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## **W(h)ither Corps?**

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# W(H)ITHER CORPS?

D. Robert Worley

August 2001

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## FOREWORD

In a March 2001 address to the Association of the United States Army, General Eric Shinseki noted, “We are once again an army between the wars, and once again, we are challenged to adjust to break old paradigms. So we are transforming to become strategically responsive and remain dominant across the entire spectrum of military operations.”

Army transformation has many dimensions with change in technology, operational methods, and organizations. So far, the focus of organizational transformation has been on the redesign of tactical units such as the interim brigade combat teams. But corps—the Army’s operational level organizations—must also be transformed.

In his monograph, Dr. D. Robert Worley of the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies provides a history of the structure and function of Army corps and discusses ways they might be redesigned to play an effective role in the 21st century security environment. He concludes that the different Army corps have such diverse functions that a “one size fits all” approach is inappropriate. After considering a number of options, he provides a blueprint for an array of corps structures that would fulfill missions from peacekeeping to major wars.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish this monograph as a contribution to the ongoing process of Army transformation.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

D. ROBERT WORLEY recently joined the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies where he serves as a senior research fellow in the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities. His defense analysis career began at the RAND Corporation in 1985 through 1992 and continued at the Institute for Defense Analyses from 1992 through 2000. Analytic activities have been concentrated in higher echelon command and control but include wargaming, training exercises, and experimentation at the national command, Allied Command Europe, U.S. unified command, and joint task force levels as well as at Army corps and division level through the battle command training program. Prior to becoming a defense analyst, Dr. Worley managed and directed research and development efforts at the Hughes Aircraft Company, NASA, and the University of California at Los Angeles. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 1967 to 1971, with one tour in Vietnam. Dr. Worley earned a Ph.D. in Engineering and an Engineer Degree from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1986 and 1985, respectively. He earned a Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Southern California in 1980 and a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Computer Science from the University of California at Berkeley in 1978. He earned a Masters in Government from Johns Hopkins University in 1995 and a Master of Arts in National Security Studies from Georgetown University in 2000. Dr. Worley formerly served on the computer science faculty at the University of California at Los Angeles and is now a Fellow at Johns Hopkins University's Washington Center for the Study of American Government and a member of the adjunct faculty at George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs.

# W(H)ITHER CORPS?

## INTRODUCTION

Army transformation should not be a “one size fits all” process. Each of the Army’s surviving corps has a unique origin. Relevance to present and future conflict environments requires multiple destinations. Ultimately, separate transformations are required to move from distinct origins to diverse destinations.

Today’s U.S. Army corps have their roots in Napoleon’s *corps d’armée* and the corps formed during the American Civil War. Corps and divisions vanished after the Civil War. Divisions were resurrected on the eve of U.S. entry to World War I, but corps returned later as large tactical headquarters during the preparation for World War II. The Cold War, with its large standing Army, mature coalitions, extensive network of modern infrastructure in what was expected to be the primary theater of war, and known enemy with known doctrine and known order of battle, made corps the U.S. Army’s principal warfighting command.

Today these conditions no longer hold. Given this, should corps retain their preeminent role? Should corps survive at all? The answer is unequivocally “yes.” But what role should they play and what relationship should they have with echelons above and below? There is no single answer that applies across the Army. Whither corps?

In the face of small budgets and high operating tempo, resistance to change is self-destructive. The Army must remain relevant, or it will continue to lose in the budget competition. But relevance to what? Some argue for relevance to the many expected small wars at the expense of the ability to fight “big” wars. Others argue for maintaining a “big war” capability for unexpected but high stakes

conflicts, at the risk of appearing irrelevant to the frequent small wars. Still others argue that relevance is determined by the ability to fight America's "big wars" 20 years hence. Regardless of where relevance for ground forces is found, most agree that relevance will be determined in the context of joint forces. In any case, organization will matter. Refining the shape and function of corps will be a vital part of the broader process of Army transformation.

## THE COLD WAR CORPS

Each of the Army's corps is tailored for a specific range of missions. But, regardless of its mission-specific composition, all corps have certain common characteristics. For instance, a corps remains active for the duration of a war, fights as part of a larger ground force, spans the operational and tactical levels of war, and has a complex and dynamic composition. Corps sustain campaigns and operations. While a division fights and then withdraws to reconstitute, a corps remains active until the campaign or operation is completed and then moves to the next, possibly taking on new combat power to continue the fight. The continuous operations of corps and the concomitant need to take on new divisions demand simple and standard procedures between corps and lower echelon forces that might come under its command.

One of the most significant assumptions embedded in current organizational design is that corps—and, hence, the lower echelon tactical commands—fight as part of a larger ground force. As such, corps translate operational objectives from a higher echelon command into tactical action for execution by subordinate commands and elements. This assumption is a dramatic symptom of the Army's conception of war—the Army fights America's "big wars" and thus should be organized for them.

As part of a larger ground force, from whom will corps receive direction? General H. Norman Schwarzkopf chose to retain strong direct connections to his corps, leaving his

army headquarters in more of a support than a command role. But if it constitutes the largest ground element in a theater of operations, a corps will take direction from a joint task force and be responsible for all aspects of the ground war. In a smaller-scale contingency requiring only a division or brigade of ground forces, corps may provide ground capabilities to a joint task force rather than forming a subordinate command.

