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Barely in Time: The Successful Struggle to Create the Transportation Command

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With the passage of the National Security Act in 1947, a concentrated effort was begun to consolidate the functions of the U.S. military services wherever possible. One area that seemed appropriate for merger was the several units that were providing ocean transportation for the services. Accordingly, in August 1949 Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson issued a directive aimed at such a consolidation. The directive named the secretary of the navy as the single manager for Department of Defense ocean transportation and directed him to establish an operating agency within the navy. On 1 October 1949, the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS) was established to serve as the operating agency.

The basic mission of MSTS was to provide point-to-point sea lift of passengers, fuel, materiel, and supplies to support U.S. military forces. To provide the assets needed for this mission, government-owned vessels, including troop transports, tankers, and cargo ships, were transferred to MSTS from the Naval Transportation Service and the Army Transport Service (ATS).

The budget for MSTS, unlike the ATS, was made available by an industrial fund, which meant that all funding was provided by the user services. The army, requiring most of the ocean transportation, was paying more than 85 percent of the MSTS budget, while at the same time having lost control of the function. The new command, led by navy personnel and operating much of the navy's noncombatant fleet, was maintained at a minimal cost to the navy. In the years that followed, the army continued to oppose navy control over its ocean transport. They argued that the new command was not an improvement and had only added another layer of bureaucracy to the system.

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By 1969, when the Nixon administration assumed office, there was a growing realization that the army's contention had considerable merit. After a period of study the secretary of defense ordered many of the original sea lift functions returned to the army. A leading advocate for this change was David Packard, the Deputy Secretary. As might be expected, the navy strenuously resisted this order. One of the leaders in the fight was Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the JCS. As the battle progressed it moved from the Pentagon to the Congress where the navy was able to get powerful friends to attach a rider to the defense appropriations bill that prohibited any funds from being used to effect the OSD-directed change. Although there was deep resentment of the navy's ability to thwart the secretary, it was decided that the cost of continuing the fight would be more than the proposed reorganization was worth.

In the fall of 1978 the Department of Defense undertook the first full-scale mobilization exercise since World War II directed toward the support of Western Europe. It was code named "Nifty Nugget." In the war game, Lieutenant General John Wickham, U.S. Army, the Director of the Joint Staff of the JCS, played the role of the Chairman, JCS. General Wickham's deputy for the exercise was Major General James Dalton, U.S. Air Force. In his role, General Wickham was responsible for the overall war game operation. The game involved a thousand players, most from the military services and some others from 27 civilian agencies. One of the players, whose career had yet to attract public attention, was Vice Admiral William Crowe, the Operations Deputy for the Navy, who played the CNO in the exercise.

As the exercise progressed, the flaws that had developed in the post-World War II defense planning quickly appeared. There was an attitude endemic in the Pentagon called "WWWNH"—World War Will Never Happen, and if it did, any general conflict would shortly end in a nuclear exchange. The complexity of marshalling men and equipment and linking them up with forward deployed units was never treated as something that would have to be done in an actual crisis.

"Nifty Nugget" was primarily a paper and computer war game, and no major troop units were actually moved during the course of the exercise. Three separate, incompatible computer systems had been wired together for the game and they quickly proved to be totally inadequate. Much of the information, when it could be obtained, later proved to be wrong.

At one point, DoD Deputy Secretary Stanley Resor, playing the secretary of defense, suggested that a Marine division destined for Norway be redeployed to Iceland. The chiefs agreed, but the plans turned out to be so rigid that it was impossible to use the existing computer models. Logistic requirements had to be developed by hand. Six full days of airlift had been lost by the time the Marine deployment was remeshed with other units of the master plan. Troops already in the field went without supplies, and units

ready to go had to wait. Few who participated in the exercise would forget the lack of coordination among the services.

The originally classified summary analysis of the exercise issued in April 1979 gave scant evidence of the degree of confusion and communications breakdown that actually occurred. In the customary antiseptic prose of such reports, it was noted that the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC) and the Military Sealift Command (MSC), “were initially limited in effectiveness because they did not have the assets needed for deployment movements. National policy restricts MTMC ownership of assets to ‘peculiar’ military needs.” (The name of the MSTC was changed in 1970 to the Military Sealift Command (MSC).)

One result of “Nifty Nugget” was the formation of the Joint Deployment Agency (JDA) to be located at Mac Dill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida. Its purpose was to coordinate war planning among the services and maintain a data base of all the available equipment for joint deployment.

The JDA’s fatal flaw soon became apparent. While the need for a vastly improved system of data collection, storage and presentation was readily accepted, none of the services were willing to abandon their own systems or share much of their own data. The JCS had failed to provide the new agency with the necessary authority and resources, succumbing to the pressures of service parochialism.

