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Joint Forces Air Component Commander Transition

by

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

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

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15. Abstract: During deliberate planning, the JFC must prepare to synchronize all action of apportioned forces and resources to achieve strategic and operational objectives. This is performed either in parallel with or subsequent to the CINC's campaign plan. Inherent in the JFC's concept of operation is the development of the Joint Air Operations Plan. Responsibility for the development of this plan rests with the JFACC. Although a CINC's campaign plan contains provisions for the planning, coordinating, allocating, and tasking of air assets in support of the JFC, it fails to adequately address provisions for the transfer of JFACC duties to other platforms or to other component commanders as a contingency. This paper will focus on considerations the JFC must anticipate for the expeditious transfer of the JFACC responsibilities without the loss of effective coordination, communication, and capabilities.

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1. ABSTRACT

Among the challenges facing the Joint Forces Commander (JFC) is the responsibility of preparing to synchronize all actions of apportioned forces and resources to achieve strategic and operational objectives. This task will be performed either in parallel with or subsequent to the CINC's campaign plan. Inherent in the JFC's concept of operation is the development of the Joint Air Operations Plan (JAOP) which documents the strategy for integrating and coordinating joint air operations in order to exploit the flexibility of air power. Responsibility for the development of this rests with the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC). The advancement of this plan and selection of forces to implement it will complicate campaign planning, and affect courses of action.

In the process of developing this portion of the CINC's campaign plan there has been a failure to address provisions for the planning, coordinating, allocating, and tasking of assets in support of the JFACC transition. Effective joint air operations planning must consider scenarios that may require the transition of JFACC responsibilities between platforms or between components afloat or ashore. This paper will focus on considerations the JFC must anticipate for the expeditious transfer of JFACC responsibilities without the loss of effective coordination, communication, or capabilities.

2. Introduction

A JFACC is established when the JFC of an operation or campaign dictates that there be more centralized control of available air power. When required a JFACC is a key component of the joint team's success in its pursuit of a common objective. The establishment of a JFACC insures that unity of command is achieved by providing an avenue to balance the demands of centralized direction and decentralized execution of those elements of the force apportioned for the JFACC's mission.

In scenarios ranging from major campaigns to MOOTW, "... a JFACC provides the linkage between strategic objectives and the tactical application of combat power."[1] It has been proven that the JFACC represents the most effective way to command and control airpower in support of a JFC's campaign plan. Military planners have made a cognitive effort to insure that the lessons learned in the skies and on the ground in such places as North Africa (during World War II), Korea, and Vietnam are effectively applied.

The fragmented application of air power in these examples proved ineffective and have given way to the concept applied in the skies during Operation Desert Storm. It was here that the combined, synchronized application of force, sequenced and coordinated through a central authority proved its devastating worth. This was achieved not without problems, however.

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[1] Marcus Hurley. JFACC: Taking the Next Step. *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 1995, page 60.

The organizational problems that underlaid the concept of joint air operations in previous wars were still a compelling source of vexation for the commanders leading up to and during Operation Desert Storm. The notion of a truly joint military had not been codified until 1986 when the Department of Defense Reorganization Act focused its' objective on " . . . the excessiveness of power and influence of the four services, which had precluded the integration of their separate capabilities for effective joint warfighting."[2] Goldwater-Nichols also helped ensure a unity of effort through the establishment of the Combatant Commands for ". . . the performance of assigned missions and...the control of the joint force structure of such commands."[3] Doctrinally this provided the Combatant Commanders the authority . . .

> ". . . to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations...to accomplish the missions assigned to the command."[4]

This new capability to integrate forces and resources, in particular air forces, into a theater plan was conceptualized but had not been implemented on a massive scale until Operation Desert Storm forced the issue.

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[2] James R. Locher. Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols. *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn 1996, p. 10.

[3] Joint Chiefs of Staff. Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF). *Joint Publication 0-2.* Washington D.C. 24 February 1995, p. I-7.

[4] National Defense University, Armed Forces Staff College. The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1993. Norfolk, VA. 1993.

The lessons learned since the first operational implementation of the JFACC have been many. Military staffers have gone to great lengths since 1991 to insure that JFACC is a well known concept. The concept has been transcribed into doctrine and the doctrine has been taught and exercised. Publications such as Joint Pub 3-56.1 provide:

> "...fundamental principles and doctrine for the command and control of joint air operations throughout the range of military operations in order to ensure unity of effort for the benefit of the joint force as a whole."[5]

To this point however, little more than lip service has been paid to the concept of transition. Normally, the JFC will assign JFACC responsibilities to the component commander having "...the preponderance of air assets and the capability to plan, task, and control joint air operations."[6] The point is that designation of a JFACC is situational, and that situation could change which would require a relocation of the JFACC.

