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PLANNING FOR A NEW THREAT ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

Combatant commanders in chief (CINCs) of the U.S. regional and functional commands confront increasingly challenging security environments. Their service components, along with civilian agencies and foreign security establishments that interact with them, are dealing with higher levels of uncertainty than they experienced during the Cold War years. U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Dennis J. Reimer spoke of this directly when he recently advised: "Today's global security environment remains complex and full of unknowns. No longer are we confronted with 'a clear and present danger.' Instead, we find ourselves facing a wide spectrum of unpredictable dangers and threats."¹

The fundamental transformations of regional and global security environments to which General Reimer referred are placing new importance on the strategic concepts and responses developed by our U.S. CINCs. A formal, written strategy is critically important for setting the primary themes of unified action within a CINC's mission area. These strategy documents are essential command and control instruments as regional security environments continue to be transformed. This essay, however, identifies a system that is incompletely defined and structured, reflecting the premission of the U.S. joint doctrine community. As a consequence of this doctrinal omission — and resulting unevenness and inconsistency in the strategy development process overall — the essay argues for joint doctrine that better guides strategy development. This includes the increased review and coordination of final products, common tenets in strategy formulation, and standards for combatant command strategy products.

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The Regional and Functional CINCs

At the mid-point of the 1990s, U.S. combatant commanders include five regional CINCs with assigned areas of responsibility (AORs, as shown in figure 1), and four functional CINCs with broad support responsibilities. Functional commands (not delimited by regional areas of responsibility) have critical supporting roles. These include U.S. Space Command space assets and programs, U.S. Transportation Command intertheater transportation and air refueling support, U.S. Strategic Command nuclear planning and support, and U.S. Special Operations Command planning and programming. These specialized functional responsibilities may be applied worldwide in the pursuit of national military strategy and to support the geographic CINCs.

