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FIGHTING FIRES WITH FIRE—AN AIRMAN’S
PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT
PUBLICATION 3-09, DOCTRINE FOR JOINT FIRE SUPPORT

by

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Preface

Assigned to the Air Force Doctrine Center (AFDC) at Langley Air Force Base from 1993-1998, I worked on several key doctrinal matters. In that five year span, there was not a more significant debate than that which centered on the doctrine drafted for Joint Publication 3-09. My first encounter with the “fires” fight was during a joint doctrine meeting convened to discuss the draft of JP 3-18.1, *Joint Doctrine for Airborne and Air Assault Operations*. My guidance was to not concur with any mention of fires in the draft. At the meeting when I expressed the Air Force concern over the matter, I was treated to an unscheduled briefing on fires presented by the head of the US Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) joint doctrine division. I was intrigued by the Army’s passion for the subject and the Colonel’s sincere attempt to proselytize this doctrine dilettante. Although I was not directly involved with the development of JP 3-09, I worked alongside the Air Force officers who were. I witnessed the massive number of manhours spent by these doctrinaires to review drafts, attend meetings, and conduct briefings to “sell” the Air Force view. Joint Publication 3-09 establishes warfighting concepts impacting the way the United States conducts military operations. I think it is essential to understand how we arrived at this doctrine, and for the Air Force, how to cope with the change.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the kind folks at the Air Force Doctrine Center, particularly Maj Dino Gilbert and Ms. Bea Waggoner. Through

their help, I was able access a great deal of first-hand information. Finally, I would like to tip my hat to all of those who fought the good fight to publish JP 3-09.

Abstract

This study is an Air Force doctrinaire's account of the development of Joint Publication 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, the most controversial joint military doctrine publication ever produced. Published on 12 May 1998, the approved JP 3-09 was the result of nearly ten years of rigorous debate, principally between the Air Force and the Army. The USAF opposed the project from the onset, citing objections to terminology and the basic need for "fires" doctrine. The introduction of the Joint Force Fires Coordinator (JFFC) was seen by the Air Force as an Army attempt to wrest away a large part of the Joint Force Air Component Commander's (JFACC) targeting and planning responsibilities. Terminology and command and control issues dominated the doctrine debate until 1998. After ten drafts, JP 3-09 reached a critical stalemate over two issues: area of operations (AO) supported/supporting commander relationships and Joint Surveillance, Target Attack Radar System (Joint STARS) control. It would require an executive meeting or Tank session comprising the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and the four Service chiefs to adjudicate the matter. The approved doctrine in JP 3-09 is impacting ongoing joint doctrine development. The final section of the study details the author's strategy to enable the Air Force to overcome the doctrinal challenges posed by JP 3-09.

Chapter 1

Striking the Match

A mighty flame followeth a tiny spark.

—Dante
The Divine Comedy

A doctrine war? The United States Air Force and Army battled for nine and one-half years over the content of a single publication, Joint Publication (JP) 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*. The Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate (J-7), the Joint Staff's organization responsible for overseeing the joint doctrine development process, considered JP 3-09 a supporting document and placed it within the joint doctrine publication hierarchy below the forthcoming keystone publication, JP 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*. The Program Directive (PD) for JP 3-09, issued 29 October 1988, directed the Chief of Staff of the US Army to act as the Lead Agent to ensure the doctrine in JP 3-09 remained "consistent with previously established joint doctrine..."¹ Unfortunately, a paucity of joint doctrine publications existed at the time. The PD cited only two relevant joint documents and both were test publications. What warfighting dynamics associated with JP 3-09 would cause the USAF and US Army doctrine communities to carry on a bitter "fire" fight for nearly a decade? This paper will first examine the initial development of JP 3-09 and summarize the key events leading up to the publication of the Second Final Coordination Draft in June 1997. Next, the bulk of

this study will focus on the key issues that slowed the publication's development. The subsequent section details the unresolved matters that forced this document up to a 4 Star General Officer-level adjudication body, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Tank. The final portion speculates upon the impact of the approved doctrine on future doctrine development. Included is the author's recommendation to resolve the major dilemmas posed by JP 3-09 and other related doctrine.

From Spark to Flame

Joint doctrine development can be a slow, arduous process. Under ideal conditions, a publication can move from project proposal to Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) approval in 23 months.² The normal flow begins with an approved doctrine proposal subsequently translated into a PD.³ Once the PD receives approval from the Services and the functional and regional Commanders in Chief (CINCs), a Lead Agent and Primary Review Authority (PRA) are identified. The PRA develops a draft that is reviewed by representatives of the Services and the CINCs. A second draft is normally warranted. If a draft is approved, the PRA turns the publication over to the J-7 Joint Doctrine Division (JDD) which serves as the joint staff doctrine sponsor. JDD prepares a Preliminary Coordination Draft and a subsequent Final Coordination Draft. If there are no items resulting in a Service or CINC non-concurrence, JDD forwards the document to the CJCS for approval. Joint Publication 3-09 deviated significantly from this normal flow.

The US Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) developed an initial draft publication in 1990 (see Table 1). The USAF non-concurred with the document and cited opposition to the definitions of "fires," "fire support" and "joint fire support" and the concept of a fires coordinator.⁴ TRADOC produced a "Final Draft" in June 1991.

The “fires coordinator” function was renamed the Joint Force Fires Coordinator (JFFC) and given the responsibility to “monitor and advise the JFC on the execution of joint fire support and joint interdiction activities.”⁵ The draft received significant feedback, most notably from the Director of Plans (XOX) in the Air Staff. The XOX described the publication as “fatally flawed” and protested attempts to include air operations as fires.⁶ It took nearly four years for TRADOC to produce the next iteration of JP 3-09, which was oddly labeled, “Second Draft.” The USAF non-concurred again, this time with comments signed out by the Commander of the Air Force Doctrine Center (AFDC), endorsed by XOX, and approved by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF). The USAF objected again to the definition of fires that now included all lethal and nonlethal operations.⁷

The Third Draft, published in December 1995 reflected little change from the preceding iteration. The USAF, despite concurrence by the other Services and CINCs, objected to the fires-related definitions. Additionally, the Air Force believed the JFFC function was not necessary, claiming it would interfere with the Joint Force Air Component Commander’s (JFACC) and other components’ responsibilities and thus lead to “serious consequences for the joint force.”⁸ Based on the proposed fires-related definition, the USAF contended JFFC duties would overlap those of the JFACC considering that the major portion of the fires under the JFFC’s purview would be air delivered.⁹ The USAF countered that fires should only consist of what has been traditionally labeled as joint fire support, i.e., Close Air Support (CAS), naval surface fire support, artillery, mortars, rockets and missiles. For the Air Force, fires, joint fires and joint fire support meant one thing, CAS. The Army argued that the JFFC was nothing

more than a Fire Support Coordinator (FSCOORD) at the joint staff level, and the proposed coordination process was no different from that within a Fire Support Element (FSE).¹⁰

Table 1. JP 3-09 Development

	Date
Program Directive	October 1988
Initial Draft	1990
Final Draft	June 1991
Second Draft	March 1995
Third Draft	December 1995
Fourth Draft	April 1996
Preliminary Coordination Draft	January 1997
Final Coordination Draft	March 1997
2nd Final Coordination Draft	July 1997
Final Coordination Draft	December 1997
Approved Publication	May 1998

Published in April 1996, the Fourth Draft was distributed with a J-7 imposed, abbreviated review period. The USAF, European Command and Atlantic Command sought relief from the tight deadline, but their requests were denied. The Air Force position remained consistent; it was going to fight against the JFFC concept and the

proposed fires-related definitions. In November, the Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) began the Joint Force Fires Coordinator Study (JFFCS). The Study concluded there was sufficient data to support the JFFC's role, functions and duties. It further stated, "The title of the action agent and/or cell is unimportant—the descriptions of the joint fires function and tasks and where they are performed are key to the concept's ultimate utility."¹¹ The USAF was highly skeptical of the results.

