

July 1998

JOINT TRAINING

Observations on the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Exercise Program



**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-280041

July 10, 1998

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Herbert H. Bateman
Chairman
The Honorable Solomon P. Ortiz
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Military Readiness
Committee on National Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Norman Sisisky
House of Representatives

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Exercise Program is the Department of Defense's (DOD) primary vehicle to train its forces and staff in joint operations. Recently, the Secretary of Defense and Congress expressed concerns about the impact of this program on the high rate of U.S. force deployments. At your request, we reviewed the CJCS Exercise Program. Specifically, we determined the (1) number and type of CJCS exercises conducted and planned from 1995 to 2002, (2) basis for DOD's estimates of exercise costs for the same time period, and (3) availability of DOD data to estimate the impact of CJCS exercises on deployment rates.

Background

U.S. national military strategy requires air, land, sea, and special operations forces to be capable of working together as a joint force in military operations. At the direction of the Chairman, the CJCS Exercise Program began in the early 1960s to provide joint training opportunities. According to CJCS policy,¹ the exercise program's primary objective is to achieve joint preparedness. Specifically, joint exercises are to be designed to demonstrate that forces are proficient in wartime and other tasks considered essential by the regional commanders in chief (CINC). CJCS guidance allows the program to satisfy other national security objectives, including overseas presence, coalition building, and support of U.S. allies.²

¹CJCS Instruction 3500.01A, Joint Training Policy for the Armed Forces of the United States, July 1, 1997.

²CJCS Manual 3500.03, Joint Training Manual for the Armed Forces of the United States, June 1, 1996.

However, the guidance requires the CINCS to ensure that the program accomplishes training essential to war-fighting missions first. The guidance also allows the CINCS to train for lesser contingencies, such as peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, while emphasizing training for major contingencies.

The Joint Staff's Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate monitors and coordinates training activities under the CJCS Exercise Program. However, the program is actually implemented by the CINCS, who determine requirements, develop joint training plans, and conduct and evaluate CJCS exercises for their respective areas of responsibility. The military services provide forces to the CINCS and use service operation and maintenance funds to absorb the costs stemming from the forces' participation in the exercises. The Joint Staff allocates funds to cover transportation-related costs among the CINCS. Congress makes an annual appropriation for these transportation-related costs in the DOD-wide operations and maintenance account.³

The Joint Staff and CINCS coordinate some CJCS exercises with the Department of State and the National Security Council, including those that (1) involve large-scale participation of U.S. and foreign forces, (2) require granting rights or approval by another nation, (3) have particular political significance or are planned to occur in politically sensitive areas, or (4) are likely to receive prominent media attention. The State Department's role in the exercise program is primarily to review exercise plans and consult with the Joint Staff and CINCS about the implications of exercises to be held in politically sensitive regions.

CJCS exercises may be simulated, live, or a combination of the two and can range from classroom seminars on a specific topic to the deployment of thousands of forces to train for military operations. Examples of these exercises include

- sending four senior military officials to a 3-day war game seminar to study the interrelationships during peacekeeping operations among the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations, international and nongovernmental organizations, and the media;
- deploying about 1,350 land forces to a foreign country to conduct combined force tactical military operations, such as infantry tasks, reconnaissance, and combat medical operations;

³Congress appropriated almost \$364 million for these costs in fiscal year 1998.

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- involving about 20,000 air, land, sea, and special operations forces in a training exercise to perform joint tasks, such as maneuvering to position, identifying targets, and providing combat support; and
 - sending 300 Marine Corps and Air Force personnel overseas to construct a vehicle maintenance facility and renovate a community center and medical clinic.

Over the past few years, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, CINCS, and military service commanders have expressed concerns to Congress about the high level of personnel deployments by a downsized force. DOD and Congress then considered the possibility that CJCS exercises were impacting the high DOD-wide deployment rate. On the basis of this and other concerns, the Secretary of Defense directed in May 1997 that the number of CJCS exercise man-days be decreased by 15 percent between fiscal year 1996 and 1998 to reduce the potential impact of the exercise program on deployment rates.⁴ Also, Congress, in its conference report for DOD fiscal year 1998 appropriations, called for a reduction in funding for the CJCS Exercise Program—including both DOD-wide and service incremental funds—of about \$118.5 million.

In addition, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998 (P.L. 105-85) directed DOD to report on CJCS exercises conducted from fiscal year 1995 to 1997 and those planned for fiscal years 1998 to 2000. This one-time congressional reporting requirement was to include (1) the percentage of mission-essential tasks performed or scheduled, (2) exercise costs, (3) exercise priority, (4) an assessment of the training value of each exercise, and (5) options to minimize the effect of CJCS exercises on deployments. The Secretary of Defense submitted the required report to Congress on February 16, 1998.