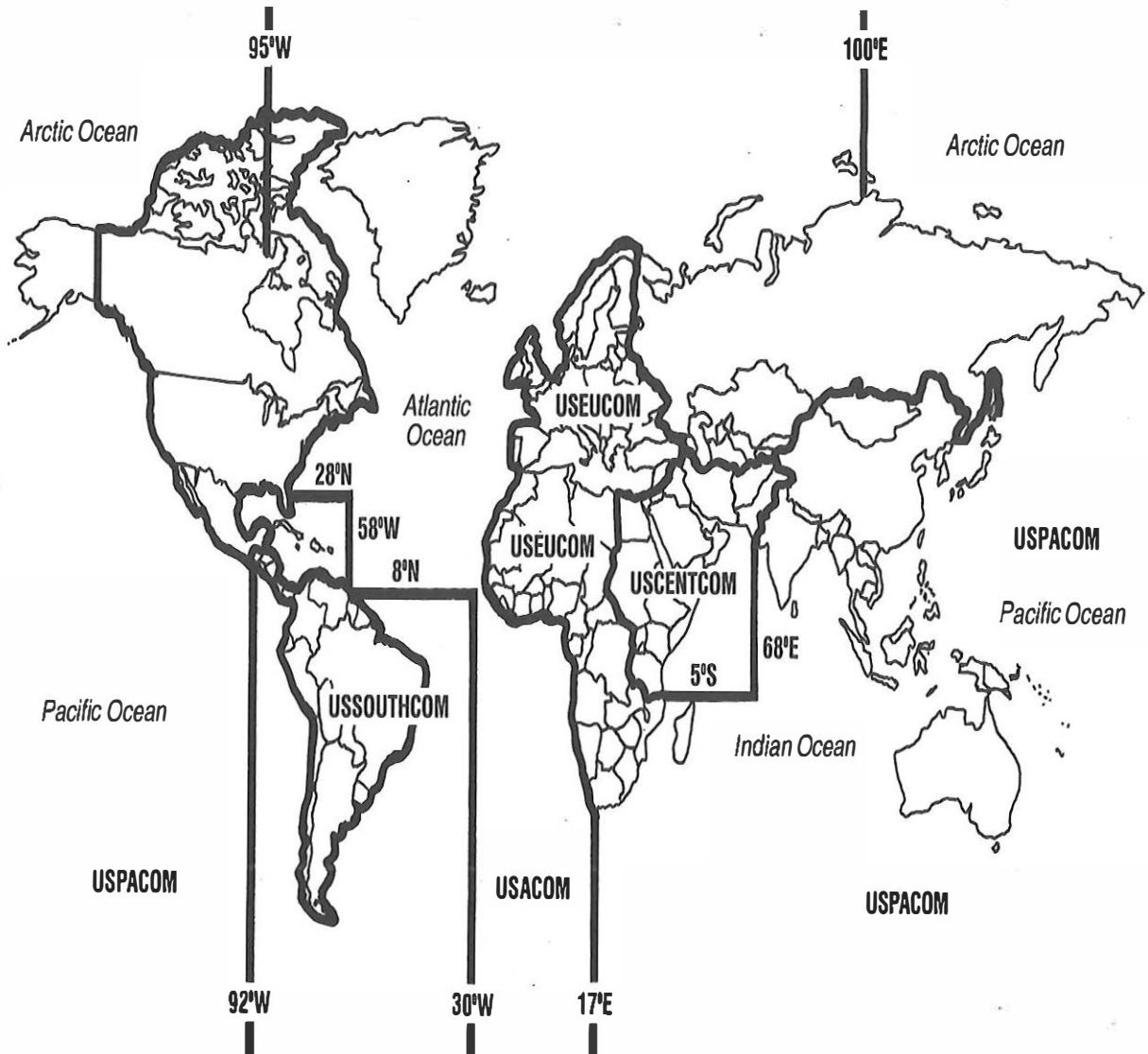


Figure 1. CINCs' Geographic Areas of Responsibility

Source: Unified Command Plan, December 1995

Each CINC's domain is unique, but each has the common challenge of maintaining a coherent strategy. While additional inquiry is needed to assess the adequacy of the strategy development process and its products, the following questions are considered here as a way to look at current approaches to strategy development and draw some conclusions about the CINCs' strategies:

- Where do the CINCs look for strategic guidance and threat assessment and what is the doctrinal guidance?
- Do all combatant commands have a current strategy?
- Have the CINCs' strategies addressed new threats and security concerns?
- What is the planning process?
- Who participates in writing a strategy and who approves it?
- Why are the CINCs' strategy documents important and what needs to be done to ensure their viability as coherent, useful documents?

Challenges to U.S. Interests

Strategy development for each CINC is based on a myriad of inputs and issues. These include national policy guidance, personalities of leaders, command relationships, the geography of a region, military resources, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), host nation support, security assistance, military-to-military contacts, and the conduct of peacetime combined exercises. Dominating the assessment process are two variables common to geographic and functional unified commands — the threat environment and the strategic guidance from senior echelons.

Understanding the dangers to U.S. interests within a CINC's domain is a central factor influencing the CINC's appreciation of his strategic situation. While a number of traditional security problems remain of great concern — e.g., the rise of regional hegemony and the threat of local interstate conflict — an array of less well-defined dangers have quickly assumed a new and sometimes prominent place in theater planning considerations. Among these latter challenges is the proliferation of nonstate security threats. Among others, these include widespread population dislocations; ethnic and religious conflict; epidemic health problems, famine, and serious environmental degradation; evolving terrorist organizations and agendas; international organized crime in its many dimensions, particularly the still-burgeoning drug trade; and black- and gray-market weapons trafficking. Strategists are challenged to address requirements across the spectrum of conflict. Typical tasks involve conducting major regional contingency operations, responding to internal threats to friendly regimes, supporting large-scale disaster relief and humanitarian assistance operations, and countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

For every CINC, the transitional nature of key states and the diversity of security challenges has created an environment where change, uncertainty and surprise are themselves substantial factors

in the development of strategies. That is, a number of long-standing friends and former enemies are in the process of fundamental transition, and traditional relationships and alliances are being critically examined for current relevance. Other factors include uneven economic change; trade and economic competition and tensions; the presence of ideological and power vacuums which foster general disorder, extreme nationalism and a potential turn to authoritarianism; high levels of political, criminal and random violence; and the unknown, long-term impact of burgeoning international organized crime and corruption on democratic institutions. Among other implications, these kinds of changes raise serious questions about the ways states and regions should be optimally grouped and considered from a military strategy and planning standpoint — questions that potentially affect the composition and orientation of combatant commands. To assist with this kaleidoscopic array of changing dangers and uncertainties, planners at all the combatant commands and their Army components now depend on a series of national-level documents that serve as the formative base for combatant strategies and plans.

