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BY THE U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Report To The Secretary Of Defense

Management Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff Exercise Program Has Been Strengthened, But More Needs To Be Done

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) exercise program trains U.S. forces, tests forces' abilities to perform their missions, and prepares the forces of two or more services for joint operations. A GAO review of this program in 1979 reported several management problems that limited the full realization of benefits.

JCS and some military commands have strengthened the management of the exercise program since 1979. Initiatives include centralizing funding under JCS; improving guidance, evaluations, and lessons-learned systems; and increasing JCS involvement in the planning, review, and approval of the program increments developed by the supporting commands.

This report evaluates the major initiatives since GAO's 1979 review and recommends further improvement where needed. Specifically, GAO recommends that participants in the exercise program be required to adhere to existing guidelines; develop more precise exercise requirements and budgets; and improve the systems for identifying, monitoring, and sharing exercise results.



GAO/NSIAD-85-46
MARCH 5, 1985

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

NATIONAL SECURITY AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

B-160096

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

This report assesses the current management of the joint exercise program and suggests ways the program can be strengthened. We made this review to determine (1) the effect of actions taken since our 1979 report on this subject and (2) whether opportunities exist for further improvements.

This report contains recommendations to you on pages 8, 15, and 24. As you know, 31 U.S.C. 720 requires the head of a federal agency to submit a written statement of actions taken on our recommendations to the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report. We would appreciate receiving copies of these statements.

In addition to the above committees, we are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen, House and Senate Committees on Armed Services; and the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank C. Conahan".

Frank C. Conahan
Director



D I G E S T

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) exercises are a primary means of achieving interservice operational training and interaction. Also, they provide a key means of testing U.S. forces' capabilities to perform their missions effectively. The JCS exercise program is therefore vital to U.S. forces' overall readiness, and it is important that the program is designed, managed, and executed as efficiently as possible.

In response to recommendations in GAO's 1979 report¹ on the exercise program, the JCS, unified commands, and military services initiated various corrective actions. The objectives of GAO's current review were to determine the current status of the exercise program and whether opportunities exist for further improvements.

GAO's current evaluation showed that the corrective actions taken have strengthened the exercise program and its management. For instance, the objectives of the program and the procedures for its development are now more clearly defined as a result of revised JCS guidance. Similarly, congressional action to transfer program funding from the individual services to the JCS has favorably affected the manner in which the program budget is developed and controlled.

However, GAO's current review showed that further actions are needed to ensure adherence to procedures, improve development of the program and its budgets, and establish an automated and interactive worldwide lessons-learned system.

GAO/NSIAD-85-46
MARCH 5, 1985

¹Improving the Effectiveness of Joint Military Exercises--
An Important Tool for Military Readiness (LCD-80-2,
December 11, 1979).

ADHERENCE TO EXISTING PROCEDURES

GAO found that JCS procedures to define the scope and composition of exercises were not being adhered to. For example, airlift requirements developed by exercise planners were provided to the Military Airlift Command much later than guidance required, which impaired the command's training opportunities and planning efforts. Additionally, exercise schedules which the unified commands prepared for JCS did not include the necessary detailed information, and neither did the commands' analyses and assessments. These analyses and assessments often provided only general discussion with limited coverage of the topics required by JCS. GAO believes more timely and detailed information in these areas would allow JCS to more effectively manage the program and develop more precise budgets. (See p. 4.)

EXERCISE PROGRAM BUDGETS

GAO found that program budgets were overestimated because airlift requirements were overstated for 34 of the 45 exercises for which airlift funds were requested in the fiscal year 1983 budget. This resulted in unused airlift funds of about \$67.5 million which were reprogrammed and spent for unbudgeted airlift and other exercise program costs.

Additionally, because of the many modifications to the exercise schedule that occurred during fiscal year 1983, the exercise program actually executed was significantly different from the program reviewed and approved by the executive branch and the Congress. Although some program modifications result from unforeseen events, GAO believes that exercise program budget needs could be estimated more accurately during the budget process if certain program development procedures were followed. (See p. 9.)

WORLDWIDE LESSONS-LEARNED SYSTEM

GAO recommended in its 1979 report that uniform lessons-learned systems be established to evaluate exercise problems, to initiate and follow up on corrective actions, and to disseminate the results to exercise participants. In response, the JCS, Army, and Air Force have developed individual systems--referred to as remedial action programs--to identify, assign responsibility for, and ensure action on certain kinds of exercise problems. These programs provide the basis for establishing an automated and interactive worldwide lessons-learned system as envisioned in the 1979 GAO recommendation. However, since these systems were developed independently and have various limitations, the exercise program is not providing maximum benefit.

For instance, the JCS remedial action program monitors only problems from selected exercises and includes only problems that require action at a high level. Therefore, a majority of the problems that surface in the conduct of exercises are not included. In one exercise, for example, 442 of 567 reported problems were excluded from the JCS remedial action program. Also, since the various lessons-learned systems were developed independently, they do not cross-feed information from one system to another. This leads to an inadequate sharing of problems among exercise participants. In addition, the Navy has not instituted a lessons-learned system, although GAO believes, and some officials agree, one would be useful. (See p. 17.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the importance of the exercise program; the need for comprehensive programming, planning, and budgeting; and the potential value of exercise lessons learned to a wide range of exercise program participants, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS and the unified commands to adhere more stringently to JCS guidance concerning (1) timely submission of exercise requirements and (2) preparation of more informative command analyses and assessments. GAO also

recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS to develop procedures for more precise exercise program schedules and budgets and take the lead in establishing a universal lessons-learned system. (See pp. 8, 15, and 24.)

AGENCY COMMENTS AND GAO'S EVALUATION

In its comments on a draft of this report, DOD generally agreed with GAO's findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and described specific actions which it believes should improve the overall JCS control and management of the program. In some cases, DOD agreed with GAO's findings, but not with GAO's supporting rationale, and stated that the report should provide more recognition of initiatives underway or instituted since the completion of GAO's fieldwork. Based on these comments, GAO revised the report, where appropriate, to clarify its position and recommendations.

DOD's comments are included in appendix I.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
IG	Inspector General
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
MAC	Military Airlift Command
O&M	Operations and Maintenance
RAP	remedial action program

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An effective joint military exercise program is essential to prepare U.S. forces for combat. The joint military exercise program is a major program within the Department of Defense (DOD), managed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). It consists of exercises specifically directed by JCS (JCS-directed exercises) and exercises of the various unified and specified commands¹ for which JCS coordinates the scheduling (JCS-coordinated exercises). Directed exercises, while sometimes sponsored and scheduled by unified/specified commands, receive priority on available exercise program resources and can be modified only with JCS approval. The table below summarizes the number of exercises and costs for a 10-year period.

JCS Exercise Program Fiscal Years 1980-89

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>JCS directed</u>		<u>JCS coordinated</u>		<u>Total program</u>	
	<u>number</u>	<u>cost</u> (millions)	<u>number</u>	<u>cost</u> (millions)	<u>number</u>	<u>cost</u> (millions)
1980	11	\$ a	36	\$ a	47	\$ 170
1981	17	a	69	a	86	260
1982	21	177	45	128	66	305
1983	18	144	39	100	57	244
1984	21	146	39	104	60	250
1985 (Approved)	25	184	41	131	66	315
1986 (Projected)	21	172	43	120	64	292
1987 (Projected)	22	a	44	a	66	362
1988 (Projected)	21	a	43	a	64	403
1989 (Projected)	22	a	42	a	64	<u>428</u>
Total						<u>\$3,029</u>

^a Data were not available from JCS to develop a breakdown between directed- and -coordinated exercise costs.

¹A unified command (e.g., U.S. Readiness Command) is composed of significant forces from two or more services under a single commander and is assigned specific functional and geographic responsibilities. A specified command (e.g., Military Airlift Command) is one which has broad continuing functional responsibilities and is usually composed of forces from one service.

