add the principle of "unity of command" to the Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms in JCS Pub 1.

The most significant difference between Grenada and Persian Gulf operations was the element of time available for planning unified action. In fairness to the commander of the Grenada joint task force, he succeeded despite the lack of time available to plan and organize his forces for the mission. He was unable to focus on important operational and logistical details that would improve the effectiveness of his forces. Persian Gulf operations are contrasted by many differences resulting from ample time to plan each mission and a joint staff in the Gulf that was familiar with the threat. Intelligence and communications systems were a strong point in the Gulf and hurt Grenada operations. In fact, Grenada probably served as an example for Persian Gulf operations. CINCCENT and the Chairman were careful not to repeat the mistakes made in Grenada. For example, prior to the start of convoys, CINCCENT used his time to overcome interoperability and intelligence problems over several months.

The most significant enhancement during Persian Gulf operations was the availability of a highly proficient, knowledgeable staff that was familiar with the threat and the area. This made inputs to contingency planning exceptionally effective and forces were employed in a fully integrated, unified team. This study endorses the concept of identifying a select cadre of officers within each unified command who could plan and execute contingency operations. This cadre would have a general or flag officer as the team chief during peacetime,

but who would become the commander of a joint task force if this cell of trained specialists was activated. The team members would act as a transition joint staff until such time as operations dictated a change was necessary. This eliminates inadequate time to plan for important details such as intelligence and communications shortfalls. It focuses command attention on service capabilities to support the mission first and foremost, and encourages the development of joint doctrine for operational concepts and training. Since command arrangements have been a recurring problem, these concerns also would be established in advance with particular attention paid to the transition from primarily naval insertion to conduct of a land campaign. Although development of contingency operations is not new, a specialized cadre of officers responsible for planning and executing contingencies as a joint staff would prevent problems like the Grenada operation.

NOTES

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