The Formative Guidance

National policy documents establish basic conceptual guidance that assists the CINCs in developing assessments and strategies. This guidance comes to the CINC via the National Security Strategy (NSS), Department of Defense regional strategy reports, National Military Strategy (NMS), the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), and numerous other official documents to include Presidential Decision Directives (PDDs) and National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs). These documents provide general direction in the form of policy goals and concepts. In addition, specific Joint Chiefs of Staff strategic plans (e.g., nuclear weapons employment, counterterrorism, counterproliferation) provide more specific strategic guidance.

Departing from the NSS — which sets out broad U.S. security policy and goals — the National Military Strategy is central to the CINCs' strategic planning. By means of the NMS, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff advises the President and Secretary of Defense about the military strategy and forces needed to accomplish the security objectives of the President's National Security Strategy. The NMS provides initial guidance for the force structuring and resource development process, and it serves as a mid-range foundation for the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, a statement of "current strategy" based on military resources available in the near term (about two years). Thus, strategic planners use the National Military Strategy as an authoritative statement of objectives and broadly defined strategic concepts. Figure 2 suggests typical relationships of a CINC's strategy to national policy and strategy documents and processes.

Yet, some serious students of military strategy have observed that the NMS is overly generalized and lacks the specifics needed for strategic planning. They argue that there should be Joint Staff-produced strategic plans to implement the NMS. For example, the NMS broadly informs the reader about the concepts of overseas presence and peacetime engagement. "But there is nothing in the NMS that tells us how we should apply overseas presence to achieve the right type and amount of peacetime engagement, in the right places around the globe, to optimize the promotion of U.S. interests, given military capability (resource) limitations, for the period of time under consideration."² It is likely that the hows of implementing the NMS are better outlined in a CINC's strategy document

than in a series of Joint Chiefs of Staff strategic plans. Besides, some of the necessary specifics for implementing National Military Strategy are found in the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, a primary document for guidance affecting near-term operational missions and service functions.

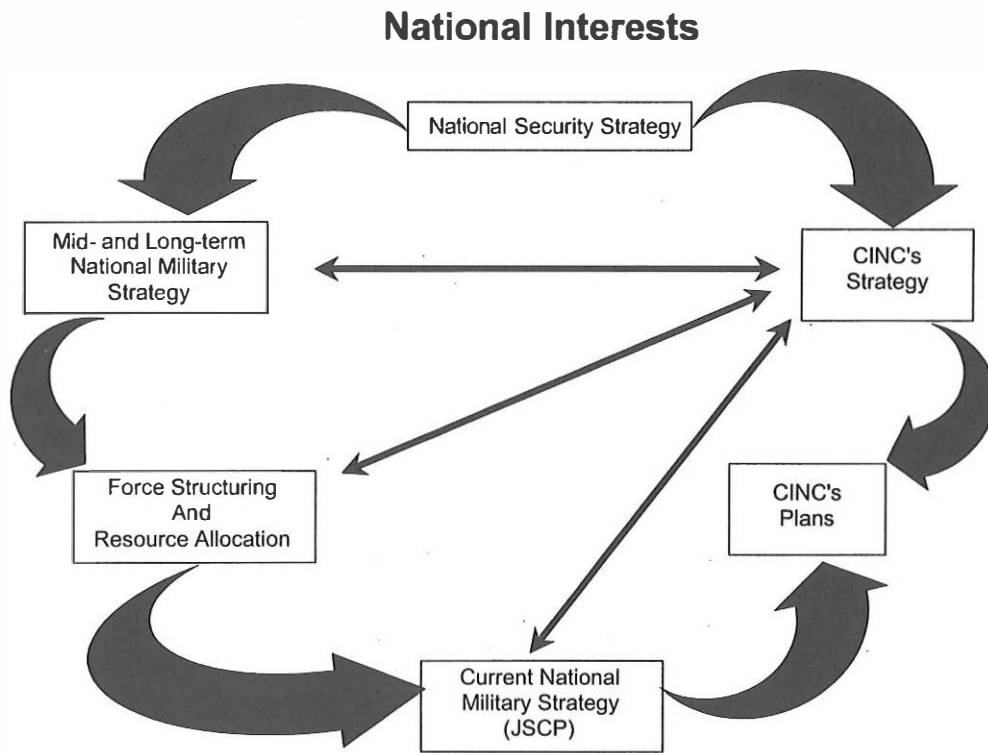


Figure 2. CINC's Strategy and National Strategic Direction
 Source: William W. Mendel, *Parameters*, December 1988

Other documents are important to strategic planners. Challenging policy and security problems may be addressed in a Presidential Decision Directive — typically prepared by the National Security Council and often classified in whole or part — to highlight and define a security threat or concern and direct that actions be taken to address or counter it. The issuance of a PDD is often followed by Department of Defense implementing guidance. The issues of drug trafficking in the late 1980s and WMD proliferation in the early 1990s are two cases in point, with both of these security problems subsequently included as important elements of strategy for those CINCs most affected.