What are the implications for organizing, training, and equipping lower-echelon ground forces when they are not part of a larger ground force? The answer may not be immediately apparent, but the ability to field a highly integrated corps is less desirable than the ability to construct a force from flexible building blocks. A corps' composition is neither static nor standardized. Divisions were and are designed to be complete for tactical combat. Division organization has long been standardized under tables of organization and equipment. Corps, in contrast, have escaped such standardization. Corps have a headquarters, major subordinate commands, and major subordinate elements. Cold War doctrine retained the language of dynamic composition, but capstone alignment with subordinates created strong habitual relationships leading to more complex bindings and procedures.

A corps' major subordinate commands include divisions (infantry, light infantry, armored, mechanized, airborne, air assault), separate maneuver brigades of infantry or armor, armored cavalry regiment, aviation brigade, and corps artillery. Divisions constitute the majority of a corps' combat power. Each Cold War corps acquired its own armored cavalry regiment, the "eyes and ears of the corps commander," for forward reconnaissance in force. Corps may take on new combat power prior to battle and may have combat power added and taken away during battle. Because of this, Haislip argued that corps must use simple standard operating procedures (SOPs).<sup>1</sup>



Each corps has an extensive complement of major subordinate elements for support. In World War II, a corps was both commanded by and supported by its superior-numbered army. During the Cold War, a corps was subordinate to a multinational army and supported by a U.S. Army component. As a result, each American corps acquired a large, division-sized support command. Other major subordinate elements include an intelligence brigade, engineer brigade, air defense artillery brigade, signal brigade, chemical brigade, military police brigade, civil affairs brigade, psychological operations battalion, finance group, and personnel group.

Strong habitual relationships developed between corps headquarters, their major subordinate elements, and their major subordinate commands. This was particularly true of the heavy corps with assigned forces, but was also true of the lighter corps with apportioned forces. A sound argument can be made that habitual relationships lead to more effective warfighting teams—if they fight the war they planned on. However, habitual relationships produce dependencies and limit the flexibility of a corps to perform across a wider range of missions. SOPs become more complicated as staffs of the many elements habitually work in the same command structure. While written doctrine retained the language of temporary relationships, strong bonds developed through training and SOPs that were developed for a very specific mission.

The question must be asked, when should the loss in flexibility be sacrificed to the focused effectiveness offered by the habitual relationship? Given the focused threat of the Cold War, the answer was clearly to sacrifice flexibility for immediate effectiveness. In the post-Cold War period, the answer must be to favor flexibility to produce effectiveness for a wider spectrum of scenarios. Haislip argued that the dynamic composition of his World War II corps required simple SOPs and simple interactions between corps and division. His admonition again takes on added significance in the current security environment.

In addition to the accretion of major subordinate commands and elements, corps became the doctrinal center of intelligence in the U.S. Army. The most sophisticated national intelligence assets could not be fed to a multinational (NATO) army headquarters, but they could be fed to a U.S. corps. Planning and conducting deception operations in consonance with the higher echelon's deception plan is another corps responsibility. Integrating the capabilities of the other services is also doctrinally centered in corps. A smaller-scale contingency based on a division or smaller ground force requires parceling out corps assets to form ad hoc headquarters or doing without those functions provided by corps.

The demands of Cold War coalition warfare transformed corps from an austere tactical headquarters into the U.S. Army's principal warfighting organization. In World War II, armies were commonly provided by a single country, and army groups were allied commands even if dominated by a single country. During the Cold War, armies were allied commands; corps and below were more likely to be single country commands. The implications of the single versus multinational nature of a command were many. The United States provided logistical support for its own forces. It also provided intelligence from national assets directly to U.S. units, bypassing higher-echelon allied commands. Corps was the highest echelon U.S. Army organization in the NATO warfighting command structure.

### Corps Specific Characteristics.

During the Cold War two heavy corps, V and VII Corps, were forward deployed in Germany, while a third heavy corps, III Corps, was prepared to deploy to Europe on short notice. XVIII Airborne Corps, while it had a Cold War mission, was largely focused on a variety of smaller contingencies. I Corps returned from Korea to Washington with responsibilities across the Pacific to include Korea. Of the five corps, the three oriented on war in Europe

dominated doctrinal thinking and equipment requirements in the Army.

*V and VII Corps.* U.S. Army V and VII Corps were assembled under NATO's Central Army Group (CENTAG) under command of a U.S. Army general. Not really an army group, CENTAG was a combined army including two U.S. corps, a single German corps, and a separate German brigade. V and VII Corps were based in Europe in defensive postures against a possible threat from Eastern Europe. Both benefited from, and depended on, superb German transportation and communication infrastructure and decades of intelligence preparation and familiarization with the terrain.

V and VII Corps were shaped by decades of preparation for a massive ground attack from waves of Warsaw Pact forces. They were assigned a relatively small area of responsibility along the inter-German border and the mission to defend in place. They repeated a deliberate planning cycle each 2 years, updating their war plan, incrementally improving it, and absorbing improved weapon systems as they were fielded. The strategic and the operational levels of war were in the hands of planners, while commanders focused on the tactical. Both corps trained rigorously to execute the plan in the tactical time frame. Should the war have come, there would have been no time to mobilize so V and VII Corps maintained the highest possible level of readiness. The force was heavy with armored and mechanized infantry divisions forward deployed. Habitual relations between corps and assigned subordinates were strong.

