

for its primary job—strategy attacks and bombing missions behind enemy lines. That, assert some, forces the Army to build its own air force—mostly helicopters, which many critics complain may be too slow and vulnerable to enemy fire.

In addition to airlift and sealift, other examples of such “orphan missions” are airlift and sealift, special operations, land-based air support of naval operations and land-based air defense of air installations. Yet it is precisely these infrastructure concerns that are most critical whenever the CINC or the on-scene military command must integrate the diverse forces that are often required to carry out the assigned mission.

After Iranian militants seized Americans at the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, U.S. leaders learned there was no existing command structure able immediately to mount a complex rescue operation. The system used in the abortive raid had to be built from scratch.

Retired Air Force Lieutenant General John Pustay, a former assistant to the JCS chairman, commented:

In the Iranian rescue attempt, it was necessary to artificially join together disparate elements from the Services in order to get the minimum capabilities needed to carry out a complex anti-terrorist mission.

The helicopters used were RH-53 mine sweeping craft, the only rotary wing available in sufficient numbers with the required range. The pilots were a mixture of Marines and Air Force officers drawn from various operating units of their Services. The C-130 aircraft used to carry fuel bladders for the Desert One phase were taken from a USAF airborne command and control squadron after the command capsules were removed. While this all illustrates classic American ingenuity, it also illustrates the lack of attention paid by the Services to operations in lower-level conflicts. The operation was carried out under supervision of the highest authorities in Washington, in part because of the sensitive nature of the mission and in part because of the inadequacies of the staffs of the field commanders-in-chief (CINCEUR and CINCPAC).

A *U.S. News & World Report* article observed:

Such rigid divisions of roles posed problems for the abortive Iran rescue effort. The mission called for launching rescue helicopters from aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean over hundreds of miles into the heart of Iran. Yet the division of service roles meant the Navy had no carrier-based helicopters specifically designed and equipped for a demanding overland journey. And while the Army had many pilots heavily trained for ground-rescue operations, the Navy had few. In the end, the U.S. used Navy helicopters equipped for mine sweeping and mostly Navy and Marine pilots.

The above quotes point to the lack of an adequate cross-service perspective needed to develop and field forces to respond to low-intensity warfare.

Our top military commanders have the complete responsibility for the operational success of their combat missions—but they lack the authority to carry out that mission. Specifically, they lack sufficient command authority and adequate control over resources, personnel, organization, chain of command, support and administra-