

They are responsible for the very survival of the nation if war should come because they are our combat commanders. Yet, incredibly, their authority is limited in such areas as exercising command; organizing their commands; training their forces; employing forces as they see fit; establishing the chain of command to their subordinates; selecting their subordinate commanders and dismissing them; exercising courts-martial authority; budgeting for joint training, contingencies, and command and control; and influencing the flow, quality, quantity, and placement of equipment and logistic support.

In 1983 the committee faulted the Department of Defense for the serpentine chain of command that extended through six layers, with two "sub-layers," and criss-crossed the Western Hemisphere from Washington to Mons, Belgium to Stuttgart to London to Naples to the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean to the amphibious task force off Lebanon before finally reaching the Marine commander on the ground at the Beirut Airport. The committee also faulted the military chain of command for failing to exercise sufficient oversight of the Marines and criticized the military for "confusion over the actual chain of command" suggesting that this "may be one more indication of the failure of higher echelons to exercise sufficient supervision and oversight of lower command levels." Considering the limitations on command authority discovered by the committee in 1986, however, is it surprising that higher authorities failed to shoulder their responsibilities?

In a few months, three years will have passed since 241 young Americans died in the terrorist attack on the Marines at the Beirut Airport. No member of the Committee on Armed Services who took part in the investigation into that disaster will ever forget it; the magnitude of the tragedy, experienced firsthand, seared the consciousness of the members indelibly. Two hundred and fifty-three Americans died when the battleship *Maine* was blown up in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898. The United States responded by going to war with Spain. What has been America's response to the deaths of 241 Americans on October 23, 1983? It may not be as dramatic, but for the Committee on Armed Services the answer lies in the most far-reaching reform of the U.S. military command structure in modern history.

JOINT OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Interspersed throughout the testimony since 1982 are constant reminders that the weak joint organizational structure is accompanied by an equally unsatisfactory personnel management system that fails to man joint positions with officers possessing the requisite capabilities in terms of talent, education, training, and experience. The Joint Chiefs of Staff legislation in 1982 and 1983 focused on joint personnel management problems affecting the 400 members of the Joint Staff. But the problem is much more widespread. It extends to joint positions throughout the U.S. military structure, and, in fact, is symptomatic of a general insensitivity among the officer corps to the implications of President Eisenhower's dictum that future wars will be fought jointly—"separate ground, sea, and