*III Corps.* Also a product of deliberate planning, III Mobile Corps at Fort Hood, Texas, was heavy and shared the "big war" as its driving force. Unlike V and VII Corps, III Corps planned for strategic movement. The corps maintained a forward headquarters in Europe to complement the command headquarters in Texas. Its function was to maintain familiarity with the terrain and

infrastructure, including the prepositioned equipment maintained by German nationals, and to receive the force. The forward headquarters collaborated with the Texas headquarters in the biennial planning process.

When the United States proclaimed to NATO that it would provide 10 divisions in 10 days, III Corps took the promise seriously and began the preparation for this monumental undertaking. Upon III Corps' departure for Europe, Army National Guard divisions would fall in on Fort Hood and the equipment left behind. When ready, they, too, would move forward to Europe. Deliberate planning was central to III Corps' mission. Habitual relationships with assigned forces were strong.

After arriving in Europe and mating with prepositioned equipment, III Corps would then conduct operational movement across the continent to join either NATO's Northern or Central Army Group. Depending on conditions, it would either counter attack or relieve another corps in the defense, demanding more flexibility in its operational planning than in V and VII Corps. III Corps' capstone training event, *Roadrunner*, as its name implies, oriented on operational movement with headquarters and their communications leapfrogging across the plains of Texas.

III Corps contributed its major subordinate commands and elements to the Gulf War, but the Corps did not go. The same is true of III Corps during Vietnam. In all likelihood, its subordinate commands would have been parcelled out to V and VII Corps as replacement units had it been called to Europe. One has to wonder about the logic of building but not using such a capable warfighting organization.

*XVIII Corps.* XVIII Airborne Corps and its subordinate units also had a "big war" mission and participated in the biennial deliberate planning process. One element of Cold War deliberate planning envisioned a Soviet invasion of Iran in the north through the Caucasus Mountains. The U.S. response would be not through the European Command but through the Central Command with its roots

in the defunct Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force and in XVIII Airborne Corps. The corps would deploy rapidly and enter Iran in the south through the Zagros Mountains to defend the oil fields. The ability to deploy rapidly and defend was demonstrated in the early phases of Operation DESERT SHIELD.

XVIII Airborne Corps was and is America's contingency corps. Based in North Carolina, it prepared for a broader range of missions than did the heavy corps. In addition to one heavy division and one light infantry division, it includes the Army's one of-a-kind airborne and air assault divisions. Each of these four divisions has different strategic, operational, and tactical mobility, as well as different combat power characteristics, making it difficult to mount an integrated corps offense. Despite this, XVIII Corps demonstrated its offensive capability during Operation DESERT STORM. A bolstered heavy VII Corps transplanted from Europe was the main effort, however.

XVIII Airborne Corps stresses crisis action rather than deliberate planning. Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion of Panama, typified its normal approach: crises action planning, picking elements from across the force (including elements beyond its habitual relationships), and rapid deployment. XVIII Airborne Corps makes no assumption about being part of a larger ground force, although it has demonstrated that ability. In operations like JUST CAUSE, it expects to be the highest echelon ground component in theater and is prepared to take on operational responsibilities in addition to its tactical responsibilities. Given the changing threat, other corps may find themselves with greater operational responsibilities in the future.

*I Corps.* I Corps in the Pacific Northwest was the lightest of the five Cold War corps. It was light in the sense that it lacked heavy divisions of armor and mechanized infantry. It was also light in the sense that it was perennially under resourced. It participated in deliberate planning in the context of a Korean War scenario and was advertised as a

Pacific contingency corps. For purposes of training, it acted as the parent corps for three light divisions in the Pacific Northwest, 6th ID(Light) in Alaska, 7th ID(Light) in northern California, and 9th ID(Motorized) in Washington. For purposes of war planning, I Corps was aligned with heavy National Guard divisions. In the middle 1980s, I Corps moved from Korea to Fort Lewis, Washington, home of the 9th ID and its culture as an experimental test bed for light forces.

### Cold War Corps.

Planning strategic, operational, and tactical movement produces a different corps than planning a tactical defense. Perhaps this partially explains VII Corps' performance in the Gulf War. VII Corps was responsible for a much larger area of operations in the Gulf than in Europe, and it was responsible for a long operational march rather than defense in place. Its communications were inadequate to the larger area and movement requirements,<sup>2</sup> and it could not match the speed of the heavy division to its left.<sup>3</sup> III Corps had prepared extensively for strategic and operational movement but was not used, just as it was not used during Vietnam.

In their primary warfighting mission, III, V, and VII Corps would conduct operations under command of a larger multinational ground force: NATO's Northern or Central Army Group. This reality drove Army doctrine, organizational design, equipment acquisition, and training. The relationship with a higher echelon ground headquarters also produced a negligible joint culture at the corps echelon.