The major cost elements of the exercise program are (1) airlift supplied by the Air Force's Military Airlift Command (MAC), (2) sealift supplied by the Navy's Military Sealift Command, and (3) port handling and inland transportation supplied by the Army and Navy or their contractors. Beginning with fiscal year 1982, the Congress transferred the budgeting, accounting, and funding for the major exercise program costs from the services to JCS. This was intended to tighten control over the planning and execution of the entire program. It also provides a means for JCS to more accurately project the costs of exercises, budget for them, and control program execution. The services, however, continue to fund the operating costs of the involved combat forces.

JCS EXERCISE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The JCS exercise program is a significant part of the overall implementation of U.S. national policy and military strategy. As currently structured, the program tests systems, procedures, and decisionmaking for virtually all forms of crises and combat operations involving two or more services. Exercise program objectives are designed to enable military leaders and units to

- test operation plans, contingency plans, and warfare systems;
- meet joint readiness and training objectives;
- assist in the development of new or revised joint procedures; and
- participate in mutual defense arrangements with allies.

Finally, the program provides an arena for developing service and U.S./allied interaction.

GAO's PRIOR REVIEW

Our 1979 review² of the JCS exercise program found not only weaknesses in the JCS management of unified command exercise programs and program repetition, but also that little attention had been given to developing purposeful and high priority program objectives. Also, we reported that the benefits of lessons learned during the exercises were not fully realized because the problems noted were not disseminated to all participants and that procedures for systematically dealing with problems were lacking. We concluded that more assertive JCS direction, coupled with improved procedures for annually

²Improving the Effectiveness of Joint Military Exercises--An Important Tool for Military Readiness (LCD-80-2, December 11, 1979).

reevaluating and rejustifying the exercises, would strengthen the program. JCS agreed to take corrective action on each of the major issues discussed.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND
METHODOLOGY

The objectives of our current review were to determine (1) whether planned actions announced by JCS in 1979 had been implemented and had resulted in program improvements and (2) if further improvements are needed.

We focused on program management structure and processes and therefore did not find it necessary to observe actual exercises to understand the exercises' execution and flow. Also, our review of the services' participation in the program was limited to examining their lessons-learned systems (where they existed or were being developed) and determining whether the systems' interface with the JCS and unified command systems.

We examined changes in program policies, procedures, and practices at the JCS and other key DOD headquarters offices, two unified commands (U.S. Readiness Command and U.S. Atlantic Command), and supporting service commands. In addition, we met with officials of these offices and commands, examined pertinent records, tested reported exercise results, and used relevant information obtained during our other reviews.³ We also examined data from MAC concerning the impact of JCS exercise program problems on MAC operations. Our fieldwork, conducted during the period March 1983 to April 1984 and updated in January 1985, was performed in accordance with generally accepted government audit standards.

³Observations Concerning Plans and Programs to Assure the Continuity of Vital Wartime Movements Through United States Ports (GAO/NSIAD-83-18, August 30, 1983).

Enhancing the Interoperability of U.S. Forces in NATO-- Initiatives, Issues, and Problems (C-PLRD-82-14, September 13, 1982).

CHAPTER 2

OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF THE JCS EXERCISE

PROGRAM HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED, THOUGH

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS REMAIN

JCS has increased its role in the management of the exercise program since our 1979 review. It has expanded its staff and has improved the quality of its guidance to the unified/specified commands, whose programs (i.e., JCS-coordinated exercises) will constitute about 45 percent of the JCS exercise program during the period 1982-86. Other improvements include the

- congressional transfer of the budgeting, accounting, and funding for the major program costs from the services' Operations and Maintenance (O&M) appropriations to the JCS (Defense Agencies/JCS) O&M appropriation, administered by the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the support of the services' transportation operating agencies (i.e., MAC, Military Sealift Command, and Military Traffic Management Command) (see ch. 3);
- development of a JCS remedial action program (RAP), an Army RAP, and an Air Force RAP, as well as some unified and service command "lessons-learned" systems (see ch. 4)⁴; and
- issuance of (1) the Exercise Planning Guidance designed to provide the strategic setting and direction for exercise planning for a 5-year period and (2) procedural guidance to the services' staff offices and unified/specified commands to guide their participation in the program.

Finally, some of the military commands also have generally strengthened their participation in the program.

In commenting on our draft report, DOD officials said that although some exercise schedules had not been developed in a sufficient or timely manner through fiscal year 1983, the process has improved as JCS officials gained experience. They stated, for example, that the 1985 schedule covering the 1987-91 period will receive a quality control review to ensure that all essential data are included.

⁴The Marine Corps also developed a RAP system in May 1984, after completion of our fieldwork.

With regard to exercise design and schedule changes occurring subsequent to schedule approval, DOD stated that JCS allows commanders to recommend changes in exercises, based on "real-world" conditions, and that other changes are directed by the National Command Authority.⁵ We agree that situations may occur during the execution period that would necessitate exercise changes. However, this would not seem to explain the extensive changes we noted. We believe many of those changes would have been unnecessary if the planned exercises had been fully developed, considering all foreseeable events at the time the overall program was approved and budgeted for.

COMMAND ANALYSES AND ASSESSMENTS
NEED TO BE MORE INFORMATIVE

Our 1979 report recommended that JCS conduct an in-depth evaluation of each unified/specified commands' 5-year exercise schedule submission. This evaluation would be used to determine exercise needs, allocate exercises among the commands, and optimize the overall program configuration.

Current JCS guidance requires each command to make (1) an annual analysis of its previous year's exercise program and (2) an annual assessment of its proposed 5-year program. However, these analyses and assessments are often general and they provide limited coverage of required topics.

Command analyses

According to JCS guidance, each annual command analysis should

- assess the accomplishment of the command's exercise and overall program objectives,
- identify areas where assistance by JCS and the services is needed, and
- recommend modifications to exercise or overall program objectives.

Our examination of 11 command analyses for fiscal years 1982 and 1983 showed that only 1 addressed all the required topics. This command's analysis was quite specific in its discussion of each topic, pointing out what the objectives were and how they were accomplished for each exercise. The other 10 analyses, however, did not include discussions in all the areas, as required by JCS guidance, and where discussion was provided,

⁵The National Command Authority consists of the President and the Secretary of Defense or their designated alternates or successors.

it was often general. For instance, a unified command said one exercise "met its objectives successfully," but did not discuss what the objectives were or how they were met.

Based on the collective response by the unified commands to the above requirements, JCS prepares a combined analysis of the previous year's exercise program. This analysis must (1) assess the extent to which overall program objectives were attained, reasons for shortfalls, and corrective actions taken and (2) recommend changes to specific exercises or to the program as a whole. It represents not only the conclusion of that year's program, but also the beginning in preparing revised exercise planning guidance and exercise schedules for the next 5 years. We believe that more detailed command analyses are necessary if JCS is to successfully analyze the overall program and prepare effective guidance for planning future exercises.

Command assessments

Each unified command also is required to submit a narrative assessment, to accompany its proposed 5-year exercise schedule. According to JCS guidance, each command assessment will

- describe the focus and objectives of the command's program,
- outline the program's relationship to the JCS Exercise Planning Guidance, and
- assess the program's planned contribution to readiness.

Three of the four command assessments we examined addressed the focus of their overall programs, but none discussed either the program's relationship to the JCS guidance or the program's specific contributions to readiness. Also, like the annual command analyses, the required data in the command assessments--where presented--were often general, which contributes to general and imprecise long-range planning, as illustrated in our discussion of imprecise exercise schedules and related airlift requirements in the following section and in chapter 3.

These command analyses and assessments are used to develop long-range plans for the overall exercise program. Therefore, to the extent that these analyses and assessments are incomplete and very general, exercise program planning will also be incomplete and lack needed specific guidance, leading to turbulence in the program during the execution phase. Concern for such turbulence was expressed by MAC, which has difficulty planning its operations when exercise schedules are significantly modified on short notice. In November 1984, DOD officials informed us that they would reemphasize the need for more complete and purposeful exercise program analyses and assessments.