3. Purpose and Scope

U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 100.5, Operations defines transition as:

> "...a period of adjusting operational focus as forces move from one type of operation to another because of changes in military objectives and operational environments."[7]

Across the spectrum of conflict, from MOOTW to war, the commander may not have the luxury of years available to plan an operation such as General

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[5] Joint Chiefs of Staff. Command and Control for Joint Air Operations. *Joint Publication 3-56.1.* Washington D.C. 14 November, 1994, p. I-1.

[6] Ibid, p. II-2.

Eisenhower had, during World War II, in preparation for Operation Overlord. Or even the months that General Schwarzkopf had leading up to the employment of forces in Operation Desert Storm. It is essential then for Combatant Commanders, in exercising their authority, to identify the contingencies requiring appointment of a JFACC and provide for those requirements to include appointment of a JFACC and a JFACC staff organization which is mission focused and flexible. Forethought should be given during the *Deliberate Planning Process** and incorporated into the OPLAN for execution.

In order to ensure exploitation of the flexibility of airpower, various scenarios must be envisioned and included during this *Deliberate Planning Process*. Emphasis should be placed on the JAOP during Phase II of the process. At this point, the CINC has developed the subordinate tasks to include those tasks assigned to the JFACC. The JFACC may now begin to analyze courses of action and assist in development of the concepts of operation. Phase III calls for the CINC to develop a detailed plan to meet the objectives. The JFACC, at this time, should assist by determining whether or not the JFACC should be based ashore or afloat and when that location might change. It may be desirable to assign duties ashore because of the potential for "...enhanced logistic, communication, and facility capacities on land."[8] On the other hand

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[7] Headquarters Department of the Army. Field Manual 100-5, Operations. Washington, D.C. 14 June 1993.

*The Deliberate Planning Process is a continuous cycle of planning conducted in five phases: initiation, concept development, plan development, plan review and supporting plans as outlined in Joint Publication 5-0.

[8] Joint Publication 3-56.1, p. II-8.

circumstances may dictate assignment of an afloat JFACC when one or more of the following exist:

A. Maritime forces provide the preponderance of air capability.
B. Land-based facilities or sufficient infrastructure does not exist.
C. A secure land-based area is not available.
D. Ground support forces are forced to withdraw.[9]

Consideration must also be made for the eventuality of the transition of these responsibilities as a function of buildup or scale down of joint-force operations.

The subsequent discussion will consider provisions for the transition of JFACC responsibilities between components afloat or between afloat and land-based components. The scope will encompass two likely events which would cause the JFACC responsibilities to shift. Both events are considered "planned transitions" as a function of buildup or scale down of joint-force operations as opposed to unplanned transition events as a result of battle damage or equipment failure. The events considered are:

1. When coordination requirements related to joint Air Tasking Order (ATO) planning and execution exceed the component capability.

2. When buildup or relocation of forces shifts preponderance of air assets to another component commander and the JFC decides that the other component is in a better position to accomplish the JFACC responsibilities.[10]

[9] Joint Publication 3-56.1, p. II-8, II-9.

[10] Ibid, p. II-9.

4. Transition Considerations

A. Guidance

Appendix A lists the JFACC transition considerations which are meant to serve as an aid to the JFC in transition planning. The following paragraphs will visit these considerations in order to specify capabilities and focus planning, amplifying the need to account for the eventual shift of responsibilities as a result of the events listed above.

The first consideration calls for continuous, uninterrupted, and unambiguous guidance and direction for joint air operations to be the primary objective of any JFACC transition. In order to achieve this the CINC must identify a need for a JFACC and plan for the eventuality of transition. Staffs must then exercise the transition option to insure the objective can be met, and to identify shortfalls. Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces,* states that "training the team as they will fight helps build the bonds of trust which are absolutely critical in joint operations."[11] In order to do this a notional JFACC should be established on the CINC staff (see Figure 1). This nucleus will be responsible for potential CINC requirements and to "...practice fundamental concepts, principles, and procedures needed to plan and execute joint and multinational air operations".[12] This staff could also serve as a "Fly Away

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[11] Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces. *Joint Publication 1.* Washington, D.C. 11 November 1991, p. 38.

[12] Marcus Hurley. p. 60.

*Fly Away Team is a cadre of staff augmentees, trained in concepts and available for tasking to support JFACC staffs when OPLANs are executed.

Team"* should a real world requirement exist to augment an actual JFACC afloat or ashore. Education and training will be the cornerstone for unambiguous guidance and direction which is necessary for meeting the objective.