The computer network set up to provide the JCS with the essential information for emergency operations was called the Joint Deployment System (JDS) and was designed to link peacetime and crisis planning, providing information on such things as unit readiness, movement priorities, lift priorities and the status of needed equipment. But the system never worked because the JDA did not possess the influence to force the services to provide the information it needed.

A new administration assumed office in 1981. President Ronald Reagan had called attention to the need to substantially increase the nation’s defenses during his campaign the previous year. He began almost immediately to fulfill his campaign promises. With the massive buildup that was anticipated, the requirement to improve the organization that would project this expanded and modernized force overseas became critical. Further, the “Nifty Nugget” debacle was still fresh in memory.

The new Secretary of the Army, John Marsh, pushed for control of the army’s essential logistic support. The Vietnam War had proved once again, if it needed proving, that almost the entire essential lift requirements of the army would move by sea. While previously there had been some willingness to rely on airlift, it was now clear that apart from movement of personnel, the air force could offer the army little support. By that time the Marines, who had always been tied closely to the navy’s amphibious shipping which provided for their immediate needs, had succeeded in obtaining dedicated sea

lift for their follow-on needs in addition to other purposes. The army, as well, wanted shipping specifically assigned for its use.

Another newcomer who shared this concern was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics Lawrence Korb, who had joined the administration after having been a member of the faculty of the Naval War College. In an effort to provide added participation for the army in sea lift, he concluded that the responsibility for all surface transportation, land and sea, should be combined. By this time the Military Airlift Command (MAC) had become a specified command and seemed to be working well. It was generally conceded that it should be left alone. While MAC had some overlapping problems with the army in booking personnel for overseas transport (the army handled the domestic portion of the movement and MAC the international), MAC and the army seemed capable of resolving that problem.

Korb presented his reorganization plan to the new Deputy Secretary, Frank Carlucci. Mindful of the previous successful navy opposition, Carlucci concluded that it was essential to gain the support of the Chairman, JCS, General David Jones, U.S. Air Force. After discussing their proposal with him, General Jones agreed with the concept of a joint command and OSD commissioned JCS to conduct a year-long study to produce a plan for implementing the change. The study was assigned to Major General Dalton, U.S. Air Force, General Wickham's former deputy who was now the head of the Industrial College for the Armed Forces (ICAF). General Jones wrote in the subsequent study that "more integrated management is required to efficiently operate a transportation movement system capable of smoothly transitioning to war." He reasoned that, with a carefully structured plan, he could obtain the support of the other service chiefs. At this time General Wickham was Vice Chief of staff of the Army and, a year later (1983), he became Chief of Staff.

JCS, at the army's urging, decided not to wait for the completion of the study and persuaded Carlucci to approve the immediate transfer of cargo booking and contract administration from MSC to the army's MTMC. Initially the navy did not realize the importance of this change, and so the personnel, together with their functions, were beginning to be transferred before the navy could once again weigh in. The point men were Navy Secretary John Lehman and his Assistant Secretary, George Sawyer. Sawyer ordered MSC to hold back on any further implementation. When it was obvious what was happening, Carlucci confronted Sawyer with this apparent insubordination. In the exchange that followed, Sawyer argued against the change and tried to insist that the entire matter be halted until a further study was made. Carlucci became increasingly impatient and eventually ordered immediate implementation. Soon after, the reorganization resumed and was

completed. However, the navy was now alerted to the possibility of further change.

When the Dalton study was presented to the JCS it concluded that “the current (deployment) system grew through a series of compromises designed to preserve the best parts of the existing systems. While well-intentioned, the result has been a disjointed system that cannot adequately perform the function for which it is intended.” The study recommended a unified surface command that included MSC and MTMC, and as such would report to the JCS. (Korb had wanted the command to report to the OSD.) The study recommended that the army and navy would have authority to name the commander in chief (CinC) on a rotating basis. The first commander was to have been Vice Admiral Kent Carroll, then-Commander, MSC. The positions taken by the service chiefs were unanimously for approval. Their endorsements were forwarded to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger who later approved the plan.

When Secretary Lehman heard about it, he hit the roof. He was not about to let the consolidation proceed if he could stop it. He contacted Congressman Charles Bennett, who chaired the powerful Seapower Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, to enlist his help. Bennett was a willing ally and sent his assistant Lou Krisen, a retired navy captain, to warn Carlucci of the consequences of attempting to implement the planned consolidation. At the same time Lehman successfully applied pressure on Admiral Thomas Hayward, CNO, and General Robert H. Barrow, Commandant of the Marine Corps, to change their position in the JCS.

