

## **Why we need a National Joint Targeting Center**

by

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Targeting for the Gulf War air campaign encompassed the first modern joint effort to integrate and employ the joint services' air power. While generally perceived as a doctrinal and operational success, widespread parochialism between and within service components adversely affected air campaign planning, targeting, and execution. Following Operation DESERT STORM, national intelligence organizations took the initiative to streamline and improve targeting intelligence support to joint operations. One solution to the problem of myriad roles, missions, and service branch agendas is to fully integrate national-level intelligence and operations to facilitate joint targeting by establishing a National Joint Targeting Center Concept of Operations. Closer integration of intelligence and operations at a National Joint Targeting Center will make targeting more effective.

### **Air Campaign Planning Organizations**

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and joint doctrine made the Gulf War air campaign planning and targeting process the prerogative of the theater commander and his subordinate components. The established organizations and streamlined linkages designed to accomplish the targeting functions came under criticism from General Norman Schwarzkopf, CINCCENT, and General Charles Horner, the CENTAF Commander. The evolution of a hybrid operational planning structure during Operation DESERT SHIELD created new linkages with external organizations impacting air campaign targeting and subsequent combat assessments. Establishment of direct communications links with multiple intelligence organizations caused uncoordinated and conflicting intelligence to be passed to operations planners. Coupled with erroneous Air Tasking Order information, this system made it likely that combat assessments and decision-making would be degraded.

The organizations responsible for operational planning are the theater commands and their components. During both Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, Central Command (CENTCOM) and Central Air Forces (CENTAF) staffs planned the theater and air campaign plans, respectively. CENTCOM had the

responsibility for providing the overall campaign strategy and objectives and for validating target nominations.

In his capacity as the designated theater air commander, General Horner, CENTAF Commander, was designated by General Schwarzkopf, CINCCENT, as the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC), responsible for all Air Force, Navy, Army, Marine Corps, and coalition air operations in theater. The JFACC was doctrinally responsible for developing the joint air campaign strategy and objectives and planning the air attack with available air forces. Theater components, working with JFACC, nominated targets through the Joint Target Coordination Board (JTCCB) process. This JFACC-coordinated planning, targeting, and execution process was deemed the most efficient method at the time to conduct multi-service joint operations.

The function of Headquarters, United States Air Force in Washington, D.C. is to organize, train, and equip the Air Force. It has no combatant strategy, planning, or targeting function. Although its stated purpose does not include combat planning, there is a small division within the Air Staff's operation planning staff known as "Checkmate." Its role as a "think tank" encompasses postulating war scenarios, applying air forces against enemy threats, and testing force posture through computer modeling and simulations.

The national intelligence agencies are comprised of the Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency. Political and economic intelligence fall under the purview of the CIA. DIA provides all-source intelligence and operational support to unified commands, while NSA provides signals and electronic intelligence. Prior to 1990, no central authority existed to coordinate interagency target intelligence and combat assessments to support unified commands' operations.

## **Prelude to Operation DESERT STORM**

The events that led to creation of a new joint air campaign target planning organization began in July 1990, when General Schwarzkopf conducted the large joint command post exercise, "Internal Look," at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The exercise tested aspects of the plan for the defense of the Arabian peninsula. General Schwarzkopf quickly determined that neither the CENTCOM nor the CENTAF staff was fully capable of planning large joint air operations for an Iraqi invasion scenario.

Concurrent with the "Internal Look" exercise, the Persian Gulf crisis escalated, and on 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. General Schwarzkopf's immediate requirements were to develop a military strategy and courses of action to stop the potential Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. To meet the invasion threat, General

Schwarzkopf requested the Air Staff's assistance in developing an air campaign plan against Iraq.

The Air Staff took Schwarzkopf's request as an opportunity to make air power the decisive factor in a U.S.-led military operation against Iraq. Both General Michael Dugan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, and General John Loh, the Vice Chief of Staff, observed that air power alone might eject Iraq from Kuwait. General Loh directed Colonel John Warden and his Checkmate staff to develop an air campaign plan. Colonel Warden realized that the plan required target intelligence support and requested his superiors to seek assistance from Maj Gen James Clapper, Assistant Air Force Chief of Staff for Intelligence. Maj Gen Clapper, citing Air Force doctrine, retorted that the Air Staff had no role to play in CENTAF's planning and that General Horner had a strategic air campaign plan already. Undeterred, General Loh ordered General Clapper to support the Checkmate's staff planning effort. The Instant Thunder air campaign planning began.

