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**THE GLASS CEILING – A QUESTION OF JOINT OFFICER DEVELOPMENT – WHY  
ONLY FIVE USAF GEOGRAPHIC COMBATANT COMMANDERS?**

by

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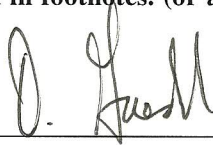
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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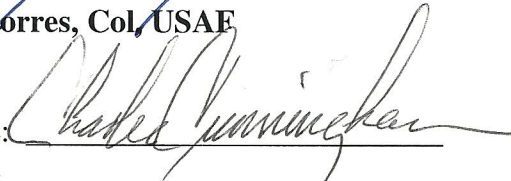
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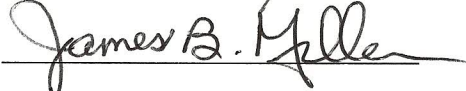
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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 dramatically increased the power, influence, and significance of the six Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) Commanders, these positions have evolved into the premier commands within the U.S. military. At the same time, there has grown a disparity in the placement of the officers from across the Services into these positions. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate this disparity in the GCC Commander appointments by using the USAF as a case study to determine if a more comprehensive, deliberate officer developmental plan could help produce more senior joint leaders poised to lead at the highest levels.

The topic will be approached through five phases that progress from the desired qualities of joint leaders to the key legislation that governs joint officer development to subsequent phases that focus on the problem—the historic inequity in Service representation in these pinnacle command positions. The third and fourth phases will review the significance of these commands, document the disparity, and use the USAF as a case study to examine reasons behind the disparity.

The final phase will be a recommended methodology to improve the development of future joint senior leaders with the credibility and capability to lead the joint force. This methodology includes addressing internal cultural issues, institutionalizing a comprehensive officer development strategy, and purposefully managing the General Officer corps' joint experiences to allow establishment of credibility from direct interaction with the senior leadership who influences combatant command selection. The lessons and recommendations are pertinent to all of the Services.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nearly a quarter century since approval of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense (DOD) Reorganization Act of 1986, the Military Departments have taken considerable steps to improve their operational employment as a truly joint force during training, peacetime, and combat operations. After the successes in Operations DESERT STORM and IRAQI FREEDOM, the Services have clearly demonstrated their ability to operate together as a joint combat fighting force. Although the Services can operate together effectively, the question remains whether or not they are succeeding as well at developing and producing the best senior joint officers. Two separate Government Accounting Office studies address this question. Both studies acknowledge that the military has improved its ability to operate jointly, but it still lacks a strategic plan for developing senior joint leaders.<sup>1</sup> The February 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report further emphasizes that a problem of officer development exists when it states that “a focus on weapons acquisition programs and overall force structure crowd out needed attention concerning how the Military Departments generate, train, and sustain their leaders.”<sup>2</sup>

As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote in the newly released 2011 National Military Strategy, “our Joint Force must prepare for an increasingly dynamic and uncertain future in which a full spectrum of military capabilities and attributes will be

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<sup>1</sup> Derek B. Stewart, *A Strategic Approach is Needed to Improve Joint Officer Development*, GAO-03-548T (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, 2003) and *Joint Officer Development has Improved, but a Strategic Approach is Needed* (Washington, D.C., December, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> *Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2010).

required to prevent and win our Nation's wars."<sup>3</sup> At the forefront of the military's mission abroad are the nation's Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) Commanders. After Goldwater Nichols, these command positions have essentially become the pinnacle of command. These leaders are now the supported and supporting commanders entrusted with the responsibility to defend the United States (U.S.) and its allies across the globe. The elevated importance of the GCC Commander's position directly translates to a need to ensure that the senior leaders appointed to these positions are the absolute best from all the Services. In today's fiscally constrained domestic environment and volatile global environment, now more than ever, the DOD must grow and promote strategic, visionary, critical thinkers capable of effectively leveraging the military instrument of national power in support of U.S. national interests around the world.

An analysis of recent history indicates that since 1947 when the four separate Services were formally established, the majority of the GCC Commander positions have traditionally been filled by Army and Navy officers. This disparity is concerning. The superior military capability of the U.S. is due in large part to its joint force, but limiting leadership of these forces to certain Services is inherently dangerous as a myopic perspective from leadership in any organization will produce solutions that limit creativity and risk groupthink. As the military is challenged with an ever-changing and dynamic environment, existing paradigms of its leadership will limit the organization's ability to adapt to change and leadership will rely on traditional solutions that are typical of the dominant Service in power. Instead the DOD, as an institution, must develop broadminded, strategic thinkers to address the uncertain future.

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<sup>3</sup> Michael G. Mullen, foreword to *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 2011: Redefining America's Military Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011).

After establishing the validity of the disparity and inherent challenges, this thesis will set upon its ultimate purpose, to recommend the creation of a strategic development plan that can be used to aid the development of future joint leaders. This thesis will use the U.S. Air Force (USAF) as a case study to illustrate that a comprehensive and deliberate officer developmental plan could help the USAF produce more future senior leaders poised to lead joint forces at the highest levels. Although this paper will be based on the USAF, the underlying lessons and recommendations are pertinent to each of the Services.

The topic will be approached through five phases that progress from the desired qualities of joint leaders to the key legislation that governs joint officer development to the subsequent phases that focus on the problem—the historic inequity in Service representation in these pinnacle commands. The third and fourth phases will review the significance of these commands, document the disparity, and use the USAF as a case study to examine reasons behind the disparity. This question of disparity is critical to understand—*why* is there a lack of USAF GCC Commanders? Is it because USAF officers do not possess the ideal characteristics of joint leaders? Do they lack substantive joint experiences possessed by Service peers? Does the USAF lack an effective strategy for growing senior officers that are competitive to serve as GCC Commanders?

In any case, the USAF should have been able to produce more than five GCC Commanders since 1947 and the intrinsic causes warrant investigation. The final phase of the paper will include a recommended methodology to improve the development of future joint senior leaders with the credibility and capability to lead military forces at the highest levels.

# CHAPTER 1

## QUALITIES OF A JOINT LEADER

To begin this analysis, it is important to first identify the qualities and attributes that a joint leader should possess. While countless books have been written to capture the essence of leadership and how to become an effective leader, the topic of leadership itself is an enigma that is extremely difficult to define. In order to avoid an argument of semantics by attempting to investigate the ethereal subject of leadership, this chapter will focus on *which* specific qualities and attributes are desired in leaders rather than discussing *how* to be a leader. There is a tremendous amount of literature written about desirable characteristics of leaders, but this review will focus on those traits that are found in joint doctrine and official military instructions.

### **Joint Doctrine**

In Joint Publication (JP) 1, values of joint service are listed to emphasize commonalities among the Services and the fundamental ideals of military members. The publication further explains that these qualities contribute to the success of the U.S. joint force and emphasize “the essence of military professionalism.”<sup>1</sup> These are values that are expected to be embodied in a joint leader and core attributes desired in all military leaders. JP-1 lists five specific values: Integrity, competence, physical courage, moral

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<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1. Change 1, 20 March 2009 ed. (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007), I-3.

courage, and teamwork.<sup>2</sup> A few of these warrant additional review that will be relevant later.

Integrity is listed first and identified as the “foremost value.”<sup>3</sup> Its essence is based upon trust—not only the trust that extends between Service men and women, but the trust the Services must have in each other as part of an interdependent military force. Trust is equally important outside of the Services as well and civilian leadership’s perception of each Service is crucial. For example, Senator John McCain’s distrust of the USAF’s handling of acquisitions programs has been detrimental, not only to the USAF, but also to USAF officers’ careers and the nomination of a USAF officer to lead U.S. Pacific Command. Quite simply, a perceived lack of integrity on the part of the USAF and its officers produced unwanted scrutiny that has continued to delay the USAF’s acquisition plans.<sup>4</sup> This perceived mishandling of acquisition programs has resulted in a credibility crisis for the USAF and illustrates the importance civilian leaders place on military values, such as integrity.

The second joint value, competence, is also worthy of discussion. Although JP-1 explains competence from the perspective of technical competency at performing specific war related duties, competence encompasses something different for the senior leader. In addition to providing “trained and ready, competent and confident forces and leaders, able to fight decisively under Joint Force Commanders (JFC),” the Services also owe

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<sup>2</sup> JP-1, I-3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Grant, “Why Airman Don’t Command,” *Air Force Magazine*, 91, no. 3 (March 2008): 48-49.

competent senior leaders to lead the JFCs.<sup>5</sup> In this context, competency must also include the capacity for critical thinking and problem solving. A senior joint leader entrusted with leading the nation's military force must possess the intellectual capability to address the challenges ahead in the future security environment, especially with diminishing resources for the DOD.

Moral courage is another value that stretches beyond actual military operations when applied to the Strategic or Theater Strategic decision making level required by GCC Commanders and key leaders on the Joint Staff. Much like integrity requires doing what is right whether anyone is watching or not, moral courage also requires making the right decision whether "unpopular or contrary to conventional wisdom."<sup>6</sup> As a senior joint leader, an officer must possess this attribute and be willing to make the best decision for the entire military force, whether it is unpopular with one's own Service or others. This attribute directly compliments the two previous joint force values, since it requires integrity to do the right thing and competence to make the best choice in a complex world.

Lastly, the joint value of teamwork quite simply epitomizes jointness. As written in JP-1, "Joint warfare is team warfare."<sup>7</sup> The principles of unity of effort, as well as unity of command, necessitate teamwork. Unity of effort requires joint forces to work together as a team to accomplish the mission regardless of Service, while unity of command implies that the joint forces are willing and professional enough to work for any commander regardless of his or her Service affiliation. Therefore, any successful

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<sup>5</sup> JP-1, I-3

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., I-4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., I-2.

joint leader must possess the quality of being a team leader who can inspire and encourage teamwork, while leading from the highest levels. In fact, teamwork is so vital to joint operations that it is further defined in JP-1 using three subareas to emphasize its importance: Trust and confidence, delegation of authority, and cooperation.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Chairman's Vision**

In addition to doctrine defined characteristics that are needed in our senior joint leaders, a review of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's (CJCS) Vision for Joint Officer Development from November 2005 provides other attributes and qualities that are valued in joint officers. This document was created in response to the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act of 2005, which directed the Secretary of Defense to "develop a strategic plan for joint officer management and joint professional military education that links joint officer development to the accomplishment of the overall missions and goals of the DOD, as set forth in the most recent national military strategy."<sup>9</sup> The Chairman's Foreword, signed by then CJCS, General Peter Pace, acknowledges the legal requirement for the DOD to develop its joint officer force, and stresses the importance of growing officers to lead the future force. His vision emphasizes that core joint leader competencies must be developed to produce the leaders required for tomorrow.<sup>10</sup>

The CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development specifies three distinct qualities that are envisioned for officers as they progress through their individual careers. This

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<sup>8</sup> JP-1, I-3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005*, Public Law 108-375, 108th Congress (October 28, 2004), 85.