V and VII Corps were forward deployed, prepared for the close fight, and were well integrated into a specific coalition structure. III Corps planned and trained for strategic and operational movement to enter the close fight as part of the larger ground force. The missions of these three corps dominated Army thinking. In this part of the Army—the

“big war” army—the culture included a heavy reliance on deliberate planning and heavy forces, and poor integration with air forces. The XVIII Airborne Corps shares strategic and operational movement with III Corps, but it was prepared to be the largest ground component in theater, contained a broad range of light and heavy forces, and relied on crisis action planning. The airborne corps maintained good multi-service relations with the Air Force for mobility, but not for integrated air-ground combat. It has long been hard to characterize I Corps and therefore hard to justify its existence.

## THE DIRECTION OF TRANSFORMATION

Transformation should produce greater relevance to present and future needs. But the country’s needs are complex, and we must ask relevance to what and when? Transformation should preserve the good in the old and discard what is not justified by present and future needs. Finally, the destination of transformation need not be cut from whole cloth; history offers several archetypes for consideration. A corps must continually evolve to be relevant.

### Relevance to What War and When?

Within the services and the Department of Defense, the concept of “transformation” has multiple, sometimes incompatible meanings. One of the most important determinants of the trajectory of transformation is the type of future war that the U.S. military must be prepared to fight. Identifying this is particularly difficult in the very long term—2020 and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Because of this, strategic thinkers have considered at least four types of transformation: (1) transformation from the garrison force built for the “big war” of the 1980s to an expeditionary force for small wars and contingencies; (2) transformation from the industrial age force of the 1980s to an information age force for 2020 and beyond—a dominant interpretation of the

revolution in military affairs (RMA); (3) transformation from the “big war” force for the 1980s to a “big war” force for 2020 and beyond; and, (4) transformation from service-focused warfare to seamless joint warfare.

Baby and the Bathwater.

Transformation must preserve some characteristics, but which ones? One way to answer the question is to examine the premises that underlay the Cold War corps and to compare them to the present reality and the uncertain future that we must plan for.

One reality of the post-Cold War era is a reduction in “above the line forces,” e.g., divisions and separate brigades. Not only are there fewer of them, but an increasing percentage of them are in the United States rather than forward deployed. Forces once resident in Europe and therefore assigned to the European Command are now either disbanded or stationed in the United States. Continental United States (CONUS)-based forces are the scarce resources to be shared—assigned to Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) in CONUS, *apportioned* through multiple plans to multiple unified commands, and *allocated* as crises emerge. Transformation must elevate the sharing of scarce resources over the Cold War method of forward deployed, assigned, and fenced forces.

The readiness model must also be challenged. During the Cold War, the U.S. military focused on war in Europe and thus maintained the highest level of readiness possible across the force. Tiered or staged, readiness was often discussed but went against the grain of the “big war” forces.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the Cold War, however, naval forces and some army units employed a rotational readiness model, with only one-third of the force at the highest level of readiness at any given time. Since the end of the Cold War, the Air Force has boldly adopted the rotational readiness model that the Army continues to resist. This has significant costs. Finding



the right readiness model or models thus must be part of transformation.

The “big war” culture within the Army should not be dismissed lightly. The Marine Corps will quickly remind us that it fights the country’s battles, but that only the Army can fight America’s “big wars.” Transforming the Army to fight small wars will kill this critical culture and capability. The “big war” Army produces commanders and staffs capable of prosecuting the strategic and operational levels of war. Deliberate planning to mobilize, deploy, and sustain a large force is the lynch pin. It does not take place in tactical units. Skill at higher echelon command and staff must be developed through career progression and training. All of these factors suggest that transformation must preserve the “big war” culture in some part of the force.

World War II offers evidence that the existence of a corps and the existence of a corps headquarters are separate issues. The inability to field a corps from head to toe does not preclude the existence of a corps headquarters. Preserving corps headquarters preserves career paths and enables preservation of the “big war” culture. Having these positions is necessary but not sufficient. Conscious effort must be devoted to preparing commanders and staff for the higher levels of war. It is customary to train corps headquarters without troops in the field, relying instead on computer simulations and a variety of scenarios appropriate for the training audience. The same is true of other higher-echelon headquarters, including Joint Task Force (JTF) headquarters. Therefore, it is possible to maintain the readiness of corps commands and staffs in the absence of its subordinate units. The higher-echelon commands can exist without assigned forces, but habitual relations must be considered in transforming the force.

The transformed corps must be a combined arms headquarters, deal with joint issues, preserve the “big war” culture in the army, and be adept at the operational level of war. It must be effective at small wars, “big wars,” and

conceivable future wars. This is a demanding array of requirements.

One alternative is to have no corps headquarters or corps at all, as was the case between the Civil War and World War I. In the case of major war, this would force the Army to create a higher-echelon combined arms headquarters at the last minute. All evidence suggests this is a formula for disaster.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, commanders and staffs would have no opportunity to develop the skills needed at corps level and thus would effectively destroy the “big war” culture in the U.S. Army.

Another option is to keep only a small corps headquarters except during a major war. World War II offers evidence that the existence of a corps and a corps headquarters are separate issues. The inability to field a corps from head to toe does not preclude the existence of a corps headquarters. The relatively low cost of small corps headquarters allows more of them to be maintained. Preserving corps headquarters preserves career paths, allows staff and commanders the opportunity to develop appropriate skills, and enables preservation of the “big war” culture. It is customary to train corps as a headquarters without troops. Therefore, it is possible to maintain the readiness of corps commands and staffs in the absence of its subordinate units.