Results in Brief

DOD cannot determine the impact of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program on overall deployment rates because DOD does not have a system that accurately and consistently measures overall deployment rates across the services. Without such a system, DOD cannot objectively assess the extent to which the Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff Exercise Program contributes to deployment rate concerns.

From fiscal year 1995 to 2002, 1,405 exercises were or are planned to be conducted as part of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program at the 5 regional commands. The objectives of these exercises are to

⁴Man-days is DOD's term for the number of personnel participating in CJCS exercises.

(1) ensure that U.S. forces are trained to conduct their highest priority mission contained in regional command contingency plans; (2) provide joint training for commanders, staff, and forces; and (3) project a military presence worldwide and support commitments to U.S. allies. Some exercises focus on just one of these objectives, whereas others, such as war-fighting training, focus on more than one objective (i.e., contingency plans and joint training). About 37 percent of the exercises during fiscal years 1995 through 2002 are directly related to executing contingency plans, 60 percent are intended to provide joint training benefits, and about 44 percent are primarily directed toward engagement activities with foreign nations' military forces and U.S. allies.

The Joint Staff maintains data on transportation-related expenses but does not monitor and track the complete costs of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program. Before the fiscal year 1998 National Defense Authorization Act, DOD was not required to determine total program costs. In DOD's February 1998 mandated report to Congress, the Joint Staff used a combination of actual and estimated costs to estimate that the total program would cost between \$400 million and \$500 million annually from fiscal year 1995 to 2000. This estimate could be understated because the Joint Staff did not include some incremental operating costs, such as those for pre-participation and recovery time, and other operating costs that the services would normally incur in their operations, including flying hours, steaming days, and tank miles.

DOD does not currently maintain the data that would enable it to determine the extent to which military personnel deployments associated with the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program contribute to overall DOD-wide personnel or unit deployment rates. The services use various methods to track individual or unit deployments and collect some data on the number of personnel or units that participate in the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff exercises and the length of personnel deployments associated with the exercises. However, the services' ability to measure overall personnel or unit deployment rates is still evolving; as a result, the impact of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program on deployment rates remains unknown.

Exercises Are Conducted for Various CINC Mission Requirements

The regional CINCS use the CJCS Exercise Program largely to ensure that their forces are trained to conduct missions contained in contingency plans, provide joint training, and project a military presence worldwide to shape the international environment. Some exercises focus on just one of these objectives, whereas others, such as war-fighting training, focus on more than one objective (i.e., contingency plans and joint training). CINC exercise officials stated that deliberate decisions are made to determine the number of exercises and their objectives necessary to meet the commands' regional security needs.

