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MARITIME COMMAND AND CONTROL FOR U.S. COASTLINE PROTECTION
AGAINST TERRORISTS

by

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

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

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16 May 2003

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Abstract of

WHAT IS THE MOST EFFICIENT COMMAND AND CONTROL ORGANIZATION FOR MARITIME PROTECTION OF THE U.S. COASTLINE AGAINST TERRORIST THREATS?

On September 11th, 2001 the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Customs Service, Joint Forces Command, Pacific Command, Southern Command, North American Aerospace Defense Command, the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Treasury and the Department of Transportation found themselves lacking a structured command and control organization to protect 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline. On that day the United States had too many government departments, branches of the military, unified commands, component commands, and federal agencies trying to protect the United States with minimal interaction, directed authority or prior planning. Although major changes have occurred with the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the establishment of Northern Command (NORTHCOM) within DoD, the question remains: what is the most efficient command and control organization for maritime protection of the U.S. coastline against terrorist threats?

INTRODUCTION

On September 11th, 2001 the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Customs Service, Joint Forces Command, Pacific Command, Southern Command, North American Aerospace Defense Command, the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Treasury and the Department of Transportation found themselves lacking a structured command and control organization to protect 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline. On that day the United States had too many government departments, branches of the military, unified commands, component commands, and federal agencies trying to protect the United States with minimal interaction, directed authority or prior planning. Although major changes have occurred with the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the establishment of Northern Command (NORTHCOM) within DoD, the question remains: what is the most efficient command and control organization for maritime protection of the U.S. coastline against terrorist threats?

The September 11th attack on the U.S. mainland showed just how vulnerable the United States was to the threat of terrorism. Americans had always taken comfort in the fact that they shared borders with two non-hostile countries and were insulated from attack by two vast oceans. The government's approach to external defense had been to affect the international environment through political, economic, military and cultural engagement. Internally, it used law enforcement and the justice system to keep the peace within the borders.¹

Terrorists have proved to be a far more difficult enemy to defend against than the United States has faced in the past. Former strategies and operating procedures used against previous threats of the twentieth century appeared much less effective against asymmetric

threats in this new war of the twenty-first century. The United States needed to develop new capabilities designed to defeat these and other future threats.

In the weeks and months following the September 11th attack, the U.S. Government commenced the process of reorganization to help prevent such an attack from happening again. This began with a Presidential Executive Order establishing the Office of Homeland Security.² At the same time the Department of Defense began reorganizing its structure to reemphasize its role in defense of the U.S. Homeland. The focus of this reorganization was addressed in the National Security Strategy, which included the following two objectives: Defeat global terrorism and eliminate the threat of weapons of mass destruction.³

The intent in changing the structure of these government departments was to streamline efficiency in protecting the U.S. Homeland against the threat of terrorists. The details of the changes are still being worked out, as are many of the responsibilities. With so many different agencies reorganized to accomplish this huge task, defining authority within the operations they perform will be critical.

According to the Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia,” the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission,”⁴ is the definition of Command and Control (C2). C2 within any organization is the most critical of all the operational functions. “It is the principal means by which the operational commander sequences and synchronizes the actions and activities of both military and non-military sources of national power in a given theater.”⁵ In reviewing the developing structures of the Department of Homeland Security (with its agencies) and NORTHCOM (with its component commands), the establishment of C2 will be a challenge and one that needs to be done properly to ensure their success.

This paper will briefly discuss the terrorist threat and address government changes as a result of the September 11th attack. After reviewing the structure of both the Department of Homeland Security and NORTHCOM, the focus will move towards their interaction and what would be the most efficient C2 organization for maritime protection of the U.S. coastline against terrorist threats.