The corps forward headquarters offers another model. It would consist of a modest headquarters, forward deployed with a small footprint. Small headquarters have two primary duties: to be knowledgeable of the local political and military situation and the military capabilities in the region, and prepare to receive deploying forces and a larger headquarters. The Army, through its corps forward, and the Air Force, through many of its numbered air forces, have long employed this model. Marines call the process of a larger force falling in on top of a smaller force *compositing*. But should the forward element be an Army corps headquarters or a joint headquarters? The logic for a joint

headquarters forward is obvious and compelling. The corps forward model maximizes the efficient use of scarce forces, provides local expertise in theater under the command of a regional Commander in Chief (CINC), provides a political-military engagement, high-level presence, and offers training opportunities and career paths for higher-echelon commanders and staffs.

The Fleet Marine Force (FMF) is another model. It is based on a garrison construct with ground combat forces (division), air forces (air wing), and service support forces (force service support group), along with a handful of standing air-ground task force headquarters. The Marine division maintains its subordinate units at various states of readiness—rotational readiness—and continuously provides infantry battalions to a small Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) for deployment at sea. The air wing and force service support group function similarly as providers to MAGTFs. In garrison, the FMF's division, wing, and support group units maintain separate organizations for efficiency. The MAGTF is designed for combined arms effectiveness and flexibility in expeditionary operations.

The Cold War-era corps with large headquarters, support elements, and assigned forces is another option. Its high cost and the few forces available for such an organization would limit the number that could be created, perhaps to just a single one. This would offer only a few training opportunities and career paths, while threatening the capability to prosecute a "big war." In that sense, it is the worst of both worlds. While a major theater war may not be imminent, such a conflict would pose a serious danger, thus retaining the ability to prosecute one seems prudent. Having to form an ad hoc headquarters would not do this.

Destinations for Transformation: Whither Corps?

The Army cannot fight alone. It cannot get to a crisis without the Navy or the Air Force, nor can it sustain itself in

theater without support from its sister services. Its abilities for forcible entry and deep strike are modest. It cannot survive in the field against an enemy with competent tactical air power. Solutions must be joint; they must be in the context of ground forces' relationship to the employing joint force.

The history of the Army has followed a progression of combined arms warfare down to successively lower echelons and smaller formations;<sup>7</sup> the same pattern is being repeating with joint warfare. Joint warfare is combined arms warfare compounded by a clash of theories and bureaucratic obstinence. The JTF is the next step in pushing jointness down. In the last decade, the JTF has become the nation's instrument of choice for command and control of military operations at the operational level of war. In the coming decade, a wide array of information age systems for command and control nominally are being developed for the JTF. Yet JTFs are typically created in response to an emerging contingency or crisis, seemingly inviting "first battle" problems.<sup>8</sup>

In transforming corps, the first objective is to improve the nation's ability to respond to crises by staffing and training an organization that can effectively and efficiently bring to bear the full range of capabilities provided by all the uniformed services—command and control of *combined arms*. The second objective is to improve effectiveness by equipping an organization capable of exploiting the dramatic advances in information technology and the precision weapon systems they enable. This argues that national intelligence assets be piped to a JTF headquarters, not to a corps headquarters. It also argues that the JTF, rather than the services, be the proponent for command and control systems. Furthermore, the strategic and operational levels of war are not single service environments, but the domain of the joint force commander. The JTF is responsible for the operational level of war, and corps translates operational into tactical; therefore, transforming corps must be discussed in the context of the JTF. Transformation

of today's corps can lead to five forms: ad hoc JTFs; JTFs forward; expeditionary JTFs; strategic JTFs; and, experimental JTFs. These are not mutually exclusive, and each form has strengths and weaknesses.

*Ad Hoc JTFs.* Like the Cold War corps, JTFs are designed for a specific mission or range of missions. Unlike Cold War corps, a JTF usually doesn't exist until a crisis demands it. Services believe that they can't form a single-service combined arms headquarters at the last minute but, for some reason, the U.S. military seems to believe that joint force headquarters can. The current practice is to predesignate unified command component commanders as potential JTF commanders. However, with the exception of a brief period of training, the commander is firmly ensconced in a single service job with a single service staff.<sup>9</sup> When a JTF is formed, its staff is built ad hoc.<sup>10</sup> A typical training event brings together a joint staff for a weeklong, 24-hour per day, real-time, plan execution exercise. When the exercise is over, the staff disbands.

*JTFs Forward.* In addition to service resistance to standing JTFs,<sup>11</sup> the CINCs of the unified commands resist JTFs from outside their theater, i.e., from JFCOM. Regional CINCs will accept the JFCOM role as provider of service forces, but not as provider of joint force commanders. Therefore, it is important to establish multiple standing JTF headquarters in the unified commands along the corps forward model. These must be capable of receiving MAGTFs, air expeditionary forces (AEFs), or joint air-ground task forces (JAGTFs) from CONUS. The JTF forward headquarters may have staffs dominated by planners, logisticians, and special operations forces. Training would focus on the operational and regional political levels and would provide career paths for higher echelon commands and staffs. JTFs forward would plan and train for compositing. They would not have assigned forces but should build strong relationships with rotating forces. They must be prepared to conduct operations with whatever forces are allocated for a crisis. Strong habitual

relationships must be built within the JTF forward, and between it and its parent unified command. The JTFs forward—commander and staff—must be distinct from unified command service components.

