

**Phase V: Improve Joint Staff Procedures**

Two improvements to JCS planning procedures, now in infancy, are particularly important.

First, the Joint Chiefs seek to strengthen ties with the CINCs, and are increasing CINC input to the planning process. Each CINC recently was required to brief the Joint Chiefs personally (no proxies permitted) on his most important plan. The Chiefs, in turn, intend to use resultant information when they help the SECDEF develop defense guidance and directives for each unified and specified command. Such collaboration could close a loop often left open in the past, if it proves to be part of a permanent new relationship.

Present members of the JCS recognize that interservice rivalries have caused their predecessors to sidestep critical issues consistently. Pressures to appear harmonious produced lowest common denominator plans at a very slow pace. Advice to the President, NSC, and SECDEF was often described as "spongy." The incumbent group proposes to present its opinions as options instead of "answers." That policy, if it pans out, would eliminate any need for concurrence by Military Services. No Service would retain de facto veto powers. Preparation time could be compressed. Recipients of JCS advice could see which solutions have a consensus, where opinions split, and why, before they make decisions. One such divergence occurred in December 1982, when JCS members disagreed on the desirability of Dense Pack basing for MX missiles. Most news media reported that as a weakness. General Vessey presents the same incident as evidence of new strength.

**Phase VI: Improve Operational Procedures**

The Joint Chiefs have addressed two operational issues, which influence how well they are situated to assist in the implementation of strategic plans,