The initial Instant Thunder plan and its 84 targets relied on decade-old DIA publications and general targeting objectives; nevertheless, the Air Staff viewed the plan as a success. Colonel Warden briefed Instant Thunder to General Schwarzkopf, who determined the plan was exactly what he needed and directed the briefing be given to General Horner in Saudi Arabia. The Air Staff plan was predicated on the concept that Iraq could be defeated by air power alone. Horner objected to the Air Staff's concept and argued that the air campaign would need to be far more extensive than the proposed 84 targets. Despite Horner's objections, Schwarzkopf directed him to accept and modify the plan as warranted. To accomplish the CINC's directive, Horner charged Brig Gen Buster Glosson (USAF), the designated CENTAF air campaign planner, to make Instant Thunder a workable plan.

From the theater components' perspective, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps planners concluded that Air Force planners were waging a separate war based on the conviction that victory could be achieved through air power alone. These component planners voiced their concerns during the Joint Targeting Coordination Board (JTCCB) deliberations. The JTCCB was and is the doctrinal mechanism by which the service components and DIA JS-J2 submit target nominations via the CENTCOM J2, who then processes the targets and forwards them to the J3 for allocation for strike by components. In reality, the CENTAF Special Planning Group Staff, established by General Glosson, developed the master attack plan and validated JTCCB targets for integration into the ATO. Army and Marine Corps ground component commanders complained to General Schwarzkopf that the Air Force often ignored their joint targeting requirements. The Navy was especially vocal after determining the JFACC targeting and operations process was not joint; the Navy staff would later concede, however, that by not defining an appropriate blend of planners to the joint effort, they may have hindered their participation.

## **Targeting Organizations**

## **National Intelligence Agencies**

The role of the national intelligence agencies in the targeting process increased dramatically during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. During the initial phase of Operation DESERT SHIELD, DIA, CIA, and NSA were unprepared to meet the rapidly escalating targeting intelligence requirements. This was largely due to reallocation of manpower to other pressing world areas after the 1980s war between Iraq and Iran ended. DIA had only one Iraqi analyst when the crisis erupted. CIA had only minimal capability before the crisis erupted, and NSA had to redirect its assets once Saddam invaded Kuwait.

A critical shortfall that would impact the air campaign targeting for Operation DESERT STORM was the initial lack of a single focal point organization for providing interagency coordinated target intelligence and battle damage assessments. At the initiative of Rear Admiral Michael McConnell, JS-J2, the National Military Joint Intelligence Center was established to act as a clearinghouse for all national-level intelligence support to CENTCOM. The NMJIC was manned by CIA, DIA, and NSA personnel with the intent to coordinate and pass all-source intelligence to CENTCOM J2. What actually happened was that these same organizations bypassed CENTCOM J2 and forwarded--via direct communications links--uncoordinated target intelligence to CENTAF. Resulting uncoordinated national intelligence efforts caused the emergence of conflicting and erroneous targeting data. This, in turn, would later lead to contradictory battle damage assessment reports that impaired CINCCENT's decision-making processes, causing a 3-day delay in the ground forces offensive.

## **CENTCOM Directorate for Intelligence J2**

The doctrinal organization responsible for theater intelligence was CENTCOM J2, which was responsible for providing national and theater intelligence--to include target intelligence--to theater service components and their forces. Perceived staff deficiencies led to drastic augmentation of the CENTCOM J2 staff with personnel from the Air Staff's Directorate for Targets. This crisis augmentation became a key factor in developing the CENTCOM J2 Targets Branch, where the new staff authored the detailed campaign targeting objectives and built the command's joint targets list. The targeting objectives and lists were briefed by the Targets Branch staff to CENTCOM J2 and then forwarded to CENTAF. The purpose of CENTCOM's target objectives and list were to provide both the joint baseline guidance and targeting intelligence for CENTAF's air campaign plan. The personnel augmentation and generation of the CENTCOM campaign targeting objectives and targets were successful in providing the CINCCENT targeting guidance to the JFACC. In addition, the Targets Branch would develop and dominate numerous emerging targets to the JTCCB and provide coordinated targeting information to the CENTAF targeting staff.