A key turn of events transpired at the Army-Air Force Warfighter Conference in December 1996. The Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force and Army agreed to change the name of the JFFC "so it does not connote any command function" and declared the function an "option primarily for JTFs."¹² Furthermore, they concurred to define elements of the "fires hierarchy" based on effects rather than specific weapons systems. Perhaps the most significant and most controversial accord resulted from a concession by the CSAF, General Fogleman to acknowledge the surface component commander as the "supported commander for joint fires throughout his area of operations."¹³

These agreements paved the way for the Preliminary Coordination Draft published a month later. The CSAF's joint fires statement had changed matters significantly. He acknowledged the existence of joint fires (versus joint fire support) and he gave authority over that capability within an area of operations (AO) to the surface component commander. Air Force doctrinaires scrambled to interpret the Chief's intentions. The USAF reasserted its contention that the term joint fires was synonymous to joint fire support. The Preliminary Coordination Draft replaced the JFFC function with the Joint Fires Element (JFE). The USAF wanted more than a name change. Air Force doctrinaires continued to downplay the role of the JFE but were willing to concede the

use of a JFE for operations where air support would be minimal and a JFACC not warranted.¹⁴

The Air Force non-concurred with the Final Coordination Draft published in March 1997. The Army concurred, but had reservations. It considered the USAF recommendation to reduce the role of the JFE, an abrogation of the Warfighter Conference agreements.¹⁵ The wording of the USAF non-concurrence reflected a different approach from past dissension. There was less concern about the fires-related definitions and more concentration on command and control procedures within a surface commander's AO. Now, the argument extended to the wording in JP 3-0: "Within these AOs, land and naval operational commanders are designated supported commander and are responsible for the synchronization of maneuver, fires, and interdiction."¹⁶ Air Force doctrinaires now contended the supported/supporting commander authority regarding fires, as stated in both JP 3-0 and JP 3-09 should change to apply to fire support only. This approach forced the issue to evolve from a fires argument to a full scale command and control battle. A 2nd Final Coordination Draft published in June did little to assuage the USAF. Again, the Air Force did not concur. On December 23 another Final Coordination draft was published. This edition reflected only administrative changes from the 2nd Final Coordination Draft. The USAF remained dissatisfied. The J-7 decided to elevate the matter to a higher authority calling for an Executive Session of the Deputy Operations Deputies, more commonly referred to as the DEPOPSDEP Tank. This Tank met twice in January 1998 before deferring the matter to a higher forum, the Operations Deputies (OPSDEP) Tank. Little was resolved at the OPSDEP Tank in February. The process would eventually culminate with the decisions by the JCS Tank.

Notes

¹ Message, 290441Z October 1988, J-7. Subject: Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, Program Directive.

² LtGen Joseph J. Redden, "Joint Doctrine: The Way Ahead," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Winter 1996-97, 10.

³ The doctrine development process was streamlined in 1995 to reduce doctrine development time from 48 to 23 months. Under the old process, publications progressed from an initial draft to a final draft. The final draft was sent to the J-7 to develop as a Preliminary Coordination Draft and then Final Coordination Draft.

⁴ Maj Dean Gilbert, HQ Air Force Doctrine Center, point paper, subject: Summary of Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, 27 March 1998, 1

⁵ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Draft, June 1991, II-4

⁶ HQ AFDC Staff. "*Joint Doctrine Issues: Fires and Joint Force Fires Coordinator (JFFC)*." Background Paper, 25 April 1996, 1.

⁷ Col Robert D. Coffman, Commander, Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, memorandum to Distribution List, subject: Second Draft, Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, 23 June 1995, 1.

⁸ MGen Robert E. Linhard, Director, HQ USAF Plans Directorate (XOX), memorandum, to MG Scales, Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine, HQ TRADOC, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support (Proposed Final Draft), No Date, 1.

⁹ HQ Air Force Doctrine Center Staff, background paper, subject: Joint Doctrine Issues: Fires and Joint Force Fires Coordinator (JFFC), 25 April 1996, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹¹ Joint Warfighting Center Study Team, *Joint Force Fires Coordinator Study*, report, 7 Feb 1997, EX8.

¹² Message, 191947Z December 1996, HQDA/DACS-ZA, subject: Joint Agreements from Army-Air Force Warfighter Conference.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ MGen Ronald E. Keys, "Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support", *Vectors*, May 1998, 1.

¹⁵ Maj Dean Gilbert, HQ Air Force Doctrine Center, talking paper, subject: AF/XO and Army OPSDEP Meeting to Discuss 'Fires', 'Joint Fires', and the Dec 96 Warfighter Talks, 3 Jul 97, 1.

¹⁶ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*", 1 February 1995, IV-15.

Chapter 2

The Burning Issues

Better a little fire to warm us than a great one to burn us.

—Thomas Fuller
Gnomologia

One could describe the war over JP 3-09 development as a series of phases. In the first period, the opposing factions battled over the legitimacy of fires-related terms. The fight took on a new dimension with the introduction of controversial command and control functions such as the JFFC and JFE. The final phase, which was not detailed in the last section, was a fight to the finish to resolve overarching doctrinal issues well beyond the scope of a supporting publication such as JP 3-09. If one were forced to pinpoint an area at the crux of the dispute, it would be command and control. There would have been little consternation over terminology were it not for the particular use of the fires-related terms in doctrinal statements about command and control. Similarly, the dispute regarding the JFFC/JFE was clearly tied to command structures. This section will examine some of the key issues at stake prior to the JCS Tank.

Firebrands?

The Air Force concerns over terminology can be traced to the initial drafts of JP 3-09. From the onset, a trio of terms, “fires,” “joint fires” and “joint fire support” troubled

the USAF. This section will track the development of these terms from the initial publication drafts through final approval. In the Final Draft of June 1991, fires was defined as, “The employment of weapons systems (individually or collectively) against targets to achieve desired effects.”¹ This definition encompassed not only all Air Force air-to-surface attack operations, but also air-to-air missions. The Second Draft amended the definition to include only surface targets. Instead of rejecting this definition, the USAF suggested changing it to read: “The employment of surface weapon systems (individually or collectively) against targets to achieve desired effects.”² This proposal was discussed at the Joint Pub 3-09 Working Group Meeting in July 1995. The group changed the definition to: “The employment of lethal or destructive as well as non-lethal or disruptive means to achieve desired strategic, operational, or tactical effects.”³ Claiming the definition was still too broad, the USAF attendees did not concur with this change.

