

F-14 Tomcat landing on *USS Independence* during Operation Southern Watch.



NATO Airborne Early Warning Aircraft.

U.S. Air Force (Gary Coppage)

U.S. Navy (Mark Therien)

# Unity of Control

## Joint Air Operations in the Gulf—Part Two

By MICHAEL A. NELSON and DOUGLAS J. KATZ

The inaugural issue of *Joint Force Quarterly* contained an article by James Winnefeld and Dana Johnson on unity of control in air operations in the Persian Gulf War. The authors advanced two initiatives to promote success: ongoing detailed planning and training for large-scale operations and

preparing a cadre joint air staff to be quickly expanded in a conflict. While their first initiative has been accepted and is being institutionalized through joint doctrine, the second has not been adequately addressed. Much attention has been given to joint air operations since Desert Storm. Exercises have been conducted at all levels within the

### Summary

Today U.S. Central Command is working toward better control of joint air operations, a concern that was raised by James Winnefeld and Dana Johnson in an article (“Unity of Control: Joint Air Operations in the Gulf”) which appeared in the inaugural issue of *JFQ*. Taking advantage of one of the two longest standing joint task forces, a “cadre joint air staff” is in training—a cadre that can be rapidly expanded in a contingency. Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia is demonstrating through its efforts how to establish and conduct operations in any joint task force. The lesson is to build on the mission, the unique capabilities of each service, and the many skills brought to a joint staff by the personnel who represent the various participants. Unity of control has arrived.

services and unified commands to implement joint doctrine for air operations and to orient staffs on the emerging concept. The exercises have been relatively brief and invariably involved new procedures and doctrine on each occasion. No matter how well planned, they have achieved only limited success in building a trained cadre staff.

#### Southwest Asia

There is an operation in southwest Asia which trains multiple service and command staff personnel for air operations as part of long-standing joint combat operations. Joint Task Force Southwest Asia (JTF-SWA) was formed in August 1992 to conduct Operation

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Southern Watch in accordance with U.N. Security Council resolutions 687 and 688. JTF-SWA is often associated with enforcing the no-fly zone

below the 32<sup>d</sup> parallel in Iraq under resolution 688 which calls for the fair treatment of Iraqi minorities, including Shias in the marshes, and a no-fly zone to monitor Iraq's compliance. But equally significant has been resolution 687 with its provisions on weapons of mass destruction, where JTF-SWA planned and, if directed, would conduct a campaign against Iraqi targets as a means of compelling compliance.

Given the preponderance of Air Force assets, and with a command and control structure in place in the region, Central Command Air Forces (CENTAF) was tasked to command, staff, and start-up JTF operations. Further, recognizing the unique availability and nearly equal tactical force level, Navy Central Command (NAVCENT) was tasked to provide a deputy commander plus key staff members. Ultimately the staff reached a strength of about 200, comprised predominantly of Air Force personnel, but with Army and Navy as well as Royal Air

Force (RAF) and French air force members in planning and executive positions. The assets provided to the JTF commander consist of a large Air Force composite wing, an almost continuous carrier air wing and air defense-capable Navy cruisers, Army Patriot missile batteries, detachments from the RAF and French air force, and Tomahawk-capable ships. This makes JTF-SWA a model for joint and combined operations.

Working with the Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command (CINCCENT) and the NAVCENT commander, the CENTAF commander formed a headquarters with a classic operations structure—J-1 to J-6, less J-5—including a J-3 staff almost identical to that of the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) in Desert Storm, a difference being size (the JTF-SWA staff has about 200 people versus JFACC which had over 1,000 in 1991). This was done to allow a rapid expansion for continuous combat operations and allow long-term operations with an accepted structure. At the same time, and more importantly, JFACC duties and procedures used in the Gulf War were also reinstated, namely, a single Air Tasking Order (ATO) for every flying operation, a single Airspace Control Order (ACO), responsibility for Area Air Defense, operation of a Joint Rescue Control Center, responsibility as interdiction coordinator, and ATO execution.

Within the JTF staff, the two major directorates for conducting Southern Watch are J-2 and J-3. In addition to being the largest, J-2 and J-3 are jointly staffed. The J-2 director is an Air Force colonel and the deputy a Navy captain. Five to eight other Navy personnel work in J-2 functional areas. The chief of collection management is an RAF officer and the ground analysis cell is made up of a British army major and three U.S. Army NCOs. Integrated in the Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) are support teams from national intelligence agencies. A continuous intelligence watch offers excellent interplay among the services with functional teams providing analysis to the commander on Iraqi operations and political activities. J-3 has the greatest combination of assigned personnel and is the largest part of the staff. Of the 65 assigned or attached personnel, 10 are from the Navy, including a captain as deputy. The Navy also furnishes members of long range plans (LRP) staff, today's equivalent of the Black Hole,

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F-15 taxiing into its slot.