DELAYED SUBMISSION OF EXERCISE
REQUIREMENTS AFFECTS PLANNING

JCS guidance provides that airlift requirements be validated and consolidated for submission to MAC (a specified command) not later than 70 days prior to the first day of the month in which an exercise deployment begins. However, MAC, in its exercise program assessments submitted to JCS in June and October 1983, observed that this provision was not being adhered to.

When we followed up on this issue at MAC headquarters in April 1984, we found this was still a problem. For example, we found that only 10 of 47 exercises supported by MAC airlift in fiscal year 1983 met the 70-day submission criterion. Generally, the only exercises meeting this criterion are the recurring, well established exercises (e.g., REFORGER, CRESTED CAP, and SALTY BEE). Airlift requirements for the other exercises "trickle in" over a period of time, making it difficult to finalize airlift plans. Some exercises are finalized only a few days before deployment begins, which disrupts MAC's other operations and impairs the command's training opportunities, according to MAC. Exercise scheduling problems and their impacts on JCS' budgeting processes are discussed further in chapter 3.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with this finding and agreed to encourage the unified/specified commands to comply more closely with JCS requirements. However, DOD officials did not agree that short-notice exercise changes should impair MAC's training opportunities because that training is based on total flying hours and not on individual exercises.

We did not evaluate the specific impacts that short-notice changes had on MAC's training opportunities. However, we believe that a fully developed schedule with minimal subsequent changes would enable MAC to more effectively integrate its own training program with those of the other commands that it serves and to assign personnel most in need of specific airlift training. Without adequate advance notice concerning the nature and composition of exercises, MAC's ability to optimize such training benefits could continue to be impaired. Also, we did not evaluate the validity of MAC's concern over the numerous short-notice exercise program changes because the related 70-day notice requirement is recognized as valid by both MAC and JCS. We continue to believe that short-notice exercise demands on limited MAC resources--contrary to JCS regulations--is reason for MAC concern. Therefore, JCS and the sponsoring commands should try to avoid such short-notice scheduling.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

JCS and the unified commands have made a number of improvements in the management of the exercise program since our 1979 report, including the issuance of new JCS planning and procedural guidance. However, further improvements in exercise planning could be achieved if JCS and the unified commands adhered more closely to certain aspects of JCS guidance.

We recommend, therefore, that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS and the unified commands to adhere more stringently to JCS guidance concerning (1) timely submission of exercise requirements and (2) preparation of more informative command analyses and assessments.

DOD concurs with our recommendation to provide timely exercise requirements. DOD also stated that it would strive to achieve complete and correct command analysis and assessment reporting.

CHAPTER 3

AIRLIFT REQUIREMENTS INACCURATELY ESTIMATED

IN ANNUAL JCS EXERCISE BUDGETS

The actual airlift costs of exercises vary substantially from the budgets justified to the Congress. As a result, airlift funds, unused at the completion of many exercises, are reprogrammed for unbudgeted or underbudgeted exercises or for other program costs. The exercise program actually executed is therefore significantly different from that reviewed and approved by the Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Office of Management and Budget. We believe exercise program budgets could be made more precise by establishing and enforcing procedures to

- require more specific and fully developed exercise schedules,
- reduce changes in the exercise program during execution, and
- anticipate and program for efficiencies in the use of airlift and other transportation modes.

ACTUAL JCS EXERCISE AIRLIFT COSTS VARIED GREATLY FROM BUDGET ESTIMATES

Airlift requirements were overstated for 34 of the 45 JCS exercises or exercise series for which airlift funds were requested in the fiscal year 1983 budget. This resulted in unused airlift funds of \$67.5 million, which was spent for nonbudgeted airlift and for other exercise cost elements. A summary of the exercise airlift variances from budget resulting in available funds in 1983 follows.

<u>Exercise</u>	C-141 aircraft equivalent flying hours		C-141 hours	Variance	
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>		<u>Percent of actual</u>	<u>Cost</u>
					(millions)
GALLANT KNIGHT	2,559	1,527	1,032	67	\$ 3.9
GALLANT EAGLE	4,417	a	4,417	b	16.8
BRIGHT STAR	11,655	9,786	1,869	19	7.1
BORDER STAR	2,088	a	2,088	b	7.9
SOLID SHIELD	2,234	1,870	364	19	1.4
OCEAN SAFARI	22	9	13	144	.1
UNIVERSAL TREK	861	754	107	14	.4
LOGEX	87	41	46	112	.2
Others (26)	<u>20,077</u>	<u>12,286</u>	<u>7,791</u>	63	<u>29.7</u>
Total (34)	<u>44,000^c</u>	<u>26,273</u>	<u>17,727</u>	67	<u>\$67.5</u>

a Exercise cancelled.

b Infinite.

c 58,000 were initially programmed for 45 exercises or exercise series.

The reprogrammed funds included

--\$51 million for airlift on 25 exercises that were underbudgeted or unbudgeted,

--\$15.6 million for unbudgeted port handling and inland transportation for the entire program, and

--\$600,000 of unbudgeted sealift.

About \$300,000 of the programmed airlift remained unused.

Imprecise budget requests for JCS exercise airlift were first noted by the Air Force as a result of a fiscal year 1982 budget amendment request for an additional \$97 million. The exercises were already funded at an enhanced level, and the Air Force could not provide the level of support required to execute the revised program. When the executive branch later requested that money be cut from the fiscal year 1982 Defense budget, the Air Force identified an excess of \$79.4 million in airlift in the JCS exercise program. The Air Force notified the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Defense, of this excess and the budget was subsequently reduced accordingly.

Also, during consideration of the fiscal year 1982 Defense budget, the Congress transferred funding of exercise airlift and sealift from the service O&M accounts to the Defense Agencies/JCS O&M account. In its first budget after this transfer, JCS

requested exercise airlift funds of about \$221 million for fiscal year 1983. Because this budget request was also imprecise, JCS was able to use these funds to support about \$15.6 million in unanticipated port handling and inland transportation, as demonstrated by the following events.

During deliberations on the fiscal year 1983 budget, the House Committee on Appropriations reduced the Army's and Navy's requests for O&M funding by a total of \$14.6 million--the amount estimated to be required for JCS exercise port handling and inland transportation costs during the year. The Committee directed JCS to absorb these costs from its O&M funds in fiscal year 1983. The actual costs were about \$15.6 million, which JCS paid for by reprogramming airlift funds, which were made available from exercises that had been cancelled, reduced in scope, or modified in ways that reduced their need for airlift (see chart on p. 10).

The pattern of wide variances between budgeted and actual airlift requirements for some JCS exercises also continued into fiscal year 1984. For example, 7 of the 11 budgeted and completed exercises for the first quarter of that year were overbudgeted by \$18 million. Ultimately, JCS returned to DOD \$23 million which was not needed for its exercise program.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD agreed that estimating exercise requirements on a "worst case" basis contributed to overbudgeting. DOD said it has developed a new system that will require the commands to compute their exercise requirements on a "best case" basis, considering all foreseeable events and available efficiency actions.

The new DOD system, to be administered by JCS, would also require unified/specified commands to provide more detailed airlift and sealift requirements to allow better cost estimating and allocation of exercise dollars by quarter. This should provide more concrete data to back up the exercise budget and should eliminate program "peaks and valleys," according to JCS officials.

Conditions contributing to budget problems

Some of the conditions contributing to the imprecise airlift budgets include

- using incomplete exercise scheduling data in determining airlift and other requirements,
- making major changes in the scope and design of exercises, and adding or eliminating exercises during the execution period, and

--developing the exercise program budget without considering available transportation efficiencies.

A discussion of these conditions follows.

