

True Jointness

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A front page article in the Washington Post, concerning the positions General Tony McPeak, recently retired Air Force chief of staff, offered the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, a senior Marine officer was quoted as saying, "What General McPeak is proposing, however, is a very inflexible, dogmatic arrangement whose *primary virtue would be to allow the Air Force to do what it does best.*" (emphasis added) Imagine that, proposing a defense arrangement that allows the services to concentrate on doing what they do best!

Why do we have so much trouble with that idea? If we in the military have learned nothing else in the last decade, it is that no service operates independently anymore. When we go to war, it is as a nation and as a unified military. Where you find soldiers in combat, you will also find airmen. You'll also find Marines and sailors as well. If we want to succeed, we must rely on each other. Doctors don't fix their own plumbing, they call a plumber. Plumbers don't build their own cars, they rely on automobile makers. And automobile makers don't fix their own broken legs, they call doctors. Why? Because they rely on each other to do what each does best.

So, the question for the Commission becomes what is it that each service does best? What are the core competencies of each of the services? The answers to this are essential, because it is the core competencies of each of the services, working together with those of the other services, which provides the synergism that makes the United States military the most capable and most respected military force in the world. For the Navy, that core competency is the ability to conduct operations under, on and above the sea and to ensure security of naval operations by projecting power inland. The Marine Corps provides a forced entry capability from the sea and is able to secure coastal areas to ensure naval forces can operate unhindered by the enemy. The Army conducts land combat operations in all types of terrain. The Air Force provides the capability to control and exploit the air and space. In short, the essential purpose of each service is to fight the war in a different medium. When the services work together under a unified commander, their individual expertise - "what they do best" - comes together to provide the combat arm of US national security policy. They operate under a unified commander because no service acting on its own can provide the expertise and capability to fully exploit warfare in every medium. However, working together they form a mutually supporting, effective fighting force.

Modern warfare is extremely complex. Operations that are not in a service's primary medium are conducted to support their ability to operate in that primary medium. The Army, for example, flies helicopters not to control and exploit air and space, but to protect its ground forces, to move rapidly over terrain, and to destroy attacking ground forces. Over the years, the services have expanded these supporting activities to include numerous areas which aid them in performing their main functions, but which are really tangential to them. Unfortunately, over time those supporting activities often have come to be viewed as additional primary missions. As with any large bureaucracy, the services have become protective of their investment of time, effort and

money into these activities. Because they allow us to do our primary missions, they have become "essential operations." The result is duplication of systems and duplication of apparent capabilities.

The problem is that we simply can't afford these redundant capabilities. The Cold War is over. Fiscal realities demand smaller defense budgets. Those smaller budgets mean a smaller defense force. But the end of the Cold War has also left the world less stable than it was when East-West tensions dominated world political-military affairs. The problem thus becomes how to deal with the numerous regional and subregional conflicts with smaller forces and less money. To find a solution we have to begin with a blank sheet of paper. As British Air Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory said so eloquently, "We are running out of money, so we must begin to think." What must not go is essential US military capability, but rather redundant capabilities. We must rely upon each other to provide mutual support in any future conflict. But military professionals are essentially conservative in nature. We want to ensure that every possibility in an operation is covered. We tend to be self-reliant people. We want to ensure that the job will get done right, and, as the old saying goes, "if you want something done right, do it yourself." We tend to trust only those activities conducted by our own service and distrust the willingness of another service to provide that same support. Hence the redundant military capabilities in supporting the main mission of each service. How do we get past these seemingly contradictory demands? The answer is trust.

We must stop thinking in terms of each service being capable of doing it all. We must reshape our thinking towards true jointness. That means operating in an environment where we not only can operate together, but one in which we must operate together. To some extent, especially in the area of logistics, we already do that. All of the services rely on the Air Force's Air Mobility Command to provide airlift of personnel and materiel. When a tank commander in Kuwait needs a part immediately it is airlifted there by the Air Force. The same arrangement is true for transport of heavy equipment and supplies. The Navy provides sealift for all military services. Years of experience have taught us the supporting service will be there when needed. Now we need to extend that trust to the pointy end of the spear as well.

The catalyst that can get the trust process moving is the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces. It is tasked with seeking ways to create greater static efficiencies in the military while maintaining dynamic effectiveness. Often in military operations those two terms, efficiency and effectiveness, are mutually exclusive. Not in this case. Eliminating redundant capabilities and streamlining organizational structures creates peacetime efficiencies. It also requires the services to work closer together to get the job done. The closer we work together, the greater the combat effectiveness of those unified forces.

Reducing the number of ancillary activities in each service will allow more time and effort to be spent developing each service's primary capabilities. Working closely together more often will enhance each service's understanding of how the other services operate, what their needs are and how they view their mission. As that mutual dependence and understanding increases, so will our trust in each other increase. The result will be a truly unified command structure - true jointness.

That Marine general was right. The intent of the Air Force's proposals to the Commission is to allow the Air Force to do what it does best. It is also to allow the Army, Navy and Marine Corps to do what they do best. When that happens, our nation will be truly protected ... *by the best*.

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