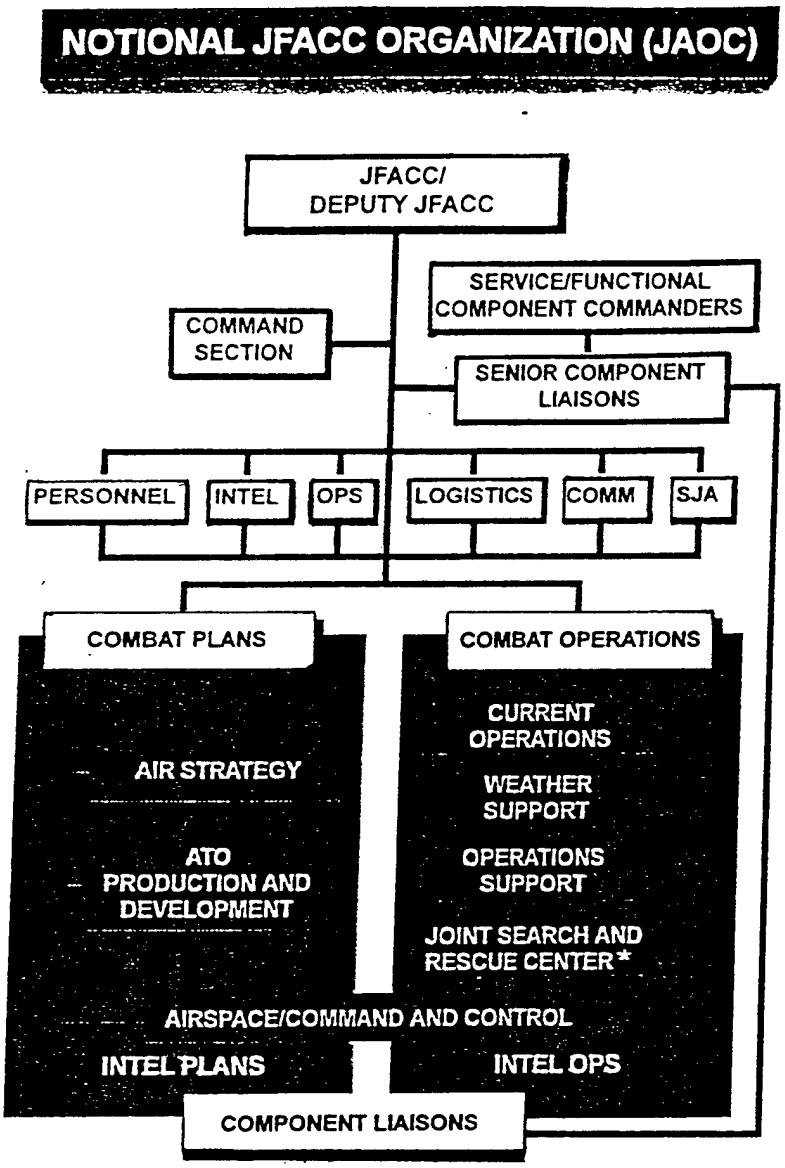

Figure 1[13]

[13] Joint Publication 3-56.1, p. II-6.

B. C4I Capabilities

The second consideration calls for appropriate C4I capabilities to ensure a shift of JFACC duties which is as transparent as possible. Figure 2 depicts the phases of the JFACC targeting/ATO cycle.