PROGRAM BUDGETS AND SCHEDULES
ARE NOT SPECIFIC AND FULLY DEVELOPED

Annual exercise budgets and annual and 5-year exercise schedules often change significantly during the execution period (frequently on short notice) and omit critical data. These conditions, coupled with last minute program demands, continue to make it difficult for some participants to support individual exercises or to achieve maximum training benefits from the program.

The unified/specified commands prepare and submit their proposed 5-year exercise schedules to JCS, reflecting the best information available, early in the program planning cycle. The proposed fiscal years 1984 to 1988 schedules, for example, had to be submitted to JCS by June 1982. Certain specificity is needed in the early years of the 5-year program to enable participants to make timely preparations, and is required by JCS guidance.

JCS guidance requires that the unified commands' 5-year exercise schedules, which are updated annually, include exercise dates, locations, length, and cost estimates, as well as a description of major participating forces for each exercise, for the first 2 years of the program. Specifying the units, where possible, is required by JCS guidance and enables the scheduling and supporting commands to develop meaningful airlift, sealift, and land transportation requirements. The third through the fifth years of the schedule identify the exercise name, give a general description and purpose of the exercise, and provide date, location, length, and cost data in varying degrees of specificity.

Our review of the first 2 years of the JCS 1983-87 exercise schedule showed that both JCS and some unified commands had omitted significant data (i.e., location, time, and forces). To illustrate, 107 of the 128 JCS exercises scheduled for fiscal years 1983 and 1984⁶ did not identify many participating forces and 61 exercises did not identify some of the types of participating forces. Other important, but less frequent, omissions related to location, time period, and length of exercise. A similar pattern also was noted with regard to the 1984-88 exercise schedule.

⁶JCS-Directed and JCS-Coordinated Exercise Schedules for Fiscal Years 1983-1987, dated 1 April 1982 (SM-202-82).

JCS and the unified commands often do not decide on exercise scenarios, participating forces, dates, or locations for many of the exercises until after the budget has been submitted. Consequently, the amount of airlift and other requirements for those exercises are difficult to estimate. Even when exercises (e.g., certain U.S. Readiness Command exercises) are well developed, they sometimes have to be changed to accommodate other unified commands' exercises that were evolving or changing subsequent to budget preparation.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the ability to gain training benefit from an exercise is not related to the data contained in the schedule. It is the purpose and intent of the exercise planning conference (several months after the schedule approval) to identify the objectives and benefits of an exercise.

We agree that the training benefits of an exercise are not necessarily constrained by the lack of specificity in the exercise schedule. However, those benefits are directly related to a stable program and to advance preparations; therefore, the participating commands at all levels need sufficient advance notice to realize optimum training benefits. In addition, early preparations are clearly impaired in an ever-changing program that does not tell the transporter (e.g., MAC) until the last minute what forces it is expected to move and when or where it is expected to move them.

MAJOR PROGRAM REDESIGN
DURING THE EXECUTION PHASE RESULTS
IN CHANGED AIRLIFT REQUIREMENTS

In our 1979 report, we concluded that individual exercises should be reassessed and rejustified annually. JCS guidance now requires this kind of program support by the unified/specified commands. However, the justification requirement is satisfied only in a general sense through the annual JCS planning and scheduling conferences, after which the exercises are assumed to have been rejustified. As a result, we found that many of the exercises were not carried out as scheduled and that some exercises were added subsequent to the planning and scheduling conferences. These changes during the execution period would help explain the difficulty of determining at budget time which exercises to include in the program and of allocating funds to exercises providing the greatest benefit.

The numerous modifications in the fiscal year 1983 exercise program, which occurred between the development of the related budget and the execution of the program, constituted a major program redesign, which generated a new set of airlift requirements. For instance, 12 exercises with budgeted airlift of about \$31 million were cancelled, were scaled down substantially, were changed from a field training exercise (involving movement of troops) to a command post exercise (involving commanders, but with little or no troop movement), or had their airlift changed to less expensive sealift or land transport and therefore used no airlift at all. Also, airlift requirements of another eight exercises were budgeted in excess of 100 percent more than was actually used. Airlift totaling \$36.2 million was used for 14 new exercises or exercises that were not scheduled to include airlift and \$14.8 million of airlift was added to another 11 exercises during fiscal year 1983.

Some of the program modifications during fiscal year 1983 resulted from unforeseeable events. For example, JADE TIGER and AHUAS TARA exercises were added in the Middle East and Central America, respectively, because of political conditions in those areas at the scheduled time of the exercises. Further confusion resulted from the transformation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (a Readiness Command organization) to a new unified command (i.e., the U.S. Central Command) responsible for exercises with Southwest Asia scenarios.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD officials emphasized that each commander must have the latitude to adjust exercises to real-world conditions and to modify or cancel exercises if needed.

We agree that commanders should be able to change their exercise programs. However, they should follow established JCS exercise guidance when making these changes. We also believe that full compliance with those procedures would result in more specific and fully developed exercise schedules, which in turn would facilitate more precise budgets and necessitate fewer changes during the execution period.

DOD further commented that the primary focus of the exercise program is not individual exercises, but to test the readiness of unified/specified commands' assigned forces. We do not dispute DOD's view, but point out that exercises are the building blocks of the program and provide specific elements against which to review proposed programs, particularly at budget time. Since the individual exercise is the principal common denominator of the JCS exercise program among the various participants, we believe DOD accountability by exercise will continue to be useful for the foreseeable future.

SCHEDULING AND OTHER PROGRAMMING
EFFICIENCIES REDUCE THE COST OF
SELECTED EXERCISES

Through program efficiencies, JCS and the unified/specified commands have done a good job of reducing the overall costs of selected exercises. For example, during the Fall of 1983, instead of allowing aircraft to return empty from Europe after offloading REFORGER assets, some aircraft were rerouted to bring BRIGHT STAR assets back from the Middle East. This scheduling change and rerouting saved an estimated \$976,000 in airlift costs, according to MAC.

Another efficiency involved the cost of airlifting special JCS communications equipment used in two exercises that were conducted in close geographic areas and time frames. Normally, this equipment is returned to the United States after each exercise to be inspected and repaired as necessary. However, in this case, the equipment used in SHADOW HAWK was airlifted from one country to another nearby country to support BRIGHT STAR. This involved only a minimum of rescheduling and saved \$866,000 in airlift costs, according to MAC.

MAC advised us that the above efficiency efforts are not unique, but are accomplished quite frequently. MAC cited VECTOR SOUTH and COBRA GOLD, WESTWIND and KANGAROO, and KINDLE LIBERTY and AHUAS TARA I as examples of other exercise combinations in which aircraft were more efficiently used to reduce the overall costs of the exercises.

We also noted examples where scheduled airlift was changed to less expensive sealift and land transportation to reduce the overall exercise cost, while still achieving the planned objectives. It was not practical to estimate the savings attributable to the alternate transport mode and to determine what part related to exercise design changes. However, with more complete and specific exercise schedules, JCS should be able to anticipate these efficiencies during the planning process and develop more accurate budget requests.

In commenting on the draft report, DOD officials said that exercise schedules do not seriously affect transportation planning, but agreed that programming based on historical performance adjusted by factors likely to occur at execution does produce more accurate budgets. The new JCS funds allocation system, discussed on page 11, should improve the process, according to DOD.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Actual exercise airlift costs vary greatly from budget estimates because the budgets and schedules (1) are not always specific and fully developed, (2) are sometimes extensively

modified during execution, and (3) do not always consider available transport efficiencies. As a result, more funds are budgeted than needed for some exercises. The overbudgeted funds either are used to finance expanded and unscheduled exercises that receive little or no congressional or executive branch scrutiny or are returned to the Office of Secretary of Defense for other Defense uses.

While we recognize that some exercise events cannot be anticipated, we believe more purposeful schedules and budgets are possible. We recommend, therefore, that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS to develop procedures that will ensure more precise exercise program schedules and budgets and will reduce to a minimum the number of changes to the schedule that occur after budget approval. These procedures, if properly implemented, should consider transport efficiencies.