The Third Draft of JP 3-09 introduced yet another version of the definition, “Fires are lethal or non-lethal weapons effects to achieve desired strategic, operational, or tactical effects.”⁴ The USAF again took exception to using fires as an overarching term and proposed more generic appellations such as “combat power” or “force application.”⁵ The stalemate would not break until the USAF review of the Preliminary Coordination Draft. The Air Force proposed the following definition, “Fires. Lethal or nonlethal weapons effects achieved through the employment of military forces.”⁶ Eventually, this recommendation would evolve into the approved JP 3-09 definition, “The effects of lethal or non-lethal weapons.”⁷

The development of the definition for “joint fires” was a more excruciating process. The June 1991 Final Draft introduced “joint fires” to joint doctrine. Although it was not formally defined in the glossary, joint fires was described in the Introduction:

Joint Fires provide the means to apply firepower. Joint fires consist of interdiction and its subset FOFA, joint fire support, and service fire support.⁸

The USAF did not see the need for this new term and protested the inclusion of interdiction. Joint fires would not appear in JP 3-09 until the Third Draft where it was defined as: “...fires performed with capabilities/forces made available by components in support of the joint force commander’s operation or campaign objectives, or in support of other components of the joint force.”⁹ Once again, the USAF balked at the definition because it included all missions of the Air Force except airlift. The Air Force Director of Plans (XOX), Major General Linhard labeled the term as “superfluous” and no different from joint fire support.¹⁰ The real area of concern was command and control. The USAF felt the creation of joint fires was another ploy to shift JFACC responsibilities to the JFFC.

As with “fires,” the USAF changed its tack during the review of the Preliminary Coordination Draft. Instead of wholesale rejection, the Air Force Doctrine Center offered an alternative definition:

Joint Fires. Those fires that result from two or more components acting together or when one component supports another component of the joint force.¹¹

Unlike the “fires” debate, the “joint fires” matter was not settled with the Final Coordination Draft published in March 1997. Although the new definition closely resembled that recommended by the USAF in February, the Air Force chose to edit some

of its own wording and claimed the change more accurately reflected supported/supporting relationships:

Joint Fires. Fires that result from joint operations ~~involving two or more components/Services acting together or~~ when one component of the joint force supports another component of the joint force.¹² (Strikethrough added by author)

The Second Final Coordination Draft, circulated in July 1997 reflected yet another iteration of the term:

Joint Fires. Fires produced during the employment of forces from two or more components in coordinated action toward a common objective.¹³

The Air Force non-concurred and resubmitted its proposal from the previous draft. The suggestion was ignored. The joint fires definition from the 2nd Final Coordination Draft was repeated in the Final Coordination Draft of December 1997. The USAF dropped its protest at that point to concentrate on how the term was used throughout the publication. As a result, the joint fires definition was accepted into joint doctrine.

The last of the fires terminology trio, “joint fire support” was the least controversial of the three for the Air Force. Interestingly, there were two distinct joint fire support definitions in the Final Draft of June 1991:

Joint fire support is a system of systems that consists of three essential parts—C3, target acquisition and battlefield surveillance, and attack resources.¹⁴

In a joint force, those fires of the supporting force against targets or objectives which are within or sufficiently near the area of operations of the supported force as to require detailed integration or coordination of the supporting action with the supported force.¹⁵

The first definition described a targeting and attack process involving intelligence cueing, command network fusing and strike. The second approach detailed joint fires as simply,

the application of a supporting force's weapons systems within certain proximity of a supported force.

JP 3-0, which was approved prior to the publication of the Second Draft of JP 3-09, contained the following text:

Joint fire support includes those fires that assist land and amphibious forces to maneuver and control territory, populations, and key waters. Joint fire support can include the lethal or destructive operations of close air support (by both fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft), naval gunfire, artillery, mortars, rockets, and missiles, as well as nonlethal or disruptive operations such as EW.¹⁶

The USAF accepted this wording based on the belief that close air support was the Air Force's only joint fire support mission. The joint fire support-related text in the Second Draft of JP 3-09 aligned with that in JP 3-0. Consequently, the USAF accepted the wording. The Marine Corps did not. The matter was discussed at the July 1995 Joint Pub 3-09 Working Group Meeting. The Marine Corps felt interdiction was also a form of joint fire support. The Air Force vehemently protested and eventually persuaded the group to add the following sentence to the end of the joint fire support definition: "Joint fire support does not include air interdiction, counter air, or strategic attack."¹⁷ Unfortunately, this change was not included in the Third Draft. In fact, the draft stated that air interdiction within component boundaries was a form of joint fire support.¹⁸ The matter was not resolved until the Preliminary Coordination Draft. The definition was reduced to one sentence: "Those joint fires provided to assist land, maritime, and amphibious forces to maneuver and control territory, populations, and key waters."¹⁹ The final approved definition also included special operations as a supported force.

Fire Marshal?

The JFFC issue once again pitted the USAF against the other Services. Unlike its battle over terminology, the Air Force was able carry this fight through to the end. The final text would reduce the JFFC from a key command and control authority to an optional advisory function on a JFC's staff. The path to this resolution was long and grueling.

The Final Draft of June 1991 laid the groundwork for the JFFC. This draft, which was published within months of the conclusion of the Gulf War, makes no mention of a JFACC. Instead, the doctrine called for a staff function to assist the JFC with joint fire support matters. The JFFC was allocated forces and given fire support missions to include "on-order" capabilities.²⁰ Significantly, the JFFC became the JFC's key adviser on the execution of both, joint fire support and joint interdiction operations. As such, the JFFC was authorized to translate the JFC's guidance for joint fires agencies to ensure joint fire support and interdiction operations were synchronized. The Air Force saw the role of the JFFC as a direct infringement upon the functions of the JFACC and counter to the procedures used in the Gulf War. The USAF contended the JFACC was the JFC's key adviser for joint air operations. To fulfill this role, the JFACC recommended apportionment, allocated air missions and monitored the execution of joint air operations in accordance with JFC guidance.

The Second Draft of JP 3-09 was a radical departure from the previous edition. The JFACC was introduced and designated the responsibilities as agreed in JP 3-0. The JFFC function was virtually removed from the text except for single sentence reference in Annex E. Although the JFFC function was reduced to little more than an optional

organization dealing with missile tasking, the Air Force objected to the text. The JFFC concept did not go away; in fact, it would return to the main body of the Third Draft along with a proposed definition in the Glossary. The reference in the text was subtle to allow the J3 the option of establishing a staff section to consolidate fires planning and coordination under the direction of a JFFC. The Air Force rejected the entry by stating:

Discussion of J3 augmentation does not belong in this pub. Also, the Air Force does not agree with the concept of a JFFC. Proposed JFFC responsibilities are redundant to component or other joint staff responsibilities. Further, JFC components should not be required to provide redundant representatives to a JFC staff section that duplicates functions that already exist.²¹

Additionally, the Air Force called for the deletion of the Glossary entry. In May 1995, the Joint Pub 3-09 Working Group discussed the matter. This forum agreed to keep both references for inclusion in the upcoming July draft. The USAF did not concur.