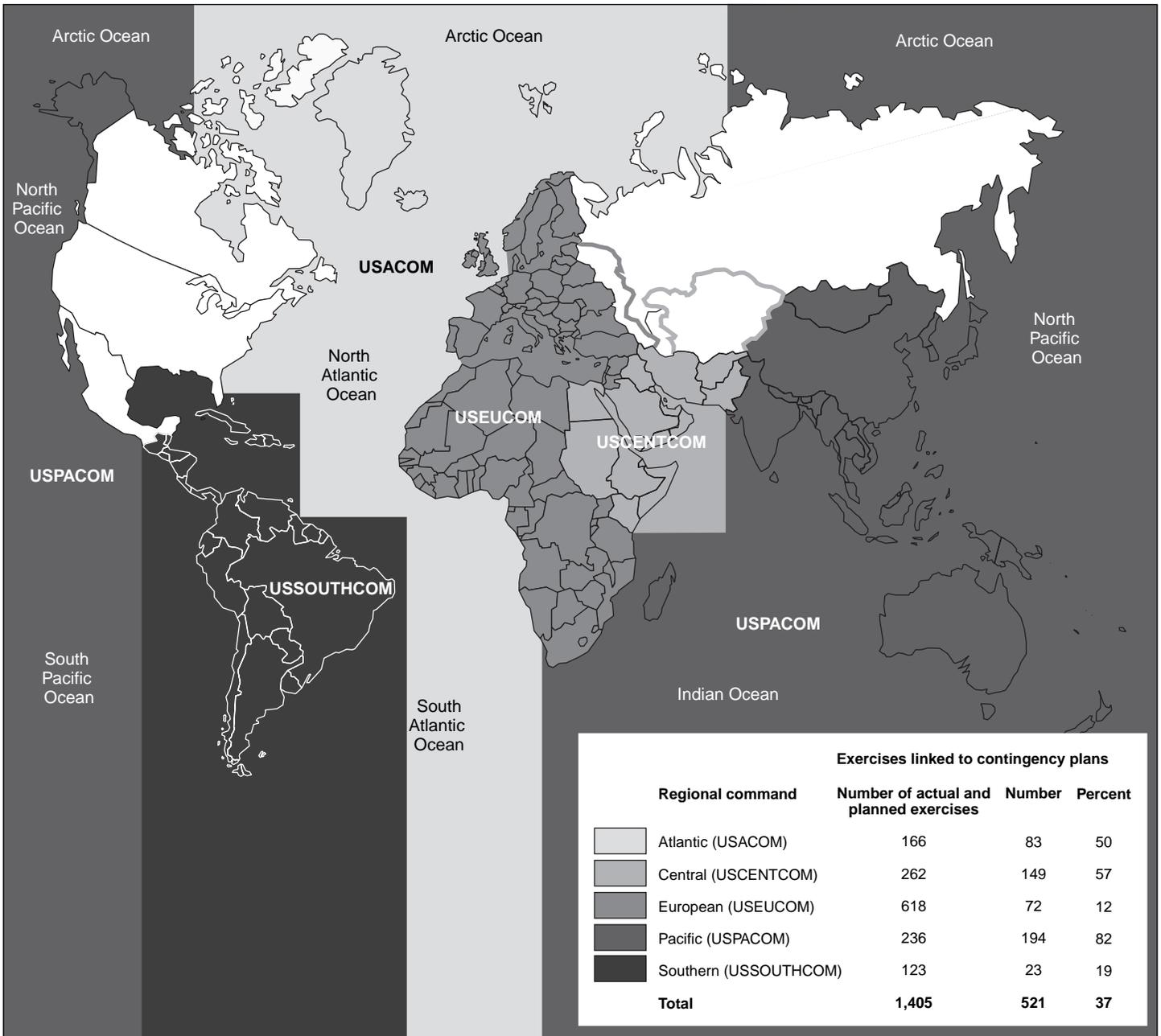
Our analysis showed that the five regional CINCS conducted or plan to conduct 1,405 CJCS exercises during the period from fiscal year 1995 to 2002. On average, about 37 percent of these exercises have or will train forces to implement the CINCS' existing contingency plans; about 60 percent are designed to prepare U.S. forces for joint operations; and approximately 44 percent are designed primarily for engagement purposes, such as projecting U.S. military presence abroad or fostering relations with foreign military forces.⁵

Exercises Directed to Execute Contingency Plans

CINCS develop contingency plans that cover a wide variety of wartime and peacetime operations, such as major theater wars and evacuations. The joint training system focuses on war-fighting or preparing forces to perform the missions contained in these plans. Joint Staff guidance requires that training should emphasize war-fighting missions and focus on major regional contingencies before other less critical training is done. Of the 1,405 CJCS exercises conducted or planned for fiscal years 1995-2002, 521, or about 37 percent, were directly tied to contingency plans. Figure 1 shows the number and percent of exercises that are linked to contingency plans at each command. It also shows the current geographical areas of responsibility for the five commands.

⁵Since an exercise can satisfy multiple objectives, some exercises are counted in more than one category.

Figure 1: Exercises Designed to Provide Training Related to Contingency Plans, Fiscal Years 1995-2002



(Figure notes on next page)

Note: The number of exercises in this figure overlaps with the number of exercises in tables 1 and 2 to the extent that the exercises have more than one objective. By order of the Secretary of Defense, on October 1, 1998, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Black Sea, and the Sea of Azov will be added to USEUCOM's area of responsibility and on October 1, 1999, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan will be added to USCENTCOM's area of responsibility.

Source: Our analysis of DOD's data.

Exercises Directed to Joint Training

The CJCS Exercise Program also provides the CINCS with opportunities to train forces in a joint setting. Such training requires the application of joint doctrine, which contains the fundamental principles that guide the employment of forces of two or more services. Also, joint exercises are either to respond to requirements established by a joint force commander or train joint forces or staffs for missions. Thus, joint training under the CJCS Exercise Program is primarily designed to train forces, commanders, or staff of two or more services using joint doctrine, tactics, techniques, or procedures to employ forces.

The percentage of exercises intended to provide joint training at the regional CINCS has increased over the past 3 to 4 years. In 1995, we reported that about 25 percent of CJCS exercises in fiscal years 1994-95 were designed to provide joint training.⁶ Our current evaluation of 1,405 exercises conducted during fiscal years 1995-97 and planned to be conducted during fiscal years 1998-2002 shows that 836, or about 60 percent, were or are intended to provide U.S. forces with joint training experience. The percentage varied among the five regional commands, ranging from 39 percent in the U.S. Central Command to 76 percent in the U.S. Pacific Command. Table 1 shows the exercises directed toward joint training.