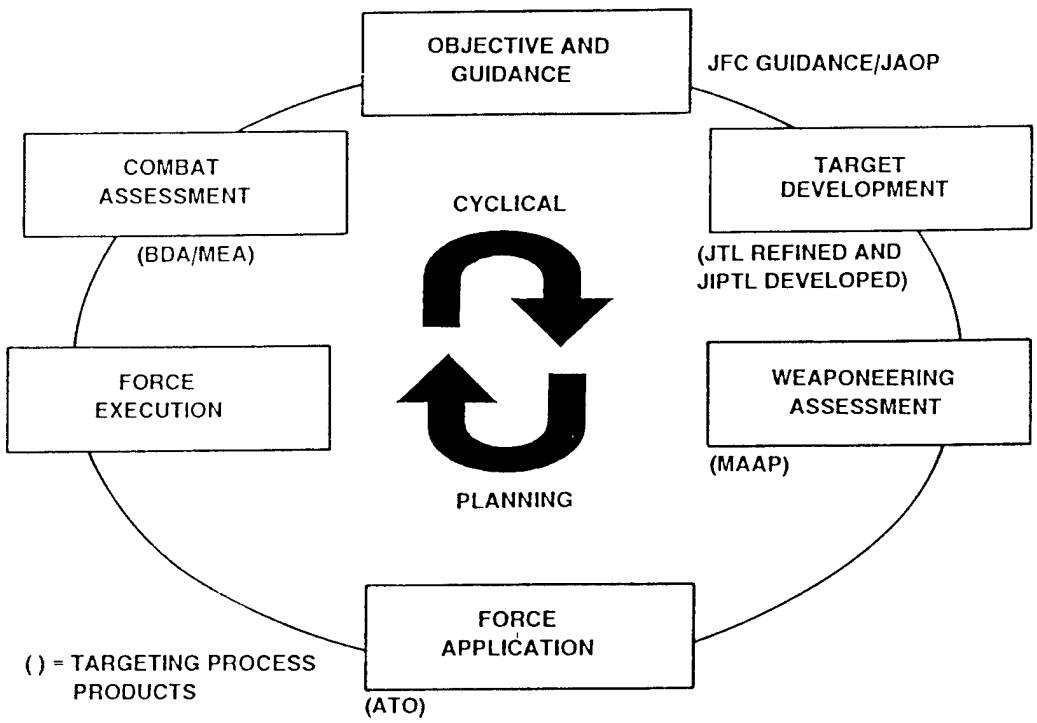

Figure 2[14]

This is an iterative and continuous cycle, which begins with NCA guidance which is then translated into the JFC mission guidance and finally moves into force execution and combat assessment. The cycle, which

[14] Naval Doctrine Command. Joint Force Air Component Commander Organization and Processes. *Naval Warfare Publication 3-56.1.* Norfolk, VA. 1996.

encompasses a 48-hour timeline, cannot be interrupted at any phase without disrupting the synchronization of forces and actions which are essential in achieving coordinated effects in time and space. Other joint force components conduct their planning and operations based on a prompt, executable joint ATO and are dependent on it's information. Any disruption in the cycle could severely impact attaining the JFC's mission objectives.

An afloat JFACC is no longer just a concept. By virtue of significant improvement in connectivity capabilities aboard the aircraft carriers (CV's) and command and control ships (LCC's), such as the U.S.S. Mt. Whitney and the U.S.S. Coronado, it is now reality. NWP 3-56.1 has provided the doctrine for the integration of these new capabilities and lists "C4I requirements"[15] for planning to host a JFACC afloat. The publication also serves as the initial step in satisfying the task, outlined in *Forward . . .From the Sea*:

> "The Naval Forces Commander will have the capability to command a joint task force and function as, or host, a Joint Forces Commander. Command and control system capabilities enable domination of the battlespace and power projection, and are central to the precise application of power."[16]

This doctrine and identified hardware improvements have led to a published and practiced plan of basing the JFACC afloat for various levels of operations.

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[15] Naval Doctrine Command. Joint Force Air Component Commander Organization and Processes. *Naval Warfare Publication 3-56.1.* Norfolk, VA. 1996, pp. 4-6/4-7.

[16] Department of the Navy. From the Sea, Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century. Washington, D.C. September 1992, p. 9.

The sea-based JFACC continuum (Figure 3) provides the CINC and JFC with a planning tool for transition.