Although Chairman Bennett was not able to have the House Armed Services committee amend the budget to withhold funds to stop the reorganization, Lehman was successful in getting Senator John Tower, then-Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to place an amendment in the DoD Authorization bill to once again prevent the expenditure of funds to bring about the reorganization. When confronted by Carlucci, Lehman claimed that it was his understanding that Secretary Weinberger did not really support the reorganization and that it was merely the work of “the people in Manpower and Logistics [Korb] and that Democrat Jones.” This last referred to General David Jones, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs who had been appointed by President Carter.

Carlucci quickly attempted to control the damage. He asked to appear before the Tower Committee and in forceful and eloquent testimony convinced the senator of the need for this reorganization. Senator Tower agreed to drop the amendment in the Conference Committee where the House and Senate versions of the Appropriations bill would be reconciled. This became important since the House had not passed the blocking amendment. When the Conference Committee met, Senator Tower found that he had other business and did not appear. Congressman Bennett did. He put the full

force of his committee behind supporting the amendment Tower had sponsored in the Senate but now said he wished to kill in conference. Bennett's arguments prevailed and the reorganization failed once again. Years later, when Senator Tower was undergoing confirmation hearings to consider his becoming President Bush's secretary of defense, he was reminded of his failure to fulfill his promise to Carlucci, with the strong suggestion that this demonstrated a basic weakness in his willingness in carrying out prior commitments.

As the years passed and defense procurement skyrocketed, it was inevitable that the fundamental weakness of the entire DoD acquisition system would become increasingly apparent. Both the House and Senate held numerous hearings to expose the latest discovery of alleged exorbitant and careless defense spending. Cartoons showing a worried looking Secretary Weinberger wearing a toilet seat in the form of a collar with a \$600 price tag became the source of much Washington merriment. The cries to "do something" swelled. It is in such an environment that Presidential commissions are formed. The result was the formation of a Presidential commission to be chaired by former Deputy Secretary of Defense David Packard to investigate current procurement practices. It was composed of a number of esteemed private citizens, most of whom had extensive backgrounds in defense matters. Former Under Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, former Commandant of the Marine Corps Robert Barrow, former CNO James Holloway, and Brent Scowcroft, a former Air Force lieutenant general and National Security Advisor to President Ford were among the commission members. All were highly regarded individuals, recognized as having a wide knowledge in the area of their investigation. Lawrence Korb, who had recently resigned from DoD, was one of the commission's first witnesses, as was General Wickham.

Even before the commission was formed, Packard stated that if there was one thing that was going to happen as the result of the commission's work, it was going to be the creation of a joint transportation command.

The commission's staff was headed by Rhett Dawson, the chief counsel to the Senate Armed Service Committee. It was populated by congressional staffers, most with a preconceived agenda. Much of the staff time was devoted to detailing the alleged failings of the existing military command structure. Two members of the commission, Nicholas Brady, now President Bush's Secretary of the Treasury, and Louis Cabot, the current Chairman of The Brookings Institution, didn't understand many of the details being discussed but were readily convinced that something was terribly wrong. The chairman, David Packard, was also claiming that things in DoD were in such bad shape that they had to be changed.

While the commission's work was proceeding, the House and Senate under the leadership of Congressman Bill Nichols and Senator Barry Goldwater were holding broad-ranging hearings to investigate what many regarded as

a breakdown in interservice operations. The tragedy of Lebanon and the operation in Grenada were repeatedly cited as evidence of the need for much closer cooperation between the services. Many of the recommendations of the Packard Commission were eventually included in legislation that became known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

During previous attempts to consolidate the surface commands, Military Airlift Command had remained on the sidelines. This was not to continue. General Duane Cassidy, the MAC Commander-in-Chief, became aware that the Packard Commission was proposing a new unified transportation command that not only would include MSC and MTMC, but would also bring in MAC. He went to the commission to find out why, having been established to make recommendations to improve military procurement, they had also generated a proposal for a new unified transportation command. Cassidy discovered this was a priority for the chairman and for many on the commission who had tried to effect this before. They believed that it was now the time to do so. As one member stated, the system is broken and "this time we'll fix it." Cassidy was reminded that there were several members of the commission who resented what they considered to be the navy's high-handed methods in the past. Some regarded Lehman as a partisan player who considered only the parochial interest of the navy. They now had the power and opportunity to override him.