<sup>10</sup> *Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision for Joint Officer Development*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), iv.

document clearly parallels the impetus behind this thesis when it states that “the objective of JOD [Joint Officer Development] is to produce the largest possible body of fully qualified and inherently joint officers suitable for joint command and staff responsibilities.”<sup>11</sup> Although the document discusses joint competencies, it acknowledges that the foundation of every officer is rooted in his or her individual Service, but by the time an officer has reached the grade of O-6, a broader perspective should be achieved. The Chairman’s vision plans to develop officers to this rank in order to ensure they possess the qualities of strategic mindedness, critical thinking, and skilled joint warfighting.

Being a skilled warfighter is the starting point for every officer, regardless of Service. The formative years of an officer’s career begin with learning individual core competencies for his or her primary wartime duties whether, as an Airman, Marine, Sailor, or Soldier. As these officers grow and develop, the expectation is for them to become a joint warfighter. As a skilled joint warfighter, an officer must possess the capacity to operate outside his or her individual Service to both serve with and lead joint forces. As a junior officer, Service-specific, tactical level operations are predominantly an officer’s focus. As they progress, however, officers operating in the joint arena should strive to become competent joint leaders who are experienced in the application of military force comprised of all the elements of the armed forces including coalition partners as well as interagency partners. In concert with the Chairman’s vision, “future joint officers must possess the inherent ability to make the sum of the whole greater than the parts by possessing an unprecedented ability to integrate diverse elements in a

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<sup>11</sup> *Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision for Joint Officer Development*, 3.

complex environment.”<sup>12</sup> The skills required to meet the Chairman’s vision do not appear instantaneously; instead, an officer’s broad experiences over the span of a career will eventually produce this leadership ability.<sup>13</sup>

The current CJCS, Admiral Mullen, published the “Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO)” in January 2009, which further emphasizes the importance of growing joint leaders. The CCJO stresses the significance of developing operational level leaders since the bulk of joint operations are executed at this level, but it also recognizes that the Services need to grow “senior leaders who are experts not only in operational art, but also in the development and execution of national strategy.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, the Chairman wants his officers to be “strategically minded” as mentioned in General Pace’s vision document. This quality necessitates the leader’s comfort operating at higher levels where “influence, collaboration, negotiation, and consensus building” are needed to handle more ethereal concepts and plans that are more general in nature, yet impact the entire nation and, potentially, other nations as well.<sup>15</sup>

The final quality that is highlighted in the CJCS vision document is “critical thinker.” Perhaps the most important of the three, being a critical thinker involves being “able to develop innovative solutions, thinking in time and context within the complex environment to bring about desired effects.”<sup>16</sup> A talented senior joint leader must possess this quality in order to operate in a wide-reaching environment, working with partners

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<sup>12</sup> *Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision for Joint Officer Development*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*. Version 3.0. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2009), 34.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision for Joint Officer Development*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

from other Services, agencies, and nations. A critical thinker, in this context, should be formally educated and intellectually capable of handling tremendously challenging issues with multiple variables.

In summary, JP-1 and the Chairman's own documents identify qualities that are desired in joint leaders and illustrate the DOD's intent to define these characteristics for the Services. This review also showed how these qualities grow in complexity throughout an officer's career. While the JP-1 characteristics are very specific, the Chairman's vision addresses traits that are broader in nature and more important for senior leaders to possess. The next step is to understand the educational process through which military officers obtain these qualities and attributes.

## CHAPTER 2

### EDUCATION OF A JOINT OFFICER

Professional military education (PME) plays a vital role in joint officer development, enabling officers to attain the educational and intellectual capacity to handle multifaceted problems that will likely arise at the strategic level. As Defense Secretary Gates stated in a 2008 address to the USAF's Air University: "The Armed Forces will need principled, creative, reform-minded leaders" to handle the unique and uncertain global security environment.<sup>1</sup> This message was further emphasized in the DOD's 2010 QDR report.<sup>2</sup> The education of a military officer, regardless of Service, must extend beyond one's undergraduate degree and basic core competency training. The Services must develop, train, and grow warrior scholars who possess the unique capability to both execute and lead combat operations, and more importantly, understand history's relevance to future strategies and application of military force. The DOD as an institution must grow officers who are capable of thinking beyond one's own Service and able to lead in the joint environment.

#### **Guidance from Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986**

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 directed that the DOD would grow and develop joint officers and stipulated specific operational and educational requirements for accomplishing this mandate. The Goldwater-Nichols Act requires officers to serve in a joint duty assignment prior to

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<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "The Contact Sport Senior Leaders Must Play." *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Spring 2009, 7.

<sup>2</sup> QDR 2010.

selection for promotion to the rank of Brigadier General or Rear Admiral. Although the Secretary of Defense was identified as the waiver authority for this particular promotion requirement, the Services know that the expectation of senior civilian leadership is that the DOD's highest ranking officers will be joint qualified officers. This Act also requires the CJCS to provide a written evaluation of an officer's performance in joint duty positions to the Secretary of Defense for any officer recommended for promotion to three-star General or Admiral. The Secretary, in turn, is required to provide this report to the President.<sup>3</sup> Given this mandated emphasis on joint duty, the Services must pay significant attention to joint assignments in order to allow their officers to be promoted and continue to progress within his or her own Service.

In addition to affecting promotion to General and Flag rank, the Goldwater-Nichols Act also provides promotion policy for all joint officers. In an effort to ensure the highest quality of officers are assigned to joint duty assignments, the Goldwater-Nichols Act requires that officers assigned to joint staff positions be promoted at the same rate or better than those officers in the same grade and specialty as those serving on each Service's headquarters staff. The Goldwater-Nichols Act further requires an officer currently assigned to a joint position to participate on each promotion board that is considering any officer who has served on a joint staff.<sup>4</sup>

### **Education of an Officer**

Prior to discussing the Goldwater-Nichols Act's specific officer educational requirements, it is important to review and understand the current officer education

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<sup>3</sup> *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, Public Law 99-433, 99th Congress (October 1, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

process as a whole. For military officers, the training and education process starts before commissioning. An officer's educational process can be broken down into five basic levels that are associated with rank or grade. The first is the precommissioning level where an officer will earn his or her commission. Once commissioned, an officer will progress through four additional phases based on rank. As promotions occur, more educational opportunities present themselves. The remaining four phases are: A primary or basic level officer training for officers in grades O-1 through O-3; an intermediate level for O-4s; a senior level for grades O-5 and O-6; and finally a General/Flag Officer level for the few officers selected to such ranks.<sup>5</sup>

For the precommissioning phase, all of the Services commission their officers through either Officer Training or Candidate School, one of the nation's Service academies, or the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) commissioning program. An officer begins his or her education by first learning basic officership skills through one of these programs. After receiving a commission, each officer will typically study and learn a particular skill in order to be prepared for a specific primary duty in their respective Service. These initial training courses, such as a pilot learning to fly a plane, or a sailor learning to operate a ship, become the introductory building blocks of an officer's particular specialty. This foundational education is common among all the Services and comprises the primary or basic phase of an officer's education. During these first two phases, a new officer is fully aware of the other Services, but the education of an officer during these phases does not place any significant emphasis on producing joint officers or joint leaders. Instead, the preponderance of officers will learn their individual specialty

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<sup>5</sup> *Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01D*, Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP), (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), A-A-2.

and how to operate and execute their mission within their Service, while likely operating within the joint environment.

These basic formative years in an officer's career extend until reaching the grade of O-4 (equivalent rank of Major or Lieutenant Commander). As an O-4, the officer is now eligible to begin the intermediate level of an officer's educational development. This period of time typically begins after approximately 10 years of commissioned service. By this point in an officer's career, an officer will have established a solid foundation within the basic core competency skill-set for their primary duty, and will have had opportunities to perform in one or more leadership roles within his or her own community and Service.

Although many officers may have been involved in joint operations prior to this point, most officers will have predominantly worked within their individual Services during these formative years. In fact, the Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL) for 2009 does not list any officer positions below the grade of O-4, supporting the idea that until this point in their careers, officers would be focused within their own Service.<sup>6</sup>

As officers transition from company grade to field grade, they are presented with joint-specific officer development opportunities. These officers become eligible to complete an intermediate level service school or equivalent through a distance-learning course or attendance in residence. Each of the Services offers an intermediate level school, such as the Army Command and General Staff College or the USAF Air

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<sup>6</sup> The JDAL is an official document that lists every joint position for which an officer can accrue time towards joint experience.

Command and Staff College.<sup>7</sup> Though the Services offered these intermediate level educational opportunities for many years, the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 expanded on guidance from the Goldwater-Nichols Act regarding joint officer education.<sup>8</sup>

The Reagan Act specified that officers will receive joint professional military education (JPME) through a three-phase approach, and defined the basic material to be included in the curriculum. The Reagan Act required a Phase I level of JPME instruction be included in all the Services' existing intermediate level schools. It even went so far as to explain specific topics to be included. For example, JPME Phase I instruction was mandated to include a review of the National Military Strategy, joint planning, joint doctrine, and joint command and control.<sup>9</sup>

This intermediate stage marks a notable change from the educational process of more junior officers. A junior officer is focused on training and development of specific tactical level warfighting and leadership skills and duties. At the Major/Lieutenant Commander rank, the DOD and Services begin to invest more in an officer's growth and expects more from its officers. During this intermediate level, the emphasis is now on introducing the operational level of warfare within the context of the joint environment.<sup>10</sup>

As officers transition to the O-5 and O-6 ranks, they are eligible for yet another level of education. Additionally, the focus moves from understanding the operational

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<sup>7</sup> All the Services have an intermediate level PME school though only two are listed in the text above as an example. The Marine Corps has a Command and General Staff College in the Marine Corps University. The Navy has the College of Naval Command and Staff under its Naval War College.