U.S. Air Force (Steve M. Martin)

#### JTF-SWA Significant Events

**August 27, 1992:** First sortie flown.

**December 27, 1992:** MiG-25 downed by F-16.

**December 1992–January 1993:** Iraq positions surface-to-air missiles below 32d parallel.

**January 13, 1993:** Coalition air attack against surface-to-air missiles.

**January 17, 1993:** Tomahawk strike on nuclear facility.

**January 18, 1993:** Air strikes against surface-to-air missiles.

**April 18, 1993:** F-4G fires HARM at anti-aircraft radar.

**June 26, 1993:** Tomahawk retaliatory strike against intelligence headquarters.

**June 29, 1993:** F-4G fires HARM at anti-aircraft radar.

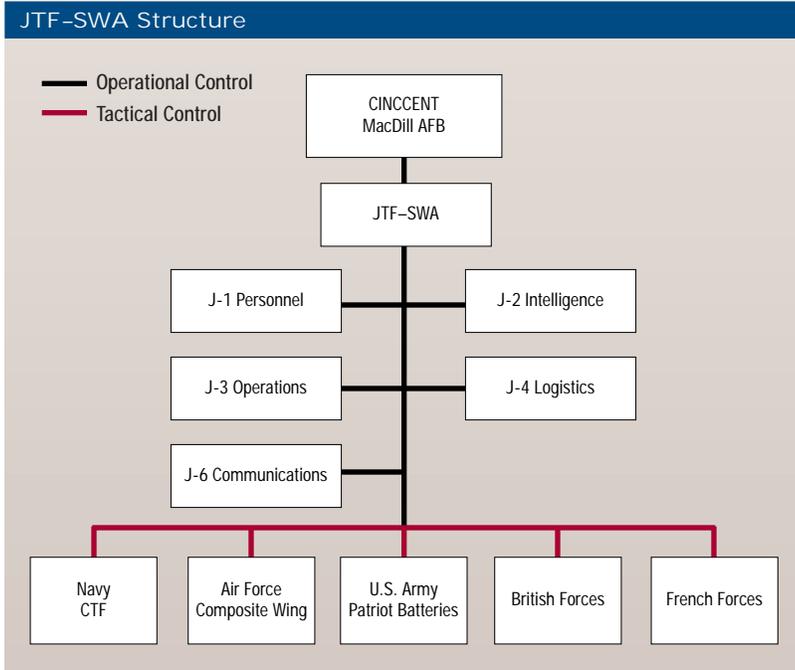
**July 24–29, 1993:** F-4G/EA-6Bs fire HARMs at anti-aircraft radar.

and the guidance, apportionment, and targeting (GAT) staff.

With everyone in desert camouflage uniforms, it is often difficult to distinguish whether the GAT briefer is an Army or Navy officer. Indeed they are interchangeable after one week in GAT. Other contributions include four Army personnel for the air defense cell and representatives from the RAF and French air force. The balance of J-3 is comprised of Air Force personnel, including a colonel who is the director. Because both CENTAF and NAVCENT as component commands have responsibility for their respective forces, J-1 and J-4 support the JTF-SWA staff and also assist the services in monitoring personnel and logistics. J-6 has a small staff which depends on Navy

and Air Force personnel to support communications equipment in the AOR. J-1, J-4, and J-6 are all staffed by Air Force personnel.

The entire JTF staff, including the commander (an Air Force major general) and the deputy (a Navy rear admiral, lower half), serve on 90-day tours. By the end of 1993, over a thousand personnel had gained joint experience on the JTF-SWA staff under this assignment policy. Among that number is a total force mix which includes members of the Air National Guard and Reserve as well as active duty leaders who subsequently had significant operational tours. Within the Navy three carrier battle group commanders have been deputy JTF commanders. The Air Force has sent its best operationally-oriented major generals and colonels. For example, the commanders of both the Air Warfare Center at Eglin Air Force Base and the Weapons and



Tactics Center at Nellis Air Force Base have recently commanded JTF-SWA.

#### No-Fly Zone

A true measure of success is relevance to the real world. JTF-SWA has been enforcing the Southern No-Fly Zone and conducted strikes in 1993 while executing a strong exercise program that routinely prepares joint and combined forces for combat operations. This success is due to the leadership of CINCCENT, his principal component commanders, and daily cooperation among the component staffs. However, because of its austere size and continuous turnover, the JTF depends on CENTAF and NAVCENT staffs to resolve numerous issues and provide continuity to ongoing operations. For example, NAVCENT strike cell serves as executive agent for Tomahawk cruise missile planning, including maintaining target data bases and concept of employment. In addition, JTF J-2 and NAVCENT N-2 work very closely to maximize intelligence support from collection resources in theater.