BACKGROUND

The Range of Threats

To simply state the enemy in the war on terrorism is al Qaida is an over simplification, although recently they appear to be the more dominant movement. According to former CIA director James Woolsey, there are three primary movements that have come out of the Middle East as threats to the United States: the Islamist Shia (ruling Clerics, Mullahs of Iran), the Fascists (Baathist parties of Syria and formerly of Iraq) and the Islamist Sunni (al Qaida).⁶ Although they have been at war with the United States for many years, it wasn't until after September 11th that the United States responded in earnest with military force. A recent history of successful attacks against the United States and a few of the more notable failed attacks include: the December 1992 attempted attack on 100 U.S. servicemen in Yemen; militia support to oppose U.S. forces in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope; the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing; the 1993 assassination attempt on President George Bush in Kuwait; the November 1995 bombing of a U.S. military training facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; the June 1996 bombing of the U.S. military's Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; the August 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania; the October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen; and the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center and Pentagon Airline attacks.⁷

The attacks listed are not meant to be a complete list, but demonstrate the patience and persistence terrorists have in accomplishing their objectives. It also shows the many avenues they have exploited to accomplish their mission. The maritime threat they pose is one of grave concern, especially in regards to al Qaida and their suspected influence over a fleet of up to twenty ships.⁸ Searching for these ships that could be sailing under a “flag of convenience” can be like looking for the needle in a haystack.

The November 2002 arrest of Abd al-Rahim (alleged senior al Qaida planner) in the United Arab Emirates uncovered members of his group that had been studying for a seaman’s license, which could allow them to enter any port without a visa.⁹ There is concern that freighters could be used in the illegal transport of chemical, biological or radioactive explosives.¹⁰ U.S. Customs has focused on the vulnerability of cargo containers entering the United States from foreign ports that could be carrying terrorist weapons. In response, customs officials have launched the Container Security Initiative, which would allow them to screen high-risk sea containers in foreign ports before they are shipped to the United States.¹¹

Attacks on tanker ships carrying explosive cargo can be disastrous if successful. In a similar type attack to the USS Cole’s in Yemen, the MV Limburg, a French oil tanker carrying 158,000 tons of crude oil, was attacked 6 October 2002.¹² Fortunately, only one crewman was killed; however, the tanker went up in flames and continued to leak oil into the water, causing an ecological concern.

Terrorists' attacks are not limited to what can be performed above the "water line." The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has warned that terrorists may attack shipping vessels by scuba divers putting explosives on vessels above or below the water surface.¹³ All this makes it very apparent that the maritime terrorist threat is very real and must be addressed.

Protecting The Infrastructure

There is much debate and speculation over the reasons for this terrorist war against the United States. However, that goes beyond the scope of this paper. What is of more relevance is understanding the terrorists' approach in carrying out their attacks. Terrorists are strategic actors, choosing critical infrastructure and key asset targets based on perceived U.S. weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Their objectives are political, economic and psychological, with the intent to generate mass casualties, shock and panic. The National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructures lists thirteen sectors of concern with high potential for terrorist targets: Agriculture, Food, Water, Public Health, Emergency Services, Government, Defense Industrial Base, Information and Telecommunications, Energy, Transportation, Banking and Finance, Chemical Industry and Hazardous Materials, and Postal and shipping.¹⁴ The challenge of protecting these critical infrastructures requires the understanding that they were built in an open society with little to no concern of terrorist attack. To further the challenge, consider their enormous size, the complexities of their design and the fact that 85 percent of them are owned and operated by private industry.¹⁵ This is significant, because within the continental United States, protection or the security of this infrastructure becomes a law enforcement mission, not one for DoD -- such is one distinction between Homeland Security and Homeland Defense.

Narrowing the focus to the transportation sector, it breaks down further into seven key modes: aviation; passenger rail and railroads; highways, trucking and busing; pipelines; mass transit systems; and maritime.¹⁶ The maritime mode includes 361 sea ports (several of which are DoD strategic), ships and passenger transportation systems, coastal and inland waterways, 95,000 miles of shoreline, 3.4 million square miles of exclusive economic zone,

and a network of pipelines and railroads that connect these coastal areas to other transportation networks further inland.¹⁷