VII Corps was disestablished after the Gulf War, and much of its equipment was left behind in the area, prepositioned for future contingencies. A resurrected VII Corps is a candidate to be a forward headquarters in the Persian Gulf region either as a JTF forward or as the land component of a JTF forward. V Corps remains the major ground force presence in the U.S. European Command (EUCOM). Since the end of the Cold War, EUCOM has increasingly been responding to crises on the periphery of its area of operations and in sub-Saharan Africa. It remains composed of forward deployed heavy forces not optimized for such missions, requiring resort to naval expeditionary forces, special operations forces, and CONUS-based light forces. Heavy armor may be useful in the Balkans or in Sierra Leone, but armored divisions are not. The requirement is for military police, civil affairs, all forms of service support, and, in some cases, for infantry supported by armor. The composition of the infantry division is more appropriate to these missions and capable of forming a wider range of combinations.

To say that V Corps with heavy divisions is no longer appropriate to the CINC's needs is not to say that there should not be a corps or Army presence in Europe. EUCOM was a creature of the Cold War, well integrated into the NATO command structure. In contrast, during the same period the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) was almost exclusively political in nature, with only a brigade of light forces to protect the canal. Which model best meets the needs of U.S. relationships with countries in Europe? Perhaps there remains a role for one or more corps forward headquarters with a role similar to III Corps Forward.

Other forward-deployed JTFs are possible. A boundary shift removing sub-Saharan Africa from EUCOM and the

“big war” army purview might also be appropriate. A separate JTF forward under U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) oriented on small wars and expeditionary operations with apportioned forces from XVIII Corps is more appropriate for operations in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>12</sup> A maritime JTF in Korea is another candidate for a JTF forward. If trends continue, Oceania may warrant a JTF forward as well.

*Expeditionary JTFs.* The recent spate of smaller-scale contingencies did not see corps or divisions fighting as part of a larger ground force. Instead, a mix of smaller units functioned as the JTF’s ground component. To be relevant to the expected small wars of coming decades, ground forces must function as part of an expeditionary JTF.

The transformation from the “big war” to the “small wars” force would be most difficult and destructive if applied to III Corps. III Corps represents the heart of the Army’s ability to project heavy combat power half way around the world, to conduct sustained land combat operations, and to close with and destroy the enemy. To transform III Corps to an expeditionary force would represent a significant loss to the country. An important deterrent would be lost, as would a potent option for the national command authorities. Such a transformation is against III Corps’ deliberate planning, heavy forces, and “big war” culture.

XVIII Corps, on the other hand, embraces a contingency culture and holds light forces in high esteem. The assumption that divisions fight as part of a corps and that corps fight as part of a larger ground force permeates the organization, doctrine, and training in the “big war” Army. Nowhere are those assumptions less applicable than in XVIII Airborne Corps. It faces enduring problems acquiring the level of close air support and battlefield air interdiction that major war demands. It has not integrated well with armored and mechanized forces. Nowhere is it more important to match the high strategic mobility of light

ground forces and air forces to produce a rapidly deployable air-land team with dominant combat power.

Much real change since the end of the Cold War has been focused on the division. There are fewer of them, and each is lighter only because they are smaller. There are no new division types, nor have any old division types been retired. There has been little change with respect to divisions across the active and reserve components. Change at the division level is about size, not shape. The degree of specialization at the division level was appropriate for the Cold War army of 28 divisions but not for today's army of 16 divisions. The appropriateness of the division structure at III Corps is an entirely different issue than the appropriateness of the division structure at XVIII Corps.

Nowhere in the Army is the inappropriateness of the division structure more obvious than in XVIII Airborne Corps. Does the country need the forcible entry and high strategic mobility provided by airborne forces? Does the country need the ability to move ground forces rapidly around a theater of operations as provided by the helicopter-borne air assault forces? Most certainly, on both counts. Should those capabilities be localized into single, division-sized structures? Probably not. Should those capabilities instead be resident in other ground forces?

Marines excel at forming Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) built around an infantry battalion but can also form Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEBs) and Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEFs) at the regiment and division level, respectively. The larger MAGTFs are problematic due to the relatively small size of the Marine Corps. It is reasonable, then, to expect that the Army-Air Force joint air-ground task force should focus on forming at brigade, division, and corps levels.

To be relevant to the many small wars expected in the next two decades, the assets of XVIII Airborne Corps and those expected under a true numbered air force should be combined, then their former headquarters gutted as



warfighting commands. The freed assets should be recombined into an organization capable of commanding joint air-ground task forces, principally deployed by air. The new organization should be created in accordance to the FMF model, including several standing JTF headquarters analogous to the standing MEB and MEF headquarters. Perhaps the resources of one or more MEF headquarters could be freed as a result.