DOD concurred with our recommendation.

CHAPTER 4

A WORLDWIDE EXERCISE LESSONS-LEARNED

SYSTEM IS STILL NEEDED

The quality and extent of exercise evaluation are generally improving. However, as we noted in our 1979 report, a worldwide automated lessons-learned system, with information uniformly categorized by subject and accessible by all exercise participants, would enable all interested users to obtain specific information on exercise results.

Exercise results are particularly important to defense planners who depend on this data to ensure current and workable operational plans. Exercise results are a major source of information for updating the plans. Therefore, exercise results have a major impact in identifying and overcoming deficiencies in U.S. combat capabilities.

Some of the exercise results (e.g., items requiring single agency action) are distributed only among participating commands, although some military officials agree that other commanders could have a need for such information in resolving problems in their commands.

INDIVIDUAL LESSONS-LEARNED SYSTEMS IN PLACE OR PLANNED PARTIALLY SATISFY THE NEED FOR A WORLDWIDE SYSTEM

At the time of our 1979 report, the Director of the Joint Staff agreed that a universal lessons-learned system, allowing all exercise planners to take into account the problems and shortfalls encountered in exercises, would be of great benefit. He said that such a system would be designed and that it would provide uniformity in identification, classification, and analysis of lessons learned; provide for a formal follow-up procedure; and enable both intracommand and intercommand access.

On the basis of this response, the U.S. European Command developed and sent to JCS a concept for a universal automated lessons-learned system. The concept provided for each command to maintain a detailed automated lessons-learned data base for its own exercises, in a standard format with universal categories. JCS would maintain a summary/index file, which each command could use to determine the appropriate data bases from which to retrieve the desired lessons-learned information. From this foundation, JCS began a process to develop an automated, interactive, and worldwide lessons-learned system for the JCS exercise program.

JCS forwarded the European Command proposal to the other unified/specified commands and the services for comment in April 1980, and received two additional proposals in reply. The new proposals were to modify existing systems, one of which was the Exercise Critique System used by JCS to record the results of its two annual command post exercises. In October 1980, JCS asked the Command and Control Technical Center of the Defense Communications Agency to evaluate the three proposals in terms of how well each met certain JCS requirements. The evaluation showed the European Command proposal to be feasible and clearly superior. None of the proposals was universally adopted. In April 1981 JCS announced that a centrally developed worldwide automated lessons-learned system was no longer planned. Instead, JCS encouraged each command to develop its own system and to provide copies of exercise after-action reports to the other commands and to JCS.

Subsequently, JCS and some of the services, unified/specified, and supporting military commands developed lessons-learned systems independently of each other. For instance, by modifying its Exercise Critique System to meet some of the requirements, JCS implemented a lessons-learned system, which it calls the Remedial Action Program (RAP), to identify, monitor, and solve exercise problems that require joint action. The Army has a RAP that parallels and complements JCS's system, and which provides the Army with a means to identify, control, and correct exercise deficiencies reported by its major commands and staff agencies. The Air Force expects, by mid 1985, to implement its own system, which also is designed to parallel the JCS and Army RAPs. Moreover, some unified and other commands have computerized data bases and other follow-up systems (see pp. 21 and 22). In November 1984, we were told by JCS officials that the Marine Corps had instituted its own RAP system in May 1984, subsequent to our fieldwork. The Navy has not instituted a lessons-learned system.

Collectively, these RAP systems represent significant progress. However, because they do not monitor anywhere near all the deficiencies noted and cannot cross-feed information from each other, they do not fulfill the needs of an interactive worldwide lessons-learned system, as suggested in our 1979 report and in other agency assessments of the exercise program.⁷

⁷GAO's report entitled Improving the Effectiveness of Interoperability in NATO--Initiatives, Issues and Problems (C-PLRD-82-14, September 13, 1982).
Technology for U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces, Defense Science Board Task Force Study, July 2, 1982.
Report of the Air Force IG entitled Functional Management Inspection of Exercise Planning (PN 82-634, September 13, 1982 -August 19, 1983).
Military Airlift Command's Analysis of its FY 1983 JCS-Directed/Coordinated Exercise Program, MAC message number 241530Z, Oct. 1983.

The JCS RAP system

Currently, exercise participants forward to JCS those deficiencies which they believe warrant inclusion in the JCS RAP system. These exercise problems are reviewed by JCS staff and are designated as one of the following:

1. RAP--problems requiring actions by JCS, the services or unified/specified commands, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, or other federal agencies.
2. Single agency action--problems that can be addressed adequately by a single agency.
3. Lessons learned--problems for which adequate procedures exist but are not followed.
4. Noted items--other valid, reported problems that are classified as not requiring corrective action.

Only exercise problems meeting the first definition (RAP) are entered into the JCS RAP system; consequently, most other problems are not monitored further or acted on.

Additionally, exercise participants are required to report to JCS deficiencies from only JCS-directed exercises, further limiting the number of monitored problems. To illustrate, we noted that as of July 1983, deficiencies had been entered into the system from only 13 of about 350 JCS exercises conducted from 1978 to 1983.

The two exercises which are conducted each year by JCS itself get the most RAP attention, although the majority of the deficiencies identified in those exercises are still not included in the system. For example, of the 567 deficiencies noted during the JCS-conducted PROUD SABER 83 exercise and recommended for inclusion in the JCS RAP, only 125--or 22 percent--were accepted, as illustrated below.

<u>Number of deficiencies</u>	<u>Action taken by JCS</u>
125	Combined into 46 new or existing JCS "RAPs"
119	Designated as "Single Agency Actions"
96	Designated as "Lessons Learned"
206	Designated as "Noted" items
<u>21</u>	Dropped as duplicates or errors
<u>567</u>	Total

Those deficiencies not accepted for inclusion in the JCS RAP get no further JCS attention. As a result, exercise deficiencies that have readiness implications may remain uncorrected. For instance, during PROUD SABER 83 the Army discovered that federal agencies were assuming differing time spans in which to prepare for mobilization, noting that:

"One agency is planning for a two-year buildup to M-Day while another is planning for only six months. Because these agencies assume different mobilization [M] planning scenarios, inter-agency problems identified by one agency are often not issues to another agency. The absence of a common mobilization scenario precludes effective interagency coordination of mobilization plans."

The Army proposed the "differing scenarios" deficiency to JCS for inclusion in the JCS RAP. However, JCS classified it as a lesson learned rather than a RAP; therefore, no JCS action was taken to resolve it. Further, because the deficiency was referred to JCS, the Army assumed that JCS had responsibility for it and did not include it in the Army RAP. Other significant problems, which were identified in a unified command after-action report to JCS but not entered in the JCS RAP, include the lack of standard procedures in logistics areas, computer software shortfalls, communications problems, and inadequate all-weather capabilities.

Another exercise problem (see p. 23), which has not received timely action by the JCS RAP system, involves the security of bridges spanning critical waterways.

The Army RAP system

New emphasis was added to the Army RAP as a result of a Defense Science Board study⁸ in 1982. The Board, which commented on Rapid Deployment Force training requirements, stressed the importance of exercise lessons learned. It concluded that

"there seems to be virtually no doubt but that large scale... exercises provide extremely valuable lessons learned for which there are probably no substitutes. It was by no means evident ... that the after-action reports were receiving the attention they deserve throughout the Defense community. We found at least fragmentary evidence that neither the test community nor the Service programmers takes the time to read after-action reports." (Underscoring added.)

⁸Technology for U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces, Defense Science Board Task Force, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, July 2, 1982.