Organizations/Command Structures

In order to counter this threat, the United States government is undergoing a major reorganization. This reorganization has become the most significant since the Department of Defense was formed in 1947, unifying the separate branches of the U.S. military. Establishing the Department of Homeland Security has provided accountability by centralizing twenty-two federal agencies and 170,000 employees under one department.¹⁸ The new department's strategic objectives, as outlined in The National Strategy for Homeland Security are: "Prevent terrorist attacks within the United States; Reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism; and Minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur."¹⁹

The Department of Homeland Security is organized into five major directorates: Border and Transportation Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Science and Technology, Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, and Management.²⁰ Beyond the five major directorates, several other critical agencies are being created or folded into the new department: United States Secret Service; Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration; Office of State and Local Government Coordination; Office of Private Sector Liaison; Office of Inspector General; and the United States Coast Guard.²¹

The United States Coast Guard has remained intact in its move on 1 March 2003 from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security.²² The Commandant of the Coast Guard now reports directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security. Unlike other military heads of service, the Commandant of the Coast Guard is both the administrative and

operational commander. Under the Commandant, the Coast Guard is divided into two areas, falling under the Atlantic and Pacific Area Commanders. Under the Area Commanders are nine regional District Commanders, all of which function as operational and administrative commanders of their assigned forces, (see chart 1).²³