⁶Military Capabilities: Stronger Joint Staff Role Needed to Enhance Joint Military Training (GAO/NSIAD-95-109, July 6, 1995).

Table 1: Total Number of Exercises Directed Toward Joint Training, Fiscal Years 1995-2002

Regional command	Number of actual and planned exercises	Exercises linked to joint training	
		Number	Percent
Atlantic	166	90	54
Central	262	103	39
European	618	379	61
Pacific	236	180	76
Southern	123	84	68
Total	1,405	836	60

Note: The number of exercises in this table overlaps with the number of exercises in figure 1 and table 2 to the extent that the exercises have more than one objective.

Source: Our analysis of DOD's data.

In its February 1998 mandated report to Congress, DOD reported that 66 percent of CJCS exercises were for joint training purposes. Differences between DOD's and our figures can be attributed to methodological differences in the evaluations. For example, DOD used planned exercises for the period 1995-2000, and we used a combination of actual exercises for 1995-97 and planned exercises for 1998-2002. Further, we considered only those exercises that involved the participation of more than one service component as joint; however, DOD officials included certain exercises that did not involve more than one service if they believed that the content of the exercises had some joint training value.

Exercises Directed to Engagement Activities

The CJCS Exercise Program is also used by regional CINCS to meet other responsibilities that are not directly focused on executing contingency plans or providing joint training. For example, the CINCS may conduct exercises or engagement activities to demonstrate U.S. forces' ability to project military presence within their geographic areas of responsibility. According to military officials, gaining access to critical facilities, maintaining presence, peacekeeping, providing humanitarian relief, and fostering relations with foreign nations' forces are engagement activities that are essential to accomplishing the CINCS' assigned missions.

Of the 1,405 CJCS exercises conducted or planned to be conducted during fiscal years 1995-2002, 625, or about 44 percent, were directed toward engagement activities. Some regional CINCS conduct more engagement-related exercises than others. For example, in the U.S.

Southern Command, 81 percent of all actual or planned CJCS exercises are for engagement purposes compared with 24 percent in the U.S. Pacific Command. Table 2 illustrates the number of CJCS exercises that each CINC devoted to engagement-type activities.

Table 2: CJCS Exercises Directed Toward Engagement, Fiscal Years 1995-2002

Regional command	Number of actual and planned exercises	Linked to engagement	
		Number	Percent
Atlantic	166	76	46
Central	262	87	33
European	618	306	50
Pacific	236	56	24
Southern	123	100	81
Total	1,405	625	44

Note: The number of exercises in this table overlaps with the number of exercises in figure 1 and table 1 to the extent that the exercises have more than one objective.

Source: Our analysis of DOD's data.

Total CJCS Exercise Program Costs Cannot Be Determined

The Joint Staff does not track total costs involved in conducting CJCS exercises; it only compiles actual cost data for strategic lift, port handling, and inland transportation—items covered by a specific congressional appropriation. The Joint Staff, CINC staff, and military services do not have systems to capture all exercise-related costs. Historically, there has been no requirement that total CJCS Exercise Program costs be tracked or reported. However, the Joint Staff estimated that the CJCS Exercise Program would cost about \$400 million to \$500 million annually during fiscal years 1995-2000. The Joint Staff's estimate was derived from a combination of actual and estimated costs; therefore, we were unable to independently verify the estimate. However, we believe that the costs reported by the Joint Staff may be understated, since certain incremental costs and other related operating costs were not included in its estimate.

Costs Associated With CJCS Exercises

A variety of costs are directly associated with conducting CJCS exercises. These costs, shown in table 3, include strategic lift, port handling, inland transportation, exercise-related construction, and service incremental. The costs are funded by the DOD-wide and service operation and maintenance

accounts except for exercise-related construction, which is funded by the military construction accounts.

Table 3: Incremental Costs to Conduct CJCS Exercises

Cost category	Paying agency	Payee agency	Costs paid
Strategic lift	Joint Staff, Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate	Air Mobility Command and Military Sealift Command	Movement of unit personnel and equipment to and from CJCS exercises.
Port handling	Joint Staff, Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate	Services	Commercial expenses to receive and dispatch cargo at ports of embarkation and debarkation.
Inland transportation	Joint Staff, Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate	Services	Surface transportation of exercise participants and equipment to and from an exercise area or ports of embarkation or debarkation. Payment made for services of commercial-for-hire firms when organic transportation is not available or cost-effective.
Exercise-related construction	Joint Staff, Logistics Directorate	Services	Construction costs paid from military construction accounts related to service participation in CJCS exercises and for facilities expected to remain in place after an exercise is completed.
Service incremental	Services	Units participating in CJCS exercises	Expenses for exercise peculiar equipment, petroleum, oil, lubricants, repair parts, expendable supplies, and contract support.