In February 1983, after the Army had examined the problem and concurred with the 1982 Defense Science Board conclusion, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans ordered that (1) the Army RAP system be formalized, (2) written instructions be published, (3) lessons-learned and noted items from past and future exercises be disseminated Army-wide, (4) problems from unilateral exercises be added, and (5) requirements for automatic data processing equipment to support and improve the system be defined. Accordingly, in June 1983, the Army Joint Exercise Manual was revised to improve post-exercise review and reporting procedures and, in January 1984, Army Regulation 350-28 was revised to provide specific guidance for initiating and reporting on exercise remedial actions. However, as in the JCS RAP, if an exercise deficiency proposed for inclusion in the Army RAP is reclassified as a lessons-learned or noted item by Army headquarters, the system will not require the deficiency to be monitored further or acted upon.

The Air Force RAP system

The Air Force also has increased its attention to the opportunities afforded by joint exercises, an initiative encouraged by the Air Force Inspector General (IG). In 1983 the IG reported⁹ that exercise results were not receiving adequate attention and were not widely disseminated, with some deficiencies being repeated in consecutive exercises. The IG, therefore, recommended that the Air Force develop a single after-action reporting system to provide guidelines for exercise participation, and require major commands to establish a single focal point to monitor and more equitably distribute the use of Air Force units in exercises, thereby avoiding the overtasking of forces.

As a result of the IG's recommendations, the Air Force contracted with the BDM Corporation to develop an improved Air Force-wide exercise planning and evaluation system, which is expected to become operational in mid 1985.

Other lessons-learned systems

The unified and service command lessons-learned systems range from almost none (e.g., the Atlantic Command after-action reports) to comprehensive and fully automated systems (e.g., the Readiness Command's system). These systems generally serve only command needs and have no capability to communicate directly with each other. Three such approaches follow.

The U.S. Atlantic Command

The Atlantic Command has no formal lessons-learned system. Instead, it relies on past after-action reports for guidance in

⁹See note 7, page 18.

planning new exercises. Compounding command problems in this area is the existence of two different staffs for planning and executing exercises (i.e., one in the plans office and one in the operations office), which do not fully coordinate their exercise activities, according to Atlantic Command officials.

Some of the command's joint exercises are planned, conducted, and reviewed by the planning staff while others are the responsibility of the operations staff. However, reporting to JCS on the overall command's joint exercise program is the sole responsibility of the planning staff. Therefore, the plans office is responsible for reporting on a program that is partly operated outside its control and on which it receives incomplete information, according to command planning officials.

The U.S. Readiness Command

The Readiness Command lessons-learned system, on the other hand, is fully automated and provides a means of building, maintaining, and retrieving a history of exercise deficiencies. The lessons learned in the system are categorized by key words and can be selectively retrieved.

The Readiness Command's exercise program planning, managing, and evaluating process--like at the Atlantic Command--is divided between the command's operations and plans directorates. However, this division of responsibilities does not seem to present a problem and coordination between those directorates appears to be working.

The Army Forces Command

The Army Forces Command, a major Army command, also has a mechanized lessons-learned system, which parallels the Army RAP system, to manage its exercise deficiencies. Access to data in this system, which also categorizes lessons learned by subject, can be obtained remotely by the subordinate commands.

Comprehensive after-action reports serve primarily as data bases

Many important exercise results are highlighted in after-action reports. However, these reports serve as little more than data bases for the preparing organizations. The reports have limited distribution and are not consistently prepared with deficiencies uniformly categorized. Since exercise planning staffs are generally too small to analyze and extract pertinent information from the dozens of reports, while at the same time plan, execute, evaluate, and learn from their own exercises, most of the after-action reports provide little benefit without a system for cataloging, retrieving, and using the after-action data.

LIMITED SHARING OF LESSONS
LEARNED INHIBITS THEIR USEFULNESS

Since the existing lessons-learned systems were developed independently, the ability of exercise participants to extract lessons-learned information from systems other than their own is limited or nonexistent. The lack of an interactive worldwide lessons-learned system precludes consideration of important information in exercise planning, which could help prevent repetitive deficiencies in succeeding exercises and actual operations.

In our 1979 report, we noted that the same deficiencies were being reported in some exercises year after year. The new individual systems that have come on line since 1979 have not corrected this problem. For example, several military exercises from 1978 to 1983, including NIFTY NUGGET, PROUD SABER, and at least two REFORGERS, have disclosed that physical security plans are deficient for the protection of bridges spanning critical navigational channels. We also mentioned the problem in our August 1983 report¹⁰ on U.S. port sustainability in wartime.

Although the bridge problem has been noted for several years, it has not been decided who is responsible for that role. A presidentially directed study of this and other security jurisdictional issues is now underway.

Additionally, the Air Force IG in its August 1983 report on Air Force exercise planning, noted that

"...after action reports revealed common deficiencies in consecutive exercises with the implication that correctable problems may not have been getting sufficient attention and lessons-learned not receiving the widest dissemination."
(Underscoring added)

The IG found that the lack of effective reporting, analysis, and authority to enforce accountability for deficiencies caused mistakes to recur in the same and similar exercises and that lessons learned are not shared among exercise and contingency planners, leading to repeat problems.

A JCS official cited still other examples of repetitive deficiencies remaining unresolved for extensive periods. He said that three major problems (one involving communications) mentioned in the after-action reports concerning the 1983 landing on Grenada had been noted 20 years earlier during the United States' landing in the Dominican Republic. Similarly, MAC noted the lack of adequate after-action analysis and follow-up in its Command Analysis of the FY 1983 JCS Directed/Coordinated Exercise program.

¹⁰See note 3 on p. 3.

JCS and service officials generally agree that their systems need to ensure timely action on major exercise issues, including lessons-learned and noted items currently not covered by the RAP follow-up processes. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD officials advised us that they intend to address this problem to the extent of including the "lessons-learned" category of exercise deficiencies in a computerized data base available to users worldwide. JCS established the RAP to satisfy our 1979 recommendation for a worldwide lessons-learned system. DOD said further that inclusion of all exercise deficiencies in the RAP would result in so many items being listed that major problems requiring solution would be effectively masked. We agree that not all items in a lessons-learned data base require follow-up under the RAP, and we believe that DOD's proposed universal data base could be a good step forward.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

JCS, most of the services, and some unified and service commands have instituted individual lessons-learned systems that provide the basis for establishing a universal lessons-learned system. However, because these systems monitor and act upon only a small share of exercise deficiencies, and because they do not cross-feed information from one system to another, the exercise program is not providing maximum benefits.

Therefore, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS to take the lead in establishing a comprehensive exercise results system that includes all major JCS exercise program results. Such a system would allow JCS and other defense organizations to account for, act on, and share the results throughout the defense community.

DOD concurs with our recommendation, and JCS intends to expand its RAP data base to include additional lessons learned.



THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

THE JOINT STAFF

24 December 1984

Mr. Frank C. Conahan, Director
National Security and International Affairs Division
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

The draft report, "Management of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program Has Been Strengthened, But More Needs To be Done," November 2, 1984, (GAO Code No. 947515), has been thoroughly reviewed.

Attached are comments that represent the Department of Defense's positions on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft report and are intended to clarify the rationale used to develop the findings.

It should be noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff will soon consider some management changes for the JCS Exercise Program that were developed prior to the draft report, but complement the recommendations contained therein.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Hosmer".

BRADLEY C. HOSMER
Major General, USAF
Vice Director, Joint Staff

Attachment
a/s

FINDING A: Overall Management of JCS Exercise Program Has Been Strengthened But Additional Improvements Can Be Made. GAO found that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had increased its role in management of the joint military exercise program since a 1979 GAO review. GAO reported that JCS has expanded its staff and improved guidance to unified and specified Commands, which conduct about 45 percent of the exercise program (the rest is JCS-directed). GAO also noted that the JCS, Army and Air Force have developed remedial action programs (RAP), and that some Unified and Service Command "lessons learned" systems are in effect (the Navy and Marine Corps had no lessons learned system in operation at the time of the review). GAO found that despite this progress, exercises continue to be approved without their scope and composition having been defined, and that numerous changes are made in exercises subsequent to the approved schedule. (pp. 6-7, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 4, this report.)