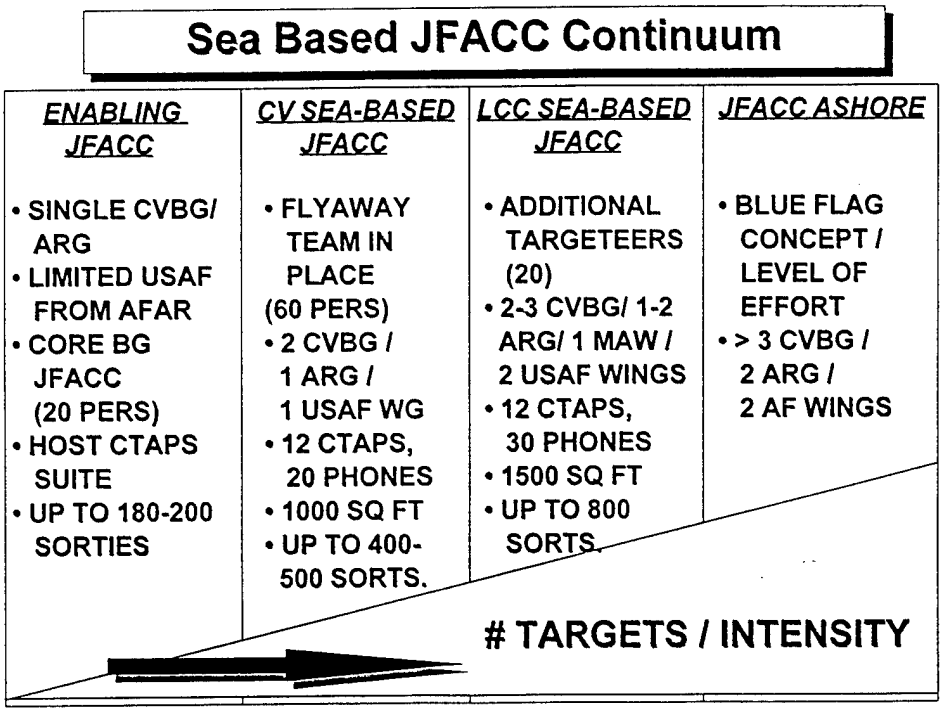

Figure 3[17]

This continuum gives planners a guide for afloat capability based on manning and sortie generation limits. Specific manning requirements and billet assignments are listed in Appendix A of the NWP 3-56.1, and should be used to plan for staff augmentation through the different continuum levels. Finally, the Navy is exercising it's capability. Exercises Ocean Venture, in the Atlantic and

[17] Commander, Carrier Group SEVEN. Operation Lateral Pass. Briefing Slides. San Diego, CA. 1996.

Tandem Thrust, in the Pacific continue to provide significant training opportunities exercising the JFACC afloat concept. Exercises such as these are key elements in the Navy's attempt "... to derive doctrine that specifies a clear division of responsibility among the JFC, the JFACC and the components and that clearly defines terms and concepts unique to joint air operations."[18] Carrier battle groups in their final stages of work-up preparation for deployment have incorporated a JTF exercise (JTFEX) which combines battlegroup assets with Marine air and ground units, SOF, and Air Force assets in a littoral operation initiated by maritime forces and executed from a JFACC afloat. Finally, Commander Carrier Group Seven (CCG-7), deployed on board U.S.S. Nimitz, during it's 1996 Western Pacific deployment, planned to exercise the transition of the CJTF-SWA, JFACC to the afloat staff in a proposed exercise called *Operation Lateral Pass* (which will be discussed later).

The Navy is "onboard" with the concept of either hosting a JFACC or performing in the role of JFACC. They have come a long way since Operation Desert Storm where the Air Tasking Order generated at the JFACC in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia had to be flown aboard each CV and then distributed to other battle group assets via helicopter. This antiquated process was repeated daily, since no Naval electronic capability existed.

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[18] Maureen A. Wigge. The Joint Force Air Component Commander: Theory and Practice. Center For Naval Analyses CRM 92-195. Alexandria, VA: March, 1993, p. 33.

The C4I capabilities issue has been addressed and the navy is keeping pace with doctrinal requirements in order to maintain it's place in the joint arena. Future system developments must continue to be driven by joint requirements and must take into account joint connectivity concerns to endeavor to attain the goal of complete interoperability.

C. Published Execution Procedures

Transition of the JFACC duties require not only systems compatibility but a timeline in order to insure smooth execution. The plan must be published as part of the JFC's JAOP. The JAOP is a five phase plan which documents the JFACC's plan for integrating and coordinating joint air operations. During Phase V, the Joint Air Operations Plan Development Phase, the following transition concerns must be specified:

-***who*** will take over responsibilities should a transition be necessary,

- conditions ***when*** this planned evolution could occur,

-***where*** the JFACC staff will relocate,

-***how*** the transition should be conducted.

Answering these questions will insure each of the remaining considerations as listed in Appendix A are addressed.

5. Operation Lateral Pass

An example of an attempt to meet these transition requirements was proposed by CCG-7. *Operation Lateral Pass*, was an exercise developed to

facilitate the transfer of the CJTF-SWA, JFACC ashore to an afloat staff onboard the U.S.S. Nimitz, in support of Operation Southern Watch.

The afloat JFACC C2 structure, as depicted in Figures 4, 5, and 6, served as the afloat staff and would plan, develop, and execute the daily Air Tasking Order (ATO) for a designated three-day period.