In addition to security challenges recognized implicitly or explicitly in basic guidance documents, more comprehensive appraisals of regional and global threats are contained in national-level intelligence documents that are intended to play a central role in informing CINC planning and intelligence staffs. In this regard, National Intelligence Estimates and Special NIEs constitute the most authoritative, nationally-coordinated intelligence assessments, while appraisals of specific issues prepared by member-organizations of the intelligence community individually and jointly (in standing or ad hoc fusion centers or task forces such as the Central Intelligence Agency's Counterproliferation Center), as well as appraisals prepared by the CINCs' own intelligence staffs, are all available to

develop a threat picture for planning purposes. Other national-level documents such as the President's National Drug Control Strategy also contribute to strategy development by defining or prioritizing threats and establishing policy goals. The extent to which planning staffs systematically use the range of national-level guidance available—and particularly threat assessment resources—clearly varies from command to command.

The Doctrine for Strategy Development

Given the background of strategic guidance, where is the guidance for the process and content of a strategy document? For the moment, it is not available to the planner. Despite the evolution of a copious joint doctrine following the 1986 DoD Reorganization Act, there is little specific guidance in Joint Publications describing how to go about writing a CINC's strategy. For example, the manual *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Joint Pub 1) provides the chairman's guidelines to the joint forces. It addresses military values, analyzes fundamentals of joint warfighting, and concludes with a chapter on the joint campaign. Forgetting about the utility of the CINCs' strategies altogether, *Joint Warfare* advises only that "campaigns of the Armed Forces of the United States are joint . . . [and] . . . serve as the unifying focus for our conduct of warfare."³ Neither the National Military Strategy nor the CINCs' strategies play a role in the manual.

Of much greater impact is *Unified Action of the Armed Forces* (Joint Pub 0-2). It is the bible of the unified forces, providing doctrine for directing joint forces, establishing joint commands, and describing command authority and relationships. This is the publication that provides the general functions of a combatant commander. Though it identifies a CINC's responsibilities as "giving authoritative direction to subordinate commands," it does not address his strategy.⁴

Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3-0) discusses the CINCs' strategic environment, principles and planning guidelines for joint operations, and considerations for multinational operations. It allows that "combatant commanders develop strategies consistent with national policy and plans," but fails to expand on strategy development.⁵ *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations* (Joint Pub 5) acknowledges the CINCs' strategies by advising only that the combatant commanders plan at the strategic level of war, relating their strategy to "both U.S. national strategy and operational activities within the theater."⁶ That is about the extent of formal doctrinal guidance for developing the CINCs' strategies.

Fortunately, the service colleges have been a vehicle for expanding the body of professional knowledge about military strategy, which in effect has provided informal guidelines. Through the study of military history, contributions to doctrinal publication, writings in journals and practice in exercises, the faculties of these institutions have prepared officers for service with the CINCs. An important contribution to understanding the process of developing military strategy has been the teachings of Colonel Art Lykke at the Army War College. In his review of the military theorists from Clausewitz to Maxwell D. Taylor, he traced the continuing relationships among military strategy, planning and operations, and settled upon this definitive formula for a strategy:

Strategy equals Ends (objectives towards which one strives) plus Ways (courses of action) plus Means (instruments by which some end can be achieved).⁷

Constructs involving anything less are simply wishful thinking, he would add — and this is seen to be true in the authors' research with the combatant commands. The strategist is enjoined to fully account for what is to be done, how he plans to do it, and what resources it will take to get the job done. By these guidelines, any viable strategy requires the strategy document to include strategic objectives, military strategic concepts and military resources. The extent of imbalance among these three elements of strategy suggests the degree of risk inherent in the strategy. This simple model for developing a military strategy is acknowledged by service and joint planners as a useful construct for writing a strategy. The devil is in successfully linking all three elements.