DOD POSITION: Partially concur.

The DOD concurs with the exception of the statement, "... exercises continue to be approved without their scope and composition having been defined, and that numerous changes are made in exercises subsequent to the approved schedule."

Exercises are defined as precisely as possible in the exercise program schedules with the information available at that time. Although some entries may not have been completed, such as specific dates and locations, it does not mean that the scope of the exercise has not been defined. The scope of the exercise is framed by the exercise objectives.

Regarding changes, including force composition that occur in exercises subsequent to the schedules being approved, the unified or specified commander who is scheduling the exercise makes the

determination or recommendation of whether changes are necessary in the planned level of the exercise considering the real-world requirements existing in his area of responsibility at the time the exercise is scheduled to occur. These are decisions which are properly under the commander's purview, cannot be accounted for two or three years in advance and, therefore, should not be restricted.

It should also be noted that the Marine Corps developed a Remedial Action Program (RAP) subsequent to the field activity associated with this report.

FINDING B: Command Analyses and Assessments Of Exercises Need To Be Made More Informative. GAO reported that while current JCS guidelines require each command to make an annual analysis of its previous year's exercise program and an annual assessment of its proposed 5-year program, these documents provide only limited coverage of required topics. GAO's examination of 11 command analyses for Fiscal Years 1982 and 1983 showed that only one addressed all required topics. GAO also found that none of the four command assessments which it examined were properly focused on its contributions to readiness. GAO concluded that exercise program planning will be incomplete and nonspecific, leading to turbulence in the execution phase, to the extent that command analyses and assessments are incomplete and nonspecific. (pp. 8-11, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 5, this report.)

DOD Position: Concur.

DOD concurs in this finding. The Department will reemphasize the need for completeness in the reports, which do require an assessment of the proposed program contribution to readiness, during the FY 1987 - FY 1991 JCS Worldwide Scheduling Conference. Improvements will occur in the FY 1985 command analyses and the FY 1988 - FY 1992 command assessments.

It should be noted, however, that command analyses and assessments are not stand alone documents. Even if the reports were complete, they would have to be weighed along with National Command Authorities (NCA) guidance, after action reports from specific exercises, discussions between all exercise program participants at the various scheduling conferences, and the unified and specified commands' and the Services' comments on the draft Exercise Planning Guidance (EPG). The programmers and analysts who work with the program every day understand these various elements, even though they may not be visible to outside observers.

But, the command analyses and assessments are only one portion of the formal reporting system contained within the procedural guidance--the others being the After Action Reports on all JCS-directed and selected JCS-coordinated exercises and the discussions conducted during the scheduling conferences. All of these sources taken in total form the basis upon which the Joint Staff conducts its detailed analysis of the program's execution over the past year and its direction over the next five years as described in the Exercise Planning Guidance.

FINDING C: Delayed Submission of Exercise Requirements Affects Planning. GAO reported that JCS exercise guidance provides for airlift requirements to be submitted to the Military Airlift Command (MAC) 70 days prior to the month an exercise deployment begins, but that, according to MAC's 1983 assessment, this provision was not being adhered to. GAO found that only 10 of 47 exercises requiring MAC airlift during FY 1983 met the 70-day submission criterion. GAO concluded that exercise planning could be improved if JCS and the Unified Commands adhered more closely to this and other aspects of JCS guidance. (pp. 11-12, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 7, this report.)

DOD Position: Concur.

DOD concurs in this finding. A recently completed exercise planners conference addressed this issue specifically along with proposed solutions. As a result, improvements are expected during FY 1985, but full compliance is not expected until some of the problems associated with use of JDS in exercises are rectified. These problems have been identified and are being corrected.

FINDING D: Airlift Requirements Are Inaccurately Estimated In Annual JCS Exercise Budgets. GAO found that the actual airlift costs of exercises vary substantially from the budgets justified to Congress. GAO's review showed that airlift requirements were overstated for 34 of the 45 JCS exercises for which airlift funds were requested in the FY 1983 budget. This resulted, GAO noted, in overbudgeting of \$67.5 million, which was spent for unbudgeted airlift and other exercise costs. GAO found the exercise program actually executed to be significantly different from that reviewed and approved by DOD, OMB and could be made more precise by establishing and enforcing procedures to require more specific and fully developed exercise schedules, reduce changes in the exercise program during execution, and anticipate and program for efficiencies in the use of airlift and other transportation modes. (pp. 13, 17, 22-23, GAO Draft Report) (See pp.9,12,15, this report)

DOD Position: Partially concur.

DOD concurs in the finding, but not the supporting rationale.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff manage the exercise program by providing an allocation to each unified or specified command to conduct a program of exercises in the commander's area of responsibility. This allocation is based on each command's exercise requirements and the financial constraints of the overall exercise budget. The CINC's requirements for training required via Joint Exercise establishes the overall level and distribution among the CINCs of exercise funds. Allocating that training among specific exercises is done within the OJCS as a general planning tool; but that allocation can be only approximate until just before the exercise due to fact-of-life changes that cannot be controlled. For that reason, the budget is submitted

and justified only in terms of the overall level of training needed; i.e., the overall exercise budget. Specific planning forecasts of individual exercise costs are not a useful part of the dialogue between DOD and the Congress because they are only notional at that time.

These elements then must be combined with the fact that the area commander must, of necessity, have the latitude to adjust his exercise activity to take into account real-world considerations and changes in NCA direction. If, in the opinion of the unified or specified commander, these considerations warrant modifying or cancelling an exercise, the commander is empowered to take the action.

The problem with the lack of completeness in the exercise schedules was discussed in the response to Finding A.

The DOD has developed a new reporting system that refines the stating of lift requirements on a "best-case" basis which takes lift efficiencies into consideration. This system has been agreed to by the unified and specified commands, the Services, and the transportation operating agencies. The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the new system on 4 December 1984.

FINDING E: Exercise Program Budgets and Schedules Are Not Specific Or Fully Developed. GAO reported that JCS guidance requires commands' 5-year exercise plans to specify exercise dates, locations, length and cost estimates, and also describe major participating forces, for the first 2 years of the program. GAO's review of the FY 1983-87 JCS exercise schedule showed, however, that both the JCS and the commands omitted significant data. GAO found that of 128 JCS exercises scheduled in FYs 1983-84, 107 did not identify many participating forces and 61 did not identify some types of forces. GAO concluded that the annual exercise budgets and 5-year plans often change significantly during the execution period and omit critical data, which makes it difficult for some participants to support individual exercises or to achieve maximum training benefits from the program. (pp. 17-19, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 12, this report)

DOD Position: Partially concur.

DOD concurs in the finding except for the portion pertaining to training. The ability to gain training benefit from an exercise is not related to the data contained in the schedule. It is, however, the purpose and intent of exercise planning conferences to identify the objectives and benefits of an exercise. These conferences identify the specific units which will participate in the exercises.

It should be noted that the quality of the schedules has improved since the publication of the FY 1983-87 version (see Finding A).

FINDING F: Major Exercise Program Redesign During The Execution Phase Results In Changed Airlift Requirements. GAO found that numerous modifications were made in the 1983 exercise program between the development of the budget and execution of the program, and that these changes generated a new set of airlift requirements. GAO noted, for example, that 12 exercises with \$31 million budgeted for airlift were canceled or scaled down while 25 exercises using \$51 million of airlift were either added or augmented. GAO concluded that while some program modifications resulted from unforeseeable events, the extent of the changes shows that JCS continues to have difficulty in determining which exercises to include in the program and in allocating funds to those exercises with the greatest benefit. (pp. 19-21, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 13, this report.)

DOD Position: Partially concur.