Using the FMF model, the army corps would primarily be a provider of brigades and divisions to a joint task force. The Air Force would provide its pieces as well, perhaps in the form of composite wings. America's contingency JTF could provide complex combined arms teams of airborne, air assault, light infantry, mechanized infantry, armor, artillery, engineers, tactical aircraft, and airlift. These JTFs should provide larger air-ground task forces than existing Navy-Marine Corps teams. They would be prepared to composite onto a JTF forward or onto an amphibious-ready group with MEU, and be prepared to be composited on by a larger JTF. This option, of course, has serious force sizing implications. It would be difficult to do with the current force structure, much less a smaller one.

Training would include habitual relationships with several JTFs forward for compositing and planning. Unlike the habitual relations between headquarters and major subordinate commands and elements, habitual relations should be within headquarters and between headquarters and headquarters forward. Rotational readiness is appropriate for expeditionary JTFs. These garrison organizations would be powerful proponents for joint command, control, communications and computers intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR), strategic and theater lift, close air support, and battlefield air interdiction. They would be the recipients and benefactors of training as opposed to the current method. They would retain a crisis action planning culture rather than a deliberate planning culture. They would be capable

of forcible entry. Standing command teams would be organized, trained, and equipped prior to crisis emergence.

*Strategic JTF.* III Corps is the keeper of the heavy, “big war” culture born of World War II, criticized as irrelevant during Korea and Vietnam, risen again to ascendancy later in the Cold War, and vindicated in the Gulf War. To be relevant as a deterrent and blunt instrument for the unexpected major theater war, III Corps, and its “big war” culture, must be preserved in the context of a JTF. Maintaining III Corps does not necessarily mean maintaining its internal structures, and it does not mean it should evade transformation. Perhaps III Corps is where transformation should take place without waiting for new systems. This could take the shape of the organizational and cultural changes described in Douglas Macgregor’s *Breaking the Phalanx*, rather than a technologically-driven transformation.<sup>13</sup> While greater strategic mobility would be an objective, combat power and mobility would remain the primary objective.

To improve strategic mobility without sacrificing combat power and in-theater mobility, III Corps should become a joint air-ground task force on a theater wide scale, and not in the Cold War model of separate air and ground forces. It must be organized, trained, and equipped to conduct tightly coupled air-ground operations as practiced by Generals George Patton and Pete Quesada in World War II Europe and as practiced by the Marine Corps in small units.<sup>14</sup> The strategic JTF must be capable of fighting in coalition or on its own. Coalition partners may provide their own JTFs, or coalition ground forces and air forces may be combined into large ground and large air forces subordinate to coalition command. In the latter case, the transformed corps must be prepared to integrate with a larger ground force, a combined army, as in the Cold War.

Resources devoted to improving strategic mobility would be for naught if the force were not trained and ready for deployment. This JTF, standing from head to toe, should

employ a total force readiness model rather than a rotational readiness model. The geo-strategic environment and the availability of strategic lift assets should determine the level of readiness maintained. It would provide career paths, training, and experience to continue building “big war” commanders and staffs. More than one of these JTF headquarters could be maintained without requiring the underlying forces. Habitual relations between JTF headquarters and assigned forces may be the preferred method of operations in garrison.

Perhaps another corps headquarters on this model could be established as a strategic reserve. In the short term, the strategic reserve corps would be more of a training harness, functioning to provide replacement units to the deployed strategic corps. Given longer lead times and the need, lower echelon forces mobilized from the Reserve component may be allocated to the strategic reserve corps for later deployment as a whole. This strategic reserve corps headquarters would complete the same training program as the standing strategic corps. A tiered readiness model would be appropriate for the strategic reserve corps and strategic reserve JTF.

*Experimental JTF.* If responsibility for transformation is assigned to a part of the force with current readiness requirements, it will always be a back burner issue. Incrementalism will be the rule. Given the recent operational tempo within the U.S. military, transformation will continue to be modest indeed. With XVIII Corps’ contingency responsibilities, transformation would always be secondary to current readiness. If III Corps were given the long-term transformation mission, its culture would interpret the mission as, “Given a heavy corps, how can information technology be applied productively?” A new organization needs to be created that will ask the question, “Given all this information technology, what force would I build?”<sup>15</sup>

The requirement for jointness is even stronger within the context of long-term transformation. Joint experimentation must seek solutions independent of current service roles and missions. A separate joint command, perhaps a JTF, must be created as the proponent for this transformation. To assure that experimentation is truly joint rather than multiservice, the JTF should not have separate service components, as is the custom, but a separate funding stream and authority. The joint force commander must be a true commander, not a coordinator of service components.

Perhaps the obvious home for this function is JFCOM. However, Army history offers an important lesson. When the Army undertook the task of rebuilding itself after Vietnam, it consciously decided that readiness for today and readiness for the future were too different to be put under a single command. Army reforms in 1973 created the Forces Command (FORSCOM) and the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). Readiness for today—unit training and readiness—was assigned to FORSCOM. Responsibility for individual training, doctrine development, and combat developments was assigned to TRADOC, which was created above, and against the resistance of, the powerful branch schools. A long succession of the Army's brightest flowed through TRADOC. Most will ascribe credit for rebuilding the Army to the success of TRADOC.<sup>16</sup> If a single service couldn't transform itself in the face of current readiness requirements under a single command, why would we expect joint transformation to be accomplished under a single command? The functions of today's JFCOM need to be split into a JFCOM with current readiness responsibilities and a Joint TRADOC with future readiness responsibilities.