The aforementioned Army-Air Warfighter Conference in December 1966 provided the impetus to alter the JFFC concept. The Chiefs agreed to change the name to JFE and relegated the function to the status of an optional staff element. To a degree these decisions were incorporated into the Preliminary Coordination Draft published the following month. Basically, the draft wording remained the same with the exceptions of changing “JFFC” to “JFE” and adding text prescribing potential JFE duties. Opting not to attack the new verbiage directly, the Air Force provided general comment. In a lengthy diatribe, the USAF contended that J-3 augmentation with a JFE should only be used in operations of limited scope. For operations involving a substantial air effort, the

Air Force saw the JFE function as a duplication of effort, disruption to unity of effort, and an unnecessary increase in joint staff manning.²²

The JFFC issue was far from dead. In February, J-7 published the results of its Joint Force Fires Coordinator Study (JFFCS). Conducted prior to the Warfighter's Conference and the publication of the Preliminary Coordination Draft, the study did not reflect the change to JFE. Because the Preliminary Coordination Draft did not alter the basic doctrine regarding the JFFC, J-7 contended the study results could be applied to subsequent drafts of JP 3-09.

The study used the Fourth Draft of July 1996 as the JFFCS starting point. Consequently, all terminology and the JFFC concept as detailed in the Fourth Draft were used as the basis for the examination of approved joint doctrine, doctrine-related documents, lessons learned, position papers, interviews and other literature. The Joint Warfighting Center personnel who conducted the study zeroed in on the joint targeting process by comparing the proposed joint fires functions with the targeting tasks performed by the JFC's staffs, Joint Targeting Coordination Board, JFACC, and other components.

Novel to the JFFC debate was the analysis of joint exercises involving the use of a JFFC. The JFFCS highlighted United Endeavor (UE) exercises 96-2 and 97-1 to conclude, "The JFFC had a practical role in planning and coordinating lethal and nonlethal joint fires, but the lack of joint doctrine is creating confusion regarding JFFC functions, manning, C4 systems support, and relationships with the JFACC and JTCB."²³ Additionally, the JFFCS cited the lack of manpower within the JFFC staff as a drawback. The Air Force provided input to the study and directly attacked the JWFC interpreted

results of the UE exercises. The USAF described the JFFC function for UE 96-2 as nothing more than a JTCB facilitator who provided no value to the JTF. The Air Force condemned the XVIII Airborne Corps standing operating procedures that prevented the JFACC from executing an effective JOA-wide offensive counterair effort to effect air superiority. Concluding, the USAF asserted, “Air power was not efficiently or effectively used due to the constraints placed upon the JFACC by the JFFC.”²⁴

The Air Force was not opposed to all aspects of the JFFCS, particularly the stipulation that the JFFC concept was a viable staff option for operations consisting of little or no surface maneuver.²⁵ The Air Force capitalized upon this recommendation to dispute the JFE-related doctrine in the subsequent drafts of JP 3-09.

In the Final Coordination Draft of March 1997, fires-related duties were shifted from the JFE to the J-3. The Air Force Doctrine Center Commander asserted that most of the J-3/JFE duties were already performed by the JFACC and the JFE concept was an attempt to fix something that was not broken.²⁶ The Air Force recommended deletion of a section on joint fires estimates, a joint fires appendix on operation order (OPORD) structure and the requirement for periodic assessments of joint fire support. For the text dealing directly with the JFE, the USAF added qualifiers such that a JFE would normally be formed for operations of limited scope. The most significant, yet questionable USAF change recommended the JFE “be appointed from the component providing the preponderance of joint fires to the JTF.”²⁷ It appeared the USAF misinterpreted the JFE as an individual, not an element or staff. Thus, the recommendation inferred all members of the JFE should come from one component. If accepted, this change could have precluded the USAF from having members within the JFE. Fortunately for the Air Force,

the recommendation was not included in the Second Final Coordination Draft published in July 1997. Neither was the provision for a JFE for limited operations. All of the significant J-3-related recommendations were approved. This turned out to be a mixed blessing as this draft boldly placed the command and control of all AO fires under the purview of the AO commander. This issue will be addressed in a later section. In short, through the evolution of JP 3-09, the major responsibility for fires shifted from the JFFC, to the JFE, to the J-3 and finally to the AO commander. The Final Coordination Draft, published in December 1997 did not include any USAF proposals for the 2nd Final Coordination Draft. During the Tank sessions, the Air Force did not pursue any further changes to the JFFC wording.

The approved text in JP 3-09 is as follows:

The JFC may approve the formation within the J-3 of a joint fires element (JFE). The JFE is an optional staff element that provides recommendations to the J-3 to accomplish fires planning and coordination. The JFE assists the J-3 to accomplish responsibilities and tasks as a staff adviser to the JFC. Specific duties would be assigned by the J-3 with approval by the JFC and may include any or all of the J-3's tasks previously identified. When established, this element would be composed of a variety of experts from the JFC's staff (including the J-3's staff), the components, the combatant command, and elsewhere as needed. The JFE would provide the capability to accomplish fires planning and coordination functions.²⁸

Notes

¹ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Draft, June 1991, GL-13

² Col Robert D. Coffman, Commander, Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, memorandum to Distribution List, subject: Second Draft, Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, 23 June 1995, 2.

³ Col Robert A. Hammerle, Director, Joint Doctrine Directorate, HQ US Army Training and Doctrine Command, memorandum for record, subject: Draft Minutes, Joint Pub 3-09 Working Group, 25-28 July 1995, 28 July 1995, 2

⁴ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Third Draft, December 1995, exsum 1.

Notes

⁵ HQ USAF Deputy Director of Plans, staff summary package, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, (Third draft), Tab 1, HQ AFDC Comments on Joint Pub 3-09, 26 Mar 96, 3.

⁶ Col Robert D. Coffman, Joint Integration Directorate, Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, memorandum to Joint Staff Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate (J-7), Joint Doctrine Division, subject: Preliminary Coordination Draft, Joint Pub 3-09, 28 February 1997, 2.

⁷ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, 12 May 1998, GL-6.

⁸ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Draft, June 1991, I-1.

⁹ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Third Draft, December 1995, I-1.

¹⁰ MGen Robert E. Linhard, Director, HQ USAF Plans Directorate (XOX), memorandum, to MG Scales, Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine, HQ TRADOC, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support (Proposed Final Draft), No Date, 1.

¹¹ Col Robert D. Coffman, Preliminary Coordination Draft, Joint Pub 3-09, 28 February 1997, 2.

¹² MGen Ronald E. Keys, Commander, Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, memorandum to HQ USAF/XOJ, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, Final Coordination, 23 May 1997, 3.

¹³ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*., 2nd Final Coordination Draft, 8 July 1997, v.

¹⁴ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Draft, June 1991, I-1.

¹⁵ Ibid., GL-15.

¹⁶ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*", 1 February 1995, IV-16.

