

spectrum and all parts of the globe where our interests are threatened. This is the core answer to the problem reflected in our military failures of the past two decades. The inability to cope with such conflicts or threats is not only reflected in the human-truck bombing of the Marine enclave in Beirut, but also retrospectively in the inadequacies reflected in the way we handled our involvement in Vietnam, the Mayaguez episode, and the more recent aborted attempt to rescue the U.S. hostages in Iran.

The "joint perspective" of which General Pustay speaks is something with which, as a past president of the National Defense University, he was intimately involved during his time on active duty. The NDU system is the cornerstone of our system of higher military education. It includes the Armed Forces Staff College, where our mid-career officers are trained for joint warfare, as well as the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces—the premier training grounds for our future generals and admirals. Yet these educational establishments, vital as they are in building the joint perspective so essential to modern warfare, can be no better than the organization they are designed to support.

Dr. Theodore J. Crackel, formerly of the Heritage Foundation, completed a "Defense Assessment Project" for the foundation in 1984 and came to these conclusions regarding the functioning of our officer corps in joint assignments:

The fact is, what we have is a defense structure that actually encourages the promotion of the interests of each individual service over the national interest. This system makes it difficult for joint staff officers to produce persuasively argued joint papers that transcend service positions. Officers serving on the joint staff have to look to their services for future promotion and assignments. They soon learned that their services view them as representatives of the service interests, and are made to feel—and occasionally see evidence—that repeated bucking of the system will have dire career consequences. The services dominate the joint staff—top and bottom.

The staff serves the [JCS]—and must satisfy each diverse interest represented. The evidence of this is found in the advice the JCS provides on virtually any controversial issue—a lowest common denominator solution, to which all the services can agree. On a substantive issue each of the four services' action officers might demand a 100 or more changes—often changes that conflict with those demanded by the other services. Joint staff officers quickly learn that the art of achieving compromise—and the art of writing proposals that will offend no one.

It is important to remember that the Joint Staff of today, like the JCS system itself, is the product of a conscious political choice that we made in not installing a conventional military staff at the head of our services after World War II. There were undoubtedly good reasons for doing so at that time, but what does the record show since then? Is our Joint Staff living up to what it really should be: the pinnacle of our staff system, where excellence should be taken for granted?