## **CENTAF Intelligence and Special Planning Group "Blackhole" Organizations**

The CENTAF intelligence organization consisted mainly of the partially deployed 9<sup>th</sup> Tactical Intelligence Squadron (TIS). The mission of the 9<sup>th</sup> TIS was to provide situational analysis, target intelligence, and BDA support for the CENTAF commander, planners, and wings. The relationship between CENTCOM J2 and CENTAF/IN was generally good. During the early deployment phase in Operation DESERT SHIELD, both organizations were rapidly expanding in terms of personnel, equipment, and intelligence requirements. The most strained aspect of the CENTCOM J2 and CENTAF/IN relationship was the communications links. This was the weakest link in the intelligence support mechanism and impacted the capability to process and store data on intelligence computer systems. The connectivity shortfall was resolved in early October 1990.

The Tactical Air Command doctrinal organization responsible for air operations planning was the Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) planning staff. During the initial stages of Operation DESERT STORM, the TACC staff, which was deployed from Shaw AFB, concentrated on moving air forces to the theater. The TACC staff was undermanned, however, and eventually Generals Horner and Glosson elected not use the TACC in its official capacity until nearly the end of the air campaign. This decision caused friction between them and the Blackhole staff. Theater campaign objectives were to attack Iraqi political/military leadership and command and control; gain and maintain air superiority, destroy chemical, biological, and nuclear capability; eject Iraqi armed forces from Kuwait; destroy the Republican Guard forces in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations; and sever Iraqi supply lines. These objectives required the development of detailed targeting objectives and target sets by the CENTCOM J2 Targets Branch. Once the air campaign targets were identified, these were allocated to Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and some Army assets and melded by the Blackhole into a comprehensive master air attack plan and ultimately promulgated into an ATO. The Blackhole would ultimately be the focal point for the campaign plan, including integrating target nominations from the national intelligence agencies, CENTCOM J2, and theater components. The strained relationship between the Blackhole and CENTAF/IN staff impacted the production of imagery products, targeting data, current intelligence, and target materials. To remedy this shortfall, the Blackhole turned to external sources such as the CENTCOM J2 and national intelligence organizations to get the needed information.

### **Blackhole Targeting Relationships**

The Blackhole staff, frustrated by the strained relationship between the CENTAF operations and intelligence staffs and a perceived unresponsiveness, turned to unconventional links for intelligence and operations planning support from the DIA JS-J2 and Checkmate. General Glosson bypassed CENTAF/IN and CENTCOM J2

and went directly to Rear Admiral McConnell, DIA JS-J2. This link was based on a personal relationship between these two flag officers and McConnell's offer to provide direct national-level intelligence support to the Blackhole. This support was to be augmented by independent actions on the part of each national intelligence agency, which sent target intelligence directly to the Blackhole, but did not coordinate their input with the established NMJIC mechanism. Direct links to Blackhole and Checkmate effectively circumvented the traditional JTCB process.

### **Joint Targeting Impacts**

Establishment of the Blackhole created several problems for targeting and BDA. First, the Blackhole staff were not properly trained to plan joint air operations. The staff lacked familiarization in the conduct of the JTCB process. Unconventional intelligence links to outside agencies precluded theater intelligence from verifying the targeting data with in-theater sources, which caused targeting errors. Errors included incorrect identification of installations and aimpoints, inaccurate coordinates, and reports of previous BDA. The most serious mistakes occurred when Blackhole planners created their own target names, numbering system, coordinates, and aimpoint guidance. Lack of proper target designations hampered the production of target intelligence materials needed by pilots for mission planning and BDA. The Blackhole's decision to let the wing staff select the bomb aimpoints was also flawed. Pilots often had little intelligence on critical elements used to select aimpoints. Ironically, the TACC intelligence staff would have provided all the required data in the ATO, but they were not used. Inaccurate and erroneous information caused many pilots to bomb the wrong installation element and made targeting and BDA more difficult.

### **Targeting Intelligence Progress Since the Gulf War**

The results and lessons learned from the Gulf War have led to some progress in fixing national-level intelligence agency support to targeting and BDA. The Gulf War, Operation SOUTHERN WATCH, and the Somali crisis highlighted the need for establishment of a small target intelligence section within the DIA JS-J2 in August 1993. The need became evident to coordinate and focus national intelligence to support the unified commands' targeting and BDA requirements. The JS-J2 Targets Section was chartered to provide national-level input directly to the theater CINC's J2 targeting organization and prohibited skipping echelons to the components. This organization's charter, based on joint doctrine, was to eliminate the national intelligence organizations targeting stove pipes by coordinating target intelligence requirements for the theater CINC's targeting staff, Joint Staff J3, and the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was designed to be the focal point for organizing coordinated interagency crisis target intelligence support among DIA, CIA, and NSA. It also directed the intelligence community's efforts to provide national-level input to the combatant CINC's BDA effort.