Assessing Strategic Planning

As suggested above, most combatant commands have some form of strategy, but not all have coherent documents that staffs, service components, the larger military community and other agencies can use as a resource for planning and coordination. Too, established strategic planning processes can lapse into periods of intermission, until interest is renewed. Further discussion of these issues and the earlier enumerated questions is instructive in assessing strategic planning.

Strategies are not always up-to-date. The current and approved "strategy" is often the last edition of the Command Briefing, or it is published as part of the CINC's annual series of reports to Congress — in the Posture Statements. A strategy may be seen as the sum of statements to Congress, Command Briefings, speeches and published articles. But these sources are far from an integrated product, and in any event are not always readily available to staff and component planners, or to interagency actors. When captured by the in-box of the "real world," strategic planning is easily set aside. The result is that the CINCs' strategies are found in varying states of currency or relevance to the strategic environment.

Nevertheless, the CINCs' written strategy documents are important enough to merit more attention. Each CINC draws upon his own regional assessment in formulating a strategy to fit his domain. The interactive, supporting-supported relationships that exist among the CINCs also demonstrate the importance of having up-to-date strategy documents as sources for coordination and integration of unified effort. A CINC's strategy can set broad conceptual guidance for smaller conflicts, as well as direction for security assistance, support for treaties and agreements, the development of good relations with nonaligned nations, and expanding U.S. influence throughout the theater. These actions suggest a collateral or bonus function that can be leveraged from such a strategy.

Even though the CINCs' strategies lack any directive authority over affairs of state and commerce, the geographic CINCs' strategy documents have the catalytic potential for linking all the elements of national power (political, economic, informational and military) into a coordinated whole to achieve national policy objectives in a region. For example, the drug interdiction parts of U.S. Southern Command regional strategy provide the integrating objectives, concepts and resources for

U.S. and combined initiatives. U.S. Special Operations Command contributes leadership to the issue of defense against WMD use by nonstate actors. Both commands could provide coordinating centers to integrate U.S. interagency activities and provide the command and control support during a crisis.

Coherent strategies provide sound reasons for asking Congress to fund the types and amounts of military resources needed to execute concepts with a reasonable assurance of success. Support for expensive resources such as carrier battle groups and ground divisions could be more forthcoming if these resources were integral factors in a CINC's written strategy calculation. Well-stated justifications within a compelling strategy document can win support within forums such as the Joint Requirements Oversight Council and the Defense Planning Resources Board, which meet to review conflicting positions on program budget decisions alongside the CINCs' requests.

The planning processes for developing and maintaining the CINCs' strategies are all different. As often as not, the process is one of developing the CINCs' annual (late winter) statements to Congress, then using this testimony as a basis for updating the Command Briefing. In a practical sense, the Command Briefing becomes "the CINC's Strategy" for some combatant commands.

In some commands specific strategy processes are firmly embedded in the planning routines of commanders and staff. Examples of this are found in the combined affect of U.S. European Command's Strategy of Engagement and Preparedness and its *Theater Security Planning System* (Directive Number 56-10). In addition, U.S. Pacific Command's Command Strategy is directed by USCINCPAC Instruction 3050.6, a long-standing strategy framework. A summary of selected strategies is shown in figure 3.

Still, there is no standing joint procedure for developing and maintaining a combatant command strategy document. Now that U.S. military strategy has moved from global warfighting to regional scenarios, the Defense Secretary's series of Regional Strategy Reports may prove fortuitous in lending some structure to the strategy process — especially in guiding the major regional themes used by geographic CINCs.

The CINCs' strategies recognize the full range of security challenges to U.S. interests. Thrust into the new strategic environment which defines the post-Cold War era, the CINCs' strategies acknowledge the challenges presented by military operations in ill-defined situations such as UN Operations for Somalia (UNOSOM II, 1993), the Rwanda humanitarian crisis operation (Support Hope, 1994), and the invasion of Haiti (Operation Restore Democracy, 1994). While a number of traditional security problems remain of great concern — e.g., the rise of regional hegemons and a requirement to conduct major regional contingency operations — less well-defined dangers have assumed new and sometimes prominent places in theater planning considerations. These nontraditional dangers to U.S. interests are noted in the National Military Strategy, but the NMS stresses the central themes of fighting to win with clear objectives and decisive force.