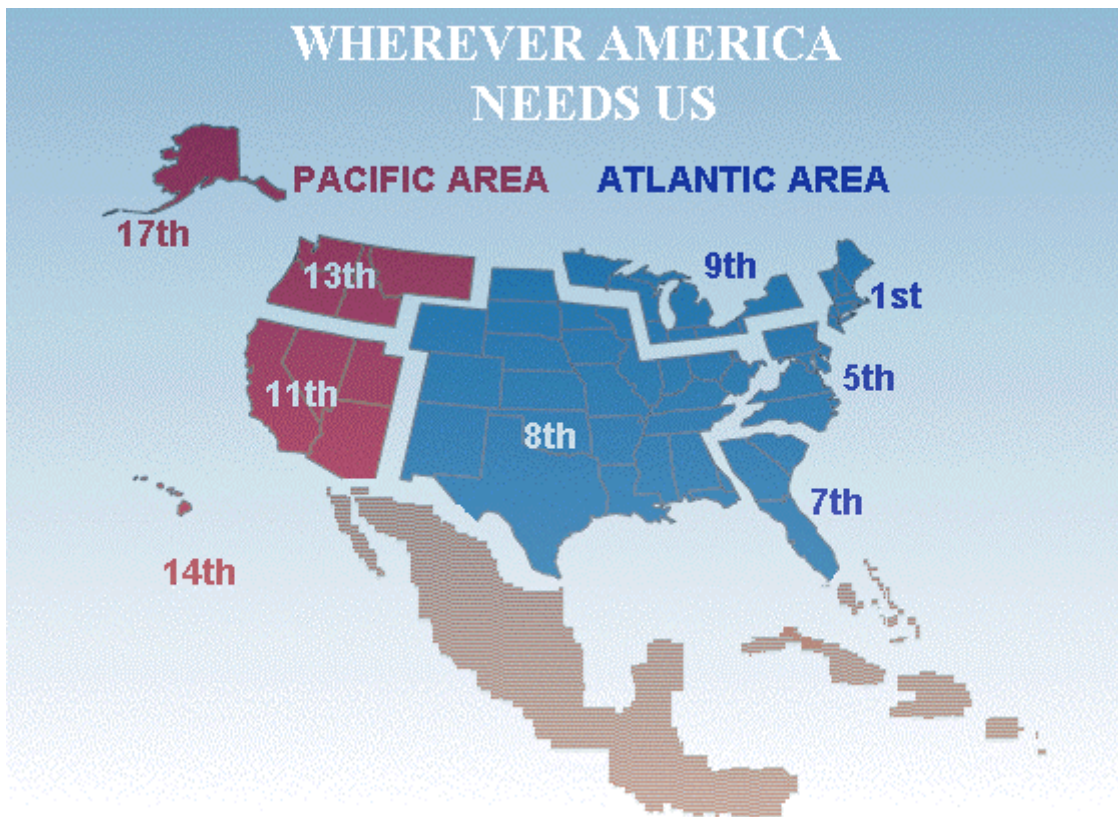


Chart 1

Beyond its civil missions under the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard will continue to work with Under Secretary of Border and Transportation Security and upon declaration of war, or when the President directs, operate as an arm of the Department of Defense.²⁴ This unique situation of operating as a U.S. armed force (14 U.S.C. 1) and as a law enforcement agency (14 U.S.C. 89) gives the Coast Guard capabilities that are extremely valuable to its diverse missions.²⁵

Within the Department of Defense, the threat of terrorism has taken top priority. As was stated in the most recent quadrennial defense review, “defense of the homeland is the department’s primary mission.”²⁶ Some of the recent changes within the Department of Defense were a result of the Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act of 2003. This act directed the establishment of an Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense position was established to “lead and focus the Department’s activities in homeland defense and homeland security, ensure internal coordination of DoD policy direction, provide guidance to Northern Command for its homeland defense mission and its military activities in support of homeland security...”²⁷

In order to effectively accomplish this “primary mission,” the Department of Defense established a combatant command whose job is to protect the entire U.S. Homeland. The April 2002 Unified Command Plan stated, “on 1 October 2002, the Commander, US Northern Command, will be established as the commander of a combatant command comprising all forces assigned for the accomplishment of the commander’s missions.”²⁸ NORTHCOM’s Area of Responsibility (AOR) includes the 48 contiguous states, District of Columbia, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea and its islands, (with the exception of Cuban land mass which is SOUTHCOM’s), as well as the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts. Pacific Command exercises Homeland Defense responsibilities for Hawaii.²⁹ NORTHCOM’s mission is to:

Conduct operations to deter, prevent and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories and interests within the assigned area of responsibility; and as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, provide military assistance to civil authorities including incidence management operations.³⁰

As a combatant command, NORTHCOM has three subordinate Joint Task Force (JTF) Commands. They are: JTF Headquarters Homeland Security, which is responsible for land and maritime defense planning and military assistance for civil authorities; JTF Civil Support, which is responsible for command and control responding to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosive events; and JTF 6, which provides support to federal, state and local counterdrug agencies. The command is expected to be staffed by 500 personnel when fully operational.³¹

Although it is a combatant command, NORTHCOM does not have forces assigned by the UCP or Secretary of Defense “Forces For” memorandum. However, at the time of this paper it is in the process of establishing a component command or a joint force command that would be responsible for the maritime defense of the United States. The current structure of the U.S. Navy has the operating force commanders and fleet commanders under a dual chain of command -- administratively reporting to the Chief of Naval Operations and operationally reporting to the appropriate Unified Combatant Commander. The Fleet Forces Commander has operational control over the U.S. Atlantic Fleet (Second Fleet) and U.S. Pacific Fleet (Third Fleet) Commanders. As units of the Navy enter the area of responsibility for a particular Navy area commander, they are operationally assigned to the appropriate numbered fleet.³²

Naval Coastal Warfare

Naval Coastal Warfare Overview (NWP 3-10) addresses the mission of protecting strategic shipping and naval vessels operating within the inshore/coastal area, anchorages and

harbors of the United States. The approach is an effective synergy of capabilities through the joint use of the U.S. Navy, Reserves and Coast Guard. This Maritime Defense Zone (MDZ) organization is designed to operate at threat levels I and II (a reasonably secure environment), but not a high threat area as in threat level III.

Level I Threat – Threats comprised of agents, saboteurs, sympathizers, and terrorists that can be responded to with unit, base, and base cluster self-defense measures.

Level II Threat – Threats from small tactical units, unconventional warfare forces, and guerrillas that can be responded to with self-defense measures and response force(s) with supporting fires.