¹⁷ Col Robert A. Hammerle, Draft Minutes, Joint Pub 3-09 Working Group, 25-28 July 1995, 28 July 1995, 2.

¹⁸ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Third Draft, December 1995, I-1.

¹⁹ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Preliminary Coordination Draft, January 1997, GL-6.

²⁰ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Draft, June 1991, I-1.

²¹ HQ USAF Deputy Director of Plans, HQ AFDC Comments on Joint Pub 3-09, 26 Mar 96, 5.

²² Col Robert D. Coffman, Preliminary Coordination Draft, Joint Pub 3-09, 28 February 1997, 5.

²³ Joint Warfighting Center Study Team, *Joint Force Fires Coordinator Study*, report, 7 Feb 1997, EX-5.

²⁴ Message, 151700Z January 1997, HQ AFDC/CC, To Joint Warfighting Center/DOC, subject: Joint Force Fires Coordinator (JFFC) Study, 5-6.

²⁵ Joint Warfighting Center Study Team, *Joint Force Fires Coordinator Study*, report, 7 Feb 1997, EX-8.

²⁶ MGen Ronald E. Keys, Commander, Headquarters Air Force Doctrine Center, memorandum to HQ USAF/XOJ, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, Final Coordination, 23 May 1997, 1.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁸ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, 12 May 1998, I-5.

Chapter 3

The Firestorm

Fire, as we have learned to our cost, has an insatiable hunger to be fed. It is a nonliving force that can even locomote itself.

—Loren Eiseley
The Star Thrower

The Tank was left with two major issues. The first related to supporting and supported commander relationships within an AO. The other, which paled in importance to the first, concerned the control of the Joint Surveillance, Target Attack Radar System (Joint STARS).

Hephaestus, God of Fire Incarnate?

In order to have a better feel for supported/supporting relationships in the joint operating environment it is necessary to understand the nature of approved joint doctrine. By doing so, one can clearly see how misunderstandings could occur. Generally, joint doctrine tends to be vague, especially concerning volatile issues. Some contend this vagueness is purposeful so the doctrine will not be overly prescriptive and thus allow the JFC the necessary degree of command latitude to plan and execute operations. While this argument may have merit, more often than not, joint doctrine results from a series of compromises that dilute bold assertions to watered-down conditional statements. Joint doctrine is fraught with conditional qualifiers such as “normally,” “typically,” “should,”

“may,” and “often.” This compromising effect allows doctrine disputants to walk away from debates not completely satisfied, yet somewhat appeased. The real losers are those outside the doctrinal “inner circle” who have to interpret the doctrine. A statement in the 2nd Final Coordination Draft of JP 3-09 attempted to clarify vague doctrine in JP 3-0 regarding AO supporting/supported relationships. The following two sentences set off a doctrine firestorm:

There are not multiple supported commanders in a designated AO. The land and naval operational force commanders are the supported commanders within their AOs for interdiction and fires, to include joint fire support and joint fires.¹

To understand the controversy, it is necessary to examine a few passages from approved joint doctrine. JP 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)* describes supported/supporting relationship as, “by design, a somewhat vague, but very flexible arrangement.”² The approved joint definitions for supported and supporting commander are as follows:

Supported Commander. The commander having primary responsibility for all aspects of a task assigned by the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan or other joint operation planning authority.³

Supporting Commander. A commander who provides augmentation forces or other support to a supported commander or who develops a supporting plan.⁴

JP 3-0 declares a land or naval operational commander is “designated the supported commander” within an AO and is “responsible for the synchronization of maneuver, fires and interdiction. To facilitate this synchronization, such commanders designate the target priority, effects and timing of interdiction operations within their AOs.”⁵ By definition, a supported commander is authorized to exercise general direction which allows that commander to designate and prioritize targets or objectives, set timing and duration of the

supporting action, and provide other instructions necessary for coordination and efficiency.⁶ On the surface, these references provide ample justification for the 2nd Final Coordination Draft entry.

The issue is complicated by other references in JP 3-0 that establish supporting relationships along functional lines. One reference states, “...the JFACC is normally the supported commander for counterair operations.”⁷ Another asserts, “...JFCs will normally task JFACCs, as supported commanders, to conduct [direct attack of enemy strategic centers of gravity] such operations.”⁸ A third reference proclaims, “The JFACC is the supported commander for the JFC’s overall interdiction effort.”⁹ Another telling passage comes from joint doctrine’s capstone publication, Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Force of the United States*. It states:

Joint force commanders will often assign one of their components or subordinate joint forces as a supported activity for a certain purpose and time...More than one supported command may be designated simultaneously.¹⁰

Hence, there appears to be a doctrinal dichotomy between designating a supported commander based on geographical considerations and establishing one for functions or activities. What happens when a function or activity occurs inside an AO? What authority does the JFACC, as a supported commander for a theater-wide activity such as interdiction, have when planning and executing operations within an AO where the surface commander is the supported authority? The USAF was willing to bring the matter to the JCS Tank for resolution. Instead, the Joint Staff agreed to drop the two lines of controversial text.

Having resolved this issue, the USAF took aim at the remainder of the paragraph. The disputed text read as follows:

Within their designated AOs, land and naval operational force commanders are the supported commanders and are responsible for the synchronization of maneuver, fires and interdiction. To facilitate this synchronization, such commanders have the authority to designate the target priority, effects and timing of interdiction operations within their AOs.¹¹

The Air Force faced an uphill battle because the words they sought to change appeared verbatim in JP 3-0. Why the sudden change of heart? Mentioned earlier, the Air Force put itself in a difficult position by accepting the proposed JP 3-09 definition of fires. The only viable approach was to use JP 3-09 to rectify JP 3-0, a tack the Air Force opposed earlier in the JP 3-09 process. In an attempt to resolve the impasse, J-7 altered the contested wording based on guidance from the DEPOPSDEP Tank. The new paragraph would read:

Supported and Supporting Relationships. The land and naval force commanders are the supported commanders within areas of operations (AOs) designated by the JFC. Within their designated AOs, land and naval force commanders synchronize maneuver, fires and interdiction. To facilitate this synchronization, such commanders have the authority to designate the target priority, effects, and timing of **fires** within their AOs. Within the joint force theater and/or JOA, all missions must contribute to the accomplishment of the overall objective. Synchronization of efforts within land and naval AOs with theater and/or JOA-wide operations is of particular importance. To facilitate synchronization, the JFC establishes priorities that will be executed throughout the theater and/or JOA including within the land and naval force commander's AOs. In coordination with the land and/or naval force commander, those commanders designated by the JFC to execute theater and/or JOA-wide functions have the latitude to plan and execute these JFC prioritized operations and attack targets within land and naval AOs¹².(bold added by author)

The USAF supported all changes except for the one word change to the third sentence. In its view, substituting "fires" for "interdiction" meant the land or naval force commander would have the authority to select and prioritize all targets in the AO. The Air Force claimed such a move, "would fragment the theater/JOA-wide operations (such

as counterair, strategic attack, JOA-wide interdiction, and airborne reconnaissance and surveillance, and all joint special operations).”¹³ The USAF counterproposal was to replace the word “fires” with “fire support.” Now, instead of the land and naval force commanders designating target priority, effects and timing of all lethal and nonlethal weapons effects, these commanders could only deal with fires that directly supported their forces, e.g., CAS.¹⁴ The other Services and CINCs did not agree with the proposal and the matter was forwarded to the JCS Tank.