Given the difficulty justifying I Corps' existence, its resources should be applied elsewhere. The resources of I Corps should be given over to the experimental JTF along with similarly freed resources from the other services.

## CONCLUSION

*Changing* the entire army structure may not be called for, but *examination* of the entire structure is. Such challenges should be made throughout the force. The structure of all four services should be examined individually and, more importantly, collectively. Force structure should be rationalized and justified in a top down process beginning with the Joint Strategic Planning process. Having the best air, land, and sea forces is not the objective—providing the CINC, and increasingly the JTF commander, with the best combined arms team is.

A great deal of the debate over transformation focuses on equipment, either as an end in itself or as a step prerequisite to transformation. Equipment modernization, a worthy topic, consumes resources including time, and competes with or defers true transformation. Some transformations vary the equipment set while holding the command hierarchy constant, for example, attempts to digitize a heavy corps or to equip divisions with wheeled rather than tracked armored vehicles. Transformation is a much broader issue than modernization. In contrast, Macgregor has challenged the division and brigade echelons—their organization and doctrine—while initially holding the equipment set constant.<sup>17</sup> This allows transformation to begin immediately without being held hostage to the lengthy acquisition and fielding process.

The country demands more of its Army than can be accomplished in a single transformation. Nonetheless, our military forces must continually evolve to remain relevant to the present and to the future. But there are many types of relevance and separate transformations must be applied to accomplish each.

- Relevance to the expected and frequent military operations in support of national interests through light forces designed for small wars.

- Relevance to the unexpected wars in support of vital national interests through heavy deployable forces.
- Relevance to the uncertain future through experimentation.

The joint task force is the crux of the matter. By ignoring it—e.g., corps headquarters masquerading as JTF headquarters—the services have preserved their most prestigious three-star commands, the status quo, and service prerogatives. Single-service structures defy joint structures, and weak joint organizations perpetuate separate service warfare. The three-star headquarters of all the services should be challenged and, when appropriate, be dismantled; the freed resources combined to form true JTF headquarters. Standing JTFs and standing JTF headquarters would provide a focal point for acquisition of command and control information systems. Connection to national and other scarce intelligence and communications assets must reside in the JTF, not in service headquarters. Standing JTF headquarters would also enable experimentation with new methods of warfare as portended by advocates of an RMA and by the transition from the industrial to the information age. Expectations are high for increased warfighting effectiveness enabled by information technology and precision weapons. Realistic experimentation with these systems and new methods can both expedite and hone emerging capabilities as well as protect us from an over-reliance on unproven concepts.

## ENDNOTES

1. See Wayne H. Haislip, "Corps Command in World War II," *Military Review*, Vol. 70, No. 5, May 1990, pp. 22-32. (This monograph draws extensively from his work.) Haislip reports that XV Corps saw 27 different divisions rotate through his World War II command and that at any given time the corps had from one to six divisions. XVIII Airborne Corps took on forces from 7th ID(Light) immediately prior to Operation JUST CAUSE and in the early stages of Operation DESERT SHIELD took on heavy divisions from III Corps.

2. New Mobile Subscriber Equipment was being fielded at the time, compounding the communications shortfalls caused by the larger area and march distances and the lack of German infrastructure. Heavy transport truck shortages were endemic to the entire Army, not just VII Corps.

3. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.

4. The year 2020 is somewhat arbitrary, but is based on the widely held assumption that the United States will face no peer or near-peer competitor for the next 20 years. Some may consider transformation 2 and 3 to be the same and, indeed, they may turn out to be. However, the former makes the assumption that the big wars of the future will be fought in a fundamentally different way, enabled predominantly by information technology. The latter makes no such assumption.

5. Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995.

6. *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, Charles E. Heller and William A. Stoff, eds., Manhattan, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1986; and D. Robert Worley, "Joint Task Forces: Options to Train, Organize, and Equip," *National Security Studies Quarterly*, Winter 1999, pp. 31-48.

7. Worley, 1999.

8. *Ibid.*

9. D. Robert Worley, Michael H. Vernon, and Robert E. Downes, *Time and Command Operations: The Strategic Role of the Unified Commands and the Implications for Training and Simulations*, Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 1996.

10. Worley, 1999, pp. 31-48.

11. The Marine Corps attempted to create a true standing JTF, but lacked support from the other services and the rest of the Department of Defense. See Mark T. Goodman and Richard M. Scott, "Standing Joint Task Force: Opportunity Lost," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 82, No. 9, September 1998, pp. 38-39.

12. In a similar idea, Steven Metz advocated forming a subunified command for Africa under the U.S. European Command, forming a standing JTF to coordinate engagement activities on the part of all the unified commands, and providing the foundation for a headquarters in

case of any U.S. military activity during humanitarian relief or peacekeeping operations. See Steven Metz, *Refining American Strategy in Africa*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2000, pp. 44, 50.

13. Douglas A. Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.

14. Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II*, New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995.

15. I am indebted to General Larry Welch, USAF (Ret.), for this formulation.

16. James F. Dunnigan and Raymond M. Macedonia, *Getting it Right: American Military Reforms after Vietnam to the Gulf War and Beyond*, New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1993.

17. Macgregor.



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