Tracking CJCS Exercise Costs

Although the Joint Staff is responsible for program oversight, it only tracks a portion of the total exercise program costs. The Joint Staff tracks actual cost data for expenditures related to strategic lift, port handling, and inland transportation expenses and reimburses the U.S. Air Mobility Command, the Military Sealift Command, and service components for these costs. It also maintains data on the amount of funding appropriated for exercise-related military construction projects. The costs reported by the Joint Staff for these categories for fiscal years 1995 through 1997 are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Strategic Lift, Port Handling, Inland Transportation, and Exercise-Related Construction Costs, Fiscal Years 1995-97

Cost category ^a	Fiscal year		
	1995	1996	1997
Strategic lift, port handling, and inland transportation	\$324.3	\$388.5	\$325.2
Exercise-related construction	6.3	6.5	6.3
Total	\$330.6	\$395.0	\$331.5

^aThese figures represent actual expenditures in constant dollars from the DOD-wide operations and maintenance accounts for strategic lift, port handling, and inland transportation and appropriations from the military construction accounts for exercise-related construction.

Source: Joint Staff, Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate and Logistics Directorate.

The Joint Staff estimated that the incremental cost to conduct the CJCS Exercise Program annually between fiscal year 1995 and 2000 would be between \$400 million and \$500 million. This cost included actual and projected expenses related to strategic lift, port handling, and inland transportation, as shown in table 4. The remainder of the cost estimate is based on an estimate of exercise-related construction costs and service incremental operations and maintenance costs. The estimate does not include the items funded in the military service accounts, such as flying hours, steaming days, or tank miles.

The CINCS do not compile, track, or report on total CJCS exercise costs, although they have access to information on and track to some degree strategic lift, port handling, inland transportation, and exercise-related construction costs. CINC officials told us that maintaining total cost information would be of no value to them because they are not responsible for paying these costs. The Joint Staff does allocate each CINC an annual strategic lift funding level, which is not to be exceeded, to manage CJCS exercises. Consequently, CINC officials said total cost information would have little bearing on their management responsibilities.

Because individual military services provide forces for CJCS exercises, they incur and pay for the incremental operations and maintenance costs associated with the forces' participation. These costs, which include consumable supplies, repair parts, and non-aviation fuel, are tracked differently by each service. Depending on the service, costs incurred by units that are preparing to participate in an exercise, equipment maintenance and repair expenses, and costs associated with recovering

from participation in the exercises may or may not be tracked. To assist the Joint Staff in developing the exercise program costs for the February 1998 report, the services provided estimated cost data related to such items as consumable supplies, repair parts, per diem, non-aviation fuel, and communications.

No commonly accepted process among the service component commands exists to capture CJCS exercise costs; therefore, the services' cost estimates will vary according to what costs they choose to include. The Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps maintained some cost data on the incremental operations and maintenance costs associated with their participation in CJCS exercises. In fiscal year 1997, for example, these services reported costs of about \$54 million, \$11 million, and \$12 million, respectively. They developed these estimates using various systems and records of funding targets to help the Joint Staff meet its congressional reporting requirement. Navy components do not track operations and maintenance funds for flying hours and steaming days used during CJCS exercises, and Air Force components do not track flying hours used for the exercises. In providing information to the Joint Staff to satisfy DOD's reporting requirement, the Navy and the Air Force estimated incremental operations and maintenance costs, excluding flying hours and steaming days.

Service component officials cited two reasons for not accumulating cost data at the level necessary to accurately determine total operations and maintenance costs associated with participation in CJCS exercises. First, such data would not enhance their management capabilities. Second, there was no DOD-wide requirement for them to track and report these costs. The officials said that any measure of the actual operations and maintenance costs consumed by CJCS Exercise Program participation would require individual unit commanders in the field (e.g., tank operators, pilots, mechanics, or explosive ordnance specialists) to maintain such cost data and report it through financial management channels. Service officials did not believe that accumulating such data would be cost beneficial.