The new JS-J2 targets section was not without problems--precipitated by the challenges of establishing itself as the lead organization for orchestrating national-level, traditional, monolithic, and stove-piped bureaucracies at CIA, DIA, NSA, and the theater CINC's. Despite the JS-J2 directive establishing the NMJIC Targets Section, the DIA, CIA, and NSA staffs, theater CINC's J2s, and even the NMJIC itself resisted. They still preferred to stove pipe their support directly to the Joint Staff J3 and theater CINC's and bypass the JS-J2. This often led to conflicting, duplicative, and incomplete target intelligence analyses and production, as demonstrated during operations in Iraq and Somalia. Once the JS-J2 Targets Section was established and functioning in October 1993, support to crises in Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, and North Korea became highly effective. The value of the JS-J2 Targets Section was its ability to ensure that the national intelligence community produced the best interagency, coordinated, deconflicted, accurate, and timely target intelligence available. The direct targeting and BDA links previously established were eliminated by written agreements between the national intelligence organizations and all unified commands' J2s. Both formally and in practice, recognition of the JS-J2 Target Section represented a significant leap forward in streamlining the national-level targeting support to the unified commands.

The success of the JS-J2 Targets Section led to its further expansion, based on a DIA study. The 1994 study concluded there was a need to expand the role of JS-J2 Targets and make it the focal point for all facets of formulating and coordinating target intelligence production requirements, policy, doctrine, and procedures. This charter included: resolution of major issues relative to targeting and BDA; supporting the theater missile defense (TMD) program of tracking and targeting mobile missile systems; and support to special programs in the Joint Staff J3, Special Technical Operations (STO) division. At the direction of the DIA director, the J2 Targets Section grew significantly.

Additional realignment of target intelligence functions with DIA were deemed necessary for the processing and production of target intelligence. Based on targeting requirements identified by the JS-J2 Directorate for Targets, the actual production of target functional analyses, target materials, and data base maintenance were to remain the responsibility of DIA's National Military Intelligence Production Center. The NMIPC was to produce target intelligence products with the support of CIA and NSA. The goal was production of high quality interagency-coordinated targeting products, based on requirements specified by the JS-J2 Directorate for Targets. The NMIPC realignment served to augment the theater CINC's Joint Intelligence Centers analytical and production capabilities--which suffered from targeting production deficiencies due to lack of expertise and current intelligence requirements. The new NMIPC production arrangement met resistance from CIA and NSA.

Another finding of the 1994 study was the realization that reduction in analytical staffs at DIA had degraded the agency's ability to process, analyze, and produce target intelligence to support multiple customer requirements. Functional analysts, such as those with expertise in foreign electrical power, transportation, command and control, and air defense, had been reassigned or had retired. The remaining analytical capability were overextended. Target system analyses and maintaining the national intelligence data base got low priority. This impacted the quality of target intelligence for theater CINCs worldwide. DIA stopped the atrophy and requested funding from Congress to address target intelligence shortfalls.

The last major study finding was the realization that other organizations with analytical targeting capabilities external to the national intelligence community were being established or had received sponsorship from the Joint Staff J3. Two key organizations, the Joint Warfare Analysis Center (JWAC) at Dahlgren Naval Station, Virginia, and the Joint Electronic Warfare Center (JEWAC) at Kelly AFB, Texas, possess unique analytical and computer modeling capabilities. Both JWAC and JEWAC are highly capable of rapidly producing tailored and exceptionally accurate products, when sound all-source intelligence is available. These products are extremely beneficial to theater and service component commanders for operations planning and mission execution. As the Department of Defense budget declined, the military services were compelled to make budget cuts and offered JWAC and JEWAC as service infringements on the intelligence community's area of responsibility and expertise. The DIA and NSA staffs recommended that JWAC not be integrated, using the excuse that their own budget reductions would not permit such an incorporation. The Directors of DIA and NSA turned down the Navy's offer. Undeterred, the Navy approached the Joint Staff J3, who concluded the national intelligence community was not serving the J-3's interests and sponsored Joint Staff funding to claim ownership of JWAC.