Shortly after the Packard Commission's recommendation had been extensively leaked, General Cassidy received a call from Secretary Lehman. Lehman invited Cassidy to his office where he stated his concern over the commission's recommendations to form a unified transportation command. He acknowledged that he probably could not stop the recommendations, but proposed that the navy and air force join forces to control the implementation and prevent interference with the navy's jurisdiction. At the same time he assured Cassidy of his support for MAC to remain a specified command. He suggested to Cassidy that the reorganization proposed by Packard would not be in either his (Cassidy's) or MAC's best interests. He reminded the general that in a unified command MAC would lose its current independence. Furthermore, MAC would have to provide a majority of the resources required by the new command. Cassidy replied that he would like to discuss this with General Larry D. Welch, the Air Force Chief of Staff and would get back to him.

Lehman's proposal was not altogether wasted on Cassidy. He had no desire to preside over the dissolution of MAC. Cassidy's preference was to expand MAC into an organization in which the army and navy would have senior representation, but the CinC would be an air force officer maintaining full control of MAC. In his meeting with General Welch he related Lehman's proposal. After some discussion both agreed that although a new unified command might be costly to the air force, the Packard Commission's

recommendation was probably in the nation's interest and that they would support it. When Cassidy returned to deliver his decision to Lehman, it was, as he later described, a "curt and very short" meeting.

Lehman didn't quit. He went to work within the JCS and in the Congress. Meanwhile, the new chairman of the JCS, Admiral Crowe, directed the JCS to take a position on the issue and a working group was established, headed by Lieutenant General Al Hanson, U.S. Air Force (J-4), to draft the implementation plan.

Under the established authority, the CinCs sent their recommendations directly to the chairman. Two important expressions of support for the future TransCom came from the admirals at CincPac in Hawaii and CincSouth in Naples. In February 1987 Admiral Crowe called a meeting for final consideration of the issue. All the chiefs were present except Admiral Carlisle Trost, the CNO, who sent his deputy, Admiral James B. Busey. Admiral Trost was in a difficult position since it was well known that Lehman had actively opposed his appointment as CNO and the issue was of obvious personal interest to Lehman.

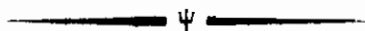
General Wickham, Chief of Staff of the Army, strongly supported the formation of the new Transportation Command. He said, "It's got to be done," and that this was a "rare opportunity." General Welch, the Air Force Chief of Staff, was also supportive. Admiral Busey, in turn, questioned the need for a unified command and claimed that he could not take a position without specific instructions from Admiral Trost. Admiral Crowe, undoubtedly remembering "Nifty Nugget," reportedly hit the table and said "Surely, in God's name, you are not going to sit here and tell us that there is no problem. Is that the Navy's position?" Admiral Busey still refused to declare himself.

The lone negative position came from the Marine Corps Commandant, General P.X. Kelley. General Cassidy, who had been designated to be the CinC of the new command, had served with Kelley before and they were good friends. Kelley acknowledged that if anyone could do the job it was Cassidy, but he persisted in his opposition. General Kelley was concerned that under such a command the Marine Corps' dedicated shipping could one day be used for joint deployments instead of being reserved solely for Marine Corps operations. It was also suggested that Secretary Lehman had threatened to withhold his support for the Marine Corps acquisition of the V-22 Osprey, a tilt-rotor aircraft needed to replace the aging CH-46 helicopter, if General Kelley supported the reorganization.

Shortly after the meeting, Crowe informed the secretary of defense that it was his decision to support the new command. This was the first time that the chairman's new authority, provided by Goldwater-Nichols, had been used. Instead of presenting five points of view as formerly, he needed to present only his own. Both OSD and JCS passed their endorsement to the

new national security advisor, none other than Frank Carlucci, who had just been appointed to replace Admiral John Poindexter, following Poindexter's resignation as a result of the Iran-Contra scandal. Carlucci saw to it that the DoD recommendation was passed to the President for approval in record time. Little effective opposition existed. Lehman, who knew that he himself would soon be leaving, finally gave up after once again testifying against the creation of the new command. One of his main concerns was the retention of the Industrial Fund for MSC and in this effort he was successful.

General Cassidy was confirmed as the new commander-in-chief in April 1987. Transportation Command stood up with a nucleus staff in October of the same year. The functions formerly assigned to the JDA, together with the necessary new authority, were also transferred at this time. A year later Cassidy was able to notify Admiral Crowe that the new command was fully operational. In light of the operations which began following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the new command's formation was barely in time.



Where a navy is largely preponderant over that of an enemy, such over-sea expeditions by large bodies of troops proceed in security, either perfect or partial. Great Britain during the Napoleonic wars had troops continually afloat, often in large bodies. So did the United States in the Mexican War and the War of Secession. So France in her conquest of Algiers in 1830, and again Great Britain and France during the Crimean War. Security such as existed in these instances leaves little of a military problem; but the case differs when there is an approach towards equality . . .

Naval Strategy

A. T. Mahan (1911)

Little, Brown (1918), p. 208