<sup>8</sup> *Reagan Act*, 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>10</sup> OPMEP, A-A-2.

level of warfare to a more strategic level of thinking. The Reagan Act's guidance provides formal direction to the Services to ensure a shift to a more strategic focus occurs. The Reagan Act mandated that a JPME Phase II level of instruction be taught in residence at either the Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC) or certain senior level service schools that must be approved by the Secretary of Defense. This change meant that the Services' War Colleges, such as the Naval War College or Marine Corps War College could be approved to award JPME Phase II credit to graduates.<sup>11</sup> To qualify, however, once again the Reagan Act provided a specific list of joint topics that had to be included in the syllabus.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the Reagan Act directed that a Capstone course be required for all officers selected for promotion to one-star General or Admiral. This course fulfills the responsibility that the Services' Flag and General officers are properly prepared to work with other Services in a joint environment. Furthermore, the waiver authority for the Capstone educational course rests with the Secretary of Defense and can only be delegated to the Deputy Under Secretary or Assistant Under Secretary.<sup>13</sup>

### **Guidance from John Warner National Defense Authorization Act of 2007**

Although the term *joint officer* has been used thus far without an explicit definition, doctrine defines it by the mandated training items necessary for designation as a *joint officer*. Goldwater-Nichols Act codified the requirements that an officer complete

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<sup>11</sup> Again, all the Services have a senior level PME War College though only two are listed as examples above. The USAF has the Air War College and the Army has the Army War College.

<sup>12</sup> In order to meet the requirements for JPME Phase II credit, the Reagan Act required that national security strategy; theater strategy and systems; joint planning processes and systems; and joint, interagency, and multinational capabilities and the integration of those capabilities be taught. 89.

<sup>13</sup> *Reagan Act*, 88-89.

JPME Phases I and II, as well as a duty assignment in a position officially identified as a joint position to earn the designation *joint officer*. The positions acceptable for acquiring joint credit are consolidated in a JDAL that is approved by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and maintained by the Joint Staff, J1.<sup>14</sup>

In 2007, the DOD announced a new system called the Joint Qualification System (JQS) in order to comply with the John Warner National Defense Authorization for Fiscal Year 2007. The Warner Act appeared aimed to address concerns previously highlighted in GAO reports, which stated that the DOD still lacked a strategic approach to growing joint officers.<sup>15</sup> This Act specifically stated its intention was “to ensure a systematic, progressive, career-long development of officers in joint matters and to ensure that officers serving as general and flag officers have the requisite experience and education to be highly proficient in joint matters.”<sup>16</sup>

The Warner Act further enhanced joint officer development by allowing joint credit for experiences outside JDAL positions and by changing the official name of a joint officer to a “Joint Qualified Officer.” The Warner Act accomplished this by adding the provision that in addition to JPME completion an officer must complete “such other assignments and experiences in a manner that demonstrate the officer’s mastery of knowledge, skills, and abilities in joint matters as determined under such regulations and

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Defense Instruction 1300.19, *DoD Joint Officer Management Program*, Enclosure 2. October 31, 2007 incorporating Change 2, February 16, 2010 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Stewart.

<sup>16</sup> *John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007*. Public Law 109-364, 109th Congress, (October 17, 2006), 105.

policy as the Secretary of Defense may prescribe.”<sup>17</sup> Obtaining joint experience has always been a key step in the process to grow joint officers, but the Warner Act was instrumental in acknowledging the joint training and experience that an officer gains in positions other than JDAL billets. This change was likely related to the number of officers that were accomplishing truly joint duty experiences during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but did not receive joint duty assignment credit.

The JQS was the DOD’s newest system used to determine which officers could become joint qualified officers. As with previous years, officers still needed to complete both phases of JPME, but a new point system was designed to quantify and qualify joint experiences that were gained outside of the existing JDAL positions. Peacetime and combat time experiences were weighted differently, as were exercise and training events.

The end result is that the DOD established a formal system to manage joint officer development. In accordance with NDAA direction originating with the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, the DOD instituted education into the growth of its joint officers while simultaneously allowing for the unique and valuable experiences that officers obtain while performing their duties. Although this process has been in place, executed and refined throughout the DOD, the question remains whether or not this process adequately supports the Services’ production of the most qualified joint leaders. More importantly, are the Services growing officers who are merely completing the minimum requirements in order to be eligible to promotion to general or flag rank? Or are the Services genuinely promoting their best officers who are the most capable and competent to lead the military’s joint forces as Geographic Combatant Commanders?

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<sup>17</sup> *Warner Act*, 105-106.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE GEOGRAPHIC COMBATANT COMMAND COMMANDERS**

The six Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) Commander positions have become the premier commands within the U.S. military. An analysis of the officers that have filled these commands will clearly illustrate the disparity among the Services' representation in these powerful positions. This remarkable difference in representation is too large to be a mere coincidence and warrants examination. It is equally important to appreciate the significance of the GCC Commander position itself and the officers selected for these influential posts. One could argue that when the Functional Combatant Commander and GCC Commanders are considered as a whole, the Service disparity is diminished considerably; however, Goldwater-Nichols gave tremendous power and global influence to the GCC Commander. This distinction, as well as the specialized nature of the mission of the Functional Combatant Commands, separates them from one another.

#### **Power of the Geographic Combatant Commander**

The GCC Commander is an immensely important position. The military officers in these positions are not only leaders of combat military personnel and forces, but also representatives of the Nation throughout the world. Though the Department of State is officially the lead organization for the President's foreign policy, the GCC Commanders also bear the responsibility to execute the Nation's foreign policy and are trusted with life and death decisions for thousands of military members. Directly linked to civilian leadership through the Department of Defense, the GCC Commanders are indisputable

leaders in diplomatic matters across the world, not unlike a regional ambassador would be if such a position existed.

Whereas Ambassadors and U.S. Embassies are integral to U.S. engagement within individual countries, the GCC's responsibilities are not limited to a specific nation. Instead, GCCs have the unique ability to engage regionally and to conduct these engagements through numerous channels. As senior military leaders, GCC Commanders have nearly direct access to senior military leaders throughout their region of responsibility. Interestingly, their contact with countries throughout their areas of responsibility is not constrained to military channels. Leaders of nations, such as presidents, prime ministers, heads of state, and kings will not hesitate to contact the GCC Commander responsible for his or her country. For example, when Pervez Musharraf took control of Pakistan and became its head of state, his first official contact with the U.S. was through the Commander of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), General Anthony Zinni. Rather than communicate directly with the U.S. President, Secretary of State, or an Ambassador, Musharraf called the USCENTCOM Commander, who was coincidentally seated besides Secretary of Defense William Cohen at the time of the telephone call.<sup>1</sup> This example is not unique to General Zinni's tenure as a GCC Commander; a review of country visits by the newest Commander of USCENTCOM includes meetings with the King of Saudi Arabia, former President Mubarak of Egypt, and senior Jordanian military leaders, all within months of taking command.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Press TV. "US Commander Meets Saudi King," Press TV, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/144844.html> (accessed March 6, 2011).

General Zinni described the role of his position best when he “chuckled that he had become a modern-day proconsul, descendant of the warrior-statesman who ruled the Roman Empire’s outlying territory, bringing order and ideals from a legalistic Rome.”<sup>3</sup>

Interaction with heads of state and senior military officers is the norm for the GCC Commanders. Besides the inherent importance of direct communication with a senior representative of a specific nation, GCC Commanders are responsible for an enormous portion of the world. The Unified Command Plan (UCP) partitions the world into six separate geographical regions, which are labeled as follows: Africa, Central, European, Northern, Pacific, and Southern.<sup>4</sup> As such, many of the regions encompass an astonishing number of countries. USCENTCOM, for example, is responsible for twenty countries within its area of responsibility while U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) and U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) each have more than fifty countries within their areas of responsibility.<sup>5</sup> Given the magnitude of these areas, a GCC Commander quite simply carries a tremendous amount of power, respect, and influence.

In addition to inherent diplomatic power, the GCC Commanders also have substantial resources at their disposal and are the warfighters responsible for the peacetime and combat employment of military forces.<sup>6</sup> Unlike each of the Service Chiefs who are responsible for organizing, training, and equipping the members of their individual Military Department, the GCC Commanders have a unique statutory authority

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<sup>3</sup> Priest, 70.

<sup>4</sup> *Unified Command Plan*, (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2008). The UCP is the official document, signed by the President that establishes the missions and responsibilities for the combatant commanders.

<sup>5</sup> From official websites [www.southcom.mil](http://www.southcom.mil); [www.centcom.mil](http://www.centcom.mil); and [www.eucom.mil](http://www.eucom.mil)

<sup>6</sup> *DODI 5100.1*, 25.

that allows them to organize and employ assigned military forces as they deem necessary to accomplish the mission within their area of responsibility.<sup>7</sup> The Secretary of Defense officially assigns all military forces (with few exceptions) operating within a GCC's area of responsibility to that particular GCC in the "Forces for Unified Commands Memorandum."<sup>8</sup>

These forces amount to a substantial resource that can be used to implement the President's vision and strategy across the world. According to Department of Defense numbers as of February 28, 2011, the active duty force alone consists of more than 1.4 million military members, who are available to be assigned to any of the 10 combatant commanders.<sup>9</sup> In comparison, the Department of Homeland Security has 215,000 employees, while the Department of State has only 35,000 employees to maintain diplomatic relations with 180 countries. Analysis of budgets will identify that financial resources are equally disproportionate between departments.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Disparity Identified**

Having established the power and influence of the GCC Commanders, this next section documents the historic disparity among each Service's representation in the GCC Commander positions. The data listed in Table 1 begins in 1947 after the USAF's official establishment. A review of the data clearly reveals that historically, the GCC

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<sup>7</sup> JP-1, IV-2. The "Forces for Unified Commands Memorandum" is used by the Secretary of Defense to officially document the assignment of military forces to each of the combatant commands and is incorporated into the Secretary's "Global Force Management Implementation Guidance."

<sup>8</sup> *Unified Command Plan*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Defense, "Armed Forces Strength Figures for February 28, 2011." Military Personnel Statistics. <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/rg1102.pdf> (accessed April 24, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> The White House, "The Executive Branch," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government/executive-branch> (accessed March 6, 2011).

Commander positions have not been evenly distributed amongst the Services. Of the 83 GCC Commanders, the Army held the most with 53 percent. The Navy has also been considerably more successful and has filled 33 percent of the positions, while the USAF only held a mere seven percent of these key command positions.