When You Wish Upon a Joint STARS

The second issue elevated to the four star-level tank dealt with text regarding the mission of the Joint STARS. The USAF was once again the lone dissenting Service to oppose the following wording:

The primary mission of Joint STARS is dedicated support to ground force commanders.¹⁵

The Air Force considered this statement misleading and caused one to assume the Joint STARS was at the ground force commander’s “beck and call.”¹⁶ The Air Force argued it should be left up to the JFC to determine who receives Joint STARS’ support. Additionally, the USAF cited Foal Eagle as an example of an exercise where the Joint STARS provided support to a maritime commander.¹⁷ The USAF proposed to alter the end of the sentence to read: “...to provide dedicated support to ground commander requirements.”¹⁸ Unresolved at the DEPOPS level, the matter went to the JCS Tank.

Controlling the Blaze or Adding Fuel to the Fire

The JCS Tank met on 12 May 98 to consider the two remaining issues. The Commander of the Air Force Doctrine Center, MGen Keys briefed first before yielding

the floor to the J-7 staff. The briefers were excused and the CJCS along with the four Service chiefs conducted “closed door” deliberations. The final results of the Tank were published the next day by J-7. The USAF proposal to change “fires” to “fire support” was rejected. Conversely, the Air Force suggestion to alter the Joint STARS wording was approved. The Chairman agreed to release JP 3-09 for publication.

In a follow-on action, General Michael Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) submitted a memorandum to the CJCS in hopes of validating the CSAF’s interpretation of the Tank results. It read:

We need to capture a key point agreed upon in the 12 May 98 JCS Tank. Specifically, the intent of designating land and naval force commanders as supported commanders within their areas of operations (AOs) does not abrogate the authority of commanders tasked by the JFC to execute theater and/or JOA-wide functions. This includes designating the priority, effects and timing of their operations within these AOs. The JFACC remains the supported commander for the JFC’s theater/JOA-wide counterair, strategic attack, and air interdiction efforts. These are critical points directly affecting the JFC’s ability to prosecute an effective joint campaign. This is how we conduct operations today and how we will continue to operate in the future.¹⁹

The Chairman responded. His opening paragraph asserted the CSAF’s memorandum did “not capture exactly the decision made at the 12 May 98 JCS Tank.”²⁰ The second paragraph confirmed the primacy of the JFC theater/JOA-wide guidance and targeting priorities such that they will be “fully supported by all component commanders.” The final sentence declared, “Designating land and naval force commanders as supported commanders within their areas of operations (AOs) does not abrogate the authority of commanders tasked by the JFC to execute theater and/or JOA-wide functions.”²¹

In essence, the CJCS’s statement did not clear up the problem of supported/supporting commander relationships. On one hand it confirmed the JP 3-0 and Tank-agreed assertion the land and naval force commanders are the supported

commanders in their AOs. On the other hand, it acknowledged the primacy of JFC-designated targeting priorities and the authority of other supported commanders to execute theater-wide missions in an AO to support these priorities. This latter qualifier weakened the JP 3-09 stipulation that the land or naval commander has the authority to designate target priority, effects, and timing of fires in the AO. In this regard, the Chairman's statement was clearly a victory for the USAF. Unfortunately, his comments left the matter unresolved.

Notes

¹ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, 2nd Final Coordination Draft, 8 July 1997, I-4.

² Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, 24 February 1995, III-10.

³ Joint Pub 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, no date, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 18 December 1998, available from <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/data/j/03287.html>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1 February 1995, IV-15.

⁶ Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, 24 February 1995, III-11.

⁷ Joint Pub 3-0, IV-5.

⁸ Ibid., IV-6.

⁹ Ibid., IV-11.

¹⁰ Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 10 January 1995, IV-10.

¹¹ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Coordination Draft, 23 December 1997, I-3.

¹² Message, 211737Z January 1998, J7/JDD, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, 3.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The USAF considers CAS as its only direct support mission.

¹⁵ Joint Pub 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support*, Final Coordination Draft, 23 December 1997, II-3.

¹⁶ MGen Ronald E. Keys, Commander, HQ Air Force Doctrine Center, slide briefing, subject: Tank Briefing, 12 May 1998, 19.

¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁹ Gen Michael E. Ryan, Chief of Staff, USAF, memorandum to Gen H.H. Shelton, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, 14 May 1998, 1.

Notes

²⁰ Gen Henry H. Shelton, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, memorandum to Gen M.E. Ryan, Chief of Staff, USAF, subject: Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support, 15 May 1998, 1.

²¹ Ibid.

Chapter 4

Future Flashpoints

Youk,n hide de fier, but w'at you gwine do wid de smoke?.

—Joel Chandler Harris
Uncle Remus Plantation Proverbs

Smoke on the Horizon

JP 3-09 was published with an official date of 12 May 1998. It would not take long for Air Force and Army doctrinaires to foist their interpretation of the final product to change other doctrine publications. Interestingly, the first action was directed toward a proposed change to the NATO publication AJP-01, *Allied Joint Operations Doctrine*. Currently, AJP-01 is NATO's equivalent to JP 3-0. The Army wanted to delete the word “interdiction” from the following sentence:

To facilitate this synchronization, such commanders [of AOs] designate target priority, effects, and timing of interdiction operations.¹

It appeared the Army was trying to equate “fires” to “operations.” The Air Force cried foul and the two sides settled on the approved wording in JP 3-09.

The next skirmish is occurring over another highly controversial publication, JP 3-01, *Joint Doctrine for Countering Air and Missile Threats*. The USAF wants to include wording from the 15 May CJCS letter to General Ryan. The Army does not support this proposal.

The ultimate fight may transpire this year when the Services begin the scheduled revision of JP 3-0. The Services will be faced with some tough choices. They may agree to add the JP 3-09 wording and the Chairman's remarks, or they may opt to reopen the supported/supporting commander issue for further debate. If the latter course is chosen, the revision of JP 3-0 will probably follow the course of JP 3-09 and require CJCS intervention.

To cope with the proliferation of JP 3-09 wording in other doctrine, Air Force doctrinaires have three options. First, they can acquiesce to proposed changes as long as the alteration aligns with the intent of JP 3-09. As was the case for AJP-01, the USAF disagreed with the Army proposal, yet fell back upon the approved text from JP 3-09. Second, the doctrinaires can resist the change. They could counter-propose wording from other established doctrine or emerging concepts. For example, the Air Force could invoke the JP 3-0 wording that allows the AO commander the authority to designate target priority effects and timing of interdiction operations vice the JP 3-09 verbiage that grants that authority for all fires. Using the Chairman's letter as doctrine input is another example. Third, the Air Force could respond to the challenges posed by JP 3-09 by taking the fire to the fight, i.e., attack the AO concept in joint doctrine.