Level III Threat – Threats from large tactical force operations, including airborne, heliborne, amphibious, infiltration, and major air operations that may have to be responded to with the timely commitment of tactical combat force.³³

Working under the operational control of a U.S. Navy Fleet Commander, the MDZ commander is a Coast Guard Area Commander (COMLANTAREA or COMPACAREA). The organizations operate under 1994 and 1998 memorandums of understanding (Department of the Navy and Department of Transportation).³⁴

DoD Limitations with Civilians

According to the new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, Paul McHale, there is a distinction between homeland security and homeland defense. Homeland security is defined by the Department of Homeland Security's previously stated objective, "Prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism, and minimize the damage and assist in the recovery from terrorist attacks."³⁵ Homeland defense however is defined as "the military protection of United States territory, domestic population, and critical defense infrastructure against external threats and aggression. It also includes routine, steady state activities designed to deter aggressors and to prepare U.S. military forces for action if deterrence fails."³⁶

Terrorism can be classified as either a criminal act or an act of war, dependent on its connection to state sponsorship. Where there is a link to hostile state sponsorship or an external armed and organized group, terrorism can be viewed as an act of war. In the absence of a clear link, terrorism is viewed as a criminal act.³⁷ This distinction, in all probability, will be difficult but is important regarding who can legally act on behalf of the U.S. government. As previously stated, the U.S. Coast Guard can act on matters as an armed force or a law enforcement agency. Other military services of the Department of Defense, however, have some limitations unless otherwise directed by the President. The *Posse Comitatus* Act “expresses a long standing national policy of appropriately limited application concerning the respective roles of civil and military authority in enforcement of the law.”³⁸ Joint Publication 3-08, Interagency Coordination During Joint Operations, states the following:

In all these efforts, **the military brings unique and very useful capabilities to the interagency forum** that have value in domestic support. However, the Constitution of the United States, laws, regulations, policies, and other legal issues all bear on the employment of the military in domestic operations. Considering the increased emphasis on domestic roles for the Department of Defense, **a balance must be defined during the planning phase between** the military capabilities and resources that can be applied to a situation and the constraints of law.³⁹

ANALYSIS

Economic Impact

The area and coastal installations a U.S. maritime force must protect are massive and present a significant challenge. Add to that the level of U.S. commerce that is conducted by sea and its economic impact, and the challenge becomes exponential as does its importance. More than 95 percent of U.S. exports and imports -- over one trillion dollars of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) -- enters or leaves the United States by ship.⁴⁰ That includes

billions of tons of petroleum, over 16,000 containers of goods per day and over 7,500 foreign-flag vessels entering U.S. ports each year.⁴¹ The impact of a terrorist attack against the U.S. shipping industry would be devastating, both physically and economically.

Organization and Coordination

In regard to the use of Department of Defense forces for homeland security, the Secretary of Defense categorizes them into three broad circumstances. First, are **temporary circumstances**, where Department of Defense forces are in a supporting role, as in security for special events. In the maritime setting, the U.S. Coast Guard would be the supported service and the U.S. Navy would be in a supporting role. Second, are **emergency circumstances** of a catastrophic nature that require post-event management. Again, in most of these cases in the maritime setting the U.S. Coast Guard would be the supported service and the U.S. Navy would be in a supporting role, (although this would be dependent on the nature of the emergency and the type of support). “Third, are the extraordinary circumstances [emphasis added] that require DoD unique capabilities to execute traditional military missions or combat operations, such as combat air patrols, maritime defense operations, or explosive ordnance disposal, within our borders.”⁴² In these circumstances, the opposite would be true, the U.S. Navy would be the supported service and the U.S. Coast Guard would be in a supporting role.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, (speaking for the Secretary of Defense) has identified specific dividing lines in how the Department of Defense will operate with regard to the previously stated definitions of homeland security and homeland defense. “With respect to homeland security, the Defense Department will operate in support of a lead federal agency. While in homeland defense activities, the Defense Department will take the

lead and be supported by other federal agencies.”⁴³ He stated further, “In general, the Department of Defense is responsible for **homeland defense** missions – to defend the land, maritime, and aerospace approaches from external threats – while the Department of Homeland Security will be responsible for major elements of domestic security and civil preparedness.”⁴⁴

In a C2 organization the dividing lines between Homeland Security and Homeland Defense could become an issue. According to the previously stated definition, C2 is the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission. The Coast Guard’s dual role operating under the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense, would allow them to bridge this division with the agreement of the Department of Homeland Security and the DoD or as directed by the President.