<b>Command</b>	<b>Total Commanders</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>USN</b>	<b>USMC</b>	<b>USAF</b>	<b>Current Service</b>
USAFRICOM	2	2	0	0	0	USA
USCENTCOM	11	6	1	4	0	USMC
USEUCOM	15	11	1	1	2	USN
USNORTHCOM	4	0	2	0	2	USN
USPACOM	22	0	22	0	0	USN
USSOUTHCOM	29	25	1	2	1	USAF
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	

Table 1. Geographic Combatant Commanders by Service Since 1947<sup>11</sup>

Of note, the Navy has managed to place an Admiral in five of the six Commands with the newest Command, USAFRICOM, being the sole exception. Furthermore, the Senate recently confirmed another Army officer to be the newest Commander of USAFRICOM. Therefore, the Army has gained yet another GCC Commander and brought its total to 44 GCC Commanders with this most recent Senate confirmation.

Critics could contend that the Army should rightfully have the largest historic percentage of GCC Commanders, since it is in fact the largest Service. Such an argument warrants a closer look. In actuality, as of February 28, 2011, though the Army is largest of all the Services with over 570,000 active duty members, the USAF is the next largest

<sup>11</sup> Edward S. Brewer, Debra L. Fertig, Laura L. Lenderman, and Brian N. Smith, *The Case for Service Leadership Diversity in the Geographic Combatant Commands* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, National Security Program, 2010), 48, and updated with current data by the author.

with almost 335,000, compared to the Navy's 327,933 and the Marine Corps' 202,022. Although the Navy and Air Force are 40 percent smaller, the relevant comparison must be made between the officer corps. After subtracting the Army's 15,675 Warrant Officers, the gap narrows. The USAF has a total of 65,448 officers for a much smaller 17 percent difference with the Army, which has 79,414 officers. The Navy has 50,594 and the Marines have 19,661. Perhaps even more revealing is that, as of February 28, 2011, the USAF has the most 4-Star Generals of all the Services, 14, while the Army has 12, the Navy, 11, and the Marine Corps, four.<sup>12</sup>

Another argument claims that any disparity is irrelevant because the numbers are more equitable when the Functional Combatant Commander positions are considered. This data would indicate a more reasonable balance, but avoids the crux of the issue. The Functional Commander, although immensely important and possessing an enormous amount of power, does not have the same responsibilities and authorities as the GCC Commander. The Functional Commanders, as the name implies, are responsible for a very specialized function that lends itself to a leader who has had a more specialized career.

For example, the Commander of U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) is assigned very specific responsibilities in the 2008 UCP. He is the single manager for transportation of the joint force whether in the air, on the land, or at sea. This includes ownership of the distribution process to move personnel, equipment, and supplies.<sup>13</sup> Although this responsibility is executed using capabilities from multiple

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<sup>12</sup> "Armed Forces Strength Figures for February 28, 2011."

<sup>13</sup> *Unified Command Plan*, 32-33.

Services, the function itself is highly specialized and well-suited for a joint officer with deep skill sets of this nature.<sup>14</sup> The USTRANSCOM mission is tremendously important and truly global, yet the command responsibilities are significantly different than those of a GCC Commander.

A key difference between the GCC Commanders and the Functional Combatant Commanders is written in doctrine, the UCP, and in the Functional Combatant Commander mission statements themselves. Quite simply, the GCC is the supported command, with rare exception. The GCC Commanders are responsible for conducting our nation's wars while the Functional Combatant Commanders and the individual Service Chiefs are responsible for providing support in the form of resources, both people and equipment. Further, as is evidenced in the mission statements of the various Functional Commands, one will find language regarding providing *support* to major combat operations. In contrast, USCENTCOM's mission statement includes language such as "deters or defeats."<sup>15</sup> This discussion is not meant to diminish the importance of one over another, but to illustrate the unique roles and responsibilities of GCCs in contrast to the Functional Commands.

Lastly, though the numbers of Functional Commanders indicate an inverse disparity that favors the USAF, this counterargument does not address nor refute the point regarding the disproportionate lack of USAF officers who have been GCC

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<sup>14</sup> The current Commander, USTRANSCOM, General McNabb, is a USAF officer whose career was centered on airlift, airborne refueling operations, and air mobility.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Central Command. "U.S. Central Command | Our Mission," <http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom/our-mission/> (accessed March 6, 2011).

Commanders. Rather, it lends credence to the notion that the manner in which the nation’s combatant commanders are selected warrants further analysis.

<b>Command</b>	<b>Total Commanders</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>USN</b>	<b>USMC</b>	<b>USAF</b>	<b>Current Service</b>
USAFRICOM	2	2	0	0	0	USA
USCENTCOM	10	5	1	4	0	USMC
USEUCOM	9	6	1	1	1	USN
USNORTHCOM	4	0	2	0	2	USN
USPACOM	10	0	10	0	0	USN
USSOUTHCOM	12	8	1	2	1	USAF
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	

Table 2: Geographic Combatant Commanders by Service Since 1986.<sup>16</sup>

A final point to consider regarding the GCC Commanders involves a review of the data since the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. As the catalyst behind the current notion of joint, it follows from the Goldwater-Nichols Act that the GCC Commander positions should be filled by the best qualified joint leader available from any Service. The information above in Table 2 illustrates the distribution of GCC Commanders after Goldwater-Nichols Act was instituted. Of note, four of the USAF’s five GCC Commanders have served since the Goldwater-Nichols Act went into effect. Equally important to consider is the one USAF General Officer who was a GCC Commander prior to 1986, General Lauris Norstad. Though truly a career aviator, General Norstad was a graduate of the U.S. Military

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<sup>16</sup> Brewer et al., 48, and updated with current data by the author.

Academy and served in the Army Air Corps for seventeen years prior to the establishment of the USAF.<sup>17</sup>

The information presented in this chapter illustrates the power and global influence exercised by the GCC Commanders. It also documents and validates the fact that a disparity indeed exists between Services in the assignment of GCC Commanders. The USAF clearly trails the other Services and this situation warrants further study. Using the USAF as a case study, the next chapter will investigate the real question that can ultimately help guide the DOD's joint officer development—*why* does this disparity exist?

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Air Force, "Biographies: GENERAL LAURIS NORSTAD," AF.mil - Home. <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=6616> (accessed March 6, 2011).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE REAL QUESTION --WHY A DISPARITY?

A recent study from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government published in 2010 suggests that Service cultural differences are a strong contributing factor to the disparity among Service representation in the GCC Commander position.<sup>1</sup> Another paper suggests that the problem is attributable to a lack of substantive joint experiences, and identifies certain experiences shared by previous and current GCC Commanders.<sup>2</sup> Other considerations worth analyzing include personalities of decision makers and politics, as well as, the impact of Service legacy in certain GCC Commander positions. A solid examination is necessary to uncover any potential factors that may contribute to the selection of officers as GCC Commanders.

#### Cultural Influences

Not only does Service culture present a perspective of the GCC Commander's potential biases, but the perception of each Service's culture could impact the selection of officers to the GCC Commander positions. Although the military as an entity shares a distinct culture, each Service possesses its own individual organizational culture. Culture entails "the beliefs, traditions, and behavior patterns that shape any country or organization."<sup>3</sup> These behavior patterns can thus influence how problems and challenges are approached. Edgar Schein defined organizational culture as "the pattern of basic

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<sup>1</sup> Brewer et al.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart K. Archer, *The Next Horizon: Air Force Leadership of Geographic Combatant Commands* (Maxwell AFB, Alabama: Air War College, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, "American Military Culture and Strategy," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 46 (3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, 2007): 76-82.

assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external and internal integration.”<sup>4</sup> Clearly then, not only do the underlying beliefs and traditions of an organization shape its culture, but perhaps more importantly, cultural paradigms directly impact decision making and problem solving processes. Furthermore, as Schein suggests, new members of the culture then learn the same basic assumptions and will use these as the approved method to handle future problems.<sup>5</sup>

Carl Builder, RAND analyst and author of The Masks of War, conducted an analysis of each of the Military Departments to uncover the heart of each of their cultures. He reviewed a number of data points for each of the Departments and provided characteristics for each of them. For example, he categorizes the Army as a loyal servant of the people that is obedient to the nation and its institutions. In contrast, the Navy is rooted in tradition and bases its belief system on the basic tenet that the Captain will lead his ship autonomously with little intervention from external actors. Lastly, Builder categorizes the USAF as the most technologically minded Service which is preoccupied with the aircraft it flies.<sup>6</sup>

These cultural differences are integral to why the Services behave as they do and further emphasize the importance of diversity among the Service’s representation in the GCC Commander positions. As Builder further states, “the military services have

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<sup>4</sup> Edgar H. Schein, “Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture,” *MIT Sloan Management Review* 25, no. 2, (1984): 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 18-20. Builder only discusses the three military departments and does not include the U.S. Marine Corps in his research.

acquired personalities of their own that are shaped by their experiences and that, in turn, shape their behavior.”<sup>7</sup> These behaviors thus include problem solving, as well as strategy development for dealing with the global security environment. Herein lies the difficulty with military culture. As the military devises new strategies to confront the global security environment, regional strategies are shaped by senior military leaders in the GCC and Service cultural biases may sway solutions for critical problems or issues. Such cultural biases are well understood and are not a new revelation, but in the context of selecting GCC Commanders for the nation, it is a point worth noting.

The recent selection of Admiral Winnefeld as the Commander, U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) is an example of the benefits of diversity in Service representation in the GCC Commander position. USNORTHCOM was created from U.S. North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD) Command and evolved from an air-centric culture that historically concentrated on the air defense of North America. When Admiral Winnefeld took command of USNORTHCOM, the command remained focused on the air domain and did not adequately address maritime security for North America. Given Admiral Winnefeld’s naval expertise and perspective, he added maritime security and warning to the missions of NORAD and USNORTHCOM.<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of another culture to the leadership of USNORTHCOM clearly enhanced the mission focus of the entire command and it is now better poised for the national security environment.

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<sup>7</sup> Builder, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Comments made during a U.S. NORTHCOM Mission Briefing attended by the author on March 3, 2011.

### **Air Force Culture – Community of Tribes**

There are a number of intra-service cultures present within the USAF that have grown as the Service has evolved since 1947. Unfortunately, the USAF is not only competing with the other Services to lead GCCs, but history indicates that the USAF has internal competition about which community will lead the USAF. Knowledge of this dynamic is vital to understanding the culture within the USAF, as well as implications for developing officers to be senior joint leaders.