DOD concurs with the finding, but does not agree with the supporting rationale. MAC's primary concern in the airlift portion of the exercise program is the total number of flying hours. The FY 1983 program originally called for 58,000 C-141 equivalent airlift flying hours. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were required, as a result of Congressional action on the Department of Defense Appropriation Act, 1983, to fund port handling and inland transportation requirements from within appropriated funds. This necessitated a reduction in the number of flying hours to a level of 55,116. In August 1983, this level was reduced to 53,883 because of a lack of airlift requirements and unfunded sealift requirements which could use the funds. In reality, MAC flew 53,883 hours in support of JCS exercises. This represents almost 93 percent of the original allocation, which was not a drastic change in the total program. The GAO rationale, however, leaves the impression that airlift requirements grew by \$20 million.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff do not have difficulty identifying exercises to be included in the program. Those exercises contained in the schedules reflect the best information available 2 years prior to the execution of the program. Additions to the schedule are dealt with expeditiously, whether they are directed by the NCA or requested by the scheduling commands.

As for the allocation of funds, they are provided for the unified and specified commands to use in the execution of their exercise programs. They must make the decision as to how individual exercises within a program can most effectively accomplish the primary goal of such exercises, which is to improve the operational readiness of their assigned forces. These decisions must be made in light of the real-world situations that exist in their areas of responsibility at the time the exercises are scheduled.

FINDING G: Program Efficiencies Reduce The Cost Of Some Exercises. GAO found that through transportation program efficiencies, both JCS and the Unified/Specified Commands have done a good job of reducing the overall cost of selected exercises. These efficiencies include, GAO noted, reduction of airlift usage and conversion from airlift to alternate transportation modes. GAO concluded that, with more complete and specific exercise schedules, JCS can anticipate such efficiencies during the planning process and develop more accurate budget requests. (pp. 21-22, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 15, this report.)

DOD Position: Partially concur.

DOD concurs in the finding, but not with the rationale. The schedules do not seriously affect transportation planning. The DOD, however, has determined that more detailed programming based on historical performance and adjusted for factors likely to exist at the time of execution accounts for transportation efficiencies and produces more accurate budgets. Such detailed programming is included in the new reporting system discussed in the response to Finding D.

FINDING H: Individual Lessons Learned Systems Partially Satisfy The Need, But a Worldwide System Is Still Needed. GAO reported that, in response to the 1979 report, the Director, Joint Staff, agreed that a universal lessons learned system, which allowed all exercise planners to utilize exercise results, would be of great benefit. GAO found, however, that efforts to develop a worldwide system were judged too expensive and were terminated in mid-1981, and that JCS, some of the commands, and the Army and Air Force either have established or are in the process of establishing separate systems. GAO noted that, since these systems were developed independently and are not integrated, the ability of exercise participants to access and extract lessons learned information from systems other than their own is limited or nonexistent. This multiplicity of systems precludes consideration of important information in exercise planning and can lead to repetitive deficiencies in succeeding exercises and actual operations. GAO concluded that the JCS, Army and Air Force remedial action programs, and similar command systems, represent significant progress, but that they have yet to fulfill the need for an automated and interactive worldwide system as was suggested in the 1979 report. (pp. 24-35, GAO Draft Report)

(See p. 17, this report.)

DOD Position: Partially concur.

Subsequent to the 1979 report, the Joint Chiefs of Staff modified existing software to organize lessons learned and distribute them universally (to the Services and the unified and specified commands). The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not terminate the lessons learned project in mid-1981 as stated in the report.¹¹ To the contrary, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed procedures for using the software and promulgated them in SM-827-81, "The JCS Remedial Action Projects (RAPs) Program. RAPs are, "...problems of such a magnitude that they require OJCS, Services, unified and specified commands, OSD, or other Federal agencies to initiate corrective action." DOD made a conscious decision to limit RAPs

¹¹This observation was subsequently revised to show more precisely JCS' efforts directed toward a centrally developed, automated lessons-learned system through April 1981. See p. 17, this report.

in such a way because of the large number of deficiencies discovered in an exercise. The GAO report cites an example exercise which had 567 deficiencies, only 125 of which were included in the RAP program. The report suggests all deficiencies should have been included and, further, that this process should have been repeated for all of the 350 JCS exercises conducted between 1978-1983. If the GAO suggestion had been followed, the RAP program would now contain over 100,000 RAPs, thereby effectively masking the major problems.

Therefore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff chose to include only those deficiencies which limit joint warfighting capability in its universal data base. Individual Service and Command RAP programs cover the specific needs of those organizations. The DOD agrees that improvements are possible and plans are underway to develop a universal lessons learned data base, which will include deficiencies of universal concern, but which do not require corrective action. The Joint Chiefs of Staff still plan to limit the number of RAPs and lessons learned to manageable numbers with the Service and CINC programs covering their specific needs.

RECOMMENDATION 1. GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS and the unified commands to adhere more stringently to JCS guidance concerning (1) timely submission of exercise requirements, and (2) preparation of more informative command analyses and assessments. (p. 12, GAO Draft Report) (See p. 8, this report,)

DOD Position

DOD concurs in the recommendation to provide timely exercise requirements. The JCS conducted a worldwide exercise planners conference recently with representatives from the Services, the unified and specified commands, and the transportation operating agencies (TOAs). One of the three main discussion points in this conference was the compliance with the JCS exercise program guidance.

During this conference and in subsequent message traffic, the JCS recommended various corrective actions that the entire exercise community can take in order to ensure better compliance with the guidance. Additionally, the Joint Staff is forming a working group, with participation invited from the Services, the unified and specified commands, and the TOAs, which will review scheduling and definition of exercises in addition to the limits and scope of the program.

The DOD will, as the report suggests, strive to achieve complete and correct command analysis and assessment reporting.

RECOMMENDATION 2. GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS to develop procedures that will ensure more precise program schedules and budgets. These steps, if properly implemented, should take into account scheduling efficiencies, and reduce to a minimum the number of changes to the schedule that occur after budget approval. (p. 23, GAO Draft Report)
(See p. 15, this report.)

DOD Position

DOD concurs in the recommendation.

The JCS-directed and JCS-coordinated five year schedules do not seriously affect overall transportation planning. However, more detailed programming based on historical performance and adjusted for factors likely to exist at the time of execution does account for transportation efficiencies and does produce more accurate budgets. The more detailed programming is included in the new reporting system described in the response to Finding D.

The basis for the new system is to provide best-case planning, which will involve the scheduling commands submitting lift requirements in terms of airframe type and hours for airlift and ship type and days for sealift, as opposed to the previous system of reporting in dollars only. The advantage of this method is that it will provide the Joint Staff and the TOAs with data that can be analyzed and assessed for its executability and supportability.

No matter how tightly the lift requirements and schedules are defined, there will always be changes because of real-world factors. However, the new system approach should reduce changes to the schedules and budget to the maximum extent feasible.

RECOMMENDATION 3. GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct JCS to take the lead in establishing a universal lessons learned system to account for, act on, and share exercise results throughout the Defense community. (p. 36, GAO Draft Report)
(See p. 24, this report.)

DOD Position

DOD concurs in the recommendation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff established the Remedial Action Projects (RAP Program in response to a similar GAO recommendation in 1979. RAPs are added to the program from two sources: Critique items from the semiannual JCS-sponsored command post exercises (CPXs) and lessons learned extracted from the JCS-directed exercise after action reports. On the average, each JCS-sponsored CPX generates about 500 critique items each of which about 100 are suitable RAPs. The remainder either do not require remedial action or joint coordination. All RAPs and all critique items are available to the entire defense community over the WWMCCS Intercomputer Network (WIN).

Lessons learned from other JCS-directed exercise after-action reports are reviewed by the RAP program manager. Suitable lessons learned are included in the RAP program and distributed to the defense community via the WIN. The remaining lessons learned are not normally made available on the WIN. The Joint Chiefs of Staff agree this is a potential area for improvement and will include the remaining significant lessons learned in a data base on the WIN beginning in March 1985.

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