Fighting Fires with Fire

The AO is the focal point for all of the USAF's concerns with fires, targeting, and supported/supporting commander relationships. It is the proverbial "root of all evil" for Air Force doctrine woes. For example, the fires-related terms are acceptable to the Air Force except when they are tied to supporting relationships inside the AO. The most vociferous targeting fights between the Services are waged over the prioritization of

targets within the AO. Finally, the AO is the only operational area where there is controversy over multiple supported commanders. There is no debate over designating supported commanders for a JOA, theater of war or theater of operations. Aside from the Joint STARS issue, all of the USAF's critical concerns over the last draft of JP 3-09 were tied directly to command and control relationships within an AO.

It would be folly to believe the AO concept could be removed from joint doctrine. It is entrenched well in numerous joint publications, particularly JP 3-0. No other Service or combatant command would support the eradication of the AO as a geographic construct. Therefore, the Air Force "attack" strategy should focus on clarifying the need for an AO versus calling for its elimination. The upcoming revision of JP 3-0 provides an excellent opportunity to put this strategy to the test. The Air Force focus should be threefold. First, it should exploit the existing doctrine in JP 3-0 to devalue the importance of the AO. Second, USAF doctrinaires should provide amplifying text to diminish the value of the AO. Finally, the Air Force must highlight the importance of the JOA as the preferred operational area construct.

It remains a mystery how the AO rose to such prominence in joint doctrine. The AO is not mentioned in Colin Powell's *A Doctrinal Statement of Selected Joint Operational Concepts*, the precursor to JP 3-0.² The Army introduced the AO concept to joint doctrine in JP 3-0. Most of this concept emanated from the June 1993 US Army Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*. There, the AO is treated as one of several battlefield framework options ranging, "from a linear framework with clearly defined geometry and lines with contiguous units and deep, close and rear boundaries, to a less precisely structured framework where units might not be adjacent to one another and have no linear

relationship.³ The AO concept was introduced piecemeal within JP 3-0. One has to sort through the various dispersed references to build a composite picture of the AO. It is best to start at the back of the publication in the Glossary section where the AO is defined as:

An operational area defined by the joint force commander for land and naval forces. Areas of operations do not typically encompass the entire operational area of the joint force commander, but should be large enough for component commanders to accomplish their missions and protect their forces.⁴

This obscure description invites controversy. First, the term “operational area” is not defined in joint doctrine. Simply, it is presumed to denote an area where operations are conducted or missions are accomplished. There is nothing distinctive about this. Numerous geographical measures such as a no fire area, fire support area, and zone of fire fit this description. Second, AOs are not established for air forces. This infers an air commander can not have an AO; it implies air activities are not affected by operations therein. Third, the purpose of an AO is not well defined. What missions are accomplished in this area? Are they operations conducted by a single component? Finally and most importantly, the definition does not indicate who, if anyone is responsible for operations inside the AO.

To understand more about the nature of the AO, one has to delve into other sections of the publication. This further examination reveals two significant points about the AO. First, designating an AO is a JFC option “for operations somewhat limited in scope and duration.”⁵ The publication does not state an AO will be used in wartime. In fact, JP 3-0 lists theaters of war and theaters of operations as the primary wartime operational areas. As implied, an AO is an operational area for military operations other than war, and these operations should be relatively short term and uncomplicated.

The second key point is that an AO does not include the airspace above it, i.e., it is a surface area with no vertical dimension. JP 3-0 states, “JFCs may use lateral, rear and forward boundaries to define AOs for land and naval forces.”⁶ Because no other method is given for delineating an AO, it can be inferred AOs are defined by a boundary, and it is the JFC’s option to use the “lateral, rear or forward” designations to describe portions of that boundary. Army doctrine acknowledges that AOs are defined by boundaries.⁷ The established joint definition stipulates a boundary demarcates surface areas, not airspace. JP 3-0 further states, “theater air sorties are not constrained by land boundaries, per se. However, because the airspace above surface areas is used by all components of the joint force, JFC’s promulgate airspace control measures to deconflict the multiple uses required of this space.”⁸ Thus, airspace is divided through airspace control measures, not a surface designation. Normally, the JFC gives the commander responsible for the AO a portion of airspace extending from the surface to a designated coordinating altitude. This section of airspace is not part of the AO.

Building upon these two significant points, the Air Force should introduce new text to detail the limited need for an AO in joint operations. This approach should shift the emphasis from establishing an AO to using only lateral boundaries. Basically, an AO consists of lateral, rear and forward boundaries. Lateral boundaries are significant to surface operations to separate adjacent units or formations. A rear AO boundary may be important depending on surface activities affecting friendly forces from behind.

Of least significance to joint operations is the forward boundary. It is nothing more than a surface force planning line often used to designate the projected location of friendly surface forces 72 hours after the commencement of offensive operations. Units

in a defensive posture have little need for this line. The forward boundary is a novel measure for the Army. The official Army definition of AO mentions only rear and lateral boundaries. It is an even more obscure concept for the USAF. The line has virtually no significance for aircraft attacking targets. Normally, aircraft control or coordination procedures are associated with fire support coordinating measures (FSCMs), such as a fire support coordination line (FSCL) and airspace control measures (ACMs). Some may argue a forward boundary allows surface commanders to shape the battlespace for future offensive action. This assertion is not valid. Services can effectively attack targets forward of the FSCL with Service or joint assets regardless of the existence of a forward line. The line does not facilitate deep operations. Effective joint planning and targeting procedures are the keys to successful deep operations. The shaping of the battlespace beyond the FSCL is not solely a Service or component concern; rather, it is a joint imperative. Therefore, the JFC should not designate a Service or functional component commander as the sole supported commander for this area. Surface-to-surface and air-to-surface attacks beyond the FSCL must be coordinated with all component commanders and the JFC through a joint planning and targeting process.

Without a forward boundary, a designated area becomes open-ended. An AO should never be open-ended because that allows the AO commander to exercise authority out into a JFC's JOA or AOR. If a forward boundary must be established, it should coincide with the FSCL. The FSCL is the forward line where surface commander control of air-to-surface and surface-to-surface attacks ends and coordinated efforts begin. Thus, the AO commander controls virtually all operations short of the line and directly coordinates upon those conducted beyond the line. The United Kingdom proposed this type of

arrangement for NATO. The US opposed the idea because it conflicted with established joint doctrine. It is highly unlikely the Army would ever agree to this sort of AO concept.

One must also consider the possibility of a non-linear AO where the distinction between rear, lateral and forward boundaries is obscured. In reality, the JFC has little reason to establish such an area. If lateral separation of forces between AO boundaries is a concern, then a nonlinear border is potentially dangerous unless it follows well-defined terrain features. If force separation is not necessary, then there is no need for a lateral demarcation and thus, no requirement for the AO.

The Air Force should articulate that the AO concept is not joint. By proving this point, the USAF could convince the joint community to view the AO concept as little more than a single-service geographic construct. As mentioned before, aircraft movement is not affected by an AO boundary. FSCMs or ACMs regulate naval fires and air-to-surface strikes. Special operations or USMC force employment may be constrained within an AO “owned” by the Army. Probably, the supported commander for the AO will use an FSCM/ACM or a lateral border to separate these units from Army forces. In essence, the AO becomes a single service domain under single-service control where joint ground forces are segregated. There is nothing joint about this.