The internal parochialism of the USAF originated with the birth of the USAF as a Service in 1947. Retired Major General Mike Worden chronicled the changing leadership within the USAF in his book, Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982. His thorough analysis not only documents the fact that flying officers, specifically pilots, have dominated the leadership of the USAF, but also which community of pilots. By analyzing the careers of Air Force four-star generals, Worden illustrates that the bomber pilot community initially led the USAF, but since 1982 the leadership has shifted to the fighter pilot community. His argument stemmed from the notion that the initial cadre of USAF General Officers, predominantly bomber pilots, did not change with the ever evolving security environment from the post World War II era to the post Vietnam era.<sup>9</sup> Instead these forefathers of the USAF, influenced by the fight to gain independence from the Army and make the USAF an independent Service, focused on strategic bombing and airpower as the future of warfare. This narrow view limited acquisition programs and other decisions that shaped the culture of the USAF and ultimately did not adjust with the changing environment in a timely fashion.

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<sup>9</sup> Mike Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945-1982* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 1998), x.

Multiple lessons regarding the impact of culture on decision-making reside throughout Worden's book. In fact, his book ends with a quote from a General Officer who said, "The doctrinal paradigm since the 1950s has been an air force that separated strategic and tactical applications of air power institutionally, organizationally, intellectually, and culturally."<sup>10</sup> This parochialism possesses inherent dangers when an organization's senior leadership shares the same limited view on handling national security issues. As Worden astutely points out, such a narrow perspective from leadership in any organization will produce solutions that maintain the dominant cultural group at the forefront. Once these organizations are challenged with a new environmental problem, their existing paradigms limit their ability to adapt to the change and, instead, provide a solution typical of the dominant culture.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, there may be yet another changing of the guard afoot. As Worden identifies, the power shift to the fighter pilot general officer's community occurred in 1982 when General Charles A. Gabriel became the Chief of Staff of the USAF (CSAF). General Gabriel was succeeded by seven more fighter pilots in the CSAF position. Finally, in August of 2008, the trend was broken when General Norton A. Schwartz was selected to be the next CSAF. Unlike his predecessors, General Schwartz is neither a bomber pilot nor a fighter pilot. General Schwartz is an air mobility C-130 pilot by core skill set with a heavy special operations community background.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Worden, 227-228.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>12</sup> The Official Web Site of the U.S. Air Force, official biography accessed via <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=7077>

Two other authors contend that a change is indeed occurring. WM Bruce Danskine is one such author who wrote “The Fall of the Fighter Generals: The Future of USAF Leadership,” in which he argues that such a transition of power is justifiable and likely. His 2001 paper illustrated how 67 percent of the USAF’s four-star generals were fighter pilots even though the fighter force only accounted for 5.3 percent of the total force. He separated the USAF into five tribes: Bomber, Fighter, Special Operations, Mobility, and Delphic. He writes about the rise of the Delphic Tribe which consists of officers who work in the intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (ISR) communities among others. He includes traditional ISR pilots and navigators, but also air battle managers, space officers, computer and communications officers, missileers, and intelligence officers. He illustrates that the change in the force structure and USAF spending indicates a leadership change may be ongoing. He reasoned that the Delphic Tribe could see greater representation amongst the leaders of the USAF as early as 2010 or 2015.<sup>13</sup>

Laura L. Lenderman writes yet another follow-on book to Worden’s. In 2008, she wrote The Rise of Air Mobility and Its Generals, in which she argues that the mobility community is poised to take leadership of the USAF. Through analysis of the use of airlift, air refueling operations, and humanitarian assistance support, she explains how the mobility tribe is ascending to a place of leadership within the USAF, beginning with the selection of General Schwartz as the most recent CSAF. She also demonstrates

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<sup>13</sup> WM Bruce Danskine, *Fall of the Fighter Generals: The Future of USAF Leadership* (Ft. Belvoir: Defense Technical Information Center, 2001), 25.

the deliberate and careful steps the mobility community is undertaking in order to develop senior leaders.<sup>14</sup>

In any case, the important point to acknowledge is the tribal nature of the culture within the USAF and its parallels to any organization. Regardless of which tribe maintains the most powerful position within the USAF, any dominant group will simply inherit the greatest ability to affect change within the USAF as it adjusts doctrine, budget priorities, and overall direction of the USAF. As the USAF's initial bomber generals fought acquisition of intercontinental ballistic missiles in favor of manned strategic bombers, the current USAF leadership has been criticized for supporting the highly expensive F-22 fighter and Joint Strike Fighter programs instead of other ISR capabilities that are desired in today's wars. In the same manner, a similar myopic view may be heavily influencing the decision-making at the various GCC Headquarters that have been consistently led by the same Service cultures for many years.

### **Importance of Joint Experiences**

Much like cultural influences, substantive joint experiences play a significant role in the officers who are selected as GCC Commanders. The Goldwater-Nichols Act did not specify exact requirements for a GCC Commander other than the officer must have completed a joint duty assignment as a flag or general officer in addition to already being a fully qualified joint officer (JQO).<sup>15</sup> However, a biographical review of GCC Commanders indicates that certain key joint positions appear related to selection as a combatant commander. Although filling these key joint positions do not guarantee

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<sup>14</sup> Laura L. Lenderman, *The Rise of Air Mobility and Its Generals* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 2008), xv.

<sup>15</sup> *Goldwater-Nichols Act*, 201.

selection as a GCC Commander, a number of USAF General Officers have essentially eliminated themselves for consideration from these positions by limiting their joint experience as a General Officer.

Historical analysis indicates that a large number of GCC Commanders share similar duty experiences in key joint positions. One study accomplished by Stuart Archer identifies four positions as being key: The Director of the Joint Staff, the Joint Staff Director of Operations (J3), the Joint Staff Director for Plans (J5), and the Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. Archer documents that these positions have traditionally been held by officers who are later selected to command a combatant command.<sup>16</sup> Archer further documents how the USAF has trailed the other Services in filling these positions with its officers. In fact, from 1997 through 2008, Archer shows that the Army and Navy have each collectively filled these jobs 11 times while the Marine Corps has filled them six times and the Air Force only four times.<sup>17</sup> As of early 2011; the trend appears to continue, the Director of Staff and his deputy are both Navy Admirals, while the J3 is a Marine Corps General and the J5 is an Army General. The Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense is also a Marine Corps Lieutenant General.

The underlying benefit with these jobs is the high level of visibility from decision makers, as well as the inherent joint experience and influence on the military as an institution. These positions are three-star billets that have regular interaction with the Chairman, as well as with senior civilian decision makers. These key joint positions provide valuable experience and joint credibility. The officers fortunate enough to serve

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<sup>16</sup> Archer, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

in these positions become fluent on all military organizational and operational matters. They become experts in translating policy and national level strategy into military strategy, planning, and budgeting. For example, the J5 learns to develop military strategy for the entire joint community, while the J3 gains experience overseeing execution of the strategy.

In addition to filling these key joint positions on the Joint Staff, a number of other jobs have recently been elevated to high visibility status that will undoubtedly produce multiple credible joint senior officers. Given the extended combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq for the first decade of the twentieth-first century, there have been a number of Flag or General Officer positions that received considerable attention. For example, General David Petraeus has served in two highly visible four-star positions in addition to his tenure as the Commander of U.S. Central Command. He is currently the Commander, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Commander, U.S. Forces in Afghanistan. He served in a similar role in Iraq as the Commanding General, Multi-National Force Iraq. Joint command jobs, such as these two, undoubtedly demonstrate combat leadership skills and credibility to the nation's civilian leadership. If General Stanley McCrystal had completed his tour in Afghanistan as the ISAF Commander, it is reasonable to think he would have been competitive for a future GCC Commander position based on this position, as well as the Director of the Joint Staff position he held before.

The above four-star commands also have a considerable number of General Officers working for them on their deployed Joint Task Force Staffs. In these positions, deployed General Officers receive a significant amount of visibility that can propel their

careers forward and ultimately improve their chances of receiving a nomination to combatant commander positions. The current Commander of U.S. Central Command, General Mattis, filled such positions both as a Brigadier General and as a Major General. Upon promotion to Brigadier General, he was selected by the Commander of Naval Forces for U.S. Central Command to lead Task Force 58 into Afghanistan. In this position, General Mattis became the first Marine to lead two Navy Amphibious Readiness Groups.<sup>18</sup> As a Major General, he continued to demonstrate his combat leadership skills in Iraq as the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division during the initial attack on Iraq in 2003, before his promotion and eventual selection as the Commander of U.S. Joint Forces Command.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to these positions, other high level duties regularly appear on GCC Commanders' biographies. Archer appropriately identifies the Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense position, but high level Executive Assistants and Aides appear regularly as duties on the biographies of GCC Commanders. The Deputies of the GCCs also fulfill the purpose of visibility and credibility for future command consideration. Table 3 below illustrates a significant number of similarities among the joint experiences of the GCC Commanders, a few of which warrant further discussion.

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Marine Corps. "Task Force 58 Overview: Operation Enduring Freedom," Official Website for Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton – Homepage, <http://www.pendleton.usmc.mil/press/kit/OEF.asp> (accessed March 6, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Central Command. "US CENTCOM Leadership: General James N. Mattis, Commander," <http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom/leadership/> (accessed March 6, 2011).

	Joint Tours prior to General	Joint Tours as Flag or General Officer	Key Joint Positions
General Carter F. Ham, USA	2	3	Cmdr, Multinational BDE Dpty Dir, Regional Ops, <b>JCS J3 Director, JCS J3</b>
General James N. Mattis, USMC Commander, USCENTCOM	0	2	Cmdr, Task Force 58 <b>Cmdr, USJFCOM</b>
Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN Commander, USEUCOM	1	2	Plans Officer, <b>JCS J5 Senior Mil Asst to SECDEF Exec Asst to CNO Cmdr, USSOUTHCOM</b>
Admiral James A. Winnefeld Jr., USN Commander, USNORTHCOM	2	2	Action Officer, <b>JCS J3 Senior Aide to CJCS Exec Asst to Vice, CNO JFCOM J9 Director, JCS J5</b>
Admiral Robert F. Willard, USN Commander, USPACOM	0	2	<b>Deputy Director, JCS J3 Director, JCS J8 Vice, CNO</b>
General Douglas M. Fraser, USAF Commander, USSOUTHCOM	2	2	Analysis Asst, OSD <b>Exec Asst to USPACOM</b> Cmdr, Alaska Command <b>Deputy Cmdr, USPACOM</b>

Table 3. Joint Experience of Current Geographic Combatant Commanders<sup>20</sup>

First, in addition to the specific positions discussed before (Senior Military Assistant to SECDEF, Director of Staff, J3, J5, Deputy GCC, Exec/Aide, or key combat leadership ), these Commanders all have had significant joint experience in key leadership positions with regular exposure to senior military and civilian leaders. In fact, of the six officers listed in Table 3, five have held one of the key joint positions listed above. The only exception is Admiral Willard, but he held two other high level Flag Officer positions within the Joint Staff: The Director J8 and Deputy Director J3, in addition to being Vice Chief of Naval Operations. General Mattis also has a different background. In addition to his combat leadership as a General Officer, he completed a tour as a Functional Combatant Commander before becoming a GCC Commander.