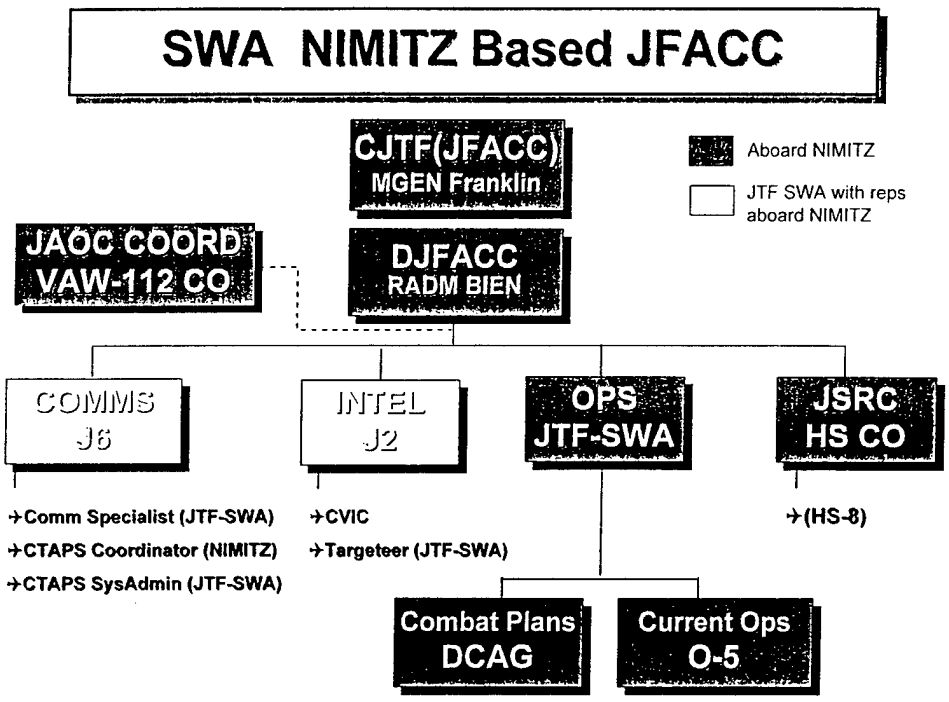

Figure 4[19]

[19] Commander, Carrier Group SEVEN. Operation Lateral Pass. Briefing Slides. San Diego, CA. 1996.

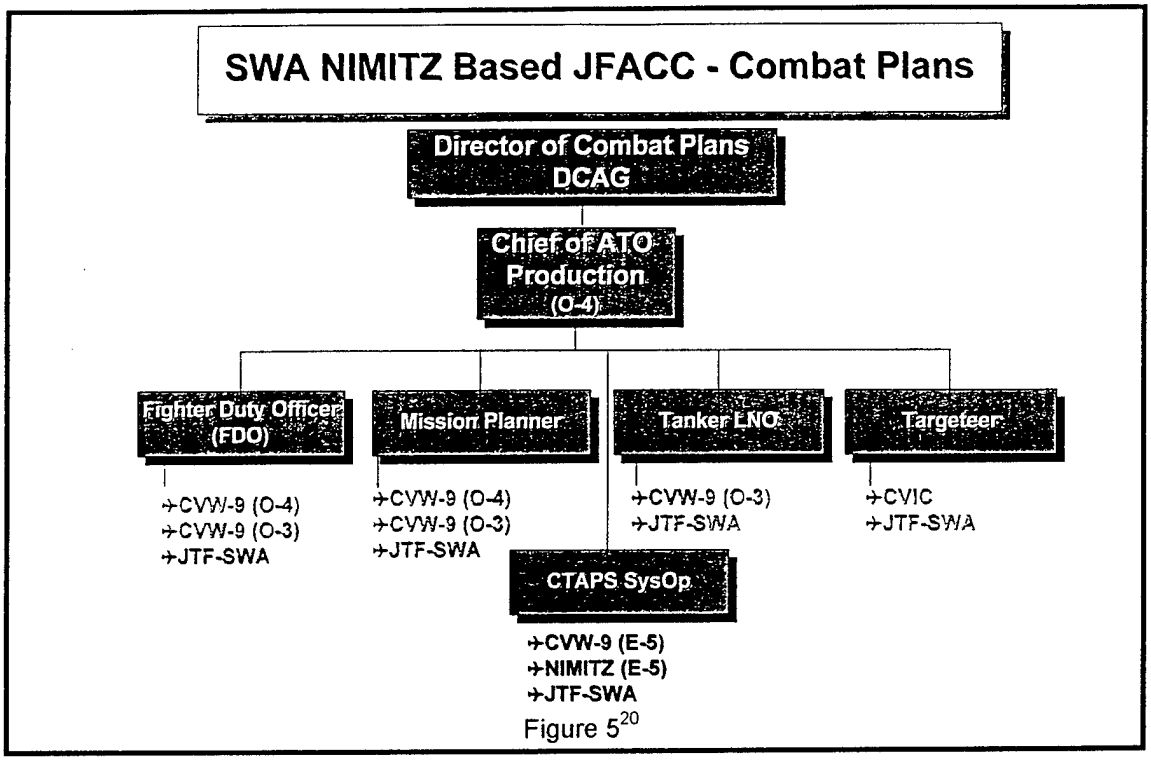

Figure 5[20]