Another critical reason for devaluing the AO is because a joint operations area (JOA) is a far superior battlespace framework. In contrast to the AO, the JOA is designed truly for joint operations. By definition, the JOA is “an area of land, sea and airspace, defined by a geographic combatant commander or subordinate unified commander, in which a JFC (normally a JTF commander) conducts military operations to accomplish a specific

mission.”⁹ The JOA, unlike an AO, includes airspace. Additionally, the JOA “boss” is a JFC with established command authority and the power to determine supported/supporting commander relationships.

What makes the JOA special is that it can be tailored or configured to meet the joint force’s needs. The land and naval component commanders may use lateral boundaries to separate surface forces. Additionally, they can establish FSCMs to effect control or coordination of surface attacks. Surface commanders become focused on joint objectives versus parochial interests. The JOA framework is much more palatable to an air component. The JFACC can conduct unencumbered theater-wide operations within a JOA that does not contain an AO. In essence, the JOA provides the battlespace framework to address needs of all component commanders. The future battlespace should be a JOA.

Notes

¹ Lt Col Wade McRoberts, HQ Air Force Doctrine Center, Joint Integration Directorate, slide briefing, subject: Joint Activity Briefing, 25 June 1998, 1.

² For further information refer to: Gen Colin L. Powell, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, white paper, subject: A Doctrinal Statement of Selected Joint Operational Concepts, 23 November 1992.

³ Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, June 1993, 6-12.

⁴ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1 February 1995, GL-3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II-17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, III-33.

⁷ Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, June 1993, Glossary 0.

⁸ Joint Pub 3-0, III-33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II-17-18.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

A poorly extinguished fire is quickly re-ignited.

—Cornielle
Sertorius

The struggle over JP 3-09 development was indeed a doctrine war. It was not warfare in the literal sense; no weapons were used and no one was physically harmed. It was a war of wills pitting doctrine experts, general officers and Service chiefs against one another. A mere supporting document exposed key doctrinal differences between the Services. For nearly ten years, the battles were fought. At the end of this bitter doctrine war, neither side could realistically claim total victory. In actuality, it was a pyrrhic victory of sorts for both sides. The Army and their supporters did not get a clear-cut statement about one supported commander in the AO. They did gain acceptance of the fire-related terms and the authority of the land or naval force commander to designate the target priority, effects and timing of fires within AOs. The Air Force was unable to change the publication to focus on joint fire support. It was able to reduce the influence of the JFFC/JFE, and receive the Chairman's written confirmation to acknowledge the primacy of JFC-designated targeting priorities within the AO. Unfortunately, neither side was able to define clearly supported/supporting commander relationships within the AO. As with most conflicts, unresolved matters have a way of re-igniting ill will. If the joint

community is unable to come to grips with the problems of using an AO for joint operations, another “fires” fight is sure to break out.

Glossary

The following acronyms and their definitions appeared in the foregoing text and are provided here for clarity:

ACM	Airspace Control Measure
AFDC	Air Force Doctrine Center
AO	Area of Operations
CAS	Close Air Support
CINC	Commander in Chief of a combatant command
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CSAF	Chief of Staff, Air Force
DEPOPSDEP	Deputies to Operations Deputies for Chiefs and Commandant of respective Services
FOFA	Follow On Forces Attack
FSCoord	Fire Support Coordinator
FSE	Fire support Element
FSCL	Fire Support Coordination Line
FSCM	Fire Support Coordinating Measure
J-7/JDD	Joint Staff Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate/Joint Doctrine Division
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JFACC	Joint Force Air Component Commander
JFE	Joint Fires Element
JFFC	Joint Force Fires Coordinator
JFFCS	Joint Force Fires Coordinator Study
JOA	Joint Operations Area
Joint STARS	Joint Surveillance, Target Attack Radar System
JP	Joint Publication
JTF	Joint Task Force
JTCB	Joint Targeting Coordination Board
JWFC	Joint Warfighting Center

OPORD	Operation Order
OPSDEP	Operations Deputies for Chiefs and Commandant of respective Services
PD	Program Directive
PRA	Primary Review Authority
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command, US Army
UE	United Endeavor
UNAAF	United Action Armed Forces
USAF	United States Air Force
XOX	Director of Plans, HQ USAF

The following definitions are taken from JP 1-02, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 23 March 1994 (to include change updates):

Area of Operations. An operational area defined by the joint force commander for land and naval forces. Areas of operations do not typically encompass the entire operational area of the joint force commander, but should be large enough for component commanders to accomplish their missions and protect their forces.

Boundary. A line which delineates surface areas for the purpose of facilitating coordination and deconfliction of operations between adjacent units, formations, or areas.

Coordinating Altitude. A procedural airspace control method to separate fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft by determining an altitude below which fixed-wing aircraft will normally not fly and above which rotary-wing aircraft normally will not fly. The coordinating altitude is normally specified in the airspace control plan and may include a buffer zone for small altitude deviations.

Fires. The effects of lethal or nonlethal weapons.

Fire Support. Fires that directly support land, maritime, amphibious, and special operations forces to engage enemy forces, combat formations, and facilities in pursuit of tactical and operational objectives

Joint Fires. Fire produced during the employment of forces from two or more components in coordinated action toward a common objective.

Joint Fires Element. An optional staff element that provides recommendations to the J-3 to accomplish fires planning and synchronization.

Joint Fire Support. Joint fires that assist land, maritime, amphibious, and special operations forces to move, maneuver, and control territory, populations, and key waters.

Joint Force Air Component Commander. The joint force air component commander derives authority from the joint force commander who has the authority to exercise operational control, assign missions, direct coordination among subordinate

commanders, redirect and organize forces to ensure unity of effort in the accomplishment of the overall mission. The joint force commander will normally designate a joint force air component commander. The joint force air component commander's responsibilities will be assigned by the joint force commander (normally these would include, but not be limited to planning, coordination, allocation, and tasking based on the joint force commander's apportionment decision.) Using the joint force commander's guidance and authority, and in coordination with the other Service component commanders and other assigned or supported commanders, the joint force air component commander will recommend to the joint force commander apportionment of air sorties to various missions or geographic areas.

Joint Operations Area. An area of land, sea and airspace, defined by a geographic combatant commander or subordinate unified commander, in which a joint force commander (normally a joint task force commander) conducts military operations to accomplish a specific mission. Joint operations areas are particularly useful when operations are limited in scope and geographic area or when operations are to be conducted on the boundaries between theaters. Also called JOA.

Theater of Operations. A subarea within a theater of war defined by the geographic combatant commander required to conduct or support specific combat operations. Different theaters of operations within the same theater of war will normally be geographically separate and focused on different enemy forces. Theaters of operations are usually of significant size, allowing for operations over extended periods of time.

Theater of War. Defined by the National Command Authorities or the geographic combatant commander, the area of air, land and water that is, or may become, directly involved in the conduct of war. A theater of war does not normally encompass the geographic combatant commander's entire area of responsibility and may contain more than one theater of operations.

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