

Marine Corps' Concept Based Requirement Process Is Broken

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Marine Corps' Concept Based Requirement Process Is Broken
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INTRODUCTION

General John M. Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) stated, "The nature of modern warfare demands that we fight as a joint team. This was important yesterday, it is essential today, and it will be even more imperative tomorrow. Joint Vision 2010 provides an operationally based template for the evolution of the Armed Forces for a challenging and uncertain future. It must become a benchmark for Service and Unified Command visions."¹ Simply put, the key to success is working together. Yet the most powerful, progressive, technologically advanced nation in the world can not see that combat development and acquisition done in a vacuum threatens this nation's success in the joint environment. The United States Marine Corps' current concept-based requirement process (CBRP) creates problems for joint battlefield operations and requires restructuring.

THE CURRENT REQUIREMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

As is general knowledge, requirements can be identified by anyone in the Corps but are generally routed through a combatant commander. This person is referred to as an advocate. The

¹ "Joint Visions 2010," Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, <<http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/history/jv2010.pdf>> (28 January 2004).

advocate drafts a universal need statement (UNS), the key to the CBRP. "As the primary means of entry into the CBRP, the UNS acts as a work request for current and future capabilities. The UNS identifies operational enhancement opportunities and deficiencies in capabilities. Opportunities include new capabilities, improvements to existing capabilities, and elimination of redundant or unneeded capabilities."² However, the advocate's UNS must relate the advocate's idea to a specific mission. He must persuade the reader that the mission is not being met due to specific conceptual or technical deficiencies. The UNS is reviewed locally. If approved by the local commander, it is forwarded up the chain of command for further approval.

The Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) Assessment Branch is the organization within the Marine Corps that receives all universal need statements approved by either Marine Forces, Atlantic or Pacific. The Assessment Branch enters the UNS into a Marine Corps internal database, which assigns it a temporary Combat Development Tracking System (CDTS) number. The UNS then is reviewed by MCCDC to determine whether or not the need is addressed in the Combat Development System (CDS) and if it complies with policy. If the identified

² "Universal Need Statement: Originator's Request," Marine Corps Combat Development Command, <
<http://usmc.boats.dt.navy.mil/shareddocs/universalNeed.pdf>> (28 January 2004)

requirement is not already in the CDS and the UNS complies with policy, the UNS continues its course; the UNS is forwarded to the Advocate.

Each directorate has an Advocate. Not to be confused with the initial advocate, this latter Advocate is usually a three star general. Without the Advocate's endorsement, the UNS dies. With the Advocate's endorsement, the UNS is entered into the CDS and is able to "live another day."

The UNS that is endorsed by the Advocate is forwarded to the MCCDC's Studies and Analysis Division. Where the UNS is analyzed in terms of USMC future capability plan. The results are documented as a "Capability Statement" and appended to the UNS. At this time, the UNS is also assigned a permanent CDTs number.

Subsequently, MCCDC's Deputy CG for Combat Development conducts a review through the Assessment Branch. The UNS is assessed against the pillars of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF). The results are documented and appended to the UNS and its capability statement.

An UNS will go through more scrutiny by MCCDC and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC) to ensure the requirements identified by the initial advocate and MCCDC are met. The scrutiny continues into the acquisition phase.

During the acquisition phase, contractors bid to produce the material solution that is supposed to correct the deficiency identified in the UNS. Unfortunately, CBRP does not incorporate substantial input from the other services. Consequently, the Marine Corps could contract for communication material solutions, which may not be compatible with communication equipment employed by the Army, Navy, or Air Force. "Unfortunately, this oversight often creates additional work for the user who has to resolve the incompatibility issue in the field. Such problems have the potential to impact force readiness adversely." have to find inadequate solutions for something that should have been foreseen.

Joint Vision 2010 and 2020 requires the Marine Corps to reevaluate how it does business. These documents mandate all services to live, eat, sleep, and dream "jointness." The USJFCOM has been designated to train the services to operate in a joint environment. USJFCOM's role is supposed to be that of, "the team captain...integrating U.S. military capabilities, ensuring our strategies and systems are interoperable, and vetting new requirements with the Department of Defense."³ With the help of U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM), all service members should soon have no problem dreaming in purple.

³ "USJFCOM's role in integration, interoperability, & requirements," United States Joint Forces Command, < <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/interop.html> > (28 January)

The difficulty with this approach is that USJFCOM currently is not part of the CRBP that identifies and validates requirements within the Marine Corps. Thus, Joint Force Command (JFC) has no control mechanism by which to monitor what the Marine Corps or the other services are doing internally. While the JFC ensures interoperability at the operational and strategic levels of war through the Joint C4ISR Battle Center (JBC), the JBC is not involved in the procurement process. Unfortunately, the proprietary mindset of each service has and will contribute to further delay unless drastic cultural changes occur.

EXAMPLES FAILED PROCUREMENT

Without a formal mechanism to integrate procurement, the services will continue to waste funds, time, and effort. The failure of the voluntary joint procurement of new satellite platforms and digital compatibility provide two such examples.

LMST vs STAR-T

In the late 1990's, the Marine Corps and the Army saw a need for new satellite platforms. The AN/TSC-93s and 85s were rapidly approaching the end of their service lives. The Army

and the Marine Corps had limited time to find a replacement without spending funds to extend the antiquated SATCOM platform's service life. The Army and the Marine Corps were looking for a satellite platform that was rugged, operated in the C, X, and Ku band, and was mobile. At the time, the Air Force employed a satellite van called the lightweight multiband satellite terminal (LMST). The terminal was fully redundant, air deployable, and both GMF and TRI-TAC interoperable. Moreover, the LMST operated within the three frequency bands required by both services and had been successfully operationally tested.

However, instead of saving money on research and development by purchasing the LMST and scaling it to their needs, the Army and the Marine Corps decided to go off in search of something better. They committed to SHF TRIBAND RANGE EXTENSION TERMINAL (STAR-T) and invested a large amount of money in the project, only to miss milestone after milestone. Needless to say, in the interim, the Army and the Marine Corps had to spend a considerable amount of money on extending the service life of their aging SATCOM vans, while the STAR-T continued to miss milestones. Finally, the Marine Corps became disillusioned by the progress of the STAR-T program and purchased a variant of the Air Force LMST. The Army is still searching for an answer to their satellite platform requirement.

Data Automated Communication Terminal (DACT) vs Blue Force Tracking

In the mid-1990's, the Marine Corps saw a need for a digital capability that would allow friendly forces to identify other friendly forces on the battlefield. This capability would give the commander better situational awareness on the disposition of his forces. It would also decrease the number of fratricide incidents. Instead of looking to the other services for assistance, the Marine Corps developed the DACT. While the DACT has many capabilities, it is not compatible with the Army's Blue Force Tracker. As a matter fact, the functionality of the DACT is similar to that of Blue Force Tracker. Again, the Marine Corps spent unnecessary funds researching and developing a piece of equipment to meet a need that was already met successfully in another service.

THE PRESENT SOLUTION

Consequently, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently (June 2003) signed an order (CJCSI 3170), which went

into effect December 2003 mandating the services to change their ways. In theory, before individual services can proceed with the development and acquisition of requirement solutions, a Joint Review Oversight Council (JROC) must approve it.

CONCLUSION

If Joint Vision 2010 is going to come to fruition, the Marine Corps must stop developing service specific equipment without considering the joint ramifications. It must embrace the idea of the joint battlefield instead of the cooperative battlefield. The USMC must now wait and see if the CJCSI 3170 can change the culture and take the Corps into the purple future.

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