<sup>20</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer, 18 February 2011.

A second point worth noting is that successful performance in one combatant command can make an officer competitive for a second combatant command. General Mattis is an example of this, as is Admiral Stavridis. Three other officers have also commanded two GCCs during the last ten years. Admiral Fallon commanded both U.S. Pacific Command and then U.S. Central Command, while Army General Craddock commanded U.S. Southern Command and then U.S. European Command. Admiral Keating commanded both U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Pacific Command before he retired in 2009.

Another significant data point is the number of joint tours completed. All of the officers in Table 3 have at least two joint tours as a Flag or General Officer. Interestingly, 67 percent (four of the six) of the officers completed at least one joint assignment below flag rank and half of them completed two joint assignments.

Lastly, given the context of the scarcity of USAF General Officers as GCC Commanders throughout history, it is worth noting the number of aviators who are sitting as current GCC Commanders. Including General Fraser, three of the six are aviators. Though aviation experience is clearly not a prerequisite, it is also not a detractor. In fact, even in U.S. Pacific Command, 13 of the 22 Commanders since 1947 have been naval aviators.<sup>21</sup>

### **Service Legacies and Politics**

Without question, there is a perception that certain Services appear to *own* some of the GCC Commander positions. A quick review of Table 1 and 2 from Chapter 3 illustrates this point. Since 1947, every single Commander of U.S. Pacific Command has

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<sup>21</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer, 18 February 2011.

been from the Navy. Similarly, the Army has dominated U.S. Southern Command, U.S. European Command, and has shown its dominance of the newest GCC, U.S. Africa Command. U.S. Central Command has been predominantly shared by the Army and Marines, while U.S. Northern Command has been split between the USAF and Navy. These facts bring to light another rhetorical question—can these commands or the commander’s position truly be joint if held by only one Service?

Although these Service legacies exist, it is difficult to provide a convincing argument that one Service should be dominant. In fact, interviews with former Defense Secretaries Cohen and Rumsfeld indicate that qualifications matter, not the color of the officers’ uniform.<sup>22</sup> Cohen was responsible for nominating a Marine as the Commander of Atlantic Command, which had previously been filled by the Navy. He also nominated USAF General Ralston to lead U.S. European Command, traditionally an Army command.

Secretary Rumsfeld attempted to break the legacy of the Navy’s leadership of U.S. Pacific Command when he formally nominated General Gregory Martin to replace Admiral Fargo in 2004. However, during a senate hearing, Senator John McCain questioned General Martin’s involvement with an Air Force acquisition executive who had been convicted and imprisoned for contracting law violations over the USAF Tanker acquisition program. Senator McCain questioned the General’s qualifications based on alleged improper involvement. As a result, General Martin subsequently withdrew his nomination for consideration.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Archer, 17 &19.

<sup>23</sup> Grant, 49.

Senator McCain's questioning introduced another dynamic—politics. Though senior military and civilian leaders have repeatedly been quoted saying that politics are not the driving force, Senator McCain's involvement illustrates the power of politics. Senator McCain's questions were valid, indeed, but one can only speculate whether his personal feelings might have played a role in attempting to block General Martin's nomination in order to uphold the Navy's legacy. Senator McCain's father, after all, was the Commander, U.S. Pacific Command from 1968 to 1972.<sup>24</sup>

In any event, the fact remains that civilian and military leaders place considerable thought into the selection of GCC Commanders due to the tremendous amount of power and influence these positions carry. It is impossible to dispute the existence of Service domination in the GCCs, but the motives and politics behind the nominations and selections made by senior leadership are driven by intangibles that must be considered as contributory and perhaps causal factors for the disparity in Service representation in the GCC Commander positions.

### **The Air Force Geographic Combatant Commanders**

Having reviewed the influence of culture, joint experiences, and politics on the selection of officers to serve as GCC Commanders, it is logical to take a closer look at the five USAF officers who served as GCC Commanders. Ideally, a study of their careers may reveal similarities among them that were instrumental in their selection to command. Additionally, in order to determine the competitiveness of the USAF's officers for future GCC Commander positions, a brief review of biographical information from current USAF three and four-star generals will be conducted. Finally, an examination of the

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<sup>24</sup> Grant, 49.

service representation among the key joint positions identified above will also be conducted.

### *Cultural Implications*

First, it is interesting that each of the USAF GCC Commanders is a fighter pilot. Given the importance of culture within organizations, the lack of other USAF communities' representation in these positions is noteworthy. Though not an indictment of the hiring authorities for these joint positions, it is clear that the USAF has continued to focus on the development and placement of key senior leaders from the members of the fighter pilot community at a disproportionate rate in comparison to the size of the fighter force to the rest of the USAF. Former Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Merrill McPeak (1990 to 1994) was once quoted as saying, "The service's purpose is to generate combat capability that protects the country, and not necessarily to provide equal career opportunities for those who fly heavies, or, heaven forbid, don't wear wings at all."<sup>25</sup> Though the USAF must certainly provide a combat warfighting capability and develop leaders that are skilled combat warfighters, the USAF must guard against focusing leadership development solely on one's community instead of some other measure of an officer's potential to lead at the highest levels.

Demographics of the three and four-star USAF General Officers indicate that this institutionalized cultural viewpoint persists nearly twenty years after General McPeak's remark. A review of the communities represented by USAF officers who have filled the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) or the Vice CJCS also shows a higher percent of fighter pilots. Of the four USAF CJCS, two were fighter pilots and two were

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<sup>25</sup> "Don't You Forget It," *Aerospace Daily*, December 21, 1991, 110.

bomber pilots.<sup>26</sup> All three USAF officers who served as the Vice CJCS were also fighter pilots.<sup>27</sup> Of the 14 USAF four-star (Active Duty and Guard) generals today, eight are fighter pilots, three are mobility pilots, two are bomber pilots, one is a space operator, and the other is a missileer.<sup>28</sup> A review of the forty six (Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve) Lieutenant Generals shows a similar trend. Twenty of these high ranking officers are fighter pilots, four bomber pilots and one bomber navigator, four air mobility pilots and one air mobility navigator, and three special operations pilots. The rest are from various specialties, such as intelligence, finance, personnel, missiles, engineers and space.<sup>29</sup>

While the joint community depends on the USAF to provide combat air power, the question remains whether or not the fighter and bomber pilot communities are necessarily the best to lead and advocate for the USAF. Is the USAF promoting and posturing the right officers to serve in senior leader positions or is it defaulting to a certain community out of tradition and culture? Undoubtedly, the three and four-stars referenced above are remarkable officers, but with approximately 46 percent of these officers representing the fighter community does the USAF possess enough variety of

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<sup>26</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer, 18 February 2011. General Nathan Twining was a pursuit pilot. General George Brown and General David Jones were bomber pilots. General Richard Myers was a fighter pilot.

<sup>27</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer, 18 February 2011. General Robert Herres was a fighter-interceptor pilot initially, but transitioned to bombers later in his career as a Vice Commander and Wing Commander of a bomber wing. General Joseph Ralston and General Richard Myers were both fighter pilots.

<sup>28</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer and the General Officers roster available online from the USAF General Matters Office. Does not include Generals Chilton or Chandler since both are retiring in February and March 2011 respectively.

<sup>29</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer and the General Officers roster available online from the USAF General Matters Office. List includes officers selected for, but not yet officially wearing three-stars. Also includes three officers with pending retirement dates: A missileer, a space officer, and a special operations pilot.

thinking to properly prepare for the future global security environment while contending with diminishing budgets? As Worden criticized the bomber community's failure to adapt and change, the risk exists that the USAF may fall victim to myopic thinking again if one particular culture dominates its decision making. As mentioned earlier, such a narrow perspective from leadership in any organization will produce solutions that maintain the dominant cultural group at the forefront. Once these organizations are challenged with a new environmental problem, their existing paradigms limit their ability to adapt to the change and instead provide a solution typical of the dominant culture.<sup>30</sup>

As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff just stated in the newly released U.S. National Military Strategy, "our Joint Force must prepare for an increasingly dynamic and uncertain future in which a full spectrum of military capabilities and attributes will be required to prevent and win our Nation's wars."<sup>31</sup> This newly published document emphasizes the importance of leadership for the military. In fact, the phrase "Redefining America's Military Leadership" is scripted across the top of every page.<sup>32</sup> Although the context of this phrase pertains to the role the military plays in defense of national interests and international security and stability, this new strategy addresses military personnel as well. In shaping the force, the strategy states that the military must "emphasize our values and our people as much as our platforms and capabilities."<sup>33</sup> This line bears some resemblance to a 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review comment, "a focus on weapons acquisition programs and overall force structure crowd out needed attention

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<sup>30</sup> Worden, 238.

<sup>31</sup> *The National Military Strategy*, i.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

concerning how the Military Departments generate, train, and sustain their leaders.”<sup>34</sup>

Given the criticism of the USAF’s expensive acquisition programs, coupled with a perception of a Carl Builder type fascination with technology, the USAF leadership must look internally to determine if its culture is poised to meet the demands of the future global security environment as detailed in the U.S. National Military Strategy.

#### *Joint Experience Implications*

Table 4 below lists the joint experiences of the five USAF GCC Commanders, plus the one officer that was nominated for Command of a GCC, but withdrew his name. Given the fact that so few USAF officers have been selected as GCC Commanders, it is necessary to look more closely at all of these officers’ joint experiences to determine if there is a correlation in experience.

Upon studying the joint experiences of these six officers, the key joint positions discussed previously reside on these resumes as well. Three of the officers were Deputy Combatant Commanders while another was the Director of the Joint Staff J5 and a Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense. General Ralston was previously the Vice Chairman of the JCS, nominated for the Chairman position, and undoubtedly enjoyed the high-level visibility inherent in the other key staff jobs. Though General Martin did not hold any of the identified *key* positions, he did serve on the JCS as Deputy and Vice Director of the J8. Nonetheless, these officers clearly worked in the highest visibility joint positions that certainly earned them credibility and trust from decision makers.

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<sup>34</sup> QDR 2010.