J-2 draws intelligence from all sources, including Air Force RC-135s, to develop a fused picture of the situation. Daily watch-to-watch coordination allows complementary analysis and reporting from a full range

of expertise. The N-2 staff relies on J-2 for in-depth Iraqi air and air defense analysis which, in turn, is drawn from various sources including CENTAF A-2, while J-2 uses N-2 Iranian air and Arabian Gulf maritime analysis. Other major agencies and assets provide liaison officers with mission expertise as well as direct links to specialized services which respond to mission tasking. These capabilities facilitate an exchange of critical ideas that ultimately enhance the warfighting expertise of the entire JTF staff.

Together with these formal arrangements, informal staff relationships maintain continuity in JTF operations while training junior officers. The composite air wing and carrier air wing—major suppliers of combat assets—also provide JTF duty officers with a knowledge of tactical systems, unit preferences, and manpower for surge operations. At the same time these captains/lieutenants and majors/lieutenant commanders learn how JTFs operate, ATOs are built, and individual services contribute to a joint effort. The information that they take back to their respective units contributes to jointness. Furthermore, at all levels, especially in the GAT division, there are daily discussions on the scope and scale of operations, including carrier port visits, unit rotation, training, special exercises, and even holidays. The period under discussion routinely covers a 60-day period up to 48 hours prior to publishing an ATO for a given day. Not only is the commander's guidance met through this informal process, but adequate time is available to approve changes as units maintain full combat capability. This process is another of the practical lessons learned from the operation, especially given the thousands of personnel who have supported Southern Watch. Finally, daily exchanges among the JTF commander, his deputy, and the staff provide additional, albeit indirect, training of everyone involved in the operation.

While acknowledging that JTF-SWA is in fact building a cadre joint air staff, one might ask what is being taught. First, every service and all personnel must accomplish a single mission. The JTF commander and staff use the best assets given the tasks, capabilities, and political constraints. Second, since people make an organization, the services must assign their "best and brightest" to this difficult temporary duty task. An excellent



U.S. Army (Robert Reeve)

Patriot in firing position.

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example is the Navy's selection of the deputy J-3. For the first five rotations the Navy almost always assigned newly identified vice carrier air wing commanders to the position who subsequently returned to their wings and deployed to the Arabian Gulf within six months. Each of these officers had a unique opportunity to come to understand the JTF mission and provide critical in-

formation to their wing commander, ship's captain, and carrier group commander. The Navy is reaping dividends from this assignment policy. JTF staff officers

experience first-hand the need to blend specific service strengths to achieve a mission. In Southern Watch, for instance, the Air Force has larger airborne warning and control system (AWACS) and tanker assets, while the Navy has more high-speed antiradiation missile (HARM) and Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) assets. The capabilities of both services are needed to accomplish the mission and neither could go it alone in a large scale or surge operation. Such a balancing of service strengths is a major benefit of joint operations and a valuable lesson for future leaders.

Two areas in which JTF-SWA could be improved are generally apparent to those involved. First, while the United States and its

coalition partners have greatly enhanced their communications (ATO's are no longer hand carried to outlying bases or ships at sea), the system is not yet seamless for all the players. Part of the problem is in the long-term, temporary nature of the operation, and another is the catch-up work which has gone on since 1986. J-6 and its service counterparts daily learn more about the issue and develop ways to make the systems work better. Another part of the communications problem is the distance between southwest Asia and the United States, something faced by operations conducted throughout the world (that is, there are finite assets and bandwidths for use in each AOR). Second, all forces involved in JTF-SWA must assign quality people. There is a great temptation to reduce the level of expertise sent to one of several competing operations but the services must remain committed to assigning the best to ensure readiness for joint operations.

The success of JTF-SWA and Operation Southern Watch can be measured in various ways aside from daily enforcement of the no-fly zone. When Iraq did threaten coalition forces in the no-fly zone an Air Force F-16 shot down a MiG. When called on to execute a strike, positive action was taken by air forces tasked by JTF. Finally, two highly successful Tomahawk Land Attack Missile (TLAM) strikes demonstrated the depth of the coalition's resolve in ensuring that Iraq lives by the terms of U.N. disarmament agreements. Each day JTF elements vigilantly and steadfastly continue to enforce the no-fly zone. There is every reason to believe that this success will continue for as long as JTF-SWA remains active. But enforcement of the no-fly zone and offensive strikes are just two indicators of success. The ultimate value of the operation will come from knowledge and experience that personnel have gained from participation. Whether they serve as cadre joint air staff or unit and force commanders, their ability to think and work jointly for the execution of the mission will be a major portion of the final success of JTF-SWA. **JFQ**