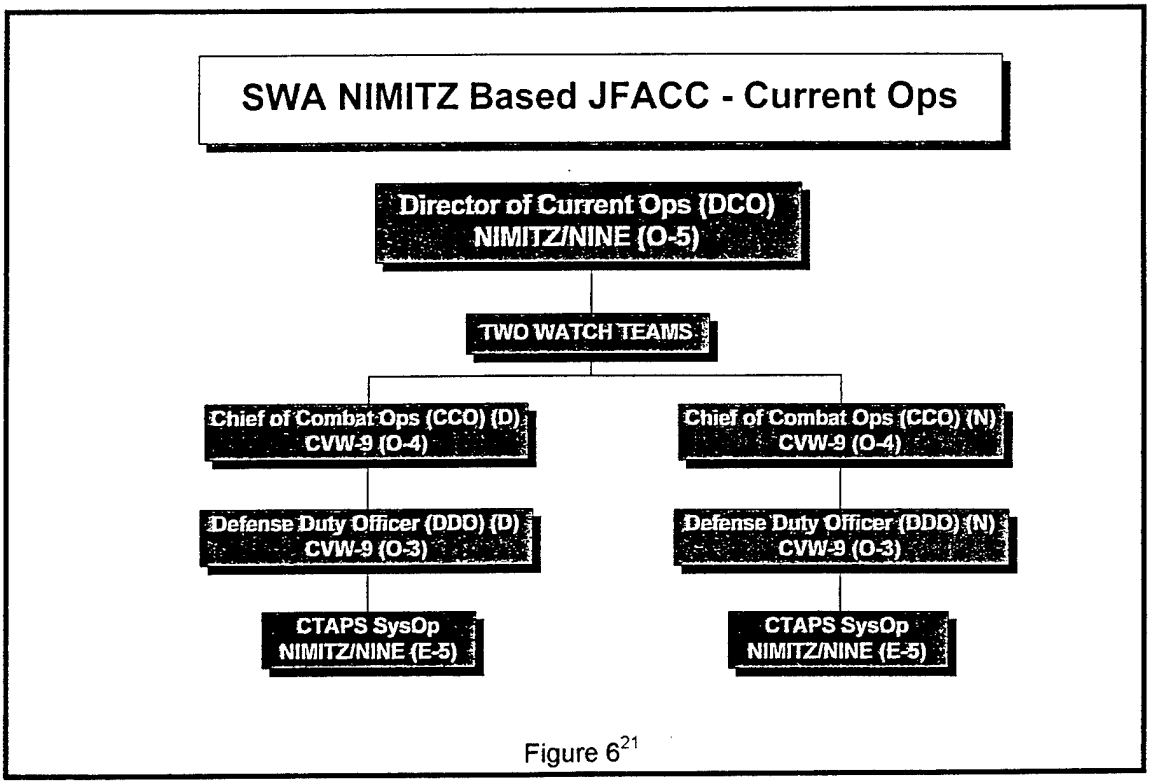

Figure 6[21]

[20] Commander, Carrier Group SEVEN. Operation Lateral Pass. Briefing Slides. San Diego, CA. 1996.

[21] Ibid.

JFACC transition consideration requirements were met first by establishing communications connectivity with all JFACC supporting units and organizations. This was followed by arranging for pertinent information transfer to include:

-the current Air Tasking Order (ATO),
-all current CJTF-SWA Special Instructions (SPINS),
-the Air Control Order (ACO),
-the Joint Integrated Priority Target List (JIPTL),
-the allocated force disposition,
-the enemy situation,
-the order of battle

JFACC afloat training had been conducted throughout the battlegroup turn-around cycle which provided CCG-7 staff and CVW-9 personnel knowledge of the processes involved with supporting a JFACC. The work-up cycle immediately preceding deployment culminated with a JTFEX similar to the type mentioned earlier. This exercise also included a shift of the JFACC responsibilities between afloat units to establish communications connectivity only.

In planning for *Exercise Lateral Pass*, it was determined that the transfer of selected CJTF-SWA, JFACC staff members for augmentation afloat would occur on D-2, or two days prior to transition execution day. This would facilitate information exchange and allow augmentees to integrate with the afloat staff and familiarize themselves with the proposed transition process. Staff exchange was limited to minimum augmentees to support afloat execution of the ongoing CJTF-

SWA operational ATO which generated, on average, 130-150 joint air sorties per day.