	Joint tours prior to General	Joint Tours as General Officer	Key Joint Positions
General Lauris Norstad Commander, USEUCOM	0 (Joint by modern standards)	3 (Joint by modern standards)	<b>Director, Plans and Ops, War Dept (equivalent to JCS J3)</b> Commanding General Allied Air Forces Europe <b>Air Dpty to Supreme Allied Commander (equivalent to Dpty GCC)</b>
General Joseph W. Ralston Commander, USEUCOM	0	2	Commander, Alaska Command <b>Vice Chairman JCS</b> <b>SECDEF nominee for CJCS</b>
General Gregory S. Martin *SECDEF Nominee for Commander, USPACOM	0	2	Deputy & Vice Director, <b>JCS J8</b> Commander, Allied Air Forces Europe
General Ralph E. Eberhart Commander, USNORTHCOM	0	3	<b>Director, JCS J8</b> Commander, U.S. Forces Japan <b>Commander, USSPACECOM</b>
General Victor E. Renuart, Jr. Commander, USNORTHCOM	1 (as O-6)	4	Commander, JTF-SWA USCENTCOM J3(2001-2003) <b>Director, JCS J5</b> <b>Senior Military Assistant to SECDEF</b>
General Douglas M. Fraser Commander, USSOUTHCOM	2 (1 as O-6)	2	Analysis Asst, OSD <b>Executive Assistant to USPACOM</b> Commander, Alaska Command <b>Deputy Commander, USPACOM</b>

Table 4. Joint Experience of USAF Geographic Combatant Commanders<sup>35</sup>

In addition to looking at the presence of the formerly identified key joint positions, it is interesting to note all the joint assignments for these USAF officers. All of these Generals filled the requisite joint tours as a General Officer, but only two of the six officers had previously completed joint assignments as Colonels and only one completed a joint assignment below the rank of Colonel. In contrast, three of the six current GCC Commanders completed joint assignments prior to attaining the rank of General or Admiral (see Table 3). Clearly, when joint experience and credibility are a prerequisite for combatant command, the USAF must evaluate its effectiveness at producing officers with these credentials.

<sup>35</sup> Compiled from official biographies of each officer, 18 February 2011.

Having identified the importance of joint experiences, a review of the USAF's current three and four-star officers should help determine who may be competitive for future GCC Command consideration. Only three of the 46 Lieutenant Generals have held one of the key joint positions, and all of these were Deputy Combatant Commander positions. One officer is currently the Director of the Joint Staff J8, but based on historical trends, as a career finance officer, his nomination as a GCC Commander is unlikely and unprecedented. Ten of the remaining three-star Generals have joint experience on the Joint Staff, but only three as a General Officer. There are six Generals (five fighter pilots and one communication officer) who have not completed a joint assignment as a General Officer; without this type of joint experience they will not be competitive in the joint arena and are, in fact, unqualified according to the Goldwater Nichols Act requirements. This lack of joint experience among some of the USAF's senior General Officer corps is a handicap to establishing the proper level of credibility to civilian and military leadership who influence selection of combatant commanders.

As one would expect, the small group of USAF four-star Generals are fairly competitive as nominees for command of a GCC. The three current sitting combatant commanders (Generals McNabb, General Douglas Fraser, and General Kehler) are clearly qualified, as is the Commander of Air Combat Command, General William Fraser. General William Fraser served as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) and the Assistant to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Four of the others have some JCS experience, but only one officer clearly possess a history of the key joint staff positions that historically lead to selection as a GCC Commander. The USAF model of joint experience is General Norton Schwarz, the current CSAF. General

Schwartz completed seven joint assignments including six as a General Officer. As a General Officer he served as the Director of the Joint Staff J3, the Director of the Joint Staff, and as the Commander, U.S. Transportation Command.

Even though a group of USAF General Officers are competitive for nomination and command of a GCC, this study has uncovered one more glaring challenge for the USAF. The specific key joint positions that have been highlighted throughout this chapter are not being filled by USAF officers. The current Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense and the Director and Vice Director of the Joint Staff are not USAF Officers. The Joint Staff J3 and J5 positions are held by a Marine and Army officer, respectively. In fact, the only USAF General Officer in a Director's position is the JCS J8, whose specialized background does not lend itself to competitiveness for combatant command selection. Finally, in the 10 combatant commands, nine of the 10 Deputy Commanders are from the other Services. The USAF only fills the Deputy position at U.S. Pacific Command. While not a prerequisite, these high level joint positions have clearly proven to produce more GCC Commanders and the USAF only fills one of the total 14 positions today.

In summary, why do the inequities exist with respect to the slim number of USAF senior officers serving in the GCC Commander positions? The analysis points to the following: Internal culture, credibility from joint experiences, and Service legacy. The question remains as to what the USAF can do to correct these deficiencies and shortcomings. The next chapter offers recommendations for a comprehensive development plan for the USAF, and its key tenets can be considered for use by all the Services.

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWING JOINT OFFICERS

The preceding chapters covered the first four phases to analyze the development of senior joint military officers as they rise to the highest levels of command within the U.S. military. This journey first began with a review of desired qualities of a joint officer and then transitioned to the second phase to review the educational process of a joint officer. This review highlighted the key legislation that governs joint officer development and provided an understanding of how the Services are obligated to develop its officer corps through education and experience. In essence, these first two phases addressed the question—what is the foundational basis for growing joint senior officers?

Once this background was established, the next two phases of this investigation centered on the problem—the disproportionate Service representation in the Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) Commander positions. Historical analysis demonstrated the influence of this command position, documented the disparity, and used the USAF as a case study to determine any potential explanation for the disparity. Finally, the fourth phase continued to focus on the USAF case study to answer the question—*why* have only five USAF General Officers been selected as GCC Commanders?

This thesis will now set upon the final fifth phase and its ultimate purpose—to recommend how a comprehensive, deliberate officer development plan is necessary to produce senior leaders who are poised to lead the joint force at the highest levels. The USAF must specifically address its internal cultural issues, institutionalize a comprehensive officer development strategy, and purposefully groom its General Officer corps with an eye toward joint experience and credibility. Finally, it must ensure its best

candidates are deliberately placed in key Service and joint positions to allow direct interaction with senior joint and civilian leadership who influence combatant command selection.

### **Culture Change**

To begin, the USAF must look inward at its culture to determine if internal parochialism is stunting the development of its officers and potentially preventing competitive credible joint qualified USAF officers from consideration for Command of a GCC. The USAF must change, in order to ensure internal parochialism does not limit any of its officers' development and growth. Beliefs and traditions of an organization shape its culture, but perhaps more importantly, these cultural paradigms can directly impact decision making and problem solving processes. The USAF has failed to guard against emboldening a dominant culture that continues to address the use of air and space power along lines of a paradigm without creative, visionary, alternative insights. Perhaps most interestingly, while many USAF proponents have stressed the importance of diversity among the leadership of the Nation's GCCs in order to enable creative and new thinking and decision-making within these organizations, history indicates that the USAF may be guilty of the same fault. In either case, now more than ever, the right leaders must be selected to lead our Nation's military.

Inducing cultural change is challenging and must occur over time, but a change could improve the unity within the USAF. Currently, the USAF lacks the cohesiveness apparent in the other Services. The Marine Corps, for example, is a highly cohesive Service that lives and fights together as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force.<sup>1</sup> Whether tank

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Smith, "Air Force Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the Twenty-First Century." *Airpower Journal* 12, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 51.

driver or aviator, every Marine views themselves as an infantryman first. The Marines exude pride in themselves and their Service and are Marines first, specialists second. In contrast, one study of USAF culture found that junior aviators identified themselves as pilots first, rather than as Air Force Officers.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, a new multifaceted policy approach from the CSAF could set the change in motion. The USAF needs to find unity in its mission and history. It also needs to celebrate its innovation and mastery of technology to focus on the fight today, while maintaining its preparedness for the future global security environment. A visionary approach to employment of air and space power is needed to prepare for the future. The USAF needs to avoid criticism from leaders, such as, Senator Bob Smith who challenged the USAF to dedicate more resources to space programs or risk the separation and establishment of a separate Space Service. He further criticized the USAF for essentially using space to better employ weaponry from its piloted fighters and bombers.<sup>3</sup> Such criticism from civilian leadership tarnishes the credibility of the USAF and illuminates a lack of a single consistent vision and mission for the USAF.

Lastly, the personnel system, including the allocation of staff positions, must be based on merit and competence, not purely on an officer's career specialty. The CSAF needs to direct a manpower study to reevaluate the use of its officers and then take swift action to ensure billets can be filled by the best qualified officers and not only specific career fields. Such an action would demonstrate that one career field or weapons system does not automatically maintain higher status within the USAF. Furthermore, the best

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, 51.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Transformation of American Air Power* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 251.

and brightest should be identified early with careers guided, so as to posture them to serve in top Service and joint staff positions, based on demonstrated performance and competence, not simply specialty.

For example, the CSAF currently signs a Rated Staff Allocation Plan (RSAP) each year that specifies where its rated officers (Air battle managers, combat systems officers/navigators, and pilots) below the rank of Colonel will work. Given the limited number of these officers, only a certain percentage are allowed to leave operational units to work on the various USAF, DOD, and joint staffs. The stated intent of the RSAP “is to ensure aircrew presence across the Air Force reflects our priorities.”<sup>4</sup> A quick review of its attached documents and associated manning illustrates a need for change.

As Worden accurately identified in his book in 1998, the fighter pilot community still dominates leadership in the USAF. A quick review of the rated staff billets on the Joint Staff illustrates a clear disparity. There are 20 fighter positions on the Joint Staff, while the bomber community has six and the mobility community has three. Interestingly, a look at U.S. Joint Forces Command reveals 23 fighter positions and only two bomber positions and three mobility aviator positions. The manning numbers for the Headquarters Air Force Staff are similar. There are 100 fighter positions, 43 bomber positions, and 48 air mobility positions. These numbers indicate that the USAF is reserving a higher percentage of its top policy and decision-making positions for a particular culture or community.

This is not to be construed as an assault on one community or another. This information is presented merely to show that one community is currently provided

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<sup>4</sup> Norton A. Schwartz, *FY10-2 Rated Staff Allocation Plan Memorandum* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Air Force, 2010).

opportunities at a disproportionate rate. Furthermore, the quality of the different groups is not being called into question; instead the recommendation is simply to ensure that the most credible, credentialed, and competent Air Force officers are selected to fill these high level, influential staff positions. The author's own experience working in the Air Combat Command Manpower and Personnel Directorate was that quality officers, regardless of community, were denied top staff positions based on a lack of a vacant manning position for the individual's specialty. Regardless of community, the best candidates must be afforded the opportunity to work on key staffs at Major Commands, the Air Staff, and the joint and combatant command staffs.