THE CINCs' STRATEGIES			
COMMAND	STRATEGY	AREA	PROCESS
Atlantic Command	Strategic Plan ¹	Atlantic Focus	Staff Coordination
Central Command	Posture Statement	Gulf Focus	Directive, Conference
European Command	"Engagement & Preparedness"	4 Theaters of Operations	EC Directive 56-10 "TSPS"
Pacific Command	"Cooperative Engagement"	6 Theaters of Operations	PC Instruction 3050.6 ¹
Southern Command	Engagement, Cooperative Security ¹	3 Sub-Regions	¹
Special Operations Command	"Total Quality Leadership" SOF Support ²	Global & Regional	SOCOM Strategic Pin Process
Strategic Command	"Hedging" "Living SIOP"	Global Support	SWPS

Note: 1. New strategy/process/formats under development. 2. SOF functional areas of maintenance and operations, and procurement programs for equipment, systems, facilities; GOP: Guidelines for Operational Planning; MSC: Major Subordinate Command; SIOP: Single Integrated Operational Plan; SWPS: Strategic War Planning System; TSPS: Theater Security Planning System.

Figure 3. Summary of Strategies

Source: *The CINCs' Strategies* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Foreign Military Studies Office, January 1996)

Responding to what is a conceptual dilemma, combatant command strategies have placed strong emphasis on both conventional warfighting and peacetime engagement activities such as counterdrug and counterterrorism support operations, peace operations, nation assistance and disaster relief. The problematic issues of WMD nonproliferation and counterproliferation have gained new prominence as these issues have become central U.S. security policy considerations.

The most difficult problem for strategic planners is effectively linking the ends, ways and means of a strategy. Commands that routinely involve staff directorates and service components in the

strategy planning process seem to be more successful in linking ends and ways to means than those which confine strategy development to a few strategic planners or to the Command Group.

Several of the unified commands have developed management tools for maintaining an effective linkage of ends-ways-means. USEUCOM has a resource allocation methodology that is integral to its Theater Security Planning System. USPACOM uses a system of spreadsheets called the Cooperative Engagement Matrix. This allows the CINC to review the resource allocation for each country activity in his AOR. USSOCOM has a Strategic Planning Process for programming SOF-unique equipment, systems and facilities. In some cases, command resource allocation is based on historical data (the usual expenditures). The positive linkage of resources to strategic priorities, phasing, objectives and concepts is not always evident — but to do less is wishful strategic thinking.

Participants in the process for designing a strategy document vary widely among the combatant commands — and it is not a safe assumption that the CINC is personally and routinely involved. As a generalization, two patterns of staff behavior are evident. In some cases the strategy document is developed much as if it were an operation plan guided by the deliberate planning process. Here, command assessments, planning directives, staff meetings and planning conferences are techniques which apply.

In other cases, the strategy is developed by the CINC with the help of a few trusted agents, who then coordinate the nearly final product with staff and service components. Thus the strategy is at times a significant consensus-building document for promulgating vision and intent, but it can also be little more than a proclamation of current policy.

Conclusions

The CINC's strategy document is not part of the Unified Command Plan nor the Joint Strategic Planning System, and it is not required by the *Unified Action Armed Forces*, the CINCs' doctrinal guideline for combatant command. There is no requirement to write a strategy document and no required place to submit it. There is no established timetable to routinely update it. Nevertheless, there are the following compelling reasons why every CINC should develop a strategy document to carry overarching command themes:

- A strategy provides the CINC's vision and guidance for a host of activities that protect U.S. interests within geographic or functional areas of responsibility. As a statement of ends, ways and means, such a strategy is broad and all-encompassing — it ties things together.
- A strategy document is needed to integrate the many U.S. and multilateral regional activities involved. CINC's must account for U.S. policy and interests, alliances, economic and political issues, WMD, new technologies and information warfare. Commands with functional responsibilities (e.g., SOCOM, STRATCOM and TRANSCOM) must plan globally while supporting the regional CINCs.
- A strategy document facilitates the U.S. interagency cooperation and support that a CINC often will need for mission success. Subordinates cannot deal effectively in the interagency and

combined arenas until they have a good understanding of the CINC's vision and intent. That the CINC's strategic wisdom might be found in his latest speech to Congress is not sufficient; planners need an authoritative document from which to draw the CINC's guidance in up-to-date and specific terms.