DOD Lacks the Data to Assess the Program's Impact on Service Deployment Rates

The services use various methods to track the time individuals or units spend engaged in operations and time deployed away from their home stations because there is no DOD-wide requirement to collect and maintain specific personnel deployment rate data. Service officials stated that they maintain some personnel or unit deployment rate data to track their forces' participation in the exercise program. However, the services do not regularly track the impact of participation in CJCS exercises on overall

deployment rates. As a result, officials from the Joint Staff, CINCS, service headquarters, and service components at the five regional commands could not provide complete information on the total number of days consumed by all deployments, including those associated with CJCS exercises. Without this data, the program's impact on personnel deployment rates cannot be precisely determined.

The Joint Staff Has Difficulty Measuring Deployment Rates

The Joint Staff has generally had difficulty measuring personnel deployments among the military services. We reported in April 1996 that it is difficult to determine the actual time that either military personnel or units are deployed.⁷ Our report recommended that the Secretary of Defense (1) establish a DOD-wide definition of deployment; (2) state whether each service should have a goal, policy, or regulation stipulating the maximum amount of time units and personnel may be deployed; and (3) define the minimum data on deployments that each service must collect and maintain. DOD agreed to further pursue initiatives—many which were noted in our report—to enhance its ability to manage deployments. Also, in January 1997, DOD forwarded a report to the Chairman, House National Security Committee, on the impact of increased deployments on training, retention, and readiness.⁸ As part of that study, the Joint Staff assessed the capabilities of service systems to track personnel deployments. The report noted that, although all the services had systems in place to monitor deployments, each service measured and defined personnel deployment differently. For example, the Army tracks personnel at both the unit and individual level, whereas the Marine Corps and the Navy track personnel only at the unit level. The Air Force tracks personnel by aircraft type and specialty type.

The difficulty with measuring either military personnel or unit deployment rates stems in part from the differences in how each military service defines and tracks personnel deployments. The services have different definitions of deployed forces. For example, the Marine Corps considers a servicemember deployed after that person has been away from his or her home station for 10 days, but the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy consider personnel to be deployed after only 1 day away from their home station. Table 5 shows the variation in service measurement systems and definitions that were in place as of March 1998. Military officials stated

⁷Military Readiness: A Clear Policy Is Needed to Guide Management of Frequently Deployed Units (GAO/NSIAD-96-105, Apr. 8, 1996).

⁸Final Report of the PERSTEMPO Working Group, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 26, 1996.

that systems that address the different personnel deployment rate measurements are evolving.

Table 5: Service Personnel Deployment Standards and Tracking Capabilities as of March 1998

	Army	Navy	Air Force	Marine Corps
Definition of deployment	1 overnight away from assigned quarters	1 day away from homeport	1 day away from home station	10 days or more away from home station
Limit on deployment	No policy, but goal is maximum deployment of 120 days per year, with a threshold of 180 days per year	Policy exists that limits deployments to 6 months	No policy, but goal is for a maximum deployment of 120 days per year	No policy, but goal is for a maximum unit deployment of 180 days per year
System tracking capabilities	Unit and individual levels	Unit level	Air Force specialty and aircraft type	Unit level

The Joint Staff Does Not Track the Impact of CJCS Exercises on Overall Personnel Deployment Rates

The readiness staff at Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps headquarters, which monitor data systems, currently do not track the impact of CJCS exercise participation on overall personnel or unit deployment rates. The services are developing systems to enhance their capability to measure overall deployment rates. At the time of our visits, officials at the service components at the regional commands had not been regularly maintaining data on the participation of their personnel in CJCS exercises. Some CINCS have tried to determine this relationship, but their data and methodologies had flaws. For example, the U.S. Pacific Command performed an analysis on the relationship between CJCS participation and personnel deployments. The analysis showed that about 4 percent of the total deployed days spent by service components in fiscal year 1996 were attributable to participation in CJCS exercises. However, the analysis did not include data from all of the units assigned to the command, the components determined deployment days differently, and the information provided by the components was not complete. For example, their personnel tracking systems do not calculate the number of days used by deployments for CJCS exercises.

The lack of such information is especially evident at the U.S. Atlantic Command, which has responsibility for training and deploying nearly 80 percent of all U.S. forces. Officials from this command stated that, to assess the impact of CJCS exercises on personnel deployment rates, the command would need an adequate database with visibility into all deployments, operations, exercises, and training events. Command officials stated that they do not have historical personnel deployment data

for all of their units; therefore, they could not determine the impact of participation in CJCS exercises on personnel deployment rates. The officials also stated that they do not have information on the extent of unit deployments and therefore do not consider this factor when selecting units for exercises.