### **Officer Development Strategy**

Another consideration is for the USAF to develop a single comprehensive officer development strategy for the entire officer corps. This strategy should address two specific targets. First, the USAF needs to grow the largest possible collection of joint air leaders in the rank of Colonel that are (1) joint qualified officers, (2) have completed command as a Lieutenant Colonel, and (3) have completed senior-level PME at one of the War Colleges or Fellowships. From this group of joint air leaders, a senior leader management strategy should be devised to groom the largest group of General Officers that has joint leadership credibility and are poised and capable of filling top joint positions at the combatant commands and the Joint Staff.

Officer development is currently more aligned along the USAF cultural tribes. For example, the two largest aviation communities, the combat air forces (CAF) and the mobility air forces (MAF), manage the development of their officer corps separately. With the exception of Air Force level central selection boards for promotion, boards for

squadron command eligibility and PME attendance are handled independently. These smaller boards are not only separated between the CAF and MAF, but also for each of the support career fields, such as manpower and personnel, intelligence, security forces, and others. Instead of such a disbanded system, an Air Force-wide strategic development program should be implemented.

For instance, the MAF already instituted its own leadership development program, entitled Phoenix Horizon. The program is separated into other smaller Phoenix programs, but the overall intent is the same. The focus of the programs is to select a relatively small group of junior officers and instill a strong knowledge of mobility operations, while developing an understanding and insight into senior leadership responsibilities. More important than the program curriculum itself, the MAF selects candidates for these programs during an internal board process and tracks them through selection to Colonel. Statistics from 1994 to 2008 indicate that in one of the programs, 100 percent of these officers were selected for promotion to Major and 16 percent were later selected early for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. This is an astonishing rate given the Air Force selection rate for early promotion is typical four percent.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this MAF specific development program, the CAF and MAF select their squadron commanders differently. The CAF runs an annual centralized selection board to identify officers who are eligible to become squadron commanders. Officers on the list are not matched to squadron command opportunities based on their board score; instead, Wing Commanders can simply hire any officer off this list to fill vacancies in their squadrons without any further higher headquarters vetting.

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<sup>5</sup> Lenderman, 50.

In contrast, the MAF runs a centralized board based purely on an individual's official records. Once the list is established, Wing Commanders can bid on which officer they would like to hire; but the final approval comes from a Numbered Air Force Commander, typically a two or three-star General Officer. This type of process allows a greater degree of objectivity regarding hiring and placement, and enables further development plans to be created to ensure top candidates are placed.<sup>6</sup>

This USAF system, as it exists today, tears at the cohesiveness of the Service and does not allow it to grow as an institution and develop its officers equitably. Regardless of the merits of each method, the fact remains that the USAF does not have a single comprehensive officer development plan to track and ensure its top officers advance. Much like the MAF's Phoenix program, the USAF needs to institute an officer development plan that identifies its top officers and purposefully develops their careers as long as they continue to perform at top levels. The USAF already makes an initial quality cut of its top 15 to 20 percent of officers on each Majors' promotion board. These top officers are designated as Intermediate Developmental Education selects, and will then attend an in-residence PME program for one year during a specific three-year eligibility period.

This pool of individuals needs to be carefully screened for future potential, regardless of career field specialty. In order to maintain their competitiveness for advancement and promotion, the top five to 10 percent of these school selects should be sent to PME as soon as possible in their eligibility window. Next, this same group of officers should be sent to a joint assignment. As shown before, multiple joint experiences

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<sup>6</sup> Lenderman, 59.

serve General Officers well in later years. Once these officers have completed their two to three-year joint assignment, they will be eligible for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. At this promotion board, the next level of quality cut occurs. The officers with the best records are eligible to be promoted one or two years early. This small group of early promotees, typically four percent in the USAF, should then be specifically tracked and developed by the USAF. As illustrated earlier, only the MAF specifically tracks these officers, while the CAF neither institutionally tracks nor manages these select few.<sup>7</sup>

The next step is for selection of squadron commanders. These officers selected for early promotion will also be Senior Developmental Education selects and will later attend a senior level PME in a fellowship or at a War College. Once again, the top quality officers should be managed by the Air Force for purposeful and deliberate development. As it exists now, the CAF will still allow the Wing Commanders to decide whom they will hire for squadron command vacancies. Though it is rare, it is definitely possible that a CAF officer in the top four percent of his or her peer group would not get hired to be a squadron commander. This possibility is too risky. If the Air Force has already made the decision to accelerate an officer's promotion, the system should ensure these top officers are purposefully developed and given the opportunity to advance within their community, which typically entails command.

Having completed intermediate level PME and a joint assignment, these officers will be highly competent in their respective warfighting specialties and will have obtained genuine joint experience. This step is the critical point that warrants special emphasis. Joint will not only broaden the officer as a professional, but it will also

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<sup>7</sup> Based on the author's experiences working on the USAF's Air Combat Command staff in the Manpower and Personnel Directorate.

provide critical flexibility for the officer's development. After squadron command and senior level PME, such an officer will have the opportunity for a Service specific staff position or be more competitive for key nominative joint O-6 positions.

At this point, the USAF will have produced a genuine joint air leader as mentioned, and will have a larger pool of joint qualified officers to consider for Group and Wing Command. As a result, these officers will be positioned more competitively for promotion to General Officer if they excel in O-6 level commands. The other problem with sending the Air Force's top officers to Service specific staffs is that it does not fulfill the requirement of getting the officers joint qualified, an explicit requirement for promotion to General. Sending these officers immediately following intermediate level PME allows the greatest amount of flexibility, while building the critical joint competencies necessary for eventual GCC leadership.

Next, it is absolutely imperative that the USAF groom its General Officers for top joint positions. Without another deliberate and purposeful plan, the USAF will not be able to compete with the other Services for the key joint positions on the Joint Staff. Analysis proved that the Joint Staff historically hires officers who have previous Joint Staff experience, so as to demonstrate the officer understands its complex work environment. Once again, the role of culture is extremely important here. The effort should not be focused on growing one Air Force career-type over another; instead the effort should concentrate on developing and advancing those General Officers who are most capable to lead at the next level.

These prescribed steps are vital to gain the foundational experience for consideration for command of a GCC. The final step is for USAF military and civilian

leadership to continue to advocate for its Generals and demonstrate that they are more than aviators or specialists; they are genuine joint leaders that understand the unique capabilities that air and space power can contribute to the joint warfighter. Through a career interwoven with professional education at intermediate, senior, and capstone PME courses, the USAF will produce officers that embody all of the desired qualities identified in Chapter 1. These General Officers will be strategic minded and critical thinkers that will have already demonstrated their leadership as skilled joint warfighters on various combatant command and Joint Staff positions. Many will have commanded multinational forces and served in combat theaters. By undertaking such a developmental path, the USAF will be better positioned to advocate for its officers to fill the key positions on the Joint Staff, and demonstrate their judgment and decision making skills to senior military and civilian leaders. In doing so, the USAF can finally shatter and eliminate the glass ceiling, that only five times has allowed a USAF officer to assume the leadership role of our Nation's Geographic Combatant Commands.

## CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis indicates that a disparity indeed exists among the Services' representation in the six Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) Commander positions. These six positions are the premier commands within the U.S. military that carry tremendous power and influence. In order to produce credible and capable joint leaders to confront the dynamic and ambiguous future global security environment, the Services must purposefully grow and develop the best possible leaders to command the GCCs. As Government Accounting Office (GAO) reports highlighted before, the growth and development of the nation's senior joint military leaders requires further investigation and attention.<sup>1</sup>

Through research and analysis, this study first identified the qualities and characteristics needed in officers and the educational processes used to introduce these traits. The paper continued by reviewing the key legislation that forces the Services to instill joint experience into its senior officer corps. After establishing the significance of the GCC Commander positions, the USAF case study showed causal factors that impede the Services' progress towards producing more GCC Commanders. The case study introduced factors, such as, cultural biases within the USAF, the lack of a single strategic approach to officer development, and the importance of earlier establishment of joint experience and credibility.

Therefore, this thesis argues, the Services must institutionalize an officer development strategy across the entire force with a shared purpose to grow and develop

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<sup>1</sup> Stewart.

the best possible leaders to command the GCCs. The Services must each deliberately groom its General Officer corps with an eye toward joint experience and credibility and ensure its most credible and competent candidates are intentionally placed in positions that allow direct interaction with senior joint and civilian leadership. Such placement will near guarantee these candidates are well-known, skilled in joint matters (such as strategy, operations, and policy administration), and are ultimately competitive for future key joint positions.

As the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen stressed in the newly released U.S. National Military Strategy, the future global environment demands our joint military force maintain the capability to execute operations across a broad spectrum of possibilities.<sup>2</sup> Without a more equitable representation in the GCC Commander and key joint positions, the nation is risking myopic and stovepipe thinking at the very top of its military command structure. Given the importance of the GCC Commander positions at home and abroad, the Department of Defense must ensure it develops a wide range of credible and capable joint leaders from all the Services to fill these command positions. An Air Force core value is “Service before Self”; our Nation’s Military Departments must establish a shared core value of “Nation before Service.” The Nation’s interests, security, and future depend on it.

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<sup>2</sup> *The National Military Strategy.*

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Lt Col David M. Gaedecke earned his commission from the USAF Officer Training School and was a member of the first class to be commissioned at Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB), Alabama. He is a Senior Air Battle Manager with over 2,100 flying hours on the U.S. E-3 B/C AWACS, the NATO E-3A AWACS, and the E-8C JSTARS, including over 500 combat hours and 170 combat support hours. Lt Col Gaedecke also served in the Ground Theater Air Control System in the Republic of Korea, Shaw AFB, SC, and Mountain Home AFB, ID. His operational experience includes participation in Operations NORTHERN WATCH, SOUTHERN WATCH, NOBLE EAGLE, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, and JOINT GUARDIAN. He was a squadron commander of an E-8C JSTARS Air Command and Control Squadron at Robins AFB, GA. Lt Col Gaedecke's staff experience includes service as the Chief, Officer Development Branch in Air Combat Command's Manpower and Personnel Directorate, A-1, Langley AFB, VA. Lt Colonel Gaedecke earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from James Madison University, VA. He holds a Master of Arts in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma and graduated with Distinction from the College of Naval Command and Staff College at the Naval War College, Newport, RI with a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies. He has also completed Air Command and Staff College and Air War College through correspondence. Lt Col Gaedecke is married to his beautiful wife and has four wonderful children.