There are obviously many avenues to approach an efficient maritime command and control organization. A sound command and control organization requires unity of effort, centralized direction with decentralized execution and interoperability. Unity of effort is essential for the success of any command in achieving its objectives. Unity of command, as in having a single commander controlling all forces is achieved by establishing “clear-cut division of responsibility.”⁴⁵ Centralized direction provided from leadership effects top down information flow. This requires centralized information gathering and decision making. Decentralized execution allows the higher command to issue orders to include the “what” and “when,” but not the “how,” delegating authority to subordinate commands as much as possible.⁴⁶ Interoperability is achieved through “doctrine, tactics and techniques,

plans, training, and material and fielding processes.”⁴⁷ In order for the command and control organization to be effective, each command echelon must be clearly established.

Achieving these C2 requirements could be accomplished by the use of a prior organized defense program, the Naval Coastal Warfare plan. This plan already has a command and control organization put together to include the Maritime Defense Zone commanders (Coast Guard Area Commanders), and the use of the Naval Reserves. The merits of a proven plan with an established organization would prevent major reorganization to current command structures within the Coast Guard and Navy. The problem with this plan is in the limitations for executing missions against threats of large scale tactical forces (Level III), or extraordinary circumstance. The plan was written for level I and II threats alone and is severely lacking in capability to handle larger tactical combat threats.

Another option might be to hand the entire coastal maritime protection responsibility over to the Coast Guard. There are many merits in this approach. The Coast Guard is already a primary force in coastal maritime security and has moved under the command of the new Department of Homeland Security. This would achieve the C2 requirements of unity of command, control, centralized direction and decentralized execution. The Coast Guard’s dual status as both law enforcement and a military force make the Coast Guard ideally suited for this role. The limitations fall on the Coast Guard’s size and ability to handle the previously discussed level III threats or extraordinary circumstance that could arise. In those cases, a larger military force would be required and the Department of Defense would most likely be required to act.

RECOMMENDATION

The new asymmetric threat of the twenty-first Century has forced the United States to change its strategies, operating procedures and even reorganize government departments. The terrorist threat in the maritime environment has many challenges that must be overcome. This paper has identified the key government departments and agencies that are most engaged in the U.S. maritime domain. The question remains: what is the most efficient C2 organization for maritime protection of the U.S. coastline against terrorist threats?

The best option has already begun at the senior levels of command. Many of the requirements to limit organizations involved or to pull their resources into one cohesive group are happening at the time of this writing. The establishment of the Department of Homeland Security and the restructuring of the Unified Command Plan, establishing NORTHCOM, have made great strides in simplifying the Command and Control structure at the strategic and theater strategic levels. This works *towards* the C2 requirements of unity of command, as in having a single commander controlling all forces and unity of effort. What follows needs to be an organization (or organizations) that has the flexibility to transition between war time and peace, access national intelligence networks, and legally integrate the military and law enforcement officials in their efforts.

In order to follow the new Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense's classification of homeland defense and homeland security, the command and control structure needs to be organized accordingly. It is obvious there will be a requirement for multiple agency/department contributions in the war against terrorism. The Command and Control organization must be able to allow that flexibility within the constraints of the law.

With NORTHCOM as the Unified Combatant Command for the U.S. homeland AOR, a naval component command or Joint Forces Maritime Component Command should be the

subordinate who would focus on the maritime domain of homeland defense, centralized direction requiring centralized information gathering and decision making. Using current naval command structure, Commander, Fleet Forces Command (CFFC, having operational control over Second and Third Fleet) could act as Joint Forces Maritime Component Command North (JFMCC North), becoming the maritime force commander for homeland defense.