The DIA Director's targeting study determined that placement of JWAC under the Joint Staff J3 was a mistake. The capabilities JWAC and JEWAC had were now understood to be critical for improving intelligence support to targeting, and these organizations had to be "married" to the functional analysis at DIA and NSA. The study further determined targeting intelligence could be significantly improved if the analytical and modeling capabilities could be incorporated to support DIA and NSA. Concluding that a marriage of JWAC and DIA would enhance intelligence support to targeting, the DIA Director called for transfer of DIA personnel to enhance JWAC's staff, with the provision that their modeling capability would be made available to DIA functional analysts via electronic links. The Joint Staff J3 retained tasking authority over JWAC. This initiative has improved the targeting products in spite of strained organizational relationships, due to competing tasking from theater CINCs and the Joint Staff J3.

Despite these realignments within the intelligence community, a void remains in the operations-intelligence interface related to targeting functions. A key to



successful combat operations planning is the availability of coordinated and timely target intelligence derived from all-source analyses based on clear operational targeting objectives. It is imperative that operators work with targeting specialists and intelligence staffs to develop valid target recommendations to meet the commander's objectives. Lessons learned from operations in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia suggest this has not always occurred. Missions have been degraded and lives lost as a result.

Establishment of JS-J2 Directorate of Targets and the intelligence community's realignment of intelligence production assets are only a "band-aid fix" to a deeper problem--a void in the operations-intelligence interface. This problem is illustrated by many crisis operations planning responses that require rapid development of targeting options to support the theater CINCs and CJCS. Highlighted in these crisis actions are lack of operations planners working with targeting specialists and intelligence analysts to provide synergistic approaches to solving complex targeting problems. Operators are needed to clarify the commanders' intentions and objectives for the targeteers who derive targets. Operators also provide expertise relative to weapons and tactics for systems employment and later during combat assessment.

### **Solution: A National Joint Targeting Center (NJTC)**

One solution is creation of a National Joint Targeting Center (NJTC). An exemplary organization integrating operations and intelligence was the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS), designed to build the integrated nuclear war plan for the United States. The unique capability of JSTPS was that it contained both operations and intelligence personnel working together with the sole mission of building an integrated and useable operational plan. The organization conducted joint and combined (US/NATO) nuclear targeting and operational planning, and produced targets that met the commander's objectives, weapons systems capabilities, and employment tactics.

Adaptation and update of the JSTPS organizational model could be used to evolve a national level joint targeting organization or a National Joint Targeting Center. The NJTC would leverage the integration of capabilities from all national intelligence agencies, including JWAC, JEWIC, and the Departments of Energy, State and Treasury. This would facilitate true integration of all-source intelligence to produce accurate and timely targeting recommendations. Most important, operations personnel would be assigned to the joint organization to work side by side with target intelligence specialists.

The idea of establishing an NJTC is not new. A similar idea was considered with the DIA, but met resistance from theater CINCs J2 staffs and other intelligence organizations. They were concerned with infringement of their responsibilities. Since an NJTC would integrate multiple agency expertise, this concern is valid.

However, fusing all available national expertise would improve the overall targeting intelligence product. The realities of continued reductions in the Department of Defense budget and manpower and the uneven distribution of expertise and production capabilities available to the theater CINCs' Joint Intelligence Centers make production of target intel more difficult. The need for an NJTC no longer can be ignored.

## **Conclusion**

Air campaign planning and targeting were hindered unnecessarily in the Persian Gulf War and during Operation ALLIED FORCE. Lack of trained staff, manpower shortfalls, inadequate communications and intelligence, and strained organizational relationships all degraded the mission. General Schwarzkopf had to request Air Staff assistance to do initial air campaign planning, creating unconventional and untried sources and links. Better relations with established theater organizations could have improved the target intelligence support by integrating theater and national-level inputs. Lessons learned from the Gulf War and other crises in recent years demonstrate the need for close integration between intel and ops if targeting is to be effective. Establishment of a Joint Staff J2 targeting capability and identifying shortfalls in the intel community to support targeting were the first steps to resolving this problem. However, that "band aid approach" does not totally resolve the issue. A viable solution is to borrow from the JSTPS concept, building on existing technologies and capabilities, to establish an NJTC.

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