During exercise planning it was also determined that in order to insure all transition considerations were met, it was mandatory for the JFACC staff, on the receiving end of the shift of duties, to closely monitor the ATO process. Near constant communication/data connectivity was a necessity.

As the 48-hour ATO cycle progressed, it would be this continuos monitoring and exchange of information that would allow the afloat staff to input all data requirements and transmit ATO A (the first of three to be executed afloat) during the force execution phase (see Figure 2), on D-Day. Following that execution the CJTF-SWA JFACC responsibilities would be complete, for exercise purposes, as the subsequent ATO's would be planned, transmitted, executed, and monitored by the afloat staff. The exercise called for three days of ATO building and execution from the afloat staff followed by a reversal of the transition process. Had the exercise been approved for execution, valuable lessons might have been wrought. Although the exercise was never carried through, the challenging problem of JFACC transition received a practical look. It served as an attempt to develop "... conformance with the criteria of adequacy, feasibility, and compliance with joint doctrine."[22]

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[22] Joint Chiefs of Staff. Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations. *Joint Publication 5-0.* Washington D.C. 13 April 1995, p. I-13.

6. Conclusion

The ability of joint forces commanders and their staffs to execute plans under severe time constraints and pressures rests upon the quality of peace-time planning and analysis by commanders concerning their theater strategic situations, likely scenarios and courses of action.

> "The basis and framework for successful campaigns is laid by peace time analysis, planning and exercise. These plans and exercises also provide invaluable training for commanders and staffs in the characteristics of the theater strategic environment and sharpen skills that are fundamental to successful planning in war."[23]

The focus of planning should always be to increase the effectiveness of the concept of operations. Planning for the transition of JFACC responsibilities serves this purpose and also insures the JFC that assigned tasks can be accomplished. Exercising the concept guarantees that a potential scheme of employment will be effective. Resulting lessons learned identify and confirm any shortfalls in system capabilities, doctrinal legitimacies, and personnel requirements.

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[23] Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces. *Joint Publication 1.* Washington, D.C. 11 November 1991, p. 46.

APPENDIX A

JFACC Transition Considerations

- Continuous, uninterrupted, and unambiguous guidance and direction for joint air operations must be the primary objective of any JFACC transition.
- All JFACC operations facilities should possess appropriate C4I capabilities to ensure shift of JFACC duties is as transparent to the components as possible (joint ATO dissemination and receipt should be unchanged).
- Specific procedures for coordinating and executing planned and unplanned shifts of JFACC should be published in the joint air operations plan.
- The oncoming JFACC must have adequate communications, connectivity, manning, intelligence support, and command and control capability prior to assuming JFACC responsibilities.
- The oncoming JFACC must have a current joint ATO, special instructions (SPINS), ACO, joint integrated prioritized target list (JIPTL), force disposition, adversary situation, and order of battle.
- The oncoming JFACC must have the JFC's objectives to conduct supporting joint air operations.
- The oncoming JFACC must establish timely, reliable, and secure communications links with all appropriate coordination cells associated with the JFC mission to facilitate continuous and dynamic exchange of information and joint air support.
- The oncoming JFACC must be completely familiar with the area air defense and airspace control plans. If also designated the AADC, the JFACC must be ready to assume the responsibility for air defense operations. When designated the ACA, the JFACC must also be ready to assume that responsibility.

GLOSSARY

AADC	Area Air Defense Coordinator
ACA	Airspace Control Authority
ACO	Airspace Control Order
ARG	Amphibious Ready Group
ATO	Air Tasking Order
C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence
CAG	Carrier Air Group (Commander)
CCG	Commander, Carrier Group
CINC	Commander in Chief
CJTF-SWA	Commander, Joint Task Force-South West Asia
CTAPS	Contingency Theater Automated Planning System
CVBG	Aircraft Carrier Battle Group
CVIC	Carrier Intelligence Center
CVN	Aircraft Carrier, Nuclear
CVW	Carrier Air Wing
DCAG	Deputy Carrier Air Group (Commander)
JAOP	Joint Air Operations Plan
JFACC	Joint Forces Air Component Commander
JFC	Joint Forces Commander
JIPTL	Joint Integrated Prioritized Target List
JSRC	Joint Strike Rescue Center
JTF	Joint Task Force
JTFEX	Joint Task Force Exercise
LNO	Liaison Officer
MOOTW	Military Operations Other Than War
NCA	National Command Authority
OPLAN	Operation Plan
SJA	Staff Judge Advocate
SOF	Special Operations Forces

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