- The CINCs strategies are critically necessary as a basis for cooperation among the combatant commands and with the service components. For instance, the doctrinal imperatives of "supporting to supported" relationships suggest that CINCTRANS would benefit from ready access to the CINCCENT and CINCPAC strategies. The emerging transnational dangers and nontraditional threats tend to defy classical notions of territorial boundaries. Insurgencies, migrations, illicit drug trafficking, natural disasters and terrorism insolently cross national frontiers (and the CINCs' AORs) without regard for international protocols. To effectively counter threats of this type, the CINCs must understand one another's strategic concepts to find ways for integrating joint effort among combatant commands.
- A complete set of the CINCs' strategies would contribute to the Joint Staff and service staffs as a way of accessing the current strategic concepts of the combatant commanders. This would contribute toward a Pentagon-level understanding of the CINCs' intent, and it would aid the service staffs in supporting the CINCs.

Overall, there is little consensus about what constitutes a CINC's strategy. But adequate guidelines can be developed—ideally using the "ends, ways and means" formulation inherent in every well-founded military strategy. The tenets for a CINC's strategy suggested in figure 4 could contribute to doctrine concerning the strategy development process.

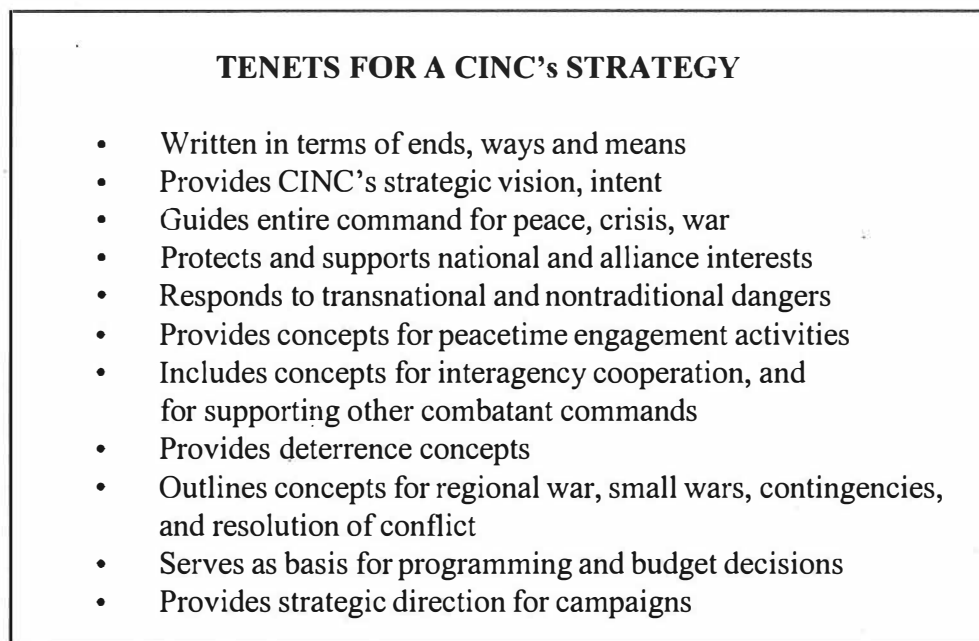


Figure 4. Tenets for a CINC's Strategy

Source: *The CINCs' Strategies* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Foreign Military Studies Office, January 1996)

Especially now in this uncertain, post-Cold War era, it seems appropriate that the Unified Command plan require the CINCs to provide a strategy for their assigned geographic and functional areas. Doctrinal aspects should be addressed in a revised *Unified Action Armed Forces* (Joint Pub 0-2). Guidance should suggest that the CINC's strategy document be produced (updated) on a routine basis — perhaps every other year. And routinely, the CINCs' strategies should be proffered to the National Command Authorities for review. As the strategic planning community moves away from global planning to various regional scenarios, a CINC's strategy ought to enjoy the scrutiny and blessing of the national leadership.

Finally, this essay argues most strongly for joint doctrine and procedures to guide the development of a CINC's strategy document. Until such guidelines are institutionalized, the strategy process of the military planning community will remain a source of debate and confusion. Just as private soldiers are held accountable for rifle marksmanship, senior strategists should be held to a standard for current and coherent strategies affecting their combatant commands.

ENDNOTES

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4. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, Joint Pub 0-2 (Washington, D.C.: 24 February 1995), p. II-14.
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7. Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired, *Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy, Military Strategy: Theory and Application* (Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1993), p. 3.

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