Although many factors contribute to the pace of deployments, such as routine training, peacekeeping efforts, and major deployments, the military officials we met with believe that personnel deployments created by participation in CJCS exercises have a minimal impact on the overall DOD-wide deployment rate. Nevertheless, the Secretary of Defense directed in the May 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review that CJCS exercise man-days be reduced by 15 percent between fiscal year 1996 and 1998 to reduce the stress on overall DOD-wide personnel deployments caused by these exercises. The officials we met with believe that any reduction in CJCS exercise participation would have virtually no impact on overall DOD-wide deployment problems. Participation in CJCS exercises has a greater impact on the personnel deployment of low-density, high-demand units rather than military units in general, according to these officials. However, their conclusion was based on professional military judgment, since no systems exist to measure the impact of the exercise program on total deployment.

In its February 1998 report to Congress, DOD describes various actions underway to reduce personnel deployments incurred as a result of the CJCS Exercise Program. The report cited the Secretary's directive to reduce the man-days devoted to exercise programs and noted that the military services had been asked to pursue further reductions. Actions to meet these mandates are underway, according to the report.

Conclusions

DOD officials use the CJCS Exercise Program to accomplish a wide range of objectives. DOD policy directs that the exercises are to prepare forces for their highest priorities—joint wartime operations. DOD policy also allows these exercises to be focused on maintaining relationships with U.S. allies. CINC exercise officials stated that the mix of exercises and their intended focus are the result of deliberate decisions made to meet each command's security needs.

Total costs associated with conducting CJCS exercises cannot be determined. DOD and its components are currently unprepared to report accurate and complete cost data because they do not believe tracking such costs would be cost beneficial. The cost data in DOD's February 1998 report

to Congress is incomplete because some service participation costs are not included. The reported costs generally represent some of the incremental costs incurred in conducting these exercises.

DOD has no method to measure the impact of the CJCS Exercise Program on overall individual and unit deployment rates. Although the Office of the Secretary of Defense questions whether deployment problems exist, concerns expressed by Joint Staff, CINCS, and service component officials have led to actions by both DOD and Congress to reduce overall deployment rates by reducing the CJCS program in terms of funding and the number of exercises. Because DOD does not consistently track information on deployments, the impact of the exercise program on overall deployment rates cannot be precisely determined. Although DOD agreed to consider the recommendations in our April 1996 report to address the problem of managing personnel deployment rates, it has yet to fully implement them. We continue to believe that our prior recommendations to DOD are crucial to its ability to measure the impact that the CJCS Exercise Program has on overall personnel deployment rates.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our findings and made several observations about the CJCS Exercise Program (see app. I). DOD also provided technical comments, which we incorporated where appropriate.

DOD said that, even though the primary focus of an exercise may be joint training, contingency operations, or engagement, it is not appropriate to consider the value of this training for just one purpose, since all CJCS exercises provide joint training value. In categorizing exercises according to their purposes, we used established guidance published by the Joint Staff to identify those exercises that provided an opportunity for joint training. We did not assess the value of the training but did include exercises with more than one purpose in all applicable categories.

With respect to program costs, DOD noted that the Joint Staff monitors direct costs of the exercise program (e.g., strategic lift and port handling) as well as service incremental costs. DOD acknowledged that the services do not track flying hours, steaming days, and tank miles associated with the exercises because, according to DOD, doing so would not necessarily benefit the agency. As our report points out, without such cost information, DOD cannot determine total program costs.

DOD noted that the Joint Staff is now collecting data on the number of man-days spent participating in the CJCS Exercise Program. According to DOD, this data shows that the man-days associated with the exercise program have been reduced and exceeded DOD's 15-percent goal. DOD acknowledged that the services' ability to measure overall personnel and unit deployment rates is still evolving and is not yet robust enough to allow the agency to determine the share attributable to the CJCS Exercise Program. Because the services use various methods to determine deployment rates and do not regularly track the impact of participation in CJCS exercises on these rates, we cannot verify DOD's statement that it has met its man-day reduction goal for the exercise program.

Scope and Methodology

To assess the number and type of CJCS exercises conducted or planned for fiscal years 1995 to 2002, we obtained and analyzed quarterly schedules of exercises conducted by the U.S. Atlantic, Central, European, Pacific, and Southern Commands. These exercises represent approximately 88 percent of the total exercises conducted or planned to be conducted during the time period. We did not analyze the remaining exercises, which were conducted by the U.S. Space, Strategic, Transportation, and North American Aerospace Defense Commands and the Joint Staff.