The decentralized execution part of this command and control organization is currently operational in both the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard command structure: the Navy divided into the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, the Coast Guard divided into the Atlantic and Pacific Areas. The question then becomes who would have control at this next level? As the analysis has shown, there are requirements from both the Navy and the Coast Guard, dependent on the type, location and level of the threat. The conclusion would be a C2 structure that allows the JFMCC the flexibility to choose a subordinate Maritime Homeland Defense (MHL D) Commander with the specific capabilities to meet the task.

This could be accomplished without major changes in either Service's command structure. Using the previously-described decentralized command structure, the following would be the four MHL D Commanders: Coast Guard Forces West (CGFORWEST, current Coast Guard Pacific Area Commander); Navy Pacific Fleet (PACFLEET, current Navy Commander Third Fleet); Navy Atlantic Fleet (LANTFLEET, current Navy Commander Second Fleet) and Coast Guard Forces East (CGFOREAST, current Coast Guard Atlantic Area Commander).

Under the MHL D, Commanders would be Combined Task Forces, (CTF) formed from both Services, and other required agencies. These CTFs would be: CTF Coast Guard Pacific (CTF CGP); CTF Navy Pacific (CTF NAVP); CTF Navy Atlantic (CTF NAVL) and CTF

Coast Guard Atlantic (CTF CGA). Chart 2 displays the maritime C2 structure graphically. Each task force would be tailored to focus on its type, location and level of threat to be used in the maritime war against terrorism.

This C2 structure allows flexibility of tasking from the strategic level to the tactical levels of command. It also allows the tasking to flow down either department's command structure, interact at the required levels and ensure adequate force availability to legally engage the threat as required.

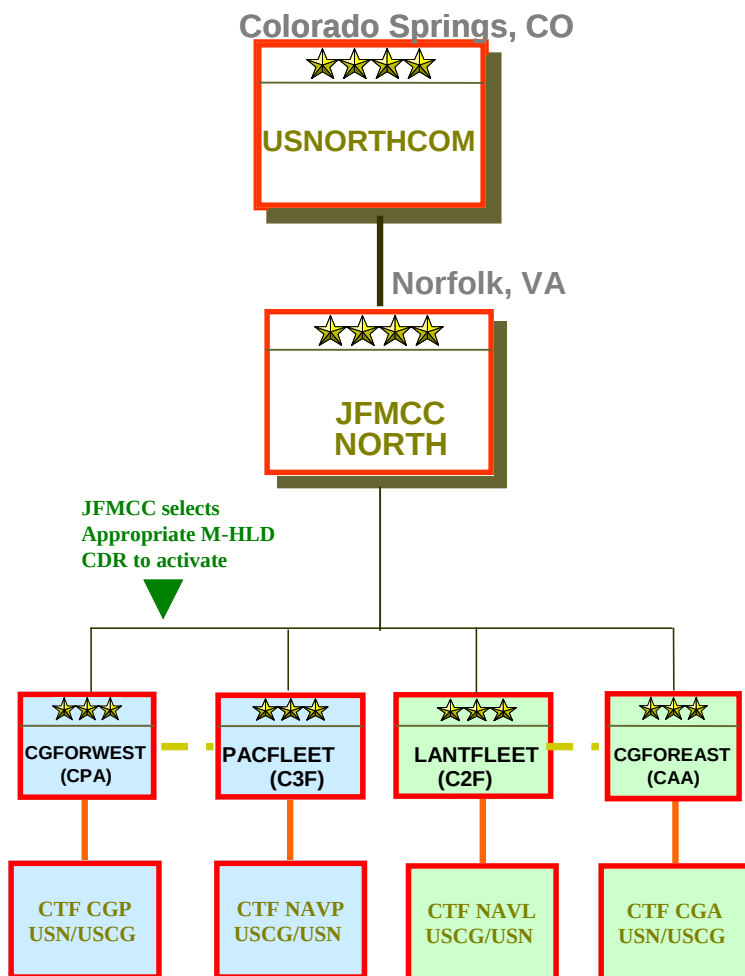


Chart 2

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