To determine the scope of the joint training, we used the Joint Staff's published guidance to determine whether a particular exercise meets the criteria for joint training. We reviewed the training objectives and tasks to be performed for each of the 1,405 CJCS exercises conducted or planned to be conducted during the 8-year period in our review. We provided the Joint Staff and each CINC an opportunity to review our analyses and make any necessary adjustments to account for additional exercises conducted or planned and exercises that were canceled. Any discrepancies between the information the Joint Staff and the CINCS provided about the exercises were reconciled. To identify the CJCS exercises designed primarily to accomplish contingency plans, we relied on the determinations of CINC officials. To identify exercises conducted to address engagement-type activities, we obtained and analyzed each CINCS' joint training plans. We discussed our analyses with officials from the Joint Staff's Exercise and Training Division. We visited each of the five U.S. regional commands and discussed our analyses with CINC officials from each command. We also interviewed officials from service components of the Atlantic, European, and Pacific Commands. These officials generally agreed with our categorization of the exercises.

To determine the available cost data for the exercise program, we interviewed officials and analyzed data obtained from the Joint Staff, CINCS, service component commands, and service headquarters. We also interviewed officials and obtained budget data from Headquarters, U.S. Forces Command; Headquarters, Air Combat Command; the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet; the Commander, Marine Forces Atlantic; the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet; and Headquarters, Marine Forces Pacific. We also discussed with the Joint Staff the methodology for estimating the costs of the CJCS Exercise Program that were reported to Congress.

To assess whether DOD maintains the data needed to estimate the impact of CJCS exercises on overall deployment rates, we interviewed officials and obtained documents from service headquarters; the Atlantic, Central, European, Pacific, and Southern Commands; and service components of the Atlantic, European, and Pacific Commands. We determined the systems the Joint Staff, CINCS, services, and major commands use to track military personnel and unit deployments by contacting the following organizations: the Joint Staff Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate (J-7); the U.S. Atlantic, Central, European, Pacific, and Southern Commands; the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations; the Air Force Operations Support Center, Training Division; the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Plans, Policy, and Operations; and the Marine Corps Current Operations Branch Exercise Office, Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations. We also contacted major service component commands. Because these organizations were unable to provide data on the amount of time units and personnel deployed for CJCS exercises, service training, and operational deployments, we could not evaluate the impact of the program on personnel or unit deployment rates. Both the lack and inconsistency of the data that is maintained made it difficult to determine the actual time personnel or units are deployed.

We conducted our work from September 1997 to July 1998 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

We are sending copies of this report to appropriate congressional committees; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; the Commandant of the Marine Corps; and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. We will also make copies available to others on request.

Please contact me at (202) 512-5140 if you or your staff have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix II.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Gebicke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'G'.

Mark E. Gebicke
Director, Military Operations
and Capabilities Issues

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Abbreviations

CINC	Commander in Chief
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
DOD	Department of Defense

Comments From the Department of Defense



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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

JUN 12 1998

Mr. Mark E. Gebicke
Director, Military Operations and Capabilities Issues
National Security and International Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Gebicke:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "JOINT TRAINING: Observations on the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Exercise Program," dated May 20, 1998 (GAO Code 703209/OSD Case 1624).

The DoD has reviewed the draft report and concurs, with the following comments:

The CJCS Exercise Program (CEP) accomplishes a wide range of objectives, as documented in the Department's recent "Report to Congress on Certain Military Exercise Programs" (February 16, 1998). While the primary focus of an exercise may be joint training, contingency operations, or engagement, it is not appropriate to consider its value for just one purpose. All CJCS exercises, including those conducted primarily for engagement, provide joint training value. For example, the engagement exercise "Intrinsic Action" also has a significant contingency operation component and is recognized as having major joint training value. Also, in the February report, Combatant commands and the Services noted good-to-major training value for approximately 95 percent of the exercises conducted.

The Joint Staff monitors direct costs of the CEP (e.g., strategic lift, port handling, etc.), as well as Service incremental costs. The Services plan operating costs for flying hours, steaming days, and tank miles to support overall operations and training requirements. While these operating costs are not tracked by Service or Joint use, it is not apparent that doing so would benefit the Department.

The Joint Staff now collects man-day participation data for the CEP annually. Data confirm that since 1996 the number of joint exercises has decreased by almost 30 percent and associated man-day reductions have exceeded the 15 percent goal. Service ability to measure overall personnel and unit deployment rates, however, is still evolving and is not yet robust enough to allow us to determine the proportional share driven by the CEP. As these measurement systems, such as the Marine Corp's Training Exercise Employment Plan (MCTEEP), come on line and mature, we expect to establish data baselines that will facilitate better analysis and trend determination.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to review the report in draft form. Technical corrections and clarifications have been provided to your reviewers by separate correspondence.

Sincerely,

Rudy de Leon



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